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Discourses of authenticity and national identity among the
Irish diaspora in England.

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Thesis presented for the degree of Doctorate in Philosophy

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June 2010

Abstract

This thesis explores the ways in which Irish people in England draw on discourses of authenticity in constructing and articulating Irish identities. It is based on the theoretical assumption that identities are constructed through discourse, which is understood as a broad horizon of meaning-making. The Irish in England are discussed as a population that negotiate both their personal identities and putative collective identity within discourses of Irishness as diasporic and as a minority identity within multicultural England. It is argued that 'authenticity' is central to both these positionings, but that personal constructions of authentic Irishness may differ from hegemonic constructions. Additionally, a distinction is made between diasporic and transnational Irish identities.

Using a convenience sample, participants who self-identified as Irish were recruited from three English cities. Thirty individual interviews and four group discussions were carried out - the interview schedules and analysis was informed by ongoing 'informal' participant observation. In analysing the corpus of data, narratives of a 'typical' Irish life were attended to as well as the rhetorical means by which Irishness was contested. A clear canonical narrative of a 'collective' Irish experience in post-war England emerges, alongside three major areas of contestation through which claims on authenticity were made: public displays of Irishness, local identities, and generational differences.

It is concluded that 'authenticity' is central to understanding how individuals situate their personal identities within collective identities. In particular, three distinct but overlapping discourses of Irish authenticity are identified: authenticity through collective experience and memory; authenticity through transnational knowledge and authenticity through diasporic claim. The implications of these findings, the original contribution they make both to Irish Studies and the social psychological study of identity, and how they may

inform future study are also discussed, with an emphasis on the need to further examine the importance of county identity.

Acknowledgements

In writing this thesis, I have been fortunate in being able to rely upon both institutional and interpersonal support networks.

Firstly, this thesis was made possible by funding from the Open University and also by the use of OU facilities. While I may have grown to take it for granted over the past 3 and a half years, a moment's pause is enough to remind me of the gratitude due to the Open University as an institution.

This thesis would also not have been possible without the co-operation of all those who participated in the research process. I am extremely grateful for those who willingly gave of their free time in order to be interviewed and/or participate in discussion groups. I would also like to thank the many people who were not participants as such, but who, through occasionally lengthy and occasionally brief snatches of conversation at Irish events and elsewhere, helped me develop a sense of the recent history and contemporary issues concerning the Irish in England.

The wise counsel of my supervisors, Dr. Gail Lewis and Dr. Jovan Byford on countless occasions allowed me to free myself from intellectual log-jams of my own making. I am grateful to them for correctly judging occasions on which I needed encouragement, occasions on which I needed to be pushed to improve my work and occasions on which I needed my own space to develop my thinking. Thanks are also due to Prof. Ann Phoenix, who supervised the first year of my PhD and set me thinking about many of the issues within this thesis.

I have appreciated the way in which the strong research culture within both the Department of Psychology and the wider Faculty of Social Sciences at the Open University facilitated the development of my thought at all stages of the PhD process. I would especially like to thank the members of the Qualitative Work in Progress group, the Social Psychology Research Group, the Centre for Citizenship, Identities and Governance and all those social science students who participated in the postgraduate seminars and Praxis conferences. The ability to discuss and receive feedback on half-formed (and occasionally half-baked) ideas in the sympathetic environment these fora represented was invaluable in fostering productive work. I would also like to thank the administrative staff in the Department of Psychology, particularly Lynda Hammond.

Aside from the conducive academic environment that the OU represented, I would also like to acknowledge the spirit of conviviality among the postgraduate community at the Open University, particularly those who eschewed the bright lights of London for the more subtle enjoyments of Milton Keynes. Anyone who has ever listened to me grouse about the impossibility of making the latest deadline over a pint in the Cellar Bar has therefore played their part in the production of this thesis. On a more tangible level, thanks are due to the brave brigade of proof-readers who spotted the typos that I was no longer able to: Sarah M., Nancy, Sam, Bethany, Sarah F., Pádraig and Diane.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family on both sides of the Irish Sea. In particular, thanks go to my Mam and Dad for their unfailing moral support and encouragement both since September 2006, and long before. My sister Mairéad's good humour and repeated exhortations of "It's only a long essay! What on earth's taking you so long?" helped to keep me grounded. Lastly, thanks to Deirdre for the sympathy, love and calculated ego boosts she provided at critical points of the writing-up process.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

In February 2010, as this thesis was being written, the Irish in England were positioned at the centre of two separate, yet related minor media storms. While these may not have been noticed outside the Irish ‘community’, they were significant in that they reflected something of a revival of social and historical discourses around the Irish in England that might have been assumed to be dormant, if not disappeared completely. In particular, for many Irish people in England, the two events carried unwelcome echoes of the 1980s.

The first controversy was provoked by an online blog written by the author and columnist Douglas Murray (2010), which appeared on the *Daily Telegraph* website on February 8th. Entitled “Anyone know any Irishman jokes?”, it recounted the story of an Irish-born union representative named Brian Kelly being awarded compensation having been offended by an anti-Irish joke told to him by Ken Barber, a Conservative councillor. Murray questioned both the amount (reported as several thousand pounds) and rationale of the award, and invited readers of the article to contribute Irish jokes of their own. Readers responded by posting a stream of anti-Irish jokes, the majority of which referred to the perceived stupidity of the Irish in general, while also commenting on the supposed absurdity of anti-Irish jokes being considered racist. The Federation of Irish Societies later submitted a complaint to the Press Complaints Commission regarding both the original article and the comments that appeared below it. Curiously enough, the current online version of the blog on the *Telegraph’s* website has since been edited to omit any reference to Murray’s original invitation to post anti-Irish jokes. Also, comments referring to other ethnic minority groups in offensive terms would appear to have been deleted, but comments referring to the Irish have been allowed to remain.

A week later, the Tánaiste¹ and then Minister for Trade, Enterprise and Employment, Mary Coughlan appeared on BBC's HardTalk programme. On being questioned on rising youth emigration from Ireland as a result of the recession, she appeared to frame this as a matter of personal choice, stating "It's the type of people that have left have gone on the basis that – some of them, fine, they want to enjoy themselves. That's what young people are entitled to do." Her comments were widely criticised both in Ireland itself and among the wider Irish diaspora as belittling the traumatic aspects of youth migration and as ignoring the economic and structural factors that drove it (Brennan, 2010). Many commentators also drew a parallel between her comments and those of a former Tanáiste, Brian Lenihan Sr. who, speaking in 1987, similarly framed the then high numbers of youth emigration as driven by personal choice rather than economic necessity, with the infamous line, "we can't all live on a small island".

What these two fleeting moments of controversy (now, as I write this in late April 2010, already largely forgotten) illustrate is that the position of the Irish in England continues to be a site of contestation, constituted within and infused with various discourses and imaginings of Irishness. As I will discuss throughout the thesis, and particularly in Chapter 3, despite the established history of anti-Irish discrimination in England, the official status of the Irish as an ethnic minority has been the subject of contestation, with both non-Irish and Irish people questioning that a 'White' group could be constituted as such. The Murray article and the reaction to the article may therefore be seen as a contemporary echo of the kind of anti-Irish sentiment that prompted calls for the Irish to be recognised as an ethnic minority. This in turn, as I discuss in Chapter 3, led to Irishness becoming an aspect of state-sponsored multiculturalism in England with subsequent consequences for the ways in which Irishness was portrayed.

¹ The Irish equivalent of the Deputy Prime Minister

Mary Coughlan's comments regarding contemporary youth emigration are also illustrative of the ways in which discourses of Irish migration and narratives of the Irish abroad are shaped by state actors within the Irish nation-state for political ends. This gulf in understanding between the Irish diaspora as it is imagined within Ireland and the experiences of those who make up the Irish diaspora is discussed in Chapter 2, as is the related contestation between territorial and diasporic readings of Irishness.

What both vignettes also illustrate is that the figure of the individual Irish person (whether they be of Irish birth or descent) in England is rhetorically positioned within both the English and the Irish domains. This may involve questions around whether Irish people ought to be considered a 'true' ethnic minority within England, or the reasons and motivations for the emigration of Irish people from Ireland. However, while individual Irish people are positioned by such discourses, it should not be imagined that they lack the agency to position themselves within them, and utilise them as resources in constructing their own Irish identities.

This thesis addresses such questions and argues that the ways in which notions of an authentic Irishness are discursively constructed are central to these debates. Drawing on my research among the Irish in England, the centre of which was 30 interviews and 4 group discussions carried out with Irish participants, I will analyse the various ways in which discourses of Irish authenticity were drawn upon in contemporary narratives and debates about 'living Irish' and the 'Irish community' in England. I will explore the differences between diasporic and territorial conceptions of Irishness and other means by which Irishness abroad may differ from that associated with the contemporary nation-state of Ireland. I will explore the position of the Irish as an ethnic minority within multicultural England and the implications this has for how the Irish 'community' is publicly represented. I will interrogate whether such a thing as a unified Irish community exists, and

the ways in which people claim to speak on behalf of the community. Arising from this, I will look at how cohorts of people are positioned as either being within or outside Irishness and the discursive resources individuals may draw upon to claim authentic Irishness. In the context of successive waves of Irish migration to England, I will examine the ways in which members of different cohorts of migrants construct Irishness, and the ways in which migrant and second generation Irish people position each other within discourses of authentic Irishness. On a broader level, this thesis will contribute to the critical social psychological study of national, diasporic and ethnic minority identities, with a particular regard for the role played by authenticity in how these are constructed.

Alongside everything mentioned above, this thesis also illustrates a moment in time. The research project on which the thesis is based began in October 2006, a time that represented the maturation point of a decade of unprecedented prosperity for the Irish in Ireland (the so-called ‘Celtic Tiger’ boom years), and unprecedented popularity for the Irish in England: two not un-related phenomena. As the project nears completion in April 2010, the Irish economy is going through a long and painful recession and the Irish in England find their numbers swelled on a weekly basis by a new wave of young Irish migrants who have come to England, particularly London, in search of work. While it is too early to make any definitive statements, this may yet be the beginning of a third wave of post-war migration from Ireland to England, to follow those of the 1950s and 1980s

To put it mildly, this wasn’t supposed to happen. In October 2006, it was widely assumed that large-scale emigration from Ireland was a thing of the past, and that the country had been transformed (with occasional teething problems) into a destination for large-scale immigration. Any future migration from Ireland to England, it was assumed, would be for reasons of professional advancement, or personal reasons, as opposed to the necessity of finding work. Therefore, conversations around Irish identity in Ireland focussed on the

need to expand the concept of ‘Irishness’ in such a way as to facilitate the integration of new migrant populations. Meanwhile, in England, the main topics under debate were the assumed irreversible shift in the nature of Irishness from being a working-class identity to a middle-class professional one, and the seeming inevitability of Irishness in England becoming a second and third generation phenomenon due to the low numbers of new Irish migrants arriving.

Such discussions have not been suddenly rendered moot by the possible emergence of a third wave of Irish migration, but they must now be viewed in a new light and as a product of their times. If anything, the juxtaposition of the assumed certainties of October 2006 with the new political, economic and social realities of April 2010 serves to underline the fragility of supposedly inevitable national narratives. Arguably, researchers can be as guilty in assuming narratives are developing in a uni-directional way as anyone else.

What follows, therefore, is a picture of a moment in time, both for me as the author of this thesis and the sole researcher in the research project on which it is based and for Irishness in England. The literature review and preliminary research for this project was carried out in late 2006 and 2007, during which time the somewhat complacent consensus that whatever Irishness now meant, it no longer represented poverty and mass emigration, was at its height. The interviews and discussion groups around which this thesis is built were carried out over the course of 2008, as the economic situation began to change and the first inklings of increased migration from Ireland to England impinged on the public consciousness. The thesis has been written throughout 2009 and 2010 following a global economic crash and with the media on both sides of the Irish Sea proclaiming a “return to the eighties” in terms of Irish emigration. This shift in circumstances will undoubtedly affect the ways in which Irishness is constructed in England over the next decade. The following analysis, however, largely deals with the discourses and narratives of Irishness

that were prevalent on the eve of the shift: as such they are tinged with something of a prelapsarian quality.

1.1 Situating the Research: Defining ‘the Irish’, defining ‘England’ and defining ‘authenticity’.

Before introducing and elaborating on the research themes that run through the thesis, it is useful to take a moment to explain how I am operationalising the three key terms of ‘the Irish’/Irishness, England, and ‘authenticity’.

Throughout this thesis, I do not conceptualise Irishness as an ‘official’ nationality that is dependent on citizenship, birthplace or ancestry. Rather, I conceptualise it as a social construct (I will discuss the social construction of national identity further in Chapter 2) and as such, as an identity that can be claimed. My interest lies in the discursive resources that people employ to make these claims, and how they construct such claims, on their own part, or on the part of others, as more or less authentic. The participants in this research were recruited on the basis of their own self-definition as Irish, rather than on the basis of any categories I had pre-imposed. “The Irish in England” therefore refers to all those in England who identify as Irish, not necessarily to the exclusion of identifying with other nationalities.

I also look at the ways in which Irishness is constituted in regard to what Hickman et al. (2005) have referred to as the hegemonic domains of Ireland and England. It may seem obvious, but it should be noted that an individual Irish person in England is simultaneously *not living* in Ireland and *living* in England, and one or other aspect of this experience may be salient at any given time. With regard to Ireland, the individual Irish person in England is positioned as part of the imagined community of Irish people abroad, or as part of a

putative Irish diaspora. However, hegemonic discourses within Ireland as to the characteristics of the Irish diaspora will shape the claims on Irishness individuals can make. With regard to England, the individual Irish person is positioned as part of a minority ethnic group of Irish people in England (although this is far from universally recognised). Thus, hegemonic discourses within England as to the characteristics of the Irish as a minority group will similarly shape the claims on Irishness individuals can make. This position of the Irish individual at the intersections of discourses of Irishness as ‘diasporic’ and Irishness as ‘minority culture’ will be explored further throughout Chapters 2 and 3.

This thesis specifically concerns the Irish in England, as opposed to the Irish in Britain, due both to methodological considerations and the qualitatively different experience of the Irish in England to that of the Irish in Scotland and Wales. For reasons of geographical convenience, from an early stage in the research, I decided to focus my attention on the discourses, narratives and activities of the Irish in England, rather than attempt to locate participants and attend events in both Scotland and Wales. Also, while the oppositional nature of Irishness and Englishness is well-established, in Scotland and Wales, the Irish are negotiating their identities against the majority Scottish and Welsh identities, which in turn are minority identities within Britishness. Coupled with this, the history of sectarianism associated with the arrival of large numbers of Irish migrants in Scotland, and the consequent re-imagining of Scottish identity as essentially Presbyterian in contrast to the Catholic Irish makes the Irish experience in Scotland a specific one (Bradley, 1996a, 1996b; Gallagher, 1991), not to mention the possible effects of devolution in both Scotland and Wales (Howard, 2006). Therefore, I distinguish between the “Irish in England” and the “Irish in Britain”, so as to avoid the common pitfall of imagining ‘Britain’ as merely ‘England’ writ large.

Having said this, the distinction between England and Britain with regard to the Irish is not quite so clear-cut. For example, at a structural level, many of the state and other institutions within which the Irish operate and Irishness is constructed are constituted at a specifically British rather than an English level. In describing how such structural factors shape Irishness therefore, it is appropriate to refer to the British, rather than the English context. Similarly, where I refer to past research that has explicitly looked at the Irish in *Britain*, I refer to it as such.

Finally, where I refer to ‘authenticity’, it should be taken as having a specific *social psychological* meaning, in other words as referring to the place of the self in society. It is important to stress that this thesis does not establish a definitive Irish authenticity against which all claims on Irish identity can be assessed. Rather, my interest is in the discursive ways in which the concept of an authentic Irishness is used in talk and the inclusionary and exclusionary effects this may have. As such, the use of the word ‘authentic’ in this thesis should be taken as denoting a construct, rather than any kind of established Irish authenticity.

I draw on the work of Rebecca Erickson (1995) in emphasising the importance of authenticity in constructing conceptions of the self and the role of the self in society. Erickson argues that “being authentic in today’s world does **not** necessarily mean that one is remaining true to some sort of unified or noncontradictory self” (Erickson, 1995, p. 135). Rather, she conceptualises authenticity as a commitment to self-values and argues that it can be explored by asking after the meaning makings through which the subjective experience of feeling “true to oneself” is articulated. This does not imply that this experience is not infused with wider social meanings; this is particularly true on those occasions where being ‘true to oneself’ involves identifying oneself as a member of a broader group and hence aligning oneself (and one’s self) with a collective identity.

Due to collective identities being socially constructed and shaped by structural forces and power relations, the agency of the individual in articulating feelings of being ‘true to oneself’ is constrained by societal meanings around what it means to be a member of a group. This, then, is the social rather than the affective dimension of authenticity; rather than “feeling true to oneself”; authenticity here is composed of the set of meaning-makings around what the characteristics of a member of a group should be. Should the individual articulate a set of meanings around being a group member based on “feeling true to oneself” that are at odds with the prevailing set of social meanings around being a member of a group, then the individual is likely to be positioned as inauthentic. As Erickson argues, “members of oppressed groups are more likely to confront the ‘problem’ of authenticity than are those who inhabit the world of power and privilege” (Erickson, 1995, p. 137). Thus, as well as drawing on discourses of authenticity in order to construct an identity, individuals are also positioned by these same discourses, and the level of agency they possess to shape how they are positioned is determined by power relations.

I would argue that the “problem of authenticity” may arise in the link between personal identity and collective identity in three ways: **reflection, recognition and ownership**. For a personal identity that is embedded in a collective identity to be ‘felt’ as authentic, the collective identity must in some way *reflect* the personal identity (or, arguably, vice versa) in order to permit identification between the personal and the collective. However, this collective identity must also be *recognised* as authentic within the broader discursive horizon of meaning-makings. As suggested above, the latter is particularly salient for members of minority groups, whereby hegemonic inauthentic stereotyped versions of the collective identity have affective and structural consequences for the individual. For example, the stereotyped and inauthentic hegemonic view of the Irish as stupid, violent and

potential terrorists widespread in 1970s England had day-to-day consequences for individual Irish people.

More positive, but still inauthentic depictions of Irishness may provoke debates over the *ownership* of Irishness as a concept. Such rhetorical work again operates on two levels, a personal Irishness that is ‘mine’, within a collective Irishness that is ‘ours’. The composition of the imagined community of ‘we’, that are seen as having ownership over collective Irishness will have implications for the individual’s ability to articulate ownership of his/her personal Irishness.

Therefore, in this thesis, Irish authenticity refers to the articulation of a personal sense of Irishness as true to oneself, which is both situated in and reflected by a collective Irish identity that has achieved recognition as a ‘true’ representation of the Irish in England, who in turn have asserted ownership over the concept of Irishness. In other words, **a personal Irishness that is ‘mine’ and “feels right” within a collective Irishness that is ‘ours’ and “looks right”.**

An authentic personal Irish identity must be articulated in such a way that it does not contradict previous discursive work around other aspects of one’s identity, but at the same time it must correspond with socially shared constructions of what an authentic Irish identity constitutes. Additionally, these socially shared constructions of authenticity are contextually bound. Analytically, the researcher may attend to the ways in which what counts as authentic and inauthentic is produced in the specific interactional context in which it is evoked and how this depends on the rhetorical work around Irish authenticity that the speaker is attending to. For example, one might predict that some will seek to disassociate their personal Irishness from a collective Irishness that they position as inauthentic. Others may attempt to re-articulate their own sense of personal Irishness, or

argue against prevailing discourses of authentic collective Irishness. Others still may seek to set boundaries around the category ‘Irish’, so as to position alternative articulations of collective Irish identity as inauthentic. On this point, I disagree with Erickson, who has argued that authenticity is a self-referential concept that does not explicitly include any reference to ‘others’. I would argue that, on the contrary, authenticity is profoundly dialogical, and that constructions of an authentic collective identity will be rhetorically arranged around those who are positioned as inauthentic in relation to Irishness.

1.2 Research themes

Irishness in England can be variously described as a diasporic, a transnational and an ethnic minority identity within England. The implications of viewing Irishness through these various prisms will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. In particular, the ‘idealised’ versions of Irishness, both in relation to a global diasporic Irish consciousness and as a facet of a multicultural England will be critically interrogated. Throughout the empirical chapters, I will consider the ways in which such idealised versions of Irishness may inform or constrain individual discourses of authentic Irishness in England.

In examining discourses of authentic Irishness in England, I focus on four subject areas which emerged through the analysis of the data corpus and form the basis of the four empirical chapters: narratives of ‘living Irish’ in England, public representations of Irishness in England, the role of local identities in diasporic Irishness and generational contestations of authentic Irishness. While these four areas intersect, each of them provides useful insight as to the construction of Irishness in contemporary England. In particular, I expand the focus on local identities beyond the English cities in which Irish people live to also include the Irish counties from which they originated and argue that articulations of county identities play a significant role in the construction of Irishness.

From an analysis of these four subject areas, I argue that three distinct discourses of Irish authenticity emerge and term these: Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory; Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge and Irish authenticity through diasporic claim.

Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory refers to the way in which individual experiences of being Irish in England are situated within the canonical narrative of the collective experiences of the Irish in England.

Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge and practices refers to the way in which articulations of an authentic identity and positioning of people as more or less authentically Irish is predicated on knowledge (or perceived knowledge) of contemporary Ireland, and the extent to which Irish practices in England resemble those in Ireland.

Irish authenticity through diasporic claim refers to rhetorical attempts to counter and deconstruct essentialist discourses of Irishness as dependent on birthplace and/or accent and instead suggest other means of demonstrating Irish authenticity.

These three discourses run through the four empirical chapters: I will highlight them in my analysis as they emerge and then explore them further in the context of the overall findings of the thesis in Chapter 9.

The above themes indicate the ways in which this thesis contributes to the social psychological study of national, diasporic and ethnic identity, and also how it contributes to the field of Irish Studies. It also makes a claim to contribute to the methodological/analytical field of discursive approaches to social psychology. In the

methodological discussion in Chapter 4, I discuss the nature of discourse and how a researcher might conceptualise the ‘broad horizon of discourse’ in approaching a topic such as Irish identity. I draw on the three (related) traditions of critical discursive social psychology, narrative analysis and Bakhtinian rhetorical analysis in order to construct a methodology and analytical stance suitable for exploring the multifaceted nature of Irishness in England.

1.3 Structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into two parts, with the first section providing the theoretical background to the research and the second analysing the original empirical data.

In Part 1 of the thesis, **Chapter 2** primarily addresses the notion of ‘diaspora’. It gives an introduction to social constructionist theories of identity and how these may be applied to the topic of national identity before exploring the ways in which diaspora has been proposed as a ‘progressive’ alternative mode of identification to the hegemonic, essentialised discourses associated with national identities. It debates whether diaspora as a theoretical model and analytical lens ignores the lived experience of diaspora and considers the alternative model of ‘transnationalism’. It then gives an overview of the uses of diaspora in the Irish case, in public, political and academic discourse. It reviews the literature on the Irish in England as a subset of the Irish diaspora, and discusses examples of the contested nature of Irish authenticity within this literature, with a particular focus on previous literature on the second generation Irish in England. Finally, it reviews the literature on the role of the local within articulations of diasporic Irish identity, and argues that insufficient attention has been paid to county identities.

Chapter 3 discusses Irishness as an aspect of multicultural England. It gives some brief

historical and geographical background about Irish migration to England, and how the Irish ‘community’ has been positioned in British discourses around ethnicity and race relations. It discusses the assumptions behind state-sponsored multiculturalism and how these assumptions have been critiqued as reinforcing essentialised, reified versions of minority identities. It then goes on to outline the process by which the Irish came to be recognised as an official ethnic minority within England, as well as the various complications that have arisen from this.

Chapter 4 explains the specific methodological approach to the research. It discusses the nature of discourse as arising from the Foucauldian tradition and critiques this tradition from a social psychological perspective as neglecting the role of individual agency. It evaluates the utility of critical discursive social psychology, narrative analysis and rhetorical work in the Bakhtinian tradition and constructs a methodology that draws on all three. It outlines the discursive concepts that were employed in the analysis of the data, before discussing the rationale behind the methods used to gather the data. It then discusses how these methods were put into practice, the recruitment of participants, the formulation of interview and discussion group schedules and ethical issues that arose.

Chapter 5 is the first of the empirical chapters and sets the scene for investigations in subsequent chapters of the way authentic Irishness is constructed. This chapter examines the ways in which Irish people narrate their experiences of living in England as Irish people and in doing so build a picture of what are seen as ‘typical’ Irish lives. It divides the ‘national narrative’ of the Irish in post-war England into three major eras and examine how personal narratives of having lived Irish in England during these eras correspond to, or speak against them.

Chapter 6 builds on some of the themes of Chapter 5 by discussing the role of public

Irishness in English life and as a facet of multicultural England, as constructed by the participants in this study. It explores whether public representations of Irishness are constructed as legitimately or illegitimately representative of Irishness, taking a particular focus on St. Patrick's Day parades. It also explores the relationship between such depictions of Irishness and the role played by, and demanded of Irishness in multicultural English cities.

Chapter 7 builds on themes explored in Chapter 6 where the role of Irishness in multicultural English cities was examined. This chapter examines migrants' narratives of coming to inhabit and identify (or not) with the localities they moved to and how this is reconciled with their sense of Irishness. It looks at the various forms of hybrid Irishness available to the second generation and their creation of a specific form of Irishness rooted in cities and localities. It also examines the various occasions on which local county identity is invoked and what kind of discursive work this might be doing, particularly in relation to authenticity.

Chapter 8 ties together a number of the themes from the previous chapters around the subject of authenticity in order to discuss specific instances around generation where certain imaginings of Irishness are prioritised as authentic and as a corollary, which imaginings of Irishness are positioned as inauthentic. It examines the ways in which 'older' and 'younger' cohorts of Irish migrants position each other within discourses of Irish authenticity. It also discusses how Irishness and Englishness are constructed as oppositional and the implications this has for the ways in which second generation Irish people in England articulate their identities. In particular, it examines the various uses of the interpretative repertoire 'Plastic Paddy' in discourses around the authenticity or otherwise of the second-generation

The final chapter, **Chapter 9**, is the conclusion. It reviews the major findings of the thesis and discusses the three broad discourses of Irish authenticity that emerge in further detail. It contains some thoughts on the wider implications of this project for the study of Irishness through transnationalism and diaspora, as well as the position of Irishness within multicultural England. Finally, it suggests some areas of future research that this thesis could inform, as well as acknowledging further gaps in the literature that the research has highlighted, but not addressed.

1.4 Influences and biography

The research is situated within a qualitative social constructionist tradition, with an emphasis on the researcher's role in co-constructing 'reality' and a high importance placed on acknowledging researcher reflexivity. While I address this topic in further detail later, it makes sense at this point to give a brief account of myself in order to give some context to the 'voice' behind this research.

I was born in Cork, Ireland in 1982 and lived there for the first 21 years of my life until graduating from University College Cork in 2003. At this point, I moved to England to pursue a Master's degree and have lived there since, apart from a two-year period of living back in Cork. My initial interest in the Irish in England as a topic of research came from my personal experience as a young Irishman living in Bath (admittedly not a traditional bastion of Irishness in England). In particular, I recall three moments of surprise that provoked curiosity as to how Irishness, my 'own' identity, was imagined in England in ways that were unfamiliar to me. The first was on becoming aware in filling out ethnic monitoring forms that the Irish (or rather, the "White Irish") were viewed as an ethnic minority within England. The second was being taken aback by the extent to which

English people celebrated St. Patrick's Day – in particular I remember an argument with bar staff at the local O'Neill's who had handed me a celebratory St. Patrick's day novelty hat, with a cross of St. George emblazoned across it. Thirdly, on regularly travelling into Bristol on Sunday afternoons to watch television coverage of Gaelic Games, I met a number of second generation Irish people who were able to speak knowledgeably and at length about the Irish sport of hurling. While I had encountered what I would have described as "English people with Irish parents" before, this was the first time I had met second generation Irish people whose primary identification was with Irishness. These encounters inspired an interest in the history of Irish migration to England as well as disrupting my own, to this point, largely territorialised assumptions about Irishness.

These assumptions have continued to be challenged throughout this research, and in many ways, my personal reaction to what I saw as unusual performances of Irishness has shaped the research as much as the previous literature. For example, as I discuss in Chapters 6 & 7, my focus on localised county-based identities arose from being taken aback by the extent to which county flags, banners and jerseys were displayed at the 2007 Birmingham St. Patrick's Day parade, coupled with a sudden realisation that I had not seen this addressed in the literature. (Any passers-by who happened to be in Birmingham that particular Sunday may have been startled by the sight of me leaning against a lamppost, muttering to myself, as I furiously tried to get my thoughts on local identity down on paper for fear of forgetting them). This realisation among others undoubtedly shaped my articulation of my own Irish identity and how I presented myself as Irish to the participants in the research.

In common with De Andrade (2000), I also found that my own Irish identity at times became central to the interview situations, often in unpredictable ways. My participants often rhetorically positioned me as a certain type of Irish person as a means of constructing

their own Irish identities – a positioning that I could either tacitly acknowledge or attempt to challenge, thus engaging in identity work of my own. Therefore, at times, this thesis contains as much data regarding my own identity work as the identity work of my participants. Where appropriate, I have attempted to indicate where my own contributions to the conversation have influenced the co-construction of Irish identity in the context of the immediate conversation. Equally, the analysis of the data is my own and comes from this same subjective position. Having said that, while the analysis is inherently subjective, it is nonetheless systematic, and is informed by best previous research practice and the established literature on the subject. This established literature will now be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3.

Chapter 2: Diaspora, diasporic identifications and Irishness

As a means of elaborating on the overall theme of authenticity introduced in Chapter 1, it is useful to explore why discourses of an authentic identity might be important, particularly in a socio-political context. In order to provide the epistemological foundations for the research, this chapter will set out the theoretical frameworks around which this thesis is constructed, with regards to diaspora, while the subsequent chapter will discuss the relationship between multiculturalism and ethnic minority identities. It is the contention of this thesis that discourses of authenticity are central to both issues, albeit in distinct ways.

As set out in Chapter 1, the subject of the individual Irish person in England is positioned at the nexus of intersecting discourses of authenticity around both diasporic Irishness and Irishness as an aspect of multicultural England. This thesis argues that the individual Irish person can position themselves within these discourses by articulating an authentic Irishness that is constructed as *personally relevant*. However, this positioning is constrained by the need to situate this personal authentic Irishness within a *collective* authentic Irishness. This collective Irishness is shaped by discourses of Irishness as diasporic and Irishness as minority culture, and so it is important to investigate each in turn, as well as the political and structural factors that influence experience of Irishness outside Ireland and Irishness in England.

Therefore, this chapter will first deal briefly with current, relevant, social psychological and sociological/cultural thought on the nature of identity itself, conceptualised within a social constructionist framework. It will then expand upon this by discussing the literature on the relationship between national identities and nationalism and how the latter may be disrupted by the concept of diaspora and diasporic identities. The chapter will give a brief history of the growing popularity of the concept of an Irish diaspora, before examining the

literature on the often fractious and contested relationship between Irishness as the preserve of the Irish nation-state, and Irishness as a pluralist, diasporic identity. Finally, limitations of the extant literature and how such limitations will be addressed in this thesis will be presented.

2.1 Identity – the social constructionist perspective

As stated in Chapter 1, in examining constructions of Irishness, this research begins from the point of viewing Irish identity as something that is not fixed by virtue of birthplace, residence, shared ancestry, (legal) nationality and citizenship, but rather as a category that is socially constructed, contested and crucially, multi-faceted and continually in flux. As such, the research is situated within a social constructionist tradition within social psychology where the emphasis on the use of the concept of ‘identity’ is that it should not be seen as suggesting an irreducible, essential sense of self and belonging. Rather the construction and articulation of both individual and group identities are contextual and form part of an ongoing process that is never completed. This ‘strategic and positional’ concept of identity has been usefully set forward by Stuart Hall (1996b, p. 617) who argues that “this concept of identity does *not* signal that stable core of the self ... which remains always-already ‘the same’, identical to itself across time”. Rather, identities are “increasingly fragmented and fractured” and are “multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions” (Hall, 1996b, p. 4). This conception of the self and the social as being inextricably intertwined and of identity as fragmented and multiply constructed according to social context as understood through the discursive has been widely adopted across the social sciences, as noted by Ann Phoenix;

There is widespread agreement that identities ... are plural and intersecting, rather than singular; decentred, rather than organised around a core; dynamic, rather than static; historically located, rather than timeless; relational and contingent, rather than absolute; productive of diverse subjectivities and potentially contradictory. (Phoenix, 1998, p. 860)

However, widespread agreement among academics as to the fragmented nature of identities or no, Hall stresses that this does not prevent identities from being *seen*, and at times *lived* as if stable, unified and continuous and the “necessarily fictional nature” of the process of the narrativization of the self through which identities arise, “in no way undermines its discursive, material or political effectivity” (Hall, 1996b, p. 4). It is this discursive, material and political effectivity that lends the notion of a stable, *essential* identity its potency. The seductive nature of this is, arguably, seen nowhere more clearly than in constructions of national and ethnic identity and the alleged threat posed to these by factors associated with (post-)modernity, such as migration and globalisation. The notion of an authentic national identity thus becomes valorised and fetishised as a norm that can both be aspired to and deviated from.

2.2 National identity

In common with most other types of collective identity, it is important to emphasise that there is nothing ‘natural’ or ‘essential’ about national identities and that, indeed, they are historically a relatively recent concept. Stuart Hall (1996a), for example decouples the ‘natural’ association between the individual and the nation-state he or she is born into by stressing the role of identification; national identities are formed and transformed through a process of identification and this process is shaped by the cultural meanings that serve to create the idea of a nation. The nation itself can only continue to exist if people continue to

participate in the idea of the nation, and perpetuate the cultural processes through which the nation is understood. However, this is not to imply that an individual person can simply 'opt out' of the national – the discourses and processes constituting the nation are sufficiently strong that continued participation in them appears 'natural'.

The respective work of Benedict Anderson (1991) and Michael Billig (1995) has been influential in the social sciences in this regard. Anderson describes how national identities operate as an 'imagined community' while Billig puts forward the concept of 'banal nationalism', by which he refers to the numerous minor, everyday ways in which national identity is constructed and re-constructed, or 'flagged'. He argues that these reminders, or flaggings are "such a familiar part of the social environment, that they operate mindlessly, rather than mindfully"(Billig, 1995, p. 38).

While Billig does not discount the role of deliberate, conscious, often state-sponsored commemorations of the nation in shaping national identity, his argument is that for this identity to be seen as natural rather than imposed, it must remain near the surface of contemporary life and be daily perpetuated through language in an unremarkable and unremarked-upon fashion, something he refers to as "flagging the homeland daily" (p.93). As such, it should not be imagined that the survival of the nation depends on a daily act of collective will, but rather through the continuation of 'banal national practices' which take for granted the reality of the nation, but in doing so, affirm its existence. Therefore, Billig asserts that the psychological study of national identity should not attempt to determine supposedly 'fixed' national characteristics, but rather should "search for the common-sense assumptions and ways of talking about nationhood". The focus should not be on asking "what is a national identity?", but rather on asking "what does it mean to claim to have a national identity?" (Billig, 1995, p. 61)

On a socio-political level, Billig and other theorists have addressed this question by emphasising the political effectivity of the promotion of the notion of an eternal, unified, homogenous national identity and culture. Stuart Hall has claimed that while national identities continue to be *represented* as unified, they are in fact “cross-cut by deep internal divisions and differences, and ‘unified’ only through the exercise of different forms of cultural power”(Hall, 1996a). So important is the myth of unity to the construct of a singular national identity that any threat to this unity is perceived as a threat to the nation itself. It has been posited that national identities are being squeezed on both sides by a renewed interest in the local and the spread of globalisation. Also, migration has, in Hall’s (1996a) terms, resulted in a contestation of the settled contours of national identity, and exposed its closures to the pressures of difference, “otherness” and cultural diversity (Hall, 1996a, p. 627). Therefore, national identities may be invoked as something that needs to be protected from outside influences, particularly if those who are represented as ‘outside’ i.e. not sharing the national identity, are to be found ‘inside’ i.e. sharing the national territory. As such, national identities, when closely aligned with a narrow view of nationalism, may be inherently exclusionary, and a source of tension within the nation. Bhiku Parekh has described this as the “paradox of national identity” (2000, p. 6):

Every political community needs some shared view of its collective identity; but every such view has an exclusivist, authoritarian, repressive and ideological thrust and a tendency to demean those outsiders who constitute its acknowledged or unacknowledged point of reference. A view of national identity is a force for both unity and division, a condition of the community’s survival and reproduction which can paradoxically also become a cause of its fragmentation and even disintegration (Parekh, 2000, p. 7).

Billig's analysis, along with those of Hall and Anderson, links discourses of national identity very much with nationalism and the role of the nation-state in promulgating these discourses. The focus of a social psychological analysis lies in the ways these discourses are taken up or rejected by individuals who identify with the nation. One might ask how national identities that do not necessarily correspond with the 'preferred' version are articulated and how some national identities, as opposed to others, come to be seen as authentic. As such, national identities are reproduced in individual discursive practice, as set out by Wodak et al:

The national identity of individuals who perceive themselves as belonging to a national collectivity is manifested, *inter alia*, in their social practices, one of which is discursive practice. The respective national identity is shaped by state, political, institutional, media and everyday social practices, and the material and social conditions which emerge as their results, to which the individual is subjected. The discursive practice as a special form of social practice plays a central part both in the formation and in the expression of national identity (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 1999, pp. 29-30).

Bearing in mind the extent to which national identities are shaped by "state, political, institutional, media and everyday social practices", it is relevant to re-examine Billig's above question from the perspective of the individual migrant, or person of recent migrant descent. What does it mean to claim to have a national identity that is distinct from the nation in which one lives, and may be expressed through allegiance to another nation? If national identities are perpetuated by being flagged daily, what effect do such banal reminders have when they serve to remind the individual that he or she is not of the nation, whether by choice or by exclusion? And to what extent can the nationally-oriented identities that such individuals do articulate be termed 'national identities', given the lack of a facilitatory discursive context?

As a means of addressing these concerns, as well as counteracting the essentialist tendencies of national identities, diasporic identities have been frequently suggested as an alternative prism that both more accurately represents the range of identifications available to people in an era of late modernity, and also as a more progressive form of identity that is less associated with hegemonic prescriptions of identity, anchored to the nation-state.

2.3 Diasporic identity

As a counterweight to those hegemonic, essentialised discourses associated with national identity, various commentators have sought to promote diasporic identities as an alternative mode of identification. The term diaspora is said to simultaneously disrupt the relationship between place of residence and belonging while providing a means by which ‘national’ identities that are not bound by a nation-state can be understood. Paul Gilroy has argued that:

As an alternative to the metaphysics of ‘race’, nation and bounded culture coded into the body, diaspora is a concept that problematizes the cultural and historical mechanics of belonging. It disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the simple sequence of explanatory links between, place, location and consciousness ... Consciousness of diaspora affiliation stands opposed to the distinctively modern structures and modes of power orchestrated by the institutional complexity of nation-states. Diaspora identification exists outside of, and sometimes in opposition to, the political forms and codes of modern citizenship (Gilroy, 1997, pp. 328-329).

As such, thinking through the prism of diaspora has the potential to express a community that is imagined, at least to some degree as 'national', but traverses the narrowness of the category 'national' and is dispersed across nation-states and national boundaries. On the level of the individual, there may be more discursive potential in articulating an authentic personal identity by identifying oneself as a member of a diaspora, rather than solely as a migrant, or as a member of a minority group in a majority society. This possibility was explored by James Clifford (1994), who argues that diasporic language can replace or at least supplement minority discourse and that the connections that arise out of diaspora have the potential to break the binary relation of *minority* communities with *majority* societies. Moreover, he argues that diasporist discourses have the potential to reposition the 'homeland' as a place of attachment rather than as something left behind (Clifford, 1994, p. 311).

This latter re-imagining widens the scope of identification with the nation to include those who are descended from the migrant generation and as such, allows a greater diversity of forms of identification than thinking solely through national identity (or displaced national identity). Many theorists have utilised the notion of diaspora and diasporic identities as a means of articulating and promoting anti-essentialist accounts of identity formation, as aligned with the growing consensus of identities as fragmented and socially constructed. For example, Paul Gilroy has argued that "by embracing diaspora, our grasp of identity turns instead towards an emphasis on contingency, indeterminacy and conflict" (Gilroy, 1997, p. 334). Looking through the prism of diaspora allows hybrid, multi-ethnic, provisional and contingent identities and multiple belongings to be articulated in a way that is not possible through more conventional readings of the national.

Diaspora, then, when conceptualised as a means of identification comes to signify more than a scattered people, but signifies a de-territorialised, liminal means of speaking about

identity and identity processes. As such, it has been argued, it is not just applicable to those who have been the subjects of historical migrations, but describes a wider social process that is equally applicable to those who are not generally represented as belonging to a 'scattered people'. Avtar Brah takes this stance in articulating her notion of 'diaspora space':

Diaspora space is the point at which boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, of belonging and otherness, of 'us' and 'them', are contested. My argument is that diaspora space as a conceptual category is 'inhabited', not only by those who have migrated and their descendants, but equally by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words the concept of *diaspora space* (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement, the intertwining of the genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'. The diaspora space is the site where *the native is as much a diasporian as the diasporian is the native* (Brah, 1996, p. 209).

Through 'diaspora space', Brah offers a different way of thinking about the space that was previously occupied by the national and where the choice is between accepting or rejecting the proffered state-sponsored national identity. At the same time, it is important to stress that she is not suggesting diaspora space represents an "undifferentiated relativism" where all possible identities co-exist equally, but rather that identities and belongings cross-cut and are entangled with each other in diaspora space, and do so on different axes of power relations, such as class, racism, gender, sexuality etc. She uses England as an example of this kind of diaspora space and argues that within this space, "African-Caribbean, Irish, Asian, Jewish and other diasporas intersect among themselves as well as with the entity constructed as 'Englishness', thoroughly re-inscribing it in the process" (Brah, 1996, p. 209). This interplay of diasporic identities creates new specificities of identities that constantly add to as well as imbue elements of the other. As such, one might expect a

specific form of Irish identity to arise in the ‘diaspora space’ that is England, that has been inscribed by other diasporic identities, as much as Englishness. This process will be examined in greater detail in Chapter 3.

The progressive potential of the notion of diaspora, through such concepts as diaspora space, in reinscribing avenues of belonging and undermining dominant hegemonies has led to the enthusiastic adoption of the term by social theorists working in all manner of fields. It is regularly used in conjunction with other terms which fulfil a similar role, such as ‘liminality’, or Homi Bhabha’s (1990a; 1994) ‘third space’. The latter in particular has been employed in such a way as to suggest the occupation of this third space constitutes a discursive space both between and beyond the essentialist discourses associated with the nation. This liminality allows those who exist between nations to express belonging to multiple nations or none, and to maintain and represent a critical viewpoint on nationalism and the nation. The existence of this ‘third space’ also serves to deconstruct binary divisions associated with the nation, such as migrant/settler, insider/outsider, home/away etc. (Kneafsey & Cox, 2002).

The question then becomes whether such an imagining of diaspora actually reflects the experiences of those who exist between nations. In critiquing the seemingly limitless progressive potential of diaspora, liminality and ‘third space’ analytical lenses, Mitchell has noted that:

Those in literal motion in-between nations or outside of proscribed, static cultural locations become vaunted as the potential locus of cultural understandings that resist hegemonic norms of both race and nation (K. Mitchell, 1997, p. 535).

It might be argued that this is rather a lot for the figure of the individual diasporic subject to embody, no matter how hybridised and post-national her identifications. It may very well be the case that those who are the subjects of ‘anti-hegemonic’ theoretical discourses would feel uncomfortable describing themselves in such a way, and that to describe occupying the liminal as inherently emancipatory may serve to obscure the daily frustrations, distresses and limitations of migratory/diasporic life. Such an imagining of the hybrid also seems to imply unlimited agency on the part of individual members of the diaspora to make their worlds as they see fit, while overlooking the material and discursive constraints on such agency. Mitchell has argued that such imaginings of the ‘third space’ of hybridity are a form of fetishisation, divorced from the reality of everyday experience, and that this can lead to “theories and policies which neglect the everyday, grounded practices and economic relations in which social identities and narratives of race and nation unfold” (K. Mitchell, 1997, p. 533). De Tona (2004) similarly has made the case for a focus on individual diasporic experiences arguing that although diasporas are “the product of multiple forces and different journeys”, they tend to be imagined, at the individual level, as a single and defined narrative.

It is worth returning briefly to Clifford’s suggestion that diaspora has the potential to deconstruct the binary relation of minority communities with majority societies and that diasporic language can replace, or at least supplement minority discourse. Given the need to take into account the everyday structural factors that make up diasporic life, I am unwilling to discount the continued importance of *minority* discourse – at the level of individual everyday experience, I would argue that diasporic consciousness does not replace, but exists alongside minority consciousness. Similarly, while diasporic identifications may provide an alternative to being positioned as a minority within the nation-state of residence, I argue that it would be mistaken to imagine ‘diaspora’ as inherently emancipatory or egalitarian. Diasporic formations are themselves infused with

power relations: this may particularly be the case when the nation-state of the homeland adopts the language of diaspora as its own and seeks to re-inscribe it for its own politicised ends. As shall be explored later in this chapter, this is particularly salient in the Irish case where diaspora has been recast as ‘resource’.

The adoption of the language of diaspora by nation-states is an example of the proliferation of the term in recent years, with an ever increasing variety of groups of people having been labelled as diasporas. Such has been the spread of the term that theorists such as Brubaker (2005) have suggested that it has begun to lose conceptual usefulness. He has argued that the application of the term ‘diaspora’ to “any and every population category that is to some extent dispersed in space” (Brubaker, 2005, p. 3) has meant that the term has lost its discriminating power: effectively, if everyone can be described as in some way diasporic, no one is distinctively so.

Brubaker has argued that dispersion is not enough in itself to denote a diaspora, and that a diaspora can only be labelled as such if its putative members display evidence of a diasporic stance and orientation. In other words, a “dispersed people” who articulate an attachment to the ‘homeland’ but do not necessarily reproduce the set of meaning-makings around the concept of ‘national’ identity contained within the nation-state of the homeland may be considered a diaspora. However, a “dispersed people” with no attachment to the original ‘homeland’ or, arguably, who merely reproduce those sets of meaning-makings, transplanted within another national jurisdiction, may not.

In order to account for the latter, it may be useful at this point to introduce a discussion of transnationalism. The term ‘transnationalism’ was originally conceived at least partly as a reaction to the overly abstracted, dematerialised nature of much of the theorisation of diaspora, as well as a means of accounting for the ways in which new technology and

transport have made new forms of multiply-located lives possible (Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Vertovec, 1999). However, this original distinction between ‘transnationalism’ and ‘diaspora’ has been elided to the extent that the two terms have become almost interchangeable. The lack of consensus as to how the two terms relate to each other, has been explored by Brettell (2006). She outlines how some authors suggest that transnational communities are the ‘building blocks’ of diaspora, whereas others argue that transnationalism is supplanting diaspora as the relevant concept, or that transnationalism represents a dual allegiance to host and origin countries, whereas diaspora represents a wider spread of allegiances: a ‘diaspora consciousness’, so to speak.

It is the latter distinction that will be adopted for the purposes of this thesis, although I wish to interrogate the notion of “dual allegiances” further. Re-iterating the focus on the individual subject, ‘transnationalism’ here represents the extent to which a life is lived in two (or more) countries simultaneously, whether that be materially, socially, economically or affectively. ‘Diaspora’ meanwhile, taken in its applied, rather than its theoretical sense, here represents the extent to which a ‘national’ life is lived outside the nation, without necessarily reproducing the set of meaning-makings around the national that are promoted by the nation-state.

My difficulty with the “dual allegiances” definition of transnationalism is the implicit assumption of an equal relationship in terms of power between the two national spheres. It is pertinent here to enquire after the transnational migrant that belongs to a majority population in one national sphere and a minority population in another, as is the case for many Irish transnational migrants. It could be hypothesised that individuals who lead transnational lives will tend to orientate to those sets of meanings around national identity that correspond with the nation state in which they are a member of the majority population. Such individuals become the embodiment of a *transplanted* national identity

that closely resembles that which resides in the nation-state. Where this comes in contact with more diasporic imaginings of identity (e.g. long-term or second generation Irish residents in England), this is likely to create contestation around authenticity.

Specifically in relation to the Irish context, Delaney (2005) has examined the ways in which the Irish in England have to some extent always been characterised by transnationalism, given the proximity of the two countries and the existence of kinship and localised networks that spanned the two countries in facilitating migration and continued contact between the two. It is the very strength of these transnational ties that I believe make the expressions of a diasporic, in the sense of an alternative to a territorialised Irish identity in England so fascinating and complex. Irishness in England is constantly re-inscribed by Irishness in Ireland to a greater extent than other sites of Irishness abroad, which simultaneously informs and constrains the ways in which an authentic diasporic Irish identity can be articulated.

2.4 Diaspora in the Irish context

When considering the usages of the term ‘diaspora’ specifically in the Irish context, one needs to consider the extent to which it has passed from academic into popular discourse, largely over the past 15 years, and the processes through which this has occurred. One of the major arguments in favour of the adoption of the term ‘diaspora’ to describe the Irish abroad was that it would encompass a multi-generational approach, including both those of Irish birth and descent, in a way the previously favoured terms ‘exile’ and ‘emigration’ did not. Accompanying this, the idea that members of the Irish diaspora may represent a more progressive form of Irishness and thus deconstruct hegemonic, sedentary norms of Irish nationhood and culture gained currency in Irish intellectual circles throughout the 1990s (Mac Éinrí & Lambkin, 2002). To a certain extent, this was predicated upon the notion of

Ireland as an almost irredeemably conservative nation and that “those most likely to foment change left, whether voluntarily or not” (Cullen, 1999, p. 75). The diaspora was romanticised through a discourse of the “bright and the beautiful taking off” and the staying population being represented as passive in contrast to migrant initiative (Gray, 2004). For those who might have wished to see a more progressive Irish society, economy and polity, the diaspora simultaneously represented a lost opportunity, and a possible mechanism for change. Perhaps more significantly, a romanticised reading of diaspora also dovetailed conveniently with government discourses that arose in the 1980s that sought to alleviate blame for the increase in youth emigration at the time, by portraying this migration as qualitatively different from past migrations arising out of hardship. Rather, as mentioned in Chapter 1, this new generation of migrants were portrayed as being middle-class, well-educated and inclined to leave Ireland in search of adventure and experience, rather than being forced to leave by lack of employment within Ireland itself.

While greeted with a certain level of derision at the time, the subsequent economic boom of the Celtic Tiger years and high levels of return migration to Ireland has resulted in the above conceptualisation of Irish emigration becoming more widely subscribed to. There is now a widespread conception that the migration of the 1980s was more middle-class and temporary in nature than previous migration - a notion which, while containing some elements of truth (Halpin, 2000), has resulted in the obscuring of continued high levels of involuntary working-class emigration. Mac Einrí & Lambkin have also argued that the high levels of return migration of relatively successful Irish people “have obscured the reality that older, less well-heeled emigrants from previous generations are not welcome and that for them return is virtually impossible” (Mac Éinrí & Lambkin, 2002, pp. 146-147).

As such, while there is a certain amount of recognition of Irish migrants living in straitened circumstances abroad, and the Irish government provides funding for relevant community groups, they are largely represented as elderly survivors of the 1950s generation of working-class migrants. The diaspora as a whole now tends to be represented as both progressive and prosperous and, since the recent economic collapse, as a potential source of revenue. For example, the popular economist David McWilliams has argued that the diaspora can act as a resource that will serve as a form of ‘soft power’ to drive the Irish economy (McWilliams, 2009). Initiatives such as the Global Irish Economic Forum held at Farmleigh House² in September 2009 for “the most influential members of the global Irish community with a record of high achievement in business and culture, as well as a number of individuals with a strong business connection to Ireland” (Martin, 2009) were hailed by politicians, business leaders and media commentators alike as representing a new stage in Ireland’s relationship with her diaspora. What this new stage will constitute remains to be seen, but the picture so far would appear to suggest a formalised ‘diaspora of the elites’ driven largely by commercial interests.

While the current imagining of the diaspora as resource may be the prevailing one in contemporary Ireland, the discourse of diaspora as representing a more progressive form of Irishness was particularly prominent throughout the 1980s and 1990s, with the 1980s representing a period of major recession and associated high levels of youth emigration, while the 1990s were characterised by unprecedented levels of economic growth (the fabled ‘Celtic Tiger’ period) and equally unprecedented levels of return migration, as has already been explored. The 1990s also saw the popularisation of the concept of an Irish diaspora, in the policy, the academic and the public spheres.

² The official Irish State Guest House.

Playing a central role in the debates around diaspora that took place in Ireland and further afield at this time was then-President Mary Robinson who made ‘Cherishing the Diaspora’ a central theme of her presidency. In a 1995 address to the Houses of the Oireachtas (the Irish Parliament), she argued that it was “an added richness of our heritage that Irishness is not simply territorial” and that the Irish diaspora highlighted the diverse nature of Irish identity both within and beyond the island of Ireland. She invoked diasporic Irishness as an example of a more progressive Irishness and one that could instruct Irish society within Ireland in values of “diversity, tolerance and fair-mindedness” later emphasising the need to “accept that in their new perspectives may well be a critique of our old ones” (Robinson, 1995).

Breda Gray (2000b; 2002b) in situating this speech among others as forming an emerging discourse of diaspora in 1990s Ireland, contends that this diasporic identity was characterised in terms of pluralism, hybridity and newness. The thesis that the concept of diaspora could be useful in articulating a more progressive Irishness and disrupting normative national narratives was taken up by a number of academics and commentators. For example, Ronit Lentin (1999), drawing upon the work of Michel Wieviorka (1998) suggested that re-imagining Irishness as a diasporic identity could serve as a means of challenging various forms of racism within Ireland, by deconstructing the myth of Irishness as “homogeneously watertight”. Although Lentin does not make the link, one could also argue that such a conception would allow for the recasting of Ireland as a ‘diaspora space’ in Brah’s (1996) terms, where the island is a site for both the Irish and other people’s diasporas. Indeed, analysis of Irish media has suggested that recognition of the existence and diversity of the Irish diaspora is an important component in what Brian Conway (2006) refers to as the ‘historical duty’ argument promoting tolerance towards immigrants. Ireland as a diaspora space also acts as a site of contestation and entanglement between ‘those who left’ and ‘those who stayed’. (Gray, 2002a, 2004)

Gray critiques this ‘progressive’ discourse by illustrating the disjuncture between the theoretical possibilities of diaspora and practice; for example, plans to extend limited voting rights to migrants quickly ran aground in the face of widespread public opposition. Also, the ‘lived’ diaspora residing outside Ireland often ‘failed’ to live up to the idealised version of the theorised diaspora, being, as one might expect, as infused with contradictions, disappointments and reactionary sentiment as the ‘home’ population. In contrast to the picture portrayed of the diaspora as diverse, tolerant, fair-minded, forward-looking and pluralistic, it became apparent that many diasporic communities took pride in a form of cultural maintenance more associated with 1950s Ireland, something that was at odds with contemporary Ireland’s view of itself as a modern nation. This disparity was highlighted by the book and television series ‘The Irish Empire’ (Bishop, 1999), and also by a high-profile argument over the ownership of Irishness arising from the refusal of the Ancient Order of Hibernians to allow Irish gay and lesbian groups to march in the New York St. Patrick’s Day parade.³ This gave rise to a certain amount of angst as to what constitutes authentic Irishness, given related concerns about whether Ireland was/is becoming too globalised (Gray, 2002b). Therefore, in acknowledging its diaspora, contemporary Ireland has entered into a somewhat contradictory and troubled relationship with it. Depending on the context, the diaspora is identified simultaneously with discourses of Irishness as progressive and modern and discourses of Irishness as old-fashioned and culturally static.

It is clear how idealised representations of the potential of diaspora can run aground when confronted with actual diasporic lives and experiences. Discourses around the Irish diaspora within Ireland have yet to view it as a social phenomenon in its own right, and

³ Accounts of this incident as an example of a high-profile contestation of ownership of Irishness can be found in Marston (Marston, 2002) and Gray (Gray, 2002b).

continue to conceptualise it as a prism through which contemporary Ireland can be viewed, or as a resource through which contemporary Ireland can be assisted. In particular, there is a tendency to gloss over the subjective experience of individual members of the diaspora and the level of agency they possess in articulating their own Irish identities. As discussed earlier in this chapter, this is in keeping with concerns around the use of the term ‘diaspora’ more generally – that in discussing its progressive potential for individuals who occupy liminal space, insufficient attention is given to the ways in which the individuals themselves articulate diasporic allegiances, if at all. As Gray has written about the female participants in her own research:

The contradictions of life in diaspora, the pain of displacement, as well as its opportunities, the work of maintaining diasporic identity, keeping in touch, reproducing Irish culture in distant places and negotiation of Irish identity in intimate relationships ... point to a set of experiences that contemporary discourses of Irishness as diasporic can scarcely touch (Gray, 2000b, p. 181).

Another possible criticism of contemporary discourses of Irishness as diasporic within Ireland is their failure to properly account for hybridised Irish identities. This may be said to be more characteristic of popular discourses of diaspora than academic ones, but is a failing common to both. For example, while the Irish diaspora is regularly quoted as being 70 million strong⁴, it is arguable that the unreflective use of this figure implies an ethnically homogeneous Irish people spread around the globe and ignores the inevitable mixed heritage of many of those worldwide who would claim some identification with Irishness. Brubaker (2005) has argued that attempts to count and put a definitive figure on who ‘belongs’ to a diaspora is based on a misunderstanding of the nature of diaspora that

⁴ For example, an online website seeking to connect members of the Irish diaspora worldwide is called the Seventy Million Project: www.seventymillion.org The actual origins of the 70 million figure are somewhat more mysterious, although they seem to have been extrapolated from US Census data. The popular use of the figure would appear to have originated with former President Mary Robinson.

treats it as a bounded, unitary entity rather than a more complex phenomenon that encompasses a series of identifications, stances, claims and practices. Similarly, as Catherine Nash has pointed out:

The easy invocation of the diaspora in terms of numbers of people of Irish descent can promote notions of a simple, single and enduring ethnic identity that the concept of diaspora, at least in its most critically theorised versions, is meant to dispel. Though the model of the Irish diaspora has been used to emphasize a global community composed of different versions of Irishness, as identification with Ireland intersects with other identifications (as an American, as Australian, and so on), the emphasis on Irish roots can result in other sources of identity via ancestry being overlooked, ignored, or dismissed as insignificant. Having Irish ancestry, even in an ethnically mixed family tree, simply means being of Irish descent alone (Nash, 2008, p. 43).

A vision of Irish diaspora which claims everyone with Irish heritage as Irish, while initially sounding beguiling in its potential for inclusivity and deterritorialisation, becomes flawed in its insistence on the primacy of Irishness to the exclusion of all other identities, and thus allows no space for the hybrid and the liminal. It also, in common with other visions of diaspora, overlooks the possible agency of individual members of the Irish diaspora in articulating allegiance to Irishness among other identities and global imagined communities. Discourses of the Irish diaspora as resource, as discussed earlier, are problematic for the same reason in that they rest on the flawed assumption that the nation-state of Ireland is the primary point of reference of each individual member of the “70 million” strong Irish diaspora, ignoring the possibility of multiple allegiances.

Popular conceptions of the diaspora within Ireland therefore suffer from both over-romanticisation and over-simplification. This, of course, does not rule out the same being

true of academic understandings of diasporic Irishness. Hickman (2002) in critically interrogating the concept of diaspora as it might apply to the Irish and to Irishness, argues that rather than seeing the diaspora as the global spread of a familiar Irishness, it should be viewed as fundamentally heterogeneous.

The idea of ‘a global Irish imagined community’ or an ‘Irish diaspora’, suggests communal interests whereas in fact the Irish diaspora is actually fractured ... by class, gender, and other differences which in many cases reveal deep conflicts of interests among the Irish abroad (Hickman, 2002, p. 20).

However Hickman argues that this heterogeneity does not necessarily undermine the existence of a ‘diaspora community’ as such communities are always hybrid phenomena. In attempting to bridge what she sees as the split in Irish diaspora studies between comparative migration studies, and studies which are based on a more post-modern concept of diaspora, she argues for a hybrid, materialist concept of Irish diaspora. This would combine “an understanding for the diasporic context of identity formation in different locations with the concerns of empirical (materialist) accounts of the socio-historical context of migration and settlement”. The latter might include “such issues as the social reproduction of racist ideology, state regulation of migration, public policy and ethno-racial, class and gender differentiation and processes of cultural inclusion and exclusion” (Hickman, 2002, p. 23).

Building on this, there is a need to articulate a more systematic research-based conceptualisation of the Irish diaspora, and to integrate the experiences and identifications of individual members of the ‘imagined community’ of Irish worldwide, with more theoretical perspectives on the nature of the Irish diaspora. The diversity of experiences

illuminated by such research can only allow a more nuanced picture of the Irish diaspora to emerge.

Focussing on the political framework within which diasporic identities are constructed with regard to this specific research naturally leads one to explore how Irishness is expressed within the framework of England as a polity, as well as a multicultural society. Before turning to this in Chapter 3, it is worthwhile to examine the specificities of diasporic Irishness in England as they relate to imaginings of Irishness in Ireland. As already discussed, the proximity of the two countries and the constant stream of migration between the two has led to regular moments of confrontation between different imaginings of Irishness on either side of the Irish Sea. One might make the argument that Ireland and England constitute a kind of double-headed diaspora space in their own right, and that this has an effect on imaginings of Irishness which are constantly defined alongside and against each other, thus operating in a continuous cycle of re-inscription. Given the earlier distinction between the ways in which diaspora and transnationalism operate, it is among the Irish diaspora in England that a constant dialectic between the two is seen – diasporic in that imaginings of Irishness go beyond those of the nation-state, and yet transnational in that articulations of such imaginings are constantly challenged due to proximity to the ‘homeland’ and the constant arrival of ‘new’ Irish migrants.

2.5 The Irish in England: a subset of the Irish diaspora?

At this point, it is worthwhile to briefly look at alternative conceptions of the Irish diaspora that have emerged from empirical social scientific work among Irish people abroad, and specifically in England. As such, a comparison can be made between the diaspora as it is imagined among the Irish in England and how these confront imaginings of the diaspora and Irishness within, and emanating from Ireland. This can be considered to be a

comparison between a ‘top-down’ version of diasporic Irishness and a ‘lived’ version of Irish identity abroad.

Of course, it would be a mistake to imagine ‘top-down’ or ‘Ireland-out’ versions of Irishness as commensurate with essentialised versions of Irishness. Given the literature reviewed earlier in the chapter, it can easily be imagined that many Irish people living in England may themselves subscribe to ‘static and simplistic’ views of what it means to be Irish (Garrett, 2005). While there is a need to conceive of the diaspora as inherently fractured and heterogeneous, identities within the diaspora are not necessarily the same thing as diasporic identities. Building on the earlier conception of diaspora space as somewhere where different diasporic and ‘staying’ identities constantly re-inscribe each other, the same may be said of different conceptions of, ostensibly, the same identity within the same diaspora. Thus, within England, or even within cities in England, a certain subset of diaspora space is where different Irishnesses come into contestation with each other, and in so doing re-inscribe the other.

It is useful to examine the past literature on the Irish in England through the prism of authenticity, while bearing in mind the dual facets of personal and collective authenticity outlined in Chapter 1. For example, Breda Gray’s research (Gray, 1996a, 1996b, 1999, 2000b, 2004) illustrated a generation gap in concepts of authentic Irish identity between the cohort who migrated in the 1950s, and that which migrated in the 1980s. Gray has placed special emphasis on the experiences of young Irish women who moved to London in the 1980s, particularly with regards to gender and sexuality as well as class issues.

A recurring theme in Gray’s research is that migration allows a renegotiation of Irish identity, particularly gendered Irish identity e.g. one can be an Irish woman, an Irish feminist or an Irish lesbian in ways that are seen as impossible in Ireland. Therefore,

migration allows the space for an articulation of a 'personal' Irish identity that is constructed through a rejection of a 'traditional' collective Irish identity. Gray's participants define themselves against what they see as the "cringingly" excessive Irishness of the older migrants, in favour of more individualistic assertions of Irish identity. For example, one of her participants rejects the notion of being positioned as an "Irish woman" due to its association with attending Irish clubs and functions.

This is echoed in Mary Kells' research among young middle-class Irish women in London, with her informants being keen to stress their individuality and that they shouldn't be considered as 'typical' Irish migrants. Despite this, however, Kells made a distinction between rhetoric and action among her informants, noting that their actions often prioritised Irish identifications, particularly with regard to social networks (Kells, 1995). This apparent contradiction can, perhaps, be accounted for by interrogating what is seen as 'typical' or even 'stereotypical' Irish migrant behaviour. The respondents in Gray's research associated 'stereotypical' Irishness with the kind of Irishness manifested in the Irish Centres, which they constructed as both excessive and of little relation to their own identity.

Rather than a wholesale rejection of Irishness, however, the respondents in Gray's research sought to renegotiate it by creating "new spaces of Irish belonging", less dependent on essentialised views of Irish identity and Irishness in London as masculine, working-class and Catholic and more relevant to the viewpoints and experiences of the 1980s generation. In contrast to the earlier generation, such new spaces tended to be virtual and transient, as more recent migrants have tended to set up social networks facilitated by telephone contact, newsletters, and more recently, websites and e-mail rather than physical clubs or centres. Gray has argued that this facilitates Irish belonging in London in a more outward-looking way, and has allowed Irishness to take its place as an aspect of multicultural

London - a topic that will be addressed in further detail in Chapter 3. However, I would also argue, again in keeping with the theme of authenticity, that it represents a mutual construction of a new form of shared, *collective* Irish identity among more recent migrants that is more relevant to their 'felt' personally authentic Irish identities, than the pre-existing collective Irish identity associated with the previous generation of migrants.

It should be emphasised, however, that this construction of the older generation of Irish migrants as being ghettoised and in thrall to a hidebound version of Irishness comes from the 'outsider' perspective of the younger migrants, and may, in its own way, be an inauthentic, essentialised account of their identities. While it would be futile to seek a universal Irish experience, it would be equally misguided simply to construct an age-based dichotomy of Irishness, as there may be more continuity of experience than is immediately apparent. Louise Ryan's research, which was carried out among women who had migrated in the 1930s, as well as among Irish female nurses who had mostly migrated in the 1950s to 1970s gives a more nuanced picture of this older cohort. Her research among nurses in particular illustrates more long-standing class differences among Irish migrants with many of her respondents constructing a middle-class identity by differentiating themselves from the stereotypical 'working-class' Irishness they encountered in London. One of the ways in which this manifested itself was through the construction of certain spaces as being either 'working-class Irish' or 'middle-class Irish', and in particular, labelling certain spaces as suitable for young middle-class Irish women and others as inhabited by working-class Irish men. This illustrates that class and gender identities were just as salient for the 1950s generation of migrants, if not more so. Delaney (2007) has expanded on the importance of class distinctions among the Irish in post-war England, drawing on the contemporary writing of John Jackson to suggest that the middle-class Irish actively disassociated themselves from the working-class Irish, in order to get on in English society:

Irish centres or dancehalls in London, Birmingham, or Nottingham, full of ‘rough’ manual workers, were places to be avoided, and nationalist political activity, above all, was to be shunned at all costs for fear of causing offence to the ‘English’. By maintaining social distance from other, less educated migrants, the inevitable danger of being lumped together as simply ‘Irish’ could be avoided: the objective was to present a ‘respectable’ face for wider public consumption to differentiate themselves from the ‘irresponsible’ Irish who so often featured in discussions as a ‘problem’ (Delaney, 2007, p. 198).

It can be seen that ‘stereotypical’ working-class Irishness in England was never unproblematically subscribed to by all migrants, and that differentiations according to class and gender lines have not only been made by more recent migrants. It is interesting, however, that it appears to be the working-class experience of Irishness in England that has become the canonical narrative of being Irish in England in the 1950s and 1960s, eliding the middle-class experience of the time. The ways in which this simplistic distinction of “1950s generation = working-class, 1980s generation = middle-class” is employed in narratives of ‘typical’ Irishness will be examined further in Chapter 5.

The extant research also complicates the assumption that more recent migrants have rejected ‘traditional’ Irishness wholesale. Kneafsey and Cox (2002) for example, illustrate how migrants of all ages in Coventry recreate Irishness in the home through the consumption of certain traditional foods. Also, the high level of participation in Gaelic Games among Irish students suggests that for what McAnallen, Mossey and Moore have labelled the “temporary diaspora”, traditional Irish sports are an important aspect of their Irish identities. This is in contrast to participation in other activities such as Irish language classes, Irish traditional music and Irish dancing, which tend to be quite low among this cohort:

Gaelic games have become progressively the most popular medium for the expression of Irish identity at home and abroad, due to the relative ease of organising them, the greater scope for mass participation and the ever-increasing profile of the GAA and its games. (McAnallen, Mossey, & Moore, 2007, p. 414)

In addition to this, Hassan has given an account of how many ‘modern’ Irish migrants in Europe, some of whom would have no involvement with Gaelic Games pre-migration, have deliberately sought out GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) activities as a means of meeting other Irish people and ‘flagging’ their Irishness (Hassan, 2007). Similarly, it has been noted that the spread of the Irish diaspora to “non-traditional” destinations in the 1990s and 2000s has led to an increasingly multinational GAA membership and participation in its activities. For example, in October 2008, players originating from more than twenty countries gathered in the Malaysian city of Penang for the Asian GAA games (Cronin, Duncan, & Rouse, 2009). The GAA, therefore, one of the most traditional and supposedly hidebound expressions of essentialised Irishness (as conceptualised, somewhat unfairly in my view, in the work of Arrowsmith (2004) among others) would appear to have continued relevance as a means of performing Irishness abroad, in increasingly deterritorialised ways. What this illustrates is the contested means by which Irish cultural activities are drawn upon to construct various versions of Irishness as either progressive or traditional/old-fashioned and the implications this has for discourses of Irish authenticity. For example, as discussed in Chapter 8, the GAA was variously invoked by participants in this research to denote both an old-fashioned ‘ghettoised’ Irishness and a modern, transnational Irishness.

Authentic Irishness, then, and how it is conceived, constructed and performed is a multi-faceted concept, being seen as both traditional and modern, associated with certain

activities and not with others and as the preserve of both recent and older migrants. It is seen as being more salient at certain times than others, context-dependent, and perhaps unsurprisingly, constantly contested, particularly in an individual's meaning-making around their own 'personal' Irishness. Perhaps the area where most contestation over authenticity arises is with the second generation Irish in England. This has become one of the major areas of the literature in recent years, with growing recognition that the unique positioning of this generation deserves attention, particularly as it brings questions of hybridised identities and conflicts over authenticity into sharp relief.

2.5.1 "Second generation" Irish identities

As argued earlier, the proximity of England and Ireland increases the points of contestation around authentic Irishness. This is perhaps most pronounced in the case of the second generation Irish in England who, in regularly finding their Irishness questioned, represent a specific form of diasporic Irishness that is contrary to understood discourses of Irishness in both countries. Hickman et al. (2005) whose Irish 2 Project remains the most comprehensive investigation of the second generation Irish in England (and Scotland) have conceptualised the second generation as being at the intersection of two hegemonic domains i.e. England and Ireland, where understandings of Irishness are concerned. In this conceptualisation, the English domain is incorporating, denying the difference of Irishness, the Irish domain is differentiating, denying of commonalities with people of Irish descent. While the implications of attempting to articulate Irishness within the English domain will be explored in Chapter 3, a brief discussion of previous research on how the second generation situate themselves within discourses of Irishness as diasporic or territorial is worthwhile.

One of the ways that the second generation are distanced and positioned as inauthentic by the 'native' Irish, is through the term 'Plastic Paddy'. This came into common use as a term of abuse in the 1980s, when it was frequently employed by recently-arrived middle-class Irish migrants for whom, according to Hickman (2002) it became "a means of distancing themselves from established Irish communities" (p.16). According to Hickman et al. (2005) the use of this term is part of the process by which the second generation Irish are positioned as inauthentic within the two aforementioned "hegemonic domains" of Englishness and Irishness: the point being that through the use of the term, the Irish identities of the second generation are undermined and they are positioned as "really English" (Hickman et al., 2005, p. 174).

It should be noted that the term 'Plastic Paddy' may not simply denote differences of accent and birthplace. Rather, as argued by Mac an Ghail and Haywood (2003) the common use of the term in "the discursive repertoire of the young elite workers who migrated from Ireland in the 1980s and 1990s" led to the term being imbued with class and power discourses of an authentic Irishness, as well as with the progressive/old-fashioned dichotomy of Irishness discussed earlier:

Its accomplishment of itself as nationally authentic within the cultural storylines available to it depends upon its active disidentification with the second generation, which it positions as culturally recidivist, retelling 'the same old story' of nationalist Ireland to which the second generation, as non-national is seen as making illegitimate claims ... the elite workers are central to constructing and circulating around the Irish diaspora in Britain an internal cultural script positioning the second generation as 'not properly Irish' (Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2003, p. 391)

In the literature, the term is also referred to by second generation Irish informants as a source of embarrassment, and the fear of being labelled a ‘Plastic Paddy’ is put forward as a reason for not ‘overstretching’ in claiming an unproblematic fully authentic Irish identity (Walter, 2004, p. 379).

However, it ought to be noted that the use of the term ‘Plastic Paddy’ in second generation discourse is far from universal. Rather than the term providing a constraint on the articulation of authentic second generation Irish identities, others have challenged the term as a means of deconstructing singular territorially-bound versions of Irishness. For example, the resistance of the second generation Irish to being labelled ‘Plastic Paddies’ has, on occasion, been asserted in public debate such as one noted by Campbell (1999) that took place on the letters page of the *Irish Post* in the first few months of 1999. During this debate, a second generation ‘Leeds-Irish’ correspondent responded to allegations of inauthenticity by explaining:

We are Irish but not in the sense of our parents or people in Ireland today. The identity of the Irish in Britain is an extension of the Irish in Ireland but it’s not the same – there is a clear divergence. We have to recognise this (Campbell, 1999, p. 281).

This kind of articulation may be represented as a plea from an individual member of the Irish diaspora for a less hegemonic, more multi-faceted and *diasporic* reading of Irishness. The question then becomes whether this is a discourse that is available to the Irish living in England, how they might draw on it in their talk and how they position their own identities within this putative diasporic Irishness. In other words, it becomes a dialogue between different claims on Irishness as to the authenticity of these claims. Investigating the ways in which this dialogue is played out in the identity constructions of the Irish in England is the prevailing theme of this thesis.

It should also be pointed out that some attempts have been made to reclaim the term. For example, in a discussion among the second generation participants in Mac an Ghail & Haywood's (2003) research, the Republic of Ireland football team and Riverdance are drawn upon as contemporary high-profile examples of those of Irish descent representing Irishness on a global stage. In drawing on these examples, participants argued that the more global, modern image of Irishness is 'plastic', and therefore that "if you're not a plastic Paddy, that means you're stuck in the past" (Mac an Ghail & Haywood, 2003, p. 395). In terms of cultural products, Arrowsmith (2000) has argued that second generation 'Irish-English' writing is characterised by a deliberate inauthenticity, and an awareness of the "constructedness and hybridity of identities" (p.42). Along similar lines, the band 'Neck' who describe themselves as a "London-Irish psycho-ceilidh band", have a line in t-shirts with the legend 'Plastic and Proud' superimposed onto a green, white and orange Union Jack on the front, and the message "it's a second generation Irish identity crisis thing – you wouldn't understand" on the back. Thus, the dilemma of being of Irish descent in London is humorously subverted. It could be argued that by playing with the notion of being positioned as inauthentic by hegemonic discourses of Irishness, second generation people are constructing an Irishness more relevant to their own subjective experience of 'living Irish' in England, and thus a more personally authentic Irishness. Again, the ways in which articulations of Irishness that feel personally authentic speak against hegemonic discourses of authentic collective Irish identity will be explored throughout this thesis.

2.6 The role of the local within the diaspora

As argued previously, Irishness in England can be understood as a dialogue between diasporic and transnational imaginings of Irishness. A further aspect of this dialogue, and one I feel has been neglected in the literature is the frequently translocal nature of Irishness and the ways in which Irishness abroad is often articulated through localised identities. In

the case of England, these localised identities may refer to the hybrid identities that have arisen in cities with large Irish populations, such as London-Irish and Birmingham-Irish, as mentioned above, and as discussed to a greater extent in Chapter 3. However, a less remarked upon facet of localised identities is the extent to which Irish localities, specifically at the level of the county are drawn upon as a resource.

In order to properly situate the role of county identification within discourses of Irishness, and particularly diasporic Irishness, some historical context is needed. Prior to the Norman Invasion of Ireland in 1169 (the date from which the hallowed “800 years of English oppression” mantra is taken) the island had been traditionally divided into five provinces: Ulster, Munster, Connacht, Leinster and Meath,⁵ but now formed a patchwork of constantly fluctuating greater and lesser kingdoms and lordships. Gradually and piecemeal, over the following centuries, successive Anglo-Norman and English governments sought to re-divide the country along the lines of the shires of England, both for administrative regions and in order to suppress rebellions against English rule in Ireland. By 1606, the counties of Ireland had been ‘shaped’ in the cartographic layout familiar today (P. J. O'Connor, 2006).

While it is difficult, due to the paucity of research on the topic to trace the emergence of specific *county* identities, as opposed to national identities or identifications with the immediate locality (e.g. parishes), it seems clear that by at least the 19th century, the county divisions had come to be seen as ‘natural’. For example, O’Connor (2006) has outlined how the popular ‘emigrant songs’ of the 19th and early 20th century almost exclusively referred to the protagonist’s longing for the county, as well as the country of his (almost exclusively ‘his’ rather than ‘her’) birth. It can also be argued that the establishment of the

⁵ Modern-day Ireland is divided into 4 provinces with Meath having been incorporated into Leinster, but this is largely only for sporting and ceremonial purposes. It should be noted that the traditional province of Ulster incorporates the 6 historical counties that currently make up Northern Ireland as well as 3 counties within the Republic.

Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884 along county lines served to confirm the county as an intermediate locus of identification between the immediate locality (the parish, by and large) and the nation. It is one of the peculiar ironies of Irish history that an explicitly nationalist organisation such as the GAA should have cemented the colonial county system imposed by the English in the popular Irish imagination. McNally (2007), for example, in commenting on the ‘sacrosanct’ nature of the county in GAA circles has argued (somewhat tongue-in-cheek) that “through the GAA, our former masters have achieved the colonisers’ dream of imposing their system and then getting the locals to police it.”

It may be argued that contemporary Ireland, and in particular the 26-county nation-state, is suffused with a kind of ‘banal county-ism’, to paraphrase Billig (1995). Indeed the very use of the phrases “the twenty-six counties” and the “six counties” as a means of referring to the two nation-states on the island of Ireland is an example of how readily ‘county’ is drawn upon as an interpretative repertoire in discussing Ireland and Irishness. It should be emphasised that this is a particularly nationalist register: the use of the phrase “the six counties” to describe Northern Ireland is a politically contentious one and refers to historical imaginings of the region rather than any current political realities. Unlike the Republic, local government in Northern Ireland is no longer run along the basis of the historical county divisions, having been re-organised in 1971.

In one of the rare geographical analyses of the topic, Gillmor (2003) has noted how daily life in Ireland continues to be infused with references to the county. For example, such everyday features as postal addresses, car registration plates, local government, local newspapers, national news reports etc. all make reference to the county, a form of “flagging the county daily” to paraphrase Billig (1995). Similarly, the county is celebrated through the widespread phenomenon of ‘county songs’ as well as the aforementioned sporting rivalries along county lines fostered by the GAA.

Gillmor's analysis corresponds with my own retrospective observations on growing up in Ireland – I would add that alongside the high-profile nature of GAA county allegiances and rivalries, educational material at primary school level regularly made reference to the 32 counties of Ireland, and questions relating to the colours, songs and nicknames associated with certain counties were regular features of table quizzes etc. While it is not my intention to claim that my own upbringing in Ireland was in any way typical (although I would claim that it was certainly not atypical) I feel it reflects both the all-pervasive nature and the relative taken-for-grantedness of the county as a reference point, and as an object of identification. Similarly, as also noted by Gillmor (2003), O'Connor (2005) and O Briain (2009), in my experience it is so common as to be almost unremarkable that when Irish people meet for the first time outside Ireland, they will immediately attempt to ascertain what county the other is from. The advent of GAA replica jerseys has become a means for the Irish abroad to further advertise their county identities in an immediately recognisable way, at least to other Irish people. The image of the young Irish backpacker in Australia walking along Bondi Beach in his/her county jersey has become something of an archetype of the Irish abroad in contemporary Ireland and this has been mirrored in the labelling of the Bondi Beach area as 'County Bondi' (McConnell, 2010) in much the same way as the Kilburn High Road was dubbed 'County Kilburn' by, and in reference to, a previous generation of Irish migrants (Ryan, 2003a).

Among the Irish abroad, the persistence of county identities has led to the formation of County Associations, which arguably have in turn shaped the articulation of county identities outside Ireland.⁶ County Associations in England were initially organised within individual cities rather than nationwide. Both London and Manchester have Councils of

⁶ I am grateful to Nicole McLennan of the London Metropolitan University for sharing some of the preliminary findings from her ongoing research project on London's County Associations. She has asked me to make clear that this remains a work in progress at the time of writing.

Irish County Associations and relatively active county associations also operate out of Birmingham, Luton and elsewhere. While the documentary evidence on the origins of many county associations is patchy, it is known that the formation of County Associations in large urban centres in the United States dates back to the mid-19th Century, and it can be assumed that the Irish in England followed this model. While most of the current County Associations in London, along with the Council of Irish County Associations (CICA) were formed in the 1950s, it seems likely that many of these were revivals of previously existing associations.

In general, the stated aims of such associations, as set out in their constitutions were similar, in that they existed to bring together people from the ‘home county’ living in London, to provide for the welfare of members and to assist new arrivals, and to promote ongoing ties with the ‘homeland’ and ‘home county’ (McLennan, 2009). The associations, while generally officially non-sectarian, regularly included priests in their membership and some organisations sought the patronage of bishops from their ‘home’ dioceses. In London, through the CICA, the associations were heavily involved in the running of the London Irish Centre in Camden as well as organising the St. Patrick’s Day parade and from 1975, the London Irish Festival (Harrison, 2004; McLennan, 2009). As such, the County Associations may be regarded as central to the Irish ‘establishment’⁷, both in London and England, and representative of a certain type of ‘traditional’ Irishness abroad. While more recent migrants have tended to be less involved with County Association, perhaps due to their association with a traditional and socially conservative Irishness, I argue that this lack of engagement has not resulted in a decline in the significance of county identity.

⁷ A distinction probably ought to be drawn here between the “Irish establishment” associated with the London Irish Centre in Camden, and the ‘Establishment Irish’, the upper-middle-class professionals, who were to be found in the “exclusive, plush surroundings” of the Irish Club in Belgravia (Rossiter, 2009).

Despite the prominent role played by the county in post-migration Irishness, this persistence of local identities and the ways in which they might intersect with national and diasporic imaginings of Irishness is something that has been neglected in the Irish diaspora literature. If county-based affiliations and allegiances are mentioned at all, they are only done so in passing, without further analysis as to what drawing on a repertoire of county or regional identification might signify. One might surmise that this is an indication that the ‘banal county-ism’ referred to earlier extends to the academic sphere. For example, Kells (1995) in writing about her research among young middle-class Irish women in London, gives an account of one of her participants (Caroline) emphasising the importance of regional differences:

My bluntness was part of my Northern origin, she said, and she contrasted this to Corkonian evasiveness. The difference between country and town, and farming and non-farming origin was also fundamental, she felt (Kells, 1995, p. 211).

While Kells fits this into a North/Republic divide regarding Irish identities, and mentions briefly the role of regional differences in her participants’ narratives, I think the specific reference to ‘Corkonian’, as opposed to simply ‘southern’ adds an extra dimension to how this difference is constructed. Caroline both highlights her own identifications as being specifically Corkonian, and attributes certain personality characteristics to that identity. Similarly, when one of Gray’s participants draws a comparison between people like her, from Dublin and the East coast and people who would have come “straight from Tipperary and got off the ferry” (Gray, 2004, p. 111), she interprets it as constructing a class-based urban-rural divide. Again, while this is a legitimate reading, I would argue that there is an added significance in that rather than simply using the terms ‘the city’ and ‘the country’, Dublin and Tipperary are both explicitly referred to. This reflects the prominence of county-based identifications of place – Dublin is not simply constructed as the city in

opposition to the country, it is constructed as an urban county, in contrast to the rural county, Tipperary.

Some exceptions to the conceptual invisibility of the Irish county in research on diasporic Irish identities include Kneafsey and Cox's (2002) study on the importance of specific foodstuffs to constructing a sense of Irish identity in Coventry. They found that their respondents associated particular brands with specific local and regional Irish identities (e.g. Denny sausages as representing Waterford as well as Ireland) and argue that this was an example of Irish migrants "using the links between foods and particular locations to mark out distinct individual and cultural identities operating at both national and sub-national scales" (Kneafsey & Cox, 2002, p. 12). In a slightly different vein, Nick McCarthy's (2007) ethnographic study of performances of Irishness through Gaelic Football matches in Australia makes reference to the propensity of spectators at the matches to praise or condemn players based on the perceived characteristics of their 'home' counties. McCarthy argued that:

The constant mentioning of various counties and their association with particular types of play, both good and bad, helps create a uniquely Irish space, one which adds inexorably to the atmosphere of the day (McCarthy, 2007, p. 376).

On approaching the research, I felt that this particular intersection of local and national Irishness was worthy of further examination. Expanding on the observations of Kneafsey & Cox and McCarthy, as well as my own experiences and early informal participant observation research, I felt that this was not simply an example of local and national registers becoming variously salient dependent on the context, but rather that this was an example of the national being articulated through the local. I further hypothesised that such articulations were a discursive form of authentication of the Irishness of the speaker or the

performer and that by grounding his or her Irishness within a particular locality within Ireland, this amounted to a *re*-territorialisation of Irishness. As such, local references act as a kind of shibboleth through which authentic Irishness can be verified. As explored in Chapter 6, if the St. Patrick's Day parades are criticised for promoting an inauthentic Irishness in allowing 'anyone to be Irish', simply by drinking Guinness, donning a green frizzy wig and singing 'Danny Boy', the ability to wear a Tipperary GAA jersey and sing 'Slievenamon' may be recognised as a greater level of affinity with Irishness demonstrated through local knowledge.

As support for this hypothesis, articulating an authentic national identity through evoking a localised identity is not confined to the Irish abroad. For example, Sala, Dandy & Rapley's (2010) research around constructions of authenticity among Italian migrants in Western Australia highlighted the ways in which regional accents (i.e. Roman accents) were employed in order to emphasise *national* identities and rhetorically differentiate these along authenticity lines from those who would be unable to pick up on such markers of locality.

This thesis examines the ways in which local, primarily county, identifications are employed as a resource in making claims on authentic Irishness and support narratives of 'typically' Irish ways of living. In keeping with the overarching theme of the thesis, it also examines how such localised claims may intersect with the ways in which authentic personal Irish identities are located within collective Irish identities. The majority of this analysis takes place in Chapter 7.

2.7 Summary

This chapter has given a brief overview of the current broad social constructionist consensus on the nature of identity, and explored how this translates into thinking around national and diasporic identities. It has examined how diasporic identities have been promoted as an anti-hegemonic alternative to national identities and the extent to which this applies to the case of the Irish diaspora. In keeping with the need for studies of Irish diaspora not to be divorced from the experiences and narratives of members of that diaspora, various aspects of diasporic experience in England were discussed, with a particular focus on past research examining the ways notions of an authentic Irish identity are contested within England, largely with reference to Irishness as it is understood in Ireland, and the possible role of localised, particularly county identities. However, it is arguable that for those members of the Irish diaspora living in the country, Irishness as it is understood in England has an equal significance as a discursive resource and constraint in articulating identities. It is this which will be the topic of Chapter 3.

Chapter 3: Multiculturalism, ethnicity, essentialism and authenticity

In Chapter 2, I examined conceptual issues around diaspora and diasporic identity, the reconceptualisation of Irishness as diasporic, and the implications this might have for the articulation of Irish identity within England and discourses around authenticity. Expanding on the point made about the need to take into account local and national institutional and discursive constraints on agency in articulating identities, this chapter takes the English context as its primary focus, specifically the recent reconceptualisation of the Irish as an ethnic minority within a multicultural sphere.

As stressed in the preceding two chapters, in examining the various theoretical debates around the utility and application of diaspora, it is important not to lose sight of the individual diasporic subject and his/her level of agency in taking up or rejecting the various discourses surrounding the condition of being a member of a diaspora. The same might be said of the individual *minority* subject within the context of multicultural England who is located at the locus of a bewildering array of discourses around migration and the make-up of ‘multicultural’ society. This is a point expressed by Lewis, who has posed the question:

What happens to the ex-colonial migrant who is now named interchangeably as minority ethnic, minority faith or settled minority community in the context of these ‘new times’ of multi-stranded mobility and transnational flow and diasporic identification and connection? (Lewis, 2006, p. 336).

In other words, continuing the theme of this thesis, one might ask how the individual Irish person’s articulation of a personally authentic Irish identity is shaped by the various historical and political imaginings and positionings of Irishness in England and its current status as a minority culture. This chapter aims to give an overview of the discursive context

within which Irish identities *qua* minority identities in England are constructed and the implications this may have for discourses of personal and collective authenticity. Given that this arises in the context of the recent recasting of the ‘Irish community’ as an ethnic minority within England, it is instructive to examine how this recasting arose and what it might mean.

3.1 The Irish in England – brief historical and geographical details

While histories of the Irish migration to England are not in short supply (Connolly, 2000; Coogan, 2000; Davis, 2000; Delaney & MacRaild, 2005; Halpin, 2000; K. O'Connor, 1972), I do not intend to give a detailed account of the various patterns of this migration. For the purposes of the following, it is sufficient to state that the two peak, post-war periods of Irish migration to England were in the 1950s and the 1980s, coinciding with major periods of recession in the Irish economy, although it should be emphasised that the ‘short-distance flow’ to England has been a more or less constant phenomenon for centuries. Geographically, while London has always been a significant destination of choice for Irish migrants, large numbers of the 1950s generation of migrants found employment and settled in the West Midlands and in towns associated with manufacturing and construction. This was not true of later migration, which was largely, although by no means exclusively, directed towards London and the South-East (MacLaughlin, 1997; Walter, 2008b). Irishness outside these areas is now largely becoming a second generation phenomenon, given the age profile and dwindling numbers of the original 1950s migrants.

In considering Irish identities in England, it has been much remarked upon that there is no ‘national’ equivalent to the high-profile hyphenated Irish-American identity that is relatively readily available to members of the diaspora living in the United States (Hickman, 2002). This is largely attributable to the legacy of colonialism between the two

countries and the fact that ‘official’ Irish identities have historically been defined in opposition to British and, particularly, English ones. The nation-building that characterised the newly independent Irish state of the 1920s and 1930s was largely predicated on notions of a Catholic, white, settled, Gaelic/Celtic unitary and authentic Irish identity to which Englishness was foreign (Tovey & Share, 2003). While this ‘official’ unitary identity has been somewhat deconstructed in recent decades (Tormey, 2006), the extent to which Irishness is still defined in opposition to Englishness should not be underestimated, as evidenced by Waldron & Pike’s (2006) research among primary school children in Ireland’s constructions of what it means to be Irish.⁸

Similarly, but somewhat less remarked upon, racialised typographies of the ‘superior’ Anglo-Saxon were largely built upon comparisons to the ‘inferior’ Celt, particularly the Irish (Curtis, 1984; Douglas, 2002). At the same time, it has on various occasions been politically expedient for successive British governments to deny any major cultural differences between Irish immigrants and the ‘native’ population, particularly with regard to whether the Irish should be regarded as an ethnic minority. This forced inclusion within a “myth of cultural homogeneity” (Hickman, 2000), while at the same time being regarded as ‘Other’, complicated the articulation of Irish identities and consigned the concerns of the Irish as a minority group, to invisibility.

The advent of the IRA bombing campaign in English cities in the 1970s and 1980s exacerbated the difficulty of articulating a positive Irish identity within England; the Irish during this time entered a phase of being regarded as a “suspect community” (Hillyard, 1993). More positively, since the 1990s, there has been a remarkable turnaround in the perception of Irishness in England, attributable to the Northern Ireland peace process, the

⁸ It might also be noted that as of the 13th April, 2010, the Facebook group “Being Irish means I’m not feckin’ English” has 16,232 members.

increasing popularity of certain, often highly commercialised, aspects of Irish culture, a growing tendency to frame Irishness within a multicultural paradigm and, importantly, decades of activism from Irish community groups (Nagle, 2008). However, the legacy of the preceding decades of antagonism, colonialism and distrust still informs the lack of conceptual space for claiming a hyphenated English-Irish identity.

The lack of space for the articulation of hyphenated identities, and the inclusion of the Irish in a myth of homogeneity, may be reflected in a lack of academic interest in Irish identity in England, which translated into a widespread assumption that Irish migration to England was followed by uncomplicated assimilation. Up until relatively recently, where the Irish were researched at all, it was in historical terms of their migration patterns (often following the Famine) and subsequent employment in England (K. O'Connor, 1972) and/or in terms of their success or otherwise in assimilating into 'mainstream' society (Hornsby-Smith & Dale, 1988). Where they have been seen as a distinct community in England, this has largely been portrayed in terms of their relatively poor physical and mental health (Curran, Bunting, & MacLachlan, 2002; Greenslade, 1997; Harding & Balarajan, 1996; Raftery, Jones, & Rosato, 1990; Walsh & McGrath, 2000; Williams, 1996). While such studies are undoubtedly necessary, Campbell has argued that this has had the effect of pathologising the community, suggesting that this "paradigm of assimilation ... has inadvertently implied that the experience of being Irish in England is restricted to a narrow range of problem-centred issues" (Campbell, 1999, p. 272).

Ironically, while the Irish were only seen as a distinct community within England in a pathologised way, the inclusion of Irishness within the myth of homogeneity, largely due to skin colour, led to the specific needs of the Irish in England being ignored on an official level. This was particularly the case with regard to the effects of anti-Irish racism, as outlined by Hickman:

The main achievement of the myth of the homogeneity of the British Isles, which implicitly includes a myth of assimilation, is the assumption that racism and discrimination are a function solely of differences in skin colour ... The myth of homogeneity assumed that all people who were white smoothly assimilated into the 'British way of life' and that the problems all resided with those who migrated and possessed a different skin colour ... The inclusion of the Irish within the same 'race' thus rendered the Irish invisible as a minority ... who were potentially subject to racialization and discriminatory practices. Given the conflation of the term ethnic minority with black or with black and Asian groups, this meant that the Irish were also rendered invisible as an ethnic minority group. (Hickman, 1998, pp. 298-299)

Mac an Ghail (2000; 2001) has argued that the conceptual invisibility of the Irish as an ethnic minority group has extended to academia and forms part of the "long academic tradition" of 'over-racialising' non-white groups, while denying the possibility of white groups being racialised minorities. He argues that this is due to the importation of a colour paradigm from American race-relations theory, coupled with a selective blindness to the fact that for much of British colonial history, particularly in the 19th century, the Irish were seen as racially inferior and as having more in common with 'uncivilised' Africans than 'civilised' Anglo-Saxons (Curtis, 1984; Ignatiev, 1995; Mac an Ghail, 2001).

Much of the recent research by authors such as Mac an Ghail explicitly seeks to address this conceptual invisibility and has burgeoned, at least in part, as a means of countering assimilationist and essentialist constructions; that is, constructions of Irishness as reducible to a handful of emblematic/problematic characteristics, but otherwise easily assimiliable within Britishness. There has also been a shift in focus towards how Irishness and Irish identity is constructed via the linguistic and discursive practices of the Irish in England themselves, something that can be attributed to wider trends across the disciplines such as

the growing influence of social constructionist theories. Examples of research that can be located in this tradition include, but are not limited to, the work of Philip Ullah (1985; 1990), Mary Hickman and Bronwen Walter (Hickman et al., 2005; Hickman & Walter, 1995, 1997; Walter, 1995, 2001) and Breda Gray (Gray, 1996b, 1999, 2000a, 2002a, 2004). This thesis can also be regarded as being located in this tradition from a specifically social psychological dimension.

In tandem with this shift in emphasis, much of the literature on Irish identity from the mid-1980s was explicitly or implicitly linked to campaigns to raise awareness of anti-Irish discrimination, and to have Irishness recognised as an ethnic identity in the UK census. This accompanied, and perhaps partly prompted, something of a shift in mindset among the Irish in England from “a position of keeping a low public profile to challenging their positioning by the British State and within civil society as an invisible ethnic minority who experienced a specific form of racialisation” (Mac an Ghail, 2001, p. 180). As a result of such campaigns, there has been a growing recognition of Irishness as an ethnicity within a multicultural context in England/Britain, and that anti-Irish discrimination ought to be recognised as a form of racism under anti-discrimination laws. In addition to this, White (Irish) was included for the first time as an ethnic category in the 2001 England & Wales census, the results of which will be explored in further detail later. In considering the lobbying carried out in order to secure the place of the Irish as an officially sanctioned minority, it is useful to examine the literature on how the expression of minority identities in Britain have been influenced by multicultural discourse and policy.

3.2 Minority identities and multicultural England/Britain

The history behind how Irishness came to be recognised as an ‘official’ minority identity within a multicultural polity in Britain is a complex one and requires a brief account of state-sponsored multiculturalism and the critiques of both the notion of state-sponsored multiculturalism and how policies related to this have been implemented. Nagle (2009), in his historical analysis of the emergence of state-sponsored multiculturalism, has argued that it has been underpinned by a “politics of recognition”. In other words, as expressed by Charles Taylor (1994), the assumption is that “a person or group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves”, and that this form of non-recognition or misrecognition can, in itself, be a form of oppression (C. Taylor, 1994, p. 75). While it might be argued that the assumptions behind this politics of recognition closely mirror the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis, I would argue that attention needs to be paid to the agency of “a person, or group of people” in articulating their own identities against misrecognition, while recognising that this will be affected by structural factors and power relations. I will return to this point later.

It is important to note, as Nagle (2009) does, that the implementation of state-sponsored multiculturalism has varied on national, local and citywide scales. Having said that, some general patterns can be noted. One of the means of counteracting the ‘oppressive’ nature of misrecognition through multicultural policies has been through sponsoring initiatives designed to promote cross-cultural dialogue and a heightened appreciation of the cultural forms of minority groups. Therefore, idealised versions of multicultural Britain tend to depict it in a celebratory way. It is important to note that, for minority groups themselves, there is much that is beguiling about the notion of ‘officially’ becoming one more strand in a multicultural society. As well as access to resources (the implications of which will be

further discussed later) it is an opportunity for minority identities that may previously have been maligned to be celebrated and ideally, it is an opportunity for the individual minority subject to take their place in mainstream British society without the need to jettison their own culture.

What this idealised depiction fails to take into account are the historical and political pressures brought to bear on minority identities, specifically post-colonial identities, in integrating into contemporary multicultural British society. For that matter, it also glosses over the very real structural inequalities and institutional discrimination faced by minority individuals (Brah, 1996; Hesse, 2000). A number of authors, in critiquing this form of ‘top-down’, state-sponsored multiculturalism, have pointed out the necessity of preserving the influence of power relations in discussing the interplay of identities within English/British diaspora space. For example, Phil Cohen has argued that:

The multicultural illusion is that dominant and subordinate can somehow swap places and learn how the other half lives, whilst leaving the structures of power intact. As if power relations could be magically suspended through the direct exchange of experience, and ideology dissolve into the thin air of face to face communication (Cohen, 1988, pp. 12-13).

Similarly, Winston James (1993) in discussing the transition from Caribbean identities to Black British identities suggests that while “meaningful elements of Caribbean culture will undoubtedly exist ... these will be constituents of a new amalgam transformed and in many ways overwhelmed by its British crucible”, and decries those “hybridity revellers” who are “blithely complacent about the forced asymmetry of the processes at work” (James, 1993, p. 266).

It is debateable, then, just how much space ‘celebratory multiculturalism’, which has also been referred to as ‘boutique multiculturalism’ or “saris, samosas and steel drums” multiculturalism offers for the articulation of minority identities. It has been criticised for highlighting those exoticised aspects of minority cultures in the UK that were palatable to the majority (by and large, English) culture and, in many instances, allowing these to represent the entirety of the culture, glossing over other more ‘problematic’ aspects. For example, Buettner’s (2008) social history of ‘Indian’ restaurants in the UK illustrates the ways in which food came to represent the totality of South Asian culture in the UK in the popular imagination.

Therefore, many critiques of multiculturalism, or at least a certain vision of multiculturalism, are based around the argument that the effect of multicultural policies in the UK has been not to encourage a genuine plurality (however that might look) but rather to promote certain essentialised, reified versions of minority identities as representative of all those who may be covered by such an identity within a kind of “multicultural mosaic” (Gilroy, 2005, p. 432). As such, attempts to treat ‘multicultural Britain’ as a kind of level playing field in which any and all identities are equally valued and equally positioned with power discourses are misguided and may serve to perpetuate inequalities.

Equally, it is important not to overlook the structural and discursive constraints on the individual diasporic subject’s ability to express his/her ‘minoritised’ identity. It has been argued by a number of scholars and commentators that such constraints are the unintended result of multicultural policies which, in seeking to recognise minority identities, have valorised an artificial notion of “community identities” at the expense of more nuanced individual expressions of identity and, in so doing, have created a form of identity politics (Anthias, 2002; Brubaker & Cooper, 2000; Malik, 2010; Phoenix, 1998). This form of identity politics, with a savage irony, serves to perpetuate the very racialised

understandings of identities that multicultural policies were meant to dispel, as well as glossing over internal differences within a ‘community’ and de-prioritising such issues as gender, class and sexuality. In commenting on this development, Ann Phoenix has argued that:

Black women, for example, are assumed only to represent what is seen in essentialist terms, as black women’s position. In addition, they are treated as interchangeable, sharing the same political opinions and commitment to the same principles and goals. Identity politics is thus reductionist; reducing individuals to all-encompassing categories and failing to give recognition to commonalities across collectivities ... the problem here is that identity politics consistently ignores the complexities of the relationship between identity and difference and attempts to deal with identity as if it is unitary, natural and stable, when it is always in process, always differentiated and always constituted within, not outside the ways in which it is represented (Phoenix, 1998, p. 872).

Phoenix’s assertion that the identity politics that are fostered within a multicultural polity have led to attempts to deal “with identity as if it is unitary, natural and stable” goes to the crux of why discourses of authenticity are central to the construction of minority identities in a multicultural polity. If, for political reasons, minority identities are assumed to be unitary, natural and stable, then there will be structural pressures to pin down what exactly constitutes an authentic identity. These structural pressures are linked to the ‘politics of recognition’ tending to recognise ‘minority communities’ as opposed to ‘minority individuals’. Nesbitt-Larking (2008), speaking specifically about religious communities makes this point, in highlighting the tendency to subsume the rights claims of individuals under the internal governance of ascribed community identities through the recognition of “discrete ethno-religious individuals and organizations that claim to speak on behalf of their members.” (Nesbitt-Larking, 2008, p. 355). Nesbitt-Larking claims that this is based

on an unrealistic model of community cohesion, a point that is echoed by Steve Garner (2008):

This model of discrete communities stutters when there are competing claims from within one designated 'community'. Who gets to represent a community? Under what conditions? Which voices are listened to, accommodated or rejected, and according to what criteria? (Garner, 2008, p. 383)

As such, within a multicultural polity that is divided into discrete communities, there is an assumption that the community will speak with one voice, something that Garner has argued supposes "homogeneity among minority subjects" and "reifies 'community' into an object" rather than as something fluid and contingent (p.383). If competing voices are to be found within the community, it may be that voice that has the political clout to shout loudest that can present itself as the authentic voice of the community. The argument then runs that if notions of authentic community identities are associated with traditionalist 'community values', it is unlikely that such voices will be 'progressive' ones. For example, Nira Yural-Davis (1992) has argued that the adoption of multiculturalist norms that define minority communities by their culture, "which has been increasingly constructed as a matter of religious identity" has led to fundamentalist leaderships being the main beneficiaries. It is for such reasons that authors such as Nancy Fraser have argued that the 'politics of recognition' have led to the drastic simplification and reification of group identities, tending, rather, "to encourage separatism, intolerance and chauvinism, patriarchalism and authoritarianism" (Fraser, 2000, p. 108).

However, it ought to be pointed out that the logic of this argument is based on the supposedly authentic being commensurate with the traditional, something that may not be the case. Indeed, as has already been explored in Chapter 2, and will be explored further in

Chapter 8, 'traditional' Irishness has variously been positioned as inauthentic and irrelevant to 'modern-day' Ireland, and the topic of who gets to represent Irishness is a contested one. This further underlines the importance of tracing constructions of authenticity in discourse.

A further consequence of the 'discrete communities' model is to create competition for resources, where resources are available for what are considered to be 'legitimate' minority community groups. In such cases, being able to present a unified, authentic ethnic identity can operate as a political resource by which a group's interests can be furthered, which results in a form of 'identity politics'. Nagel (1994) has argued that being designated an 'official' minority group may serve to create or reinforce ethnic boundaries. This leaves little space for multiple identifications or for the various ways in which identities intersect, instead prioritising ethnicised and racialised identities rather than those associated with class, gender and sexuality, and deprioritising certain forms of political action. This model may also have the potential to further marginalise those who might be considered as minorities within 'minority communities'. It is for this reason that Phoenix (1998; Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006) is sceptical about the use of a form of 'strategic essentialism' as a means of minority political articulation.

Therefore, minoritised individuals may be caught in something of a double bind (Nagle, 2009) – in order to have one's voice heard and have access to the various economic and political resources that come with being a member of a minority 'community', one needs to conform, to an extent at least, to the approved minority identity that being a member of this community involves, which, in turn, limits the means by which alternative identities can be articulated. Notions of authentic identities associated with minority communities may lead to charges of inauthenticity being laid against any member of that community who does not conform with assumed norms. For example, Phoenix has explored the

phenomenon of Black British people being labelled as ‘coconuts’ (i.e. brown on the outside, white on the inside – this label is also applied to second generation British-Asians cf.(Jaspal & Coyle, 2009; Vadher & Barrett, 2006)) for behaving in a manner that was seen as less than authentically ‘black’:

There is an inherent contradiction in the ‘bounty’ argument which runs as follows: If you have black skin, you are necessarily black. However, it is very easy to fail at being black, so you must behave correctly in order really to be black. In that formulation, blackness becomes simultaneously both an achieved and an ascribed status. The criteria for the achievement of blackness are dictated by those who set themselves up to prescribe what constitutes blackness, but the policing of that ‘authentic’ achievement is on the basis of the ascription of ‘blackness’ through biological difference (Phoenix, 1998, p. 863).

However, it is arguable that this analysis understates the level of agency available to those within minority communities to articulate identities in a non-essentialised way. This carries echoes of the debate around the level of agency available to individuals to position themselves within discourses of power in Foucauldian research, which is explored in further detail in Chapter 4. Tariq Modood, for example, has argued that essentialisation and reification is not inherent to multicultural policy:

Successful policies of difference recognition may (or may not) be accompanied by crude, confused, unreflective notions of culture. Not only is there no inherent reification in politicized ethnicity but for theorists to latch on to the reification in the confused or crude accounts that agents give of their activities and beliefs is actually to over-homogenize and essentialize the beliefs that people have (Modood, 2007, p. 97).

As a means of addressing this question, there is a case for further analysis of how individual members of ‘official’ minority groups construct their identities as ‘ethnic’, as well as how the boundaries of authenticity are policed, and how these might be affected by mainstream discourses as to what an authentic minority identity should constitute. A study of the Irish in England is particularly illuminating in this regard, given that Irishness has only recently started to be regarded as an ethnic minority within England, and its status as such is still a regular point of contestation, both within the Irish ‘community’ and among wider race-relations discourses in England. Before examining research that looks at whether this has led to a reification of Irishness, however, it is worth examining the political and structural factors that led to Irishness being re-imagined as an ethnicity.

3.3 The Irish as an ethnic minority in multicultural England

As mentioned earlier, it is important to recognise that the implementation of multicultural policies varied on national, local and citywide scales. Bearing this in mind, the origins of the recognition of the Irish in England as a minority ethnic group and the subsequent inclusion of Irishness as one of the strands of multicultural England can be traced to the mobilisation of the Irish in London as a form of ‘new social movement’ in the late 1970s and early 1980s. One of the tactical arguments made during this mobilisation involved emphasising the similarity between the experiences of discrimination and structural inequalities of the Irish and those of other ethnic minority groups in the capital: as such, it was a means of emphasising the racialization of the Irish and labelling the discrimination experienced by the Irish as racism (Anthias, Yuval-Davis, & Cain, 1992; Nagle, 2009). This stood in contrast to previous positions taken by the Irish abroad, which had been to emphasise their ‘privileged’ position as ‘white’ and to distance themselves from other minority groups, often in quite violently racist ways. (A fuller analysis can be found in Ignatiev (1995) or in Garner (2004)). This new tactic of allying the experiences of the Irish

with those of other minority groups was often met with resistance and suspicion. Hickman (1998) notes that while the disadvantages experienced by Irish people were occasionally acknowledged, this was usually accompanied “by the notion of a ‘hierarchy of oppression’ based on the idea that no white group could experience the level of racism which a black group can” (Hickman, 1998, p. 289). The counter-argument to this ‘hierarchy of oppression’ argument was to prioritise the colonial experience as opposed to purely a black/white dichotomy as a site of power relations and discrimination. While in many cases, this argument may have fallen on deaf ears, it was not without something of a wider audience at governmental level.

The mobilisation of the London-Irish as a ‘new social movement’ coincided with the Greater London Council’s (GLC) commitment to an institutional multiculturalism in the early 1980s, with council funds being made available to voluntary organisations, and an Ethnic Minorities Committee being established. Ken Livingstone, the then leader of the GLC, was regarded as sympathetic to the concerns of Irish community organisations and took a personal, direct interest in London-Irish affairs. While this was undoubtedly at least partly attributable to currying favour with a view to electoral advantage, it led to the appointment of an Irish liaison officer in 1983, the production of three policy reports on the Irish community in 1984 and, by 1988, over £3 million had been provided by the GLC to fund Irish ‘community projects’ (Gray, 2000b; Nagle, 2009; Rossiter, 2009). While this was an undoubted boon for Irish community organisations and the participation of the Irish in London political life, there were voices of dissent both at the time and now. These came both from ‘English’ sources, who ridiculed the notion of the Irish as an ethnic minority and accused Ken Livingstone of political clientelism (Nagle, 2009), and from Irish sources, who argued that only a version of Irishness that coincided with the aims of municipal socialism was being promoted. For example, Harrison (2004) recounts the strong belief of those involved with the London-Irish Centre in Camden that their applications for grant

money had been turned down because of the perceived close associations between the Centre and the Catholic Church.

These concerns aside, the recognition of the Irish as an ethnic minority in London created something of a snowball effect, with other metropolitan councils following suit, for example, Birmingham City Council in 1986 (Limbrick, 2007b). Campaigning on a national scale also began with such organisations as the Federation of Irish Societies, the Irish in Britain Representation Group and the *Irish Post* actively lobbying for recognition of the existence of anti-Irish discrimination and the inclusion of an 'Irish' option in the UK census. In 1994, the Commission for Racial Equality commissioned a report on the Irish in Britain, which was published in 1997 under the title '*Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain*' (Hickman & Walter, 1997). Following the recommendations of this report, an 'Irish' category was included in the ethnic monitoring section of the 2001 census for England and Wales, being presented in the 'White' category as White (Irish) alongside White (British) and White (Other). As recounted by Howard (2006) in the run-up to the census, the Irish ethnic press urged its readers, particularly the second and third generation to choose the Irish option, recruiting a number of high-profile celebrities of Irish descent as a means of encouragement. One of the major rationales given was that it would allow funding to be directed to the correct sources - the implication being that the Irish should "come out" (Howard, 2006). This was a good example of what Nagle has termed the "multicultural numbers game", whereby:

Minority groupings try to expand their numeric size so that they can claim an increased share of public resources. However, this process of 'ethnic recruitment', rather than necessarily providing a basis for people to create forms of political dialogue and alliances to counter essentialist representations of ethnicity, can instead act to reproduce and maintain ethnic hierarchies (Nagle, 2009, p. 40).

As suggested earlier, the multicultural numbers game, in relying on people to put themselves forward to be counted as a specific ethnicity may result in the reification of ethnic differences. As it transpired, far fewer people classed themselves as being Irish than community activists had hoped or expected, with only 700,000 people choosing the Irish ethnic option. Given that it was claimed in the run-up to the census that 13 million people in Britain had Irish ancestry, this was seen as a disappointing figure. In attempting to explain this disparity, Howard has written that these results lend themselves to three rather different interpretations:

1. The assimilationist interpretation: which might also be termed the ‘traditional’ interpretation, having been prevalent in the literature up to quite recently: that the Irish experience in Great Britain is characterised by rapid assimilation. If at all, Irish ethnicity is only weakly evident beyond the migrant generation.
2. The inadequacy of the question interpretation: that the British-born descendants of Irish migrants misrecognized the question in the census and interpreted it as pertaining to citizenship and not ethnic background.
3. The hidden community interpretation: that the multi-generational Irish ethnic community is continuing to maintain its historical low-social profile, due perhaps to the persistence of anti-Irish racism in British society. (Howard, 2006, pp. 118-120)

Irish community groups would appear to have adopted the second explanation, with the Federation for Irish Societies, for example, arguing for a more nuanced question to be included in the 2011 census with a greater emphasis on ancestry as indicating Irish ethnicity and a modification of the ‘Mixed’ category to capture the complex ethnicities of Irish and other White groups (Hutton, 2005). Similarly, the respondents in Garrett’s (2005) research among Irish social workers in Britain criticised the Census options as being oversimplistic and failing to capture the complexities of Irish identifications. In particular, the

assumption that the Irish in Britain are *exclusively* a white population came under fire as amounting to an official disqualification of a black Irish identity, which one of the participants in the research subscribed to. The census results are thereby symptomatic of the difficulty experienced by many Irish in defining their own identity, especially in the reductionist, essentialist terms employed by census forms. That this was particularly a difficulty for second generation Irish people (a problem shared by second generation immigrants worldwide, cf. (Kasinitz, Mollenkopf, Waters, & Holdaway, 2008)) is underlined by the call for a greater emphasis on ancestry and ‘mixed’ Irish identities. In addition to this, the Irish 2 Project (previously discussed in section 2.6.2) found that many of their second generation participants seem to have misinterpreted the census question, or at least seen it as unrelated to their own sense of identity - something Walter et al. (2002) describe as confusion over formal and informal levels of ethnicity.

Garrett’s research also suggested that the official recognition of Irishness as an ethnic minority has been slow in translating into practice, with many of his informants describing feelings of being “on the backfoot” in trying to insert an Irish component into debates on ethnic minority issues within social work and social care. There was also criticism of the regular conflation of Irishness and Catholicism that they experienced in the course of their work.

Garrett suggests that there are four approaches towards recognition of minority groups in social work and more broadly, social welfare. The first is termed adverse or negative recognition, where there is an acceptance that Irish people are a distinct national or cultural group in Britain, but that as a result of this recognition, policies and practices are put in place that lead to Irish users of welfare services being stigmatised or penalised. The second approach is non-recognition or denial, which is seen as a product of the myth of homogeneity and perceives the Irish as part of the dominant ‘white’ group. The third

approach is bureaucratic or 'tick box' recognition, which Garret suggests characterises current approaches towards the Irish community in Britain. He argues that while the inclusion of an Irish category on the census represents progress, the data generated has yet to have had a substantial impact on engagement with the Irish community, while perceiving Irish people in Britain in a static and simplistic way. Gunaratnam (2003) has described such approaches on the part of officialdom as "fact-file" approaches to 'race' and ethnicity, that promote "tidy no-nonsense (often described as 'practical') information and research about the racialised/ethnicized care needs of different groups" (Gunaratnam, 2003, p. 34). Gunaratnam has suggested that the desire on the part of official funding bodies for such 'practical' information about ethnic groups has the effect of perpetuating essentialised assumptions about ethnicity.

As a means of challenging these essentialist assumptions, Garrett suggests the fourth approach, 'positive or complex recognition' as an aspirational form of recognition, that would build upon the third approach by stressing the centrality of people's self-definition and own narrative of Irish identity, as well as meaningfully engaging with individuals and Irish community organisations (Garrett, 2005, pp. 1371-1372).

This aspirational form of recognition would appear to be shared by many of those now engaged in work with Irish community groups, as evidenced by my own observations at a conference entitled 'The Irish Die Young' which was organised by the Federation of Irish Societies and held in London in January 2007. During an open discussion, dissatisfaction was voiced with the way the category 'Irish' was presented on census and survey forms, particularly as it didn't allow for mixed backgrounds. The lack of official recognition of and engagement with the Irish community was explicitly linked to funding with delegates asserting that "whoever shouts the loudest gets the funding". The widespread lack of knowledge of Irish issues in the health sector was also referred to, with speakers claiming

that in certain quarters, mentioning the Irish as an ethnic minority is still greeted with ridicule. Thus, it can be seen that the issue of the complexity of Irish identifications in Britain is very much a live one, and not solely the preserve of academics.

However, it should be pointed out that all the above fall into the category of Irish community activists, or what Nagle would describe as ‘ethnic entrepreneurs’, who have a vested, although presumably generally well-intentioned interest, in mobilising the ‘Irish community’ and appealing for as many people to identify themselves as Irish as possible. It is, however, far from clear that the status of the Irish as an ethnic minority within England is universally accepted by the Irish themselves. Indeed, among more recent middle-class migrants, the notion that the Irish could be considered a separate ethnic grouping to the ‘mainstream’ English is often greeted with equal bemusement as it has been among some quarters of the English media. (As I mentioned in Chapter 1, I will admit to having been quite taken aback by the suggestion myself on first moving to England). Nagle, in exploring the various reactions of Irish people to being labelled an ‘ethnic minority’ has linked this bemusement to a denial among some Irish that such a thing as anti-Irish racism exists:

When I was present in the Irish Cultural Centre conducting research I occasionally tried to find out if students and tutors had experienced anti-Irish hostility. Often the reaction was almost to blanch, as if I was suggesting they had deserved racist abuse. Regarding experiencing prejudice, some students said it ‘never’ occurred because they never sought to ‘ghettoize’ themselves as they thought many other Irish migrants had done in London. Many affluent, middle-class Irish business people I spoke to were particularly vehement in their opposition to the claim. A discourse typically espoused was that the Irish were not a ‘race’ – certainly not distinguished from the ‘white English’. For these people, the idea that the Irish were an ‘ethnic minority’ to be granted substantial public resources

was the result of mischief making from sections of the London-Irish. These ‘trouble makers’ had effectively brought on the spite of the host population because they had sought to differentiate the Irish (Nagle, 2009, pp. 57-58).

Given that there is overwhelming empirical evidence that anti-Irish discrimination in England was an established socio-historical phenomenon and a major constraint on the lives and activities of many Irish (Curtis, 1984; Hickman & Walter, 1997) it is tempting to dismiss such attitudes as the result of never having experienced, or at least having turned a blind eye to, instances of anti-Irish discrimination by virtue of class position or recency of migration. However, I believe it also reflects claims of authenticity, both with regard as to what should be regarded as a ‘typical’ Irish life and how the Irish should be represented; i.e. not as a victimised group. It also serves to distance one set of Irish people from another along the lines of class and generation and undermines the notion that there is a single ‘unitary’ Irish community. This can be conceptualised as a form of ‘ideological dilemma’ (I will discuss my use of this term as an analytical tool further in Chapter 4) – Irishness as a minority ethnicity is incompatible with these individuals’ personal narratives of ‘living Irish’ in England. However, in order to reconcile the authenticity of their personal Irish identities with the ‘fact’ of the ethnic minority status of the Irish, the latter is constructed as “mischief making” on the part of the London-Irish, and as not based on a shared authentic Irishness.

This point of contestation may also be linked with my earlier distinction between transnationalist and diasporic Irishness – transnationalist Irishness may not be commensurate with being part of a majority culture in Ireland, but a minority culture in England. On the other hand, diasporic Irishness, being located more definitely outside Ireland, has greater potential for intersecting with understandings of Irishness as a minority

culture. Similar points of contestation from my own empirical work will be discussed in future chapters, particularly Chapter 8.

3.4 Recognition of Irishness within England

Referring back to the discussion in Chapter 1 of the importance that a collective Irishness be recognised as authentic, it is necessary that ‘recognition’ is not taken as solely implying tailoring social policy towards Irish issues, but also that the portrayal of Irishness in public discourses in England would be in some way authentic. Primarily, this refers to ways in which Irishness is depicted in mainstream media.

Media depictions of Irishness in post-war England can be divided into three eras. In the immediate post-war era from around 1945 to 1969, Irishness in England was largely characterised by invisibility at a public level, both in terms of policy and the media, despite Irish migration to England being at historically high levels. The myth of homogeneity which, as has been explored, led to a glossing over of any forms of discrimination or structural difficulties the Irish might have faced was reflected in an almost total absence of Irish figures from the UK media apart from a handful of ‘stage Irish’ figures.

The second period can be termed the “suspect community” period (Hillyard, 1993) and roughly coincides with the period of the Troubles in Northern Ireland and the IRA bombing campaign of English cities. The Irish now occupied a more prominent, but almost entirely negative position in British media, with the press regularly portraying the Irish as stupid, inherently violent, or both. Also, anti-Irish jokes were a regular comic staple for stand-up comedians on mainstream television, as set out by Curtis (1984). At the same time, this period saw the rise of successful Irish ‘ethnic’ media associated with emerging Irish activism, which itself arose as a reaction to negative stereotyping. It was in the

environment that the *Irish Post* was launched in London in 1970, a newspaper which specifically represented itself as “the voice of the Irish community in Britain”. Indeed, in an interview for a 30th anniversary publication, Brendan Mac Lua, the founding editor of the *Irish Post*, took credit for having invented the term ‘the Irish community’:

The newspaper played a very large part in creating a sense of community which involved all the Irish in Britain. From the outset, I banned the publishing of the words “emigrants” and “exiles” and replaced them with “the Irish community in Britain”. The phrase soon caught on with people generally, including the British media, and it has stayed. (Doyle, 2000, p. 17)

Naming the ‘community’ in MacLua’s account is a prerequisite to the formation of a community. While his claim to have more or less invented the concept of a collective Irish identity in England can be taken with a pinch of salt, contemporary accounts do suggest that the meaning-makings around Irishness in England promoted by the *Irish Post* acted as a resource by which individual Irish people could speak against hegemonic understandings of Irishness during the suspect community period. For example, a “veteran Irish community activist” quoted in the *Irish Post*’s 30th anniversary publication claimed that “it was easier to go into work when you had read the Irish Post” as it “provided the arguments that people needed to respond to the criticism” (Doyle, 2000, pp. 45-46).

While the *Irish Post* represented a resource for those Irish already in England, the new wave of Irish migrants arriving in England in the 1980s, as well as the emergence of a specific second generation Irish culture, exemplified by bands such as the Pogues, changed the profile of Irishness in England (although Campbell (1999) argues that the Pogues themselves “tended to gravitate towards a narrow, essentialist form of Irishness” and that a subtler form of second generation Irish music was exemplified by the work of John Lydon

and the Smiths). Similarly, as already mentioned, emerging multicultural initiatives sought to advertise alternative, more authentic, positive versions of Irishness – an early attempt at this was the Sense of Ireland festival hosted at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London in 1980. Such state support, at least at a local level, allowed negative, stereotyped portrayals of Irishness to be challenged. A high-profile example of this was the support offered to the Irish in Britain Representation Group by the GLC in protesting a cartoon published by the *London Evening Standard* in October 1982 describing the Irish as “the ultimate in psychopathic horror” and depicting them as fang-toothed ghoulish figures wielding knives, bombs and drills (Curtis, 1984; Nagle, 2009).

The third period, which I’ve termed ‘Riverdance revivalism’ after Neil O’Boyle’s (2006) use of the term to describe a particular period in Irish advertising, is a period which can be dated from the mid-nineties to the present day: it coincides with the advent of the Peace Process in Northern Ireland, and is characterised by more positive, although not necessarily more informed, depictions of Irishness in the media. Riverdance is emblematic of this highly stylised form of Irishness, but this period has also seen Irish people occupy positions of power within the media, not just within popular entertainment, where Irish people often had a certain presence, but also in other areas. This period coincides with Irishness being integrated into a kind of multicultural strand within England, along with the public celebration of Irish events: for example, officially-sanctioned St. Patrick’s Day parades are now an annual event on the calendars of most English cities.

It should be emphasised that the transition from the ‘suspect community’ period to the ‘Riverdance revivalism’ period did not occur overnight, and nor did one replace the other straightforwardly in linear time. Rather, there is more of a dynamic relationship between the two, and it could be argued that the seeds of the high-profile nature of Irish culture in the 1990s were set in the more localised Irish community arts initiatives taking place in the

1980s. Similarly, it could be argued that the popularity of Irish culture that coincided with the nascent peace process occurred as a form of a reaction to the privations of the suspect community era, both on the part of the wider population and the Irish in England. Certainly it would appear that, on an individual level, many of those who had lived through the suspect community phase welcomed the new-found popularity of Irishness as representing an improvement in their everyday lives. While this may be constituted as a form of strategic essentialism, the significance of these everyday consequences should not be underestimated and the transition in what it meant to 'live Irish' in England will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Similarly, the opening up of opportunities to celebrate Irish publicly that occurred at this time was also greeted with general enthusiasm, as discussed in Chapter 6.

However, it can be argued that these celebrations are as subject to the failings of multicultural representation as anything else. If there is a specific form of "saris, samosas and steel drums" multiculturalism that applies to the Irish, this could be termed "craic, céilís and Celticism". Nagle (2005) has argued that the success of a certain type of Irishness, often characterised by a sort of primitivist Celtic-tinged celebration is an example of "acceptable alterity" and that Irishness is only allowed to enhance Britain's rich, cultural heterogeneity on certain terms. While this form of strategic essentialism might seem a worthwhile exercise to the Irish in England themselves in achieving popularity and acceptance by gaining a place in the public sphere through the use of certain types of popular Irish culture, Nagle argues that:

In a postcolonial sense this is problematic, in that rather than traditional culture providing a source of counterhegemonic struggle against the imposition of an inferior Irish identity, it more likely represents the confirmation of essentialist notions of difference. In other words, though the Irish [organisers] may think that Irish traditional

culture represents a positive identity and provides pluralism, the “colonial gaze” operates as the once-colonized find their authenticity prescribed, hierarchized, and fetishised as cultural surplus value (Nagle, 2005, pp. 569-570).

It might be argued that, for a minority culture to be afforded a presence in the mainstream because some aspect of that culture is fashionable, is an unsustainable form of visibility: things that are in fashion can just as quickly fall out of fashion. It should also be pointed out that the increase in popularity of Irishness has not necessarily meant an end to negative stereotypes of Irishness in the English media, as evidenced by the *Daily Telegraph* article discussed in Chapter 1. Thus, it might be argued that the advent of the Riverdance revivalism period has not represented a clean break with the negativity associated with the suspect community period. Similarly, possibly arising out of the siege mentality of this period, letters decrying perceived negative stereotyping of Irish people are still printed relatively commonly in the *Irish Post*. However, interestingly, these letters are now regularly framed in terms of the Irish not receiving their due as a minority group in multicultural Britain, as in the following example:

All the negative stereotypes of the volatile, violent, stupid, drunken and feckless Irishman portrayed with impunity on the BBC. The BBC wouldn't dare allow any other racial group to be portrayed in the manner just described. They wouldn't permit such racial stereotypes of the Jewish or the Pakistani. [sic] They know if they did the whole elaborate and well-oiled machinery of the Race Relations industry would click into action with alarming self-righteous vigour. The obvious conclusion is that it is permissible to insult and denigrate the Irish but other racial groups are strictly taboo (Barrett, 2007, p. 23).

A possibly more sustainable form of visibility is the growing presence of Irish names and accents in mainstream media. It is possible to attribute this to the ‘upwardly mobile’

characterisation of the Irish in England, and this is the line regularly taken by the *Irish Post*. For example, a headline in the February 17th, 2007 issue reads “Irish stars are rising on prime-time British TV” and attributes the growing Irish presence on Saturday evening television shows to the “charisma” that they add. The article goes on to quote a film critic as saying “It’s great that so many Irish people are so successful over here and I can imagine it getting even better for them” (Hennessy, 2007, p. 10).

However, in line with the arguments above, this situating of the high-profile nature of individual Irish celebrities within a narrative of the continued improvement of the lot of the Irish, collectively, in England, is not necessarily unproblematic either. Bronwen Walter, in noting the “recent explosion over the last decade of Irish accents in the English media as presenters of current affairs, gardening and travel programmes” has suggested that this may be attributed to Irish voices signalling “verbal fluency, a greater range of emotional registers and warmth, summed up in the notion of ‘the craic’” (Walter, 2008c, p. 176). Thus, while the shift from the Irish accent as an object of derision and a marker of stupidity to an object of admiration and a marker of warmth and fun undoubtedly represents progress, it can still be located within a fetishised discourse of “craic, céilís and Celticism”. Also, as Walter points out, Irish accents vary in ‘acceptability’, with the “Southern Irish” accent now classed among the most popular for English audiences (Walter, 2008c). The very notion of a single “southern Irish” accent (as opposed to a Northern Irish accent, presumably) both homogenises the Irish in eliding regional and class differences, and is exclusionary with regard to those who may identify as Irish, but do not have the right accent. The most high-profile example of this would be those of Irish descent.

This underlines something of a paradox in the reframing of Irishness as an ethnicity. To conceptualise Irishness in ethnic, rather than national terms would suggest that it is multi-generational and not dependent on having been born in Ireland. Indeed, one of the

arguments for treating Irishness as an ethnicity was that certain health disadvantages experienced by Irish migrants in England were also being experienced by the second and third generation descendants of such migrants (Harding & Balarajan, 1996, 2001). However, the lack of an Irish accent renders the second and third generations invisible, making it harder to claim both Irishness and minority status.

3.5 The second generation Irish within the ‘hegemonic domain’ of England

As noted in Chapter 2, Hickman et al (2005) describe the second generation Irish as being at the intersection of two hegemonic domains, Ireland and England, with the English domain being an incorporating one, denying the difference of Irishness. The pressure to conform to “being English” felt by the informants in the Irish 2 Project is exacerbated by what they see as a lack of encouragement or understanding of Irish identity and articulations of Irish identity and difference as being risible.

Hickman et al conceptualise these “negative and estranging” responses to the second generation’s ‘unacceptable’ claims of allegiance to Ireland as being a reaction to their disruption of the association of whiteness with understood discourses of Englishness - a discourse which, they claim, does not include an acceptance of internal difference at the level of cultural belonging. In other words, to be white and to speak with an English accent is to be assumed to be English, and countering this notion takes a great deal of effort. Bronwen Walter (2008c) has argued that accent operates in a similar manner for Irish migrants in England as physical appearance does for other ethnic minorities, with audibility taking the place of visibility. However, this has the effect of excluding English-born children from family ethnic identities “in ways which are not extended, or allowed, to the second generations of ‘visible’ minorities” (p.175). She has suggested that the second generation’s English accents place them at a “disjuncture between their senses of

belonging to a distinctive cultural background and their entitlement to express this publicly” (p.179).

It should be pointed out that the very term “second generation Irish” is a contested one, as pointed out by Bronwen Walter herself, appearing as it does “to tie children firmly back into their parent’s situation of migrancy rather than acknowledging their own more permanent status of hybridity in a multicultural society” (Walter, 2004, p. 374). Indeed, Walter points out that, among a group of women interviewees in Manchester, none labelled themselves as “second generation Irish” rather choosing a range of identifications from ‘Irish’ to ‘Irish descent’ to ‘English’, and including hybrid identifications such as Irish-Mancunian, half-English/half-Irish, British-Irish and Anglo-Irish (although not in its “Protestant sense”). Walter describes the disinclination of her informants to describe themselves as ‘second generation Irish’ as indicating its technical, academic usage. Having said that, there is currently no other available term that specifically describes the children of Irish migrants who still identify with Irishness. This issue will be explored again using my own empirical data in Chapter 8.

Hickman et al identify five separate positionings that emerge over the course of their research: ‘being English’, ‘not being English/British’, ‘being Irish’, ‘being half-Irish and half-English/British’ and ‘being local’. They stress that these positionings do not represent a continuum along which it is possible to chart degrees of assimilation, but rather that given a particular context:

One of these points of identification may represent the narrative that an individual may utilise in response to the question ‘are you Irish or English’ or in response to their difference being denied or rendered problematic (Hickman et al., 2005, p. 166).

The fifth option, that of being local, is worthy of further elaboration. The emphasis on locational specificity highlights the way in which those hyphenated identities that have emerged have been largely localised. While no prominent ‘British-Irish’ or ‘English-Irish’ equivalent of the relatively unproblematic ‘Irish-American’ identity is available to be articulated, identifications such as ‘London Irish’, ‘Birmingham Irish’, ‘Mancunian Irish’ are common and widely recognised as ‘valid’ (Walter, 2001). Many participants in the Irish 2 Project claimed to identify equally strongly with Irishness and with the city of their birth, while not particularly identifying with Englishness.

Also, in areas with long-standing Irish communities, a distinct hybridised Irish culture has emerged. For example, in Marion Leonard’s study of Irish communities in Liverpool, many of her respondents discussed music-making and Irish dancing classes as part of a Liverpool-Irish family tradition. Irish dancing in particular was seen as something that was passed down the generations, with different generations of the same families being tutored by the same dancing instructor. She argued that this represented an articulation of a double sense of belonging both to a home of past ancestors and to a local community within Liverpool founded upon a shared ethnic identity (Leonard, 2005, p. 522).

It was also remarked upon by Leonard’s respondents that the second and third generation Liverpool-Irish seem to recognise that cultural past-times such as Irish dancing and traditional music are of more importance (or at least of more marked importance) to them than to family members in Ireland. This may be constructed as the kind of ‘excessive’ Irishness referred to by recent migrants, but can also be constructed as an example of a performative dimension to diasporic Irishness that does not necessarily reflect or refer to the ways in which Irishness is performed in Ireland, and is not dependent on same for a perceived authenticity.

While those living in Ireland might regard these activities as quaint, the performance practices had operation in England as a method of marking out the respondents' genuine sense of themselves as Irish. The point is not that the respondents were acting out a pre-existing Irishness but, through their activities, were producing a performance of Irishness and, in so doing, were working to produce themselves as Irish (Leonard, 2005, pp. 521-522).

However, this is not necessarily true for all localised Irish communities. For example, in Gilzean and McAuley's research among the Irish of Huddersfield, a mention of the origins of a dancing teacher as "coming over" from Ireland as a teenager, is interpreted in the context of the discussion, as being a means of emphasising the "legitimacy of the transmission of the dance" (Gilzean & McAuley, 2002, p. 69). Therefore, it should not be imagined that all localised Irish communities are necessarily self-contained and can perpetuate their own Irish identities without reference to the 'homeland' for authentication.

It would appear probable that where second generation integration is occurring, it is at a local rather than a national scale. While to follow the old assimilationist hypothesis and assume that the second generation unproblematically identify as 'white English' would appear to be patently false given the evidence, they may identify as Londoners, Mancunians, Liverpoolians etc. without much difficulty. The importance of attending to local identification when analysing second generation integration is not of course, confined to the Irish in England. For example, it has been noted that second generation Puerto Ricans in New York refer to themselves as 'New Yoricans' (Orbe & Drummond, 2009) while the work of Viola-Donata Rauch (2009) emphasises the extent to which second generation Turkish immigrants in Berlin identify as Berliners rather than as Turkish or German. Reflecting this trend towards researching the second generation at a city-based rather than a national level, Thomson & Crul (2007) have recently emphasised that

focusing on specific local conditions allows more nuanced answers to the general question of second generation integration to be found, particularly with regard to “the dynamic interplay between structure, culture and personal agency”. What a study of the second generation Irish in England can specifically contribute to this turn to the local in second generation studies is a high-profile example of the construction of a specific hybrid identity comprised of the local and the national, which allows those who claim this identity to negotiate their own place both in the cities of their birth and with regard to the nationality of their parents. In addition, given that this thesis draws on constructions of authentic Irishness from both the migrant and the second generation, it is also an opportunity to examine the ways in which the migrant generation conceptualise the localised identities of the second generation.

3.6 Summary

This chapter has provided an overview of the literature examining the link between multicultural policies in Britain and the ways in which it is argued that this has led to essentialist minority identities becoming entrenched. It has examined the progress of Irishness as a minority identity in England from myth of homogeneity, through suspect community to officially enshrined ‘ethnic minority’. In doing so, it has posed the question as to whether this has entailed the promotion of a certain commodified version of Irishness as authentic. It has also examined the specific case of the second generation Irish in England and how they may have their identities inauthenticated by prevailing discourses as to what constitutes Irishness in England, and examined local identifications as a means of counteracting this.

Taking Chapters 2 & 3 in tandem, it is the contention of this thesis that a focus on the discourses of authenticity available to and employed by the Irish in England in

constructing their own identities is essential in understanding how Irishness acts both as a diasporic and as a minority ethnic identity. A study of the Irish in England, where Irishness is simultaneously a diasporic and an ethnic minority identity, and due to the proximity of the two countries, constantly re-inscribed by contemporary imaginings of national identity in the 'homeland' provides a unique insight into how such identities are discursively constructed.

Returning to the argument in Chapter 1 about the situating of authentic personal Irish identities within collective personal Irish identities and the role of reflection, recognition and ownership in shaping this, what is required, and what is offered by this thesis in order to understand these processes is a systematic analysis of the discourses drawn upon by individual Irish people in speaking about Irish authenticity. Chapter 4 lays out the methodological approach by which this question was addressed.

Chapter 4: Methodology, data generation and analysis

It is an artefact of thesis writing, that in order to express concepts and procedures in a legible and coherent manner, the messy, convoluted and often frankly incoherent thought processes by which the ideas have been arrived upon are elided in favour of familiarly-structured paragraphs on reassuringly crisp and clean white paper. This is nowhere more true than in writing about methodology: the structures of the form demand a clear cause and effect narrative for what is an inherently iterative process. All this is by way of preamble for a caveat as to the structure of this chapter; although it is divided into two halves, this division is a neat one only in retrospect. The first half of this chapter explores the nature of the discursive and the development of an analytical lens, which in turn influenced my methodological approach, and the second outlines the rationale for the methodology used and the means by which the data was generated before turning back to how the analysis itself was developed. In reality, my initial theorising around the type of analysis appropriate for the research question informed both my choice of methodologies and the way I approached the interviews and discussion groups; the nature of the data that emerged further refined the analytical process. The non-chronological nature of the following discussion should therefore be borne in mind.

4.1 Developing an analytical lens: The nature of discourse and its relation to identity

In discussing what it might mean to approach the question of Irish identity from a discursive psychological perspective, it is first necessary to define what constitutes discourse and then to address the second implicit question on the kind of data with which discursive researchers might concern themselves. With regard to the first question, a distinction can be drawn here between those operating in a conversational analytic context who argue that that researchers should concern themselves solely with the immediate

features of interaction and those who take a wider, post-structuralist view of discourse in the Foucauldian tradition (Wetherell, 1998). This thesis follows the latter viewpoint in taking a broad view of what constitutes discourse and thus, what the researcher should take into account as relevant context in generating a corpus of data:

It is important to note that the concept of *discourse* in this usage is not purely a ‘linguistic’ concept. It is about language *and* practice. It attempts to overcome the traditional distinction between what one *says* (language) and what one *does* (practice). Discourse, Foucault argues, constructs the topic. It defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It governs the way that a topic can be meaningfully talked about and reasoned about. It also influences how ideas are put into practice and used to regulate the conduct of others (Hall, 2001, p. 72).

Such an approach appeals to those who are “much less interested in the nature and sequencing of activities in talk and much more interested in semantic content and modes of representation” (Wetherell, 2001, p. 388). It is this kind of epistemological slant that I believe to be most relevant to this thesis and research question, as I feel that a narrowly defined focus on the nature and sequencing of activities in talk would lead to an impoverished understanding of Irish identity. Rather, in order to examine how identity is constituted through discourse, Hall argues that three components must be attended to:

Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside, discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies (Hall, 1996b, p. 4).

Drawing on this, in an attempt to analyse constructions of Irishness, one must attend to the specific historical and institutional sites in which Irishness is constructed (which could

range from the entire history of Irish migration to England to the immediate context of the research situation), the specific discursive formations and practices employed in order to construct Irishness and how precisely these are enunciated. As such, a broader concept of discourse as not merely a linguistic concept can allow for a wider perspective on the multifaceted ways in which Irishness is understood and constructed.

In order to answer these kinds of broader questions about identity, the immediate data (however this is generated) must be situated in a wider context, whether that be social, historical, political or cultural. Wetherell (1998, 2001) has focused on the work of Laclau and Mouffe as a good example of this latter kind of post-structuralist, Foucauldian approach to discourse in equating it with human meaning-making processes in general:

For Laclau and Mouffe it makes no sense to distinguish between the discursive and the extra-discursive or talk and the world – there is rather an unceasing human activity of making meanings (the horizon of discourse) from which social agents and objects, social institutions and social structures emerge configured in ever-changing patterns of relations (Wetherell, 1998, p. 393).

A brief ‘worked’ example will illustrate how this “unceasing human activity of making meanings” applies in the context of the Irish in England. On attending a comedy fundraiser on behalf of Aisling, a London-based charity for elderly Irish people, as part of the ‘informal participant observation’ stage of my pilot work, I noted that the comedian Dara O’Briain’s routine about loving his ‘English’ child (a more complete version of which can be found in his book *Tickling the English* (O Briain, 2009)) bore a number of remarkable similarities to issues that were raised by the respondents in Breda Gray’s research among female Irish migrants in London when discussing the possibility of raising children in London (Gray, 2006). These migrants found it difficult to imagine an ‘Irish’ future either

for their children or themselves, foreseeing an ‘either/or’ scenario in which potential children can only identify as English, and in which they themselves become Irish ‘others’ in an English family, as in the following extract from a group discussion where a woman named Helen is talking:

“...that would be the cut off point where, if my kids grew up here, they would see me as being Irish, and having a bit of a funny accent, but they would grow up English and their kids would be English...” (Gray, 2006, p. 210)

Helen is here making use of an available discourse of Irish authenticity being dependent on birthplace, which is also drawn upon by Dara O’Briain in his comedic routine. To conceptualise these two utterances as being linked is to understand the nature of discourse in a similar way to Laclau (1989) who has posited that society can be understood as a vast argumentative texture through which people construct their own reality. Wetherell has drawn on Laclau’s theories, specifically his blurring of the distinction between verbal and nonverbal actions, and has suggested they can be incorporated into a research approach thus:

Laclau’s notion of society as argumentative texture collapses any easy distinction between discursive and extra-discursive, talk and things external to talk. In this perspective, even the particular words which are used evoke discursive history and current social relations. Utterances are threads in this respect: they connect with other utterances and other conversations, texts and documents. What things mean and what identities, versions and narratives signify depends on the broader discursive context ... These struggles create accepted truths and ways of understanding who people are, what things are, how they work and how they should be. Such an approach is interested in the discursive links which connect representations and accounts in one conversation, text,

documents, etc. in a culture and with trying to decipher the power relations which lead to the emergence of precisely these patterns (Wetherell, 2001, p. 389).

Returning to the notion of ‘the English child’, both the talk of the Irish women in Breda Gray’s interviews and Dara O’Briain’s comedy routine should be seen as threads that connect to the broader argumentative texture of what constitutes Irishness and whether a child born of Irish parents in England should be considered an English or an Irish child. Such utterances are shaped by broader accepted truths that have arisen in Irish culture, English culture, the culture of the Irish in England, and the power relations which mould how the three interconnect.

While attending to the ways in which power relations shape discourse is undoubtedly important, I am unconvinced by the strand of Foucauldian argument that insists that discourse can only be understood through power relations i.e. that power relations *produce*, rather than shape this discourse. This ‘ubiquity of power’ viewpoint argues that power in society cannot be separated out from the institutions that shape everyday life and that “power is present in our approach to things insofar as the objects we relate to are always discursive objects, produced by and in discourse” (Andersen, 2003, p. 3).

Parker (1992) has criticised the use of the ‘power-knowledge’ couplet in Foucauldian research as eliding the difference between the two and argues that while discourses do have a role in reproducing power relations and have ideological effects, this does not mean discourse and power necessarily entail each other. Drawing on this argument, with regard to my own research interests, I feel that to focus on discourse as being commensurate with and determined by power relations places too little emphasis on how *individuals* may construct their own identities through negotiating with, and re-interpreting available discourses. The Foucauldian tradition tends to overlook the possibility of individual agency

by conceptualising the individual subject as produced within discourse. While the subject can become the bearer of the kind of knowledge which discourse produces and the object through which power is relayed, it cannot stand outside power/knowledge as its source and author. Indeed, it is argued that the very notion of the sense of people as free to choose is itself a historical product and the effect of power/knowledge complexes (Hall, 2001; Wetherell, 1996).

Therefore, as Emerson and Frosh put it, Foucauldian-inspired discourse analyses which focus on the centrality of power in discourse are:

...fascinating and important in demonstrating that powerful social discourses actually construct consciousness, but ... also tends to present the individuals concerned as 'judgmental dupes', without offering insight into the personal dynamics which might make these discourses so salient for the individuals concerned (Emerson & Frosh, 2004, p. 7).

A truly social *psychological* approach to discourse as opposed to a sociological one needs to allow for the individual within the discourse as something more than a mouthpiece through which the discourse is communicated. In arguing for individual subjects as more than judgemental dupes, a gap arises around the way that individuals may position themselves within a particular discourse and possibly more importantly, the extent to which they have a choice as to how they position themselves within these discourses (Davies & Harré, 2001). Given the overarching theme of this thesis, i.e. to examine the role of discourses of authenticity when situating personal Irish identities in collective Irish identities, it is necessary to address this gap. One means of doing this is to examine the *processes* through which individuals position themselves within discourse. In other words,

‘why did this individual make this utterance here and how does this connect with other utterances, conversations, texts and documents in the broader discursive context?’

4.1.1 Critical discursive social psychology

In an effort to address this, Wetherell (1998) suggests a ‘synthetic’ analytic approach, and a ‘critical discursive social psychology’ as a discipline which focuses on the *situated* flow of discourse and which “looks at the formation and negotiation of psychological states, identities and interactional and intersubjective events” (Wetherell, 1998, p. 405):

On the one hand, we try and study how talk is organised as a social action in its immediate context, the subject positions in play and the rhetorical and interactional consequences of this organisation, focusing on participants’ orientations to clarify and identify these elements. On the other hand, we assume that talk ... assumes regular patterns that reveal the shared sense-making resources of a sample or which may be specific to a site, institution or characteristic of a broader social context and historical period. These resources are always, of course, customized for the particular discursive context but are revealing about the taken for granted and indicate the marks of power relations (Edley & Wetherell, 2001, p. 441).

With relation to identity work, such an approach implies that ‘identities are in part conferred, through positioning, and in part actively constructed, contested and negotiated by active speakers’ – identity is “partly but not wholly determined by larger social meanings; a speaker is active, for example, in taking up and contesting these” (S. Taylor, 2006, p. 95).

I have taken this as a useful analytic perspective from which to approach this thesis. From such a perspective, larger social meanings of Irishness, and conceptions of Irishness and Irish authenticity characteristic of the Irish in England or the Irish in Ireland (the various 'hegemonic domains' in the words of Hickman et al. (2005)) will influence the way individuals construct their own sense of Irishness. At the same time, individuals are active in negotiating their own identities with or against these larger social meanings and do so in a way that is dependent on the immediate social context through the taking up of positions and the use or rejection of shared sense-making resources. There is an inherent tension here between the agency of the individual in constructing his or her own identities and the limitations placed on same by the constraints of subjectivity and meaning-making. These tensions themselves are central to the process of identification and may be manifested by individuals in the taking up of 'troubled' positions i.e. while the individual has agency in constructing their own identity, these identities are available to be challenged by others as either negatively valued, as inconsistent with larger social meanings, or as inconsistent with previous constructions of identity (S. Taylor, 2005, 2006; Wetherell, 1998). The constraints placed on the ability of individuals to construct an identity by previous, possibly contradictory constructions of identity have been explored by Taylor, who suggests:

These prior positionings are a constraint on speaker's identity work because they trouble new positionings which can appear to be inconsistent with them. They establish limits to the range of identity work which can take place within any occasion of talk and thereby create continuity across occasions of talk and a likelihood that patterns will be repeated (S. Taylor, 2005, p. 48).

Limits to agency in expressing one's identity are not only provided by external constraints and the possibility of challenge by others but are also provided by past identity work on the

speaker's own part which may be inconsistent with the present project of identity construction and as such needs to be accounted for. The speaker constructs his or her identity not only in dialogue with others, but also with his or her past, present and future selves.

4.1.2 Continuity of identity and the narrative approach

This raises the issue of individual experience and perception of continuity of identity, with certain social constructionist approaches having been criticised for “overplaying the disorderly, chaotic, variable and flux-like nature of self-experience” (Crossley, 2000, p. 527). There have been a number of approaches that seek to counteract this tendency. For example Hollway and Jefferson's (2000) work from a psychodynamic perspective incorporates insights from psychoanalytic theory to argue that there is an unconscious dimension to the individual which may account for why people invest in constructing their ‘selves’ in a particular way. Along these lines, Redman (2005) suggests that individuals draw on unconscious resources to construct a narrative of the self as continuous and unified.

Other theorists operating in a narrative tradition agree that analysis should “consider the special importance which ‘first-person narration’ or ‘self-narration’ may have as part of identity work” (S. Taylor, 2005, p. 46), and that the individual's use of narrative as a resource in constructing his or her own identity may allow for a form of agency and continuity of identity. However, they argue that the use of psychoanalytic concepts is not necessary, nor indeed helpful when analysing these narratives. This perspective tends to view what exactly constitutes ‘narrative’ as it relates to identity in a similar manner to Floya Anthias:

A narrative is an account that tells a story, and a narrative of location ... is an account that tells a story about how we place ourselves in terms of social categories such as those of gender, ethnicity and class at a specific time and space ... The narrative is also both a story about who and what we identify with ... and is also a story about our practices and the practices of others, including wider social practices and how we experience them. These stories do not necessarily have a beginning, plot or ending; they are composed of fragments whose place in the whole text is emergent and at times contradictory (Anthias, 2002, pp. 498-499).

This latter point is crucial in that 'narratives' in a research context should not be understood in 'literary' terms as being bounded, coherent entities. Indeed, an advantage of the narrative-discursive framework posited by Taylor is that it takes a broad definition of what constitutes 'narrative'. Narrative is not looked for in "a single extended stretch of talk which has perhaps been elicited by a single question" but by concentrating on the "sequential or consequential structuring of the version of a personal biography produced in a particular interaction" e.g. the research interview (S. Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 25). Therefore, narrative analysis need not be concentrated on those portions of interviews where participants presented their life stories, relatively uninterrupted with a clear beginning, middle and end, and without embarking upon tangents.

This notion of the use of narrative in talk has led some theorists to argue that some form of continuity of identity is not incompatible with social constructionist theories of identity, but that the two can be reconciled by paying attention to the "rehearsed nature of the talk which is part of the extended process through which identities are constructed and taken up" (S. Taylor, 2005, p. 48). Taylor argues that these previous versions of narratives relating to identity act as a discursive resource and argues that they both enable and constrain a speaker's identity work:

Although identity work is situated and a new version of an ‘up to now’ life narrative is presented on a particular occasion as part of a particular interaction, it is a new *version* and not a wholly new creation. The speaker will almost inevitably be drawing on previous tellings of the same story. A speaker’s investment in certain subject positions can be understood as a consequence of some identity work becoming established through repetition and rehearsal (S. Taylor, 2005, p. 48).

Jerome Bruner’s (1987) concept of life as narrative may be useful at this point. He argues that the ‘autobiographies’ that individuals form reflect the prevailing theories about ‘possible lives’ that are part of one’s culture and are replete with cultural, interpersonal and linguistic influences. Similarly, Anthias (2002) argues that individual narratives “draw on and are therefore derived from collective stories told around us” and that these stories “are ways in which we try to organise our experiences in terms of certain conventional norms or rules” (Anthias, 2002, p. 499). These collective stories, shaped by conventional cultural norms, have been described by Bruner (Bruner, 1987, 1991) as ‘canonical narratives’.

Bruner’s notion of ‘canonical narratives’ can be equated, more or less, to Edley and Wetherell’s earlier reference to the shared sense-making resources of a society. What the two concepts have in common is a conviction that wider social meanings are both drawn upon in an individual’s articulation of his or her own identity, and act as a constraint to this articulation. Thus, individuals are active participants in accounting for and situating themselves in relation to Bruner’s ‘possible lives’. In the context of the research interview, Emerson and Frosh (2004) argue that personal narrative sense-making reflects the impact of, as well as choices made in relation to, canonical narratives and organising social discourses. Therefore, in order to access this particular form of discursive work, Taylor (2005) suggests a narrative-discursive approach which “assumes that identity work is both social and individual:

A speaker employs established and recognisable resources to construct an identity which also refers to the unique circumstances of a particular life. Part of that identity work may be the construction of an up-to-now life narrative, and part of *that* the telling of a story in which the speaker is a character (S. Taylor, 2005, pp. 48-49).

Of course, the use of the word ‘story-telling’ in a research context, raises associations with accounts that are in some way fictionalised. Watson points out that “personal experience narratives often need to be told as a ‘good story’ with certain aesthetic requirements” and that these requirements may lead the teller to “play fast and loose with what might be recognized in folk terms as ‘the facts of the matter’” (Watson, 2006, p. 371).

However, and this may appear counter-intuitive, it can be argued that when the topic under discussion is the way in which individuals construct their identities, this tendency to ‘not let the facts get in the way of a good story’, may not actually matter that much, given that the construction of identities are always negotiated in dialogue and are an ongoing process that is never finally and fully accomplished. A certain looseness with documented facts, or even outright ‘untruths’ in narrative may be seen as another strategy by which identity can be performed. To argue that the ways in which identity are constructed have to be strictly factual, is to imply that there is such a thing as a ‘true’ identity that can be accessed. From a methodological point of view, it might also be argued that a focus on narrative necessarily entails a certain ‘suspension of disbelief’. Taylor (2010) argues that it is worthwhile to treat interviews, to some extent, as reportage or witness accounts of the participants’ experience, or in other words, as ‘facts’. However, she posits that the researcher’s concern should be with “how such facts are shaped and given meaning in the talk” (S. Taylor, 2010, p. 37).

Useful as the narrative-discursive approach is, it has certain limitations with regard to this particular research in building a wider picture of the discourses that are available to/widespread among the Irish in England. As discussed earlier, the approach is based on an assumption that larger understandings which prevail in the speaker's social and cultural context act both as a resource and as a constraint on identity work (S. Taylor & Littleton, 2006). Wider understandings of Irishness can be identified and analysed through attending to the use of interpretative repertoires and positionings across narratives and the similarities and differences in the ways such repertoires and positionings are employed.

However, for the purposes of this research, there is an over-reliance on personalised biography within the narrative-discursive approach as it has been employed thus far. There are large swathes of vital interview and particularly focus group data that are not expressible in terms of personal biographical narratives. While a narrative approach might be taken as adequate if the topic of my research was to trace how biographical Irish identities are constructed, or solely around how Irish identities are constructed as personally authentic, it is not quite sufficient in addressing how collective Irish identities are recognised as authentic or, for that matter, how others may be positioned as inauthentic. For example, while this approach allows for the viewpoint that "identities are in part conferred, through positioning, and in part actively constructed, contested and negotiated by active speakers" (S. Taylor, 2006, p. 95), I am not sure that it allows for the 'conferring' work done by speakers around the perceived identities of other people, a point that is particularly salient when researching authenticity. While authentic 'self'-identities might be constructed through narrative, authentic 'other'-identities, when they exist as something more than a foil to the speaker's own identity constructions, draw on discursive resources beyond narrative. It is the contention of this thesis that this 'conferring work' can be examined with a greater emphasis on the use of rhetoric as a discursive resource.

4.1.3 The Bakhtinian tradition and the importance of rhetoric

Another aspect of identity as ‘story-telling’ is that an audience, whether present or imagined, is implied. At this point, it is useful to incorporate some of the theories of Mikhail Bakhtin (and Valentin Vološinov)⁹, as well as Billig’s related theorising around the role of rhetoric in conversation. Much of the work that follows in the Bakhtinian tradition draws on his theory of language as dialogic interaction:

In the absence of a real addressee, an addressee is presupposed in the person, so to speak, of a normal representative of the social group to which the speaker belongs ... I give myself verbal shape from another’s point of view, ultimately from the point of view of the community to which I belong (Vološinov, 1994, p. 58).

This notion of giving oneself ‘verbal shape from another’s point of view’ corresponds with the theories of identity that have been discussed so far as constructed through discourse, but adds an extra dimension in the notion that any formulation of identity is always done in a dialogic manner towards a ‘real or supposed addressee’. This is not confined to *speaking* about oneself, but also applies to any form of self-presentation, as “verbal intercourse is inextricably interwoven with communication of other types, all stemming from the common ground of production communication” (Vološinov, 1994, p. 59).

In other words, utterances are situated within a ‘broader horizon of discourse’, but one that allows for the existence of voices of contradiction. Individuals’ talk and self-descriptions are not solely their own, but are suffused with past experience and what other people have said and done. If, as Bakhtin argues, “every conversation is full of transmissions and interpretations of other people’s words” (Bakhtin, 1994, p. 77), then it is possible to

⁹ I do not intend to address the vexed historical question of authorship.

position oneself in alliance or opposition to these. Billig's (1996) work around the use of rhetoric and argument in conversation builds on this. Billig underlines the importance of rhetoric in all discourse, and that argumentative dimensions are not confined to moments of discursive conflict, but rather have a wider importance in conversation. The relevance of this to identity, is that this leads individuals, in the interests of preserving their rhetorical stake in the interaction, to identify with, to contradict, or to simultaneously identify with and contradict a present or imagined audience. This is especially relevant when considering identity as situationally determined, and certain identities in particular as contested.

Feelings of personal identity can be bound up with criticisms and justifications ... It is not simply that the desire to justify or criticize stems from an inner feeling called an 'identity', but, in a real sense, the sense of one's identity can emerge within a context of argumentation (Billig, 1996, p. 277).

Returning again to the overarching theme of the dialectic between personal and collective Irish identities and the role played by authenticity in this, this context of argumentation is useful in examining how such identities are articulated. Therefore, again with the aim of attending to the specific discursive formations and practices employed in order to construct Irishness and how precisely these are enunciated, the ways in which Irishness is constructed rhetorically should be a topic of investigation. Narratives of 'living Irish' will always occur in the context of possible contradiction and criticism (of possibilities such as being labelled inauthentically Irish, being Irish in the wrong way, or of reflecting the negative stereotypes associated with being Irish) and are therefore likely to employ rhetorical defences against such. Indeed, it might be argued that in the case of this research where I, as the interviewer, was myself Irish, that I became an embodiment of such possible criticisms and thus made such rhetorical defences more likely or at the very least,

influenced how such defences were constructed. By tracing how such defences are constructed within the context of the conversations that make up the data in this thesis, one can locate the points of contestation around the topic of an authentic Irish identity.

4.1.4 Employing discursive concepts

The central premise of this research, therefore, runs like this: Irishness has both a personal and a collective aspect and exists as both something that is lived and as a wider concept. Discourses of authenticity surrounding the latter affects the way that a collective Irishness is identified with, as well as the way in which a personal Irishness is constructed as being ‘true to oneself’. This in turn shapes narratives of ‘living Irish’ as well as the wider question of who is entitled to claim Irishness. The analysis, then, will first focus on personal narratives of ‘living Irish’ in England, and the points on which these might discursively converge or diverge from canonical narratives, and then further examine areas of contestation around constructions of authenticity, largely through attention to the rhetorical strategies used. Some discursive concepts employed in order to analyse this rhetorical work are outlined below:

Reported speech is a concept that emerges from Bakhtinian work and refers to the aforementioned observation that individual’s talk and self-descriptions are not solely their own, but are suffused with their own and others’ past experiences and what other people have said and done. Within a conversation, reported speech will refer to dialogue that is *explicitly* framed as not coming directly from the individual speaking, but rather as generated by another ‘original speaker’:

Reporting speech is not simply a “reporting”. It also involved making evaluations or assessments of what was said. Reported speech makes relevant an assessment from the

teller or recipient. The assessment component tells interlocutors how to interpret or frame the reported speech; it displays the teller's positioning toward the quote (Buttny, 2003, p. 106).

Buttny (2003) argues that a distinction can be drawn between two types of reported speech: 'direct reported speech' and 'prototypical speech'. Direct reported speech refers to instances where an individual is purportedly directly quoting the original speaker(s) i.e. dialogue of the 'he said, then I said, then she said' variety. Prototypical reported speech refers to the perceived characteristic utterances of a prototypical group member. In the case of this research, it might take the form of dialogue along the lines of, 'well, I'm sure someone who was still living in Ireland might say...' etc. Therefore, "direct reported speech purports to quote the words of an individual, while prototypical speech purports to capture the words of the group, as articulated through the prototypical individual" (Buttny, 2003, p. 106).

With regard to its use in discourse, it can have the rhetorical function of providing supposedly 'objective' evidence, of positioning the original speaker (either as an individual or as a prototypical group member) in a certain way or as a means of distancing oneself from a controversial opinion while still communicating it, by presenting it as someone else's 'work', so to speak (Buttny, 2003).

Interpretative repertoires is a concept that has emerged from discursive psychology and was developed by Potter and Wetherell (1987). They defined it as:

... a lexicon or register of terms and metaphors drawn upon to characterise and evaluate actions or events ... [they are] constituted through a limited range of terms used in particular stylistics and grammatical constructions. Often a repertoire will be organized

around specific metaphors and figures of speech (tropes) (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, pp. 139,149).

By way of illustration, Ullah's analysis of identity contestation among second generation Irish youths utilises the concept of interpretative repertoires to examine his participants' sense of pride in being Irish in the context of the then ongoing terrorist violence associated with the Troubles in Northern Ireland. He describes how the conflicting repertoires of 'terrorist' and 'rebel' were drawn upon when expressing pride in Irishness:

Second generation Irish youths could draw upon these two different repertoires to perform different duties, as the situation demanded. Thus they could condemn present day acts of Republican violence when this was required by using the terrorist repertoire. Yet they could still derive a sense of pride and positive identification with Ireland through its heroic struggle with the oppressor England, and express this through the rebel repertoire (Ullah, 1990, p. 178).

This illustrates how various interpretative repertoires may be employed to rhetorically negotiate a contested identity. Interestingly, in terms of making links to the 'wider horizon of discourse', one of the tropes around which the conflicting interpretative repertoires of 'terrorist' and 'rebel' were constructed was Republican-style Irish rebel music, particularly the music of the Wolfe Tones. This demonstrates the need for the researcher to be familiar with the wider meanings of Irishness associated with practices that are constructed as Irish, such as listening to Irish music.

Subject positions refer to the ways individuals position themselves within discourse every time they employ a narrative or an interpretive repertoire, or draw on certain voices.

Within the context of the interaction, these positions construct an identity, a self and a subjectivity:

Once having taken up a particular position as one's own, a person inevitably sees the world from the vantage point of that position and in terms of the particular images, metaphors, story lines, and concepts which are made relevant within the particular discursive practice in which they are positioned (Davies & Harré, 2001, p. 262).

Positioning oneself within a discourse has the inevitable corollary of also positioning other people (whether they are present or not). Therefore, the use of the terms, 'we', 'us', 'you' and 'they' (and in an Irish context, 'ye') can prove fruitful in analysis, as can examining how other participants in the interaction orient to these positionings and whether they are accepted or contested.

Ideological dilemmas, a concept developed by Billig et al. (1988) to describe the contradictions inherent in 'common-sense' understandings of the nature of the social world and the presence of opposing themes in everyday discourse, can also be usefully employed in analysis. For this thesis, this may be done with regard to the contested nature of Irishness and the competing 'common sense' understandings of Irishness. For example, one common sense theme may draw on territorial understandings of Irishness, arranged around the belief that only those who have been born in Ireland can claim Irishness. However, an opposed theme may stress other non-territorial understandings of Irishness, arranged around the well-known maxim, 'being born in a stable, doesn't make you a horse'. As such, in discussions where the speaker is seeking to definitively state who can be included and excluded within the category 'Irish', these two common-sense understandings will need to be accommodated and, if possible, resolved.

In carrying out analysis, the concept of ‘ideological dilemmas’ can be used alongside the concept of interpretative repertoires and can lend the latter an additional argumentative, rhetorical quality, as discussed by Nigel Edley:

The notion of ideological dilemmas carries a further implication in that it alerts us to the possibility that different interpretative repertoires of the ‘same’ social object are themselves constructed rhetorically. In other words, it implies that the different ways of talking about an object or event do not necessarily arise spontaneously and independently, but develop together as opposing positions in an unfolding, historical, argumentative exchange. (Edley, 2001, p. 204)

In other words, not only is personal, biographical narrative rehearsed, but so is social, argumentative talk. Through analysis, one can trace the ways in which speakers “work with the inconsistencies in the repertoires they draw on and try to reconcile contradictory argumentative threads” (Reynolds, Wetherell, & Taylor, 2007, p. 336).

4.1.5 Summary

By way of summation, in approaching the research question, my aims in developing a methodological approach were to generate data that would allow an examination of the ways in which personal narratives of Irishness are constructed, but also how Irishness as a concept is spoken about in a rhetorical fashion. Bearing all this in mind, the approach taken in this thesis may be characterised as being based on a narrative-discursive framework but also attending to the rhetorical nature of talk around identity *concepts* as well as personal, biographical identity. It is such an approach that has provided the foundation for the empirical chapters of this thesis.

4.2 Methods – A Rationale

The following section outlines the methods used in order to generate this data and the rationale behind them.

4.2.1 Interviews

Although the rise of alternative methodologies suggest that the primacy of the interview as a research method may be waning, it is still accurate to say that the majority of discursive approaches to social psychological research privilege interviews as a means of generating material that can be analysed as data. (As asserted by Baker (2004), the interview process from a social constructionist perspective is better described as data ‘making’ or ‘generation’ as opposed to data ‘collection’.) Wetherell argues that interviews are a means of accessing “the cultural resources people have available for telling their patch of the world” and that when drawing from a relatively large corpus of interviews, “repetition and clear patterns emerge”. She relates this to her ‘synthetic’ model of analysis, arguing that interviews are an example of how local talk connects with discursive history (Wetherell, 2003, p. 13).

While there has been some criticism of interview data as being illegitimate due to not being ‘naturally occurring’, Holstein and Gubrium have argued that this distinction is not easily made. Seemingly spontaneous, naturally occurring talk and interaction are not necessarily any more authentic or bias-free than interviews; they simply happen to have been staged by persons other than an interviewer in what have been conventionally recognised as non-interview settings. Furthermore, they argue that the development of ‘the interview society’ has made the interview ‘a naturally occurring occasion in its own right for articulating experience’ (Holstein & Gubrium, 2004, p. 155). This notion of ‘the

interview society' posits that the interview has become such a staple of modern culture over the last 50 years, and is such a routine occurrence in everyday life, whether through job applications, chat shows, news bulletins etc., that for many people, participating in a research interview will come as almost second nature.

In addition to this notion of the 'interview society', Taylor and Littleton have argued that for many people being interviewed will not only 'come naturally', but may be an enjoyable experience; "a congenial performance context for first person narration which speakers find pleasurable" (S. Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 28). They also refer to interviews as an "ongoing interaction" in which "meanings are reinforced, challenged and negotiated between interlocutors", an understanding which is crucial to a social constructionist stance on the interview process. Especially notable is the use of the word 'interlocutors' rather than 'interviewer' and 'participant' – the status of the interviewer as researcher is not seen as giving his or her utterances a privileged position, nor are they seen as neutral speech actions whose only function is to elicit a reaction from participants. Rather, the interview data is something that has been mutually constructed by both parties to the interview and the linguistic nuance of the researcher's questions becomes as analytically important as that of the interviewee's answers (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 165). This notion of the researcher as 'active' is expanded upon by Holstein and Gubrium:

Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter. Respondents are not so much repositories of knowledge – treasuries of information awaiting excavation, so to speak – as they are constructors of knowledge in collaboration with interviewers. (Holstein & Gubrium, 1999, p. 106)

However, even allowing for the interview as something that is actively constructed between both parties to the interview, Kvale (2006) has stressed the importance of attending to power relations in the interview process. He argues that, despite what he describes as the popular perception of qualitative research interviewing as a democratic and emancipatory process, the interview entails an asymmetrical power relationship between interviewer and interviewee due to the interviewer's monopoly of interpretation (Kvale, 2006, p. 484).

Given this monopoly of interpretation held by the interviewer as analyst, it might be argued that in reporting interview data, the researcher has an obligation both to the participant and the reader to provide sufficient context that alternative interpretations can be drawn. As has already been noted, from the perspective of seeing the interview as actively constructed, the researcher's questions are seen as 'just as much a topic of analysis as the interviewee's answers' (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 165). To present a snippet of interview material without any related context may be considered 'under-analysis through isolated quotation' (Antaki, Billig, Edwards, & Potter, 2003). Providing such context not only allows the reader gain a greater insight on the 'identity work' done by the interviewee, but also that done by the interviewer. Rapley (2001) argues that the interviewers' identity work is central in the interview interaction and as such is a vital aspect in the analysis and the presentation of the data (Rapley, 2001, p. 317).

In the case of this research, the interview may be seen as an encounter where I and the participant mutually constructed the notion of an authentic Irishness, and both engaged in identity work around this construction. However, due to the nature of the research, the content of the interviews focused more on the participants' accounts of 'living Irish', the construction of their own 'personal' Irish identities and how these related to canonical narratives of Irishness. This prioritisation of the personal accounts of the participants,

however, did not rule out moments where the participants questioned me about *my* personal narrative of ‘living Irish’, or positioned me as a certain type of Irish person. I will discuss such moments later in the chapter.

4.2.2 Focus groups

At first glance, a number of the arguments that are made for the validity of using interviews to access the means by which people construct identities can also be made for the focus group method. To adapt the above statements, focus groups may also be seen as “culturally rooted communication situations in which meanings are reinforced, challenged and negotiated between interlocutors in the ongoing interaction” (S. Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 28) and also that they “tell us about the cultural resources people have available for telling their patch of the world”(Wetherell, 2003, p. 13). For this reason focus groups have been described as ‘group interviews’. However, they also provide data of a different nature to individual interviews, being based on group rather than one-on-one interaction. Therefore, in a focus group scenario, research participants have the additional role of creating an audience for one another (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999, p. 4).

It has been argued that being based on the interaction of a group of peers, rather than the interaction between interviewer and interviewee, focus groups more closely resemble ordinary conversation than do interviews. While the group interaction is obviously influenced by the presence of a moderator with recording equipment, who can intervene in order to elicit responses and control turn-taking, at the same time, “participants raise and shift topics, agree and disagree, select speakers and interrupt them, laugh and fall silent, in ways they would in ordinary conversation” (Myers & Macnaghten, 1999, p. 175).

The question then becomes the various ways in which focus group data gives an insight on the construction of identity within the group interaction, and to what extent this provides a different perspective than the use of individual interviews. Munday (2006) argues that focus groups provide a particularly useful tool when researching the construction of collective identity:

The focus group provides the opportunity to study how individuals jointly construct and give meaning to phenomena. Thus, the researcher is able to observe the process through which individuals construct their own realities and make sense of themselves as a group who share common values and ways of understanding themselves and their world (Munday, 2006, p. 95).

She also argues that the ability to observe interaction as it occurs is crucial “in highlighting issues around how ... identity is produced, negotiated, affirmed and reinforced”. Therefore, if the members of a focus group can agree among themselves that they are all Irish, and that being Irish means certain things, the analytical focus can be on the processes by which agreement was reached. Such processes may include how certain things were constructed as Irish, what rhetorical devices were used within the group to prioritise certain arguments, how divergent views were accommodated and/or challenged, how various members of the group positioned themselves within the discussion, what interpretative repertoires were employed etc. etc. By analysing these processes, one can gain a sense of how Irishness is constructed and re-constructed in other discussions across England on a regular basis.

Therefore, it could be put forward that the use of focus groups allows the analysis of the ways in which a *shared*, collective sense of Irishness is constructed, whereas the use of interviews allows analysis of the ways in which a *personal* and individuated sense of

Irishness is constructed and narrated (although this is not to say that there would not be a dialogic aspect to this construction). Therefore, employing both interviews and focus groups allows the ways in which an authentic Irishness is created to be traced across both the personal and the collective.

There are practical as well as theoretical reasons for employing both focus groups and interviews. Lynn Mitchell (1999) has highlighted the capacity of focus groups to silence certain voices, who might be more forthcoming in the interview setting. While this might accurately reflect the ways in which collective understandings of identity are constructed, it risks missing out on layers of meaning and explanation which might be more forthcoming in the more private environment of the interview. Similarly, in their research among older Irish migrants living in London, Leavey et al. (2004) used a combination of focus group and interview methods “in order to obtain a richer combination of information-building”. They found that the former were useful in accessing knowledge and attitudes that were unlikely to arise through individual interviews, whereas the latter “allowed access to more personal experiences and emotive issues that may have been too sensitive and threatening to explore within a group” (Leavey et al., 2004, p. 767).

Theoretically, working on the assumption that identities are negotiated in a way that is dependent on the immediate social context through the taking up of positions and the use or rejection of shared sense-making resources, the heightened level of interaction available for analysis in focus group data may be the most suitable means of exploring this process of negotiation. However, given the argument that as well as this process of negotiation, identities also have a ‘rehearsed’ narrative component, an interview schedule which allows people the space in which to construct their own narratives, without the fear of interruption associated with focus group participation, might be the most suitable means of exploring these more personal constructions.

As outlined above, in order to fully explore the ways in which discourses of an authentic Irishness were constructed, I carried out a series of interviews, followed by group discussions, the details of which are to be found later in this chapter. In addition, in order to situate these interactions within larger social meanings of Irishness as argued above, I first engaged in activities designed to gain an understanding of what these larger social meanings might constitute, as discussed below.

4.2.3 Participant observation & media analysis

As discussed earlier, the ways in which identities are understood as being socially constructed in this thesis draws on Laclau's (1989) notion, as interpreted by Wetherell (2001), of society as argumentative texture, whereby utterances may connect with other utterances, conversations, texts and documents – in other words, the 'broader discursive context'. In order to inform one's analysis of how these broader discursive contexts are invoked, however, the researcher should have some conception of what they constitute – that is, where are these larger social meanings of Irishness to be found outside the immediate discourse of individuals?

This notion of 'broader discourses' and 'larger social meanings' is, of course, somewhat ephemeral, and difficult for the researcher to access. However, I would argue that there are two major means by which sufficient understanding of these issues can be gained in order to inform the 'central' data generation via interviews and group discussions i.e. some form of participant observation on occasions in which Irishness is performed publicly, and by paying attention to media discourses around Irishness.

The argument that a form of participant observation allows one to gain access to wider understandings of Irishness goes back to the discussion of what exactly ‘identity’ constitutes at the beginning of Chapter 2, and how it may be examined at the beginning of Chapter 4. Drawing from Stuart Hall (1996b), it was argued that an attempt to analyse constructions of Irishness must attend to the specific sites in which Irishness is constructed, the specific discursive formations and practices employed, and how exactly these are enunciated. While, as has been outlined, much of this work can be done through analysis of interview and focus group data, this still omits some of the discursive *performative* practices that are employed to construct Irishness. While the kinds of participant observational methods employed in this research are an imperfect way of accessing these practices, they provide sufficient insight for the purposes of this thesis.

In speaking of “the kinds of participant observational methods employed in this research”, I wish to make clear that I am not making any claim to the kind of methodological rigour associated with participant observation as the primary means of data generation in the ethnographic tradition. Despite caveats about observation being “probably the most basic and oldest method in the whole of psychology” (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994, p. 17), there is a tendency, particularly within research methodology textbooks, to situate observational methods squarely within discussions of ethnography. Even allowing for relatively broad definitions of ethnography, participant observation is here conceptualised as the researcher becoming a participant in a certain group or event, observing with the benefit of social scientific insight, and then reporting. As such, such ethnographies are concerned with gaining access to the field and other questions derived from an anthropological tradition (Silverman, 2001).

My conceptualisation of participant observation in this research derives less from an anthropological tradition where the researcher *becomes* a participant in a group (or

subgroup, or ‘tribe’) and more from a more recent broader sociological tradition, expressed by Atkinson and Hammersley:

In a sense, *all* social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it. From this point of view, participant observation is not a particular research technique but a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of researchers (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994, p. 249)

It is possible to argue, therefore, that as an Irish person living in England who was himself carrying out research on the Irish in England, my “being-in-the-world” was intrinsically a form of participant observation in itself. However, what I define as ‘participant observation’ for the purposes of this research encompasses both maintaining a general awareness of issues affecting the Irish in England and attending public events which were in some way billed as ‘Irish’. A full list of such events can be found in Section 4.3.1.

This form of participant observation played a facilitative role that allowed me to gain further insight on the data generated in the interviews and group discussions rather than being a means of generating data in itself. It also played a practical role in facilitating comprehensibility in the interviews. In this, I drew from the advice of Andrews (2007) who recounts how in preparation for the data generation phase of all her projects, she spends considerable time familiarising herself with the social history of the community she is exploring. She argues that without this preparation she would be unable to understand much of what is said to her in interview situations. I would argue that in order to guard against the assumption that my own Irish nationality automatically gave me an understanding of my participants’ talk, attending major Irish events was equally vital in gaining a sense of the social context of the Irish in England as it is presently being constructed publicly, as well as the performative dimension of Irishness in England.

It is important to establish what precisely I mean by identity having a ‘performative’ dimension. While constructing Irishness through conversation is a type of performance in itself, in this context I am understanding ‘performances’ of Irishness as referring to a *public physical enactment* of Irishness, designed to demonstrate an individual or group’s Irishness to a wider audience. It may also be seen as a way of publicly articulating allegiance to, or a certain understanding of Irishness. For those of Irish descent, such performances of Irishness may correspond to Gans’ (1979) notion of ‘symbolic ethnicity’, where certain cultural patterns and practices are transformed into visible, clear, and easily expressed symbols of Irishness – although, obviously decisions as to what exactly constitutes a visible, clear and easily expressed symbol of Irishness is a form of identity construction in itself.

This type of understanding of Irishness as ‘performed’ has been employed in previous research, particularly research which examined St. Patrick’s Day parades as a particular ‘site’ of public identity construction. For example, Marston (2002) examined the St. Patrick’s Day parade in New York as a “central political and cultural ritual that negotiates identity through the use of public space” and found that the parade provided her with “a window onto the practices and meaning systems” of how Irishness is constructed and contested, and how the boundaries of Irishness were policed. Similarly, John Nagle (2005), as previously discussed in Chapter 3, carried out an ethnographic study on the 2002 London parade, towards his aim of interrogating the assumption that the visibility the parade would provide for the London-Irish community would allow them a space to provide a positive representation of Irishness. Unlike Marston, Nagle saw his own participation in the parade as important towards gaining an understanding of the event and the ways in which identities were being constructed on the ground. This allowed him to:

...pick up on those niceties of interaction and ambivalence and ambiguities of exchange where the most intricate (and interesting) aspects of sociocultural world are constructed, negotiated, contested and disseminated (Nagle, 2005, p. 572).

These studies added extra nuance to understandings of how Irishness was constructed by attending to those performative dimensions of identity which may remain unspoken and taken for granted, and as such, may not occur in interview or focus group situations. Both Marston and Nagle also used newspaper and media accounts of the parade to aid their analysis, the merits of which I shall now discuss.

Maintaining familiarity with media constructions of Irishness in England, both in the Irish 'ethnic press' e.g. publications such as the *Irish Post* and the *Irish World*, and the English 'mainstream' press can also be seen as a form of participant observation, insofar as it reflects my "being-in-the-world" as an Irish person in England, as well as a researcher. Starting with Liz Curtis's (1984) seminal work *Nothing but the Same Old Story*, a large body of literature has been built up on historical and modern racialised discourses of Irishness in the British press e.g. (Douglas, 2002; Hickman, 2000; MacLaughlin, 1999; Ryan, 2001a; Walter, 1999, 2001). However, there has been rather less work done on how these discourses influence or are contested by Irish people themselves in constructing their own Irish identities, or on the influence of 'internal' media discourses, such as the ways authentic Irishness is constructed and contested within the pages of 'community' newspapers such as the *Irish Post* and the *Irish World*. The latter may occur in explicit debates within the newspaper about what it means to be Irish; Campbell (1999), for example, recounts a fierce debate that raged in the letters page of the *Irish Post* in the first few months of 1999 about the use of the term 'Plastic Paddy' and by extension, the authenticity of the Irishness of the second generation. Alternatively, such discourses may

be implicit in various ‘flaggings’ of Irishness, along the lines of Billig’s (1995) ‘banal nationalism’.

If certain constructions of Irishness continually recur in the same media, it may be fair to say that this constitutes a dominant discourse against or within which Irish people construct their own identity. An examination of print media has the potential to provide the researcher with valuable insight when carrying out interviews and focus groups and analysing the resulting data. Taylor (1996) argues that tracing commonalities and resemblances between interview material and material that arises from other sources (such as print media) can support the researcher’s argument that the features identified are regular, not idiosyncratic, and indicate that participants were indeed drawing on collective and shared resources (S. Taylor, 1996, p. 154). Attending to these commonalities allows the researcher to make stronger claims as to the validity of his/her findings.

It should be stated here that this is not to claim that the print media are a *source* for the discourses drawn upon by individuals in their talk (nor vice versa) but that the two both comprise facets of the ‘wider horizon of discourse’ alluded to above. Therefore, in order to trace how discourses that arise in participants’ talk might be echoed in discourses in the print media, I remained up-to-date over the course of the research with publications such as the *Irish Post*, and issues that relate to the Irish in England in the more mainstream media on both sides of the Irish Sea. However, it should be emphasised that while I maintained a dossier of stories I believed reflected prevailing discourses regarding the Irish in England, specifically focusing on the *Irish Post* between early 2007 and mid-2009, I do not claim to have carried out a systematic analysis of such methodological rigour to have generated a dataset in its own right.

4.3 Putting Methods into practice

4.3.1 Participant observation

As discussed above, prior to beginning the process of interviewing, or indeed recruiting participants, I made it a priority to regularly attend Irish community events, or events billed as being of Irish interest. By and large, I became aware of these events through subscribing to the mailing lists of Irish community organisations, or through advertisements in the *Irish Post*. Attending these events from an early stage in the research allowed me to build up a picture of contemporary discourses around public Irishness in England. This had the dual effect of informing my overall research question and the topics I wished to address in the interviews and group discussions as well as informing my subsequent analysis of the data.

The following is a chronological list of some of the major events I attended over the course of the research. I have omitted some minor events as well as ‘Irish activities’ I attended in more of a personal capacity, for example, watching televised Gaelic Games at the local Irish Centre. I have also omitted some repeated events, for example, I attended more than one match at the London GAA grounds in Ruislip.

6th November, 2006: A benefit concert for the Aisling Return to Ireland project at the Bloomsbury Theatre, London.

31st January, 2007: ‘The Irish Die Young’: a conference intended to highlight health issues among the Irish in Britain. Organised by the Federation of Irish Societies and co-sponsored by the Equalities and Human Rights Unit of the Department of Health, and Cara Housing Association.

11th March, 2007: Birmingham St. Patrick’s Festival

17th March, 2007: St. Patrick’s Day walking tour, London.

18th March, 2007: London St. Patrick's Festival, including the London-Irish film festival

27th May, 2007: London v. Leitrim Gaelic Football match at the Emerald Grounds, Ruislip, London.

2nd September, 2007: London-Irish Festival, Roundwood Park, Harlesden, London.

21st September, 2007: "The Big Shindig", a combined sport and music event held at the Galtymore dancehall, Cricklewood, London.

18th January, 2008: "Céilí Nights": a social event based around Irish céilí dancing at the Irish Cultural Centre in Hammersmith, London.

8th March, 2008: Irish Book Fair, Irish Cultural Centre, Hammersmith.

14th March, 2008: UK Premiere of '*Kings*' at the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn. Part of the London-Irish Film Festival.

15th March, 2008: Luton St. Patrick's Festival

16th March, 2008: London St. Patrick's Festival (on this occasion, I marched in the parade in order to get a different perspective on the day's events – a fuller account is found in Chapter 6).

6th July, 2008: Music & Sports Day, Milton Keynes Irish Centre

11th November, 2008: London Irish Centre Open Day, Camden.

19th February, 2009: The relaunch of the NUI (National University of Ireland) London Graduates Club at the newly opened Irish club in Blackfriars.

14th March, 2009: St. Patrick's Day parade, Milton Keynes

15th March, 2009: St. Patrick's Festival, London

16th March, 2009: Talk entitled "the Craic was good in Cricklewood" delivered by Ultan Cowley, author of *The Men Who Built Britain* (2001) at the Birmingham Irish Club. Part of the Birmingham St. Patrick's Festival.

4th July, 2009: *Damhsa an Deoraí*, an Irish-language film about the Galtymore dancehall at the Tricycle Theatre, Kilburn. Part of a wider programme of Irish films as part of the Kilburn festival.

The extent to which I was an *active* participant in these events varied. As mentioned above, these events were all open to the public, so that access was not an issue. However, it should be noted that as an Irish person, I felt quite culturally ‘at home’ at these events, and my presence was also unlikely to be questioned – something that may not have been the case had I lacked the cultural resources to position myself as an ‘insider’. Therefore, drawing on DeWalt & DeWalt’s (2002) typology of the degrees of participation of researchers carrying out observational work, I could be classified as engaging in ‘complete participation’, being a member of the group that I was simultaneously studying. Certainly, on occasions such as ‘Céilí Nights’, which I attended with a group of Irish and non-Irish friends, I was as concerned with the next dance and the next drink as anyone else in the room, while simultaneously maintaining an interest in how the evening was mutually performed as a representation of ‘traditional’ Irishness in London. However, as I will discuss in Section 4.4, insiderness is fluid, and there were many occasions on which I was more comfortable taking a bystander position. This is described in DeWalt & DeWalt’s typology as ‘passive participation’, where the researcher “does not interact with people” but rather “uses the site as an observation post” (DeWalt & DeWalt, 2002, p. 19). Having said this, my continued ‘insiderness’ with regard to Irishness served at times to deconstruct this passivity – a worked example of the difficulty of dividing those attending St. Patrick’s Day parades in particular into ‘participants’ and ‘observers’ can be found in Chapter 6.

I took field-notes while in the process of attending these events if practical, or immediately afterwards otherwise. I then wrote these notes up in full at the first opportunity. In earlier stages of the research, I made comprehensive (near voluminous) notes on everything that seemed in some way significant, while in later stages my observations were more focused, based on my emerging research questions and patterns I had noticed in previous observations. For example, having taken comprehensive notes on the St. Patrick’s Day

parades in 2007, my focus in 2008 and 2009 was more on noting moments of continuity and difference from the previous years and locations. Similarly, while my observations from events in 2007 and early 2008 helped to shape my thinking around the research question and the formulation of an interview schedule, having commenced interviewing in March 2008, I started to trace similarities between the themes emerging from my interview data and my observations from events. Thus, participant observation contributed to making this research a thoroughly iterative process.

4.3.2 Formulating interview & focus group questions

The formation of a schedule to guide the interviews and group discussions was influenced by both the research question and by themes I had noticed emerging from the participant observation and the ‘media dossier’ component of the research up to that point. For the interviews in particular, it was also my aim to encourage as free-flowing a narrative as possible. Having said that, there were a wide range of issues that I wanted to address, and so the interviews may be best described as ‘semi-structured’ rather than ‘unstructured’.

As already outlined, in formulating the interview schedule, it was my aim to access constructions of identity and claims on Irishness through eliciting narratives of ‘living Irishness’ in England. I avoided direct questions such as “what does your national identity mean to you?”, or “how do you conceptualise Irishness?” in favour of a range of more open-ended questions. This is not to say that participants would be unable to answer such questions, but having been posed in a theoretical, academic style, the answers to these questions would likely be framed in a similar style and would not reflect the personal, day-to-day construction of identities and identification that might be hoped for – consequently, the data may lack richness and validity. In common with Ní Laoire (2007) the question-set

was developed in order to allow participants talk ‘around’ their experiences of migration and living Irish in England, as well as directly about them.

A copy of the schedule that guided the interviews can be found in Appendix 1. In this schedule, I grouped themes I wished to address over the course of the interview under topic headings, and listed some possible questions to ask in order to encourage conversation on that theme. Given that I was interviewing both migrant and second generation participants, a slightly different schedule was drawn up for each, in order to match likely experiences. For example, I opened my interviews with migrants by asking them about where they were from in Ireland and the circumstances of their migration, while I opened my interviews with second generation Irish people by asking them about their upbringing, and childhood memories around being from an Irish family in England. Thus, the two approaches invited chronologically-based narratives of Irish lives in England, but tailored to the experiences of the individual participant.

It should be noted that this schedule guided, but did not determine the pattern of the interview. As can be seen from Appendix 1, the schedule attempted to anticipate the ‘messiness’ of the interview as a conversational interaction rather than attempt to impose order on it. Besides the opening and the closing question, I did not consider it important that the questions be asked in the order set out on the schedule. Rather, I attempted to fit the questions to the ‘flow’ of the interaction i.e. if a participants talk appeared to me to be starting to address themes ‘scheduled’ for later in the interview, I introduced these questions at this point. Similarly, while I wished to cover each of the themes previously identified, I did not consider it important that every single one of the questions on my list was posed. If I felt that a participant had already addressed an issue thoroughly, it was my view that it would be a source of frustration for them to be asked to repeat an answer simply in order to satisfy the vagaries of my interview schedule.

Broadly, the themes I attempted to address over the course of the interview were as follows. For interviews with migrants, I began by asking them where they were from in Ireland and then went on to ask them about the circumstances of their migration and arriving and beginning to live in England. Following this, in various order and by various means, I asked them about their involvement (or non-involvement) in Irish communities, or in Irish activities in England, about their personal sense of Irish identity, about local identity, about their relationship with present-day Ireland, about any negative experiences they may have had in England, and about their plans for the future. For interviews with second generation Irish people, I began the interview by asking them about their upbringing and their childhood memories of 'being Irish' and belonging to an Irish family in England, before going on to cover many of the same themes as listed above, but more tailored to second generation experiences. I finished all the interviews with an invitation to participants to add anything that they felt may have been important about Irishness in England that we had not covered.

In forming a schedule for the group discussions, I was less interested in eliciting personal biographical narrative and more interested in examining the ways in which Irishness as a concept was mutually constructed and contested. As such my schedule (Appendix 2) covered such areas as "what makes you feel most Irish?", "what makes a 'real' Irish person?", and the ways in which Irishness is represented in England. I also wished to use the group discussions to explore the generational aspect of Irishness, both in regard to successive generations of migrants and with regard to second generation Irish people in England. In order to facilitate this discussion, I circulated an *Irish Post* article addressing such issues entitled "What will Irishness mean in the future?" from November 2007 by Joe Horgan, a regular columnist who is himself second generation Birmingham-Irish, but now lives in Ireland. A copy of this article can be found in Appendix 3. Following circulation of

the article, I then enquired as to whether participants recognised the themes and the sentiment of the article in their own experience and encouraged a discussion about generational differences around Irishness.

As I have mentioned, this research was inherently an iterative process. As such, no two of my interviews or group discussions followed exactly the same pattern. Also, as I gained experience as an interviewer through carrying out 30 interviews in a short space of time, I built up a sense of, crudely speaking, what worked and what did not. Thus, later interviews were informed by lines of enquiry that had proved fruitful in previous interviews, while I also learnt how to frame questions in such a way as to be relatable and understandable (following a few awkward moments in early interviews where I realised on being confronted by blank looks that I had framed a question using language that was overly technical and academic). Similarly, I would occasionally use a theme or an idea that had arisen in one interview or group as a means of rhetorically questioning some of the themes in other interactions (with due regard to confidentiality, of course). For example, a conversation that arose almost spontaneously in the second of my group discussions around what a ‘modern’ Irish centre ought to look like proved sufficiently illuminating about constructions of Irish authenticity that I subsequently deliberately introduced it as a question in the third group discussion.

4.3.3 The process: Recruiting participants, conducting interviews and group discussions, and analysis

As the aim of the research was to investigate various ways in which Irishness was constructed and contested, I made a deliberate decision to recruit as wide a variety of participants as possible. Identification with Irishness was the main criteria set for

participation in the research, with the only constraint being that all the participants would be aged over 18, for ethical reasons.

Overall, thirty-one people participated in my research. Thirty of these agreed to individual interviews whereas one participant was not interviewed, but participated in the first group discussion. Eleven people who had been interviewed also took part in the group discussions. While it might be argued that this is a small sample size, in common with most discursive work, I would argue that the approximately fifty hours worth of material that the interviews and group discussions generated comprise a sufficiently large corpus of data from which to draw out recognisable discourses about authentic Irishness in England.

Recruiting participants was primarily done through snowballing, spreading out from a network of pre-existing contacts. For example, I had met Sharon on one or two occasions at sporting events in the year preceding beginning the data collection. Having agreed to participate in the study, she then referred me on to Máire, who in turn referred me on to Kate, Peg and Sheila. While much of the snowballing was done through these forms of friendship networks, others were done through more institutional networks – for example, many of the London-based participants were involved with the Gaelic Athletic Association, and my initial contact with them was based on this. This initial recruitment was bolstered by participants who responded to letters sent to Irish community organisations requesting assistance. These letters resulted in some replies from individuals involved in organisations agreeing to be interviewed on an individual basis, while other organisations arranged for me to recruit from among their members.

As mentioned in Chapter 1, at the outset of the research a deliberate decision was taken to specifically limit the topic of the research to the Irish in England, as opposed to the Irish in Britain. As my recruitment progressed, I made the decision to focus on three primary

locations: London, Milton Keynes and Birmingham. Bearing in mind the iterative nature of this research, this tripartite focus arose as much out of emerging patterns of participant response as it did out of any premeditated design. However, while this design may not have been entirely planned, it proved to be a fortuitous one, as it allowed me to compare three separate sites of constructions of Irishness: London, which has been a constant destination of Irish migration for centuries, Birmingham, which also has a long history of Irish migration, but is mostly defined by the large influx of Irish migrants in the 1950s and the subsequent marginalisation of the ‘community’ following the pub bombings of 1974, and Milton Keynes, a ‘new town’ with a smaller, although close-knit Irish population. It should be said that while not all of my thirty-one participants currently lived in the three cities, they all had at least some point of identification with at least one of them, for example, having formerly lived there, or having been born there. Also, there was a certain level of overlap with regard to the cities in the biographies of some of my participants: many of the Milton Keynes participants had previously lived in London, while one of the London-based participants had previously lived in Birmingham.

Of the thirty-one participants in my research, fifteen can be classified as ‘London’, six as ‘Birmingham’ and ten as ‘Milton Keynes’. Twenty were classified as ‘Irish migrants’, and eleven as ‘second generation migrants’, although this categorisation was complicated by a couple of participants who had either been born, or spent some time in Ireland as young children, before moving to England along with their parents. For the purposes of this research, I classified participants who moved to England as adults as ‘migrants’, and others as ‘second generation’, although some of these might more properly be referred to as ‘1.5 generation’. Sixteen of my participants were male, and fifteen female. A guide to the salient demographic details of each participant, as well as the pseudonym assigned to each can be found in Appendix 4.

In relating the above demographic details to my analysis of the data, I have attempted not to prejudge and categorise participants' talk according to the demographic cohort to which they may be seen as belonging. Given that I do not claim that my participants are necessarily representative, as understood in a statistical way, of the Irish population in England, it would be intellectually incoherent to represent an individual participants' identity work as in some way typical of a specific demographic cohort. However, where participants have either individually or collectively appeared to be drawing on similar discourses in their identity work as those of similar demographic status, I have drawn attention to this. Similarly, where a discourse appears to be more available to a certain demographic cohort than another, particularly with regards to participants' own identity construction as a member of that cohort, I have addressed and commented on the usage of such discourses. I further discuss how 'cohort membership' was co-created in the interviews with regard to generation in Section 8.1.

Initial contact with participants was made either in person, by phone or via e-mail and took the form of an enquiry as to whether they would be interested in participating in a PhD research project on Irish identity in England. Where a potential participant expressed interest in the study they were then formally approached in writing, either via letter or e-mail. This letter gave further details of both the research and the topic of the proposed interview – a copy can be found in Appendix 5.

It should be briefly noted that being aware in advance (assuming all participants read the approach letter and subsequent letter of consent in detail) of the purpose of the interview and that it would involve "discussing your personal history and experiences of being Irish in England" in the words of the approach letter, will undoubtedly have influenced participants' preconceptions of the interview interaction and thus the content of the interview itself. In some cases, this may have led to participants preparing for the

interview, or mentally rehearsing the stories they would tell beforehand, if only in order to have their ‘facts straight’, so to speak. (Indeed, one participant commented that “I should have thought about this before you came”, in response to a question about the length of her time in London). It might be argued that such mental rehearsals are liable to create more stylised and less genuine narratives. For example, Louise Ryan, in commenting on the fact that one of her participants had previously been interviewed by RTE for a programme about emigration, noted that:

The process of remembering is not always spontaneous. People may have told these anecdotes and funny stories many times before, honing and polishing them in the process of retelling. In addition, if people have recorded their memories in autobiographical writing or in previous interviews they may present you with their rehearsed stories and it is difficult to access anything beyond this carefully constructed narrative (Ryan, 2002, p. 44).

Over the course of carrying out the interviews in this study, it was notable that certain participants had more polished narratives of their lives in England than others – indeed, at least two had previously spoken about their lives for radio programmes, and made reference to this fact during the interviews. However, as argued earlier in Section 4.1.2, the purpose of this research is not to establish the facts of the matter, so to speak, with regard to the participant’s life. Rather, it is to examine what discourses are employed in creating a coherent and recognisable narrative of an Irish life in England: as such, polished, rehearsed life narratives may be seen as an advantage rather than a drawback to analysis. Furthermore, bearing in mind the earlier discussion around interview data as co-constructed, and interview talk as inherently dialogical, it is unlikely that even retellings of ‘polished’ narratives will be entirely unshaped by the immediate discursive context of the interview.

On agreeing to participate in the research, a time and location were set for interview, with the primary concern that these would be convenient for the participant. The majority of interviews took place at the participants' own home, although some interviews took place at the participants' workplace, this being more convenient for them. Before beginning the interview, the participants were asked to read and sign a consent form (a copy of which can be found in Appendix 6, while a copy of the consent form for the group discussions can be found in Appendix 7), and were given one copy to retain for their own records. On completing the interview, participants were sounded out as to whether they would be interested in participating in a group discussion at some point in the future.

Forming discussion groups from the same people as participated in the interview process was motivated both by expediency and by a wish, as discussed above, to trace moments of continuity and discontinuity across interviews and group discussions. Given that the research was designed in order that individual narratives of 'living Irish' in England would be the focus of the interviews, while the discussion groups took Irishness as a concept as their core topic, being already aware of participants' individual histories informed both my moderation of the discussion groups and my subsequent analysis. Put simply, having already built up a research relationship with participants and being aware of their life histories meant that less time needed to be spent on familiarisation and "what happened when" chronological detail, which allowed for a greater focus on Irishness as a concept in the groups. At the same time, where participants drew on their own experiences in order to discuss Irishness as a concept, my familiarity with their previous telling of these experiences allowed me to draw out salient details in order to guide the discussion. Analytically, as previously discussed in Section 4.2.2, tracing how participants constructed an authentic Irishness relating both to personal and collective identity, is facilitated by examining the similarities and differences between the identity work done in interviews

and group situations, where the latter may embody, for dialogic purposes, collective Irishness in microcosm.

The decision as to who to include in each group discussion was heavily influenced by geographical factors and pre-existing social networks. Drawing on my initial ‘snowballing’ means of recruiting participants, it was simply less complicated to get previous participants in the same room at the same time, if they lived in the same area and knew each other previously. Methodologically, there were possible disadvantages to this arrangement as well as advantages. While it can be argued that participants were more comfortable in participating in the discussion due to knowing the others involved, it could also be argued that the high level of shared experience between participants in the groups leads to less analytically interesting data than would the contrasting experiences and opinions of more mixed groups. However, as I outline in the forthcoming empirical chapters, it is equally analytically interesting to trace the various ways shared resources are drawn upon by the groups to collectively construct and build consensus around certain versions of Irishness.

Another possible disadvantage in the formation of the discussion groups was the disparity in group size. Partly as a result of attempting to organise groups according to location and pre-existing networks, and partly due to a handful of participants unavoidably withdrawing at the last minute, the four discussion groups in Milton Keynes, Birmingham, London and Birmingham again were composed of, respectively, six, three, three and four people, including the moderator (myself). Referring to the participant details in Appendix 4, the first group in Milton Keynes (held in the local Irish Centre) was composed of Andrew, Gerry, Marion, Kathleen and Áine (who had not been interviewed, but was acquainted with all the other members of the group). The second group in Birmingham consisted of Matthew and Peter, the third in London consisted of Máire and Sheila, and the fourth in Birmingham consisted of Becky, Eileen and Sarah. While Matthew and Peter were friends

and regularly socialised together, as did Máire and Sheila; Becky, Eileen and Sarah all worked in the same Irish community organisation in Birmingham, in the offices of which the discussion was held. It should be pointed out that this organisational setting may have shaped the discussion in some way.

These groups may, arguably, be too varied and small in number to be properly considered ‘focus groups’, which is one reason that I tend to refer to ‘discussion groups’ and ‘group discussions’ rather than ‘focus groups’ throughout the empirical chapters. Equally, it might be argued that my discussions with Matthew and Peter and with Máire and Sheila might be more accurately described as dual or paired interviews, given the different dynamics involved i.e. that at times my role was more as interviewer of two people than as moderator of a self-perpetuating discussion. However, bearing all this in mind, I argue that the data from the group discussions, taken alongside the data from the interviews (both individual and dual), still offer a valuable insight into what discourses are available to be drawn upon when discussing Irish identity and authenticity, without necessarily making any claims towards comprehensive representativeness.

Each of the interviews and group discussions were recorded using a digital voice recorder – the files were transferred to my computer’s hard-drive at the earliest opportunity. Transcripts of the interviews and group discussions were prepared using a version of Jeffersonian transcription adapted for my purposes in agreement with the two transcribers who assisted with the transcription process – a key for the conventions used can be found in Appendix 8. While I did not explicitly offer each participant a copy of the transcript of their interview, in the event of a participant independently expressing interest in reading over what had been said, I made a note of this and arranged to send on a transcript once it had been prepared.

In analysing the data, I initially familiarised myself with the corpus by reading and re-reading the interview and group discussion transcripts and relistening to the audio files of the interviews and group discussions. While doing this I began to pick out some themes and points of interest, drawing on my own experiences as part of the participant observation phase of the research. Having done this, I revisited the data, building on these initial thoughts to more concretely identify the existence of discourses that were drawn upon by the participants in speaking about Irishness and authenticity – in doing this I used the NVivo 7 software to group ‘like with like’. As outlined above, in identifying these commonalities, I was looking at both the ways in which narratives of ‘Irish lives’ were constructed and rhetorical points of contestation around Irish authenticity. Having identified similarities across the corpus of data in the use of established discourses, I then examined the discursive means by which these were drawn upon in the immediate context of the conversation. The results of this analysis can be seen more clearly in the empirical chapters.

The selection of extracts within the empirical chapters thus reflects the wider discursive patterns and similarities throughout the corpus of data that I identified in my analysis. The basis for generalisability within this research therefore rests on the assumption (common to most discursive research as discussed in Section 4.1) that the wider discursive patterns to be found in the corpus of data and how these are articulated, reflect the forms of meaning-making available in the broader social context. I also demonstrate how the extracts, as pieces of discursive work, have been shaped by the immediate conversational context of the interaction between me, as interviewer and the participant. Occasionally, for the sake of providing some wider context, or in order to demonstrate that certain discourses are not universally employed among those of similar demographics, I include individual ‘atypical’ extracts of discursive work. Such extracts are presented as such, and the analytical focus is on the rhetorical work by which participants speak against the dominant discourse.

4.4 Reflecting on the research – ethical considerations, ‘insider research’ and other thoughts

This research was designed and carried out with regard to the guidelines contained within the Open University Human Participants and Materials Committee (HPMEC) Ethical Principles for Research Involving Human Participants and the British Psychological Society Ethical Principles for conducting Research with Human Participants. Having given appropriate assurances around anonymity, informed consent and data protection, the research was approved on 3rd March, 2008 by the Open University HPMEC.

Of course, the difficulty that arises with regard to seeking ethical approval before beginning to conduct research of an iterative nature is in attempting to predict unanticipated ethical dilemmas that may arise over the course of the research. For me, one such dilemma arose as a result of recruitment patterns that, as already mentioned, led me to situate the research in three geographical areas: London, Birmingham and Milton Keynes. My dilemma in this case was whether or not to name these three cities, or to anonymise them, given that I had made a reference in the ethics application to changing “specific placenames” in the event that they might threaten the anonymity of the participants. The point of interpretation here, of course, is how specific is ‘specific’ and to what extent naming the city they live in (or have an association with) might threaten the anonymity of the participants. I came to the decision that London and Birmingham were sufficiently large cities that the anonymity of participants would not be threatened, although I have altered any reference to a more specific area within these cities, except in the case of ‘iconic’ locations¹⁰.

¹⁰ Examples might include areas such as Kilburn or Cricklewood in London, or Digbeth in Birmingham, or specific locations such as the Galtymore Ballroom in London or the Irish Club in Birmingham. These

Milton Keynes proved somewhat more troublesome in this regard being a smaller city, with a consequently smaller (and more tight-knit) Irish population. As such, it was more likely that individual participants would be identifiable from the excerpts quoted in this thesis and in other publications. After some deliberation, I decided that the focus on local identities in this research meant that it was more intellectually coherent to identify Milton Keynes as such. As a means of securing the anonymity of my Milton Keynes participants, I have been careful to omit or alter any other biographical details that arose in their interviews or group discussion. Unfortunately, this meant needing to excise some excerpts of analytically rich data and discussion from the final version of the thesis. This may be seen as a necessary compromise between the researcher's desire to make the most of interesting data and the researcher's duty to respect the anonymity of participants.

Finally, building on my comments in Chapter 1 about my own Irish identity, as well as the discussion earlier in this chapter about the identity work of the interviewer being as much of a factor in analysing an interaction as that of the participant, it is worthwhile to briefly recount my experiences of conducting 'insider research'. In beginning the research, I was mindful of De Andrade's (2000) comments on carrying out research among the Cape Verdean American community in New England. She was taken aback by the centrality of her own Cape Verdean identity in the discussions and how participants' reading of it could influence the direction of the interview. She outlines how a number of her participants posed questions about her own family background and participation in the Cape Verdean community before talking about their own experiences – thus constructing her identity as a Cape Verdean simultaneously with their own.

locations are sufficiently iconic and well-known among Irish people in England that including participants' references to them does not threaten their anonymity.

As such, when carrying out the interviews, group discussions and analysis, I was attentive to moments where I was positioned as Irish (or otherwise) by the participants in my research. At the same time, due to my accent, my birthplace, my citizenship and my own profound, almost blasé sense of being Irish, I did not anticipate my Irishness being challenged over the course of the research, nor did I feel I had to make any explicit claims on being Irish before a research interaction. Having said that, the discursive and rhetorical claims I make for my own personally authentic Irish identity are undoubtedly traceable throughout the corpus of data and indeed, this thesis – something that might form an interesting research study in its own right.

As it transpired, while I did not get the impression at any time that my identity as ‘Irish person’ was being challenged, I did find myself regularly engaging in discursive work around my position as an ‘Irish person in England’. I found that due to my relative youth, and the relatively short period I had lived in England, I was positioned as a ‘newcomer’ by many of my participants, particularly those who had lived in England for a long period of time. As such, these participants had a tendency to arrange their biographical narratives of ‘living Irish’ in England in terms of explaining to me what it was like to be Irish in England at a certain time, as not having lived through the period myself, I was assumed not to know. While this was so much grist to my analytical mill, given that I was hoping to elicit narratives that would allow me to analyse how personal narratives of ‘living Irish’ in England were situated within canonical narratives of the Irish, it is notable that on a number of occasions, I interject to the effect of demonstrating my knowledge of the history of the Irish in England. This may be construed as a means of re-positioning myself as a person with an awareness of Irish history in England, rather than a relatively clueless and naïve ‘new arrival’, but also as a means of aligning myself with the ongoing canonical narrative of the Irish in England. As such, I was deliberately positioning myself as an ‘insider’ with regards to the Irish in *England* as a reaction to being positioned as an

outsider due to my recent arrival. This demonstrates the complexities of insider research, and mirrors De Andrade's argument that conducting 'insider research' involves a constant re-evaluation and re-making of the researcher's identity and relationship with their 'own' community. Where relevant, I have highlighted such moments of my own identity work throughout the course of the empirical chapters.

Chapter 5: Narratives of time and ‘living Irish’ in England.

In order to set the scene for investigations in subsequent chapters of the various ways in which authentic Irishness is constructed, it is useful to begin with an analysis of narratives of ‘living Irish’ in England. In examining the ways in which people narrate their experiences of living in England as Irish people, one can begin to build up a picture of what is seen as a typical Irish life in England. In doing so, it is useful to draw upon Freeman & Brockmeier’s (2001) conceptualisation of narrative integrity which suggests that the autobiographical process is conditioned by some notion of ‘the good life’. They have posited that:

In epochs or cultures in which there exist strong, agreed-upon standards pertaining to the good life, there would, hypothetically, be a high degree of narrative integrity, whether explicit or implicit in the resulting narratives. Autobiographical reconstructions of the past would therefore be comparatively unambiguous, in the sense of having strong canonical constraints and a comparatively limited range of possible meanings. In those epochs and cultures, on the other hand, in which standards pertaining to the good life are not so clear or are in the midst of being contested or redefined ... there would, again hypothetically, be a relatively low degree of narrative integrity, with autobiographical memory in turn emerging as decidedly more ambiguous and multivoiced (Freeman & Brockmeier, 2001, p. 76).

The concept of ‘the good life’ can be interpreted broadly to meet various criteria – in this case, the ‘good life’ might refer to ways in which it is felt Irish people ‘ought’ to live their lives in England. Therefore, a useful way of approaching the data is to examine the coherence of individual narratives and moments of possible trouble and repair, and their implications for certain imaginings of what it means to ‘live’ Irish. In doing so, as explored in Chapter 4, one can trace the commonalities and differences across the cohort

of interviews. The commonalities in which Irish people talk about their lives as Irish people in England will reflect the established meanings of ‘typical’ life trajectories of the Irish in England. However, it will be equally illuminating to examine moments where participants either speak against what they see as the ‘typical’ life trajectory of Irish people in England, or construct alternative notions of what constitutes a ‘typical’ life trajectory. Indeed, given the history of Irish migration to England occurring in waves, as well as the existence of a strong sense of second generation Irishness within English cities, it is probable that a number of established narratives of ‘typical’ life trajectories around being Irish in England will co-exist. Furthermore, it might be anticipated that they will be dialogically arranged in relation, or opposition, to each other.

In keeping with the overarching theme of the thesis, investigating personal narratives of ‘living Irish’ in England, and the extent to which these serve to construct narratives of ‘typical’ Irish lives, provides a means by which the situating of personally authentic identities within a collective Irish authenticity can be examined. For reasons of coherence, this chapter does not seek to give a ‘full’ biographical narrative of each individual participant. This is in keeping with the narrative-discursive approach, which:

...does not particularly consider the kind of extended biographical talk which is of interest to life history researchers and others. Instead, it analyses the emergent biographical details and the ways that these are mobilised and harnessed to support speakers’ broader ongoing identity projects. (S. Taylor & Littleton, 2006, p. 29)

Furthermore, speakers’ “ongoing identity projects” relating to Irishness, drawing on and constrained by wider notions of Irishness in England as they are, are inextricably linked to the ongoing identity project of the Irish population/community in England. In other words, personal life narratives are ‘nested’, to use Gergen’s (1994) term, within broader

‘macronarratives’, which may include “the broader history of one’s people”. He argues that such macronarratives reflect the social advantages to “having one’s stories agree” and “seem to lay the foundations upon which we construct other narratives” (Gergen, 1994, p. 204).

Gergen’s theory of the ‘macronarrative’ can be equated with Bruner’s concept of ‘canonical narratives’ discussed in Section 4.1.2, and it is the latter that I will use throughout the rest of this chapter. It is illuminating to examine how people’s personal narratives are constructed in such a way as to agree or disagree with other people’s presumed narratives or with the assumed canonical narrative, and the implications this has for the articulation of an authentic identity. However, the canonical narrative itself does not exist in a vacuum, but is reconstructed with every re-telling: with regard to the nation, “the people are neither the beginning or the end of the national narrative” (Bhabha, 1990b, p. 297). Additionally, canonical narratives are nested within other canonical narratives. For example, the narrative of the Irish in England, is nested within the narrative of Irish emigration as well as the narrative of minority populations in England.

How, then, to approach these nested narratives in an analytically useful way? Taylor & Wetherell (1999) have suggested attending to constructions of time as a resource by which speakers situate their own narratives in larger narratives of place, nation and belonging, arguing that “the narrative form is elaborated and framed within both time and place”. ‘Time’, in this case, does not refer to “a ‘real’ time of uninterpreted occurrences in a ‘real’ world”, but is rather a discursive resource in which “the shape precedes the content, the events are selected and fitted into their places” (S. Taylor & Wetherell, 1999, p. 41).

With regard to national narratives, the ‘imagined community’ of the nation, or the people, is accompanied by an ‘imagined history’: a historical narrative relating the origins,

achievements and destinies of the people. This can serve as a collective discursive resource: a recognised story within which individuals can position their personal narratives. For example, as I shall explore later in the chapter, there is a recognised story regarding migration between Ireland and England in the 1950s and the ‘general’ Irish experience in English cities at that time. However, given the hegemonic nature of such narratives, they can also act as a resource against which a personal narrative is constructed in counterpoint. In other words, an individual’s personal narrative of living Irish in England may be explicitly articulated in such a way as to be differentiated from the recognised story, but in doing so, in some way it incorporates the assumption that a recognised narrative exists, even if only to be deconstructed.

In looking at how time is employed as a discursive resource among narratives of the Irish in England, one can identify three distinct post-war eras, largely defined by external political and cultural events, the first being a period of time lasting roughly from 1945 to 1969, when the Northern Ireland ‘troubles’ began, a second period lasting from 1969 to roughly 1994, coinciding with the beginnings of the Peace Process, and a third period from the mid-nineties to the present day, characterised by an unprecedented level of popularity of Irish culture (of a certain, commodified form, as explored in Chapter 3) in England.

A ‘well-rehearsed’ storyline with regard to the wider narrative of the Irish in post-war England, and the kind of which is alluded to in press discourses and popular histories of the Irish in England (Bishop, 1999; Chinn, 2003; Coogan, 2000; Cowley, 2001; Cronin & Adair, 2002; Doyle, 2000; Dunne, 2003; Harrison, 2004; Limbrick, 2007b) might go something like this : For the Irish who arrived in the 1950s and 1960s, it was a time of hardship and prejudice, characterized by manual labour and difficulties in finding accommodation, something exemplified by the notorious ‘*No Dogs, No Blacks, No Irish*’ notices found in rented accommodation (Garrett, 2005; Kneafsey & Cox, 2002; Leavey et

al., 2004). However, it was also characterized as a time of excitement, of economic opportunity, of escape from the social and religious conservatism of 1950s Ireland and (perhaps paradoxically) as a time of strong community cohesion, something Delaney (2007) has referred to as the formation of “islands of Irishness”.

This period was disrupted by the advent of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in the late 1960s, and in particular the IRA bombing campaign of English cities, which had the effect of positioning the Irish in England as a ‘suspect community’ for most of the 1970s and 1980s. At the same time, this period was characterized by the emergence of a distinct second generation identity, a resurgence in Irish activism and ‘alternative’ community groups, and the related recasting of Irishness as a minority ethnic identity. Along with this, the 1980s saw a new wave of younger, more middle-class migrants who exemplified a more modern take on Irishness, which did not always sit well with older migrants or with the second generation, for example, the young middle-class women interviewed as part of Breda Gray’s (2004) research, as explored in Chapter 2. The advent of the 1990s brought the end of the Troubles (at least insofar as they affected England), the Celtic Tiger economy in Ireland, which had a knock-on effect on the perception of Irishness abroad, and a rise in the popularity of a certain form of commodified, sanitized Irish culture, something that has been characterised by what O’Boyle (2006) has described as ‘Riverdance revivalism’.

Obviously, this is far from being a comprehensive account and does not cover the entirety of the experience of Irish people in England. For example, Delaney’s (2007) historical account of the Irish in post-war Britain reveals patterns of socialisation that are somewhat at odds with modern-day retrospective imaginings of the time period. Also, the work of Breda Gray (2004), Bronwen Walter (2001) and Louise Ryan (Ryan, 2001b, 2002, 2007) has emphasised the experience of Irish *women* in England, as a way of deconstructing the

ways in which narratives of Irishness in England have largely been built on the male experience. I would argue that the above does serve as a national *canonical* narrative periodised in time and located in space, insofar as one can establish that a national narrative is distinct from being the sum of the narratives of those who make up the imagined national community. Rather, it is a narrative of the Irish in England that is publicly available and can be and *is*, as I shall outline in this chapter, drawn upon by Irish people in England. My argument is that by drawing on such narratives, as my participants did in order to describe the experience of being Irish in England, they are making a claim to authenticity by situating their own personal narrative within the national narrative. The way in which I have set out this national narrative above is drawn from my own impressions on carrying out the research discussed in this thesis, both from the interview and discussion group corpus and from attending to the ‘wider horizon of discourse’ as discussed in Chapter 4. As such, there is an iterative relationship between the data and the narrative-discursive analytical lens brought to it in this chapter.

To sum up, how individuals draw on the collectively constructed ‘typical’ experience of the Irish in England in describing their own personal experience of being Irish in England, throughout the three eras mentioned, has implications for the ways in which authentic Irishness is constructed. This operates both in a diasporic context with reference to Ireland itself and in the context of Irishness as a minority identity in England. What follows is an analysis of the ways in which personal narratives of ‘living Irish’ in England are situated in wider narratives of the Irish experience in England for each of the three eras.

5.1: “No blacks, no dogs, no Irish”: post-war to the beginning of the Troubles

Those who migrated from Ireland to England in the first era under consideration are now somewhat elderly, but also represent a large cohort widely described as “1950s migrants”.

This should be regarded as a label rather than a factual description: while the majority of this cohort did migrate from Ireland to England during the 1950s, the label as representative of the characteristics of a certain generation may also be applied to those who migrated in the late 1940s and early 1960s. The emblematic nature of the 1950s in representing both a certain version of Irishness and a certain version of Irish emigration is further explored by Breda Gray (2002a). She notes that discourses around 1950s emigration both at the time, and in retrospect, represented those who left as “young people of energy and mental independence” who were forced to leave in order to earn a living, but whose leaving allowed the preservation of certain “archaic patterns of Irish rural life” characterised by a particular strand of Catholicism and conservatism. This discourse represents “those who left” as in some way choosing to do so, both in order to seek out new opportunities and as a repudiation of the “stagnation and decline” that was seen as characterising 1950s Ireland. However, it exists alongside a discourse that highlights the involuntary nature of this emigration (often referring to it as ‘exile’) and positions those who left as the victims of post-colonial underdevelopment (Gray, 2002a, p. 162). These discourses both compete and overlap, so that those who emigrated from Ireland in the 1950s have a variety of narratives available to them within which they can situate their own personal narratives. It is important to note that this is not necessarily an either-or choice – it is quite possible, and indeed common, for such migrants to simultaneously represent themselves as both ‘choosing’ and being ‘forced’ to leave, depending on the conversational context.

It is among this ‘1950s generation’ that descriptions of the initial ‘foreign-ness’ of England is most pronounced, with many of the narratives of arriving in England stressing the disorientating effect of the urban environment in which they now found themselves as opposed to the rural environment from which they originated. While this is, no doubt, an accurate description of the emotional reaction of many Irish migrants upon arriving in

London or Birmingham in the 1940s or 1950s, it is its status as canonical narrative that is the concern here, given the discursive work it does in positioning Ireland as rural and England as urban, as well as Irish migrants as naïve. For example, Peg, a woman in her eighties, who had migrated to England in order to train as a nurse, gave the following description of ‘her generation’:

Extract 5.1:

Peg: I suppose .hh you could call us very backward [**Marc:** yeah] my generation (.) when they came [**Marc:** hmm] you know, coz some of them as I said some of them had never been on a bus or train in their lives [**Marc:** hmm] and can you imagine coming into London, into Euston station (.) [and trying to find-]

Marc: [Yeah, yeah and going on underground trains and everything yeah]

Peg: Yeah and they might have an address of (.) someone from the village that lived in (.) Camden Town or something [**Marc:** yeah] .hh and they'd have to make their way, you know, .hh I mean they (.) they could be so lost you know [**Marc:** hmm] (.) and some of the girls did get lost [**Marc:** yeah] at Euston station believe it or not [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] because you had .hh you had these fellas or women coming up them telling oh yes .hh they know (.) they would offer you-give them a job and all the rest of it .hh probably into a prostitutes [**Marc:** hmm] (.) you know (.) that happened quite a lot [**Marc:** yeah] you know

Peg’s narrative of arrival in London constructs the figure of the ‘typical’ Irish migrant in a certain way. She, for this is a highly gendered account, is disorientated and “lost”: the metropolis of London is contrasted to the village that she is assumed to have arrived from. Her account of girls being lured into prostitution echoes some of the moral panic around the figure of the emigrant ‘country girl’, that was common in contemporary Ireland at the time, as related by Louise Ryan:

The ‘emigrant girl’ symbolised an Irishness marked by religion, culture and a sense of place. In transgressing physical space by leaving home and travelling to London, she also transgressed cultural space and encountered the dangers of life in an alien, urban environment. Thus, while Ireland was overwhelmingly constructed as a rural landscape—a safe, local, homely environment, England was constructed as an urban landscape—a threatening, unfamiliar, dangerous environment. (Ryan, 2001b, p. 272).

Invoking this figure, therefore, serves to contrast the innocence of rural Ireland, with the threatening nature of urban London. There is also an implicit contrast drawn here between Peg’s generation and current young Irish migrants (represented by me, the interviewer, in the immediate context of the above interaction, I would argue) where Peg utilises ‘prototypical speech’ in saying “I suppose you could call us very backward”. Thus the prototypical attitude of current generations of young Irish migrants is to position previous generations as backward, which Peg reframes by positioning the young Irish girl of the time as innocent and naïve. The ways in which Irish people rhetorically position each other according to generation is further explored in Chapter 8.

None of this is necessarily to make the claim that Peg’s memories of Irish girls being lured into prostitution are in any way exaggerated – for example, contemporary documents refer to the “fairly high” level of prostitution among young Irish immigrant women (Gibbens, 1957), whereas the image of Legion of Mary¹¹ volunteers meeting young Irish migrants off the train in Euston in order to safeguard their morals is now enshrined in canonical narratives of the time (Coogan, 2000; Harrison, 2004). Rather, the centrality of this narrative in Peg’s descriptions of her own generation serves to position this “50s

¹¹ The Legion of Mary is an organisation for lay Catholics that was founded in Dublin in the 1920s. They played a major role alongside the Irish chaplaincy in England in the 1950s in providing welfare services for Irish emigrants, as well as attempting to ensure a level of post-migration continuity in Catholic observance and practice among migrants.

generation” of migrants both in time and space in contrast to the English then, and the Irish now. Also, in framing such phenomena as part of the collective experience of the Irish in England at the time, Peg authenticates her own experience by situating it within a narrative of a more general *immigrant* experience. This situating of the individual experience of migration within a narrative of collective migration was quite common among the older generation of migrants, and serves to create a discourse of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory.

A similar resource which is regularly drawn upon in narratives both of 1950s England and of the 1950s generation is that of the difficulties and prejudice faced by young Irish migrants in finding accommodation in the cities of England. This is almost uniformly attributed to prejudice on the behalf of English landlords, rather than a shortage of available housing following the Second World War. Such narratives are often arranged around some variation of the sign “No Dogs, No Blacks, No Irish”, or “No Irish Need Apply” being found in the windows of lodging houses e.g. (Coogan, 2000; Curtis, 1984; Harrison, 2004; Ryan, 2003b). While, again, there is documentary evidence that such signs existed, the concern here is with how such images serve as a kind of interpretative repertoire and have become central to, and almost emblematic of, narratives of the hardships associated with the 1950s generation, as well as those that preceded them in the pre-war years, as seen in the research of Louise Ryan:

The signs declaring ‘No Irish Need Apply’ have become part of the collective memory of Irish immigrants in Britain. Perhaps in remembering and re-telling their stories of the past, these signs have become a signifier, a metaphor for all the other unspoken and difficult experiences that are hard to put into words (Ryan, 2003b, p. 75).

Gerry, a man in his seventies now living in Milton Keynes, describes his own arrival in London in 1953

Extract 5.2:

Gerry: At that, at that time, the time I came [Marc: mm], that was, 1953 was it? '53? Yes; well I walked all day to get digs [Marc: yeah] it was no joke [Marc: yeah] y'see? You had a job to get digs but I got digs as well and some, some door that I knocked on and took this one, she was, she said to me 'you have to share a bed with some fella'; I said 'I never shared a bed with anyone only myself' I said 'thank you very much' [Marc: yeah]. But I, I went into a place, I had to have the, there was three beds in the same room like [Marc: yeah]; one pound fifty [Marc: yeah]; no food (*laughs*) (oh dear) I remember; there was great big windows in it; [*name of road*] Kilburn [Marc: mm] (.) I suppose September, October, November maybe, and one night it was snowing and the snow was coming in on top of me in the bed [Marc: right]; the flakes were coming in yeah [Marc: yeah] my goodness [

Marc: Did you, was any of the problem getting digs because 'erm landlords didn't want to take Irish people?

Gerry: Well it was 'er wrote up [Marc: yeah]; Irish and and blacks or something, I forget now [Marc: yeah] 'need not apply', I've seen that wrote up d'y'see [Marc: yeah]. You don't see that now [Marc: no, well no] it was up that time; I don't know why; I don't know why. My wife she got digs down in [*name of estate*]; she had a job to get digs, but she got digs down in [*name of estate*]; yeah, and it was a week before I seen her again; I lost her [Marc: yeah] for a week, and I seen her by (.) ah, Quex Road church, met again [Marc: yeah] and she was in [*name of estate*] (.) so (hh) where she was, she was (*laughs*). You'd think of home alright [Marc: yeah, yeah] after coming over, to tell you the truth.

Marc: Yeah, yeah, when you've got snow coming in the window onto you, I suppose? (*laughs*)

Gerry: (*Laughs*) and the sadness of leaving home y'know? [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] Yes; and it is sad because at the Galway Station, I suppose it's the same everywhere at that time, there used to be fathers and mothers, there used to be a lot of people from Galway on the train that time [**Marc:** yeah, yeah]. They used to be crying and everything you know like [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] (.) sad, some people they were coming back [**Marc:** yeah, yeah]; yes; happy like. But 'er, it is (.), but 'er as the years go by (hh) everything settles down like and everything, from once you get your own place and things like that, everything works out and your own family and everything and I suppose it's the same as Ireland like [**Marc:** mm], the same, the same as if I stayed in Ireland I don't know, would I be any better off? [**Marc:** mm]. I might, I might.

There are a number of constructions of hardship in Gerry's narrative, many of which can be associated with the difficulties associated with separation. His emphasis on walking all day in order to find digs, being required to share rooms with other men, and waking up covered in snow serve to accentuate the *physical* hardships and indignities associated with being a young Irish migrant in London, a point that is sometimes overlooked in the focus by writers on psychological oppression, although it tends to be included in more literary-historical accounts such as T.P. Coogan's *Wherever Green Is Worn* (2000). In this context, the demand from a landlady that he "share a bed with some fella" is perhaps presented in terms of being the ultimate indignity, and a place where he draws a line. Gerry was to repeat this anecdote in a later group discussion, suggesting that it had some resonance for him.

It should be noted that the possibility of the role of anti-Irish discrimination fuelling difficulty in finding accommodation is introduced by me, and not Gerry. This may be seen as my proffering the 'canonical' narrative of landlord prejudice being a major factor in the difficulties of Irish migrants as a resource for Gerry to construct his personal narrative around arriving in London. However, while he invokes the 'Irish and blacks need not

apply' sign in answer to my question, he does not address this in detail, merely saying that he doesn't know why the signs were present – perhaps indicating a reluctance to attribute blame to people rather than circumstance.

Rather, in then following this with an anecdote about 'losing' his wife while *she* found digs and rediscovering her outside Quex Road church in Kilburn (something of an iconic meeting-point for the Irish in London at the time, as noted by Delaney (2007)), followed by an account of parents bidding goodbye to their offspring at Galway station, he places separation, and the anxieties and sadness associated with it, rather than prejudice, at the centre of his narrative of hardship. In this case it is emotional hardship that is invoked, alongside the physical hardship already referred to. He also seems to posit a solution to the hardships created by separation in his suggestion that "everything works out" once "you get your own place ... and your own family and everything". This then would appear to provide an endpoint for the narrative – the emotional crisis brought about by the separation of the family unit in Ireland through migration, and the physical hardship associated with accommodation difficulties in London is resolved through the reconstitution of a new family unit in England. However, that this endpoint is not entirely untroubled is suggested by Gerry's musings over whether he would have been better off if he had stayed in Ireland.

Other participants made the link between difficulties associated with accommodation and anti-Irish prejudice more explicit. For example, Betty, having moved to England to train as a nurse in the early 1950s, was struck by the prejudice she encountered when she moved out of the sheltered environment of residential halls into the main population:

Extract 5.3:

Betty: Then when (.) I came out to live, when I was married, and came out to live in the 'er population, I realised then how very anti-Irish most of them were [**Marc:** yeah]. I didn't know it when I was in the hospital looking after them [**Marc:** mm]; they were nice to me [**Marc:** yeah], but by God when I was out there and wasn't a nurse any more, were they rotten [**Marc:** yeah], were they, they, were they. (..hh) 'Erm, I think that's why I kept my Irish accent because they were s:o nasty (.) and so bigoted that I thought 'I'm going to keep my Irish accent; I'm going to rub your bloody noses in it' [**Marc:** right] 'until my dying day'.

Betty's narrative expresses a sense of shock and betrayal at encountering the 'real' attitudes of the English towards the Irish as soon as they were no longer dependent on her as a nurse. Maintaining her Irish accent is constructed as a deliberate provocation and a type of defiance. On being questioned further about this 'nastiness', she makes an explicit link to the difficulties associated with finding accommodation.

Extract 5.3 (cont.)

Marc: Well I was going to ask actually about the [**Betty:** cl-] examples of 'erm, I mean you said that they were very prejudiced and very nasty. We may as well work off that. I mean, were there specific examples you can remember?

Betty: Oh yes; you wouldn't get, for instance, (.) you wouldn't get a flat; there was loads of flats 'er, 'erm (.) advertised [**Marc:** mm]. You might then go; they'd bang the door in your face 'You're Irish ain't ya; you're Irish ain't ya?' [**Marc:** yeah]. I mean that was, that 'You're Irish ain't ya?', I mean that was it and (.) 'er there was 'er, we, we had our, all of us had our names down for flats with the GL-, no, it was the London County Council at that time [**Marc:** okay], they owned all the property and that kind of

thing [Marc: mm], and they put us on, on a waiting list [Marc: yeah], but I mean, you know, if I lived to be a hundred, I would never have got anything from that L, LC [Marc: mm] London County Council, (.hh) and so we had to forage our own, forage for ourselves, help each other out; tell someone that there was a flat going, get it [Marc: mm], and the only way we could get any place to live in was to go to a crooked estate agent and give him 'key' money [Marc: right]; give him a hundred quid key money. Now the other point was this, we wouldn't get a mortgage [Marc: mm]; we were told we were 'itinerant' labour [Marc: okay] so there was no point, even though I had an account with, with 'er, with 'erm (.hh) a building society; I was saving a few bob; they would not give us 'er any one of us that I know of a mortgage [Marc: mm], alone because we were seen as itinerant labour [Marc: right]. (.hh) 'Erm (.) that, that was, that was, that was the greatest 'er sacrifice of all, to have to live through,

Betty's narrative of attempting to secure accommodation is explicitly framed in terms of personal and institutional prejudice, with both lodgings and the more permanent security afforded by a mortgage, or council housing, denied to her due to her Irishness. She also frames this as a collective experience, which serves to situate it as part of the canonical narrative of the Irish in London in the 1950s. The prejudice that was 'typically' encountered acts as a justification for the Irish building their own networks and obtaining accommodation outside the official channels. Thus, participation in these networks may be constructed as an aspect of authentically Irish experience for the time period. Also, in common with Peg, the intertwining of Betty's narration of her own experience with the 'time-appropriate' collective migrant experience of the Irish in London is key to her own claim on authenticity: presented in such a way as to be rhetorically almost incontestable. Her narrative is therefore situated within the aforementioned discourse of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory.

Having obtained a flat, Betty goes on to give a more personalised account of the anti-Irish prejudice she suffered at the hands of her neighbours:

Extract 5.3 (cont.)

Betty: But the neighbours were so nasty to us; they wrote; they sent nasty notes through our door, they broke our doorbell. When I went out in the garden to hang up my children's clothes, and my clothes, the one, the one on the right hand side used to throw dirt at my kids, my clothes, and my washing line. She'd lift it up and she'd hit it, hit the washing with it [**Marc:** mm], and she would swear and shout and (.) tell us we were dirt and filth and papists and breeding like rabbits and 'we didn't want your sort in this country' and (.hh) 'er 'we should never have let you in' and 'you collaborated with the Germans; you fuelled the U-Boats and sunk our ships; De Valera apologised to the I, to the German ambassador'; I mean I had so much of it that, that I began to sort of think 'er, believe it [**Marc:** mm], you know, what Churchill said and 'Churchill said this'. So then I, (it, it, it) started out on a plan to re-educate them.

Marc: To re- what sorry?

Betty: Re-educate them [**Marc:** oh okay], (.) but it wasn't like that at all [**MS:** yeah], instead of being, instead of being nasty back. (.) I was nice to them [**Marc:** right]; nice to them, and that, that threw them [**Marc:** mm]; they couldn't cope with it to be honest with you.

The oft-stated aphorism on the problems associated with Anglo-Irish history that "the Irish cannot forget what the English cannot remember" (Mac an Ghail, 1999, 2001; Popoviciu, Haywood, & Mac an Ghail, 2006) would appear not to apply here, as Betty positions herself as the target of her neighbours' resentments around the perceived Irish role during the then recent Second World War. Betty and her family are represented here as the victims of a dubious historical narrative over which they have no control. It is perhaps

constructive to compare the way domesticity is represented in Gerry and Betty's narrative, and consider the way gender runs through these narratives. Gerry represents the establishment of a domestic family unit as a source of stability and a safeguard against feelings of loneliness and alienation, whereas in Betty's narrative this family unit is centred as deliberately at the centre of her neighbours' attacks, both physically (throwing dirt at her children and her washing) and verbally (the reference to papists breeding like rabbits). With regard to the latter, Hickman (1995) has examined the persistence into the 1950s and 1960s of a specific form of anti-Irish prejudice that incorporated discourses relating to class and Catholicism, and it is experiences of this that Betty draws upon. Again, Betty's narrative is situated within a wider collective experience although in this case, it is not explicitly framed as such. Rather, in referring to the ways in which her experiences of prejudice intersected with the mundane details of everyday life, her narrative is authenticated through its very ordinariness.

Betty's narrative of coming to interact with her neighbours (and of being individually instrumental in prompting a shift from outright prejudice and hostility to conviviality) represents a shift from the Irish experience as migrant, to that of minority group within England. Drawing on the discussion in Chapter 3 of the position of the Irish as a minority group in multi-racial and multi-cultural England, it is also important to note that Irishness is also narrated and re-inscribed through interactions with other minority groups. It is notable (and something which has been somewhat overlooked in past research on the English context) the extent to which the narratives of the 1950s generation of migrants position the Irish, "us", collectively, in relation to other minority groups newly arrived in England at the time, most notably, recent migrants from the West Indies. For example, the following extract comes from my conversation with Ciarán, a man in his seventies, who had moved to London in the 1950s to work as a tailor. Earlier in the interview, he had spoken about experiencing anti-Irish comments in the workplace, something he described

as “the knock”, using this as a catch-all term to cover all forms of anti-Irish discrimination. He then goes on to describe this form of discrimination as being displaced onto other groups:

Extract 5.4:

Ciarán: People that come over we'll say .hh later on wouldn't have to go through as much as: as they did earlier [**Marc:** hmm] you know what I mean like there's one .hh Irish man said to me, he said .hh he said the black man done a great job for us (.) he took the pressure off us [**Marc:** huh, right] you know [**Marc:** right] hmm [**Marc:** yeah, the, the-] and th-there's no doubt about it [**Marc:** yeah] the coloured man did .hh black man did (.) take a lot of the pressure off the Irish

Marc: In terms of prejudice?

Ciarán: Aye prejudice, you know

While again, a contrast is drawn between the experience of later generations of migrants, and those that migrated in the 1950s, the experience of this generation is here constructed as a collectively ethnicised one. The racialised and gendered figure of “the black man” is represented as having taken “the pressure off” the Irish, collectively, in replacing them as the target of prejudice. This is almost to imply that prejudice is accepted as a constant – all that changes is the target of the prejudice, and to have been supplanted as the target is represented as a great boon, collectively, for the Irish. So while the ‘No Dogs, No Blacks, No Irish’ signs mentioned earlier might appear to represent a kind of equality of status among those represented as undesirables, narratives of “the black man taking the pressure off the Irish”, would appear to construct a kind of racial hierarchy, a connection that is explicitly made by Peg:

Extract 5.5:

Peg: you had to find your own [Marc: yeah] accommodation .hh and erm that was when
(.) when we found out that (.) we weren't that welcome at all, you know [Marc: okay]
(*cough*) so er (.) as I said 'twas no Irish, no dogs, no Irish, no babies [Marc: yeah] and
then it went er then of course when the coloured people came (.) it was wonderful when
they came coz we went up a rung on the ladder .hh and er (.) it was (.) for a while they
were with us it was er no Irish, no blacks (.) no dogs, no babies [Marc: hmm] but then
the-we we got left out and it was just no blacks, no *dogs, no babies* [Marc: yeah] yeah
so .hh I used to tell them, the girls I used to work with that (.) we were delighted to see
them coming [Marc: hmm] you know because we went up one rung on the ladder you
know

While the Irish collectively moving “up a rung on the ladder” can be represented as a narrative of progress, it is a curiously negative one: the Irish are not represented as winning the respect of the English due to hard work, or as benefiting from more enlightened English attitudes, but simply as profiting from the arrival of an even more disparaged group. Thus, the barring signs on rented accommodation act as something of a public list of the dispreferred, and become emblematic of the gradual grudging acceptance of the Irish, collectively. Referring back to the discussion in Chapter 3, any evidence of a form of cross-minority solidarity are absent from these accounts. Rather, they are situated in an older narrative of the Irish being distinguished from other minority groups by virtue of their whiteness.

It would be disingenuous to suggest that the narratives of ‘living Irish’ in the 1950s are solely concerned with hardship and prejudice. For example, Peg, among others, gave an enthusiastic account of the opportunities for socializing available to the Irish in London at the time. However, while the 1950s generation themselves may incorporate the social

aspects of life within their narratives, for later migrants, the hardships associated with this cohort became a point of reference against which to compare their own experience, but also as an explanatory narrative for current issues surrounding the Irish in England as in the following extract from the group discussion in Milton Keynes. It is worth bearing in mind that Gerry, who was quoted earlier, is around 15 years older than the other participants, and would have migrated correspondingly earlier, thus being the only speaker who could be considered a “50s generation” migrant. Marion is a second generation Irish woman whose parents had migrated in the 1930s, whereas all the other speakers had migrated in the late 1960s/early 1970s. Prior to this particular extract of conversation, Kathleen had been discussing a talk she had attended given by Mary Tilki, the Chair of the Federation of Irish Societies at the London Irish Centre, on the link between alcohol and mental health problems among Irish migrants:

Extract 5.6:

Kathleen: She was saying ‘erm, which comes, what, what caused it; they were looking for the cause of it, and what they think caused a lot of it was, is the digs that these men lived in [**Marion:** yeah], and, and they used to pay for their, their, their room and they had to pay for a meal, but the meal that they got was sub-standard; [**Marion:** yeah] it was lots of crap that they were given to eat. (.hh) They weren’t allowed to sit in anybody’s living room [**Marion:** couldn’t cook] or dining room [**Marion:** no]; they couldn’t cook for themselves; they just had a bed, so, so [**Marion:** in the damp, cold] so they went down the pub, got drunk, came home, went to bed, went to work [

Marion:]Slept in their clothes [**Áine:** yeah]

Kathleen: And, and [

Marion:]But socially they met people [**Áine:** yeah] [

Andrew: That happened here.

Kathleen: And that was, that was the, she; they reckoned that that’s [

Marion:] That was the start of it [

Kathleen: A lot of the reason for the Irish being dis-, disadvantaged and, and being the way that they are [

Marion:]And thought of as drunkards [**Kathleen::** yeah] it's because they actually went to the pub; they might not have all got drunk, but because that was a meeting place and they were warm [**Áine:** mm]; my dad told us that [**Kathleen:** yes] You'd be out working in all weathers, your clothes would be wet, there was nowhere in your room to dry them [**Áine:** mm] and you'd, you'd go home and you'd go to the pub, because it was warm, and your clothes dried out on you while you were in the pub.

Kathleen: 'Er, you know, and, and they reckon that was the cause of a lot of the ill health with the Irish [**Marion:** yeah], and, and that's how we were perceived by other, by other 'erm (..hh) [**Áine:** by the English people] the natives if you know what I mean [**Marion:** yeah], yes, yes [**Marion:** (Coventry)], and, and I never, never gave that a thought until she was talking about it and 'erm, because she worked with a lot of these, these people and she came across it on a daily basis [**Marion:** mm], but I would never have, you know, because (.) I didn't have to do anything like that when I came. You didn't have to do anything like that [

Áine: No, no

Marion:]No, it was different [

Kathleen: You; maybe Gerry's generation did [

Áine: Again, I didn't really have to come over [**Kathleen:** yeah] like you I didn't have to come over [**Kathleen:** no]

Gerry: Well I had (.) because there was six of us in a room I think, at the beginning; I had a single bed anyway, and (since I never had a single) bed, and it was one pound fifty (.); no food, no nothing, and you'd have to get out in the morning and go somewhere you'd find [

Marion: Out all day

Gerry: That was hard [**Áine:** oh, it must have been, yeah]; that only lasted for a certain time d'y'see 'til, 'til I met with [*wife*] and got married [

Kathleen:]Well see, you were one of the lucky ones because you fell in love with a woman [**Gerry:** yeah], with, with ‘er [*wife*], and you fell in love, had your family and, and took it up and started again [**Gerry:** yes] [

Marion: Took it up

Kathleen: Where a lot of the chaps that came over that didn’t have the confidence to do it [**Gerry:** no]

Áine: They wouldn’t, no

Marion: Oh, they wouldn’t have the confidence to talk to a woman

Kathleen: They wouldn’t know how because [**Marion:** know how to talk] it wasn’t what happened at home.

Gerry: They got stuck in a rut [

This historical narrative of the hardship of the 1950s generation Irish in England is co-constructed in such a way as to provide an explanation for the poor health of many elderly Irish people, as well as acting as a counter-narrative against the ‘native’ perception of the Irish as drunkards. Having lived through the period in question, Gerry’s contribution serves to lend the narrative authenticity (another example of “Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory”), as does the initial reference to the Chair of the Federation of Irish Societies, who is here portrayed as an authoritative voice on the subject of the Irish in England. In constructing the options available (in retrospect) to the ‘typical’ 50s migrant, who is, notably, constructed as male, starting a family is, once again, portrayed as the natural way of restoring a ‘good’ Irish life. The young single Irishman is positioned as having been exposed to continual hardship and possible exploitation due to the absence of the care associated with a feminised domesticity (e.g. being able to cook for oneself), while falling in love, getting married and starting a family is constructed as a form of rescue. Those that fail to do this, on the other hand, get “stuck in a rut”, and fall into a ‘bad’ Irish life, associated with drunkenness, poverty and poor diet. The ‘typical’ migrant who falls into the latter category is also portrayed as not “having the confidence to talk to a woman”:

this being characterised as typical of 1950s Ireland, which is portrayed as being a particularly unforgiving environment for gender relations. The introduction of this theme may echo something of an ideological dilemma between two alternative explanatory factors: blaming London for representing a harsh environment for Irish single men or blaming 1950s Ireland for not providing adequate preparation for living in a large city. Taken in tandem they represent an explanation for the low social position of many Irish men at the time that does not rely on any account of individual failings – one might note the collective effort within the extract to build up such a narrative.

The condition of the single 1950s Irishman is presented in a debased and almost pathological way, and in doing so, a contrast is drawn to later migrants, who did not have to negotiate such hardships. It is notable that both Kathleen and Áine speak in terms of ‘not having *had* to come over’, positioning themselves as possessing greater agency due to having migrated through choice. Again, it might be noted that this is an example of constructing an authentic immigrant experience, which is associated with a certain generation. It is also interesting to compare the way ‘risk’ is retrospectively constructed for young Irish men and young Irish ‘girls’, as discussed earlier, where the risk for men is discussed in terms of developing unhealthy habits, but the risk for girls was constructed in terms of sexual predators and falling into prostitution. Further on this theme, ‘rescue’ for men comes in the figure of a wife, whereas rescue for the ‘girls’ comes in the figure of the Legion of Mary. The way in which sexuality, particularly female sexuality, continued to be policed post-migration is examined by Rossiter (2009). It is also notable that the figure of the single elderly Irish female migrant is absent from this discussion and from wider narratives around the ‘disadvantaged’ survivors of the 1950s generation of Irish migrants.

Narratives of ‘living Irish’ in the 1950s do seem to be arranged around established meanings of a ‘typical’ shared set of experiences, both positive and negative, as well as

around a certain heteronormative life trajectory which is seen as ensuring a ‘good’ Irish life in London. In such ways, claims can be made on a personally authentic Irishness that is constructed through these narratives of a typical set of collective experiences. A strong “Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory” discourse thus emerges.

5.2: “A suspect community”: the 1970s and 1980s

As has already been discussed, the canonical narrative of the Irish in England depicts a relatively settled period during the 1960s, which was disrupted by the beginning of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in 1969 and, perhaps more pertinently, the Provisional IRA’s subsequent bombing campaign of English cities, which was at its zenith between 1973 and 1975. This, and the reaction of the British state in enacting the first Prevention of Terrorism Act in 1974 (subsequently renewed annually until 1989), had the effect of positioning the Irish as a suspect community as thoroughly discussed by Hillyard (1993). Perhaps nowhere was this more keenly felt than in Birmingham, where on the 21st November 1974, the IRA exploded bombs in two pubs in the city centre, killing 21 people and injuring 160.¹² As related by Carl Chinn (2003) the consequences for the relatively close-knit Birmingham-Irish community were immediate and severe: the city’s St. Patrick’s Day parade was suspended indefinitely (the significance of which is discussed in greater detail in Chapter 6), planning permission for Irish developments such as GAA pitches were withheld, and the population itself began to be policed severely, in common with the Irish population of other English cities.

¹² Six men, originally from Belfast and Derry, and all of whom had been living in Birmingham from the 1960s were tried and wrongly convicted of the bombings. The campaign to release the ‘Birmingham Six’, along with the ‘Guildford Four’ and the ‘Maguire Seven’ became a rallying point for Irish activism in the 1980s until their successful appeal and release in 1991.

Sam, a man in his early 60s, who migrated to Birmingham during the 1960s, and is now a relatively high-profile member of a Birmingham-Irish community organisation gives the following account of the 1974 Birmingham pub bombings and their aftermath:

Extract 5.7:

Sam: But, obviously ‘er (.) then there was this (.) Northern Ireland thing was going on [Marc: mm], ‘twas happening in London and here, there and everywhere, y’know (..hh), and you were hoping it wasn’t gonna happen in your locality y’know [Marc: yeah]. But (hh) it did [Marc: yeah] in ’74 (..hh), which was a major, major blow to us y’know [Marc: yeah]. ‘Er, I remember at home (.) switching on the telly but, and all of a sudden this thing happened; two bombs in Birmingham and you were saying [Marc: yeah] ‘please say it’s not true’ [Marc: yeah] ‘please say it’s not true, surely not’, (..hh) and ‘er I remember going down and saying to [*wife*], she was in bed and I said ‘there was a bomb in Birmingham, I think two, we’re not quite sure’ [Marc: yeah], and ‘er suddenly life changed [Marc: mm], life changed very much for us, and I can understand a lot of it y’know [Marc: mm]. The, the bitterness (.); the bitterness from ‘erm the point of view of, it was an Irish thing that was done [Marc: yeah] y’know, and no thought was given to the community, but the perpetrators, it was a just terrible, terrible act, y’know. (..hh) They didn’t bother about who (..hh), who was in that pub or them pubs; it could have been me and my brother. We used to go there quite frequently to the Mulberry Bush...

The 1974 Birmingham bombings are here constructed as not just disrupting Irish life in Birmingham, but as destroying one era of Irishness and replacing it with another. Irish life before the bombings is represented as integrated into the city life of Birmingham, with Irish people being portrayed as equally likely to have been caught up in the bombings as anyone else. The “perpetrators” are thereby represented as external to the Birmingham community, due to “giving no thought” as to the consequences of their acts in causing the

Irish, collectively, to become marginalised within the city. At the same time, they are represented as internal to the wider imagined Irish community, given Sam's representation of the bombings as an "Irish thing that was done", and the bitterness towards the Irish as being understandable. His account of the aftermath of the bombings therefore represents a form of ideological dilemma in recounting the level of discrimination faced by the Irish in Birmingham, while acknowledging that this discrimination arose from understandable provocation. In other words, continuing to identify with Ireland, Birmingham and Irishness within Birmingham involved a certain amount of complex discursive work, much of which can be seen as Sam continues to recount the change in the circumstances of the Irish in Birmingham, slightly later in the conversation:

Extract 5.7 (cont.):

'Er, your life changed (..hh) in as much there was your neighbours you would talk to yesterday, they wouldn't talk to you today [**Marc:** mm]. (..hh) The shopkeepers wouldn't 'er serve you [**Marc:** yeah]. Y'know, I went in and I remember Bridget going down for a loaf of bread; she walked in with the kids on the way to school (..hh) and 'er, they wouldn't serve us y'know, so [**Marc:** yeah]. That was very hard [**Marc:** yeah, yeah], very, very hard y'know. (..hh) So we kind of 'erm (.) closed ranks a bit, I suppose, y'know, maybe, and 'er kept ourselves to ourselves, which we had to do, y'know [**Marc:** mm] because 'er, the dangers involved, physical as well as everything else y'know [**Marc:** mm] quite, quite real y'know. (..hh) Here you, you, many people were beaten up and attacked in the street, y'know, (..hh) if your Irish accent came out, y'know [**Marc:** mm]. A lot of it you can understand because I have always said, in years after, when I was interviewed on Radio 5 Live, if it happened in my own village I obviously would feel very bitter as well y'know [**Marc:** yeah]. But that was life; the people that done it, we don't know who they were, whatever, (..hh) but they left a, a

fairly permanent stain [Marc: mm]. (.hh) Now, we the community obviously had, we had a lot of work to do [Marc: mm], to rebuild ourselves here in the city.

The marginalisation of the Irish in Birmingham is represented in the sudden difficulty associated with carrying out everyday activities, such as buying bread, (which is another example of the ‘ordinariness’ of acts of discrimination, as with Betty’s earlier account), but also by the threat of physical violence. The extent to which Irish accents became a potential source of aggravation and violence during the 1970s and 1980s has been examined by Walter (2008c). The main point here is that the dangers associated with having an Irish accent are an aspect of the canonical narrative of Irishness being ‘under siege’ in England during the IRA bombing campaigns, and forms an explanation for the Irish community ‘closing ranks’. Again, this is expressed as a collective experience, and Sam’s reference to what would happen “if your Irish accent came out”, is suggestive of the accent being something that needed to be hidden. At the same time, this violence is once again constructed as understandable with the bitterness of the reaction being linked to an assault on Birmingham as a *locality*, with Sam positioning himself as being equally bitter had his own village in Ireland been attacked. The aftermath of the bombing is constructed as a nadir for the Irish in *Birmingham*, specifically, and as something from which the community needed to ‘rebuild’ themselves. This rebuilding or ‘reconstruction’ can be seen as repairing community relations, but it can also be seen as needing to reconstruct a new version of a collective narrative of what it meant to be Irish in Birmingham, the previous version having, quite literally, been exploded. This importance of localised identifications will be examined more closely in Chapter 7.

The effect of the bombings was also to create a crisis in second generation perspectives with regard to situating themselves within wider narratives and meanings of Irishness, as

explored by Sinéad, a second generation London-Irish woman in her forties, in the following extract:

Extract 5.8:

Sinéad: I:: remember probably in the seventies being aware .hh of (.) the Irishness and then of course you had all the spate of bombings over here [Marc: hmm] you know the- so .hh that brought a different dimension again probably (.) to it because I think I remember feeling .hh (.) did I feel embarrassed-I don't know if I would say the word embarrassed but I felt .hh an awareness that .hh s: (.) obviously I'd gone for so long in my life feeling .hh the real positiveness about being Irish [Marc: hmm] .hh and then suddenly there was something out there happening that was trying to change (.) that or putting a different erm (.) perspective on it but [Marc: hmm] .hh at that point I was probably still quite young .hh but I knew a bit of Irish history so .hh other feelings were coming out in me as well thinking .hh well it's only one side of the story that's being portrayed over here-I think [Marc: hmm] I was old enough to realise (.) [Marc: yeah, yeah] realise that but .hh er::m so pe-I suppose that was one point where you did think 'oh God' it-it made you feel .hh a bit unsure about-not unsure about your Irishness-I can't really find the word for it .hh erm (.) perhaps it challenged [Marc: yeah] (.) the-the way I was feeling about (.) Ir-my Irishness and .hh I didn't feel old enough to be able to actually .hh maybe (.) give an argument back-I'm trying to think I would have probably been about (.) ten, twelve, fourteen [Marc: hmm] er:::m (.) but I suppose those were my earl-earliest [Marc: yeah] maybe memories

Much like Sam, Sinéad represents the bombings and the consequent shift from one 'era' of Irishness in England to another as an abrupt change, with which she then had to come to terms. Sinéad's narrative is an example of how personal narratives can be intertwined with collective narratives of the nation – the positive, uncomplicated Irishness associated with

her childhood becomes both externally and internally challenged as she enters her teenage years. Irishness is now represented as something that can have multiple meanings, and needs to be negotiated in dialogue with people external to Irishness. However, she represents herself as being too young and insecure in her own Irishness to “have the argument”. Walter et al. (2002), in examining the ways in which ‘public accounts of Irish history’ were constructed among second generation Irish people have noted the tendency for those of Irish descent to grow more confident about asserting a sense of Irish difference as they grow older. Here, however, the lack of confidence associated with youth, is associated with a lack of confidence in speaking against the dominant narrative of Irishness associated with the bombings. It is also interesting that within the immediate context of the interview, Sinéad struggles to articulate her own relationship with Irishness at the time, which is perhaps indicative of the dilemmatic aspect of reconciling a sense of a personally authentic Irishness with a recognised collective authentic Irishness. In this case, her Irishness is constructed dialogically with contemporary hegemonic understandings of Irishness, which she represents as inauthentic, due to portraying only “one side of the story”.

This theme of second generation Irish people negotiating their Irishness dialogically within hegemonic and hostile understandings of Irishness, particularly in the 1970s runs through the corpus of data, but is at times leavened by the emphasis on a private, domestic sphere of Irishness where such arguments did not need to be had. Sheila, for example, another second generation woman, speaks of needing to hide her Irishness while working in the West End but being able to “be what she was” among her own Irish community centred on London’s Caledonian Road. At the same time this community is portrayed as needing to go underground for fear of attack, much as the Birmingham-Irish community ‘closed ranks’ in Sam’s narrative. Thus, the authentic Irish experience at the time is represented as being a private community affair through necessity, whereas one could not, as an individual,

publicly portray one's Irishness. This may be seen as another aspect of the discourse of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory.

The extracts so far have reflected the ways in which Irish people constructed themselves as having been positioned as 'suspect' by external events over which they had no control and yet cannot distance themselves from without 'hiding' their Irish identities. As such, the Irish in England, both individually and collectively, are positioned as victims. However, it is far from clear that this 'victim' narrative constitutes an uncontested canonical narrative of 'living Irish' in England during the 'suspect community' period. As has already been discussed, the way individual Irish people draw on discourses of authentic Irishness to narrate their own lives as Irish people in England incorporate both personalised (i.e. an Irishness that is mine) and collectivised (i.e. an Irishness that is ours) repertoires of authenticity. However, when this Irishness is at odds with the hegemonic portrayal of Irishness within England, this creates an ideological dilemma. While this may be resolved by emphasising a separation between personal and collective Irish identities i.e. one can be authentically Irish in the domestic sphere, but not in the public sphere; it may also be resolved by attempts to articulate an authentic Irishness publicly, and thus challenge hegemonic representations of Irishness.

Along these lines, alternative narratives of the suspect community period emphasise the agency of the Irish, again both individually and collectively, in engaging with the changed political circumstances and articulating an Irishness distinct from negative hegemonic representations, but also from an 'undercover' Irishness. These accounts of Irish activism are sometimes explicitly political. For example, Brian, an Irish migrant in his sixties living in London gave an account of getting involved in anti-internment and civil rights campaigns. 'Getting involved' in his narrative was represented as a natural progression from a moment of identification between his personal status as an Irishman and the

collective political position of Irish people in England. That this identification would not have been salient in Ireland is reflected in his comment that “you didn’t really notice it back home ... but of course you had to get involved here”.

Alongside this kind of explicitly political activism, there was also a conscious effort at this point to promote a kind of cultural activism and articulate different meanings of Irishness. As was discussed in Chapter 3, this form of activism coincided with a wider turn towards articulating minority cultures as a form of postcolonial politics, and represented a nascent multicultural orientation among the Irish in England. For example, Andrew, a migrant in his late 50s, described the way in which the “Sense of Ireland” festival held in London in 1980 inspired him and others to organise cultural events with his local Irish Society:

Extract 5.9:

Andrew: I think what, what we felt we were trying to do was give them, y’know, a sense of, y’know, this is what’s best, this is what’s really good in Irish, and be proud of it [Marc: mm] sh-show it off to everybody and be proud of it [Marc: yeah] ahh, and I suppose the other thing is, y’know, bearing in mind the times we were operating in and the, the, y’know, the situation in Northern Ireland, the situation here [Marc: yeah] y’know, the- those were very difficult times so I- I think what we probably had in mind too was to give people a sense of pride in who they are [Marc: yeah] not to feel, not to feel bad about themselves because of, y’know all the bad publicity in the news and in the papers and so on, be, be proud, y’know, hold your head high kind of thing, this is, this is what the Irish community have to offer, and I have to say that people regardless of whether they were Irish or not responded very well to that [Marc: mm] y’know, they, they really did and we got great co-operation from the local council [Marc: mm] y’know, so it, it was a very positive thing, a very good thing to be involved in at the time, very satisfying

Marc: So it's kind of like projecting a positive [image of Irishness]

Andrew: Yeah, absolutely, absolutely, yeah

Promoting Irish culture is portrayed as a means of constructing an alternative narrative of Irishness to that associated with the “situation in Northern Ireland”. It is also constructed as the authentic Irishness – “what’s really good in Irish” and “what the Irish community have to offer”. Irishness, at this point, is no longer portrayed as something that is simply lived, but which has to be consciously remade and performed and done so for an audience that is wider than the Irish community themselves. This form of emphasising the good in Irishness as a way of allowing people to ‘hold their heads high’ may also be seen as a form of defiance, but unlike Brian’s account of engaging in protest activities, it is a defiance that is simultaneously an effort at engagement. A link may be made to Betty’s account of challenging her neighbours with niceness and thus positioning the Irish as engaging rather than the English as lenient.

Narratives of this period from second generation Irish people also emphasise a growing sense of second generation Irish consciousness, and a relocation of Irishness as situated, and created within an urban environment, as opposed to a migratory identity. As such, the notion of a canonical narrative referring to a collective Irish experience begins to become deconstructed, and the “Irish authenticity through diasporic claim” discourse is more in evidence. In the following extract, Kate, a second generation Irish woman in her 40s recalls the emergence of a specific second generation London-Irish narrative and links it to the campaign to recast Irishness as an ethnicity:

Extract 5.10:

Kate: I suppose we was-i-it was it was the first time I was aware of that it was like, you know, 'say it loud, I'm Irish and I'm proud' [**Marc:** right] you know, it was that-it was like (.) you Irish, green power as opposed to black power, it was very much that kind of, 'wow', we can be (.) [**Marc:** yeah] interesting and friendly-hip and fashionable-and then it got very fashionable for while as well [**Marc:** right] and at the same time you had bands coming out of Ireland like U2 and it was becoming a bit [**Marc:** hmm] more global you know the sort of world wide, I don't know, appreciation-it was-it was just like saying (.) y'know, we come from a (.) culture a (.) a-there's a great cultural history [**Marc:** hmm] legacy (.) but we've got to filter it through our own experience [**Marc:** yeah] which is a very London-Irish and (.) which is different to Americ-second generation Irish-Americans [**Marc:** hmm] coz when I talk to Irish-Americans they didn't experience that racism they didn't have the Birmingham Six they didn't have any of that stuff [**Marc:** yeah] so when you talk to them about people being anti-Irish they're quite shocked [**Marc:** hmm] I know very early Ir-American immigrants to America had a bit of racism but (.) not people of the later generations [**Marc:** hmm] you know (.) not in the same way anyway (2) [yeah]

Marc: [So] did the that green power slogan was that actually used?

Kate: *Not that I remember [**Marc:** okay] I just made that up* (*laugh*)

Marc: *Okay you just made it up right* damn I thought wow something new (*laugh*)

Kate: A new-a whole new movement yeah [**Marc:** *laugh*] yeah .hh but there was a definite sense that it was okay to be Irish [**Marc:** okay] in London-as a young person [**Marc:** yeah] you didn't have to hide it any more

Marc: Hmm which was er [created by the scene]

Kate: [Coming out almost] yeah

There is, then, an importance of creating a narrative around the specific experiences of second generation London-Irish people that can be contrasted with other experiences,

particularly the Irish-American experience. Despite the fact that Kate is quick to clarify that the 'green power' slogan was not something that was actually used during the rise in second-generation Irish consciousness during the 1980s, it is still interesting that she employs it as a register, suggesting that the 'black power' movement is the nearest understandable cultural movement. This has an unmistakable echo of representing the new ways that Irishness was being articulated among young second generation Irish people in London as a re-evaluation of a previously dispreferred identity. Of course, it also serves to position Irishness as ethnic, and shortly afterwards in the conversation Kate explicitly linked this re-articulation of Irishness in the 1980s with the multicultural initiatives undertaken by the GLC at the same time, claiming that these initiatives resulted in "people being much more open about talking about ethnicity and identity and nationality".

The emergence of a second generation Irish narrative is therefore related to a number of wider historico-political narratives at the time e.g. a narrative of the GLC under Ken Livingstone as being a welcoming environment for projects relating to ethnicity. Thus, Irishness is nested within the wider narrative of a multicultural London. London-Irishness is also defined by the kind of Irishness it is not: for example, Kate draws an explicit comparison between London-Irishness and Irish-Americanness, and differentiates between the two by virtue of the political circumstances within which London-Irishness had been created.

A narrative of the 'typical' Irish experience during the 1970s and 1980s thus emphasises the 'suspect community' narrative and the extent to which expressions of Irish culture were driven underground. However, alternative narratives emphasise the extent of Irish activism, the deliberate promotion of Irish culture as counteracting associations with violence, and the emergence of specific second generation London-Irish culture situated in the multicultural city. The latter can also be read as the emergence of a discourse of Irish

authenticity through diasporic claim. As such one can begin to identify certain imaginings of what it means to live Irish in England as having a dialogical aspect: defiant narratives are constructed in dialogue with those of concealment, public Irishness in dialogue with private Irishness and narratives of hostility and discrimination with those of tolerance and understanding the motivations of the authorities and the wider population. Such dialogues and counter narratives set the tone for the third era.

5.3: “Flavour of the month”: the 1990s to the present day

The dominant narrative around ‘living Irish’ in England over the past 15 years portrays a remarkable turnaround in the perception of the Irish in England, and an unprecedented level of popularity of Irish culture. As an example, the following extract is taken from the group discussion carried out in Milton Keynes:

Extract 5.11:

Kathleen: At the moment in England we’re, we’re, we’re living in a very favourable time because Irish is flavour of the month [**Áine:** yes] and it has been, but we can remember when it wasn’t flavour of the month [**Áine:** yeah] you know, and we, as far as people are concerned, we can do no wrong [**Marc:** mm]; that’s, that’s what the concept I get, just at the moment [**Áine:** mm] [**Marc:** mm] and, but I’ll keep quiet (*laughs*).

Áine: No, I, I feel the same way as you do Kathleen; it’s actually, to use a modern word, it’s cool to be Irish (..hh) but we can remember the days when it certainly wasn’t cool to be Irish

While Kathleen and Áine refer to the current ‘coolness’ of Irishness, this is done in reference to its previous unpopularity. Additionally, in using the phrase “flavour of the

month”, and “at the moment”, there is a suggestion that this popularity is fleeting. That there is a certain wariness evident in the narratives of Irish popularity as constructed by those who lived through the suspect community era is perhaps, understandable. In referring to a shared common memory of the position of the Irish collectively, the participants in this group are once again, interweaving their personal narratives with the wider narrative of Irishness in England, and again invoking a discourse of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory. Such narratives also refer to the wider context in which Irishness is situated. As well as the Irish, and Irishness increasing in popularity, the general culture is also constructed as having changed and as being more amenable to the kind of difference that Irishness represents.

When looking for causes attributed to this change in narratives of ‘living Irish’, it is useful to make a temporary distinction between the two aspects of the change: the decline in anti-Irish sentiment and the rise of the popularity of Irish culture. The former is by and large attributed to the onset of the Northern Ireland peace process and the end of IRA bombing campaigns in England, and to a certain extent, the advent of the Celtic Tiger economy in Ireland. For example, Alan, a man in his 50s, living in Milton Keynes:

Extract 5.12:

Alan: now it's (.) nobody takes any notice [**Marc:** hmm] y'know you're one of the people aren't you

Marc: And d-did you notice (.) that changing like did you d'you was there a time when you thought ‘huh, there’s

Alan: Ah, you could see, yeah, yeah

Marc: Yeah

Alan: I suppose (.) the peace when peace came [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] even before that you know [**Marc:** hmm] t'was chan-change I suppose [**Marc:** yeah] .hh and then when the, I suppose somebody else g- there's always somebody to blame isn't there [**Marc:** *yeah*] .hh and it's not the Irish any more I suppose it's somebody [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] you know there's nobody bombing London (.) you know I suppose if you were being bombed (.) .hh you know in London I suppose you (.) you'd be worried who it-who it was wouldn't you [**Marc:** hmm] so I:: it's completely changed hasn't it [**Marc:** hmm] like within the Irish p-economy you know, coming up and [**Marc:** yeah] doing well and (.) you're not to be laughed at any more are you [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] and things like, you know so

Marc: So it's kind of a cultural thing as well like with [**Alan:** I would say] Irishness (.) more, works out

Alan: Especially the young people coming over from Ireland you know [**MS:** yeah, yeah] they don't go (.) they don't go out (.) they don't have to go building any more [**Marc:** hmm] they're all er (.) even though (.) there's nothing wrong with building [**Marc:** *laugh*] now no (*laugh*) .hh it's quite a good life as well you know so [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] but (.) .hh I suppose it's hard you know

Alan suggests that the profile of the Irish has declined insofar as they are now no longer the scapegoats for “bombing London” – the Irish are now seen as “one of the people” as opposed to a suspect group. While he doesn’t dwell on it, his brief reference to “I suppose if you were being bombed, you’d wonder who it was” can be construed as corresponding with the aforementioned repertoire of anti-Irish sentiment on the part of the ‘native’ English as being in some way understandable. Similarly, he constructs the success of the Irish economy as having defused the power of anti-Irish jokes. There is also a class aspect to this narrative: in following up his assertion that the Irish are not to be laughed at any more with an observation that more recent Irish migrants “don’t have to go building any more” he appears to be suggesting that at least some of the anti-Irish sentiment had to do

with the association of the Irish with manual labour, or alternatively that the decline in such sentiment has led to opportunities for Irish migrants outside the building trade. While there is then a moment of repair, given that Alan himself is a builder, where he emphasizes that “there’s nothing wrong with building”, it is illustrative of the shift in narratives of the perceived typical Irish migrant: to be a young Irish migrant is to be middle-class, whereas to be an older migrant is to be involved in manual labour.

Robert, a man in his thirties who migrated to London during the 1980s to attend university, and now works in the City, constructs a similar narrative, but from an insider’s perspective:

Extract 5.13:

Marc: So when did you notice that starting to change?

Robert: ‘Erm, I would have noticed that starting to change like, you know, in the, in the late ‘90’s, you know [**Marc:** right], and then it definitely like started to change near enough ‘er, near enough straight away [**Marc:** yeah] after they went for the Anglo-Irish agreement like you know [**Marc:** okay], you know that whole thing was changing (.hh) but also like you know, it, it had eased off for me personally like yeah, when I got a bit older [**Marc:** mm], like even though I knew of people that was like you know, I’d get stopped maybe once, maybe once in seven times [**Marc:** yeah] ‘er when I was like, you know, the second like, the second five years I was here [**Marc:** mm], you know you definitely, like you could definitely see it easing off like you know [**Marc:** yeah] like no interest at all hardly in ‘er, in, like around you know late ‘90’s, early 2000 [**Marc:** yeah, yeah], yeah you know, and that’s when; I think that’s when ‘erm (.) that’s when being Irish in London changed quite a lot [**Marc:** right], around that period because a lot of people went back to Ireland [**Marc:** yeah]; ‘er, a lot of people which would be from more the ‘er the manual worker type person like yeah, you know, the guy operating on the building site, ‘er went back home with the, with the Celtic Tiger starting to boom,

whereas a lot of professionals just stayed in London because that was where it was, and you, and you found over the last like, you know, over the last eight years, it's like the guys coming into London are the ones that are coming to pursue a career in the city [Marc: yeah], to do like you know, to do professional services, to do different things that, you know, just not the markets for [Marc: yeah] back home like yeah.

Marc: So, almost like you say, being Irish in London has changed, kind of the, is it like the community spirit has changed? Or just the people you meet or [

Robert: Oh yeah, definitely like yeah; I'd say like 'erm, it's definitely like filtered away completely like yeah, you know, like a lot of these professional guys wouldn't go near (.) 'er, wouldn't go near 'er (.) an Irish community centre [Marc: yeah] yeah, to socialise right yeah, 'cos they'd be just like (.hh), 'er, they don't want to socialise with people from the lower end of the scale [Marc: mm] if you put it that way like yeah [Marc: okay].

Robert situates his own personal narrative of being stopped and searched while travelling between Ireland and England, within a wider narrative of the Irish in England as a suspect community. As the political situation changed, the pressures associated with travelling between the two countries changed. Subsequently and simultaneously, what it meant to be Irish in London is also represented as having changed, something he attributes to a shift in class dynamics, with manual workers having returned to Ireland due to the economic boom, to be replaced by professional City workers. This shift in class among the 'typical' Irish community has been described by the second generation London-Irish author, John O'Donoghue as a movement from the 'murphia' to the 'murphoisie'.¹³ Significantly, perhaps, in both cases, the figure of the typical Irish migrant worker is represented as male, continuing a pattern previously noted by O'Sullivan (1995) and also evident in the previously discussed narratives around the gendered nature of the 1950s generation of migrants.

¹³ In conversation. Both words are plays on the common Irish surname, 'Murphy'

It is also notable that within Robert's narrative he positions the new middle-class "professional" arrivals as deliberately distancing themselves from "the lower end of the scale" as he portrays the kind of Irishness associated with Irish community centres. While, as previously discussed in Chapter 2.5, this kind of class distinction with regard to Irish spaces is hardly a new phenomenon, it does shape a narrative of 'newer' Irish migrants as being qualitatively different from their predecessors. It is interesting to look at how this new Irishness embodied by 'newer' Irish migrants is interwoven into the understood narratives of 'living Irish' of those already in England. While inter-generational differences around the construction of Irish authenticity will be explored further in Chapter 8, given this chapter's focus on the relationship between collective and personal narratives, it is worth looking briefly at the way in which the changing collective narrative of Irishness troubled some personal narratives of Irishness, resulting in a certain level of ambivalence about the new-found popularity and prosperity associated with Irishness.

For second generation Irish people, the advent of the Celtic Tiger economy in Ireland caused some disruption to narratives of Irishness in England as urban and progressive, in contrast to a rural, less materialistic Ireland, as in the following extract from an interview with Kate:

Extract 5.14:

Kate: I think partly the whole Celtic Tiger thing, I've-personally have found challenging and people I know have said .hh because it has changed the relationship between (.) us here and the Irish over there [**Marc:** right] because you know we're the ones-in a sense we're the ones th-the poor ones now [**Marc:** right] although that might be about to change again but you know [**Marc:** yeah] over the last ten years there's been a

real change in .hh the sort of erm material (.) erm (.) you know Ireland's a lot richer than it was [Marc: hmm] you know (.) I used to go back and you know my cousins would get some of my cast off clothes, you know [Marc: right] that wouldn't happen now [Marc: no] it would the *other way round if anything* [Marc: laugh] you know .hh erm (.) and I think we've had to adapt to that

Kate constructs her own personal narrative as Irish as having been disrupted by shifting meanings of Irishness due to the Celtic Tiger. Again, this may be conceptualised as a disconnect between an Irishness that is personally experienced as authentic and separate versions of collective Irishness. The difference in prosperity between the Irish in Ireland and the Irish in England reinforces the way in which they are imagined as separate collectivities. Later, she elaborates on this slightly:

Extract 5.14 (cont.)

Kate: Maybe-I mean that's it I think there was a relationship where people from London or second generation here (.) probably do feel a bit superior [Marc: hmm] to the (.) people our age in Ireland because we were more ahead (.) [Marc: yeah] you know, they're even catching up with social problems now [Marc: *.hh* yeah] so it suppose (.) that's the great equaliser but .hh (.) yeah that has changed and I [Marc: hmm] and that's had to-yeah coz I guess maybe that was part of my stepping back and thinking [Marc: yeah, yeah] 'ooh what's all this about?'

So, whereas the second generation London-Irishness was earlier presented as being defined during the 1980s as distinct from Irishness in Ireland, this distinction becomes less attractive when Ireland itself changes, and Irishness becomes associated with prosperity and modernity, with all the associated social problems that entails. This refers back to the narratives common among the constructions of the 1950s era, whereby Ireland was

represented as old-fashioned, rural and innocent, as opposed to modern, urban, England. When Ireland itself becomes modern and urban, that prompts a re-writing of long-established canonical narratives, which can be difficult to come to terms with in constructing a personal Irish identity.

There is therefore an element of the double-edged sword to narratives of the 'flavour of the month' period. In Irishness 'coming out' into mainstream English culture, a counter-narrative of what it means to be Irish becoming diluted is constructed:

Extract 5.14 (cont.)

Kate: I think the change in the political situation (.) [**Marc:** yeah] in Ireland (.) has had an impact on the profile of the Irish community [**Marc:** okay] (.) in a way that should be a good thing (.) [**Marc:** hmm] and (.) but I guess like I said there's a lack-the visibility is gone-maybe that's good-that people [**Marc:** hmm] are having a rest they don't have to feel exposed, you know, when all this stuff was going on in the North but .hh erm (.) I guess it's important not to lose the (.) kind of cultural aspects [**Marc:** yeah] you know and to (2.0) I don't know (.) it's hard to explain

Marc: I mean a-are (.) when (.) I'm going to hypothesise here [**Kate:** hmm] just after that but .hh when one is more consciously aware of being a minority culture [**Kate:** hmm] maybe that the cultural aspects are more to the fore [**Kate:** yeah] do you think that's something like that?

Kate: Yes: yeah or the need to club together [**Marc:** yeah] clump together (.) with your fellow (.) your gr-you know your fellow Irish is less important some how [**Marc:** hmm] .hh you know

A sense of loss of a communal identity is built into the narrative, to accompany the positive changes associated with no longer being viewed as a suspect community. It is notable that narratives describing the 3rd era of post-war Irishness are not built on assumed universal experiences of the typical, or even the ‘good’ Irish life. Rather, narratives of ‘living Irish’ appear to have become far more individualised. While it is possible that this is an artefact of a collective, historical sense of what it is accepted to mean to ‘live Irish’ in England in recent years not yet having been codified, it is possible that this period also marks the transition into a more postmodern Irishness, where the co-existence of multiple forms of Irishness is more accepted. Returning to the dual nature of the way individuals draw on discourses of authenticity in articulating their own Irish identities, the relationship between personal and collective authentic Irish identities has shifted according to temporality. Whereas narratives of what it meant to ‘live’ Irish in the earlier period are very much situated in the collective migrant experience, drawing on discourses of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory, a more individualised narrative of living an Irish life that is authentic to the self appears to be prioritised in narratives of more recent years.

5.4 Summary

This chapter has examined the ways that individual narratives of ‘living Irish’ in England shape and intertwine with what are considered to be ‘typical’ life trajectories of Irish people in England as well as with the assumed canonical narrative of the collective story of the Irish in post-war England. As has been outlined, a ‘typical’ life trajectory was very much in evidence in accounts of living Irish in 1950s England, whereby a heteronormative domesticity was constructed as being the path towards a ‘good’ Irish life, while those that were insufficiently lucky to achieve this were positioned as existing in something of a pathological state. There was also a shared understanding of the hardships of ‘the Irish’

collectively at this time, which persisted throughout the narratives of the somewhat different hardships endured during the ‘suspect community’ period. However, this narrative of discrimination was challenged somewhat on the part of some participants with a dialogical engagement as to the possible motivations behind the ‘bitterness’ displayed towards the Irish, which drew to a large extent on a localised register. The role of public displays of Irishness also became a trope around which counter-narratives of Irish experience during this period were arranged, with the ‘forcing underground’ of public Irishness being seen as one of the hardships of the period, but the public articulation of ‘what was good’ in Irishness came through as a possible means of defiance.

Articulations of different Irishnesses are associated with narratives from the 1980s on, with specific second generation and ‘professional’ Irish narratives emerging, thus destabilising the notion of a ‘typical’ life trajectory of Irish people in England, as well as making the collective narrative of the collective Irish experience in England more multi-faceted. Referring back to Freeman & Brockmeier’s (2001) conceptualisation of narrative integrity at the start of the chapter, I would argue that the emergence of “more ambiguous and multivoiced” narratives of Irishness reflects a lack of clarity around what a contemporary ‘typical’ Irish life in England constitutes. It should be stated that this is not to suggest that Irish identity in England in the 1950s and 1960s was based at the time on a collective, unitary, homogenous understanding of what Irishness constituted, but rather that it has been retrospectively constructed as such.

This increase in the number of available meanings in constructing a narrative of an Irish life in contemporary England highlights areas of contestation around authentic Irishness, and suggests that the notion of the authentic has become more orientated towards the individual rather than the collective. However, this is not to say that the ways in which individual Irish identities are articulated are now independent of the discursive constraints

imposed by perceived collective Irish identities. Rather, the priority, among some Irish people at least, appears to have shifted from an authentic Irishness in England being dependent on recognised shared experience, to the need to have one's own authentic Irishness as personally defined recognised by a larger audience. This argument will be enlarged upon in forthcoming chapters.

While there are a number of strands that could be taken out of these conversations, three are particularly worthy of further examination in subsequent chapters. As a means of delving deeper into the expressed importance of public displays of Irishness, Chapter 6 will look at articulations of Irishness in the wider 'English' public sphere through the prism of St. Patrick's Day celebrations. Chapter 7 will take up the question of the importance of locality and how this runs through and sometimes challenges expressions of a 'national' Irishness. Finally, Chapter 8 will further examine some of the troubled moments around the disparity between personal narratives of 'living Irish' and changes in meanings of the 'typical' Irish experience and look at discursive contestations around authentic Irishness, particularly on a generational level.

Chapter 6: Public Irishness in multicultural England

The aim of this chapter is to explore the ways in which public representations of Irishness in England are spoken about in the interviews and group discussions, the ways they are constructed as representative of an authentic Irishness, and the ways they are incorporated into the individual narratives of Irish people. Again here, authenticity works along a dual modality: both whether public representations of Irishness are constructed as reflecting an authentic collective Irishness in England, and whether individuals identify with them as reflecting their own sense of a personally relevant authentic Irishness. The chapter builds on previous discussions in Chapter 3 of the recognition of Irishness as an ethnicity within a multicultural framework and the role of the public visibility of a certain form of Irishness in shaping this. It also expands on one of the themes running through the discussions of ‘living Irish’ in Chapter 5, with regard to the importance and possible difficulties of being able to publicly proclaim one’s Irishness, as well as the existence (and ‘public face’) of an Irish ‘community’.

In analysing the corpus of data, the major strand that runs through it with regard to public representation of Irishness relates to St. Patrick’s Day. In particular, this refers to discourses built around the day as a pivotal annual expression and celebration of Irishness in the public domain and the areas of contestation around the version of Irishness that is portrayed. These may be taken up or rejected by the participants in articulating their own version of authentic Irishness.

6.1 Public Irishness on St. Patrick’s Day – a brief history

The most comprehensive history of the celebration of St. Patrick’s Day, both in Ireland itself and across the diaspora, is given in Cronin and Adair’s (2002) book, *The Wearing of*

the Green. They outline the various ways in which the feast has been celebrated and in particular how public celebrations have been a point of contestation and contentiousness, both among the Irish abroad themselves and between the Irish and other groups. This was often due to political reasons, but also due to cultural reasons surrounding what type of Irishness was publicly celebrated on the day, with Cronin & Adair noting that as early as the early 20th Century, in the context of the Gaelic Revival, St. Patrick's Day acted as something of a litmus test for the London-based Irish (Cronin & Adair, 2002, p. 64).

It is notable that current understandings of the 'traditional' means of celebrating St. Patrick's Day, in particular the nature of the Parade as a public, 'carnavalesque' celebration of all things Irish, is by and large a creation of the diaspora, and in particular the Irish in America. Cronin & Adair note how festivities within Ireland were seen as rather drab compared to those in New York and Boston, the parade in Dublin operating mostly as a showcase of agricultural and industrial machinery in the 1950s and 1960s, before being remodelled along 'American' lines in the 1970s. This remodelling was initially looked upon favourably as bringing a touch of colour to the Parade, but by the early 1990s the format had come to be regarded as stale, and almost entirely at odds with contemporary Ireland. As Cronin and Adair point out, "there was a feeling that the American tradition of celebrating St. Patrick's Day was long-standing and ongoing, whereas events in Ireland were poor copies" (Cronin & Adair, 2002, p. 188). There is a certain irony here given, as previously discussed, the extent to which Irishness has been assumed by those within Ireland to be the preserve of the Irish nation-state, that St. Patrick's Day parades held in Ireland were seen as inauthentic copies of the 'real thing', which was presumed to be happening on the streets of New York or Boston.

It should be mentioned that the St. Patrick's Day parades in Dublin were given something of a new lease of life by their re-invention in 1996 as part of a week-long Festival. This was

specifically done, as stated by the festival website (St. Patrick's Festival, 2010) in order so that Ireland, the nation-state might regain ownership of the Day, and that Dublin would be repositioned at the centre of the global celebrations. This effort to promote a St. Patrick's Day celebration more in keeping with current discourses of Irishness within Ireland would appear to have been quite successful, at least in commercial terms, with recent estimates suggesting the festival is worth €58.3m to the Irish economy (Sweeney, 2010). However, St. Patrick's Day parades are still something of a cipher through which Irishness in Ireland and the Irishness of the diaspora are almost forced to engage with one another at least once a year, and, significantly, it is still perhaps the one time of the year where territorialised versions of Irishness do not have the upper hand. This may, at least in part, account for some of the hostile reactions to inauthentic versions of Irishness performed as aspects of St. Patrick's Day parades outside Ireland.

This conversation between Ireland and its diaspora is largely between Ireland and Irish-America, however. Despite the proximity of England to Ireland, and a long history of St. Patrick's Day celebrations and parades being carried out in English cities in some form, the way in which St. Patrick's Day is celebrated in England does not appear to inhabit discourses around the day in the same way as the Irish-American tradition. In part, this is attributable to political reasons and in keeping with the broader experience of the Irish in England as being an 'invisible' migrant group for large periods of recent history, as outlined in previous chapters. During the 1960s, as outlined by Cronin and Adair, St. Patrick's Day events had become relatively established in English cities and were regarded benignly, if not enthusiastically by the relevant authorities and the public at large. However, such public demonstrations of Irishness were regarded with outright hostility following the onset of IRA bombings of English cities, and the associated suspect community period. The parade in Birmingham, previously one of the most high-profile in the country, was suspended indefinitely following the 1974 bombings of that city, while parades in other

cities were confined to ‘Irish areas’ such as Brent in London, or more commonly, the day was celebrated in a less publicly visible way in Irish pubs and clubs. The one exception to this was a church-oriented parade organised by the Council of Irish County Associations in London, which continued throughout the 1970s and 1980s, although often in the face of much public hostility.

In recent years, dating from around the mid-1990s, and in line with the wider shift in how Irishness is viewed within England, explored in previous chapters, large-scale high-profile St. Patrick’s Day parades began to be staged once again on the streets of English cities. In some cases, this was deliberately framed as a re-emergence of the Irish in England, following the low-profile nature of the ‘suspect community’ years, and it was also framed as a reconciliation between the Irish community and the civic sphere. This was particularly apparent in the case of the Birmingham St. Patrick’s Day Parade: Gudrun Limbrick’s (2007b) history of the parade in Birmingham places particular emphasis on the symbolic significance of the 1996 parade as the first to be held in the city since the 1974 bombings. Those contributing to this history represent the 1996 parade as variously symbolising “the resurrection of the Irish in Birmingham”, emblematic of “a new generation of Irish Brummies”, “the establishment of a modern Irish identity in the city”, “time we came out of the darkness”, “the re-emergence of the Irish community, which had been under a cloud for 22 years”, “burying the hatchet and putting all that – the pub bombings – behind us” etc etc. (Limbrick, 2007b, pp. 79-90). For those involved in the parade, the re-emergence of the Irish in the public space of the city symbolised and was a step towards the acknowledgement of the role of the Irish in the public life of the city.

Meanwhile, the revival and re-invention of the London parade has been largely attributed to the efforts of the former Mayor, Ken Livingstone. Building on his long personal history of engaging with the Irish in London in his former role as head of the GLC as discussed in

Chapter 3, he included a pledge to revive the parade as part of his election manifesto in running for the office of Mayor in 2000. In delivering on this pledge, the responsibility for the organisation of the parade was transferred from the Council of Irish County Associations to the Greater London Authority, who set about transforming the parade into a major feature of official London public life (Harrison, 2004). The Council of Irish County Associations continue to retain an advisory capacity as members of the St. Patrick's Day Advisory Forum, along with other interested groups. In addition to this, the festival is now organised in partnership with Tourism Ireland, the official agency promoting Ireland (on an all-Ireland basis) as a tourist destination. Therefore, the festival now also represents a showcase for selling Ireland around visions of how 'native' tourist agencies wish to portray Irishness.

It can be seen that as the parades have been revived, they are now required to fulfil a number of functions simultaneously. While the expectation of many Irish people might have been that the parades would be a community-orientated participatory event, much as they were in the years preceding the suspect community period, the 'carnavalesque' nature of the Irish-American parades now represented the dominant paradigm of St. Patrick's Day parades worldwide, and there may have been an expectation that parades held in English cities should follow this pattern. Practically, parades cannot now be run in large cities without co-operation from both local authorities and commercial sponsors who might have different expectations and demands of a St. Patrick's Day Parade, or St. Patrick's Festivals as they have now been largely re-branded. As such, this possible tension between 'parade' as participatory community event and 'festival' as spectacle, is an aspect of the tensions discussed in Chapter 3 between visibility and essentialism in a multicultural setting. Nagle (2005) highlighted this tension in his discussion of the 2002 London St. Patrick's Day Parade and suggested that the role of local government and multicultural corporations in sponsoring the celebrations may have shaped the nature of the celebrations and choices

over the way Irishness was represented within the parade i.e. as a form of commercialised Celticism to be marketed as an “alternative way of life”, which those who are not Irish can buy into, if only for a day:

Many of the Irish agencies taking part in the parade were willing to include some representations of Irishness that played on alterity: representations that foreground forms of Irish traditional music and dance that are connected to visions of Celticism. In a postcolonial sense this is problematic, in that rather than traditional culture providing a source of counterhegemonic struggle against the imposition of an inferior Irish identity, it more likely represents the confirmation of essentialist notions of difference (Nagle, 2005, p. 569).

However, while Nagle highlights the possible ambivalence of such events, as “lying uneasily ... between an important politics of recognition and a dangerous reification of culture and ethnicity and the reduction of identities to a fetishized surplus value” (p.563), his analysis from attending the parade itself suggests that it defied co-option by any one group, or vision of Irishness, being rather characterised by nuance, fluidity and a self-reflexive plurality. However, O’Keefe-Vigneron’s (2008) research among patrons of Irish centres in Camden, Hammersmith, Haringey and Wimbledon presents a more ambivalent picture. The respondents in this research, while acknowledging that the official St. Patrick’s Day parade had made the Irish in general more visible, were concerned about the image of Irishness being projected, describing it as ‘slick’ and dependent on “the paddywhackery stuff, a lot of it clichéd” (O’Keefe-Vigneron, 2008, p. 189).

Therefore, the parades represent a useful site through which to examine the contested nature of how Irishness is represented publicly in England, and how this impacts on constructions of authentic Irishness. As a means of exploring these two facets in this

chapter, I will first give my own impressions from observations of St. Patrick's Day celebrations in England, followed by analysis of how the celebrations are constructed in the data from the interviews and group discussions.

6.2 Personal observations on St. Patrick's Day celebrations in England

As discussed in Chapter 4, this research was approached from the analytical stance that an element of participant observation was important in maintaining a wider picture of Irish experiences in England in order to inform the interviews and group discussions. In keeping with this, I attended and took field notes on a variety of St. Patrick's Day parades and other events within St. Patrick's Festivals over the course of conducting the research. These included the 2007, 2008 and 2009 London St. Patrick's Day parades, the 2007 Birmingham parade, the 2008 Luton parade, and the 2009 Milton Keynes parade (the first to be held in the city). Inevitably, in attending these parades, I was bringing to them my own preconceptions of what a St. Patrick's Day parade 'typically' constituted, although initially at least, this was based less on the Irish-American 'razzmatazz' version and more on memories of attending the 'agricultural and industrial machinery' showcase type of parade that was still prevalent in Cork in the late 1980s and early 1990s. As such, discovering the nature of a St. Patrick's Day parade outside Ireland was something of a new experience.

Each of the St. Patrick's Day parades I attended were similar insofar as they were organised around the same framework. In all venues, and each year, the parades were led by a flag-bearer carrying the Irish tricolour, generally accompanied by people carrying a parade banner (e.g. "Birmingham St. Patrick's Day Parade") and followed by the flags of the four Irish provinces. The core of the parades (with the exception of the Milton Keynes parade) were the County Associations which were grouped by province, and generally comprised people from that county carrying a relevant banner, waving flags in the county GAA

colours, and wearing county GAA jerseys. Going by advertisements that appear in publications such as the *Irish Post* in the weeks leading up to St. Patrick's Day, it would appear that a conscious effort is made to ensure all 32 Irish counties are represented. It's also notable that no distinction is made between those counties in the Republic of Ireland and those counties in Northern Ireland. Alongside the County Associations marched various welfare and community organisations as well as Irish-oriented sports clubs, and occasionally political groups from the local area. Thus these groups may be said to represent the 'community participation' aspect of the parades.

The representation of the 'spectacle' aspect of the parades is where the parades differed. Whereas it was difficult to escape the impression that the Luton and Milton Keynes parades were being staged for the benefit of the marchers themselves, the Birmingham and particularly the London parades placed a greater emphasis on representing Irishness to a wider audience. The London festivals were specifically designed to be a showcase for both Ireland and Irishness with stalls promoting Ireland as a tourist destination being set up around Trafalgar Square on the day of the parade. Also, in 2007 and 2008 an Irish Food Market organised by Bord Bia (the official Irish food board) took place in Covent Garden, although it had been discontinued by 2009, in keeping with a general scaling-down of the festivities, presumably for budgetary reasons in the light of the recession. It is also customary for the London festival for an Irish Government Minister to be among the dignitaries, alongside the Mayor of London (Ken Livingstone in 2007 & 2008, Boris Johnson in 2009), the Irish Ambassador to the UK and various others. As such, the London parade represented a convergence of official Ireland and official London: a space where Irishness could be simultaneously performed as transnational in relation to the homeland and as a facet of the multicultural city. Referring back to the distinction I made between 'transnationalism' and 'diaspora' in Chapter 2, the 'official' Irishness being portrayed is very much that of the Irish nation-state transplanted to London, ergo transnational rather

than diasporic. However, this ‘top-down’ version of ‘official’ Irishness does not necessarily preclude the articulation of other Irishnesses as part of the parade.

This then raises the question as to whether the various performances of Irishness can co-exist, or whether a certain vision of Irishness will prevail. It also raises the question of who is considered inside or outside the performance – who, in the London festival is a performer and who is an onlooker, or whether these lines are drawn and redrawn over the course of the day. This question is more easily answered in relation to the Luton and Milton Keynes parade where the marchers later became the audience for speeches and musical performances in open public spaces, while the Birmingham parade dissipated into more privatised, enclosed spaces on completion (e.g. the Irish Club). However, with regard to the London parade, the parade is as much part of the spectacle and aimed at attracting non-Irish people as the performances in Trafalgar Square following the parade.

In an attempt to explore this, I marched in the 2008 London St. Patrick’s Day parade, thus positioning myself, if only for the duration of the parade, as an insider both in regard to Irishness, and the specific way in which Irishness was being articulated by the parade. The opportunity to do so arose a few weeks beforehand when the *Irish Post* ran an ad saying that the organisers of the parade were seeking to have representation from all 32 counties and encouraging people to register to march with their county by sending in a form. Having done so, and indicated my desire to march with my home county of Cork, I later received an e-mail providing me with the necessary logistical details about where to go and when to arrive.

It is worth pausing here and considering how entry to participation in the parade was policed. As I have already mentioned, the majority of groups marching in the parade were either county associations or community organisations, accompanied by musical and other

cultural groups (brass & pipe bands are a regular feature). As such, in order to participate in the parade, one also needed to be a member of a specific 'Irish' group, and one with sufficient legitimacy to be seen as entitled to march in the parade (although it is unlikely that the eligibility of groups to march in the London parade is policed quite as tightly as the New York parade, as discussed by Marston (2002)). However, by issuing a call for the Irish public at large (or at least, readers of the *Irish Post*) to register to march in the parade, the link between being a member of an Irish community group and being provided with the space to perform Irishness in a high-profile public arena had been, if not broken, then certainly loosened. However, in requiring potential marchers to register with a specific county, the parade organisers were reinforcing territorial assumptions around Irishness; that identification with Irishness was commensurate with identification with a specific locality within Ireland. The implications of this and the ways in which national identity may be discursively linked with county identity will be discussed further in Chapter 7.

Marching with the Cork group in the rain along the parade route down Piccadilly and turning into Regent Street, I was struck by the reactions of the crowd to the parade, something I had not been able to gauge as well from my position as a spectator. From this position it became clear that while some spectators viewed the parade as a whole entity, others were more concerned with cheering specific floats and groups, with many spectators clearly determined to locate their specific county within the parade and identify themselves with that county. So, at various stages along the parade group, spectators would shout "Up Cork" at our group, whereas others would shout "Up Limerick" at the group in front. It might be speculated that in identifying themselves with a particular county, those who cheered specific county groups were both publicly delineating their specific Irish origins and blurring the lines between marchers and spectators. (After all, we in the Cork group were providing little more by way of spectacle than struggling to control an unwieldy banner and becoming gradually wetter and more dishevelled.) By cheering us specifically,

those on the sidelines of the march were able to identify themselves to those around them as members of an imagined community within an imagined community – Cork people within an Irish milieu. By doing this, they inscribed the parade as less a commercialised spectacle and more of a participatory community event.

Having said that, on completing the route, we who had been participants in the parade aspect of the festivities once more became spectators and consumers of the Irish ‘product’ on display. The Trafalgar Square events which follow the parade each year are an amalgam of political rally, music festival and participatory community celebration. The events (which by and large followed the same format in 2007, 2008 and 2009) begin with speeches from political dignitaries, as outlined above, the general effect of which is to emphasize the size and importance of the Irish community in London and the centrality of the Irish to London. The latter point is often made with reference to Trafalgar Square being the heart of London, and how fitting it is that St. Patrick’s Day celebrations should be held there. Such sentiments are generally accompanied by wishes for continued strong ties between the London authorities, Irish organisations in London, and the Irish government in Dublin. As such, a transnational vision of the Irish belonging, collectively, both ‘where they’re from’ and ‘where they’re at’ is officially promoted. Such official promotion serves to shape and bolster the strength of the “Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge” discourse.

The festivities are generally proclaimed open with the release of green, white and orange balloons (although this was not done in 2009) and the playing of U2’s *Beautiful Day* over the sound system. Following this, a succession of moderately high-profile bands, with an emphasis on mainstream pop/rock music¹⁴ appeared on the main stage interspersed with a compère whose function appeared to be to continue to instil enthusiasm in the crowd

¹⁴ Although it should be said that there was generally at least one band featured with more of a traditional Irish music slant.

(generally with some combination of the questions “are you having a good time?”, “Isn’t it great to be Irish in London?”). The bands on the Main Stage in Trafalgar Square were generally based in Ireland and had travelled over for the day. London-based musicians, such as the London-Irish Pensioners’ Choir, the London Irish Symphony Orchestra and the London Irish Uilleann Pipers were featured on a ‘Community Stage’, which was based in Covent Garden in 2007, and in a marquee off Trafalgar Square in 2009.

A certain pattern emerges from my observations of St. Patrick’s Day celebrations in England. Where celebrations of St. Patrick’s Day were employed to promote ‘official’ versions of Irishness, it was readable as transnational, corporate, somewhat commercialised and, arguably, bland. It was hard to disagree with O’Keefe-Vigneron’s participants’ characterisation of the official celebrations as ‘slick’, and certainly there was a large element of what might be considered ‘paddywhackery’. However, this is not a comprehensive characterisation of the London festivities and did not preclude other, more individual and community-based articulations of Irishness being made. Some of these were officially sanctioned, such as the community stage at the London festivals, whereas some were more individual and spontaneous, such as the moments of identification made by onlooker-participants during the parades. St. Patrick’s Day can act as a discursive resource to be taken up by individuals in constructing discourses of authentic public Irishness, but these may be shaped by the growing influence of officialdom on such performances.

6.3 The importance of St. Patrick’s Day as a community event in narratives of Irishness

The majority of my participants mentioned St. Patrick’s Day as something that has been important to them, and a day on which their Irishness is marked throughout their lives. Building on the themes present in Chapter 5, the ways in which accounts of marking St.

Patrick's Day intersect with narratives of 'living' Irish, are closely associated with personal experiences of the putative three eras of Irishness in post-war England. Distinct patterns emerge along the lines of age and birthplace when it came to discussing the role St. Patrick's Day has played in their lives.

In particular, there would appear to be a difference in the accounts of those who had experienced the community-oriented parades prior to celebrations of St. Patrick's Day being 'driven underground' during the suspect community period and those whose main experience of St. Patrick's festivals in England had been of the more recent spectacle-oriented variety. Discourses of the "parade as inward-looking community event" and "parade as outward-looking spectacle" intercut throughout narratives of how my participants constructed the events in relation to their own Irish identities. Additionally, the notion of an authentic Irishness is invoked, both with regard to participation in St. Patrick's Day events, and how Irishness is represented to a wider audience.

6.3.1 Older migrants

For older migrants then, St. Patrick's Day was constructed as a historically important means of community solidarity in an often hostile environment. For second generation Irish people, it was closely associated with family celebrations and customs, as well as memories from school. Ambivalence towards the day was more prevalent among younger migrants who tended to construct communal celebrations as not being particularly relevant to their own Irishness and stress the importance of their own individuality in how they marked the day.

While the parade was an important ritual of community solidarity, even in the pre-suspect community period, the convivial aspect should not be overlooked, and the opportunity it

afforded not just as an outlet to publicly demonstrate one's Irishness, but to be among other Irish people and renew acquaintances with old friends. For example, in the extract below, Gerry (previously mentioned in extract 5.2) describes attending the London parades with his family when they were younger:

Extract 6.1:

Marc: Things like, uh, St Patrick's Day and stuff like that, would you have always celebrated those?

Gerry: Oh yes [**Marc:** yeah] always; I put up the Shamrock and the green badge [**Marc:** yeah] and 'er thing(s) like that and I do celebrate it here in the club and everything, and I used to go to the marching in London one time [**Marc:** yeah] out to Horse Guards Parade [**Marc:** mm] when the children were smaller; things like that [**Marc:** yeah]. We used to meet some friends there that day, y'see, too [**Marc:** yeah, yeah]; they used to bring us for the tea and things like that. Some people from Galway that I knew like when I was going to school with them, meet them again

As well as being a day on which it is appropriate to display such public markers of Irishness as shamrocks and green badges, Gerry's account of the parades casts them in the mould of a family day out and an opportunity to meet old friends from school. Taken alongside Gerry's account of the emotional hardship of separation from family and friends through migration in extract 5.2, the parades may here represent a moment of affective repair where old, pre-migration ties can be renewed. Also, given the earlier discussion of the way articulations of Irishness may be filtered through expressions of local identities, it is interesting to notice the emphasis placed by Gerry on meeting friends specifically from his hometown of Galway.

While the parade was an opportunity to re-affirm old friendship networks, it also seems, at least in its pre-suspect community form to have represented a show of strength on the part of the Irish in London. For example, the following extract comes from my interview with Peg (previous: Extract 5.1):

Extract 6.2:

Marc: Erm (.) yeah you mentioned earlier about the:: the St. Patrick's Day parades and you [**Peg:** yeah, oh yes, yes] were involved in arranging those

Peg: We used to have huge parades you know [**Marc:** yeah] the parade to-today is nothing .hh we used to have huge parades (.) erm (.)

Marc: This would have been up in::

Peg: Horse Guards Parade (.) we always started from Horse Guards Parade [**Marc:** right] and er we went to the cathedral we always had mass in the cathedral (.) [band]

Marc: [In Westminster] cathedral

Peg: Westminster [**Marc:** yeah] and the bands-all the bands and all [**Marc:** hmm] and er they used to play during mass and then .hh we went-we got so big in the end (.) that we used to go to-we had it in Hyde Park [**Marc:** yeah] and we used to have a mass [**Marc:** right] on the back of lorries [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] you had a lorry and y-you said a mass on the back of the lorry [**Marc:** hmm] and it was lor-it the (.) Tyburn con-convent [**Marc:** hmm] just across the road from where we used to er were we used to hold it .hh and they used to let-u-they used to use the loud speakers [**Marc:** yeah] for the mass (.) [**Marc:** oh okay, right] it was huge [**Marc:** yeah] but then the trouble started in Ireland [**Marc:** yeah] and when the trouble started (.) people were afraid to go out in the streets [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] so-er the parade got smaller-but we never gave it up (.) coz (.) the police told us if they-if you gave up the day (.) you'd never get it back [**Marc:** right] .hh so we never gave it up-if there was only twenty of us marched we marched

Peg's account of the pre-Troubles parades stresses their size and also very firmly situates them in a religious context, with mass, and the organisation involved in holding mass being the primary focus of her narrative. Indeed, it should be noted that in many cases, earlier St. Patrick's Day parades in Britain were as much about public displays of Catholicism as they were about displays of Irishness. In this context, Hickman (1995) has argued that the Church in many cases brought about a depoliticization of St. Patrick's Day, turning it instead into a celebration of a kind of folk Catholicism.

Peg attributes the dwindling size of the Parades during the suspect community period to the external pressures associated with the Troubles, with people being "afraid to go out into the streets". There is also an emphasis on continuity here, with Peg stressing that "if there were only twenty of us we marched". However, this is framed more as needing to ensure the future of the parade: the authority figure of the police is invoked to lend credence to the observation that if the parade was "given up", they'd "never get it back". Shortly afterwards, as part of the same conversation, she elaborates on the hostility that greeted the parades in these years:

Extract 6.2 (cont.):

Peg: you see we-we had the troubles in between [**Marc:** yeah] and when the troubles came .hh we were-people were afraid to march coz we used to have (.) .hh dancers, kids marching and all that, uh, the dance-schools of dancing and .hh all that sort of thing used to march with us you see [**Marc:** yeah] .hh and you were afraid with-that anything would happen because w::we were insulted a few times [**Marc:** hmm] they'd shout at us to get off the streets to go back to bloody Ireland murderers and all the rest of it you know .hh the people [**Marc:** yeah] standing around (.) so y- a lot of them got afraid and then-we didn't want to have the responsibility of the children getting hurt or [**Marc:** hmm]

anything (.) you know .hh so er we cut it down .hh but we (2.0) I think the smallest parade was:: there was a big bombing (.) I forget where it was now there was a huge bombing somewhere and erm (.) it was we-that St. Patrick's Day came just after it [Marc: okay] and that was the smallest one we ever had (.) .hh and it was a wet day of course .hh of course the police offered to take us by their van to [Marc: yeah] the to er Westminster Cathedral but we said no we have to walk-we'll walk and we did walk [Marc: yeah] but there was only about .hh I suppose a hundred maybe a hundred and twenty of us that's all [Marc: yeah, yeah] (.) you know but we did walk coz we were determined we weren't going to (.) to show our pussies like [Marc: hmm] but people d-do:: you had people on the side walk who were shouting insults at you [Marc: yeah] you now but didn't pretend to see them (.) well the police always walked with us anyway so

The small size of the parades during the Troubles is constructed as arising out of safety concerns, particularly as there were children involved. However, at the same time there is an air of defiance to her anecdote about being determined to walk the route in the face of hostility following a major bombing. Somewhat paradoxically however, this defiance is qualified as being dependent on a police presence for security. Thus, the police, who are so often positioned as the villains and the face of institutional racism in narratives of the Irish in England during the suspect community phase – for instance, the enforcement of the Prevention of Terrorism Act, or the Guildford Four or Birmingham Six – here take a more nuanced position as protecting the Irish from a hostile ‘native’ population. I would argue that it is this very deviation from the canonical narrative of the Irish experience at the time that lends this account its verisimilitude. By including detail that involves a more nuanced representation of the police, Peg’s account cannot be dismissed as a simplistic ‘us’ versus ‘them’, but is instead more likely to be accepted as a faithful account of what actually happened.

It is worth drawing out the contrasts at this point between my own experience of the contemporary parades and that of Peg's account of her experiences of the parades during the suspect community period. While a dominant discourse of celebrating Irishness ran through the contemporary parades (arguably in such a way as to drown out alternative voices, or to elide past hostilities) Peg's narrative represents the parade as being a small pocket of defiance, contingent on police support, in a hostile environment. Therefore, the nature of the parade as a politically-charged discursive resource to be drawn upon has been altered dramatically.

Earlier in the chapter, I discussed the means by which the construction of the New York St. Patrick's Day parade as what a parade ought to be shaped perceptions of the parades in Ireland. That this was also true of the parades in London was evident in Brian's account of his disappointment with the London parades of the 1970s, in comparing them to his previous experience of the New York St. Patrick's Day parade:

Extract 6.3:

Brian: When we went to the States we got involved in, we had to 'erm, we took part in the actual parade with the group there; they were a Republican group in, in, in 'erm in Brooklyn and 'erm, you know, showed your colours on the day and all that, but that was a case that 'erm (.) 'erm (.) that you took over New York [**Marc:** mm] but it was a relaxed kind of a thing; everybody there wanted you (.) to show your colours like [**Marc:** Yeah], whereas here, there was a lot of times (.) people seemed to have a different view. They would, they would (.) enjoy themselves or show their colours but 'twould be in Irish dance halls, very much on an Irish scene, they wouldn't be out, that's what I found in the '70's like [**Marc:** Yeah] that they wouldn't be out showing other nationalities who

they were, whereas that happens now with ‘erm the London, with this, the parade in Central London

Brian draws a contrast between the outward-looking relaxed nature of the New York parade, where “everybody there wanted you to show your colours” and the enclosed nature of London celebrations which would occur in Irish dance halls rather than being “out showing other nationalities who they were”. The parade becomes a means by which a community can stake a claim on a city, and importantly be seen to stake a claim by other nationalities. Thus, the modern-day parade allows Irishness to inhabit the multicultural city in ways that celebrations in the 1970s did not.

Given Peg’s account, and the previous discussion of Irishness being forced underground during the suspect community period, there is an available explanatory discourse for the low-key private nature of the London parades i.e. that the political atmosphere at the time made such high-profile parades impossible and the subsequent easing of the situation and popularity of Irishness has created a space for more celebratory London parades. However, when I suggested such a discourse to Brian, he rejected the chance to take it up:

Extract 6.3 (cont.)

Marc: So (perhaps) the atmosphere has changed to make (that) easier to do?

Brian: (.) Well, it was always possible, ‘erm, if we put our mind to it and we’d have to blame ourselves as far as that you know. I mean the (.) the date, the date was always there on the calendar then, the area, all you had to do was, I’d say permission would have been granted if you asked for it [**Marc:** mm], ‘erm, but we just didn’t seem to organise it and (.) it took somebody (.hh) you know, to, else to help us out to (.) to show that we could do this like [**Marc:** Yeah]. There was a bit of a feeling in, you know, way back that (.) we wouldn’t be able to do it right maybe or something [**Marc:** mm], but

‘erm (.) I didn’t think an awful lot about it like at the time about maybe you know we should do it better, but (.) I felt it was, it was something very small and (.). You didn’t have the support ‘erm (.) among the Irish; the majority of Irish people here [Marc: Right]. The majority of Irish people here seemed to be a little embarrassed about it if anything, for making a scene

This extract then lays the responsibility for the relatively small parades of the 1970s and 1980s not on the political climate at the time but on the Irish community themselves and their failure to organise something on the scale of the New York parades. The narrative then becomes framed less in terms of a lack of Irish visibility due to the political climate of the time, but more one of a lack of Irish self-confidence in their own ability to organise. As such, the Irish are positioned as requiring external help (this reference is presumably to Ken Livingstone) in order to organise their own celebration, which troubles the notion of ownership further.

Brian and Peg’s accounts represent two different interpretations of the relatively small crowds that participated in the St. Patrick’s Day parades in the 1970s and 1980s. It is not my intention to determine which of these two constructions is a more accurate depiction of the parades, but rather try to extrapolate how they reflect available discourses of Irishness in England and how they are incorporated into Brian and Peg’s own narratives of ‘living Irish’. For example, Brian’s account seems to reflect a certain amount of personal frustration with the Irish community in London as being somewhat parochial and inward-looking, whereas Peg’s account reflects an Irishness deeply rooted in religious practices and determined to retain a presence in London in the face of hostility. However, despite these differences, both participants emphasised their own participation in the parades during the ‘lean years’. Thus, their accounts can be situated within the discourse of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory.

While the parade is the most high-profile way of marking St. Patrick's Day it is not the only one. Building on Peg's assertion that the parade was scaled down in order to avoid children being hurt, it is worthwhile looking at how discourses around St. Patrick's Day are drawn upon in the narratives of those who would have been children at the time i.e. second generation Irish people.

6.3.2 The second generation Irish

Walter (2008a) in examining the way St. Patrick's Day during the suspect community period was constructed by the respondents in the Irish 2 Project, has noted that there was a dual component to their narratives: St. Patrick's Day was remembered as something that was celebrated both privately within the family and publicly at school and possibly on the street. She has noted that:

What was apparently a "festive" occasion was also tinged with "tragic" components when it collided with, or had to be hidden from, the majority society for whom it signalled a political threat (Walter, 2008a, pp. 193-194).

Similarly, the second generation Irish discourses around St. Patrick's Day in the corpus arising from this research are generally situated in family narratives and childhood memories. For those second generation participants of a certain age, however, St. Patrick's Day was also often emblematic of the oppositional nature of Irishness and Englishness as well as serving as an illustration of the contested nature of second generation identity, whether this involves coming into conflict with authority or with peers. For example, the following extract comes from my interview with Kate (previous 5.10):

Extract 6.4:

Kate: Then in my primary school in North London .hh we had a thing-and I don't know if it was a gender thing but it turned into an English-Irish thing or the other way round but there was (.) in my class most of the girls were from Irish families but most of the boys were from English families [**Marc:** oh] .hh and we would on St. Patrick's day they wouldn't sing the St. Patrick's hymn (.) so on St. George's day we wouldn't sing [**Marc:** *laugh*] St. George's hymn .hh (*laugh*)

Marc: I th-this used to be done you'd have a St. Pat-(.) [Hail-hail glorious St. Patrick?]

Kate: [Oh yeah, hail glorious St. Patrick dear saint of our isle] yeah (.) [**Marc:** alright] and we'd all wear our green badges going [**Marc:** yeah] into school on St. Patrick's day [**Marc:** okay] and of course the English didn't do that but we-there was an English hymn-now don't ask me what it was for St. George but (.) we would refuse to sing it [**Marc:** right] you know (.) so and that's in, you know, primary school

Kate constructs her schoolday St. Patrick's Day celebrations as magnifying both the national and the gender divide in her class, with the girls marking out their Irishness by wearing green badges. Interestingly, Walter (2008a) has noted that the female respondents in the Irish 2 Project were more enthusiastic about their childhood memories of St. Patrick's Day than the male respondents and that this was specifically framed in terms of the decorative aspect of the day. One might surmise that St. Patrick's Day represented an opportunity to articulate a specifically *female* second generation Irishness. Hymns also become a metaphorical badge of national identity and there is a mutual refusal to participate in singing the 'other' national hymn. Notably, I demonstrate my own knowledge of the St. Patrick's Day hymn, 'Hail Glorious St. Patrick' at this point, thus contributing to a mutual construction of a shared Irishness through Catholic cultural rituals.

A similar kind of *quid pro quo* approach to participation in nationalised rituals is evidenced in David's (a second generation man in his late thirties) account of an incident in his schooldays in Milton Keynes:

Extract 6.5:

Marc: Right, ok, so around St. Patrick's Day there wouldn't have been any mention at the [school of]

David: [No], no, absolutely not, no, ah, in fact there was a time I remember in 1977 when am, the Queen had her Silver Jubilee [**Marc:** yeah] amm, there was a celebration there, there was never any Irish celebration in this school, there was never ah, the schools were, there was one Catholic school but I didn't go to that, but the schools were very Church of England, ahh, so there was never any mention really uh, and in 77 it was the Silver Jubilee and we were expected to stand for the National Anthem [**Marc:** yeah] I was six years old and I remember refusing to stand for the National Anthem and my grandfather had said to me, never stand for the National A- he was an IRA man himself [**Marc:** ah, right] he said never stand for the National Anthem, you just can't be doing that sort of thing and I refused and I remember that's when I really stood out because I had to go to the headmaster and he said to me what on earth are you doing not standing for your national anthem and I said to him hhh it's nothing to do with me, it's not my national anthem and he got the slipper out and bent me over and slipped me a few times and that made me think, yeah, hang on a minute .hhh [**Marc:** yeah] y'know, there is no recognition of wh- of these things like St. Patrick's Day but I'm gonna be forced into recognising these things, no, I'm bloody not (*laughter*) y'know, so that was, there wasn't, there wasn't any St. Patrick's Day recognition

David retrospectively constructs his refusal to stand for the British National Anthem as being a form of protest at the lack of recognition afforded to Irish celebrations such as St.

Patrick's Day. His account is also situated in family history with his decision not to stand for the anthem being justified by his grandfather's exhortations against it. However, unlike Kate's account, which constructs the Irish-English antagonism of her childhood as being between two relatively equal peer groups, David constructs his attempts to assert his Irishness as being (violently) thwarted by authority in the form of his teachers. David's earlier reference to his grandfather being an IRA man has the effect of framing this anecdote within a political register. As such, being 'slipped' by his headmaster fits into a familial register of resistance to post-colonial oppression, while Kate's account is subtly different in portraying rival, gendered nationalities.

This form of oppositional discourse is notably lacking in younger second generation Irish people's accounts of celebrating St. Patrick's Day, i.e. those who would be too young to have experienced the suspect community period at first-hand. For example, Bob, a young second generation man from Milton Keynes described marking St. Patrick's Day:

Extract 6.6:

Marc: I mean, outside the school, just personally at a family level used you do things for St Patrick's Day or for things like that?

Bob: (.hh) St Patrick's Day; yeah 'erm (.), like, like certainly in recent years 'erm, St Patrick's Day has always been a kind of good, kind of like celebration really, can, and I, I've tended to meet up with friends that are kind of, you know, Irish and will go, will go to like an Irish pub [**Marc:** mm] and 'erm you, you know like I did last St Patrick's Day and it, you know, it's a really good sort of; I suppose it's just a celebration of being Irish really [**Marc:** yeah] and you can just sort of, you know, have a few Guinness's and (.hh) you know, have, have a laugh really you know, and just (.hh) y-, y-, kind of recreate that kind of friendly atmosphere

For Bob, St. Patrick's Day affords the chance to socialise with his friends in a way that marks their Irish heritage. The way he discusses the day may therefore be situated within an "Irish authenticity through diasporic claim" discourse. Again, it is significant that Bob is in his early twenties and so would only have experienced St. Patrick's Day as a more-or-less officially sanctioned and widely celebrated aspect of life in multicultural England. In particular, his reference to having a few Guinness's may be taken as reflective of the increasingly commercialised nature of the feast as an advertising opportunity for Guinness, again raising issues around the ownership of the day.

When one compares Gerry's account of St. Patrick's Day parades around the 1960s and Bob's account of the contemporary feast, it might be argued that St. Patrick's Day has come full circle for the Irish in England. It is once again a space for conviviality and for Irish people to meet up and celebrate their own Irishness on their own terms. However, this neat model is disrupted when one examines the more ambiguous terms in which more recent migrants discuss St. Patrick's Day.

6.3.3 Younger migrants and the "globalised Irish™ experience"

In the discussions with the participants who had migrated from England to Ireland within the last 10-15 years, i.e. since the end of the 'suspect community' period, it was notable that large scale public events, such as St. Patrick's Day parades took on a less central aspect in their accounts of the day. While the day is still celebrated, many of the accounts from this cohort reflect a more individualist, personal preference for marking the day, as well as a certain disconnect regarding the form of Irishness the parades portray. For example, Matthew, a man in his thirties who had migrated to England during the 1990s, mentioned that he was not in the habit of attending the parades in England, and put this in the context of finding the parades in Ireland somewhat boring as a child:

Extract 6.7:

Matthew: I was much more interested in the day off at home [**Marc:** yeah], and I suppose when I got into my student years, there was always a few pints in the pub and I celebrated Irishness in, y’know, it, acch, maybe I’m an anomaly then, maybe I’m a curious one because there’s nothing I ever like more than being back home and having the sing-songs in the pubs and the camaraderie of all the friends and I’m really, I’m still very interested in Irish music and I like the gah but, I never had, t, I suppose maybe in the music and in the, in the sport, there was something in it for me [**Marc:** yeah] in terms of the passion and in terms of wanting the support and in terms of me getting something back but I never really felt, like, something I got back out of the parades or such kind of [**Marc:** mm] perhaps, ostentatious displays of nationalism [**Marc:** yeah] (.) yeah, maybe, maybe I do think they’re a bit, a little bit ostentatious and a little bit contrived but I never really thought about it too much, to be honest.

Matthew, then, constructs the parades as not being particularly personally relevant, although his listing of ways in which he does celebrate Irishness serve to emphasise that it is the particular version of Irishness associated with the parades that he does not identify with rather than Irishness itself. Again, this can be linked back to the discussion in Chapter 5 of the ways in which, for more recent migrants, notions of Irish authenticity are filtered through personal rather than collective experience. In accounting for his lack of identification with the parades, Matthew constructs them as “ostentatious displays of nationalism” and “a little bit contrived”, casting them as an inauthentic portrayal of what he understands as Irishness. This extract is therefore rooted in an individual, rather than a collective construction of Irishness – the parades are described as “not for me” and compared to other aspects of Irish culture in terms of “getting something out of it”. It is also significant that the aspects of Irish culture that Matthew highlights as enjoyable are

situated “back home”, thus reflecting a discourse of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge. This transnational knowledge is also framed in an individualised way, as opposed to the discourse of authenticity through collective experience reflected in accounts of St. Patrick’s Day elsewhere.

As well as ambivalence about the centrality of St. Patrick’s Day in their narratives of ‘living Irish’ in England, which can possibly be attributed at least in some degree to life circumstances, younger migrant participants also distance themselves from the ways in which Irishness is represented during the parades. For example:

Extract 6.8:

Peter: I don't take part in parades [**Marc:** right] erm and this is probably telling you something about my character rather than .hh you know this kind of level of patriotism or whatever [**Marc:** hmm] erm but I I erm .hh I-I-I know I got St. Patrick's day cards from people so people know that I value [**Marc:** yeah] that day erm I certainly value that day I know what it's all about and I know that it's a point where Irish people should be proud of being Irish erm but I don't I don't (.) twirl a baton or put on a (.) ginger wig or a [**Marc:** hmm] wear a leprechaun's outfit no

Marc: Right so it's almost the:: (.) it's almost an individual thing for you then is it rather than needing to create a spectacle?

Peter: Yeah very much, very much but I again think that's a part of my character I'm not a sort of extrovert type [**Marc:** yeah] person if that's how far you take that but erm .hh good on 'em you know good on 'em [**Marc:** yeah] I don't have any objections to it it's just not something I would participate in.

Much like Matthew, Peter constructs his non-participation in St. Patrick’s Day parades as a personal choice and attributes it to his non-extrovert character – however, he emphasises

that he values the day itself. Unlike, Matthew however, he characterises the parade as involving “twirling a baton, putting on a ginger wig or wearing a leprechaun’s outfit” rather than “a ostentatious display of nationalism”. Non-attendance at the parade is justified by virtue of its frivolity rather than any political slant. Again, the ideological dilemma presented by the fact that other people obviously do identify with this form of Irishness is resolved by his constructing it as an Irishness which is not relevant to his own narrative of personal authenticity.

That the parade might represent a frivolous, or inauthentic performance of Irishness is an argument that is made more forcefully in the following extract from an interview with Éamonn, a London-based migrant in his early thirties:

Extract 6.9:

Éamonn: the raucous kind of paddywhackery element of (.) what passes for Irish culture
[**Marc:** yeah] in this country (.) i-is not something that appeals to me [**Marc:** yeah] the:
I-I remember initially when there was going to be a St. Patrick's day parade in London
[**Marc:** hmm] officially-you know officially sponsored by the City .hh I thought was a
good thing, this is erm (.) you know sort of recognising that we're part of it, part of the (.)
the great .hh make er up of this, of this you know World City .hh but *you know* .hh
and then you-and I've been on it, I mean I went on it with-with the hurling club I was
playing for [**Marc:** yeah] I-I carried a banner and all this sort of stuff .hh and erm (tut)
then it's the-the green foam hats and the [**Marc:** yeah] wall-to-wall (.) Guinness coverage
and erm .hh and I was just thinking, is this-is this what it's about [**Marc:** yeah] is this
how we advertise (.) what being Irish is to: (.) the people who might not know an awful
lot about Ireland, you know [**Marc:** hmm] .hh because I can see why so many people
come along because it's just (.) throw loads of drink down your neck [**Marc:** yeah] and
and have a rip roaring time .hh you don't have to-you don't have to think about it, you

don't have to work too hard at it (.) you know, you don't have to:: ask too many questions about what does that mean or where does that come from [Marc: hmm] you know the language is almost absent from those sorts of celebrations (.) the:: the GAA is only there in terms of (.) people, you know wearing jerseys, with a banner [Marc: yeah] there's no: (.) exhibition matches or anything like that, nobody, nobody's trying to explain this is (.) you know quite an integral part of-of what modern Ireland is .hh erm (.) you know it's a country with an incredibly rich literary tradition (.) that's, that's not really there either [Marc: hmm] .hh you know and all this sort of stuff I just don't fi-I-it's not that I don't feel part of it, I just don't want to be part of it [Marc: yeah] it's a caricature.

This extract covers both Éamonn's own personal participation in and reaction to St. Patrick's Day events, and also the wider topic of how Irishness ought to be represented on a major public scale. He describes his own initial enthusiastic reaction to the establishment of the parade as reflecting a hope that it would entail recognition of the contribution made by the Irish towards the 'world city' that is London, before describing his disillusionment with the actual form of the parade. This contrast may be linked to the debate around the role Irishness should play in the multicultural city discussed in Chapter 3 and earlier in this chapter.

Éamonn describes the Irishness as portrayed in the parade as "a caricature" characterised by "green foam hats and wall-to-wall Guinness coverage", which comprises a deliberate rejection of the commercialised discourse linking Guinness with Irishness that Bob had adopted in Extract 6. After setting up this example of "caricatured" Irishness, he then mentions some examples that he would see as more representative of Irishness that are absent from the celebrations, such as the language, the GAA, and the "rich literary tradition". These latter are constructed as authentic markers of Irishness, and significantly, an "integral part of what modern Ireland is". Much like Matthew, Éamonn's criticism of

the parade is at least partly situated within a discourse of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge. However, the authentic markers he mentions are constructed as being overwhelmed by the more raucous inauthentic markers. Likewise, the celebratory aspect of the day, associated with the opportunity to “throw loads of drink down your neck” is constructed as a lazy means of representing Irishness that ignores the subtler aspects of the culture.

Éamonn’s account is also a useful illustration of the ways in which notions of authenticity infuse articulations of Irishness as both a personal and a collective identity. In common with Peter and Matthew, his final rejection of the form of Irishness portrayed as in any way relevant to his own sense of an authentic Irish identity is framed in terms of personal agency – “It’s not that I don’t feel part of it, I just don’t want to be part of it”. However, he also expresses concern that the Irishness performed at the St. Patrick’s Day parade is the wrong, inauthentic way to advertise Irishness and that, dialogically, this will have consequences for how both Irishness as a concept and the Irish collectively are viewed.

Éamonn’s account occurs in a *personalised*, but not an *individualised* register and his description of St. Patrick’s Day incorporates his views on the way Irishness is represented in London into his own narrative of being Irish in London and constructs the two as sitting together uneasily. There is something of an ideological dilemma in evidence here whereby the importance of the visibility of Irishness within multicultural London is contrasted with the form of Irishness that has been made visible, and from which Éamonn distances himself. As such, this is a good example of the dilemmas of identification caused by multiculturalism’s double-bind as discussed in Chapter 3. Of course, by discussing the presentation of Irishness in terms of ‘advertising’, this is in some way drawing on the ‘Irishness as commodity’ repertoire. Later in the interview, I return to this theme:

Extract 6.9 (cont.):

Marc: Yeah (.) erm going back to the London parade (.) [**Éamonn:** hmm] and [**Éamonn:** clear throat] which you you know your (fervour) to that (*laugh*) and the:: you mentioned about how you thought it might (.) reflect the role of the Irish in the kind of world city [**Éamonn:** hmm] erm (.) do you see Irishness as kind of taking its place within multi-cultural London, as part of a (.) an aspect of it?

Éamonn: (.) That's a very good question [**Marc:** yeah] (3.0) I th-I hh I would say no [**Marc:** no] because the-the St. Pat-St. Patrick's day parade .hh the thing, the parade that you get in London is the same as the parade you get (.) more or less in New York or in Tokyo [**Marc:** hmm] or Russia or wherever right .hh it's the, you know, the-the kind of globalised (.) er (.) Irish™ experience [**Marc:** hmm] right? Whereas the: (.) the kind of subtler er aspects of Irish culture, you know the language the music (.) erm (.) the sport (.) these things y-you wouldn't-you have to go and seek them out you wouldn't have too much day to day contact with them in London

Éamonn represents the type of Irishness performed over the course of the London parade as a kind of globalised, commercialised Irishness that is indistinguishable from that performed anywhere else in the world. In particular, his use of the phrase “Irish™ experience” suggests a type of disposable, monolithic Irishness that can be bought into and consumed easily. The parade is positioned as a site where diasporic Irishness and Irishness as an aspect of the multicultural city may potentially intersect, but Éamonn places ‘global’ Irishness within a discourse of globalised, commercialised homogeneity that hampers, rather than helps engagement with the multicultural city. This type of globalised Irishness is the very opposite of diasporic Irishness, where the latter represents multifaceted articulations of Irishness, the liminal and the hybrid. Rather, this is an imposed homogenous version of Irishness that is the same “in New York, or in Tokyo or in Russia or wherever”. This sense of an imposition of Irishness, may perhaps be linked back to the

sense of ‘official’ Irishness that I noted was an aspect of the London festivals I attended. As such, the imagined audience for the parade is not permitted to develop a recognition of the subtler, more authentic aspects of Irish culture.

Éamonn’s account then provides something of a bridge between narratives of participating in St. Patrick’s Day events as a community event and discursive constructions of moments of contestation around how Irishness should be represented publicly to a wider audience. It is to discourses around St. Patrick’s Day as a means of promoting the recognition of Irishness that I now turn.

6.4 St. Patrick’s Day as promoting recognition of Irishness

It should be emphasised here that the London St. Patrick’s Festival, being, symbolically at least, the joint creation of dual state constructions of Irishness is far from representative of other St. Patrick’s Day parades in England which, in my experience at least, are more rooted in the activities of local community organisations. While this does not necessarily make them more authentic or representative, (remembering the caveat about the possibly exclusionary nature of ‘community’ discussed in Chapter 3), it may be taken as the Irish inhabitants of a city (or an area) having a greater input in how Irishness is represented in the area. With regard to the role of ownership in articulating authentic Irish identities, this may allow an individual Irish person to situate his/her personal Irish identity within a collective Irish identity that is “ours”, and represented as such. The collectivity here may refer to an imagined Irish community that is local, rather than ‘the Irish in England’, but as I shall investigate in Chapter 7, identification with Irishness often is framed in terms of the local, rather than the national.

As already mentioned, the revival of the St. Patrick's Day parade in Birmingham became emblematic of the re-emergence of the Irish community in the city, as well as Irishness staking a claim of belonging among the other cultures in present-day Birmingham. As such, there is an overt concern with advertising Irishness among the organisers as well as providing an event in which Irish people can participate. This dual function is shown in Sam's (previous: extract 5.7) account of the contemporary festival, which he has had a role in organising at various times:

Extract 6.10:

Sam: But Patrick's Day will show you that everyone, who're Irish they'll all appear here in hundreds and thousands of them [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] y'know (..hh) dressed in their green and white [**Marc:** mm], and it's a jolly, jolly day, y'know [**Marc:** yeah] a happy day. Everybody's happy and you just know (..hh) everybody is happy. And we send a great message across the city and across the world [**Marc:** mm]. (..hh) Irish exiles; first, second, third generation, are all here, enjoying themselves y'know [**Marc:** mm]. It's a great, great feeling, y'know. (..hh) And up to a couple of years ago we'd only one policeman on duty here y'know [**Marc:** yeah] in this massive thing, y'know. 'Er (.) but that's it; obviously times have changed and [**Marc:** yeah] drinking gets involved y'know, so; but even at that like, it, it is 'er great. Selfridges here, which is a big; don't know if you've seen it [**Marc:** yeah] silver building there.

Marc: The, the big, the kind of iconic bit of the Bullring like, yeah

Sam: Yes, absolutely [**Marc:** yeah, yeah], and Selfridges go green.

Marc: Yeah, yeah; I see it, I see it on the leaflet there.

Sam: Yeah, they go green; the city goes green [**Marc:** yeah, yeah]. We have 'er, well we've created a civic reception in a council house during the week of the festival, 'erm which we present the Lord Mayor with shamrock [**Marc:** mm], and we have an exhibition of young Irish dancers, young musicians. 'Erm, an odd story teller, and we

have the old set dances with the old and the new and, as I said, we present to all the council; everybody comes to that; that's a great event y'know

Sam's account of the St. Patrick's Day celebrations illustrates the multiple levels on which the festival works. It is described as contributing to cohesion within the Irish community and providing "first, second and third generations", with a chance to enjoy themselves in an Irish context, but "sending a message across the city and across the world" is constructed as being of equal importance. Once again, the St. Patrick's Day parade becomes a site where Irishness as diasporic and Irishness as an aspect of the multicultural city intersect.

The question then arises as to whom exactly this message is being sent? While Sam does not explicitly address this question, it does serve to illuminate the dialogical aspect to such performances of Irishness – they always occur in the context of a real or imagined audience. Again, given the specific political context of Irishness in Birmingham, where the parade was suspended for over twenty years following the IRA bombings of the city, one can imagine that there is a perceived need to promote the Irish as upstanding members of the urban community. Sam's comment about only having "one policeman on duty" can probably be interpreted in this light. The dialogue can almost be seen as being across time between two temporally-determined dominant versions of Irishness: the suspect community of previous years and the "happy" community of the present day. This 'happy community' are not only an integral part of Birmingham, but are permitted to transform it for the week – physically, with regard to the Selfridges Building going green. Therefore, Sam's emphasis on the extent to which the St. Patrick's Festival is integrated into the commercial and civic life of the city is less about selling Irishness as a commodity and more about creating a space for the Irish community in the city.

A reciprocal relationship is thereby constructed between the articulation of a popular, positive form of Irishness and the acceptance of Irish identities and Irish people in general. Such a relationship is echoed in other accounts of St. Patrick's Day. In particular, contrasts are drawn between the current popularity of displays of Irishness and the suspicion displayed towards the Irish in previous decades. For example, David who had earlier (Extract 6.5) spoken of the lack of recognition of St. Patrick's Day in his own schooldays, described the current popularity of the feast in this way:

Extract 6.11:

Marc: Yeah. I guess what I'm thinking about, I don't know if you've been to, say the St. Patrick's Day celebrations in London, for example [**David:** yeah] which are very much a::, almost an official celebration of Irishness [**David:** yeah, yeah] in a way that possibly wouldn't have been, well, possible, twenty years ago, so

David: I see what you mean, oh, absolutely [**Marc:** yeah] absolutely, and am, I think it's very healthy as well, that it's been hi- hijacked by the English as well [**Marc:** yeah] you know I've got a class of students before the 17th, all saying, right, what are you doing? Where are we going? Where are we meeting? This pub's putting this on, this pub's putting this on (*laughter*) yeah, I think it's fantastic that the opportunity to express your individuality, your individual identity, your culture etc, is available and, yeah, it's fully accepted by the rest of society inasmuch as it's, y'know, it's a thing that they'd just been missing out on anyway so I think they try, they try and adopt it as their own as well, which is good, I think it's healthy.

In a way, David's account of the enthusiasm of his English students for St. Patrick's Day is a mirror-image of his earlier account of the lack of recognition during his own school-days. While his description of the day as being 'hi-jacked by the English' might be said to conjure up echoes of colonialism, the fact that he describes it as healthy would suggest that

he is comfortable with this adoption, particularly when he goes on to suggest that it is something that meets a need in English society. Of course, bearing in mind the concerns raised earlier regarding the ways in which St. Patrick's Day might lead to a reification of Irishness, it has to be considered whether David's students' immediate association of St. Patrick's Day with pub-based revelry quite reflects the positive valuation of expressions of individual Irish identity that he constructs it as fostering.

In a similar fashion to David, Sheila, a second generation Irish woman in her fifties, draws a sharp contrast between the current popularity of St. Patrick's Day and the former 'hidden' nature of the feast.

Extract 6.12:

Marc: And what do you think about the fact that it's changed to the, to the big popular thing it is today; Is that all positive?

Sheila: I think it's positive yeah [**Marc:** yeah], yeah, and I think it's amazing [**Marc:** mm]. You know, it's, just to see all of that but also as well that, that the 'erm the English want to join in [**Marc:** yeah], you know. You know, so for me that's like a really big change, 'cos I know actually people who stopped wearing shamrocks, you know, quiet, and the pubs would be quiet. There was a stage there in the '70's, '80's, you know, where it was you know to show your Irishness was not, you know; I know people that were beaten up and things like that you know [**Marc:** yeah] coming out of pubs and things yeah, or would be discriminated against. But 'erm, yeah so it's gone from you know; I mean that wasn't, it wasn't always that strong I think the anti-r, like the anti-Irish thing afterwards, but 'erm (.) but it's done a complete turnaround now I think [**Marc:** yeah].

Here the popularity of St. Patrick's Day among the English population is explicitly linked with personal physical safety. The enthusiasm for contemporary public expressions of Irishness is understood through a prism of a previous time period where displaying Irishness put one at risk of discrimination and physical assault. Drawing on this personal narrative positions Sheila as someone who is able to see the full implications of the complete turnaround and the amazing change. That Irishness is not now only tolerated, but that the English want to join in is particularly highlighted – bringing one's former antagonists into the fold, as it were, may be seen as a vindication of 'living Irish' and there is no suggestion that this has occurred on anything other than terms dictated by the Irish themselves.

There may be a certain discourse of strategic essentialism running through the above extracts i.e. that in the aftermath of the suspect community period, the most important thing is that the space is there for Irishness to be celebrated publicly, and that the type of Irishness advertised, which was so central to Éamonn's narrative, is not particularly the priority. This may be seen as a crucial distinction between the discourses of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory and Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge. At the same time, there is a certain amount of variation with regard to how the non-Irish, in particular the English, are positioned in relation to St. Patrick's Day's new-found popularity. Sam refers to the civic leaders of Birmingham being invited to attend receptions during the week, thus positioning the Irish community themselves as having control over the way the week is celebrated. Thus, the question of ownership is put at centre stage; much as Brian spoke about the importance of control in comparing the New York parades to the London one, here there is an Irishness that is 'ours'. Meanwhile, David and Sheila talk in more general terms around 'the English', significantly not just as a previous source of hostility now removed, or as an audience, but as potential participants in St. Patrick's Day festivities and, by proxy, Irishness. Sheila

portrays the English as “wanting to join in”, which suggests that the boundaries of participation are at least still drawn by the Irish, but David refers to the English hi-jacking the event. That such a discourse of the day as “hi-jacked by the English” is available to be drawn upon raises further questions as to the ownership of Irishness arranged around St. Patrick’s Day.

In order to illustrate how such questions might be played out, it is worth returning to the Birmingham parade, and examining a rather more critical discussion of what it has come to represent than Sam’s account reflects. The following extract is taken from a discussion group held at a Birmingham Irish community organisation with three second generation women, where the conversation had veered towards a discussion of whether the parade had deteriorated in recent years, since its return in the mid-nineties

Extract 6.13:

Becky: Now it’s just so packed with people getting drunk [**Eileen:** mm] [**Marc:** mm] that it’s, it’s, it’s going away from everything that it was [**Eileen:** mm], but there was a time, and a good few years, where (.hh), I think because everybody appreciated the fact that it had been started up again [**Sarah:** yeah] and how important it was to the Irish community to have this go, go without any arrests, without any trouble (.hh) because we needed to prove that we, you know, [**Eileen:** yeah] we should be having this parade; we should be having this celebration (.hh); it’s completely going away from that now. Last year was the perfect example, there was, there was trouble last year [**Eileen:** mm], ‘erm [

Eileen: But there was trouble the year before as well and it was [

Becky: Just, yeah it wasn’t so public was it?

In this discussion, the ‘trouble’ surrounding the parade due to drunkenness is constructed by Becky as problematic, specifically because it portrays the Irish community in a negative

light. This is emphasised when Eileen reminds her that there had been trouble the previous year, but Becky retorts that it hadn't been as public – thus, the appearance of trouble is more of an issue than the trouble itself. This occurs shortly after a claim that it was important to the Irish community when the parade started up again, that it ought to go without any arrests in order to “prove that we should be having this parade”, which itself echoes Sam's comments about only needing one policeman on duty. One gets the impression that public displays of Irishness in Birmingham and by extension the role the Irish can play in the city, is contingent on public approval. Along these lines, the discussion continues...

Extract 6.13 (cont.):

Eileen: And also, you know, with the number of parades that go on now [**Becky:** mm], I jus:t; (hh) I think unless you were Irish, there wasn't a lot to draw people and keep them, because you've got the shops open on the Sunday [**Becky:** mm], so they could just come out and have a look and then just disappear again [**Marc:** mm], and I, I just don't think it was inclusive; I don't think it was; I don't think it drew enough people in, and yet it was an absolute monst-, monstrous opportunity, as a hook, monstrous [**Becky:** yeah, absolutely] [**Marc:** mm]; you know, you'd got people coming out of the woodwork [**Marc:** yeah] into the Irish community that had got Irish roots [**Marc:** mm], and obviously had some interest, you know; how you let all that lot go on that one opportunity is beyond me, but- [**Marc:** mm]

Marc: So perhaps it's being taken for granted a little since its been reinstated do you think?

Eileen: 'Erm, I think I'd rather use the word 'manipulated' than 'taken for granted'.

Marc: Right. Manipulated in what way?

Eileen: I think it's been presented; you know, earlier on [Becky] was talking about somebody that wanted to obliterate Shamrocks and all the rest of it. I think (..hh) it then

was manipulated into a position where it was no longer the feel-good, happy day [Becky: mm] and was being sort of put out as just another ethnic parade. I don't know [

Becky: Yeah, I think that [

Eileen: Is 'manipulated' the right word?

Becky: Well I think that everybody, as you say, came out of the woodwork to support 'erm, you know, 'I'm Irish; I'm going to show my support' (.hh) and they did that and then did it again the next year, and did it again, and then you get bored; well 'I'm here; I'm not getting anything from it really' [Eileen: exactly] and the floats are looking a bit tatty and (.hh) 'where do we go?', 'oh, you can't go to the toilet because everywhere is packed' [Becky: mm] and (.hh) you know

There is an interesting ideological dilemma here where an articulation of the parade as needing to be as inclusive as possible in order to attract support is accompanied by a resistance of it being positioned as "just another ethnic parade" within multicultural Birmingham. Eileen's disapproval of the failure of the parade to capitalise on the "monstrous opportunity" afforded by the parade is expressed in terms of being insufficiently inclusive to draw people in, who wouldn't necessarily be Irish. In keeping with the notion of advertising Irishness, there is almost a narrative of trying to attract consumers running through her account; the St. Patrick's Day parades have to compete for the interests of the casual observer with the shops which are now open on a Sunday. Equally, Becky speaks in terms of the potential audience "not getting anything from it", increasing the impression that a consumerist discourse is being drawn upon. The reference to the Irish having to differentiate themselves from all the other "ethnic parades" may refer to the loss of the 'unique selling point' of Irishness, so to speak, but may also be seen as part of the ongoing debate as to whether the Irish should position themselves alongside, or distinct from other ethnic minority groups in English cities. In this context Eileen and Becky's discussion over whether the St. Patrick's Festival had been "manipulated" into "just another ethnic parade" references concerns over the ownership of the parade, but also

suggests that the parade is a means for local authorities to position the Irish as one more minority ethnic group among many in Birmingham, against the wishes of the Irish themselves.

There are a number of areas of contestation troubling St. Patrick's Day as a public representation of Irishness. St. Patrick's Day as a means of promoting recognition of the Irish community in England appears to rely on some means of advertising Irishness to a wider public. At the same time, the need to advertise Irishness appears to draw upon a commercialised version of Irishness that has the potential to alienate members of those community groups that form the historical link between the current parades and their previous incarnation in the pre-suspect community years. However, an over-concentration on the parades as a participatory community event as opposed to a spectacle may lead to a form of ethnic exclusivity in policing participation in the festival, thus excluding those who may identify with Irishness in a non-'traditional' way. The relationship between inclusivity, participation and authenticity around St. Patrick's Day is worthy of further exploration.

6.5 St. Patrick's Day as an example of inclusivity and authenticity through diasporic claim

The extract below came after a stretch in the interview where Sinéad (previous: extract 5.8) had been discussing her involvement in Gaelic Football in London and how more and more women from non-Irish backgrounds had started playing it. I suggested that this might reflect Irishness as part of multicultural London and suggested a parallel with the St. Patrick's Day Parades. After initially crediting Ken Livingstone for the change in the profile of St. Patrick's Day, Sinéad goes on to discuss the effect this might have on the ability to participate within the category 'Irish':

Extract 6.14:

Sinéad: now it's almost quite trendy the Irish .hh you know the St. Patrick's parade in London I mean it gets televised it's on the radio [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] there-it really has .hh has changed from what it was years and years ago

Marc: Yeah, yeah (.) and er it seems to have become (.) in a way made (.) Irish culture quite accessible for people who wouldn't necessarily (.) be fro-be of Irish descent, you know and .hh maybe that's manifesting itself in people getting involved [**Sinéad:** hmm] with the-with the Gaelic football who wouldn't be from (.) Irish backgrounds

Sinéad: Yeah and I think for people who aren't involved in (.) Irish football and different things like that [**Marc:** yeah] they don't have links-now they have something [**Marc:** yeah] .hh that they can actually go [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] and (.) be-be part-of-be Irish and show their their sort of roots [**Marc:** hmm] and it (.) they can do that easily and not have to be (.) [**Marc:** hmm] involved in something like Gaelic football or Irish music or whatever

In building on the 'trendiness' of the parades, I attempt to link this to the previous discussion about non-Irish people becoming involved in playing Gaelic Football and suggest that this may be part of a pattern whereby Irish culture is being presented in a more accessible way towards an audience of people with non-Irish backgrounds. Sinéad however, doesn't quite orient towards this interpretation, rather reworking it with a focus on those of Irish roots and suggesting that the parade can provide a focal point for people from an Irish background who might lack another outlet in which to demonstrate their Irishness. Thus, St. Patrick's Day celebrations operate as a site through which claims on diasporic Irishness can be made. This can be linked back to the earlier discussion around the nature of the St. Patrick's Day parade leading to a blurring of the categories 'participant' and 'audience' in relation to Irishness.

In Sinéad's account this is constructed as a positive development. However, bearing in mind the aforementioned tensions around ownership of Irishness and who is seen as entitled to participate in Irish rituals, for some of those involved in Irish community groups the once-a-year nature of St. Patrick's Day in terms of the wider community engaging with Irishness appears to be a source of frustration. This may be seen as drawing a discursive line between those who 'live' Irish and those who merely 'act' Irish when it suits them. For example, Becky, (in my interview with her, as opposed to the group discussion above) following a conversation around the difficulties of second generation Birmingham-Irish people in claiming Irishness, links these difficulties to the perception of St. Patrick's Day as 'a bandwagon':

Extract 6.15:

Becky: Maybe is that little bit of a, a feeling of (.) 'I don't want to be called a Plastic Paddy here' you know [**Marc:** yeah], like I'm not jumping on the bandwagon and dressing in green, white and gold every March [**Marc:** mm] just (..hh) because it's the hip thing to do. 'Erm, but I am proud of my heritage [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] and I would like it, and I, and that's it; end of script.

Marc: (*Laughs*). You think there is an amount of bandwagon jumping?

Becky: Oh yeah [**Marc:** yeah]. I mean, it, its, its amazing over the last, I would say (.) probably five years [**Marc:** mm] how much that has increased [**Marc:** yeah]. 'Erm, you notice it (.) obviously on St Patrick's Day [**Marc:** mm], at the parade. 'Er, you do notice it very much so, 'erm where you've got sort of friends of friends and they kind of (.) just get caught up in the moment [**Marc:** yeah] kind of thing, and it's great to see because it's (..hh); St Patrick's Day is for everybody to celebrate [**Marc:** mm], not just the Irish and 'erm (.), but some people take it to the extreme [**Marc:** yeah] and that's where it kind of (..hh), problems start then [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] because you 'er, you do get a bit

of animosity for those who are and who aren't [Marc: yeah] and, you know, feel that they have a right to be there and this other person shouldn't be there and [Marc: mm] blah blah blah.

Becky here distances herself from the possibility of being called a 'Plastic Paddy' (the ways in which this term was employed in the interviews will be explored farther in Chapter 8) by stressing that her involvement in the St. Patrick's Day celebrations is not just 'jumping on the bandwagon ... because it's the hip thing to do' but rather due to a pride in her heritage. On my asking for elaboration on 'bandwagon jumping', she singles out St. Patrick's Day as the most obvious site where it occurs. While she emphasises that this is desirable to an extent as "St. Patrick's Day is for everyone to celebrate", she highlights the potential inherent on the day for contestation of Irishness, particular if people who are constructed as having a tenuous claim on Irishness ('friends of friends') 'take it to the extreme'. Becky, through drawing on the prototypical reported speech of those who would police the boundaries of participation, articulates the view that there are acceptable and unacceptable ways to express Irishness, and that those who are not positioned as sufficiently authentically Irish ought not express Irishness in an unacceptable way. Thus, while the St. Patrick's day celebrations may provide an opportunity to articulate a diasporic claim on Irish authenticity, these claims are contested.

6.6 Summary

What this chapter has demonstrated is that St. Patrick's Day operates in discourses of the Irish in England both as a resource to be drawn upon in building narratives around 'living Irish' in England at certain specific times and as a contemporary site of contestation around meanings of Irishness as a concept and participation.

My own observations of St. Patrick's Day festivals, particularly in London, illuminated the multitude of meanings that could be taken from them. While it is a site of state-promoted understandings of 'official' Irishness, designed to sell both Ireland to London and multicultural London to the Irish, it is also a site of multiple recognitions, localised identifications, and a blurring of the boundaries between participant and observer of Irishness.

Such festivals can be used as a resource in multifaceted ways when constructing the authenticity or otherwise of the ways in which Irishness is represented in England. It may represent the latest point in the continuation of a canonical narrative of Irish experience in the UK, as it does in the accounts of Gerry and Peg, or it may represent a long-overdue opportunity for Irishness in England to be celebrated publicly, as it does in the accounts of Sam and Sheila. More recent migrants, such as Matthew, Peter and Éamonn, construct it as unrepresentative of their own personal sense of authentic Irishness. Éamonn goes farther in constructing it as representative of a globalised IrishTM experience, which suggests that rather than representing an authentic collective Irishness, it has been imposed by hegemonic powers – a similar discourse is drawn upon in the Birmingham group discussion in suggesting that the parade had been manipulated. However, such parades are also seen as expanding the category of Irishness, but this in turn may provoke a counter-reaction around policing the boundaries of Irishness.

For me personally, the most striking aspect of the parades were the emphasis placed on county-based identities, and the situating of translocal identifications within a transnational/diasporic milieu. How this public performance of county identity was echoed in my participants' talk will be examined in Chapter 7.

In analysing how the results from this chapter fit with the overarching theme of the thesis, I would argue that it reflects the continuation of a pattern noted in Chapter 5, where the situating of a personally authentic Irish within a recognisably authentic collective Irishness is disrupted by generation. Here, the St. Patrick's Day parades of the past are retrospectively constructed as an accurate reflection of a collective emigrant experience of the time, and thus situated within a discourse of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory. However, the modern-day parade/festival simultaneously stands accused of imposing an inauthentic collective Irishness that bears no relation to personally-felt Irish identities, while being congratulated for prising open Irish collectivity sufficiently wide that personal 'atypical' Irish identities can find a place within Irishness. In particular, this represents a clash between discourses of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge and Irish authenticity through diasporic claim. The seeming incompatibility of these two perspectives, as well as the use of the parade as a discursive resource for policing the boundaries of authentic Irishness, serves to emphasise St. Patrick's Day as a site of contestation where personal and collective authenticities intersect.

Chapter 7: Local identities and Irishness

As explored in Chapter 6, discourses of locality permeated the accounts of St. Patrick's Day as reflecting public Irishness in England. It was quite clear that the St. Patrick's Day parades in London and Birmingham were as much about those cities as they were about Ireland. More specifically, they were about what role Irishness ought to take in English cities and to what extent Irish people could be said to belong to, shape and be shaped by their urban environment. As such they reflected a means of identifying simultaneously with both 'where you're from' and 'where you're at', as previously explored in Chapters 2 and 3. The associated adoption of 'local-national' hyphenated identities by both the migrant and second generations has been much remarked upon in the literature. To reiterate, Gray (2000a) found that the expression of a London-Irish identity among female migrants in London offered them a meaningful basis for belonging in both London and Ireland. The Irish 2 Project found that these forms of hyphenated identities were also employed by second generation Irish people in English cities as a means of negotiating the two "hegemonic domains" of Ireland and England and articulating an Irishness that was "contingent on their locational specificity" (Hickman et al., 2005, p. 178). Therefore, in keeping with the overarching theme of this thesis, identification with an Irishness that is locally situated may prove a means by which discourses of a personal Irishness can be interwoven with discourses of a collective Irishness that is not necessarily national. This chapter will further explore what implications situating Irishness within a particular locale in England might have for articulations of authentic Irish identities.

As noted in Chapter 6, the parades also operate as an opportunity for people to publicly identify with a locality within Ireland, most usually a county of origin. For me, given that the 2007 Birmingham parade was the first time I had attended a St. Patrick's Day parade outside of Ireland, either in a research or a personal capacity, the extent to which the

parade was arranged around displays of county allegiance was the most striking aspect of the celebration. As mentioned in Chapter 6, my experience of parades in Cork had been largely of the “industrial machinery” format and so to encounter a parade based around county allegiances was something of a novelty. Having established that this was standard practice for St. Patrick’s Day parades in England, this provoked questions about identifications along the axis of the localised identity of the ‘home’ county, alongside the localised identity of the ‘host’ city. As I argued in Chapter 2, this is a point of investigation that has been somewhat overlooked in the literature on diasporic Irishness.

This chapter will look at the construction of local identities and localised Irishnesses within England and explore how they might fit into a diasporic framework. It will examine migrants’ narratives of coming to inhabit and identify (or not) with the localities they moved to and how this was reconciled with their sense of Irishness. It will look at the various forms of hybrid Irishness available to the second generation and their creation of a specific form of Irishness rooted in cities and localities. It will also examine the various occasions on which local county identity is invoked and what kind of discursive work this might be doing, particularly in relation to personal and collective authenticity.

7.1 City-based Irish identities: Hyphenated labels and hybridised identities

Among the Irish migrants who participated in the research, while there was widespread expression of a feeling of belonging to the city in which they now lived, there was little outright identification along the lines of the kind of hyphenated identity noted by Gray. Interestingly, Sharon, one of the few migrants who did express her identity specifically in “London-Irish” terms, belonged to the same cohort as the participants in Gray’s research, having migrated to London for professional reasons as a young woman in the 1980s. Claiming London-Irishness appeared to have a dual function for Sharon: firstly, she was

adamant in distinguishing between England and London, stating that she was not particularly interested in England, but liked London and the type of life one could live in London. Secondly, she highlighted the importance to her of being part of a long history of Irish people in London, and stressed her pride at the participation of Irish people in London society. The extract below comes in the context of these statements:

Extract 7.1:

Marc: Erm (.) yeah going back you said that you were (.) proud to have lived in London participated in London [**Sharon:** hmm, totally] so would you describe yourself as a Londoner?

Sharon: London-Irish-yeah [**Marc:** yeah London-Irish] I would actually yeah, yeah, yeah absolutely [**Marc:** hmm] I tell [*her partner*] who was born and bred in London same as [*mutual acquaintance*] yeah [**Marc:** yeah] I'm in many ways, coz London for me is about what it's made up of, you know [**Marc:** yeah] and I sound probably more London than you boys [**Marc:** laugh] actually they don't believe me but .hh yeah I do, yeah, yeah I love the place yeah [**Marc :** hmm] I think it's great yeah (.) so

Sharon, in identifying with London, draws on the 'born and bred' narrative resource discussed by Taylor (2010) but counters this by stating that London "is about what it's made up of" and positions herself as "more London" than two 'native' Londoners. Sharon's identification with London, being framed throughout the interview in terms of opportunity and the range of things to do bears many similarities to those interviewed in Breda Gray's research. It might be an interesting question to trace the structural and discursive factors that made the adoption of a London-Irish identity so relevant to female migrants of this cohort.

Otherwise, in common with the findings of the Irish 2 Project, hyphenated identity labels such as London-Irish and Birmingham-Irish were largely both employed by and applied to second generation Irish people. This perhaps reflects a shift in the nature of these terms where they are now seen as the preserve of the second generation. The extract below comes from my interview with Kate, whose narrative of developing a second generation London-Irish identity I have already referred to in Chapter 5 (extract 5.10). Kate had earlier briefly mentioned her involvement in the London-Irish music scene of the early 1980s, spearheaded by the Pogues. Campbell (1999) has written of the significance “of the Pogues’ post-punk reconfiguration of Irish ‘folk’ music, which articulated a peculiarly Diasporic (London) Irish experience at a time when it was neither popular nor fashionable to be Irish in Britain” (p.275), something of particular relevance to the second generation. On my questioning as to her involvement in this scene, she recounted a number of occasions on which her own band had shared a bill with the Pogues:

Extract 7.2:

Kate: there's a couple of famous nights we did in the Irish Centre in Camden [**Marc:** yeah] .hh which we did as fundraisers for the Irish Centre (.) so I know The Pogues did a photo shoot for their first album in there with a big portrait (.) Kennedy-John F Kennedy [**Marc:** yeah (.) yeah, yeah] yeah that was in the Irish Centre in Camden [**Marc:** okay, right] erm (.) so (.) yeah so that was that whole scene and that was very much about (.) saying we're Irish but we're not (.) paddies [**Marc:** hmm] we're London-Irish [**Marc:** yeah] and it was a very different identity to being first generation [**Marc:** yeah]

The London-Irish music scene then, for Kate, is constructed as being very deliberately about articulating a type of Irishness that is situated in London and is explicitly differentiated from the “Paddies”, the first generation migrants. This then, is a very specific

form of positioning – one that seeks to claim Irishness, but disassociate itself from the possible negative connotations associated with being a “Paddy”. In the next extract, Kate draws a historical parallel to John Osborne and the ‘Angry Young Man’ literary movement of the 1950s – the allusion may suggest a specifically working-class frustration with English society, or perhaps with ‘traditional’ formations of Irishness in London associated with an older generation. Physically, the narrative is situated within the Irish Centre in Camden, an iconic site of Irishness in London, and Kate invokes the image of the Pogues being photographed around the portrait of John F Kennedy (another icon of diasporic Irishness) within the centre. Thus, the image is of the London-Irish claiming a diasporic Irish authenticity without necessarily referring to Ireland, and drawing on class-based discourses of generational conflict native to England. Kate goes on to elaborate on the distinctiveness of London-Irishness as reflected by the music scene at the time:

Extract 7.2 (cont.):

Kate: we were much more open to those (.) broader cultural influences [**Marc:** yeah] you know there was bands (.) who I've got-I've got a bit of a collection of kind of Irish hybrid music, you know .hh ska bands playing traditional Irish tunes but reggae style .hh you know [**Marc:** yeah] so there's-there was a lot of (.) cross fertilisation going on [**Marc:** right, okay] which was really exciting [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] and you had people like The Pogues who were (.) angry young Irish men *if you like* [**Marc:** yeah] John Osborne of the music scene, you know [**Marc:** yeah] .hh and er in a way that say punk wasn't coz it was like very ethnic (.) you know [**Marc:** hmm] punk was angry about everything but I think (.) with The Pogues singing it was very much 'we're Irish and proud of it better [**Marc:** yeah] believe it but we're not (.) but we're not the same as (.) the Irish [**Marc:** hmm] the first generation Irish'

Marc: A-and in what kind of ways do you think that distinction was drawn?

Kate: (3.0) erm (2.0) weren't going to take any crap [**Marc:** yeah] you know I think that was a clear message was you know 'we're here, we're here to stay' [**Marc:** hmm] erm

Marc: Coz you were born here in the first place kind of thing?

Kate: Yeah, yeah we've as much right to be here as anybody else [**Marc:** hmm] but you know the famous erm Norman Tebbitt cricket test [**Marc:** ah yeah] I'd always support Ireland [**Marc:** yeah] [when they were playing]

Marc: [Well not at cricket]

Kate: Well whatever [**Marc:** (laugh)] it was soccer or rugby or [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] something, I mean that was the difference we'd failed the cricket *test*

By drawing attention to her collection of Irish hybrid music, Kate situates the music of the Pogues as being 'ethnic'; on a par, and interacting with other minority 'ethnic' music in a multicultural London. London-Irishness, therefore, is defined both by opposition, and by collaboration. She constructs London-Irishness as being something that is opposed to both the assimilationism exemplified by the 'Tebbitt test', and also to the 'low profile' that may have previously been adopted by the migrant generation in the hope of avoiding discrimination. Rather the second generation "weren't going to take any crap", and were "here to stay", thus emphasising their own permanent residency and rootedness in London as opposed to the migratory status of their parents. At the same time, the level of musical "cross-fertilisation" reflects an eagerness to make links with other minority groups and diasporas in London. A comparison may be drawn here to the discussion of the ways in which the Irish position themselves alongside other minority groups in Chapter 3, and contrasted with the resistance to this positioning discussed in Chapter 6 (Extract 6.13) or the place of the Irish on a 'hierarchy of the dispreferred' discussed in Chapter 5 (Extract 5.5). This may be taken as an example of a convivial, grassroots multiculturalism in an urban environment, and also may reflect a form of intercultural solidarity with other minority groups in London, given Kate's reference to the Tebbitt 'cricket' test, which

would be generally associated with those of Caribbean or South Asian descent rather than Irish. When I point out to Kate that she was unlikely to have been supporting the Irish cricket team, (itself an indication of my own ‘authenticity work’ around the sports typically associated with Irishness¹⁵), she emphasises that the sport itself is less important than the symbolism of failing the test and thus refusing to adopt a national English identity.

London-Irishness as an identity that is constructed and adopted as a reaction to the estranging features of other identities is also present in other narratives of adopting a London-Irish identity. For example, Sinéad, another second generation woman in her 40s, (previous: extract 5.8), drew upon her involvement with Gaelic Games in London to articulate both her sense of Irishness and her sense of London-Irishness:

Extract 7.3:

Sinéad: I think from the football point of view as well .hh I've seen some situations-I know this is a bit bizarre and it's getting to football the whole time and you might [Marc: yeah] think I'm a bit weird but its .hh probably where (.) erm (.) a lot of the Irish identity has-has come from but I think .hh being London-Irish as well .hh if you've got (.) some of the Irish footballers .hh you would have even had Irish supporters on the bank if you were .hh if you had an London-Irish footballer doing very well say playing for London [Marc: hmm] there might be about four of them amongst (.) .hh say eleven other players who would have .hh b-had been born in Ireland [Marc: yeah, yeah] and just over working [Marc: yeah, yeah] .hh then you'd get a lot of erm (.) people erm say other players on the pitch from the other team might say something to them 'oh well you're just a (.) plastic anyway' [Marc: yeah] or you'd get people on the side line

¹⁵ For a discussion of the ways in which cricket has been positioned as antithetical to nationalist discourses of Irishness, see McDevitt (1997), Brady (2007) and Barnier (2003; 2007).

shouting and things (.) .hh a-and that really used to upset me actually coz I think that I felt they were hitting (.) [Marc: hmm] at me and I thought .hh God you know you guys came over here-you had no work (.) people try and help you .hh erm you know (.) give you somewhere to stay give you some work and then you go-you turn round .hh so I al-I almost become very .hh *London-Irish [Marc: *yeah*] which is quite bizarre really* .hh [you know]

For Sinéad then, her own adoption of a London-Irish identity is constructed as having been in solidarity with ‘London-Irish’ footballers, who were having their Irishness brought into question via the use of the ‘Plastic Paddy’ label. She describes herself as having felt both personally insulted that those born in London wouldn’t be considered Irish, and struck by the lack of gratitude of the Irish-born towards London. Adopting a London-Irish identity in this case, is constructed as a reaction against these perceived attitudes. Interestingly, there is an element of a kind of defensive uncertainty in Sinéad’s account – she repeatedly describes the process by which she came to adopt a London-Irish identity as “bizarre” and voices a concern that I might think her “a bit weird”. (Given the topic of conversation, my own position as an Irish migrant is probably not irrelevant here.) This can be attributed to something of an ideological dilemma as to the role of Gaelic Football in Sinéad’s articulation of an Irish identity: over the course of the interview, she repeatedly referred to sport as the major means through which she could demonstrate her link to Irishness, and yet it is sporting experiences which cause her to identify with London (albeit an Irish London) as opposed to Ireland.

At this point, I continued the interview by asking at what point Sinéad had started to adopt a London-Irish identity:

Extract 7.3 (cont.):

Marc: [Erm] .hh I'm just wondering about the-the (.) timescale on you picking up on this London-Irish thing coz you said it became more as you (.) [**Sinéad:** I-] came along I mean-

Sinéad: It was I think my m-my m-my first memory was actually being at a party probably I was (.) about nineteen or twenty (.) eighteen, nineteen or twenty .hh and I remember some girls-the first time somebody said to me .hh I think it was probably those silly things you're at a party and they were Ir-they were actually born in Ireland working over here [**Marc:** yeah] .hh and we were at a party a mutual friends party a guys party [**Marc:** hmm] I don't know whether they felt-saw me and my friend as a bit of threat or whatever [**Marc:** yeah] .hh but that was the first time somebody said to me 'yeah but you're just a (.) Plastic Paddy anyway' [**Marc:** alright] and I said 'yeah I'm what?'

Marc: Had-had you heard the term before or?

Sinéad: I had heard the term but nobody had said it to me [**Marc:** okay] it was the first time that somebody said it to me [**Marc:** yeah] er::m [and it made me-]

Marc: [A-and it was said] like in a:: (.) in a denigratory way [like it wasn't done in joke]

Sinéad: [It was yeah] I mean I have had other people tease me about it [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] since then and I've probably been older so I wouldn't react in the same way [**Marc:** yeah] .hh but no that person used it as ammunition *hh* [**Marc:** right] and it riled me it really [**Marc:** yeah] did

The fact that Sinéad answers my query about the timescale around which she had started to adopt a London-Irish identity with an anecdote about the first time she, personally, had been referred to as a 'Plastic Paddy' is indicative of the means by which London-Irishness is positioned as a defensive identity. Interestingly, as she describes the "girls" who insulted

her, she corrects her description of them as Irish, to the more particular “born in Ireland”. This indicates that in the immediate context of the interview, Irishness is something that needs to be unpacked: here, she constructs Irishness as depending on more than just birthplace by specifying that these particular Irish people had been born in Ireland. I later attempted to develop this point, by suggesting that London in the 1980s may have been a site of contestation between two quite different versions of Irishness:

Extract 7.3 (cont.):

Marc: Well I, what’s been suggested is it might have been a way for (.) people who are the (.) children of the fifties-sixties generation migrants to differentiate themselves (.) from the people who were coming over in the eighties .hh because they would have been around the same age and might have had erm [**Sinéad:** yeah] kind of confrontations like you de-you described having-

Sinéad: Yeah because I would say we wouldn't have wanted to differentiate [**Marc:** yeah] but they want-they quite clearly .hh I feel they wanted to differentiate from us [**Marc:** yeah] we didn't, we wanted to be part of it all [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] .hh and the be the same of it but it was them coming over who didn't (.) well I can only talk for my own perspective of course [**Marc:** hmm] that's how I perceived the situation and .hh somebody come over from Ireland (.) my age would probably tell you something very different but I felt (.) the differentiation was on their side not on ours that we didn't want-that we wanted to be associated [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] you know (.) erm (.) and of course it was only a minority (.) [**Marc:** hmm] who made you feel like that [**Marc:** right] the majority didn't [**Marc:** hmm] so

Marc: Erm but now-I mean now you would describe yourself-self as London-Irish even [*inaudible*] Irish, or]

Sinéad: [.hh I think I would] because (.) I never want-I don't think I ever (.) wanted to differentiate myself as London-Irish [**Marc:** yeah] but a few things that were said and

done (.) [Marc: hmm] a few things that have happened to: .hh London-Irish people (.) it makes you feel 'okay well we need to fight-maybe fight your corner a bit more' [Marc: yeah] .hh erm so I don't think I ever wanted to be a London-Irish person [Marc: hmm] .hh erm but somehow it's evolved (.) maybe .hh from my personal experiences but I (.) .hh of course from the er-you know the things that were happening at the time as well so .hh as is a lot of these s-a lot of things are happening at the same time that's why these things .hh [Marc: hmm] occur

Sinéad, while agreeing that the 1980s represented a period where “a lot of things were happening at the same time” and the second generation in London were encountering a new wave of migrants over from Ireland, emphasises that it was ‘them’, the new young migrants, who wanted to differentiate from ‘us’, the second generation who “wanted to be part of it all”. Adopting a London-Irish identity is constructed by Sinéad not as a choice she was able to make freely, but rather as something that emerged in a defensive context, having had the means by which she could articulate her personal Irishness constrained by the new arrivals.

Although there are similar themes running through Kate and Sinéad’s positionings of themselves as London-Irish, particularly the association of “not taking any crap” and “fighting your corner”, there is less of a sense of actively constructing a new, exciting hybrid identity in Sinéad’s narrative. Rather, by emphasising her claim that she never *wanted* to be London-Irish, she suggests that it is an identity that she has felt obliged to adopt out of solidarity with other London-Irish people, and as a defence against being labelled a ‘Plastic Paddy’. As such the personal here intersects with the collective in terms of authentic descriptions of the self: whereby a wholly individualised authenticity for Sinéad might be described in terms of Irishness, in order to articulate her position within a collective identity, she uses the term ‘London-Irish’. By doing so she is making a diasporic

claim on authentic Irishness as a reaction to the more exclusionary aspects of the Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge discourse.

Returning to Hickman et al.'s (2005) argument that the second generation Irish in England are at the intersection of two hegemonic domains, both Kate and Sinéad use the London-Irish label as a way of negotiating these domains. However, while Sinéad's adoption of the label is primarily a reaction to the differentiating nature of the Irish domain, Kate's is largely a reaction to the incorporating nature of the English domain.

It should be pointed out here that because of their cultural activities, both Sinéad and Kate move in spheres where the 'London-Irish' label is particularly salient. It should not be assumed that the 'London-Irish' label is adopted by *all* the second generation Irish in London. Indeed, some of my other participants were less enthusiastic about adopting the label. For instance, the following extract from my interview with Sheila (previous: extract 6.12) occurs following a discussion of Irish dance-halls in London, and their status as representing a particularly London strand of Irishness that was not represented in Ireland itself:

Extract 7.4:

Sheila: I remember my uncle when he came over from Dublin and he plays, he's with Dickie Rock [**Marc:** oh right] and 'erm he played in the Gresham 'erm some years ago, and he said 'Jeez, they haven't even got these places back in Ireland' [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] (*laughs*), so it was like the Irish here holding on to something [**Marc:** yeah] that, that came from Ireland but that was no longer at that time sort of going on over there. They'd moved on, but here it hadn't, so still, you know, holding on to that.

Marc: So it was kind of, it was kind of London-Irish in a way was it?

Sheila: Yes.

Marc: Do you think that's; is that an identity you would hold, London-Irish?

Sheila: Yeah [**Marc:** yeah], probably yeah.

Marc: I mean would you ever describe yourself as that?

Sheila: Yes, I think when I was in, in the midst of like an identity crisis [**Marc:** yeah] I thought, and I heard the terminology 'London-Irish', you know, so that's a whole new, it's a whole different culture [**Marc:** yeah], not brought up there, but not English, you know, so they, y'know, this thing, and I thought 'That's what I am; I'm London-Irish' [**Marc:** alright] you know. 'Erm, so I did yeah, I, I identified that because I share a lot of experiences with people that are brought up here 'erm in an Irish community, but in a different culture [**Marc:** right], an English culture [**Marc:** yeah, yeah], and so there'd be a lot of, of shared experiences [**Marc:** mm], but then I've moved on from that and, you know [**Marc:** oh, you've] moved on, yeah, because I think 'erm, you know, it's back to that form filling, you know [**Marc:** yeah] so, you know. I'm London Irish so then I'd be thinking 'Am I Irish?' or am I, so I'd tick myself as English, London Irish, so that's declaring I'm London [**Marc:** yeah] so but then, you know, so I've just gone back to the Irish [**Marc:** okay], Irish thing.

At first glance, Sheila's narrative of coming to adopt a London-Irish identity bears strong similarities to those of Kate and Sinéad. She constructs the availability of the label as being a means of resolving an "identity crisis" – indeed, much as was indicated by the findings of the Irish 2 Project, she suggests it was the very existence of the label itself that allowed her both to come to terms with and to articulate the specific duality of her experience of 'living Irish' in London. However, as is indicated by my somewhat surprised reaction, Sheila breaks away from this familiar narrative in indicating that she had "moved on" from identifying as London-Irish, to simply identifying as Irish. She constructs this as being something of a forced choice between Englishness and Irishness necessitated by "form-filling". She invokes this forced choice as altering what claiming to be London-Irish

means, insofar as she now presents it as being more about declaring her Londonness than her Irishness. However, the fact that she chooses to describe herself as ‘Irish’ as opposed to ‘English’ would suggest that, unlike the pattern noted in previous studies of the second generation Irish and discussed in Chapter 3 e.g. (Hickman et al., 2005; Walter, 2004) when faced with a forced choice, Sheila chose ‘ethnicity’ and ancestry over birthplace and citizenship.

Sheila’s account acts as a reminder of the fluidity of identity claims and also that a local-national hybrid identity should not be seen as a universally applicable panacea to the difficulties of second generation identification. As pointed out by Nazroo & Karlsen (2003) while local identities may appear universally accessible, there will be internally and externally imposed constraints on access to them. Agency is not unlimited, and there will be structural and contextual factors that make the adoption of a hyphenated identity more or less salient, such as, in this case, the way ethnic monitoring forms appear to police what identity claims can be made.

Similar discursive constraints in adopting a local-national hybrid identity can be seen in operation in the group discussion between three second generation Irish women, of varying ages in Birmingham (previous: extract 6.13). The following extract represents an attempt on my part to return to an earlier moment of agreement between Sarah and Becky about the differences between the Irish brought up in Ireland and the Irish brought up in Birmingham, and the sense of discomfort when the two met:

Extract 7.5:

Marc: [Sarah], you were saying you would agree with the fact that there is kind of a perceived difference between people [**Sarah:** yeah] born and brought up here and people who come over [**Sarah:** mm]. I mean, have you come across that yourself?

Sarah: ‘Erm, I just think ‘er there is that fear of the, the ‘Plastic Paddy’ by being called a ‘Plastic Paddy’; it, well, it doesn’t really bother me but ‘erm, I know that it, some people really hate it because its hard to, like; they can have a complete Irish upbringing and be considered maybe Irish by people over here, but if they’re in Ireland it’s just that they’re like; I suppose they could call themselves ‘er (..hh), they’d call themselves maybe ‘Birmingham-Irish’, but they wouldn’t call themselves ‘Irish-Irish’

[**Marc:** mm].

Eileen: I think that’s quite a [

Becky: It’s a fear of being criticised more [**Eileen:** yeah, well I think so] yeah.

Eileen: Generally people don’t like to be different [**Sarah:** yeah]; you know, generally people like to fit in.

The women in the group describe a process by which second generation Irish people in Birmingham come to describe themselves as Birmingham-Irish as a means of avoiding being labelled a ‘Plastic Paddy’. Adopting a hybridised label is a means of creating conceptual space for a different type of Irishness to be imagined, one that emphasises the localised specificity of their Irish identities. However, the adoption of these labels only reflects a limited amount of agency in claiming Irishness – the extract makes it clear that the constraints placed on second generation identity by the existence of the ‘Plastic Paddy’ trope mean that people feel unable to claim an unqualified Irishness, reflecting the discursive power of the label. The possibility of being labelled a ‘Plastic Paddy’ is constructed in this extract as something that cannot simply be ignored or rejected, but rather accommodated, by pre-emptively adopting a qualified Irish identity.

However, this does not mean that the label Birmingham-Irish exists solely as a rhetorical device to guard against possible accusations of inauthenticity. For example, in my interview with Eileen, a member of the Birmingham group, she put a more positive spin on the term:

Extract 7.6:

Marc: But it is kind of, the Birmingham-Irish term is one that you use as that kind of hyphenated [**Eileen:** yes] (term)

Eileen: Yes, and I think it's, you know; to include maybe, to make people feel in, included like my son [**Marc:** yeah], 'erm who are of value to the community [**Marc:** mm] and who, you know, like GAA, proud of their Irish roots [**Marc:** mm] but are not a hundred percent Irish [**Marc:** yeah]; then if you put the term 'Birmingham-Irish', then it's a lot more inclusive [**Marc:** yeah] isn't it?

Marc: And is Birmingham-Irish more available, say, than just English-Irish or British-Irish?

Eileen: (.) Yeah, I think [**Marc:** yeah] it is; I think, if you put 'English-Irish' then I think that would be far too confusing [**Marc:** yeah], but 'Birmingham-Irish', because there's the 'oh well' you know 'the Irish came to Birmingham' [**Marc:** yeah], so, you know, that's, that's 'er an acceptable term [**Marc:** mm] I think.

In this case then, Eileen appears less eager to claim the Birmingham-Irish identity on her own behalf than on behalf of her son, and by extension on behalf of all those who identify with Irishness, but may be of mixed descent. The Birmingham-Irish label is constructed as an inclusive one, that allows those who are not "100%" biologically Irish, to claim Irishness and a sense of belonging in the community. The articulation of such hyphenated identities can also be situated within a discourse of Irish authenticity through diasporic

claim. However, this label is not constructed as being universally available but is rather applied to those who are “of value to the community”, a term that here is associated with liking Gaelic Games and being proud of one’s Irish roots.

A similar argument for the salience and inclusiveness of the Birmingham-Irish label is put forward by Becky, in relation to her own self-identification, having earlier identified her pride both in being a ‘Brummie’ (slang meaning a native of Birmingham) and in being Irish:

Extract 7.7:

Marc: So it’s, in terms of being, having that dual thing of being proud to be a Brummie and proud to be Irish so, I mean is that kind of a hybrid thing? Would you describe yourself as Birmingham-Irish?

Becky: Yeah [**Marc:** yeah], yeah, oh, very much so [**Marc:** yeah]. ‘Erm, I’d love to lose my Birmingham accent [**Marc:** (*laughs*)] at any given time (*laughs*) don’t get me wrong (*..hh*). ‘Erm, but yeah, I do, ‘er I am Birmingham-Irish [**Marc:** yeah]; it’s ‘erm, I am aware that I wasn’t born in Ireland [**Marc:** mm], ‘erm (*..hh*) (.). Had; I think it, it, it; because all of my friends are Irish mum, Irish dads [**Marc:** yeah], I always felt not as Irish as them, but I am more active with anything Irish [**Marc:** right]; it’s, it’s, it’s strange. If there’s one person out of all of my friends that you would think wouldn’t be working for [*Irish community organisation*] (*..hh*) teaching Irish dancing, you know, socialising, and anything Irish; years ago you would say it would probably be me because I had the strongest accent; I’ve got an English father [**Marc:** mm]; ‘er, it was just really, really strange, but I am (.) probably the most Irish out of all of my friends [**Marc:** yeah] but in terms of mum and dad being Irish, I’ve only, I’m only half [**Marc:** mm], so ‘erm. That, I think because they (.) ‘er, I don’t know how to describe it really; because they were (*..hh*) ‘erm (.) you know, ‘up Mayo, up Galway’, say for instance

[**Marc:** yeah], and I was kind of ‘up Birmingham’ and [**Marc:** (*laughs*)] and up; you know, if the football was playing I’d go [**Marc:** yeah] ‘Well I support both’ and they couldn’t understand that at all [**Marc:** yeah]. ‘Erm, but I was like ‘Well I was born in this country’ [**Marc:** mm]; whether I liked it or not, I was born here and it’s given me a home and a good life and (.hh) and ‘erm, and I went to Ireland ‘er for the summer holidays and [**Marc:** mm] that gave me a fantastic life as well, you know. I’m (.hh) kind of thankful to, to both of them.

In this extract, the Birmingham-Irish label is constructed as something that allows Becky to do some identity repair work regarding her Irishness. She constructs herself as having a somewhat tenuous Irish identity due to her not having been born in Ireland, and compares her own Irishness to that of her friends as being somewhat lacking, having only one Irish parent. However, involvement in the local community and being active with things Irish allows her to re-assert her Irishness and re-position herself as now being “the most Irish out of all her friends”. Meanwhile the Birmingham-Irish label allows her to simultaneously feel pride in both her Irish and ‘Brummie’ backgrounds. Becky is making a claim on authenticity at two levels – by stressing her involvement with community activities, she is prioritising *doing* Irishness over simply being Irish, which allows her to make up the perceived deficit on her ‘fully’ Irish friends. At the same time, in articulating her *Birmingham-Irish* identity, she makes it clear that this isn’t simply a qualification of her Irishness, but a claim of authentic ‘Brummie-ness’, insofar as she highlights the fact that she has the strongest Birmingham accent of her friends, and identifies with Birmingham more than any specific county in Ireland. It is also notable that she refers to being born in this *country* rather than this city. This suggests a certain fluidity in her identifications and that Birmingham might act as England in microcosm. Articulating her identification with Birmingham may also represent an identification with England, without outrightly claiming Englishness.

Becky's comparison of her own cheer of "Up Birmingham" as opposed to her friends' "Up Galway" or "Up Mayo" is also interesting in its own right, in that while it underlines her own commitment to Birmingham, it exists alongside a discourse that positions her friends as being more *naturally* Irish due to having two Irish parents. Her friends' support for the counties of their parents' origin is a means of emphasising that theirs was an Irishness territorially situated in Ireland to the extent that hers wasn't. As argued earlier, I believe that the use of this interpretative repertoire of the county as a marker of a certain kind of territorially authenticated Irishness is prevalent to a major extent among the diaspora in narratives around 'real' Irishness, and is worthy of further examination.

7.2 Localised Irish identities – the role of the county

As previously discussed, during the interview process, I was anxious to establish the extent to which my participants identified with a particular county, so one of the opening questions in the interview dealt with the area of Ireland they originated from. However, in a number of cases where the interview was carried out in participants' homes, such questions were less necessary as physical markers of county identity were already in evidence. For example, Éamonn had a Down flag flying from his balcony, while there was a good deal of Leitrim paraphernalia around Sinéad's house, including Leitrim GAA Supporter's club stickers on the car, and a 'Pubs of Leitrim' poster on the wall. Also, some participants seemed eager to point out various items relating to their home county over the course of our interactions. For example, Gerry drew my attention to some of the Galway-themed memorabilia on display in a nearby cupboard as well as a painting of the Claddagh in Galway on his wall, while Ciarán drew my attention to an article about his home county of Leitrim that had recently appeared in the travel section of an English newspaper.

In common with the patterns of involvement in Irish community organisations mentioned in previous chapters, for many of my older respondents, discourses around county identity centred around their involvement in county associations. For example, Peg, (previous: extract 5.1), after previously mentioning that she and her husband had been “up to their eyes in associations and all sorts” expanded on the role of the county associations as a welfare service in the following way:

Extract 7.8:

Peg: The good thing about them was there wa-there was no .hh erm there was no (.) there was no religion .hh no politics (.) [**Marc:** yeah] you know they were for everybody that was in trouble (.) .hh or anybody that you .hh (.) that was that just needed help [**Marc:** yeah] you know (.) so we used to get letters from people here like [**Marc:** hmm] you know living .hh and you know there was someone died belonged to them and .hh and erm they couldn't pay for the funeral or [**Marc:** hmm] or something you know .hh and we'd send them money [**Marc:** yeah okay] you know with er-well we'd go and visit them [**Marc:** yeah] to make sure that they were right like .hh we used go to visit them .hh and you'd bring-you'd have the cheque book with you and you give them .hh the cheque to help the (.) .hh pay the funeral and .hh somebody else would go and maybe send the child to Lourdes and .hh oh there was all sorts of things like that you'd do .hh [**Marc:** hmm] and (2) it was a great place for youngsters coming over [**Marc:** yeah] because erm they wouldn't know anybody you know and they'd come .hh and they'd come to the Irish Centre and when they'd come to the Irish Centre there they'd (.) they'd be sort of .hh they'd ask them where they came from and they say you said Galway, Cork and Kerry .hh or wherever and they'd say now (.) come down Monday night there's a meeting with the Cork Association or the Galway Association [**Marc:** yeah] all that, you know .hh

In common with the tendency discussed earlier for the county associations to present themselves officially as non-sectarian and non-party political, Peg emphasises that the associations operated primarily as *welfare* providers and that there was “no religion, no politics”. However, in describing their operations, she draws on a register of religious rituals in discussing helping to pay for funerals, and in particular, the reference to sending “the child to Lourdes”: a specifically Roman Catholic place of pilgrimage. The reference to “no religion” in Peg’s narrative apparently does not take into account the ‘benign’ ways in which religion operated, so it can be surmised that it is a reference to the potentially divisive nature of religion, perhaps with regard to the ‘sectarian’ Troubles.

In stressing that the associations were for “anyone that was in trouble”, Peg constructs them as open and having no bar on receiving assistance. However, this is apparently contradicted in her account of how the provision of welfare operated, with new arrivals being referred to the relevant county. It might be suggested that the effect of this immediate division of the Irish on arrival according to their county of birth would be to undermine solidarity among Irish migrants – a potential ideological dilemma that Peg later attempts to redress.

Extract 7.8 (cont.):

Marc: Erm so y-you you saying they used to set the:: (.) young people up with the, with their county of origin kind of (.) erm if you're from Galway get some help from the Galway [Association]

Peg: [Yes, yes] but er, but er y::y-if you couldn't help them, and we could [Marc: yeah] you know we-did-we-didn't say well I can't help you because you're from Kerry [Marc: *laugh*] y'know, not that but well you'd ring the Kerry people and you'd say now [Marc: yeah] do you have you anything around .hh you see a lot of our crowd were builders and (.) you could get them jobs, you know [Marc: yeah, yeah] (.) you-you you knew people and-in-in-in the different trades, so you could get them a job [Marc: yeah,

yeah] so if I didn't have a job for .hh some young lad I-you'd ring up Kerry and you'd say
(.) .hh have you-is there anything going (.) can you fix this young lad up?' They-they'd
never say no (.) they'd always find him something you know

Peg here emphasises that county identity was not a bar on receiving assistance in that “a young lad” (again, the gendered aspect should be noted) would not be refused help for being from the ‘wrong’ county – Kerry rather than Galway in this instance. At the same time, however, she explains how they would then put the applicant in touch with the ‘right’ county. The assumption underpinning this would appear to be that anyone applying for assistance would identify with a singular county, and also that his fellow county people were seen as having responsibility for his welfare. She also emphasises the means in which the county associations worked as an informal network for securing employment, particularly in construction. This intermingling of the county associations and the provision of labour was reflected in Cowley’s (2001) history of the “Irish navy” which includes a former supervisor’s assessment of the worth of each worker according to the perceived characteristics of their county of origin:

“You’d ask a guy where he came from, to see if he can work... Donegal – a bit fiery, but a good worker; Roscommon – intelligent, decent and a reasonable worker; Leitrim – probably OK; Cork – let him stand at the gate, lettin’ the wagons in and out! Limerick – a bit of a buzz, orators...” (Cowley, 2001, p. 196).

Referring back to McLennan’s (2009) account of the stated function of the County Associations in Chapter 2, it can be seen that Peg’s narrative highlights their charitable function as ensuring the welfare of their members and new arrivals. The other major function of the associations, in operating as a means of maintaining connections with the homeplace, was also in evidence in the interviews. As a brief example, Sam, whose

account of the Birmingham pub bombings has already been highlighted in extract 5.7, stressed the link between the Limerick Association in Birmingham of which he was a member, and the Limerick County Council.

To a large extent those of my participants who had been involved in County Associations stressed their positive impact while downplaying any notion that they might undermine Irish solidarity. Betty (previous: extract 5.3), however, had a more critical take on the way the County Associations had been set up in order to bring people from the same county together:

Extract 7.9:

Betty: Now about the County Associations; first of all, when I came here, I discovered that the Mayo girls and boys did not mix with us [**Marc:** right]. (.) Cork people were (.) the pits ohh! [**Marc:** (*laughs*)]; Gods own county, the Devils own people. The Kerry people, to be avoided [**Marc:** right], Dublin jackeens, and there was this dreadful feeling of animosity towards other counties [**Marc:** right], and I looked at it and I said ‘What’s all this about?’, and a lot of them would say ‘Well’, for instance Mayo, they beat us at football so often ... and as a girl I didn’t play football, so, I didn’t see the point of it, but there was no chance of me getting off with a Mayo chap [**Marc:** right]; ‘err, forget about it! And then you had, we had these divisions, so I think it was terribly much the herd instinct or the clan instinct [**Marc:** right], or the extended family. You see [**Marc:** mm] in, where I lived, we were an extended family really; there was a cousin here and an aunt there [**Marc:** mm] and, y’know, so I think that was it; there were, there were little cohesive groups.

Betty’s narrative here voices the prevailing attitudes towards people from other counties and their perceived characteristics that she ‘discovered’ on arriving in London. I react with

laughter at the mention of my own county of Cork, something that can be interpreted in this context as an example of Hak's (2003) contention that interviewer laughter can act as a signal that "the interviewer has problems 'appreciating' the respondent's viewpoint" (Hak, 2003, p. 202). While Betty does not immediately react to my laughter, and rather compounds her initial statement by referring to Corkonians as "the Devil's own people", she claimed later in the interview that she had forgotten that I was from Cork myself; I was, and remain, unsure whether to believe her or not.

Through Betty's use of reported speech in constructing prototypical county rivalries in this extract, she positions herself as not subscribing to these discourses, and yet constrained by them. Although she claims not to have seen the point of the gendered sporting rivalry between her own county of Leitrim and Mayo, its existence meant that there was 'no chance of getting off with a Mayo chap'. She then draws on a historical register of the "herd or clan instinct" in order to explain these county-based rivalries, thus positioning them within a discourse of the outmoded and pre-modern. She later elaborated on the effect these "little cohesive groups" had on intra-Irish solidarity.

Extract 7.9 (cont.):

Betty: But 'erm (.hh) then, the, the, it became a count-, it became a county man's association; I mean there was the Leitrim Man's Association [**Marc:** yeah], and the Limerick Man's Association, but then if you look at the Limerick Association you'd find there was several tow- parish associations as well that would have nothing to do with the city of Limerick [**Marc:** yeah], everyone would drink poison. And I thought 'dear God' and 'er, it, that also came as a great surprise because as far as I was concerned we were all Irish [**Marc:** yeah] and I spoke Gaelic; I thought we'd all speak Gaelic and what a; not a hope in Hell; no, no, no, no. (.hh) So we became, and I think there was divide and

rule situation going on as well [Marc: right]; if we united together it would be a disaster, so keep it as in little, little groups competing with each other [Marc: okay] for what?

Betty here contrasts her idealised vision of a united Gaelic-speaking solidarity among Irish migrants with the divided scenario she describes encountering. Her reference to speaking Gaelic may draw upon a discourse of authentic Irishness being specifically Gaelic-speaking, or it may also be a means by which the Irish could possibly have collectively distinguished themselves from the English, thereby enhancing their sense of solidarity as migrant in a strange land. Rather than this, however, Betty emphasises the extent of intra-Irish disagreements, with urban-rural divides even occurring within County Associations themselves. She further suggests that such divisions were encouraged by the authorities in order to prevent the Irish in England uniting. Who the authorities are in this situation she does not quite make clear, although elsewhere in the interview, she speaks scathingly about the relationship between church and state power in 1940s/1950s Ireland, which might give some indication as to whom she's referring.

As already pointed out, later generations of migrants have tended not to get involved in County Associations to quite the same extent, whether from less need for the kind of welfare services they provided, or due to their perceived association with the kind of 'old-fashioned' tribal Irishness discussed above. However, this does not mean that local, county-based identities became any less salient, but more that they were expressed in a different way. Rather than county identities being a subset of national identities, or national identities writ small, the two were employed by participants in quite fluid ways, with local or national identifications becoming salient and prioritised over the other, depending on the context. For example, Liam, a relatively recent migrant in his twenties living in London, mentions occasions on which he prioritises his 'Kerryiness' ahead of his Irishness:

Extract 7.10:

Liam: Yeah, I mean, people sure are very proud of their county [**Marc:** mm]; very proud. Erm, I mean, if you read in the papers about Brian Cowen, the big party he had down in Offaly last week [**Marc:** yeah], you know, like er at home, that's the case too like; Kerry men see themselves as being, not just Irish, but Kerry men as well [**Marc:** yeah]; you know. I would have those type of beliefs [**Marc:** mm] I, I'd be very proud of being from Kerry more so than being from Ireland, you know [**Marc:** mm]. It's like an extra star in your collar, you know.

Marc: I mean, would you introduce yourself as a Kerry man if you're meeting other people over here?

Liam: If I meet an Irish person I'd say I'm from Killarney; I would never say I'm from Kerry even [**Marc:** right]; I just say 'Killarney' [**Marc:** yeah], because everyone knows Killarney [**Marc:** well, yeah], so erm (.). Yeah, the, I mean it's funny really isn't it when you think about it like that, but (.) erm, yeah I would always let people know I'm from Kerry [**Marc:** mm], yeah; I like that idea, 'cos everyone knows Kerry, everyone goes on holidays to Kerry and [**Marc:** yeah] d'you know, so (.hh). That's probably a big thing, yeah, not to worry about being, about identifying myself as erm, being Irish all the time, you know; people generally know anyway [**Marc:** mm], so I don't make a big deal out of it. You know, but if I'm talking to someone from Ireland, I will say like 'oh, Where are you from yourself?' kind of thing

Liam, in describing himself as being more proud to be from Kerry than from Ireland constructs this as being a typical attitude, both among Kerry people and among other Irish. He uses the contemporary emphasis on the (at the time) new Taoiseach Brian Cowen's status as an Offaly man to highlight the normative nature of 'county pride'. Having said that, when I question him about self-presentation, he draws a distinction between introducing himself as being from Killarney to other Irish people, while introducing

himself as being from Kerry in other contexts. There is a dialogic aspect to this self-introduction that rests on the assumption that “everyone knows” either Killarney or Kerry depending on the context, but where the imagined audience is composed of Irish people, Liam constructs an identification with his specific hometown as being more salient than his home county. While this form of town/county identification may fluctuate, Liam presents himself as not being overly concerned to “make a big deal” out of his Irishness, as this is something that is generally known. It may be that Liam is constructing his Kerry identity as being more *personally* authentic as well as a means of disidentifying from a collective Irishness in certain contexts. Also, there would appear to be a greater stake in articulating an identity that is not immediately apparent (but is yet assumed to be well known, once flagged) and this may shape the ways in which county identity is discussed among the Irish in England.

Similarly, Matthew (previous: extract 6.7) speaks about the identities he prioritises when meeting new people:

Extract 7.11:

Marc: so if you were introducing yourself to somebody, where would you say you were from?

Matthew: If I met somebody in the UK?

Marc: Yeah

Matthew : If I met somebody in the UK and I knew they were, amm, and they had an Irish element to them [**Marc:** yeah] I would introduce myself as a Corkman [**Marc:** right] emm, almost as a way of banter, immediately, y’know, you’re straight in there, immediately into, into the slagging match, I suppose, but if I met, emm, if I met somebody, y’know, if I met somebody in, in the school next week, and I wouldn’t

necessarily introduce myself as anything other than myself [**Marc:** yeah] they usually pick up on my accent and more often than not will make reference to it and that, at which point I would say I'm Irish and then I would say, well, if they ask me more specifically, I'd say Cork [**Marc:** yeah], emm, so yeah, I suppose I have a duality in that sense, if, if I know they have Irish links I tend to go for Cork if it's, if it's UK-based people or people who don't necessarily have an affinity with Ireland, I would just say Irish, Southern Irish [**Marc:** yeah] or way down South, or something like that I'd say.

Matthew makes a distinction between introducing himself to anyone with “an Irish element to them” and anyone else in, for example, a professional setting, where for the former he introduces himself as a Corkman, and with the latter he takes a more individualist position. Similarly to Liam, he claims that he wouldn't ‘necessarily introduce myself as anything other than myself’, unless he's questioned about his accent or his Irishness, although he does mention that in such a case he would identify himself as ‘Southern Irish’. Claiming a ‘southern’ identity has the dual effect of positioning him both politically and geographically: ‘Southern Irish’ can be taken as distinct from ‘Northern Irish’ with reference to the border that separates the two polities of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic. “Way down South” may be taken as a more specifically localised identity predicated on Cork's geographical position as Ireland's southernmost county, but without the assumption that ‘Cork’ will act as a signifier for an imagined audience – this may be contrasted with Liam's claim that “everyone knows Kerry”.

To digress briefly, an interesting question that arises at this point is the extent to which knowledge of Irish geography is assumed in a non-Irish audience. Over-generalising slightly, the assumption appears to be that while Dublin is universally recognised among the ‘non-Irish’, and the existence of a border between ‘the North and the South’ is also well-known, other places will require slightly more explanation. Two ‘prototypical’

responses which arose (often expressed in terms of humorous exasperation) over the course of the research with regard to the articulation of a specific place of origin were “Is that in the North or the South?” and “Is that anywhere near Dublin?”; the latter often being accompanied by a tale of a recent weekend break. Any deviation from this ‘prototypical’ script may therefore be treated as evidence of a greater knowledge of, and engagement with Ireland on the part of the audience.

Taking this into account, it is interesting to note how Matthew positions those to whom he introduces himself as a Corkman. While this may have been an artefact of the interview situation, rather than just saying he introduces himself as a Corkman to other Irish people in the UK, which might have been taken as meaning those of Irish birth, he uses a range of descriptions including “an Irish element”, “Irish links” and “an affinity with Ireland”. The effect of this is to expand the number of people who would both identify with, and have knowledge of Ireland, beyond those of Irish birth. Crucially, in identifying himself as a Corkman to this cohort, and stating that this is “almost by way of banter” there is an assumption that to have an affinity with Ireland is to be familiar with perceived county characteristics – in other words, in order to be able to engage in banter or “a slagging match” one has to have some familiarity with what being from Cork is perceived to mean. This knowledge, rather than the more bounded category of birth, is positioned as an expected facet in “having an Irish element”. Thus, the discourse of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge may not, in certain contexts, exclude those of Irish descent.

It could be argued that such assumptions factor largely in the recent upsurge in interest in genealogy and establishing a specific, localised ‘point of origin’ among those of Irish descent, as explored by Catherine Nash (2008). The extent to which this becomes

something of a shibboleth for the Irish in England as regards authenticity will be now be examined with regard to the second generation.

7.2.1 County identity among second generation people

The discourse of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge positions those who profess an affinity with Ireland as people who ‘ought’ to have the requisite local knowledge. In this context, the following extract from my interview with Finbarr, a retired Irish migrant living in Milton Keynes, on the subject of second generation Irishness is illuminating:

Extract 7.12:

Finbarr: No, there are some families who-who'd definitely [**Marc:** yeah] the children are Irish you know and ‘erm whereas in our case ‘erm they don't consider themselves Irish, but there was a thing that used to bug me years ago when people say 'oh my father is f-fro i-is Irish' and you say 'oh, what part?' 'oh I don't know' [**Marc:** right] I used to think that was terrible [**Marc:** yeah] you know so all our children have been over to summer after summer for twenty years back to [*village name*] you know [**Marc:** yeah] so they know the shops, they know some of the people, they know everything

Finbarr expresses his irritation at second generation Irish people who are unaware of the locality in Ireland from which their father originated, comparing this with the familiarity his own children have with his native village. Given that this follows on from a discussion about whether second generation migrants call themselves ‘Irish’, the implicit argument appears to be that knowledge of the locality one’s parents originated from is a prerequisite for claiming Irishness. Therefore, local Irish identifications are often central to perceived authentic diasporic Irish identities. Referring back to Matthew and Liam’s tendency to

prioritise local identifications on introducing themselves to people “with an Irish element” to them, it is notable that in Finbarr’s narrative, he represents his first question to those of Irish descent as establishing their locality. This pattern is also apparent in the narratives of second generation Irish people, as in the example below, again taken from my interview with Kate:

Extract 7.13:

Marc: Like, does, in terms of talking to other, whether its other London-Irish people or Irish people over here [**Kate:** hmm] does the, erm topic of locality come up very much?

Kate: Oh yeah where are you from, where are your parents from [**Marc:** yeah] that's the first question really [**Marc:** yeah] so yeah and I would say Galway [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] y’know I would always say Galway [so yeah]

Marc: [It's] the first question so it's almost-it's almost like a password in a way is it?

Kate: Yeah it is I guess, is I guess because I notice my mum and one of the first things she said to you was where are you from [**Marc:** yeah] and even when on this course these people I've met in the last few weeks it's [**Marc:** hmm] all been about 'and where are your parents from again?' and you know turning out that one of the guys on the course the older guys is from Galway and knew my dad and [**Marc:** hmm] he knew my dad's brother, [Andy], I went to school with his sister de-de-de-de and different people from different parts of Ireland-oh yeah it's one of the first questions still [**Marc:** yeah] definitely yeah [**Marc:** okay] basically I think you're trying to find out do you know someone they know [**Marc:** yeah] where's the connection you know lets [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] find the connection yeah

Kate describes the near-inevitability that determining the locality of her Irish origins will arise in conversation and the role this plays in acting as a point of connection between Irish

people. It can perhaps be surmised that for second generation Irish people, demonstrating knowledge of Irish localities serves to position them as authentic within a conversation with other Irish people, and has a ‘levelling’ effect on the conversation, serving as it does to establish mutual Irishness. Thus, second generation Irish people can make a claim on diasporic Irishness, through local knowledge – this represents a confluence of the discourses of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge and Irish authenticity through diasporic claim. Of course, the ‘password’ element of this knowledge serves to exclude those who may not possess it – as with other aspects of diasporic Irishness, this serves to simultaneously expand and bound the category ‘Irish’.

A similar use of local identity can be found in my conversation with Eileen. The extract below immediately follows a discussion around the prominence of county banners and associations at the St. Patrick’s Day parades, which Eileen framed in terms of “giving people somewhere to belong to”:

Extract 7.14:

Marc: Yeah. I wonder does it get more, more or less important as you go down the generations? ‘Erm, when you talk, not with the people who’ve migrated themselves, [**Eileen:** mm] but their children and grandchildren, for them to actually be able to point to a place on a map and say ‘That’s where I’m from in Ireland’.

Eileen: ‘Erm, I think, like my son [**Marc:** mm] will automatically go for Wexford [**Marc:** yeah]. I mean he does know that my mother came from Mayo but the links are with Wexford [**Marc:** mm]. ‘Erm, but he’s a great sort of sport enthusiast [**Marc:** yeah] and he’s got a; I mean, on his bedroom window he’s got ‘erm a sticker on each pane of the Wexford team [**Marc:** ah, okay], ‘erm, the hurling team [**Marc:** yeah], and he’s also got a signed photograph of them all as well [**Marc:** oh, okay], and that’s in his bedroom [**Marc:** yeah]. You know, he’d never ‘erm, I mean he’s never taken it down; it’s been up

there donkey's years, but you know he would never take it off the window [**Marc:** mm].
'Erm, you know, the purple and yellow [**Marc:** yeah, yeah]; its there; so I don't know. I,
I think even, even kids [**Marc:** mm] like to feel a belonging.

Marc: Yeah. And that he can point to Wexford like himself [

Eileen: Mm, yeah, yeah. I think so; I think if they're, you know; if they're looking at a
map of Ireland [**Marc:** mm] it's, it's big [**Marc:** yeah], you know, there's all those
counties, so to have one to say 'actually my, my granddad came from there' [**Marc:**
yeah] then I think that's something for them to focus on.

Marc: Mm, yeah. It's 'erm, yeah I suppose something to kind of grab on to [

Eileen: Absolutely, absolutely, because otherwise it becomes faceless [**Marc:** yeah,
yeah], but all of a sudden it means something

In giving the example of her son, whose identification with Wexford (and in particular the Wexford hurling team) gives him a sense of familial belonging that Ireland itself is too large and "faceless" to provide, Eileen highlights the importance of localised county identities in terms of claiming Irishness. Implicit in this is that Ireland, the nation is not sufficient on its own to facilitate a sense of belonging, as well as suggesting that those who possess knowledge of their local origins have greater potential for belonging.

It is important to note here that I am not making a case for the local superseding the national in terms of diasporic Irishness. Rather, in cases where Irishness is contested, the articulation of local identification may add an extra layer of legitimacy to claims of Irishness. This, of course, has added implications for constructions of Irish authenticity through diasporic claim: while a diasporic Irishness may not necessarily be a deterritorialised Irishness, it may bypass constructions of Irishness promulgated by the Irish nation-state in favour of identifying with an Irishness rooted in a particular locality.

At the same time, however, the ideological dilemma alluded to above, whereby an emphasis on county identification may be seen as undermining Irish solidarity in a diasporic setting is also present in second generation conversations. As an example, the following extract is taken from the group discussion in Birmingham in the context of the difficulties of promoting a public image for the new 'Irish Quarter' in Birmingham that would be recognised and enjoyed by Irish and non-Irish alike:

Extract 7.15:

Becky: It started off initially when we were, we had a, a bit of consultation about 'erm public art [**Marc:** mm], (.hh) and they were throwing up 'erm ideas that were like, 'yeah, yeah, I've got a great idea; we'll have a mini-Rock of Cashel' (*laughter*) (.) o:ka:y
[

Eileen: Was that your mother? (*laughs*)

Becky: No, that wasn't my Mum; (.hh) 'erm, and then it, then it kind of, it, it just escalated, so everybody that was from every different county said 'yeah, yeah; we'll have' 'er, oh give me another example of something I, I 'erm [

Eileen: A replica of Vinegar Hill in Enniscorthy (*laughs*)

Becky: That's the one; you know, something like that, and they all came up with the ide-, and I was 'Oh right, okay', so we had to kind of drag it back and say (.); nobody would identify 'erm; if they, unless they have Irish roots, and ninety nine percent of the time, if somebody's got Irish roots and they saw a Rock of Cashel [**Eileen:** (*laughs*)] they wouldn't have a clue what it was because they might not have been to Cashel

Becky relates an occasion in which on attempting to get a group of Irish people to agree on a piece of public art to represent Irishness in Birmingham, each participant proposed a symbol that was of specific relevance to their own county of origin. She constructs this as a problematic situation, both in terms of these being localised, rather than national

representations of Irishness, but also frames it in terms of a representation of Irishness being required that was externally recognisable i.e. recognisable as representing Irishness by those who would not have Irish roots. Interestingly, when providing examples of local symbols in order to illustrate this anecdote, Becky, whose family history is in Tipperary, mentioned the Rock of Cashel, a Tipperary-based symbol, while Eileen, whose family history, as already noted, is in Wexford suggested Vinegar Hill in Enniscorthy, a Wexford-based symbol. Therefore, even when critiquing overly localised representations of Irishness, local identities reassert themselves: Becky and Eileen's laughter during this anecdote would suggest an awareness of this apparent contradiction.

7.3 Summary

This chapter has examined the ways in which local identities are constructed and employed as a repertoire in discourses of Irishness. It supports the conclusions of the Irish 2 Project that, for the second generation Irish, the articulation of a hyphenated 'local-national' identity is a way of negotiating a more personally relevant space within the two hegemonic domains of Ireland and England. In the extracts quoted in this chapter, my participants employed London-Irish and Birmingham-Irish identities as a rhetorical defence against accusations of inauthenticity and being labelled a 'Plastic Paddy'. However, the adoption of such labels were not solely defensive, but also were constructed as being more *personally* authentic in reflecting their experiences, identifications with their native city, and sense of solidarity with other people with similar experiences. Meanwhile, uses of such hyphenated identities by migrants along the lines noted by Gray, were not as much in evidence, although where they were used, it was by someone who had many of the same personal characteristics as the participants that Gray had originally interviewed – women who migrated to London in the 1980s for professional reasons. It might be surmised that

the label London-Irish holds a particular relevance for this particular cohort, but is otherwise seen as the preserve of the second generation.

This chapter has also argued for a greater focus on the role played by local Irish identities in narratives around diasporic Irishness, and has given ample evidence of its prominence. For older migrants, county identities were reinforced by the institutional arrangements of the county associations, although there seemed to be a certain acknowledgement, even if only expressed as an ideological dilemma to be resolved, that this could be construed as parochialism and may have militated against the expression of solidarity among Irish people. For more recent migrants, county identity appeared to work as a resource that could be drawn upon to facilitate a more *personally* authentic form of self-presentation, and almost as a ‘break’ from being continually positioned as Irish. With regard to the second generation, county identity was construed, both by the migrant generation and the second generation themselves as a means by which their Irish identities could be authenticated. As such it acted as a re-territorialisation of diasporic Irishness, while simultaneously deconstructing the hegemonic domain of Ireland, where Ireland and Irishness are construed as monolithic. At the same time, the parochialism associated with expressions of county identity was also constructed as creating difficulties in articulating a ‘common’ Irishness appropriate for multicultural England.

Chapter 8: Generational contestations around authentic Irishness

Previous chapters have discussed the patterns to be found in narratives of ‘typical’ Irish lives and arising from these, how discourses of an authentic Irishness are arranged around performances of Irishness relating to St. Patrick’s Day, and how nationalised authenticities may be expressed discursively by drawing on a repertoire of localised Irishnesses. Running through all of these discussions around the ownership and the expression of an authentic Irishness and what this authenticity might constitute, is the question of generation, and how generation is discursively associated with a certain version of Irishness. Generation has a double meaning in this instance, referring to both age, in terms of successive generations of Irish migrants in England and descent, in terms of differentiating between the migrant generation and second generation Irish people. In Chapter 5, it was clear that narratives of ‘living Irish’ and discourses around what constituted a ‘typical’ Irish life in England were highly mediated by temporal narratives i.e. the ‘typical’ experience of the Irish in England at a particular time. These temporal experiences undoubtedly have an effect on how the distinct generations of Irish in England position each other within discourses of authenticity.

Of course, given the fact that Irish migration to England, and particularly to London is a constant phenomenon, generation in terms of age and generation in terms of descent, overlap in ways that are not necessarily chronological. This gives rise to some interesting possibilities with regard to the contestation of identity – one might imagine a scenario where a 20-year-old Irish migrant who has lived in London for 3 months encounters a 45-year-old second generation Irish person who has been heavily involved in the London-Irish community all her life. In this hypothetical scenario, claims on authentic Irishness might be

made either by invoking birthplace and knowledge of contemporary Ireland or by invoking length of involvement with Irish activities.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, previous research on the Irish in England has touched on this reciprocal positioning. For example, the participants in Breda Gray's (1996b; 2004) research among women who had migrated from Ireland to London in the 1980s positioned their own Irishness against the "cringingly excessive" Irishness of the older generation of migrants and also against that embodied by rural, working-class contemporary migrants, particularly around the repertoire of education. In doing this, they positioned the Irishness of the 1950s migrants and of the 1980s working-class rural migrants as essentially similar, and as distinct from their own Irishness.

As also previously mentioned in Chapter 2, the extent to which the middle-class Irish migrants of the 1980s positioned themselves as "an economic emigrant aristocracy" simultaneously distinct from 'traditional' forms of Irishness within England and embodying a type of national authenticity with regard to 'modern Ireland', also led them to disidentify from the second generation Irish. It was this disidentification, which involved calling the authenticity of the second generation Irish into question that gave rise to the term 'Plastic Paddy' as a way of describing the 'fake' Irishness of those of Irish descent (Campbell, 1999; Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2003).

Given the role of the 1980s generation of Irish migrants in disrupting understood narratives of Irishness in England, it is tempting to cast them, and those who migrated subsequently in the 1990s and 2000s as the protagonists with regard to positioning other Irishnesses as inauthentic. In this narrative, members of other Irish cohorts are required to rhetorically articulate their identities within and against the hegemony created by more recent migrants from Ireland to England, a hegemony that might be described as the hegemonic domain of

Ireland (Hickman et al., 2005), displaced. However, this would be to ignore the multifaceted nature of positioning. While the second generation Irish undoubtedly have more discursive work to accomplish in attempting to position themselves as authentic, this does not entirely rule out their ability to position themselves as *more* authentically Irish than the recent migrants, or those residing in Ireland. One possible way of accomplishing this might be through emphasising Irish practices. For example, the Birmingham-Irish participants in Marcus Free's (2007) research argued that authenticity should be based on levels of devotion to the Irish football team, while one third generation Liverpool-Irish woman in Leonard's (2005) research commented on how her skill at Irish dancing distinguished her from her relatives in Ireland.

Meanwhile, while there has been a large amount of work done on the *experiences* of the 1950s generation, there has been relatively little research on how this generation position the younger generation of migrants within discourses of Irishness. As was suggested in Chapter 5, such positioning may involve the construction of a collective authentic immigrant experience, in which younger migrants have not participated. Similarly, a lack of participation on the part of the younger generation in the rituals, institutions and networks established by the older generation may be a means of constructing them as inauthentic. O'Keefe-Vigneron (2008) has highlighted the uncertain future of Irish clubs in England due to being over-dependent on an aging clientele, while a cursory examination of the letters page of the *Irish Post* reveals a similar concern on the part of its readership as to the continued survival of Irish clubs and associations in England. The *Irish Post* itself launched a "Save Our Clubs" appeal in October 2007, with the clubs being described as a vital resource and a "vivid symbol of our community" (Collins, 2007, p. 21). While this appeal called on the clubs themselves to do more to attract the "younger Irish", this was accompanied by a call for the "community" to unite in support of the clubs. The implication would appear to be that the younger Irish, whether second generation or

migrants were neglecting the Irish community, and by extension Irishness, by not contributing to the upkeep of the clubs.

As already discussed in Chapter 4, a relevant newspaper article was introduced about halfway through each of the group discussions as a means of facilitating discussion of such issues. To recap briefly, the article was an opinion piece which appeared in the 24th November, 2007 issue of the *Irish Post*. It was written by the columnist Joe Horgan, who himself identifies as second generation Birmingham-Irish, and entitled “What will Irishness mean in the future?” The full text of this article may be found in Appendix 3. Within the article, Horgan suggests that “the essence of Irishness” is to be found outside of Ireland and that a certain type of “essential Irishness” was inextricably linked with 1950s Ireland and, in particular, the 1950s generation of migrants, concluding that:

It could be argued that if you want to know something about Irishness you would be better of (*sic*) asking the children of 1950s emigrants in Britain and maybe the USA than you would asking the Irish born children of the ‘60s, ‘70s and ‘80s (Horgan, 2007, p. 24).

This article speaks against territorialised narratives of authenticity in suggesting that authentic Irishness left Ireland in the 1950s. In the context of the group discussions, it invited positionings of certain generations as more or less authentic. However, such positionings also arose without the prompt of the article and the following data draws on both the interviews and the group discussions.

8.1 Positionings of the ‘young Irish’ by the ‘old Irish’

In analysing the data presented below, I have picked out instances whereby the cohorts ‘older generation’ and ‘younger generation’ were drawn upon as interpretative repertoires in my participants’ talk. As such, for the purposes of this chapter, I have explored the ways in which my participants identified themselves as belonging to either an older or a younger generation rather than categorising them myself as members of some clearly defined structural or demographic category in a post-hoc fashion. That being said, given that I was explicitly asking about generational difference in the interviews and group discussions, such identifications were inevitably co-created. While the majority of participants categorised themselves as belonging to either an older or a younger cohort, there was some fluidity in these identifications and there was also evidence of a distinct ‘middle’ category emerging. For example, Sharon, having migrated in the 1980s, compared herself both to the ‘older Irish’ who had arrived in the 1950s and the ‘young Irish’ embodied by her niece who continued to migrate to London now. As the ostensible third wave of large-scale Irish migration to England begins to make its presence felt, this is a positioning that may become more salient.

The opening extract occurs in the context of the group discussion carried out in Milton Keynes, and involves my exploring the perceived distinctions between the characteristics of the two major waves of Irish post-war migration, drawing on the Horgan article in order to do so:

Extract 8.1:

Marc: What do you think of this bit in the article about; you’ve got the 1950’s emigrants and then the Irish born children of the ‘60’s, ‘70’s and ‘80’s; have you; I mean, if there

have been two, like a lot of people came over in the '80's, but then also a lot of people came over in the '50's and '60's; have you seen a, kind of a difference between those?

Áine: The ones who came over in the '50's and '60's and the ones who came over in the '80's [**Marc:** yeah]; the difference I can see is that the people in the '80's, and I wish I was young enough to say I came, I came over in the '80's because I would have come over as a more confident, better educated 'er young lady [**Marc:** mm], so the people who came over in the '80's, either they were; 'erm, they, they obviously were more [**Kathleen:** dynamic] 'erm, 'er affluent [**Marion:** yes], and so they had a very good education [

Marion:]I was going to say education [

Áine:]Probably 3rd level education [**Marion:** yes, yes], but the main thing is they had the confidence that me and my contemp-, contemporaries lacked [**Marion:** didn't have] so much and it's played ha:voc with our lives [**Marion:** yeah] [**Marc:** mm]

Marion: Yeah, yeah, I, I would agree with that.

Kathleen: I, I, I totally agree with that; [

Marion:]Yeah, I would agree with that [

Kathleen:] Totally agree with that [**Marion:** yeah] mm

Áine, with support from the others in the group constructs the major distinction between the "50s and 60s" cohort and the "80s cohort" as being around education and self-confidence. The younger generation are positioned as being better-educated, more dynamic, affluent and above all self-confident. This is clearly constructed as something that was lacking on the part of the older generation and that impacted negatively on their own lives. As such, the younger generation are constructed as better equipped to deal with the disruption that migration brings, both in terms of 'social capital' and actual capital, as in the next extract from my interview with Peg, who drew a contrast between the level of knowledge 'brought over' by more recent migrants as opposed to her generation:

Extract 8.2:

Peg: I-I mean they're not coming like that now no they know-they know too much now
(*laugh*) [**Marc:** hmm] but er .hh that's the way it was, it was an entirely different [**Marc:**
hmm] (.) 'tut' I mean it's awful hard for your age group to even imagine what it was like
[**Marc:** yeah] you know (.) for young people coming over then I mean .hh you come
now you can go home for weekends and .hh which they do a lot of them go home for-
with their work over here and they go home for weekends and that sort of thing .hh God
you wouldn't have the-you wouldn't have the money to go over there .hh to go any where
you know [**Marc:** hmm] you'd be saving up for .hh for months before you went home

Peg contrasts the affluence and mobility of the contemporary young Irish in England with her own generation, in a way that suggests a kind of experiential incomprehensibility: contemporary young people are constructed as being unable to understand the conditions endured by their predecessors, and this positions them as “entirely different”. This again draws upon a discourse of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory: here the mobility and transnationalism of the younger generation imply that they haven't had the authentic Irish migrant experience of an enforced separation from the homeplace.

Notably, Peg positions me, the interviewer, as a member of this generation, referring to “your age group”. This, of course, has a bearing on the interview process – given that I, in my capacity as interviewer, had been asking Peg about her experiences in London in the 1940s and 1950s. Her insistence that “it's awful hard for your age group to even imagine what it was like” can be read as a comment on the limitations of the interview to gain an understanding of the time; as I argue above, it was inherently experiential.

Following a discussion of the extent to which young people at the time would be dependent on the County Associations to find work (see Extract 7.8) Peg continues to position me as a member of this cohort, as she elaborates:

Extract 8.2 (cont.):

Peg: But I think there's none of that today because the:: .hh they're all a-you're a different
(.) breed today *if you know what I mean* [**Marc:** *yeah*] you are, you're, and it's
grand to see you (.) all doing so well .hh but erm you're entirely different

Peg continues to emphasise the difference between the two cohorts in language that stresses the lack of continuity between the two. However, there is still a recognition that they share an identity, in the almost familial solidarity expressed in Peg's comment that "it's grand to see you all doing so well". She continues:

Extract 8.2 (cont.):

Peg: Yeah (.) a-and er I think that the young people are more-they're a lot more
sophisticated [**Marc:** yeah] and they're better educated of course and that but they are
they're more sophisticated .hh and I think it's grand that-I don't think they give a damn
whether people like them or not [**Marc:** hmm] which is the right (.) which is the right
way to be

Marc: Whether-whether-whether English people like them or not?

Peg: Yes (.) yes or any people any [**Marc:** yeah] country likes them or not [**Marc:**
okay] they're .hh they're their own person and all that

Marc: So th-there's more of a self confidence thing [you think then]

Peg: [Oh a lot more] they're very self confident they know-they know who they are sort of thing [**Marc:** yeah] you know a-and they're proud-well I hope, I hope they're proud to be Irish

Peg here draws on a similar register to Áine earlier in representing the younger Irish as better educated, more sophisticated, and more self-confident than their predecessors – also, there would appear to be an acknowledgement that the younger generation are portrayed as being more individualist than their predecessors in her reference to being “their own person”. Interestingly, however, there is a moment of reservation as regards their shared Irish identity: while Peg begins to indicate that the younger generation are proud to be Irish, she then corrects herself and says that she *hopes* they’re proud to be Irish. This moment of ambiguity regarding the extent to which the younger generation identify with Irishness, or more accurately perhaps, Irishness as the older generation understand it, is echoed in other accounts.

For instance Betty, prior to the extract quoted below, in describing the younger generation of migrants who came over in the 1980s positioned them as being on “a different plateau of understanding of the world” due to their higher levels of education, and as like “persons from a foreign land to us”. She goes on to emphasise this difference:

Extract 8.3:

Betty: No, no, there’s a huge change and we’ve nothing in common at all [**Marc:** yeah]; absolutely nothing in common. I mean, they’re into ‘erm (.) ‘er foreign holidays; they think nothing of flying off to Crete or wherever the hell, for a weekend, and all I, ever I thought about was going back to Ireland [**Marc:** yeah, yeah], and bringing my children back to Ireland and (..hh) leaving them there for the summer holidays so they would

(.hh) know the roots they came from [Marc: mm], and the culture they came from, and to give them a bit of self-respect as who they were, not by the way they were being put down here [Marc: yeah, yeah], you know, and make them feel ‘er, give them some self-esteem. This lot have more self-esteem than, than, than the Queen of England [Marc: mm], you know, and that’s great [Marc: yeah], I’m not, I am absolutely delighted, absolutely delighted. But they wouldn’t get involved in counties associations or Irish centres, or anything like that; n:ever.

Betty, much like Peg, draws on the increased mobility of the younger generation as a major difference between the two cohorts. However, she constructs this in such a way as to suggest a lack of connection to Ireland and a prioritisation of foreign holidays over their “roots”. Similarly, in contrasting her efforts to give her children some self-esteem around being Irish in England, so that they wouldn’t feel inferior, she suggests that the younger generation feel *superior*, having “more self-esteem than the Queen of England”. Here again, Betty seems to be drawing on a repertoire of an authentic immigrant experience, and placing personal experience of discrimination – “the way they were being put down here” - at the centre of this repertoire, which aligns with the canonical narrative of ‘living Irish’ in post-war England discussed in Chapter 5. Having “more self-esteem than the Queen of England” is thereby a device by which Betty positions the experience of the young Irish as the polar opposite of her own cohort’s collective experience and as external to the discourse of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory. Possibly as a rhetorical defence against accusations of begrudgery, she then expresses her delight with this situation, albeit in a somewhat hesitant manner, which may indicate some ambivalence. This ambivalence is then expanded upon by expressing her doubt that they would get involved in Irish community organisations.

There would appear to be a general theme running through the accounts of how the older generation position the younger generation that suggests that the prosperity of the latter, while to be welcomed, makes them less interested in participating in Irish community organisations, and thus value Irishness less. This discourse is closely related to that which suggests that the prosperity of the Celtic Tiger era has led to a loss of Irishness in Ireland itself.

It was a regular feature of the narratives of the older participants in the research that it was almost taken for granted that the younger Irish wouldn't be interested in the type of Irishness, or the Irish activities, espoused by the older Irish. This seemed to apply to both younger migrants and those of the second generation. This narrative was often accompanied by one which stated that activities and traditions that would have been viewed as typically or authentically Irish by the Irish in England were now devalued in Ireland. It might be argued that what is lacking in these narratives is an element of understanding how the 'young Irish' position themselves and the 'older Irish' within discourses of what Irishness constitutes. The discursive work around these positionings will now be discussed.

8.2 Positionings of the 'old Irish' by the 'young Irish'

Again, much as with the 'old Irish', being a member of the 'young Irish' should here be understood as a discursive claim made by the participants themselves in the context of the research interviews. Thus, claiming to be 'young Irish' may be done by either those of Irish descent or Irish migrants. Again, the point of analysis here is what is accomplished discursively with regard to constructions of Irishness by claiming membership of the cohort 'young Irish' and positioning others as 'old Irish'. The ways in which migrants and

second generation Irish position themselves with regard to each other will be examined later in the chapter.

With that in mind, the extract below is taken from my interview with Kate;

Extract 8.4:

Marc: *okay* .hh erm (.) so the:: seeing as we were talking earlier about the:: er County Associations [**Kate:** yeah] and the Galway Association [**Kate:** yeah] di-did you (.) keep up any contact with them as you grew older or

Kate: Not really no [**Marc:** no] no I'd go to the occasional function dinner dance [**Marc:** hmm] er I think the last one I was at was when I was in the pipe band [**Marc:** okay] and erm (.) we went to-well we'd won this prize in the-in St. Patrick's day in Dallas (.) and we went to-I think it was the Galway Association 'do' just to show off the trophy really [**Marc:** right, okay] erm but no that was (.) hh they-they didn't appeal to the younger generation [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] you know it was very traditional very old fashioned so [**Marc:** hmm] it didn't appeal to us at all, you know

In discussing the activities of the County Associations (as explored in Chapter 7), Kate relates her gradual disengagement with the Galway Association as she grew older. She attributes this to the traditional and old-fashioned nature of the County Associations not appealing to 'us', the younger generation. Coupled with her earlier distinction (extract 7.2) between the Irishness espoused by the "paddies" and that of the "London-Irish", this would appear to position the old-fashioned County Associations very much as the domain of the former.

However, while the older generation may be positioned as representing an old-fashioned take on Irishness, they have the potential to reproduce this version of Irishness in a

hegemonic way that limits articulations of alternative Irishnesses. Arguably, this is more pronounced in Birmingham due to the demographics of the Irish population in the city – Birmingham not having had an influx of Irish migrants in the 1980s to the same extent as London (Walter, 1997, 2008b), with figures from the 2001 Census reflecting the comparatively elderly nature of the population (Limbrick, 2007a). Thus, any articulation of an alternative Irishness in Birmingham may be constructed as a challenge to the identities of the original 1950s generation. This is a narrative that is set out by Becky in the extract below, again referring to the Irish Quarter in Birmingham:

Extract 8.5:

Becky: we'd have a meeting [**Marc:** mm]; 'erm, and the, one of our AGM's for instance, and 'erm (.) you've got three people sitting on the top table and (.) not, none of them were born in Ireland [**Marc:** yeah]; they've all, all have Irish heritage. (.hh) 'Erm (.), the people in the crowd, bitter and twisted some of them, will be, will be at, but, 'erm they would use that as a weapon to, to sort of (.hh) argue the toss of something [**Marc:** yeah] like 'erm, 'what would know what we want; you're not even Irish' [**Marc:** yeah] or 'you weren't born in Ireland; how do you know what, how Ireland can be reflected within the Irish quarter' say [**Marc:** mm]. (.hh) 'Erm, its (.) that these people that lived in Ireland probably hadn't been back for like forty years [**Marc:** yeah], whereas the people sitting on the top table are regular visitors and go back and see family and are active within the community, in the hobbies, in the culture. 'Erm (.) it, it, it's the older generation [**Marc:** yeah] who think that they have (.) the monopoly on being Irish [**Marc:** mm], 'erm, and that (.) the Birmingham Irish, or the youth or the second generation [**Marc:** mm], however you want to say it here, don't really have the right to tell them (.) what they would like to see [**Marc:** yeah], for example, in an Irish quarter or from the [*Irish community organisation*].

Marc: Right, so it's kind of different visions of Irishness competing [**Becky:** Yeah] there [

Becky: That's it, yeah. And, and (.hh) (.) I think that the people that are, are born in Birmingham of Irish heritage [**Marc:** mm] (.hh) can see (.) the contemporary side; contemporary's the wrong word; they can see how traditional Ireland [**Marc:** mm], picking a piece up and putting it in here, into the heart of the Irish quarter, wouldn't work [**Marc:** yeah], 'cos it has to mix with today, so the [**Marc:** mm] modern day, and also (.) the bit of Birmingham in there you know [**Marc:** yeah, yeah]; it's, it's the kind of Birmingham-Irish theme.

Becky's account of the debates between the younger second generation Irish and the older migrant Irish about how Irishness should be publicly articulated demonstrates both the various repertoires that are called upon to authenticate Irishness and how these repertoires are associated with particular cohorts. Becky here uses reported speech as a means of supporting her claim that some members of the older generation were 'bitter and twisted'. She reports the way in which older generations used the fact that many of the people on 'the top table' hadn't been born in Ireland as 'a weapon' – a means of questioning their right to speak for the community on Irish issues and of inauthenticating their Irishness. However, Becky represents this as an extreme view and an illegitimate criticism of those "at the top table" by constructing heritage and community involvement as being more important and relevant to an Irishness that is situated in Birmingham. In this respect her comparison between those who "think they have the monopoly on being Irish" and those who can articulate "the Birmingham-Irish theme" is illuminating: the latter, which is constructed as the more relevant identity is a specifically hybridised one, and corresponds with the discussions of Birmingham-Irishness explored in Chapter 7. This differentiation can be situated within a discourse of Irish authenticity through diasporic claim.

Interestingly, this hyphenated identity does not represent a shift away from Irishness as it is constructed in Ireland, as Becky also uses the extent to which people visit contemporary Ireland as a rhetorical device to confer authenticity. Those at the top table are constructed as visiting Ireland more regularly than the “bitter and twisted” people in the crowd who “probably haven’t been back for forty years”. Thus, the discourse of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge is drawn upon in order to set the ‘contemporary and modern’ against the ‘traditional and old-fashioned’. The second generation Irish are positioned as more in touch with the former, which is constructed as more relevant to both Birmingham and Ireland, whereas the traditional Irishness associated with the older generation “wouldn’t work” for the purpose required: representing Irishness in Birmingham.

Similar themes can be found running through the Birmingham group discussion (which, by way of reminder, was made up of myself and three second generation Irish women, in their 20s, 30s and 50s respectively), albeit with a somewhat more conciliatory tone, possibly created by the greater scope for mutual construction in such interactions.

Extract 8.6:

Becky: But the community don’t let go very easily.

Eileen: It’s because they’re so frightened; they’re frightened that if its, if its watered down a little bit now, [**Becky:** mm] that in five years time there’ll be nothing left of it, whereas actually it’ll have the adverse effect, because, you know, taking it to a new level [**Marc:** mm] will ensure that it will last longer [**Becky:** mm].

Marc: Mm. So what you’re saying it’s kind of adapting to survive [

Eileen: Absolutely [**Marc:** yeah]; I think that’s what it’s; I think that’s; don’t you?

Becky: Yeah; yeah, I do actually.

Eileen: Because I think, you know, if, like if the usual bunch are left to it, they'll take it down with them; they'll be dead; there'll be nothing left.

Becky: Yeah; I mean it is difficult passing things on [**Eileen:** of course] and you do have to be (.hh) a special kind of person [**Eileen:** mm] to, to set something up and then pass it on, and if they do a better job than you did, then, you know, that really is heartbreaking [**Eileen:** of course] [**Marc:** mm], but that's what's got to happen [**Eileen:** yeah] and you're so right, it's not happening.

Eileen: If they, if they're; I, I think it's very important to be diplomatic and that if something's passed on, that they're still included in it (.), and even if what they say isn't used, to continually respect them and say [**Becky:** oh yeah] 'Gosh, if it wasn't for you' you know 'we wouldn't be this far ahead' and (.hh) give them a bit of value and respect because that is something with older people anyway [**Marc:** mm], that because they almost drop out of society, they're forgotten [**Marc:** yeah] and I, I think its very important that however much respect they get, however little, that they do get some, because at the end of the day they did set up that network; they did help one another.

Sarah: Built Birmingham [

Eileen: They did, yes, the roads [**Becky:** yeah], you know, they did do a huge amount.

In this account, the hostility of the older generation to the articulation of different forms of Irishness, and their reluctance to "let go" is constructed as being borne out of fear that a "watering down" of *their* version of authentic Irishness will lead to "nothing being left". Eileen, having rehearsed this argument then puts forward the counter-argument that articulating a different form of Irishness will "take it to a new level" and "will ensure it lasts longer", rather than dying with the "usual bunch".

At this point, the conversation turns towards a mutually constructed position of understanding the viewpoint of the older generation, possibly as a means of counteracting previous criticism of them. Referring back to the canonical narratives around the

experiences of this generation discussed in Chapter 5 (extract 5.7), this may act as a constraint on the extent to which they can be criticised for “not letting go”. It is possibly within this context that the conversation turns to emphasising the extent of the work that was put in by this generation, not just in building up the Irish networks within Birmingham, but also, as Sarah suggests, building Birmingham itself.

This theme of the older generation attempting to impose their own readings of Irishness and not understanding contemporary Irishness, both in relation to their surroundings and in relation to modern Ireland, is not confined to members of the second generation, but can be found in the narratives of younger migrants. For example, the following extract comes from my interview with Liam (previous: extract 7.10):

Extract 8.7:

Liam: A lot of the guys that came over here, who now have kids my age over here, came over here because they had no choice [**Marc:** yeah], so they came over to work. So, a lot of them have made a lot of money, but education-wise it wouldn't have been the same as it is for somebody who's emigrating now; even the basic immigration (.hh); some guy comes over into construction now has more than likely done his Leaving Cert [**Marc:** yeah], at least, which means he's done a reasonable standard of education, right, so, a guy who left forty years ago, left when he was sixteen when he had very little education and it wouldn't have been the same standard of education as it is [**Marc:** mm] now, (.hh) he would have had no interest in education when he came over here; he came over here to make money to work, to send money home and he met an Irish girl and they lived, set up a life up in Cricklewood [**Marc:** yeah], drank in the bars, played football [**Marc:** the Galtymore every Friday] went home, went to the Galtymore every Friday, went home twice a year [**Marc:** yeah], and had no clue what was going on in Ireland, weren't really aware of the Celtic Tiger or what it actually meant; they read about it but

they didn't really know what it meant [Marc: mm], and they never really progressed as quickly as we do; not all of them, but some of them, definitely [Marc: yeah], it's still the case. You meet fellas here, they've the thickest Irish accent, you'd swear they were only just over and they're here fifty years [Marc: yeah], d'you know? I mean I imagine if I lived in New York for fifty years that I'd eventually get an American accent and at least find myself being American [Marc: yeah] you know, in some ways. Obviously you'd always say you're Irish but [Marc: mm] I mean these guys just won't let go of anything.

Liam's positioning of the older generation is almost a mirror-image of the positionings of the younger generation discussed earlier. He positions them as being poorly educated and as only socialising in an Irish context. There is an element of mutual construction here, while Liam draws on reference points such as meeting an Irish girl, living in Cricklewood (along with Kilburn, an area associated with having a large Irish population) and being involved in Gaelic football, but where I introduce the notion of going to the Galtymore (a well-known Irish dance-hall based in Cricklewood) every Friday. As such, both Liam and I are demonstrating a mutual understanding of the typical narrative associated with this 'typical' migrant.

While Liam draws on a similar repertoire of the older generation "not letting go" as is employed in the Birmingham group discussion, it is notable that he places less emphasis on participation in Irish activities as a marker of Irish authenticity. Rather, he prioritises knowledge of developments in Ireland, and positions the older generation, despite their holding on to Irish accents and activities, as less relevant to modern Ireland due to their lack of knowledge of it. He links this theme of lack of knowledge and understanding to levels of education, making the point that a contemporary migrant entering the construction industry would have a higher level of education¹⁶ than 'his' (again, this is an

¹⁶ The Irish Leaving Cert is roughly equivalent to A-Levels in England.

extremely gendered account) equivalent forty years previously. Thus, temporal differences are constructed as being of greater significance than class differences, with contemporary working-class migrants positioned as better-educated than their forebears, and less likely to live ‘ghettoised’ Irish lives.

Expanding on this theme, Liam then goes on to discuss his own involvement in the London GAA scene and the lack of understanding on the part of those who live in London about the ways in which the GAA has developed in Ireland:

Extract 8.7 (cont.):

Liam: All the big clubs are run by the same people more or less, ‘cos they have this stronghold on (.hh), it’s basically their only connection to Ireland [**Marc:** right], the GAA. It’s the only way they can still claim relativity to modern Irish day life [**Marc:** yeah], so (.) I mean, some of it is quite sad because they don’t really know that Ireland has progressed that much [**Marc:** mm], you know, they’re, Ireland, sure GAA at home is so advanced now, it’s like a professional sport, but over here it’s still going for pints on a Friday night [**Marc:** yeah], you know, do a bit of training; a little dog-running, y’know, no ball-work. They don’t even have goal posts at training, you know [**Marc:** yeah]; it’s backward, you know, but, I mean, that’s part of it too I suppose (.hh). D’y’know, the whole, when you think about it, like, this is all they have, you know? [**Marc:** yeah, yeah], so.

Liam here in drawing comparisons between the way the GAA is run in Ireland to the way it is run in London, emphasises that, from this view-point, it is insufficient to merely participate in Irish activities, but that the way in which such activities are run can be constructed as either reflective of a modern, “professional” Ireland, or the “backward” way in which Irishness is embodied by the older generation in London. While participation in

the GAA is held up as a way in which this generation can “claim relativity to modern Irish day life”, this claim is constructed as being based on a false premise, due to their lack of knowledge of how both Ireland and the GAA have progressed. Liam is thereby prioritising a discourse of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge and practices – for Irish practices, such as participation in Gaelic Games, to be understood as authentic, they should as closely resemble how such practices are engaged in in Ireland as possible.

Again, however, there is a moment of repair here to counterbalance the criticism of the older generation – having represented them as “backward” he then qualifies this by saying “when you think about it, this is all they have”, which corresponds with his earlier claim that “some of it is quite sad”. This is not dissimilar to Becky’s comment in the Birmingham group discussion that “it really is heartbreaking” and may be said to represent a degree of sympathy, if not quite empathy with regard to the older Irish which is probably shaped by the canonical narrative of their experiences, as discussed earlier. So while Becky and Liam both position themselves in disagreement with the form of Irishness articulated and embodied by the older generation, as well as their perceived attitude that this constitutes an authentic Irishness that will disappear, they also position themselves as understanding where this discourse originates from. However, there is a difference between the two in that Becky represents the older generation as attempting to retain control of the Irish networks they had built up in Birmingham, whereas Liam represents them as trying to retain control of the last link they had with Ireland.

Elsewhere in the corpus, this ‘sympathetic’ discourse is translated almost as a form of wistfulness, whereby the older generation aren’t constructed as having a monopoly on Irishness, but are positioned as representing a specific type of Irishness that is likely to disappear when they die. An example of this ‘wistful’ discourse can be found in the extract below from my joint discussion with Máire, a migrant in her 40s and Sheila, who was

second generation London-Irish (previous: Extract 6.12). This occurs in the context of a discussion of what Irishness in London might look like in the future, coupled with (as discussed in Chapter 4) a hypothetical question which referred to building a new Irish Centre, to be representative of Irishness in England:

Extract 8.8:

Sheila: I'd put all the people in; money was no; (.hh) this is the wish list though [Marc: yeah]; this is; I would; I'd put in the generation that 'er, that [Máire: yeah] are all gone [Marc: ah, right].

Máire: Yeah; I'd put; there'd be some kind of memorial to their [Sheila: mm] experience [Marc: mm], which was awful [Marc: yeah, yeah].

Sheila: Well I don't know about that so [

Máire: Well not awful completely, but y'know [

Sheila: I don't mean it in that way [

Máire: People that came over, built the roads [Sheila: yeah, yeah] and all that, you know.

Sheila: Yeah, because I, but I, I don't mean as a memorial, but I'd like to reinvent them (*laughs*) [Marc: (*laughs*)], but, you know [Máire: yeah] I'd like; I'd still like to have; I'd still like to have that; (.hh) to go in and sort of s:it in somewhere and have like loads of different Irish people; you know when we 'erm, when we've been to that party at the Hilton that time and they [Máire: mm] have the sing-song, [Máire: mm] the Irish sing-song?

Máire: Mm.

Sheila: Yeah? [Máire: yes], do you know what I'm talking about, yes?

Máire: And the old guys.

Sheila: All the old; right, that [

Máire: God, just looking at their faces said it all, you know, they'd lived a rough old life [

Sheila: That's what I'd like [**Máire:** mm] because that, what, what you've heard there, that's what I was brought up with [**Máire:** yeah], what you, what you got in there [**Máire:** yeah], that's, that's what I was brought up with, so all sitting around like [**Marc:** mm] or whatever [**Máire:** mm], and 'erm, yeah, singing all, [**Máire:** mm] all the, singing all the; and beautiful songs [**Marc:** mm], you know,

Máire's misunderstanding of Sheila's original wish to preserve the "generation that are all gone" is illuminating insofar as it illustrates the different ways in which this generation are positioned within discourses of Irishness. Máire assumes that Sheila is making reference to the experiences of this generation, which as has already been explored thoroughly in both this chapter and Chapter 5, forms a major part of the canonical narrative around the Irish in England. Máire's references to the older generation having "came over, built the roads" and having "lived a rough old life" can be situated within this narrative, and represents a further valorisation of the specificity of this generation's immigrant experience. However, Sheila wishes to preserve the people themselves, or more specifically, the culture that she associates with this generation. Her account of being brought up in a culture of "Irish sing-songs", which she associates with her own Irish identity is linked to the existence of this generation. This then may illustrate the major difference in the way the older generation is positioned by the two cohorts of the younger generation i.e. the migrants and the second generation, and also reflects the level of shared experience between the older generation and the second generation. After all, chronologically, many of the parents of the second generation individuals participating in this research would belong to this older generation – thus, both generations may draw, depending on the context, on a discourse of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory. Bearing this in mind, the ways in

which the migrant generation and the second generation position each other within discourses of Irishness will now be examined.

8.3 Positionings of the second generation Irish by migrants

As has already been pointed out, the literature to date has focussed on second generation Irish people's reports of having their own Irish identities questioned by those born in Ireland: what Hickman et al. (2005) have referred to as the 'differentiating' aspect of Ireland as a hegemonic domain, "denying of commonalities with people of Irish descent" (p.177). However, there is an absence of research on how Irish-born migrants themselves position the second generation Irish within discourses of Irishness. By and large the respondents in my research recognised the claims on Irishness of the second generation, but represented them as being caught between two worlds, or as not quite exhibiting an authentic Irishness. Many of these discussions in some way revolved around the uses of the 'Plastic Paddy' label, although it was very rare to find an unreflective use of this, with most participants, migrant and second generation recognising its status as a loaded term. In particular those migrants who had children, or had close relationships with second generation Irish people constructed the term as particularly problematic. For example, the extract below from my interview with Brian (previous: extract 6.3) is not untypical:

Extract 8.9:

Brian: I found Irish people (.) here sometimes 'erm have strange views on, on [**Marc:** yeah] and the, the saying, the one saying I absolutely have a problem with and that is this 'plastic' [**Marc:** yeah] I (*whistles*) [**Marc:** the Plastic Paddy]; yeah, I, I, I have 'er, I have a problem with that (.) you know, I certainly, I cannot understand a person saying it; I find it so offensive, you know, I'm just blown away by that like [**Marc:** yeah]. The

‘er, you know, why (hh) (.), my problem is actually is that if you’re trying to separate; you know, I know the majority is that it is a kind of a joke and, you know, it’s this idea of implying well, they weren’t born in Ireland, they were born here, but they’re trying hard or you know. I’m not sure what the whole thing is about but ‘erm (.) I (.) have difficulty with the attitude of people [Marc: yeah] with that and I have seen it become, I’ve seen it being offensive on a number of occasions; I’ve seen people very hurt by it [Marc: yeah] you know. I was at a wedding one time and ‘erm, was a friend of mine, and best man of course doing his usual jokes and one thing and another, and he made reference to her as being plastic and she was very offended. I thought on that day (.) you know, ‘what a clown’ like you know [Marc: yeah].

Brian, having established how offensive he finds the term ‘plastic’, then goes on to explain why he finds it so – his brief reference to “my problem is actually is that if you’re trying to separate” is key here. It would appear that he constructs the term as problematic as it has the effect of undermining solidarity among the Irish in England. He then indicates that he’s aware that the term is meant as a joke, possibly as a rhetorical defence against the perception that he’s taking it too seriously, but roots his dislike of it in having seen it being used in an offensive way on a number of occasions. Billig (2005) has explored the ways in which tellers of ‘offensive’ jokes on being confronted on their offensiveness will seek to frame the joke as “just teasing” and position the person taking offence as over-sensitive. Brian appears to be building a counter-argument against being positioned as over-sensitive by providing evidence of its offensiveness: the invocation of an extreme case of the term being used to insult a bride on her wedding day can be understood in this context.

Therefore, the ‘Plastic Paddy’ trope is more likely to be used, whether maliciously or unreflectively, in narratives distinguishing between more and less authentic forms of Irishness, largely dependent on place of birth. As an example, Mairéad, a migrant in her

thirties, invokes the term when I ask her about second generation Irishness in the extract below:

Extract 8.10:

Marc: ‘Erm, I mean I’m not sure how much you’ve come across the whole concept of second generation Irishness over here.

Mairéad:(.hh) ‘Erm (.) I’ve had a, a lot of friends whose; actually, I’ve probably got more friends whose parents were Irish [**Marc:** mm] and they grew up over here [**Marc:** yeah], so ‘Plastic Paddies’; I’ve come across more of those people I guess,

Mairéad initially grounds her experience of second generation Irishness by referring to having a lot of friends whose parents were Irish and had grown up in England, and then summarises these, matter-of-factly as “Plastic Paddies”. I was struck by the extent to which she used the term apparently unreflectively as a sort of shorthand, and returned to it later in an effort to find out more about her usage of the term:

Extract 8.10 (cont.):

Marc: I want to go back at the moment to ‘erm when I talked about second generation Irish people, people who’d [**Mairéad:** yeah]; ‘erm, you immediately said ‘Plastic Paddies’ [**Mairéad:** I, yeah]. Is this something they’d call themselves or is it; why did that come to your head so quickly?

Mairéad: Because (.) I th:ink (.), where did I hear the phrase? I didn’t hear it in Ireland; did I hear it in America? Maybe I heard it; (.hh) I don’t know, but it’s a phrase I’ve, I’ve ‘er, I’ve heard used to describe people [**Marc:** mm] who, you know, who aren’t, who weren’t born in Ireland [**Marc:** yeah] but somehow have Irish nationality [**Marc:** mm]. ‘Erm, it isn’t a derogatory thing, it’s just a sort of a ‘Oh yeah, Plastic Paddies’.

It is important to acknowledge at this point that my returning to Mairéad's earlier use of the term 'Plastic Paddy' cannot be seen as a 'neutral' act. Rather, in the context of the conversation, this request for clarification of her usage of 'Plastic Paddy' signals that I have taken it as being somehow inappropriate: in other words the very act of enquiring further about her usage of the term indicates that some controversy surrounds it, and that I, the interviewer, have a position or perspective with regard to this controversy (Pomerantz & Zemel, 2003). Thus, Mairéad is now in the position of needing to justify her use of the term – her attempts to place where she first heard it, and her claim that it “isn't a derogatory thing” can be seen in this context.

Following up on this, I enquired whether she'd be happy to use the term to people's face, and she replied that she'd be unlikely to use it in a work context, thus acknowledging the at best ambiguous, at worst offensive quality of the term:

Extract 8.10 (cont.):

Mairéad: I can imagine people could feel slightly offended or even terribly offended by, by, by the term. 'Erm (.) it was just; it was just what I've always understood they were called [**Marc:** yeah, okay], as opposed to a proper paddy, which is me (*laughs*).

Mairéad's discursive work in distancing herself from the term 'Plastic Paddy', both in trying to locate where she had first heard it and claiming that “it was just what I've always understood they were called” positions her as having picked up the term from someone else, so to speak, rather than subscribing to it in an unambiguous manner. Thus, the responsibility for the potential offensiveness of the term is deflected, allowing Mairéad to

‘save face’ (van den Berg, 2003). Meanwhile, “Proper paddy-ness” is constructed as being the preserve of Mairéad herself, as a member of the migrant generation.

Other instances of migrants describing the term as not being seen as offensive by second generation friends were dotted throughout the corpus, while Alan, one of the Milton Keynes participants, mentioned that his own children referred to themselves, humorously, as “Plastic Paddies”. Of course, the claim that one’s friends and acquaintances are comfortable with a term may be one means of rendering the use of the term less offensive. Notably however, all of the second generation participants, with one exception, constructed the term as offensive and exclusionary: this, however may be an artefact of the research itself, as those who agree to participate in a project explicitly about personal readings of Irishness, may be unlikely to downplay the significance of a term whose main understood usage is to delegitimize the Irishness of the second generation. The main point to be taken from this is that the second generation Irish in England are no more a cohesive bloc of people with uniform shared understandings of the meaning of a term than any other cohort – however, in carrying out discursive work towards articulating strong identifications with Irishness, the term ‘Plastic Paddy’ is a recognised constraint on these articulations. For example, the following extract from my interview with Kate is quite representative:

Extract 8.11:

Kate: I don't like that term Plastic Paddy [**Marc:** no] because it's .hh it's not like you're a fake (.) coz that's the-to me that (.) the image is it's a fake [**Marc:** yeah] paddy (.) I don't consider myself a fake Irish person, I'm just different [**Marc:** hmm] you know, there's a spectrum of Irish (.) and I'm on it somewhere [**Marc:** yeah] you know

Kate illustrates that, for her, the use of the term ‘Plastic Paddy’ is a means of positioning her as “fake”. In order to speak against this positioning, Kate, constructs Irishness as a spectrum, on which she can be located, rather than a static entity, or something that is territorially bound in Ireland. Thus, the rhetorical answer to being labelled ‘fake’ is to make a claim of ‘not fake, just different’. This can be located within a discourse of Irish authenticity through diasporic claim.

However, while the term ‘Plastic Paddy’ might be generally understood as being used by migrants in order to position the Irishness of the second generation as ‘fake’, it is more accurate to describe its use among the participants in my research, as positioning the Irishness of the second generation as ‘insecure’. For instance, Éamonn (previous: extract 6.9) drew the following contrast between the migrant Irish and the second generation Irish:

Extract 8.12:

Éamonn: It's not something I have to worry-I have to-well not-nobody has to worry about these things [**Marc:** yeah] but, you know, it's not something I have to concern myself with .hh it's erm (.) I think it's something the second generation (.) guys wrestle with a bit, or some of them do, you know [**Marc:** yeah] kind of torn a bit more between two worlds, whereas you and I can say (.) well we know where we're from, we were born in Ireland and we're Irish (.) that's it, you know [**Marc:** yeah] there's-you don't have to (.) go into any-any further than that, whereas they maybe .hh maybe feel like they have to prove themselves a bit sometimes, especially when they get the 'ah sure you're only a oul Plastic Paddy anyway' [**Marc:** hmm] attitude

Éamonn constructs a category of ‘native-born’ Irish, in which he includes both himself and me, the interviewer, and contrasts ‘our’ position of secure, ‘factual’ knowledge of our own

Irishness by virtue of birth, with the “second generation guys” positioned as “torn a bit more between two worlds”. In invoking the use of the ‘Plastic Paddy’ term as a constraint on second generation identity, he both recognises and reproduces the discursive power of this label to police the borders of Irishness. Uncomplicated Irishness is constructed as territorial, whereas “torn” Irishness is associated with those born outside Ireland, who consequently need to “prove themselves”. This representation of the second generation as possessing troubled, incomplete Irish identities recurs in other migrant discourses around the second generation. Liam draws a similar contrast between ‘us’, Irish-born migrants, and ‘them’, the second generation:

Extract 8.13:

Marc: I want to go back to ‘erm the guys who play hurling or football who would be second generation [**Liam:** uhm]; ‘erm, do you find they, like, I mean I don’t how well, how many of those kind of guys you know well?

Liam: Loads [**Marc:** loads, yeah].

Marc: ‘Erm, do you find their sense of being of Ireland, despite having the English accents, ‘erm, is there a difference there between that and say fellas like yourself who sort of come over in the last five or six years?

Liam: Yeah, they’re far more eager to display their Irishness than we are [**Marc:** yeah], and they’re really, really afraid to be not seen as Irish [**Marc:** yeah], even though they have an English accent, they’ll tell everyone they’re Irish and they’re very proud of their roots; they’re even more proud than we are often [**Marc:** mm].

Liam draws on a similar discourse to Éamonn in depicting the second generation as being eager to prove and display their Irishness, and going beyond the migrant generation in their eagerness to do so. Given the English accents of the second generation, there is a suggestion that this claiming of Irishness is counter-intuitive, particularly given the context

of Liam's repeated comparisons to the migrant generation, who are represented as not as eager to publicly display Irishness. The implication is that the second generation are going over the top in their claims of Irishness in order to compensate for having English accents, which are represented as irreconcilable with authentic Irishness. Liam goes on to elaborate:

Extract 8.13 (cont.):

Liam: they'll know exactly where they're from in Ireland and exactly who their mother was married to and their father was a cousin of (.hh) [**Marc:** yeah] 'erm, and [**Marc:** exactly where they're from in terms of village, town, county], exactly the location yeah exactly [**Marc:** yeah], they'll know exactly and they'll know where their family came from and they know, they go to Ireland a lot, a lot of these guys [**Marc:** yeah]; they go home for weddings and cousin's communions and things like that, and they love events (.hh) and they live a very Irish lifestyle here, a lifestyle that would have been led here twenty years ago [**Marc:** yeah]. So they go to the pub at nighttime, or lived in Ireland twenty years ago, should I say they go (.) 'er, have (.) 'er, they have their football as their main identity of Irishness over here and they go to their Irish bars and Irish clubs and they hang around together in groups. A lot of them, lot of the girls, even I know a gang of girls, they're 26, 27, they all hang around together, they're all second generation Irish [**Marc:** yeah], and they're all together, always, always together and they're very tight [**Marc:** right], very tight. So (.) definitely yeah, they're very in touch with their roots and they're very eager to be seen as Irish [**Marc:** yeah]. Sometimes I feel sorry for them [**Marc:** in what way?], because I think (.) they're missing the point about being Irish. Often I think they've, they're stuck in what they've been told growing up [**Marc:** yeah].

In this extract, Liam re-iterates the eagerness of the second generation Irish of his acquaintance to be seen as Irish, and highlights the customs and practices by which they

position themselves as Irish. However, somewhat paradoxically, while he recognises that they lead “very Irish” lifestyles; Liam frames this form of Irishness as being twenty years out of date. Therefore, while there is a recognition that multiple and different Irishnesses might exist outside of Ireland, second generation Irishness in London is still judged against the standards of contemporary Ireland. Liam describes himself as feeling sorry for his second generation acquaintances, and positions them as being “stuck in what they’ve been told growing up”. Second generation Irishness, in common with ‘older’ Irishness as discussed earlier, is positioned as static, outdated and “missing the point”. Individual second generation people are positioned as external to the authentic Irishness that resides in contemporary Ireland, and which informs the discourse of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge.

A similar discourse of second generation Irishness is drawn upon by Éamonn, when discussing elements of London-Irish culture:

Extract 8.14:

Marc: And I mean when you met (.) second generation people for the first time was that a bit of a (.) surprise to meet people with London accents?

Éamonn: Yeah, it was a little bit I-I'll-I will, I will admit that erm, I mean I'd met (.) lots of English people who had Irish Grannies and all this sort of thing [**Marc:** yeah] .hh but they just, you know they just kind of (.) thought of that as a nice thing (.) nice thing to tell people that they'd [**Marc:** yeah] just met from Ireland, you know, and they didn't think any more of it than that .hh erm, but the guys who actively (.) participate in the Gaelic games here (.) were, yeah it-you know it was strange to hear them shouting in heavy English accents (.) shouting out on the pitch erm (.) some of them I found out (.) if you, you know, if you, s-if you accidentally referred to them as the English lads would [**Marc:** yeah] get very upset about it [**Marc:** yeah] they really would (.) you know 'I'm

not-I'm not fucking English like' [**Marc:** *yeah*] you know, or you know, I mean for some of them they just didn't (.) .hh they didn't make any differentiation, they said 'I'm Irish' [**Marc:** yeah] and that's it, none of this, they didn't qualify it with London-Irish or second generation [**Marc:** hmm] just 'I'm Irish'

Éamonn begins his account by distinguishing between two different types of people of Irish descent. There is a major difference in tone between his description of his initial meetings with “English people who had Irish Grannies” and his subsequent meetings with people who explicitly identified as Irish – whereas the former are situated more in the domestic sphere and their Irishness as almost a historical curiosity that is “a nice thing to tell people”, the latter are more firmly positioned as making an active claim on Irishness. This process of claiming Irishness is framed as being almost aggressive in nature, given Éamonn’s use of swearing in reporting the prototypical speech by which Englishness is denied. This denial is juxtaposed with the perceived incongruity of people shouting in English accents on the pitch while engaged in playing Gaelic Games. Here again, Gaelic Games are held up as something of a totem of Irish authenticity – while it is strange to hear English accents while engaged in them, the very engagement of second generation people with Gaelic Games distinguishes them as Irish as opposed to “English people with Irish Grannies”. He goes on to elaborate on the claims made by this cohort on Irishness, unqualified by any terms such as ‘second generation’ and ‘London-Irish’.

Extract 8.14 (cont.):

Éamonn: I could see why they thought that (.) erm because the circles that they moved in, it-it wa-it was (.) it wasn't even so much the Irish community here, it was the London-Irish [**Marc:** yeah] community here, and that-that meant the same thing as being .hh (.) born in Ireland and moving to London [**Marc:** hmm] you know, I think this London-Irish tag, which I'm sure you could probably write a thesis on in and of itself (.) is a

funn-it you know it's kind of erm (.) you know you got the guys who were born here and then you've got guys who've maybe lived here for so long and have n-absolutely no intention of going back [**Marc**: yeah] that they've become London-Irish as well, and it's just (.) i-i-it's Irishness which has developed itself erm (.) in a foreign-in a foreign clime (**Marc**: hmm] it's a very-it's a very different thing, you know, and I'm still sort of erm (.) I don't know, I mean, their world sort of surrounds th-the various Irish districts in London, you know it doesn't-it doesn't look back to home so much [**Marc**: yeah] so when I was talking to these London-Irish lads, you know, .hh they all knew their hurling and-and they all knew .hh you know they were asking me about w-of the three clubs, they all knew that there was three hurling clubs in Down, [**Marc**: yeah] the senior clubs and they all knew their stuff .hh but erm (3.0) but if you were talking about any sort of (.) if you getting too much about you talking about, you know, modern Ireland or whatever, they wouldn't [**Marc**: hmm] they wouldn't make that connection so much, you know, they wouldn't .hh you wouldn't be there talking about 'oh did you hear' you know I don't know (.) 'hear about the Late Late Show the other week' or something like that [**Marc**: yeah] they wouldn't, that wouldn't register with them so much [**Marc**: hmm] (.) so the-so they, you know, they're like you, but they're not (.)

Marc: Yeah, yeah, yeah

Éamonn: But they're more like us than anybody else I can think of over here, you know

Éamonn stresses the difference between the “foreign” Irishness that has developed around the various Irish districts in London and the contemporary Irishness of “modern Ireland”. In doing this, he highlights the uneven level of knowledge the second generation Irish people of his acquaintance have of modern Ireland, portraying them as having an extensive knowledge of certain aspects, mostly to do with sport, but little or no knowledge of other aspects of popular culture and current affairs within Ireland. Thus, like Liam, Éamonn draws on a discourse of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge as a way of differentiating between ‘us’, the migrants, and ‘them’, the London-Irish, in whose number

he also includes long-term migrants who “have absolutely no intention of going back”. However, unlike Liam, while he positions the London-Irish as embodying a different kind of Irishness to ‘us’, he doesn’t portray this Irishness as inauthentic to the same extent. Rather, in positioning the second generation Irish as “like you, but not, but more like us than anybody else I can think of over here”, it could be argued that there is a certain recognition that the second generation occupy a liminal space, and that there is potential for this space to be defined on their own terms.

Having said that, the oppositional nature of Irishness and Englishness referred to earlier is not so easily surmounted. Given this, and the importance of accent in marking Irish migrants in England, first generation discourses concerning the second generation in England tend to arrange themselves around the English accents of the latter. For example, returning to Liam:

Extract 8.15:

Liam: There’s still a lot of negativity towards England at home so (.hh), I mean, that’ll be forever the case, so maybe that’s the reason why these guys really want to hold on to their identity. But I mean (.hh) one of the first things you’re gonna judge a guy on is their accent [**Marc:** yeah], as soon as they open their mouths you’re going to hear an English accent, you’re going to say whatever; that’s the way most guys are when they come over here at first, that they realize that ‘wait a second, these guys know more about home than I do’.

Marc: Yeah. I mean were you surprised yourself when you came over here first and found all these guys with cockney accents describing themselves as Irish?

Liam: Probably you’d laugh at them [**Marc:** yeah]. Like, you’d call a fella on a football field if he was being smart with ya you know, an English, whatever [**Marc:** yeah]; you’d call them English [**Marc:** they can’t have liked that] they can’t take that

well [**Marc:** yeah] you know, and that's why you do it [**Marc:** yeah]; you call them English you know 'how can you be Irish with an English accent?' you know. I'm not saying personally but, you know, people would do that like, you know [**Marc:** yeah], (.) and that's something they won't ever be able to get away from like, as long as they have an English accent

In this account, Liam represents the English accents of the second generation Irish as almost an insuperable barrier towards claiming Irishness; it is "something they won't ever be able to get away from". He also makes it clear that accent is seen as a rhetorical device by which the Irishness of the second generation can be inauthentic in a competitive environment, such as on the football field. Accent is portrayed as an indelible marker of Irishness, and a trump-card by which the migrant generation can assert their 'superior' Irishness.

It is clear that the oppositional nature of Irishness and Englishness and the importance of accent leads to the second generation Irish in England being positioned as troubled and inauthentic. This tension between the second and the migrant generation collapses any easy unification of the two as a single 'young Irish' community. Within this discourse, the second generation Irish define themselves by what they are not i.e. English, and yet cannot escape being defined as English due to their accents. Bronwen Walter has argued that accent operates in a similar manner for Irish migrants in England as physical appearance does for other ethnic minorities, with audibility taking the place of visibility. However, this has the effect of excluding English-born children from family ethnic identities "in ways which are not extended, or allowed, to the second generations of "visible" minorities"(Walter, 2008c, p. 175). She suggests that the second generation's English accents place them at a "disjuncture between their senses of belonging to a distinctive cultural background and their entitlement to express this publicly" (Walter, 2008c, p. 179).

8.4 Self-positionings of the second generation Irish

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, it is often assumed that the second generation Irish are “caught between two cultures”: this assumption is common in literary treatments of the second generation e.g. (Arrowsmith, 2000; Harte, 2003), but was questioned by the findings of the Irish 2 Project (Hickman et al., 2005). While the notion of the second generation Irish as being caught between two cultures may be a simplified or insufficient account of the complexity of their identifications, I would argue that it acts as one possible interpretative repertoire for migrants and second generation alike to draw on as a means of positioning the latter. For example, Helen, a second generation woman in her twenties from Milton Keynes describes orienting towards two nationalities in the following way:

Extract 8.16:

Helen: In England we kinda (.) feel slightly different because .hh our grandparents aren't from here we haven't got any cousins here things like that [**Marc:** hmm] we haven't got as many ties .hh it all kind of goes back to Ireland [**Marc:** hmm] but erm .hh slightly more interesting is sometimes when (.) I then I'm in Ireland I'm suddenly very aware how British I am [**Marc:** yeah] which is (.) .hh quite strange and it's quite confusing to be honest [**Marc:** hmm] sometimes

Marc: But what kind of things makes you aware of that is it the accent or?

Helen: .hh yeah the accent is probably the main thing [**Marc:** yeah] erm it's like (.) when I go over there I feel very much (.) like I'm really at home [**Marc:** yeah] even though for a long time we didn't really have a base there .hh erm coz my grand (.) parents died and things like that we [**Marc:** hmm] .hh kind of just stayed in B&Bs and things so it wasn't like there was (.) any physical thing or any physical home drawing us there (.) it just kind of felt (.) I can-I could recognise the people around me and .hh they

kind of looked more like us and (.) they kind of would act a bit more like my parents and things [Marc: hmm] so .hh I felt very at ease there (.) but (.) as soon as you start talking .hh it's that kind of (.) there's a quite a bit .hh it's like the illusion's kind of shattered a little for me [Marc: *right *] erm (.) which is a bit strange coz .hh it used to bug me a bit more than did (.) than it does now because you'd erm .hh I'd notice I mean as you go into a shop and .hh like (.) you'd sort of blend in [Marc: hmm] very well and no one would ever sort of question you or anything .hh I would be with my brother or my parents and we all kind of looked Irish but then (.) as soon as we started speaking it *kind- you just kind of feel like .hh oh God we sound so English* [Marc: *hmm*] which is a bit s- which is a bit strange to be honest (.) sometimes a bit uncomfortable.

Helen draws upon the repertoire of the second generation being caught between two cultures and not fully belonging to either as a means of articulating the fluctuating and troubled nature of her identifications. Having family ties in Ireland rather than England leads her to feeling different in England, but this is counter-balanced by becoming more aware of her British identity when in Ireland. This can be seen as an example of what Walter (2008c) has described as the internalisation of the attitude that having an English accent inauthenticates ones Irishness. For Helen, the “illusion” that she can “blend in” to an Irish lifestyle in Ireland, due to similarities in appearance and behaviour is “shattered” as soon as she opens her mouth and reveals her English accent.

In order to claim Irishness, second generation people are required to rhetorically counter their positioning as English by virtue of their accents. This is often done by emphasising another personal feature that affirms their Irishness. An example of this can be seen in the following extract from an interview with Bob (previous: extract 6.6):

Extract 8.17:

Bob: I used to say, well you know, at the end of the day, yes I was bor- I was born in England and I, and I was brought up in England; yes, I do have a, you know, English accent, but ‘erm, I say ‘well, at the end of day’, like, my parents are Irish, they’re both from Ireland; their background is all Irish; their background goes on and on. There is no English, there is no, you know, whatever country; it’s all fully Irish, so (.hh) obviously I’m fully Irish blood [**Marc:** yeah] but then, and I, I try and say that it might be like ‘oh you’ve got an English accent’ you know ‘you speak like that’ you know ‘you’re English; you were born in England so therefore you’re English. It says that on your passport’

This extract is a useful illustration of the various overlapping and competing discourses of Irishness within which the second generation have to negotiate their identities. Bob attempts to counter being positioned as English due to his birthplace and accent, by invoking discourses of Irishness as determined by genealogy. His hesitancy in invoking these may be interpreted as reflecting a certain level of defensiveness about his Irish identity, whereas in later reporting the prototypical denials of his Irishness, he is illustrating the kind of discursive constraints within which he has to negotiate. Of course, in presenting himself as having ‘fully Irish blood’ unmingled with English or any other nationality, he could be said to be challenging one essentialist discourse of Irishness with another. Irishness becomes deterritorialised in his account, but is still dependent on a kind of ethnic ‘blood’ purity. It is doubtful whether such arguments leave much space for conceptualisations of the liminal, whether between Irishness and Englishness, or incorporating any other mixed heritage. However, Bob goes on to describe himself as having moved on from attempting to claim any kind of ethnic/national purity:

Extract 8.17 (cont.):

Bob: I think now I'm kind of just happy to kind of appreciate both kind of (.) you know Irishness and Englishness in me really [**Marc:** yeah] you know. [**Marc:** you mean, if-] rather than kind of become quite stubborn to just one side [**Marc:** yeah, yeah], 'cos a lot of people, English people 'oh, I'm English through and through' and (..hh) they're overly proud and patriotic and I'm sure it's the same with like people that are Irish, but now, now I think I take a more kind of (.) 'erm subtle kind of laid-back view on it now, but I, I always like to be appreciated for kind of my Irishness as well as kind of my Englishness really [**Marc:** yeah]

In arriving at the point where he expresses a desire to be appreciated for his Irishness as well as his Englishness, Bob attempts to downplay the importance of proclaiming one's national identity, disassociating himself with people who are "overly proud and patriotic" in favour of a more "subtle kind of laid-back view on it". He presents himself as having reached a compromise with the various discourses around what constitutes Irishness by positioning himself as embodying both Irishness and Englishness. Bob articulates a liminal space between Irishness and Englishness and does so in such a way as to emphasise subtlety, overlapping allegiances and personal agency. I would argue that the latter is particularly important in keeping with the theme of this thesis, as Bob is attempting to articulate a *personally* authentic Irishness that is independent of collective hegemonic discourses as to what authentic Irishness looks like. These attempts can be situated within the discourse of Irish authenticity through diasporic claim. However, that this personal take on Irishness is not entirely independent of the approval of others is reflected in Bob's stated desire to be "appreciated for" his Irishness as well as his Englishness.

In discussing how Helen and Bob situate themselves in discourses around Irishness and Englishness, it must be noted that they do so in the context of having grown up in Milton Keynes. Therefore, the hyphenated localised identities of “London-Irish” and “Birmingham-Irish” are not available to them, and given the much smaller, (although still not insignificant) size of the Irish population in Milton Keynes, a specific “Milton Keynes-Irish” identity label does not appear to have developed. This corresponds with the findings of the Irish 2 Project whereby it was only in the smaller population centre of Banbury, as opposed to the much larger cities of London, Manchester and Coventry, that the notion of a named local Irish identity was missing (Walter, 2008c). Thus, as was suggested by Sheila in Extract 7.4, the very existence of a hyphenated identity within an urban environment shapes the way identifications are made. Similarly, outside both a metropolitan environment and the presence of a large, established Irish community based within a specific locality within a city, ‘Englishness’ may become more salient.

While ‘Plastic Paddy’ can be said to be the term that most explicitly draws a division between the migrant generation and the second generation, terms that are seen as more benign can also be constructed as doing similar, divisive work. For example, as Sheila mentioned in Extract 7.4, and as touched upon by Éamonn in Extract 8.15, claiming or being labelled London-Irish can also be constructed as an *unwanted* qualification of one’s Irishness. A similar point could be made about the label ‘second generation Irish’. As already mentioned in Chapter 3, Walter (2004) has questioned the utility of the term ‘second generation’, citing the disinclination of her participants to use the term as evidence of its “technical, academic usage”. While my participants used the term more freely than Walter’s appear to have, dissatisfaction with the application of the term surfaced occasionally. For example, Sheila in the following extract taken from the joint discussion with myself and Máire:

Extract 8.18:

Sheila: You know when you said that earlier in the kitchen, you said (*laughs*) ‘Sheila’s second generation’ (*laughs*); it grated with me.

Máire: Does it (*laughs*)

Sheila: Yeah [

Máire: (*laughs*) Oh God; I’ll keep me mouth shut [**Marc:** mm].

Sheila: ‘Cos I don’t, I, I think I said this to you before, and you said, was it came from the ge- ‘Just because you’re born in a stable, doesn’t make you a horse’ (*laughs*)

Máire: Right (*laughs*) (.hh) oh well [**Sheila:** (*laughs*)], there you go.

Sheila: So I don’t call mys-, I don’t think of myself as second generation; I don’t think of myself; I just think of myself as Irish.

Máire: Mm, okay; I shall never again say that word to you [**Marc:** (*laughs*)] (*laughs*) [**Sheila:** yeah].

Marc: Amm (.) I [

Máire: Well I was lucky I got out of that [**Marc:** (*laughs*)] [**Sheila:** (*laughs*)] might have been a good way of getting my head kicked in
(*Laughter*)

Máire: Okay.

Sheila: He did say we’ve not to come to blows (*laughs*) didn’t he [**Marc:** (*laughs*)].

Máire: Well, now I know how to wind you up, “ya old second generation” (*laughs*).

Sheila: Press my buttons.

Marc: Do you think there is a need for terminology to kind of; I mean obviously doing the research I do, I need to distinguish every so often [

Sheila: Right, what it makes me feel is that I’m not, (*laughs*) (hh) I’m second, you know [**Marc:** yeah]; not a first class, I’m second class (*laughs*).

Máire: You're a first class citizen [**Sheila:** (*laughs*)] but second generation [

(*Laughter*)

Sheila: (..hh) But I'm not part of something [**Marc:** mm] when I hear that [**Máire:** yeah]; I'm not, that I don't quite fit [**Máire:** mm].

Sheila's reasons for disliking the term 'second generation' and Máire's surprise at this are both interesting. Sheila draws on the well-known quote disassociating birthplace with nationality: "just because someone's been born in a stable doesn't make them a horse". She had previously made use of this quote in my interview with her a few months earlier and refers back to this. She then expands on this, by linking the terminology around the distinction between first and second generation Irishness to the distinction between first and second class – being positioned as second generation Irish makes her feel as though she doesn't "quite fit" within discourses of Irishness.

Meanwhile, given that both Máire and I had been born in Ireland and had previously used the term 'second generation' in conversation, being confronted with Sheila's dislike of the term required a certain amount of repair. Máire, while promising not to use the term again, plays up the humour of the situation: that all three of us join in on the laughter may be seen as a mutual attempt to lessen the tension of this moment of contestation. Meanwhile, I defend my use of the term by drawing attention to my status as a researcher, indicating that the distinction between first and second generation is one I occasionally need to make in my professional capacity.

While this is an example of how the second generation Irish construct the way they are positioned in first generation discourses of authentic Irishness, this does not preclude the second generation from positioning those of Irish birth as inauthentic, as demonstrated in the *Irish Post* newspaper article referred to earlier. As a reminder, Horgan's argument in

this article was that, Irishness in Ireland had gradually been lost due to modernisation, but that it had been preserved in the cultural activities of those who emigrated in the 1950s, and their children, the second generation. Drawing on this kind of rhetorical construction, second generation Irish people in England often point to their greater engagement with what they see as authentic Irish activities than their ‘native’ relatives to support a “more Irish than the Irish themselves” discourse e.g. (Leonard, 2005). For example, the extract below comes from my interview with Sinéad:

Extract 8.19:

Sinéad: I remembered having .hh (.) a disagreement with some*body* .hh about [Marc: hmm] I think .hh they were born in Ireland both of them (.) brought their children up here [Marc: hmm] and (.) what had they said .hh oh they had one of their children over here but wanted to go back to Ireland coz they didn't want the rest of them born over here [Marc: yeah] .hh and I said 'well actually, you know you're (.) what-what do you think you're saying to me then when you're saying that' I said 'I've been born and brought up over here' [Marc: yeah] 'I (.) play Irish football I play Irish music .hh erm I'm out with you here .hh' I said 'I-you know you're that's a bit offensive to me what you're saying-my children are born over here' [Marc: yeah] .hh erm and I said 'do you realise about some of the (.) historians from Ireland who actually they weren't all born over there' I sa-you know [Marc: hmm] 'some of them 'tut' were born here and actually then brought up over there' I said well they didn't even know that [Marc: yeah, yeah] I had to tell them that .hh you know I said 'you don't even know your own history so .hh' you know how it is

Sinéad constructs her friends' wish to bring up their children in Ireland as being an attack on her own Irishness and emphasises that it is possible to live an Irish life outside Ireland. In this case her own Irishness and that of her children is authenticated by involvement in

Irish activities, such as sport and music. She then demonstrates that in some areas at least, her knowledge of Ireland is greater than that of her Irish-born friends, thus positioning herself (temporarily at least) as being *more* authentically Irish than them.

Similarly, Sinéad told the following anecdote about her sister, who had moved to Kerry:

Extract 8.20:

Sinéad: She took ages to be-she felt to be accepted at the school (.) [**Marc:** hmm] you know picking up your children at the playground [**Marc:** yeah, yeah] and she had things said to her er about-I remember she went out to dub-dinner with some .hh they were a company of about three other couples .hh and again it got to the-I don't know how it got to the Irish thing but somebody said to her (.) erm 'yeah but you're English anyway' [**Marc:** yeah] and she said 'have you got an all-Ireland medal' and they said 'no' she said 'well I've got one' coz she played .hh she played for London ladies when they beat Leitrim in the nineties .hh [**Marc:** ah right] and she happened to have .hh [**Marc:** (*chuckle*)] and she said 'well I have' .hh [**Marc:** yeah] erm and Dinny her husband happened to have one and funny enough he was born in Manchester [**Marc:** ah right] as a very young child (.) was brought up in Kerry .hh went back when he was about four or five [**Marc:** yeah] so it's quite ironic that they were the only two round the table *with the* [**Marc:** *with the Celtic cross*]

In relating this anecdote, Sinéad is undermining the territoriality of authentic Irishness, through the achievements of her sister: being in possession of an all-Ireland medal is here constructed as an unanswerable argument to positioning oneself as Irish, and it is emphasised that the two people around the table in possession of one were the only two born in England. In this case it is proficiency at authentic Irish activities that allows Sinéad's sister, and by extension Sinéad herself to position themselves as authentic. A

parallel can be drawn here to Leonard's (2005) aforementioned research: whereas in the case of her participants, authenticity could be claimed due to proficiency at Irish dancing, here it is Gaelic Football. The act of stressing such practices can be situated within the discourse of Irish authenticity through diasporic claim.

However, there is an obvious drawback to this discursive strategy of claiming authenticity through excellence at Irish activities in that it presupposes the existence of a skill bar on Irishness which must be negotiated by second generation Irish people but (presumably) not by those of Irish birth. One might ask whether this 'skills' approach towards authenticity holds any potential for the second generation Irish person who is proficient at neither Irish dancing nor Gaelic Football (nor Irish traditional music, nor the Irish language etc etc.)? It is tempting to liken this approach to claiming Irish authenticity to the annual Rose of Tralee pageant¹⁷, whereby individual members of the Irish diaspora can take centre stage in a celebration of Irishness irrespective of their birthplace, but only if they are young, female, attractive, and sufficiently proficient at some aspect of 'traditional' Irish culture to satisfy the demands of a television audience in Ireland. In other words, such an approach excludes the vast majority of members of the diaspora.

This is not to deny the potential of the 'skills' approach in deconstructing essentialised notions of Irishness. For example, the selection in 2008 of Belinda Brown, a woman of mixed Irish and Jamaican parentage, as the London representative for the Rose of Tralee was seen as long overdue recognition for the Irish identities of those of mixed backgrounds in England (Audley, 2008). However, it is still more likely that the 'skills' approach will allow individual second generation people to claim Irishness, but may not hold out much

¹⁷ The 'Rose of Tralee International Festival', is held in the town of Tralee every August – heats are held throughout the Irish diaspora throughout the year. It is not officially a beauty pageant, rather being billed in the words of the organisers as celebrating "modern young women in terms of their aspirations, ambitions, intellect, social responsibility and Irish heritage". However, it ought to be said that to the casual observer, this distinction might not immediately be apparent.

potential for a recognition of second-generation Irishness as authentic on a collective level. Also, in referring back to Bob's earlier valorisation of 'blood' rather than 'birth', swapping one essentialised Irishness for another does not necessarily deconstruct hegemonic narratives of Irishness in favour of more liminal conceptions.

8.5 Summary

This chapter has examined the various ways distinct generations of Irish people, whether 'older' or 'younger' or 'first' or 'second' generation are positioned within discourses of Irish authenticity in England. It has discussed the ways in which the older generation position the younger generation as more self-confident and better equipped to deal with life in England, but at the expense of participation in 'typically' Irish activities. As the corollary of this, the younger generation positioned the older generation as being afraid to let go of a certain strain of Irishness that was no longer relevant to either Ireland or the cities in England in which this Irishness was situated.

From the analysis in this chapter, a more nuanced picture of the relationship between the migrant generations and the second generation than has been demonstrated by previous research emerges. It would appear from the data that the second generation's claim of "not fake, just different" in reaction to the use of the term "Plastic Paddy" to inauthenticate their Irishness is starting to gain validity as a means of shaping how the second generation are discussed. However, this exists alongside a positioning of the identities of the second generation Irish as insecure, as opposed to the 'uncomplicated', 'factual' transnational Irish identities of younger migrants.

It is debateable however, whether this indicates a shift towards more deterritorialised understandings of diasporic Irish identity, given that the discourse of Irish authenticity

through transnational knowledge appears to retain a dominant position as the standard against which other understandings of Irishness must be rhetorically constructed. It would appear that the discourse of Irish authenticity through diasporic claim is insufficient in and of itself to have one's Irish identity recognised as authentic by others (in England, at any rate). Alternative discourses of Irish authenticity act as a constraint on this discourse, but also as a resource by which claims on authentic Irishness can be bolstered in certain circumstances. Authenticity therefore, however it is understood, acts as an important shibboleth towards claiming diasporic identity. The ways in which the three discourses identified interact and re-inscribe the other will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This thesis presents a detailed examination of the complex and multifaceted ways in which authenticity is constructed among the Irish in England and how this relates to national identity. In particular, it has examined the close, but at times troubled, relationship between ‘living Irish’ and Irishness and explored the ways in which being a certain type of Irish person is valorised as representing an authentic Irishness. While Irishness is contested, constructions of the characteristics and experiences of specific cohorts of Irish people are imbued with similar constructions of Irishness.

A major theme of this thesis has been the gap between official discourses of Irishness abroad constituted by state bodies in both Ireland and England, and the discourses and narratives of Irishness employed by individuals in speaking about their experiences as Irish people in England. The growing tendency in Ireland to depict the diaspora as an undifferentiated economic resource that can be tapped is therefore built on a fundamental misunderstanding of what diaspora constitutes. A similar point may be made with regard to academic readings of issues arising from migration that do not attend to the complexities of individual experience and individual agency in identity work. The multifaceted and at times, contradictory identifications, positioning and identity work running through the ways in which Irish people talk about Irishness and their experiences speaks against any simplistic or ungrounded reading of diaspora, transnationalism or multiculturalism.

A major achievement of this thesis has been to highlight points of contestation between various discourses of Irish authenticity. Such points become means through which authentic Irishness can be claimed or others can be positioned as inauthentically Irish. While this research has built and expanded on past research examining the role played by generation, public displays of Irishness, and city-based hybridised Irish identities in such discourses, it

has also broken ground on an important area of identification among the Irish abroad that has been neglected in the literature to date; that of county identity.

9.1. Review

In setting up this thesis, I drew a distinction between the transnational and the diasporic as I planned to employ the terms throughout my analysis of the corpus of data. To revisit this distinction, I argued that the diasporic referred to an Irishness that existed outside of Ireland, and was not bounded by territorialised discourses of Irishness. On the other hand, the transnational, while referring to an Irishness that was simultaneously lived in Ireland and England, was more likely to refer to understandings of Irishness as ‘the property’ of the Irish nation-state, ‘transplanted’ to England. The dialectic between these two alternative imaginings of Irishness takes place within England, which is simultaneously a diaspora space and a multicultural polity. While Irishness in England may be shaped and re-inscribed by innumerable personal and collective meetings with ‘other people’s diasporas’, it is also positioned, and arguably locked into a double-bind by its ‘official’ (if not always recognised) status as an ethnic minority culture.

I also articulated a specifically social psychological argument about the role (and the affective dimension) of the self within Irishness, the relationship between personal and collective Irish identities and the role played by authenticity where the two intersect. I hypothesised that the situating of a personally authentic Irish identity within a collective Irishness would be potentially influenced by three factors: reflection, recognition and ownership. In other words, the authentic ideal might be described as a personal Irishness that is ‘mine’ and ‘feels right’ within a collective Irishness that is ‘ours’ and ‘looks right’. The level of agency available to the individual to articulate this authentic ideal is limited by structural and discursive factors. In order to trace how this occurs, through an analysis of

participants' talk around Irishness in England, I identified four major discursive sites of construction and contestation around Irish authenticity, which made up the content of the four empirical chapters. To recap briefly:

Chapter 5 drew on Freeman & Brockmeier's concept of narrative integrity to examine the canonical narratives of Irishness in post-war England and the ways in which personal narratives were nested within these canonical narratives. In looking at how 'time' was employed as a discursive resource within these narratives, I identified three distinct eras: from immediately post-WWII to the late sixties, from the early seventies to the mid-nineties, and from the mid-nineties to the present day. The earlier era was characterised by a high level of narrative integrity, with a clear canonical narrative emerging around the collective experience of the Irish in England, and an assumption that individual experiences could be situated within this collective experience. This degree of narrative integrity continued to some extent during accounts of the 'suspect community' period, but was disrupted by the accounts of the emergence of second generation articulations of Irishness, as well as the emergence of narratives of 'professional' Irishness associated with a new cohort of migrants from the 1980s on. This emergence of more ambiguous and multivoiced narratives of Irishness was argued to represent a shift from an authentic Irishness in England being dependent on recognised shared experience, to the need to have one's own authentic Irishness as personally defined recognised by a larger audience. It also highlighted specific areas of contestation around Irishness that were explored in the later chapters.

Chapter 6 examined the various ways in which public representations of Irishness, in particular, St. Patrick's Day celebrations, were drawn upon as a resource in discourses of authenticity. In particular, there was a focus on whether the parades, as the 'public face' of Irishness as a concept, accurately reflected the personal Irish identities of individuals as

well as the collective identity of the Irish in England. Questions also arose around the 'ownership' of the parade, and by extension, Irishness, given its contemporary association with officialdom, particularly in London. Again, a division arose here between retrospective constructions of the parade in the pre-suspect community period of the 1950s and 1960s, and the contemporary parade. While the ownership of the historical parade was constructed as having been with a unified community, the ownership of the current parade is contested. The St. Patrick's Day parades of the past are retrospectively constructed as an accurate reflection of a collective authentic emigrant experience of the time. By way of comparison, the modern-day festival simultaneously stands accused of imposing an inauthentic collective Irishness that bears no relation to personally-felt Irish identities, while being congratulated for prising open Irish collectivity sufficiently wide that personal 'atypical' Irish identities can find a place within Irishness.

Chapter 7 explored the ways in which drawing on a discourse of local identifications served to authenticate personal Irish identities by situating them in a local, rather than a national collectivity. It added to previous research highlighting the importance of local-national hybrids, such as London-Irish, and Birmingham-Irish in articulating alternative Irish identities that were not dependent on territorial understandings of Irishness. However, this chapter highlighted that such hybrids exist alongside a significant discourse of county identities within Irishness. Articulating a county identification may act as a way of authenticating one's Irishness, and in a public display context, reasserting ownership of Irishness, but it may also be seen as something of a shibboleth towards claiming Irishness. Depending on the context, it may be seen as a reterritorialised version of local Irishness, that constrains liminal Irish identities, but promotes translocal ones. The rivalries that are associated with county identity, particularly around sport, also act to deconstruct the notion of a unitary Irish community in England.

Chapter 8 examined contestations of Irishness on a generational level and how ‘older migrants’, ‘younger migrants’ and ‘second generation Irish’ people were positioned within discourses of authentic Irishness. It found that the older generation positioned the younger generation as more self-confident and better equipped to deal with life in England, but at the expense of participation in ‘typically’ Irish activities. As the corollary of this, the younger generation positioned the older generation as being afraid to ‘let go’ of a certain strain of Irishness that was no longer relevant to either Ireland or the cities in England in which this Irishness was situated. Participants from the younger migrant generation positioned the second generation as being insecure in their Irishness, largely due to their accents and lack of transnational knowledge, while second generation participants rhetorically articulated the need for recognition of different Irishnesses, while occasionally positioning themselves as *more* authentically Irish than the migrant generation due to engaging in Irish practices.

9.2 Main findings

As previously discussed in Chapter 1, in reviewing the various sites and subjects of contestation of authentic Irishness in England within this thesis, three broad discourses of Irish authenticity can be identified as running through them. Each can be explored in relation to the diasporic and the transnational, and each is loosely associated with a certain ‘cohort’ of Irish people in England. To recap, I have termed these three discourses as follows: *Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory*; *Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge* and *Irish authenticity through diasporic claim*.

Respectively, these three broad discourses can be loosely associated with the three cohorts identified in Chapter 8 i.e. ‘older’ migrants, ‘younger’ migrants and second generation Irish people. It is important to note that I am not suggesting these cohorts amount to bounded

categories, or that there is any kind of inevitability that an Irish individual of a certain age or generation will necessarily draw on these discourses in speaking about Irish authenticity. Rather, I would argue that the ways in which one positions oneself and is positioned as a certain type of Irish person (both discursively and structurally) are interwoven with the use of discourses around authenticity. For example, individual positioning as an ‘older Irish migrant’ shapes, and is shaped by discourses of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory.

This is also not to say that such discourses and positioning do not overlap between the three cohorts. Members of each cohort also have the other discourses at their disposal which they can draw on in the context of the negotiation of what it means to be Irish in England. For example, as has been explored in Chapters 5 and 8, participants’ rhetorical positioning of themselves as ‘younger migrants’ or ‘second generation’ may involve a disidentification with ‘older migrants’, and particularly with their perceived ‘old-fashioned’ take on Irish authenticity. However, rather than simply being dismissed, there is an attempt to explain the other viewpoint, often through prototypical reported speech, that draws on the discourse of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory.

Also, it is significant that this particular discourse can accurately be labelled “collective experience and *memory*”. Thus, the use of this discourse in constructing personally authentic Irish identities is not confined to those who migrated from Ireland to England in the post-war period and have lived through the various changes that shaped both the Irish and Irishness in the intervening 50-60 years. As was apparent, the collective experience and memory of growing up second generation Irish in England has shaped both personal and collective Irish identities. Also, the strength of the canonical narrative of the collective Irish experience in England means that it acts as something of a folk memory, within which ‘younger’ migrants can situate continuities or discontinuities of experience. Similarly, an

alternative canonical narrative of collective experience and memory appears to have been constructed around those who migrated in the 1980s and since.

Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge is a discourse most associated with the construction of a “younger migrant” identity and cohort. Drawing on this discourse prioritises understandings, articulations and performances of Irishness that resemble “what we do back home”, as authentic. However, this discourse is also drawn upon as a foil against which alternative discourses and understandings of Irishness are rhetorically constructed. For example, younger migrants are positioned outside the discourse of authenticity through collective experience and memory due to their more transnational practices and orientations. Similarly, this discourse acts as a constraint on second generation claims on Irishness, and a source of disconnect between personal and collective authentic Irish identities.

Irish authenticity through diasporic claim is a discourse that prioritises liminal, deterritorialised constructions of Irishness and is rhetorically arranged against the notion that there is such a thing as a unitary Irish identity. As such, this discourse could also be labelled “not fake, just different” and promotes a “spectrum of Irishness”. This discourse should not be taken however, as completely denying the role of the authentic in Irishness, but rather reflects a viewpoint that authentic Irishness is personally claimed rather than collectively bestowed. It is a discourse most commonly associated with the identity work of second generation participants, but can also be found among participants from other cohorts. This can be articulated either in a construction of Irishness, and therefore the Irish community as a ‘broad church’, so to speak, or a recognition that there are different forms of Irishness, although such a recognition does not necessarily give parity of esteem to all forms of Irishness. Such an argument might be paraphrased as “all Irishnesses are Irish, but some are more Irish than others”.

Each of these discourses of authenticity represents a resource which the individual Irish person can draw upon (depending on the context) as a means of situating a personally authentic Irish identity within a collective Irish identity. However, they also act as a constraint on articulations of Irish identity, given that each of these discourses construct a different version of collective Irishness, both as a concept that is owned by the imagined Irish community in England and as a reflection of personal Irish identities. For example, as discussed in Chapter 6, it is possible to place the St. Patrick's Day festivals within a discourse of Irish authenticity through diasporic claims, due to their potential to prise open the category of Irishness sufficiently to allow those who may otherwise be positioned as inauthentic to participate. However, this representation of Irishness does not reflect the 'felt' personal Irish of many people and thus disrupts their ability to situate an authentic personal Irish identity within an authentic collective Irish identity.

This thesis has argued for the importance of localised identities as serving to shape authentic Irish identities: the ways in which this occurs can also be situated within the three broad discourses mentioned. For example, second generation London-Irish identities involve a diasporic claim on authentic Irishness, specifically by constructing a different Irish collectivity – one that the imagined community of second generation Irish people in London have ownership of. London-Irishness or Birmingham-Irishness etc. therefore becomes a way of situating a “not fake, just different” personal Irishness, within a specific, locally-inscribed, collective Irishness. What is more, these localised allegiances appear to have achieved a certain level of recognition as a specific form of Irishness by those who might draw on other discourses in constructing Irish authenticity. Moreover, constructing localised hybrid Irish identities also draw on discourses of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory. In this case, it is a specifically second generation collective experience, which has been shaped both by the need to differentiate oneself (both

personally and collectively) from the ‘old-fashioned’ Irishness of the older generation, but also by being positioned as inauthentic by younger migrants.

The other aspect of localised identities highlighted, that of county identity, is a repertoire that is drawn upon across all three discourses. For example, discourses of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge, may also draw on *translocal* knowledge as a means of positioning an individual Irish person as authentic. Similarly, the ability to identify oneself as belonging to a certain county allows claims on Irishness to be made, insofar as it allows the individual to position him/herself within the collective identity of the county, which in turn is situated within the national ‘imagined community’ of Irishness. Claiming a county identity becomes a form of claiming Irishness by proxy, without the necessity to subscribe to nationalised discourses of Irishness. Articulating a county identity becomes a specific form of diasporic claim on Irish authenticity in that it exists in a liminal space that orients towards a localised version of the ‘homeland’ and through this, claims identification with Irishness. Almost paradoxically, this is a deterritorialised version of Irishness that depends on identification with a specific territory i.e. the county.

County identities are also drawn upon as a means for Irish migrants in England to prioritise a personal Irish identity that is constructed as ‘feeling’ more authentic than ‘Irishness in England’. I would argue that such means of identifying with the county, rather than as an Irish person in England, is a means of disidentifying with the collective identity of Irish people in England, and rather articulating a more personalised identity as an Irish person who happens to live in England. Thus, it could be argued that this use of county identities prioritises transnational rather than diasporic forms of Irishness.

The use of county identities is somewhat double-edged when included in narratives of Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory. While on one hand, the County

Associations are constructed as having been integral to the experience of ‘living Irish’ in England, both as a source of welfare and recreation, the suggestion that they served as a form of ‘divide and rule’ in perpetuating local Irish rivalries in England serves to deconstruct the canonical narrative of Irishness in England as a collective experience.

9.3 Implications

With regard to the implications that this research has for various imaginings of Irishness as diasporic, transnational and as a minority ‘ethnic’ culture within England, the results add new insight as to how these are constructed on an everyday basis. As stressed earlier, this bears out the importance of putting the identity work of the individual subject at the centre of any systematic exploration of these concepts.

In Chapter 2, I drew a distinction between diasporic and transnational imaginings of Irishness as they may apply to the Irish in England, arguing that diaspora may represent discourses of an Irish life lived outside Ireland, without reproducing the set of hegemonic norms around Irishness promulgated by either the Irish or the English hegemonic domains. I argued that transnational identifications, on the other hand, were more likely to lead to the prioritisation and reproduction of contemporary norms around Irishness, prevalent in Ireland. Given the results of the thesis – that there is a clear discourse suggesting “Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge and practices” and an equally clear discourse suggesting “Irish authenticity through diasporic claim”, I argue that diasporic articulations of Irishness in England are shaped and constrained by transnational articulations of Irishness in England. In other words, while there was evidence of a diasporic stance and orientation in participants’ talk, this was rhetorically arranged around an equally strong orientation that suggested that authentic Irishness resided in Ireland.

Returning to the debate in Chapter 2 around the ‘interchangeable’ nature of transnationalism and diaspora, whether transnational communities are the ‘building blocks of diaspora’, or other distinctions between the two, I would argue that far from being interchangeable, the two are rather rhetorically arranged opposite one another in a dialectic. With regard to both discursive orientation, and structural factors (most obviously regarding recency of migration) ‘diaspora’ and ‘transnationalism’ represent two quite different readings of Irishness in England, although one is invariably shaped by the other. As such, it may be analytically and theoretically useful to examine similar sites of contestation between transnational and diasporic readings of ostensibly the same identity.

Turning to constructions of Irishness as an ethnic minority culture, and the ways in which individual Irish people *qua* individual minoritised subjects position themselves within such discourses, the picture is less than clear. It seems apparent that an inherent component of the canonical narrative of the Irish in post-war England was oppression and discrimination in the ‘no blacks, no dogs, no Irish’ period and subsequently in the ‘suspect community’ period. Therefore, drawing on the ‘Irish authenticity through collective experience and memory’ discourse in constructing one’s own Irish identity, involves situating oneself within a collective Irishness as one of an imagined community that have been discriminated against. Regarding the current position of Irishness in England, this may lead to a positive articulation of its apparent popularity, along the lines of “things are better than they were”. Drawing on such a discourse may prioritise the general popularity of Irishness above any concerns that it be recognised as authentic. However, this may also be qualified with a declaration that to be authentically Irish was to remember a time when Irishness led to discrimination rather than popularity.

It might be expected that transnational understandings of Irishness would be less likely to situate a personal Irishness within a collective Irishness positioned as an ethnic minority,

given the prioritisation of Irishness as it is experienced in Ireland (i.e. as an ethnic majority) within such a discourse. At the same time, drawing on the discourse of Irish authenticity through transnational knowledge would appear to lead to a positioning of the way Irishness is represented in England as inauthentic – and thus the collective identity of Irishness in England, as something that personal Irish identities can only be situated within problematically.

Constructions of Irishness as an ethnic minority tend to be most apparent when discourses of Irish authenticity through diasporic claim are employed, particularly as conceptualising Irishness as an ethnicity removes the ‘entry bar’ on Irishness of accent and birthplace. Arguably, attempts to draw out points of similarity between the Irish and other minority groups in a multi-ethnic England are another aspect of this discourse. However, such attempts exist alongside a historical discourse that constructs Irishness on a kind of ‘hierarchy of the dispreferred’ in England, which may be echoed in the modern-day resistance to the positioning of the Irish as ‘just another ethnic group’. These complexities in the ways in which Irishness in England is constructed as a minority culture by the Irish in England support Garrett’s (2005) call for ‘positive or complex recognition’ of the Irish in policy terms.

9.4 Final thoughts, caveats and suggestions for further research

This thesis has made a major contribution to the study of authenticity within an Irish context, breaking new ground in particular in highlighting the role of county identity, as well as contributing to a greater understanding of the issues of diaspora, transnationalism and multiculturalism more generally. The research carried out in this thesis is therefore intended not to be a final word on these topics but to provoke and inform further research,

either by addressing the acknowledged gaps in this research or by investigating where the findings are applicable in other contexts.

For example, with regard to the three discourses by which Irish authenticity can be claimed, it would be interesting to investigate whether such discourses are applicable in the context of other minority identities. In particular, the somewhat novel distinction I have drawn between diaspora and transnationalism, and how this translates into everyday talk and practices may be a valuable perspective from which to view other groups in England (or elsewhere) which have been constituted by multiple migrations.

While it has not been the central theme of this thesis, from an Irish Studies perspective, the research has been groundbreaking on the topic of county identity, drawing attention to the long-neglected ‘other’ local element of Irish identities in England. Having prised open the topic of county identity as an object of study, some suggestions can be made as to further, more systematic work on the topic both throughout the diaspora and within Ireland itself. For example, while it has been posited that county identity is inextricably linked with GAA rivalries, research that critically investigates this link, perhaps through a study of the kind of ‘banal county-ism’ that pervades Irish life would be valuable. Similarly, drawing on my suggestion that national identities in terms of Irishness abroad are occasionally constituted through local identities, it would be interesting to examine the ways in which county identities intersect with Irishness and also with other localised identities such as parish, village, town or province within Ireland itself.

Outside of Ireland, it would be interesting to note if the patterns noted among the Irish in England around county identity, and in particular the ways it appears to act as a kind of shibboleth for claiming Irish authenticity, operate in similar ways in locations other than England. If not, it could perhaps be posited that it is the high influence of transnationalism

on Irishness in England that causes county identifications to be so salient, but if so, this would suggest that county identities are an intrinsic aspect of constructing Irishness, regardless of location.

Where limitations of this research are concerned, some caveats must be made with regard to the conclusions drawn above, particularly regarding the association of the three discourses I have identified with the construction of and positioning within three cohorts of Irish people – older migrants, younger migrants and second generation. I have stopped short of saying that such discourses are most prevalent among these *categories* of Irish people, because the research was not designed in such a way as to examine variations in expressions of Irishness across pre-defined categories. Rather, due to the iterative nature of the research, I set out with the intention to speak to as wide a range of Irish people as possible: the three loose groupings of older migrants, younger migrants and second generation emerged over the course of the analysis. (It is worth stressing here that a number of the participants positioned themselves as both ‘older’ and ‘younger’ depending on the immediate context of the conversation – hence my disinclination to divide the participants into post-hoc categories based on age). A study that set out to examine these possible differences among the discourses of authenticity employed by Irish people in England using pre-defined categories may be able to establish firmer associations.

While it was my intention to speak to as wide a range of Irish people as possible (within practical geographical constraints), there are two major aspects of Irishness in England that have gone unexplored in this thesis, and their relationship to Irish authenticity uninterrogated. The elephant in the room, as it were, when speaking of territorialised versions of Irishness, is that two separate political ‘territories’ exist on the island of the Ireland. Thus, while the imagined community of Irishness may extend to all 32 counties,

the discourses drawn upon by those from Northern Ireland will have been shaped by quite different structural factors.

Of my thirty-one participants, two (Éamonn and Máire) had grown up in Northern Ireland and did at times over the course of my interviews with them mention how the specificity of this upbringing had shaped their Irish identities. Also, other participants would occasionally position those from Northern Ireland as not quite belonging within a collective Irish identity. For example, in discussing his involvement with a Gaelic Football team in London, Robert claimed that the players from Northern Ireland tended not to integrate with the other members of the team, and attributed this to their having a ‘chip on their shoulders’. However, I did not feel there was a sufficient corpus of data on the specificities of how a Northern Irish identity was positioned within discourses of Irish authenticity to draw out any discursive patterns.

As Éamonn and Máire were both from Nationalist cultural backgrounds, none of my participants came from a Northern Irish Unionist background. While this was not deliberate (i.e. I did not seek to exclude those of a Unionist background, but neither did I explicitly try to recruit them), it can be attributed to the design of the research, and my methods of recruitment. By and large, it is my opinion that to have recruited a ‘token’ number of people from a Unionist background would have confounded the research findings in a way that would have made it difficult to draw out discourses of authenticity, while not providing a sufficient corpus of data to make any firm conclusions about ‘Northern Irish’ authenticities. At the same time, deliberately recruiting a larger number of people from a Unionist background would, in my view, have changed the nature of the study and turned it into a Nationalist/Unionist comparative exercise, to the exclusion of subtler discourses. However, I recognise that it is a legitimate critique that in arguing in this way, I am reinforcing an essentialist association of Irishness with Nationalist politics and culture and,

by extension, with Catholicism. For an analysis of how migrants from Northern Ireland from both cultural traditions position themselves within discourses of Irish diaspora, I recommend the work of Ní Laoire (2002) and Trew (2007; 2010). There is still a need for further comprehensive work on the role of authenticity in discourses of Irishness abroad that fully incorporates the Northern Irish perspective.

This thesis has also side-stepped the role of deconstructing essentialised associations between Irishness and Whiteness, given that none of my participants were, in the terms employed by census forms, from anything other than a 'White Irish', or in some cases from a mixed White Irish/White English background. Similar critiques and defences can be made around this issue as were made above: this was largely an artefact of recruitment, it may have smacked of tokenism to deliberately set out to recruit a small number of Irish people from a mixed ethnic background for 'a different perspective', while recruiting a large number would have made it a different research project. However again, it is a legitimate critique that by not deliberately tackling this issue, I have by default perpetuated essentialised associations between Irishness and Whiteness. While this is an association that has begun to be deconstructed in the context of Irish citizenship (e.g. Lentin (1998; 2007), King-O'Riain (2007) Cadogan (2008)), this has yet to occur in research on the Irish abroad. Arguably, such an interrogation is highly necessary, as it would further serve to highlight the complexities and subtleties of Irish identification within a context of state discourses of Irishness as diasporic and Irishness as a minority culture that both draw on simplified assumptions of what Irishness constitutes.

Methodologically, this thesis has demonstrated the potential of employing a range of methods in order to explore the wider horizon of discourse. In particular, I recommend the 'informal participant observation' practice of familiarizing oneself with the field by attending appropriate events prior to recruiting participants. Analytically, it would be

interesting to investigate what the use of an analytical lens that attends both to narrative and to rhetoric, which I have used in order to explore national identity as both something that is lived and as a concept that can be contested, can accomplish in other fields.

As mentioned previously in Chapter 1 and Chapter 4, this thesis also stands as an example of insider research, or rather as an example of the complexities of positioning oneself as an insider when carrying out research on identity. Indeed, a possible alternative reading of this thesis would be to trace my own identity work, and how I position myself within discourses of Irishness through the empirical chapters and elsewhere. While for reasons of space, a full analysis of such a reading is not possible to do here, it is something I wish to explore in the future.

Finally, as discussed at the beginning of Chapter 1, this thesis is being completed in the context of rising Irish migration to England, once again. While as yet, it is unclear as to the extent of this migration, or what effect it will have on reinscribing Irishness in England, it will be interesting to follow how this shapes new discourses of authenticity among the Irish in England, and what new positionings may emerge.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Schedule.

Interview - migrants

Pre-migration

- Where in Ireland were you born?

Migration

- When did you move to England? First impressions?
- Why did you move to England?
- What area did you first move to?
- Did you have friends/relatives in that area?
- Did you intend to stay in England as long as you have or did you intend to return?
(Phrase differently for recent arrivals).

Irish community/activities in England

- Have you made many new Irish friends since moving to England? (If yes, put in a question about socialising. If no, why not? Actively sought to avoid become part of the Irish 'scene' perhaps?)
- How do you feel about Irish community organisations/ Irish clubs?
- Do you think such a thing as the 'Irish community in England' exists? Would you describe yourself as belonging to it?
- Do you celebrate Irish events, such as St. Patrick's Day? Or watch sporting events with other Irish people? Or take part in any cultural activities?
- Do you read Irish newspapers/ other media? Both those based in Ireland and England e.g. Irish Post? Irish TV – Setanta?

Irish identity/authenticity

- Has your sense of being Irish changed since moving to England?
- How do you feel about the Irish in England being classified as an ethnic minority (e.g. the Irish ethnic section on official forms)? Does Irishness have a part to play in multicultural England?
- If you were introducing yourself to another Irish person in England, where would you say you were from? (How would you recognise someone as Irish?)
- If you were introducing yourself to a non-Irish person, where would you say you were from?
- Are you familiar with the term 'Plastic Paddy'? Who do you think it applies to? (Would you ever use it?)

Local Identity

- Do the Irish people you know in England tend to come from all areas of Ireland or one area specifically?
- Do you find it easier to get along with people from your own area in Ireland?
- Are there times when being from a certain area in Ireland is more important to you than being Irish?
- What does the area you live in in England mean to you? (positive or negative)

Relationship to present-day Ireland

- Do you go back to Ireland often? Where do you stay? How do you think you are seen in Ireland?
- Would you like to return to live in Ireland?

Negative Experiences

- Could you describe your experiences as an *Irish* person in England? Have you had any negative experiences of being Irish in England? Any anti-Irish attitudes, jokes etc.? Has this changed over time?

An Irish future?

- (If they have children). Do you think your children feel Irish? (if they don't have children) Do you think younger Irish people in England feel Irish in the same way that you do? Have you encouraged this? How- music/dance/GAA? Would they have an attachment to a certain area of Ireland?
- (Religion question)

Interview – second gen

Upbringing

- What are your earliest memories of being Irish?
- Would you describe the area you grew up in as an Irish area?
- To what extent do you feel you had an Irish upbringing? Did your parent(s) (or others around you) often mention/ tell stories about Ireland? Irish history? Food, music, sport?
- Were both your parents Irish? If not, what was that like – experience of a dual heritage?
- Did you have many Irish friends growing up? Were there other Irish families at the schools you attended?
- Was there any Irish element to your school? Catholic? Irish teachers? St. Patrick's Day mentioned?
- Did you visit Ireland often as a child? What area did you visit? What were your impressions?
- Do you have family in Ireland? Are you in contact with them?

Negative experiences

- Tell me about your experiences as an Irish person. Did calling yourself Irish cause any problems either in England or in Ireland?

- Have you ever experienced anti-Irish attitudes, jokes etc.? How did you react? Has this changed over time?

Irish identity

- Has your sense of Irishness changed over time?
- When did/do you feel most Irish? What are the things that make you feel Irish?
- Do you tick the 'Irish' option when filling out the ethnicity section of official forms? How do you feel about the Irish in England being classified as an ethnic group?
- If you were introducing yourself to another Irish person in England, where would you say you were from?
- If you were introducing yourself to a non-Irish person, where would you say you were from?
- Do you ever refer to yourself as English/British? When? Do you ever correct people who refer to you as English/British?
- What's the most important difference between being Irish and being English/British?
- What does the term 'Plastic Paddy' mean to you? (Do you ever use it?) What might separate a 'real' Irish person from a 'Plastic Paddy'?
- Do you ever feel the need to 'prove' your Irishness? When might this occur? How do you do this?

Irish community/activities in England

- Do you have many Irish friends now? Migrants or second generation?
- Do you think such a thing as the 'Irish community in England' exists? Would you describe yourself as belonging to it?
- How do you feel about Irish community organisations/ Irish clubs? What role do you think they have?

- Do you celebrate Irish events such as St. Patrick's Day? Or watch sporting events with other Irish people? (Who do you support?) Or engage in other Irish cultural activities?
- Do you read Irish newspapers/ other media?

Localised identities

- How conscious are you of the area/county your parents came from in Ireland?
- Does being from (x) mean something to you?
- Does being from London/Birmingham mean something to you?
- Are there times when being from a certain area in Ireland is more important to you than being Irish?
- Do the Irish people you know in England tend to come from all areas of Ireland or one area specifically?
- Do you feel an affinity with people from "your part" of Ireland?

Relationship to present-day Ireland

- Do you visit Ireland often now? Where do you stay? How do you think you are viewed in Ireland?
- Do you think you could live in Ireland? (Or have you ever done so?)
- (religion question)?

An Irish future?

- (If they have children). Do you think your children feel Irish? Have you encouraged this? (if they don't have children) Do you think younger Irish people in England feel Irish in the same way that you do? How- music/dance/GAA? (If relevant)
Would they have an attachment to a certain area of Ireland?

Appendix 2: Focus group guidelines

Introduce discussion by thanking everyone for coming, making sure everyone knows each other, has signed the consent form etc. Then outline the topic of discussion – most of you have already been kind enough to talk to me in an interview, where the topic was more centred around your own personal experiences as Irish people in England. In this case the topic will be more along the lines of Irishness as a concept, although you should of course feel free to bring your own personal experiences into the discussion.

The idea of the discussion is to allow you to share your views in a relaxed and informal environment. There aren't any right or wrong answers to any of the questions, and all points of view are important. So you shouldn't be worried about your contribution being 'wrong' somehow, about what you're expected to say, or whether your opinion differs to others in the group as the purpose of the discussion is not to reach consensus but rather to allow diverse viewpoints to be heard. Similarly, you shouldn't worry about the length of your contributions but I would ask that we try and make sure that everyone has a chance to be heard. (I'm sure I won't have too much difficulty in keeping things civil, anyway).

Opening questions

Before we get into the discussion itself, in order that we'll be able to identify the various voices on the recording, if we go round the table and if everyone can introduce themselves and say a little bit about themselves.

(see if they introduce Irishness in the self-introduction – they might, given the topic)

Otherwise:

What makes you feel most Irish?

- Cultural aspect – music, language, literature, sport?
- Citizenship/birth?

What makes a ‘real’ Irish person?

- Do you think in some ways the Irish abroad are more in touch with their Irishness than the Irish in Ireland? In what way? Did moving abroad cause you to re-assess your view of ‘Irishness’?
- Is involvement in an Irish community/attending Irish events in England important to maintain a sense of Irishness? Or is it sufficient simply to keep in touch with Ireland?

Irishness in England?

- What do you think of the way Irishness is represented in England? What’s the most high-profile aspect?
- Most high-profile aspect in Milton Keynes?
- Do you feel that public events such as St. Patrick’s Day parades represent an Irishness you can identify with? How about Irish pubs?
- Are there certain aspects of ‘public’ Irishness you see as fake?
- What role does religion play in Irishness in England?
- Do you think Irishness in England has changed over time? How do you see it developing in the future?

- Bring in generational aspect here. If necessary, draw on newspaper article.

- (Do you recognise the type of Irish club mentioned in this piece? Décor? Music?)
Closure of Irish dancehalls?
- What do you think of the proposition that if you want to know something about Irishness you'd be better off asking the children of 1950s emigrants in Britain than you would asking the Irish born children of the '60s, '70s and '80s?
- Is the notion of this Irishness being frozen in time necessarily a positive thing?
- Do you agree that Ireland has become more Americanised? Since you left?
- Do you think 2nd generation people have a different understanding of Irishness to the migrant generation? Which would be a more authentic understanding of Irishness?

Aspects of Irishness in London?

Different types of Irishness from different parts of the country? Is Irishness more associated with rural landscape?

Appendix 3: Joe Horgan article

What will Irishness mean in the future?

Joe Horgan

The Irish Post

24th November, 2007

It has become one of those dismissive clichés about the Irish abroad that they are more Irish than the Irish. But it is also the case that it may well be true. It could well be that the essence of Irishness is to be found outside of Ireland and that this has repercussions for the nature of Ireland itself.

If it could be argued that James Joyce and Samuel Beckett both felt something about Ireland was best explored and illuminated by leaving the place and looking at it from afar then it could also be said that only those from a distance can really see the country.

Those of us living here are easily caught up in Yeats's country of little room – unable to see or think about Ireland coherently because we are so immersed in the everyday.

I recall as a young man sitting in an Irish social club in Birmingham with some cousins over from Ireland.

You know the kind of place, white cottages and green boreens painted on the wall, men and women of the 50s generation in smart clothes, musicians playing the Siege of Ennis, Limerick You're A Lady and Take Me Back To Mayo.

My cousins had never come across anything like it. Pressed on the matter they could say that there was someplace near them where this kind of thing went on but this was not part of their social existence at all. They had never been to places where Irish people from nearly every county gathered, where this music was played, where these Irish sensibilities were displayed.

Those of us brought up by Irish emigrants in Britain may have been living in an Ireland frozen in time but this was a place those growing up in Ireland never even knew.

That was then, of course. But now that Ireland has changed even more dramatically – becoming more and more a carbon copy of every American-lite model of society that consumerism creates – that frozen Ireland of the 1950s we were brought up in can be seen as even more of a vital historical experience.

In other words it could be argued that if you want to know something about Irishness you would be better of [*sic*] asking the children of 1950s emigrants in Britain and maybe the USA than you would asking the Irish born children of the '60s, '70s and '80s.

There is in many ways a clear precedence for this in Irish history.

That is why the Flight of the Earls is seen as marking the end of Gaelic Ireland, why the fleeing of 1 million Irish speakers after the Great Famine is seen as the final death knoll of the Irish language.

These fundamental markers in Irish history are essentially suggesting that at these times the essence of what was Irish left the country.

It is an obvious progression then to suggest that the 500,000 1950s emigrants – most of whom went to Britain – took something essentially Irish with them too and that it was the families they reared away from Ireland who then grew up in this.

Strangely enough in the northern part of this island there is another community that also reflects this experience and pinpoints the problems inherent in it.

Is it not an essential contradiction for Northern Ireland Protestants that they identify themselves as British through an allegiance with a Britain that no longer exists.

The pre or post-First World War image of Britishness that is so integral to the manifestation of their identity has long ceased to be.

Thus their culture has turned in on itself, their physical-force adherents having nowhere to turn to in the recent conflict when the gunmen of Republicanism were able to attach themselves to the politics that had always been part of their creed.

Loyalism had nothing like that, being by and large a working-class Britishness ruthlessly exploited by big-house Unionism. Where they struggle now and what their finest minds such as David Irvine recognised was that they were culturally at a dead end.

Perhaps a similar question mark now hangs over the future of those Irish communities abroad.

How does a vibrant, very genuine culture survive down the years and continue to renew itself.

That it is worth preserving and recording is beyond doubt. History clearly illustrates that it is a part of Irish experience and is replicated through the centuries.

That it is of even more historical importance now, when what is most distinguishably Irish is being consumed by blanket materialism within Ireland itself, is undeniable.

There is more likely to be a debate about what Irishness is in communities abroad than there is in an Ireland itself that has little room for such things unless it involves deciding who Irishness doesn't involve.

More Irish than the Irish certainly might be true. But what is it going to mean?

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Appendix 4: Participant details

Name	Birth/Descent	Location	Age Range	Decade of migration (if applicable)
David	Descent	Milton Keynes	30s	n/a
Matthew	Birth	Birmingham	30s	1990s
Peter	Birth	Birmingham	30s	1990s
Sharon	Birth	London	40s	1980s
James	Descent	London	40s	n/a
Brian	Birth	London	60s	1960s
Liam	Birth	London	20s	2000s
Mairéad	Birth	London	30s	1990s
Robert	Birth	London	30s	1980s
Máire	Birth	London	40s	1980s
Ciarán	Birth	London	70s	1950s
Éamonn	Birth	London	30s	1990s
Tim	Birth	London	40s	1980s
Andrew	Birth	Milton Keynes	50s	1960s
Finbarr	Birth	Milton Keynes	70s	1950s
Peg	Birth	London	70s	1940s
Kate	Descent	London	40s	n/a
Gerry	Birth	Milton Keynes	70s	1950s
Bob	Descent	Milton Keynes	20s	n/a
Betty	Birth	London	70s	1950s
Marion	Descent	Milton Keynes	50s	n/a
Sheila	Descent	London	50s	n/a
Kathleen	Birth	Milton Keynes	60s	1970s
Helen	Descent	Milton Keynes	20s	n/a
Alan	Birth	Milton Keynes	50s	1970s
Sam	Birth	Birmingham	60s	1960s
Becky	Descent	Birmingham	30s	n/a
Eileen	Descent	Birmingham	50s	n/a
Sarah	Descent	Birmingham	20s	n/a
Sinéad	Descent	London	40s	n/a
Áine	Birth	Milton Keynes	50s	1960s



Appendix 5: Approach letter

Marc Scully
Faculty of Social Sciences
The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

Tel: 01908 xxx xxx

Mobile number: 0779 xxx xxxx

E-mail: M.Scully@open.ac.uk

To Whom It May Concern:

A study of Irish people's personal experiences of being Irish in England

Thank you for your expressed interest in taking part in this study. If you decide to go ahead, your involvement will make an important contribution to this project.

There are two stages of this research project – the first consisting of interviews and the second consisting of focus groups. Agreeing to take part in the interview stage in no way compels you to take part in the focus group stage (nor vice versa, should you prefer).

If you agree to participate, you will be asked to take part in an informal interview discussing your personal history and experiences of being Irish in England. Our conversations are expected to last around 45 minutes to an hour. The information you give

will be treated in confidence. It will be used to explore similarities and differences in the various ways Irish people talk about their own experiences of being Irish in England.

If you are happy to continue with your involvement in the project, at a later date you may be asked to join in an informal group discussion with 4-6 other people, to talk about Irish-themed places, activities and events in England and your own personal experiences of these. The discussion is expected to last about 45 minutes. The information you give in this context will, again, be treated in confidence, and will be used in order to explore the extent to which Irish people participate in 'Irish events' in England and how this contributes to the way 'Irishness' is understood.

In both cases, the discussion will be audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. All names will be changed to protect the anonymity of everybody who takes part. Excerpts from the transcript will form part of the final research report as well as any academic papers which are published as a result of this project. The data will not be used for any purpose other than academic research and teaching. Your privacy will be protected and you will not be identified by name in any published work relating to this project. A transcript will be made available for you if you would like your own copy.

This study is the basis for my PhD research being carried out at the Open University. My research is supervised by Dr. Gail Lewis and Dr. Jovan Byford of the Faculty of Social Sciences at The Open University (address above). The project is funded by the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Open University.

If you would like to participate in this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please do contact me either by telephone at either of the two numbers above, by e-mail, or in writing at the address above. We can then arrange an informal interview at a time and place convenient for you.

Many thanks for considering participating in this study. Your time is much appreciated.

With regards,

Marc Scully

Appendix 6: Sample Letter of consent (interviews).

Marc Scully
Faculty of Social Sciences
The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

Tel: 01908 xxxxxx

Mobile number: 0779 xxxxxxxx

E-mail: M.Scully@open.ac.uk

Date

Dear xxx

A study of Irish people's personal experiences of being Irish in England

Thank you for your expressed interest in taking part in this study. If you decide to go ahead, your involvement will make an important contribution to this project.

As mentioned previously, you are about to take part in an informal interview discussing your personal history of being Irish in England. By signing the form overleaf, you indicate that you understand that:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary
- You are free to withdraw at any time and discontinue participation.

- The discussion will be audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Excerpts from the transcript will form part of the final research report as well as any academic papers which are published as a result of this project.
- The data will not be used for any purpose other than academic research and teaching.
- Your privacy will be protected and you will not be identified by name in any published work relating to this project. A transcript will be made available for you if you would like your own copy.
- Should you wish to withdraw your data following the interview, you may do so at any time up to the writing up of the research project.

There are two copies of this form, both of which I have already signed – the second copy is for you to keep.

Many thanks for participating in this study. Your time is much appreciated.

Marc Scully

Participant: Name (Please print) _____

Signature _____

Researcher: Name _____

Signature _____

Appendix 7: Letter of consent (focus groups).

Marc Scully
Faculty of Social Sciences
The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
MK7 6AA

Tel: 01908 xxxxxx

Mobile number: 0779 xxxxxxxx

E-mail: M.Scully@open.ac.uk

Date

Dear _____,

A study of Irish people's personal experiences of being Irish in England

Thank you for continuing to take part in this study. Your involvement will make an important contribution to this project.

As mentioned previously, you are about to take part in an informal group discussion to talk about Irish-themed places, activities and events in England and your own personal experiences of these. By signing the form overleaf, you indicate that you understand that:

- Your participation in this study is voluntary
- You are free to withdraw at any time and discontinue participation.

- The discussion will be audio recorded and later transcribed for analysis. Excerpts from the transcript will form part of the final research report as well as any academic papers which are published as a result of this project.
- The data will not be used for any purpose other than academic research and teaching.
- In order to protect the anonymity of participants, all names will be changed in transcription and you will not be identified by name in any published work relating to this project. Similarly, you have a responsibility to treat the contributions of other participants as confidential.
- Full transcripts will be made available to each participant on request. Should you prefer your data not to be shared in this way, you may request it be omitted from transcripts – however, transcripts cannot be recalled retrospectively for this purpose.
- Should you wish to withdraw your data following the focus group, you may do so at any time up to the writing up of the research project.

There are two copies of this form, both of which I have already signed – the second copy is for you to keep.

Many thanks for participating in this study. Your time is much appreciated.

Marc Scully

Participant: Name (Please print) _____

Signature _____

Researcher: Name _____

Signature _____

Appendix 8: Transcription conventions.

KEY:

(Word or words) = Brackets indicating transcribers' doubt about spoken word(s)

- = Abrupt end to speech

{0.00} = Undetermined word(s) or stretch of speech indicated by time on recording

Underlined word = Speaker emphasis

[] = **Other** speaker's interjection

[= Interrupted speech

Wo:rd = Word spoken noticeably slower than surrounding speech

(..hh) = In breath (very noticeable)

(hh) = Out breath (very noticeable)

(2.0) = Timed pause in speech

(.) = Untimed pause in speech

word = Speech spoken with laughter

(*laughs*) = Laughter

[*placename*] = Name replaced for confidentiality purposes