

**AN EXPLORATION OF THE IMPACT OF LEARNING THE
IRISH LANGUAGE ON FIRST GENERATION IMMIGRANTS'
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION INTO IRISH
SOCIETY**

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ABSTRACT

Research has shown that young immigrants experience integration into their host society through many different processes. There is no one common definition for integration, and approaches to policies for integration differ between countries. Significant immigration to Ireland is a new phenomenon with increasing numbers starting to arrive from the early 1990's. Many of these immigrants are now part of Irish society. Immigration became an issue for the Irish government at that time, and although there was a pause after the financial crisis in 2007, there is now a new wave of arrivals following the economic recovery. By 2011, there were over 544,000 non-nationals living in Ireland (CSO, 2011). It is therefore increasingly important for both economic and social reasons that immigrants participate fully in Irish society and are not marginalised.

Government policies in Ireland include the use of language and education as tools to achieve integration, with an emphasis placed on the education sector for policy implementation. English language proficiency is a key goal of immigration policy, with little reference made to the Irish language. Immigrants coming to Ireland before the age of 11 do learn the Irish language at school through the government's national Irish language policy. However, the focus for many immigrant children is on English, as it is not their mother tongue and is the everyday spoken language and language, of administration, in Ireland. Although the Irish government's policies for integration are currently under review, little research has been undertaken into how integration is experienced by young immigrants in Ireland.

This study explores the experiences of young immigrants in Ireland through a qualitative research method, involving nine semi-structured interviews. Participants were all first generation immigrants (i.e. born outside Ireland) who had learned the Irish language for a period of not less than three years. This study also examines how learning Irish impacted on their social and cultural integration into Irish society.

This integration was experienced by the participants in this study through feeling 'a sense of belonging', 'seeing Ireland as home,' 'making friends', 'participating in Irish society', having a 'familiarity with customs and norms' and feeling a 'sense of identity'.

Some countries, e.g. Canada, with two state languages have shown how to use their minority language effectively as a tool for integration. Although the Irish language policy targets everyone including immigrants, it does not specifically use the Irish language as a tool for integration and very limited research has been undertaken into the impact that learning and

speaking Irish has on integration. The experiences of the participants in this group showed that learning Irish positively impacted their social and cultural integration and could be used as a part of integration policy.

Key Words:

First generation, immigrants, integration, host language, minority languages, immigration, Irish language

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Immigration in Ireland:

Immigration is increasing across Europe and for some countries, including Ireland, it is a new phenomenon. Since 1994 the number of immigrants has increased considerably and although statistics show it slowed after 2007 following the financial crisis, numbers are growing once again. By April 2015, the CSO (2011) estimates that 12.5% of the population were non-Irish citizens. Immigration has a significant impact economically, socially and culturally on Irish society. Previous research (Berry 1990, 1997) has shown the importance of immigrant's participation fully in society.

The increase in immigration figures rose steadily every year from 8,000 in 1996 to 67,300 in 2007 according to Quinn, Stanley, Corona and O'Connell (2008, cited by Gilligan, McGrath, Ní Raghallaigh, Scholtz, 2010). There has been a period of net emigration following the financial crisis in 2007/8; however, excluding Irish nationals, the trend of growing net immigration has once again been clearly established. 16.8% of the population consisted of immigrants at the end of 2012 according to McGinnity, Quinn, Kingston, O'Connell (2013). The main immigrant groups include Polish – 2.7%; UK – 2.5%; Lithuanian - .8%; Latvian - .5%; Romanian - .2%; Slovakian - .2%; German - .2% and largest non-European include – Nigerian - .4%; Indian - .4%; Filipino -.3%; US American and Chinese - .2% CSO (2011). The number of immigrants adopting Irish citizenship is also growing.

Figures from the 2011 census show that one in eight people between 0-19 years of age are from an ethnic and/or migrant background (159,424), this rises to one in seven children under the age of 14 (CSO, 2011). The ESRI institute published a report in June 2012 which highlighted the fact that almost 25% of births in 2010 were to mothers born outside Ireland. In 2004, when this information was first collected, just 16% of births were to mothers born outside Ireland. Thus, while immigration to Ireland has slowed, a substantial number of immigrants see Ireland as their home and have settled there (ESRI, 2004).

Integration policy in Ireland:

Prior to 2000, there was effectively no policy on immigration to Ireland. The government then responded to the increase in immigration through three policy documents. In 2000 'Integration: A two way process,' which viewed the integration of immigrants as a sequence, whereby immigrants become able to participate in Irish society, without having to relinquish their cultural identity (Dept. of Justice Equality and Law Reform, 2000:11). This was

followed in 2005 by ‘Managing Diversity, The National Action Plan against Racism,’ which aimed to provide direction and guidance to address racism and develop a society that was more inclusive and intercultural (NPAR, 2005:41). In 2008, ‘Migration Nation’, the most recent policy statement was published. This outlined the government’s strategy to address integration and diversity. Ireland’s integration policies are currently under review again and a new strategy is expected in 2016.

The Irish government currently adopts the EU definition of integration as a two way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and their host society. This particularly pertains to language, with government policy targeting those who apply for long-term residency or citizenship, to become proficient in the English language, being the daily spoken language of the country (Migration Nation, 2008).

Language policy:

Language and education are among the primary tools used by governments globally for integration. The Irish government targets both language and education for integration purposes and places considerable emphasis on the education sector for policy implementation. Language policy for immigrants focus on the English language.

All immigrant children who come to Ireland before the age of 11 years of age do learn the Irish language at school. However, for many children their primary language learning needs are focussed on English. Also, those who arrive older than 11 years are exempt from learning Irish. The government’s Irish language policy (20-Year Strategy for the Irish Language 2010-2030: Dept of Education and Skills, 2010) aims to ensure that as many citizens as possible become bilingual and focuses on Irish becoming a living language within families and communities. However, there is no specific facility for immigrants to learn the Irish language, nor does policy address the use of Irish as a tool for integration.

This study also explores countries with two official state languages, such as Canada and Wales, where like Ireland, one is a minority language and examines how these countries use their minority language as a tool for integration. It additionally explores how learning the (minority) Irish language impacted on the participants in this study who are first generation immigrants, on their social and cultural integration into Irish society. It explores whether the language provided them with a greater understanding of their peers and Irish society. And it considers whether the Irish language could be used as a tool for integration as part of immigration policy.

Chapter 2 conducts a review of the theoretical and empirical literature on integration, the use of language and education as tools for integration and looks at countries with two state language who use their minority language for integration purposes. The review pertains to literature globally in Europe and in Ireland. Chapter 3 outlines the methodological approach adopted for the exploratory purposes of this study. It includes the sample framework and the instruments used in the data collection and analysis. Ethical considerations are addressed and a demographic profile of the participants is provided. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the research study, under the headings of ‘social integration’, ‘cultural integration’ and ‘sense of identity’. Chapter 5 presents an analysis of the key findings relating to the literature reviewed. Chapter 6 concludes the study with policy recommendations.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction:

This chapter presents a review of the literature on the various definitions, measurements and goals of integration and considers how these definitions and measurements are both contested and continue to evolve. The question of how integration is understood and perceived by young immigrants is also examined along with both the strategies they adopt to integrate into their host societies and the strategies their host societies adopt to integrate them.

The literature on the roles of education and language as tools for integration is reviewed with particular consideration given to countries with two state languages, of which one is a minority language. Finally a review of the literature on the Irish language and the Irish language policy is conducted, in the context of social and cultural integration.

Definitions, Goals and Measurements of Integration:

A review of the literature shows that there is ongoing discussion about, and considerable contesting of the definitions of ‘integration’. Definitions are considered both at the level of individual experience and at group level, and in relation to how societies’ facilitate and impact individuals becoming part of their host society. There is no single common definition for integration in the context of immigrant integration into a host society and although the concept of integration is regularly spoken about, it is rarely defined. (Stevenson and Schanze, 2009)

Several attempts have been made to define and develop indicators that could be used to measure integration at European level (Council of Europe, 1996; Gutzinter and Biezeveld, 2003; Ager and Strang, 2004; Spencer and Cooper, 2006; British Council 2007). The European Union developed a framework of Common Basic Principles (CBP) on Integration to guide policy development. CBP 1 views integration as

‘A dynamic two way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of member states’.

(EU Commission, 2004: CBP1)

Measurements of integration vary among countries and continue to change, and therefore no commonly agreed indicators of measurement. Recent terrorist attacks in the US, Europe and globally, for example, have resulted in changes in approaches and attitudes to integration.

Although little is known about how integration is perceived or experienced, or what the underlying dynamics are (Ward, 2013). Schellenberg's (2004) view recognises that

‘Integration is understood as a sense of belonging, it is a reflection of integration into social networks and institutions, and it fosters feelings of social solidarity with the core or socially predominant group’.

Schellenberg (2004, cited by Wu, Schimmele and Hou, 2012: 383)

There is no common approach to defining goals for integration by governments. The European Commission uses its Common Basic Principles to promote integration. CBP 11 aims to develop clear goals, indicators and mechanisms to support integration. However, there is a lack of clearly defined goals on integration among individual governments in Europe.

[Approaches to Integration:](#)

Individual countries have different approaches to measuring integration and there has been a shift away from the concept of multiculturalism as a goal of integration, particularly in the US and Canada since the 9/11 attacks. This shift has resulted in a move towards a goal of assimilation. These changes in approach and blending of terms are also reflected in some European countries where current policies on integration could be placed some way in between the two ideas at the heart of ‘integration’; ‘assimilation’ and ‘multiculturalism’, located at each end of a conceptual spectrum (Extra and Spotti, 2009).

Integration occurs generally when there is involvement of immigrants in both their heritage culture and that of the national society (Berry and Sabatier, 2010). There are a number of terms used to describe the various approaches to integration, these include

Assimilation, which occurs when individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural heritage and actively look to participate in the culture of their host society. It is experienced as a process where cultural differences between the immigrant minority group becomes absorbed into the culture of the host majority (Extra and Spotti, 2009).

Acculturation, which occurs where there is mutual accommodation between heritage and host cultures. It is experienced as a process through which individuals or groups while maintaining their heritage culture participate fully in their host society (Berry, 1990, 1997).

Multiculturalism, which occurs where cultures participate together in their host society. It is experienced where cultural diversity is a feature of the society and includes race and religions of all cultural groups (Berry, 2011).

Marginalisation, which occurs where individuals don't wish to participate in the culture of the host society and where frequently for reasons of enforced cultural loss and experiences of discrimination, there is little mutual cultural acceptance.

Separation, which occurs when ethno-cultural group members value holding onto their heritage more than interacting with the host society. It is experienced when the individual or group only value their own culture according to Berry (1974).

Although measurements of integration are difficult to define, for many, their experience of acculturation and integration is, as a 'process' or 'journey' or described as 'reaching a balance', between their heritage culture and that of their host society according to (Sirin and Fine, 2008). There are however, many experiences and perceptions of how integration is processed. Studies by Rudmin (2003 cited by Ward and Kus, 2012) state

'that the population of short and long term migrants classified as integrated varies widely across studies even when using the same assessment instruments.'

Rudmin (2003, cited by Ward and Kus, 2012:475)

Policy researchers agree that there is no one measurement of integration and that the patterns within indicators are complex. Therefore approaches to measurement need to be flexible rather than hierarchical. (Feldman, Gilmartin, Loyal and Migge, 2008) also note that 'causal' or 'linear' relationships are established between certain indicators, which would impact integration outcomes. Changes in government policy in some European countries reflect the changes in approaches and attitudes to immigration. Policy is becoming increasingly defined in the context of the problems associated with immigration rather than the more positive aspects of integration.

Integration of Young Immigrants:

Studies undertaken by Castles, Korac, Vasta, Vertovec (2002, cited by Feldman, Gilmartin, Loyal and Migge, 2008) contend that the question of how newcomers become part of society must first be addressed, when approaching the subject of integration. Consideration then needs to be given to the practicalities involved in building up relationships with the host

society (Feldman, Gilmartin, Loyal and Migge, 2008). Integration, according to Berry (2005, 2007) can happen only in multicultural societies; and it is also the preferred strategy between immigrants and their host society, where there is a retaining of the culture of origin while adapting to the new culture (Berry, 1997).

Many studies agree on the positive outcomes of this approach to integration, where immigrants who involve themselves in both their heritage culture and that of their national society have the most positive psychological well-being (Sang and Ward, 2006; Ward, 2009; Ward and Lin, 2005).

This literature reflects the views that perceptions and experiences of integration are diverse and there is ongoing discussion of what the integration processes are and how different factors may influence the outcomes. Some factors have been identified as negatively impacting immigrants; they include perceived discrimination (Berry, Phinney, Sam and Veder, 2006) and identity crisis (Phinney, 1991). Equally a strong cultural identity (Phinney, Horenczyk, Liebkind and Vedder, 2001) and a high level of education of parents (OECD, 2015) have been identified as positively impacting integration outcomes.

Comparative research undertaken (Berry and Sabatier, 2010) among second-generation (born in host country of parents born abroad) immigrant youth in Montreal and Paris examined the strategies they used to adapt to their host society. This research differs in that it focusses on first generation immigrants (i.e. born abroad).

The comparative research (Berry and Sabatier, 2010) in Canada and France also looked at government policies in both host cities and how these impacted on the young people's experiences. The results showed that the most positive impact occurred where a variety of strategies were used by young people, to adapt to their host societies and that those who maintained their heritage culture while settling in were well adjusted psychologically, both at school and in their communities. The comparative research reflected the same pattern in both societies, those who achieved integration fared significantly better in terms of high self-esteem, compared with those who were marginalised. Immigrants who adopted strategies of assimilation and separation fell in between. This pattern was stronger in Canada than in France which was primarily due to the different national policies and experiences of discrimination.

In Quebec, priority is given to the French language and culture. The young immigrants in Montreal, while experiencing a largely positive multicultural approach with elements of

assimilation, fared considerably better than the young immigrants in Paris who experienced a primarily assimilationist approach.

Bouchard and Taylor's study (2008, cited by Berry and Sabatier, 2010) noted that Montreal is in the province of Quebec where the Canadian policy of 'multiculturalism' has been modified to that of 'interculturalism'. There was a significant contrast in the approaches between the two countries, the main difference being in their language policies. Government of Canada (1971 cited by Berry and Sabatier, 2010) policy states that

“while there are two official languages, there are no official cultures”.

Government of Canada, (1971, cited by Berry and Sabatier 2010:193)

Strategies used by young Muslim immigrants in the integration and adaptation process were the focus of research (Ward, 2013) in New Zealand. Studies (Stuart and Ward, 2011) have shown (Stuart et al. 2010), that the experiences of acculturation and the strategies young people use to negotiate multiple social identities impact on their adaptation to their host society. The young immigrants in this study (Ward, 2013) described strategies which included approaches that allowed them to 'reach a balance' in managing their roles, relationships and responsibilities. This included negotiating identity and religious and societal demands. At the same time these strategies allowed them to retain their traditional values and enhanced their sense of self-worth.

Although this research provides an insight into the processes which young Muslims adopted to become part of their host society, a principal focus of the study was on identity and insight into how they accommodated their ethnicity and religion in New Zealand. The role of language was not explored. The research does not identify whether the Muslim youths were first or second generation. For first generation immigrants, the age of immigration in the adaptation process is significant because children are rarely involved in the decision to immigrate. This factor was outlined in studies by Bartley and Spoonley (2008, cited by Wu, Schimmele and Hou, 2012) and supported by earlier research by Rumbaut (2004) who identified

‘Preadolescence is a crucial life stage in the immigration experience because child immigrants have limited choice in the decision to immigrate and also encounter unique age-related problems in the adaptation process’.

Rumbaut, (2004, cited by Wu, Schimmele and Hou, 2012: 386)

The impact of age as an influencing factor in integration, was reflected in studies (Doyle, 2011) of young Muslim immigrants in Ireland, which found that there was a difference between the experiences of those who had been in the country for less than one year, compared to those who had been there considerably longer. This study also highlighted the importance of language fluency of the host country in their experiences of integration.

These studies on young immigrants are insightful in highlighting the impact of language policy on integration outcomes. They describe the different approaches and strategies used by young immigrants to adapt to their host countries, and show that the experiences and perceptions of the integration process are diverse. As the comparative research in Canada and France pertained to second generation immigrants, further research is needed into the process of integration for young immigrants who are first generation, as immigrants increasingly fall into this category.

Education as a Tool for Integration:

Many EU member states target their education sector for implementing integration policies and measures. Ireland supports the European view on education as an enabler for integration strategy. This states that

‘Education has an important contribution to make to the successful integration of migrants into European societies starting with early childhood, education and basic schooling, but continuing throughout all lifelong learning. Targeted measures and greater flexibility are needed to cater for learners with a migrant background whatever their age and to provide them with support and opportunities they need to become active and successful citizens and empower them to develop their full potential’.

(EU Council, 2009:4);

The Education Act (1998) provided for assistance to be given to all of those working in the education sector, to ensure that inclusion and integration would become the norm. In 2005, the Department of Education and Skills focussed on language skills and encouraged second generation children to learn English and Irish, while maintaining their heritage language (DES, 2005). Immigrant parents in Ireland are typically supportive of this approach as they view multilingualism as culturally beneficial and it is important in helping them settle into their local communities (Roder, Ward and Frese, 2014).

In 2010, the Department of Education and Skills introduced an ‘Intercultural strategy’ aimed at ensuring that all students would experience an education that respected the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society (DES, 2010).

Language as a Tool for Integration:

Government policies on the role of language have significantly influenced integration policies and governments frequently use language as a tool for integration. The European Union’s view is that language is crucial to integration and many European governments support the view that the acquisition of language skills supports integration (European commission 2011:4). The European Commission’s Common Basic Principle No. 4 states that

‘Basic knowledge of the host society’s language, history and institutions is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is successful to integration’.

(EU Commission, 2004: CBP4)

A number of language policies have been used to successfully integrate minority groups, e.g. Lithuania, where changes in languages and citizenship policies have led to more positive attitudes amongst the minority Russian communities (Hogan-Brun-Ramoniene, 2005).

Many countries’ individual experiences and history of immigration are reflected in their government’s immigration policies. Countries such as Canada and the US have a longer history of immigration than many European countries who are now experiencing a large increase in immigration. Recent terrorist attacks and the increasing numbers of immigrants in the last two decades, have influenced some government’s approaches to immigration and integration and have challenged the previously multicultural approach taken by many governments. (Ros I Sole, 2014).

A number of countries have made learning the host language a cornerstone of their integration policy. For example, the Netherlands has made it obligatory for immigrants seeking to settle in the country, to take a computerised test on the national language (Dutch) and to have a knowledge of the national society Extra and Spotti (2009, cited by Ros I Sole, 2014). Other countries such as the UK have made learning the host language a requirement for citizenship UK Government (2014, cited by Ros I Sole, 2014)

‘Currently the law in the UK establishes that in order to settle and become a British citizen in the UK, immigrants are asked to meet both ‘the knowledge of

English’ and ‘life in the UK requirements.’

UK Government (2014, cited by Ros I Sole, 2014: 72)

Recent policy changes may also reflect the way that different governments interpret the link between language learning and whether this emphasises the positive or negative aspects of integration. Changes in some European government’s policies reflect the use of the language as a tool for social control, which is seen as an important aspect of national security. There is considerable discussion, though little research, about the links between language and the issue of national security. A number of socio-linguistic studies such as (Hogan-Brun, Mar-Molinero and Stevenson, 2009 and Avermaet, 2009, and Extra and Spotti, 2009) reflect that many European integration policies may not reflect the needs of many multi-lingual migrants today.

Evidence from Countries with Two State Languages, One a Minority Language:

Being bilingual means the ability to communicate in two languages. Research into early language learning among young school children shows the benefits of bilingualism in terms of cognitive development and improved cognitive awareness (Barac and Bialystok, 2010). Studies on bilingualism by Clement (1980) and Noels and Clement (1996) agree that speaking two languages impacts positively on integration outcomes and on an immigrant’s ‘sense of identity’ and ‘belonging’ and supports research by Collier and Thomas, (1988), and Kim (1988, cited by Freynet and Clement, 2015) which asserts that

‘Language confidence in speaking a language allows understanding of cultural particularities and is necessary for identification with an ethnic group.’

Collier and Thomas (1988) and Kim (1988 cited by Freynet and Clement, 2015:58)

Research in Canada undertaken by Boissoneault (1996, 2004) and Dallaire (2003, cited by Freynet and Clement, 2015) found that Canadian Francophones tend to identify themselves as bilingual and associate with both the French and English languages.

The province of Quebec emphasises a ‘common’ culture, where learners are encouraged to participate, contribute and work towards changing what it means to be Quebecois in Canada. Everyone in Quebec, regardless of their origin is encouraged to learn the French language (Government du Quebec, 2001). Canada, and across Quebec specifically, are examples of

where immigrants can revitalise a language. Language policies through the Charter 2010 strategy and francisation programmes introduced immigrants to French in Montreal and Quebec according to Lamarre (2013, cited by Higham, 2012). Many of the immigrants made their initial contact with French in the adult learning centres where many language courses are subsidised by the immigration office or 'Emploi Quebec', the employment agency of Quebec. Many of the teachers interviewed for the research saw themselves as ambassadors, not just to teach the language but also to support integration (Higham, 2014). Thus, the language policy in Quebec offers an influential framework and facility for immigrants to learn French. Freynet and Clement (2010) noted

'Equilibrium between both languages would be fairly common throughout minority groups in Canada. In fact, most members do not appear to adhere more to one language group than another'.

(Freynet and Clement, 2015:55-72)

Spain and Wales are other examples of countries with two state languages. Some of these countries' integration policies have included the use of their minority language as a tool for integration. However, the impact of the policies vary and their outcomes may reflect their government's approaches to immigration and integration. Attitudes too, to a minority language, play a role in influencing the extent to which a language is used in a country with two official languages (West and Graham, 2011).

In 2002, a language test was introduced in Wales for residents seeking British citizenship. Applications were required to show a sufficient knowledge of English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic. From 2007 this requirement was extended to include immigrants wanting to remain in the UK. The Welsh Language Measures (2011) placed emphasis on language skills with equal status given to both English and Welsh. The purpose of these measures was to provide a facility through which asylum seekers and refugees could live and settle into life in Wales, as outlined by the Welsh Govt. (2013, cited by Higham, 2014). However, there were contradictions between policy and practice for immigrants who wanted to learn Welsh. The English government promoted learning English to British immigrants and provided classes for them and although the Welsh government promoted both Welsh and English to immigrants in Wales, it only supplied and subsidised English classes. Thus a lack of funds, information and accessibility were shown to negatively impact on immigrants who learned

Welsh, and those who learned the Welsh language were the exception rather than the norm. Brooks (2009 cited by Higham, 2014) states that

‘ignoring power inequalities between English and Welsh languages “opens the door to the possibility that the minority language might be identified as a barrier to the social inclusion of certain marginalised groups’.

Brooks (2009 cited by Higham, 2014:116)

In Spain, Catalan is spoken in Catalonia and in some other smaller areas in Spain in the east and north-east. In 2008 a study of the language showed that of those over 15 years old in Catalonia, most can understand (99.9%), speak (78.3%), read (81.7%) or write (62.3%) Catalan (Arnau, 2013).

Since the early 1990’s Catalonia has used the internet to promote their language. The NGO language partnership ‘Voluntariat per la Llengua’ works with the host community and immigrants, to teach and support them in learning the language and integrating into local society. Across all of Spain it is estimated that a relatively high number of people speak Catalan, with approximately 4 million mother tongue speakers. Approximately 3 million people speak Catalan as their second or third language and 2 million understand but do not speaking it. It is the main language in the education and administrative sectors of Catalonia (Darmody and Daly, 2015).

Ireland’s minority language differs from many other minority languages, in that the Irish language is the country’s first official state language (Watson, 1996 cited by Darmody and Daly, 2015). However, the Irish government does not use the Irish language for integration purposes. As little research has been undertaken on the impact of learning Irish on integration, its impact is unknown.

The various outcomes outlined reflect different governments’ approaches to using their minority state language as a tool for integration. These outcomes show that a minority language can be used effectively to achieve integration. However, they also reflect how gaps in policies may influence their practical implementation and negatively impact their use as a tool for integration.

Irish Language as a Tool for Integration:

The Irish government's language strategy (DES, 2010) promotes the use of both English and Irish in the community and aims to ensure that as many citizens as possible are bilingual, whilst also increasing the number of families who use Irish every day. All immigrant children in Ireland are given the opportunity and support to learn the Irish language and to participate in Irish language activities. However, the same opportunity is not available to their parents. Studies on second generation immigrants have reflected that although immigrants value the ability to communicate in different languages, there is no evidence to show that adult immigrants are encouraged to learn the Irish language (Roder and Ward, 2014).

The role and perceptions of the Irish language are complex and are reflected in the diverse attitudes shown towards learning the language in the education sector and within Irish society. An Irish language survey in 2013 (Darmody and Daly, 2015) showed that three out of four parents indicated that they considered it important that their child grows up learning Irish, but in reality, few actually spoke it. The 2012 Census figures showed that 41% of the population reported that they could speak Irish in the Republic of Ireland, and 11% in the North of Ireland. Earlier studies by O'Riagain (2008, cited by Darmody and Daly, 2015) contend that the use of the language is not in line with attitudes towards it.

The 2013 survey (Darmody and Daly, 2015) showed that the Irish language was perceived in the education sector as a lesser subject than other curriculum subjects. Although the Irish language policy focusses considerably on schools, it was deemed to have had limited success in producing bilingual speakers (Murtagh, 2007, cited by Darmody and Daly, 2015). Recent studies by Kennedy (2012, cited by Darmody and Daly, 2015) contend that the education system is overburdened as the sector for reviving the Irish language.

Attitudes to minority languages can significantly influence the enthusiasm and motivation for many to learn and use them, and the perceived status of a language by society can also impact the extent to which it is spoken. Hornberger, Skilton and Sylvester (2000, cited by Darmody and Daly, 2015) assert that

‘One needs to be mindful of the status of languages within jurisdictions with more than one official language which may have adopted bilingual policies. In reality one tends to have a higher status than the other’.

Hornberger, Skilton and Sylvester, (2000, cited by Darmody and Daly, 2015:11)

Attitudes to learning the Irish language are complex and continue to incite public debate in both the education sector and in Irish society. They also continue to evolve, and

‘while attitudes may be positive or negative, they can also be instrumental or integrative’.

(Darmody and Daly, 2015:10)

Irish government policy supports learning the Irish language at school for all immigrants who come to Ireland before the age of 11. Schools play an influential role towards learning the language, and although there are some perceptions of Irish as a ‘dead language’ in the education sector and in Irish society, all children who learn Irish leave school with at least two languages.

The Irish Language and ‘Sense of Identity’:

The roles of language, language confidence and citizenship have been shown in studies to be influencing factors on ‘sense of identity’ (Liebscher and Dailey-O’Cain, 2013), on ‘group identity’ (Cavallaro, 2005 and Fargelt, 2006) and on ‘sense of belonging’. The use of multiple languages and language varieties is linked to identity and is recognised as an influencing factor in supporting and promoting social interaction where speakers can use one or more languages to achieve a specific interaction (Mendoza-Denton and Hall, 2010).

Research into immigrant experiences in Ireland have shown that immigrant children may not see themselves in definitive terms of being ‘Irish’, but may feel partly Irish and partly another nationality, or in some cases, not any particular nationality. Migrant children often refer to themselves in hyphenated ways, using different cultural frames of reference to create new identities, where their heritage culture may not be a strong part of this identity. Research has shown that participation in local communities is valued and that familiarity with local norms and cultures helps immigrant children to settle into Irish society (Ni Laoire, Buskin, Fina Carpena-Mendez and Allen White, 2009).

Irish citizenship was granted to more than 85,000 immigrants from 161 countries between 2012-2015. The increase in immigrants who now see Ireland as ‘home’ is reflected in these citizenship numbers. Research has shown that the longer immigrants have settled into a country the more likely they are to become citizens (Immigrant Council of Ireland, 2010).

Studies have also shown the positive relationship between citizenship and sense of identity (Sindic, 2011) and between citizenship and integration outcomes (McGinnity, 2013).

The 2011 census showed that one out of seven immigrants are children under the age of 14, the majority of whom will learn Irish in the education system in the next decade (CSO, 2011). As many immigrant children at school today will become Irish citizens in the future, it is important to consider the impact that learning the Irish language has on their 'sense of identity' and 'sense of belonging'.

Summary:

The literature presented here shows that there is no one common definition applied to integration and that definitions continue to be contested. It shows that measurements and goals for integration vary and continue to evolve, and that there are many experiences of how integration is perceived and processed. Individual governments' responses to integration also vary and many adopt approaches reflecting their countries' individual experiences and history.

Further research is needed into how young immigrants experience and perceive the process of integration particularly in relation to first generation immigrants in Ireland, Europe and worldwide.

Approaches to language policy as a tool for integration also continue to evolve. Some governments may define policy in accordance with their interpretation of the link between language learning and whether it emphasises the positive or negative aspects of integration. The literature outlines how language policy as a tool for integration currently reflects a fragmented approach in Europe and a diverse approach worldwide.

A number of countries with two state languages use their minority language as a tool for integration, with varying outcomes. Canada has experienced a more positive impact through its language policy than either Wales or Spain. Many outcomes reflect the individual approaches adopted.

As immigration to Ireland continues, the Irish government policy targets both language and education as tools for integration. However, the emphasis for young immigrants coming to Ireland is on learning English. All young immigrants who come to Ireland before the age of 11 years learn the Irish language at school. There is under-research on the impact of learning the Irish (minority) language on integration. Accordingly, the present study aims to explore

the impact of learning the Irish language on first generation immigrants' social and cultural integration into Irish society. This review of the literature provides the framework for exploration of the themes outlined. The methodology for the research design is outlined and discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction:

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the research aims and design underpinning this study. It explains the methodological approach taken, including the methods for data collection and analysis. Ethical concerns are addressed and the chapter concludes with a demographic profile of the participants.

Research Aims, Design and Methodological Approach:

Themes identified from the literature review relate to the process of integration and how it is experienced and understood by young immigrants. This study aims to ‘give voice’ to first generation young people who have come to Ireland and to explore their experiences and perceptions of how learning the Irish language impacted on their social and cultural integration.

The numbers of immigrants continuing to arrive in Ireland and the forging of social and cultural links between native Irish society and immigrants is important from a social, cultural and economic perspective. As language and education are commonly chosen tools for integration, this study considers the government’s policies on integration and relevant aspects of the policy on Irish language. As already noted, Irish language policy provides for all immigrant children who come to Ireland prior to the age of 11 to learn Irish and this study looks at how learning the Irish language may provide a mechanism to support their social and cultural integration into Irish society.

A survey of the relevant literature was conducted through data bases and search engines including Science Direct, Google Scholar, JStor, ERIC and LION. Searches in peer-reviewed publications, as well as reports and publications from the EU and Irish government were conducted. Key words and phrases includes ‘First generation immigrants, integration’, ‘first generation, host language, integration’, ‘languages, integration, second language’, ‘cultural integration, well-being’ and ‘cultural identity, host language’. A search was also conducted relating to all literature using additional key words and phrases to those outlined including, ‘minority languages, policies’, ‘Irish language, social integration’, ‘first generation, Irish language, integration’, ‘integration policies, Irish language’. An evaluation of this literature provided an understanding of the topic and helped to frame the research question, aims and objectives.

This is an exploratory study based on a constructivist paradigm, defined as an ontological position

‘that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors’ (Bryman, 2012: 710).

This framework is pertinent to the study as the impact of the Irish language on immigrants is a subject with little prior research. Also because there is a lack of quantitative instruments, there was a need to design a set of relevant instruments (see Appendix A). Each instrument represented an epistemology through which an interpretivist approach was taken, this placed emphasis on the understanding of the social world of the participants, by examining their experiences (Bryman, 2012) and interpreting them.

Initially there was a methodological concern about focussing on the experiences of a group who were pre-disposed towards the Irish language. Clearly such a group would not be representative of the population of first generation immigrants. However, there is value in examining the experiences of those with a high level interest in the language as it provides an insight into the potential of language learning on social and cultural integration. The study does not seek to be representative of the population or to prove a causal relationship.

This methodology takes a qualitative approach, identified as suitable for exploring issues that are complex and for studying processes that occur over time (Snape and Spencer, 2003). This approach was appropriate for exploring the central issues and key themes identified from the literature review on how language impacts integration in an Irish context. This approach also provided support for the instrument design. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), the use of field-notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to self are included in their definitions of qualitative research. This study used field-notes, interviews, conversations, recordings and memos to self, thus supporting a qualitative approach.

The participants for this study were all first generation immigrants who had learned the Irish language. As a survey of a large population was not possible given the time limitations of the study a purposive sample was selected.

Sampling and Recruitment:

Purposive sampling was chosen because it allows for more than one approach, using both convenience sampling and snowball sampling. This was the recommended module approach as access to this population was challenging. The sample size used in this study was small

and was not selected to be representative of all immigrants who have learned the language. However, it provided a ‘snapshot’ of those who had learned Irish through the education system or by choice. An alternate random sampling would have been very time consuming with potentially little additional value. There was a concern in accessing the sample framework through the Cumann Gaelach (Irish Society) in Trinity College Dublin, that it created a ‘bias’ in favour of accessing participants through a University organisation which would represent a highly educated migrant group. However, students attending Trinity College represent a wide demographic profile and their varied relationships with the Irish language justified the choice of access to the sample population.

Identifying the sample criteria for the study required participants to have specific features and characteristics. These were first-generation immigrants who were born outside of Ireland and who had learned the Irish language. All the participants had learned the language for a period of not less than three years and were able to converse with other Irish speakers. These criteria allowed for the exploration of individuals with varied experiences and whose differences included cultural backgrounds, age at which they came to Ireland, where they lived and where they went to school.

This was not an easy population to identify through administrative or statistical records; therefore the decision was taken to access a sample frame through the gatekeepers of the Cumann Gaelach (Irish Society) and the Seomra na Gaeilge (Irish Language Room) at Trinity College Dublin. Information sheets (see Appendix B) outlining the aims of the research, the sample criteria and including contact details for the researcher and supervisor were sent to the President (Reachtair) of the Cumann Gaelach and the Irish Language Officer. Agency consent forms (see Appendix C) were also sent to, and signed by, the gatekeepers to provide for the use of their channels to distribute information and recruit participants. The Cumann Gaelach’s online newsletter was used on two occasions to distribute information with an outline of the study detailing the sample criteria and the purpose of the study. This information was also made available in bilingual notices which were displayed in the Seomra na Gaeilge.

Information sheets for participants (See Appendix D) outlining the study were also made available to members of the Cumann Gaelach in the Seomra na Gaeilge with contact details for members to seek clarification or request further information and to make arrangements to participate in the interviews.

Instruments and Data Collection:

The instruments provided a structure which would maintain validity of the findings. Validity is defined as an

‘ability to describe a phenomenon in rich and authentic detail and in ways that reflect the language and meaning assigned by the participants’

(Ritchie, 2014:357)

The design also aimed to provide reliability, a concept in qualitative study that refers to ‘replicability’, however, in the design of these instruments the aim was also to provide ‘consistency’.

Key themes were identified for exploration from the literature review and these informed the schedule of questions for the interviews. The questions prompted participants to remember and process their experiences of learning Irish at school, sometimes from an early age, and to recall their experiences of their social and cultural participation with both their peers and Irish local communities, through the Irish language.

A pilot interview was carried out to test the instruments and make any necessary adjustments in advance of the following eight interviews. Semi-structured interviews of approximately one hour’s duration were chosen as they allowed for greater flexibility in the course of the interview, and provided an environment where the participants were encouraged to lead the conversation. A room in the Arts building in Trinity College was located for the interviews, to provide ease of access and familiarity to the participants. However, two participants who were recruited through snowball sampling, were living outside the country at the time of interview and participated in the interviews through Skype, which required a laptop and camera.

Although information sheets were made available in the Irish Language Room during the recruitment process, they were sent again with individual consent forms to the participants one week in advance of the interview. The information sheets gave a background context to the research explained its relevance, outlined the procedures involved relating to the participants, and highlighted the voluntary nature of their participation. Assurance was provided to the participants that they could opt out at any stage, or stop the interview. Any anticipated risks and benefits were explained and these are discussed in the ethics section. An assurance of confidentiality and the secure arrangements for the material during the study and

its disposal on completion were outlined. The information sheets also informed them of their right to access the material under the Freedom of Information Act. The consent forms (see Appendix E) were signed by both the researcher and the participant at the beginning of each interview. Consent forms were sent electronically to the participants interviewed on Skype, which required a laptop and printer and were returned in the same manner. A summary was conducted at the end of each interview and participants were invited to ask questions or clarify any aspects of the interview or study. Provision was made for any further clarification or information required, subsequent to the interview.

The interviews were guided by a schedule of open-ended questions (See Appendix E) informed from the literature. Open-ended questions provided consistency in exploring the topics and allowed the participants to answer in their own terms and provided an opportunity for new data to emerge. The questions prompted some unexpected and valuable responses and where appropriate were followed by more probing questions to elicit further information. An example of an open question used was ‘Tell me about speaking Irish now?’ The duration of the interviews ranged from 40-60 minutes. All of the interviews were also conducted in a single sitting with the exception of one which was carried out over two sittings. All of the interviews were carried out face-to-face with the exception of two which were carried out over Skype.

Many of the participants reflected that they hadn’t thought previously about many aspects of the questions asked. On a number of occasions, participants acknowledged that having answered a question with a particular response at the outset, they would answer it differently later in the interview. The interview process constructed their knowledge narrative about the subject. This echoes Mason (2002) who points out that:

Most would agree that knowledge is at the very least reconstructed, rather than facts simply being reported, in interview settings. According to this perspective, meanings and understandings are created in an interaction, which is effectively a co-production, involving researcher and interviewees. Qualitative interviewing therefore tends to be seen as involving the construction of knowledge more than the excavation of it.

(Mason, 2002:62)

Many of the participants reflected that they enjoyed the opportunity to speak about their experiences of the Irish language. On two occasions after the interview finished and the audio tape was turned off, conversations continued and the audio recorder was re-activated to record the conversation. Field-notes were taken on conclusion of each interview, to maintain consistency and note any particular characteristics of the interview that differed to previous ones. Each recording was transcribed on the day of the interview.

Data Analysis:

Thematic analysis of the data was conducted which involved discovering, interpreting and reporting patterns and clusters of meaning within the data. This involved working systematically through the transcripts and identifying topics that were then progressively integrated into key themes, pertinent to the overall research question (Boyzatis, 1998; Braun and Clarke, 2006; Joffe, 2012 cited by Ritchie, 2014). It was noted that some researchers argue that thematic analysis is not a succinct approach, but more of a generic method (Ryan and Bernard, 2000, cited by Ritchie, 2014). This approach was also chosen because it allowed for descriptive codes to be used in the transcripts and the data to be organised into key themes and sub-themes.

The codes were consolidated to refine and identify the key themes. An inductive approach was used to note comparisons and differences, recurrences in the sequences of themes, and links in the data. Although social and cultural integration are the main exploratory aspects of the research, new samples showed that two further core themes emerged from the data analysis which became central to the research. They were ‘a sense of identity’ and ‘a sense of belonging’. A summary of the data aligned to the study aims and method and results were written up and supported with quotations giving ‘voice’ to the participants.

Ethical Considerations:

Bryman (2014) cited Diener and Crandall’s (1978) four ethical principles in social research: an avoidance of harm to participants, the use of informed consent, an avoidance of invasion of privacy and whether deception is involved. The research design adopted for this study addressed each of these areas. They included the proviso that ethical considerations would be addressed at the outset and information sheets and consent forms were given to the gatekeepers and participants. Assurances of confidentiality and anonymity were given and participants were informed of their right to access the material at any time, under the Freedom of Information Act.

There was a recognition that participants may have had a negative experience when first migrating to Ireland, and that their experiences of social and cultural integration may not have been positive. Consideration was also given to the experiences the participants may have had learning the Irish language at school or speaking publicly. This concern pertains also to the complex attitudes towards the language previously outlined. However, when speaking to the participants at the beginning of each interview, no adverse concerns were expressed. At the end of each interview participants were invited to comment, query or seek further clarification on the discussion that took place. All participants were informed that the study would be available when it had been completed and assessed by the examining authorities.

Participants were consulted on the use of an audio recorder and each consented to its use. Participants were advised that they could stop or withdraw from the interview at any stage. They were informed about the secure arrangements for the audio recordings, documentation and data, and that all documentation would be anonymised. They were assured that information would be stored securely on a password protected PC with all USB ports disabled, and would be destroyed once the data had been typed up for analysis. Typed transcripts would be stored securely in an office, and once the study was complete all written transcripts and files would be destroyed in accordance with Data Protection requirements.

This study was passed by the Research Ethics Committee, School of Social Work and Social Policy Trinity College in February 2016. The Committee had sought clarification and some amendments pertaining to the research title, and aims and objectives, to ensure that they were in alignment with the research design. These were amended accordingly. The concern of ensuring that no causal relationship could be claimed from a small unrepresentative sample accessed via the Cumann Gaelach was addressed and a need to amend the instruments to reflect a more open-questioning approach was also outlined and addressed.

Demographic Profile:

- Five of the participants were undergraduate students attending Trinity College Dublin. One participant was studying in a university outside Ireland. Two were working at universities in Dublin and one was working abroad.
- Seven of the participants lived in Dublin and two were living outside Ireland at the time of the interviews.

- Six of the participants came from Anglophone countries and three from non-Anglophone.
- Three of the participants had no Irish parents, three had one Irish parent and three had both Irish parents.
- Six of the participants were female and three were male.
- Five of the participants came to Ireland before primary school, of the remaining three participants, one arrived at age 9, two came after secondary school, and one participant lived abroad and returned to Ireland at various intervals.
- Five of the participants learned the Irish language at school as a compulsory subject, one who arrived after the age of exemption chose to learn it and two participants were self-taught before they came to Ireland.
- The participants learned Irish at a range of schools. One attended a Gaeltacht school, one attended an Irish-speaking primary school and then proceeded to an English-speaking secondary school, one participant attended an all-Irish school for the duration, and one attended an all-Irish school for one year and then proceeded to an English-speaking school, three attended English-speaking schools and two were self-taught before they came to Ireland.
- Five were aged between 18-20 years and four were aged 24 years and over.
- None of the participants were born into Irish-speaking families.
- All six of the female participants volunteered to be interviewed for the study, however, the three male participants were recruited through snowball sampling.

Summary:

This chapter outlines and explains the methodology chosen which provided a recognised formal framework for the purposes of this study. A qualitative approach was appropriate for exploring and identifying the ‘lived experiences’ of the participants who were first generation immigrants, and in building an understanding of the impact that learning Irish had on their experiences of social and cultural integration in Irish society. The next chapter outlines the results of the interviews and presents the findings under headings pertaining to the research question on social and cultural integration.

CHAPTER 4: FINDINGS

Introduction:

This chapter presents the results of the nine semi-structured interviews which took an exploratory approach to understanding the experiences of the participants, all of whom were born outside of Ireland. They recalled and spoke of their experiences of learning and speaking the Irish language. The findings are outlined under the headings of ‘social integration’, ‘cultural integration’ and ‘sense of identity’. The findings show that all of the participants experienced positive social and cultural integration outcomes through learning the Irish language. Many of their experiences reflected the extent and circumstances through which they were immersed into the language. In the analysis of the findings outlined, each participant has been given a number and their quotes presented under the labels of P1, P2 referring to participants 1, and 2, etc.

Key themes are outlined, and detailed to show how the participants understood and perceived their experiences of social and cultural and integration. A key theme of ‘sense of identity’ emerged from the findings as many participants perceived aspects of their social and cultural integration to be closely linked with a sense of identity.

A number of sub-themes were also identified from the Data Analysis. Social integration, for example, was experienced as ‘making friends’, through a ‘sense of belonging’ and ‘family involvement’. Cultural integration was experienced through the Irish language by enabling participants to adopt ‘roles and responsibilities’ whilst engaging in cultural activities. Sub-themes also included experiences provided by a ‘knowledge of history, folklore and mythology’, an understanding of ‘the Irish humour and mentality’, and ‘familiarity with customs and norms’. Experiences of ‘sense of identity’ included sub-themes identified as a sense of ‘pride and confidence’ as Irish speakers, a ‘shared identity’ between their Irish identity and that of other cultures, and the impact that their ability to speak the Irish language had on their citizenship’.

So, I think speaking, being able to speak the language, plays a huge part in saying yeah, I’m Irish, I’m from Ireland, I can speak Irish.(P1)

SOCIAL INTEGRATION:

This research examined how learning the Irish language impacted on the social integration of the participants in their daily lives as part of Irish society. Social integration was experienced as ‘making friends’ and feeling ‘a sense of belonging’ and ‘sense of acceptance’ and feeling ‘welcome’. Many of their experiences of social integration took place as a result of their social interaction with their peers at school, in their communities, at the Gaeltacht and at Irish-speaking social events.

Making Friends and Fitting In:

The Irish language provided a mechanism for social interaction, and was particularly valued as a facility through which to ‘make friends’. Learning the Irish language provided a mechanism through which to share and understand the native sense of humour and wit. Many perceived this facility as a bonding experience. This led to feelings of ‘fitting in’ and ‘feeling accepted’. ‘Being welcomed’ was experienced in Irish-speaking communities and at Irish social activities. The ability to speak Irish was experienced by one participant as a ‘unifier’ at the Gaeltacht, (Irish-speaking area) uniting them to native peers and to the local community. Knowledge of the Irish language facilitated the building of friendships and negotiating of relationships, and was particularly valued by participants as newcomers to school, at college, work and within their communities. Many attended cultural events which promoted social interaction during their period spent at the Gaeltacht where they also met and made new friends. This exemplifies the close link between culture and social integration.

...like a lot of my friends, they would be Irish and we'd share like a lot of Irish jokes and that sort of thing.(P2)

I would say it's part of me feeling more like welcome and that sort of thing, the Irish culture and people.(P3)

Interestingly having left an all-Irish school now after 14 years of having to speak Irish constantly, I now would speak Irish with all my school friends.(P4)

And I always really like having that kind of connection especially when I got into secondary school and you know you would hang out with people from (Irish speaking schools x 2) and those kind of places.(P7)

Sense of Belonging:

The findings outline that there were multiple approaches taken to learning the language. The majority found it to be a mechanism through which they experienced a 'sense of belonging'. The language supported their social interaction and impacted their social integration, This supported their settling into their local communities. A 'sense of belonging' emerged as a key theme of social integration experienced by the most of the participants.

..and I remember the girl said to me, 'but, yeah you do speak Irish, it was kind of just like, yeah, you're kind of one of us.(P8)

I wanted to get a job in Irish, in Ireland, well anywhere really, but I suppose in Ireland because it's nice to be at home with your friends and family.(P1)

..I think it was very much like getting to go to the Gaeltacht and that kind of thing, was a really good experience.....So maybe meeting kids who came from a more Irish speaking background, and definitely when you were in like the house and everything was happening in Irish, there was a real sense of community in all coming together over the language.(P7)

It is important to note that the value of the language and 'sense of belonging' was not universally experienced and some doubt was also expressed

...I mean it does make you feel more Irish and it doesn't, because you know Irish isn't the first language it's not predominantly spoken. You don't need it, it doesn't, it's sort of, it's a thing that you can speak Irish. But so, I think because we don't use it, it's not as much, it's not a necessity, it's not like an integral part of life here, so it's easy to just not feel anything about it.(P4)

There was one participant who, although valuing friendships made through speaking Irish, found it to be an excluding experience. This participant perceived nuances of a hierarchy in relation to Irish speakers within Irish speaking communities. This perception was referred to by a number of participants who spoke of a consciousness and awareness of their Irish (or lack of) accent and levels of fluency. The hierarchy referred to Irish speakers who included native born speakers from Gaeltacht areas, those who had attended all-Irish primary schools and all-Irish secondary schools, those who attended English speaking schools and those who were self-taught. Thus exemplified that speaking Irish can have a varied outcome.

I was never really confident in my Irish because I wasn't, because I didn't speak it at home like, I didn't have the exact same accent as everyone else.(P5)

I have become more private about the language, I have to say. More reclusive, more private, I have my circle of speakers and my circle of friends and I speak to them and that's basically it.(P6)

Although all of the participants were born abroad, each related to a different degree to their countries and cultures of birth. A number continued to travel and live abroad for varying periods during and after their school years. Almost all of the participants who lived abroad perceived Ireland through their ability to speak the native language, as 'home' or as an 'anchor'.

I feel that moving away to all those different places, I always knew that the anchor was home, the anchor was Ireland, Dublin, yeah, the language, the language was nice.(P9)

Family Involvement:

Many of the participants spoke of parental and family involvement in supporting their Irish language education. Some parents provided encouragement, one non-native-born parent learned the language for the first time and one native-born parent re-learned the language. One participant who had lived out of the country for periods of time during the education years, spoke of a parent who regularly encouraged the family to speak Irish while living abroad. Family involvement was perceived as having an influential role in their experiences of social integration

My mom really, really encouraged us to speak Irish because she was in to it herself, because she studied it, so it was partly for her own benefit as well.(P5)

My mum went and took Irish class because coming from X (outside Ireland), she had nothing.(P4)

Dad took it upon himself because he had his Irish....I remember sometimes every two weeks we'd talk in Irish, we'd talk at the dinner table in Irish... But I guess to remind everyone that we should keep up our Irish (while living abroad).(P9)

When I was younger my parents put us into things like Comhaltas I think, it was solely because, you know it was musical instruments so like and then all the way through primary school, we were taught the tin whistle, so I have a basic understanding of that.(P3)

CULTURAL INTEGRATION:

Cultural integration was experienced as participating in many different cultural activities and events and included taking on new roles and responsibilities. The language was perceived as providing an insight into the Irish mind-set, and into the Irish character through Irish literature and history. Knowledge of Irish provided experiences of, and familiarity with, customs and norms. The ability to understand Irish words used in the everyday English language and being able to pronounce people's names and place names was valued by the majority of participants and led to a sense of 'inclusion'.

Roles and Relationships:

The findings show that the Irish language provided a pathway for many to participate in cultural activities, particularly Irish speaking activities, which allowed them to closely identify with Irish society. The participants noted that attending cultural events such as a 'fleadh' or an 'oireachtas' promoted greater social interaction. This in turn positively impacted their overall sense of social integration. This exemplifies how social interaction and social integration are deeply intertwined. Many of the participants continued to experience cultural integration after they had left school and as their access to speaking the Irish language diminished. They valued being able to continue to forge connections and bonds with Irish people through cultural interests and activities and, particularly those living abroad, they also experienced their participation as cultural integration.

Participation in cultural activities included voluntary work, hobbies, community activities and entertainment. Many participated through Irish cultural organisations, activities and events. Almost all of the participants experienced the Irish language as providing a mechanism through which they could participate in these Irish cultural activities.

When I was in secondary school after my transition year, I went to Raidio x which is an Irish language station in Dublin and I had a show there, where I played Irish music there, kind of a mix between Irish traditional music and contemporary kind of Westlife and that kind of thing, like pop music.(P1)

I am volunteering at the 1916....exhibition in.... I'm also doing..the RTE 1916 commemorations.(P4).

I'm on the (Irish organisation) committee.” ..Just kind of like cultural events.(P5)

The value of the Irish language was not immediately identified by some of the participants. For example, one participant noted

...I just looked at it as a party piece, oh yeah, I speak Irish and then people would like oh 'speak some Irish' and then I would, but it's the strongest element of any cultural identity I have. If I was going to be honest, yeah, yeah, if I thought about it, it's definitely the biggest marker, biggest part of my cultural identity, definitely.(P5)

Many started participating at an early age at school in cultural activities in their local communities, including music, drama and sport. Cultural activities provided a mechanism through which some of the participants experienced their reintegration into Irish society, on returning from living abroad, during their school years.

....and I played for St x Gaelic football club for a while when I came back...Between 12, from about 12 (years) to 15. Yeah, again, that helped. Because sports helped me make friends, so, I said the more I play, the quicker I'd settle in I felt.(P9)

It was very kind of the culture in both my primary and secondary school that there was lots of GAA, lots of traditional music and as a result I played GAA for my whole life from the age of 8, I think.(P4)

I would never want to lose that part of my upbringing. And so many of those formative years are Irish years, very typified by the Irish cultural experience.(P7)

Cultural Integration through History, Literature and Folklore:

This study found that many participants considered the Irish language to be an intrinsic link to Irish culture through their knowledge of history, literature and folklore. In some cases culture was the 'trigger' for learning the Irish language. Two of the participants who lived

abroad prior to coming to Ireland noted, that their interest in literature and history prompted them to learn the language.

I think when I was younger I was kind of like, I don't know whether I'm like Irish or X as I have both passports, but now I definitely feel more Irish, just from, like I learned more Irish history and culture and stuff. ...It's kind of like because I've read like all the old fairy stories like Cúchulainn and Fionn Mac Ciúil through Irish and stuff that has helped me.(P5)

...but I've always been very interested in Irish history so, I think they kind of go along together because I see that language as sewn into the history and I think I would read literature 'as gaeilge' though from time to time.(P8)

Irish Humour and Mentality:

Learning the Irish language and knowledge of Irish literature was experienced as providing a valued insight into the native mentality and character of the people. It supported an in-depth understanding of the attitudes and characteristics of their peers and Irish society.

It's really nice to have it (the language), I just enjoy having it. It makes me feel a bit more connected to Ireland and to like the history of everything and I think it's really like historic and you know arty language, that I just see, like I guess that I see the beauty behind the weird way we put stuff together and the funny little stuff we do and that makes no sense at all, but you know it's its own little thing.(P2)

I think the language is an important key to Irish culture anyway, because it shows you also how people think, because the way Irish expresses certain concepts are completely different from English.(P6)

Familiarity with Customs and Norms through Irish Words:

The ability to understand Irish words and phrases used in the everyday English language provided a familiarity with customs and norms. Being able to pronounce the names of people's and place names provided a feeling of 'inclusion'. This was particularly valued at school among peers, and in their local communities.

...the understanding of the sports played through the Irish language, the understanding of the jokes, relying on kind of words from the Irish language, the conversational terms thrown in from the Irish language and being able to

talk about our experiences of learning Irish as well, as some of the DVD's that we were shown in Irish that everyone had kind of seen.(P9)

..people make a lot of jokes sometimes, they say some words and like, they would go like 'oh mo dhía' and some people from other countries wouldn't get what they're saying. They'd say, they'd misinterpret, they'd think that they were talking English because they'd say 'oh my' and they wouldn't catch the last word and that sort of thing.(P3)

...being able to look at names like Siobhán and Fiachra or whatever it and just like have the confidence to say 'ah, I recognise that, I know how to do that one.'(P7)

The findings showed that many participants continued to engage in cultural activities independently of school and college. This provided opportunities to pursue careers, hobbies and for further study at home and abroad.

I did a translation class as part of my x degree, like translation classes and interpretation as well kind of in the hope that in the long term I might go to (European city) and do some work there. ..It was something in the back of my mind always is to get an Irish job in a different country and just get the opportunity to travel.(P1)

..I would always read a lot of books, of course, I would order a lot of books online and to read them all the time to improve my Irish if I couldn't speak it at least I could read it.(P6)

..did a couple of plays with (Irish organisation), but like drama through Irish would be my passion.(P8)

..I have an hour a week of Irish classes, although, there, it's sort of a mixed ability level.(P2)

SENSE OF IDENTITY:

The Irish language was experienced as providing a sense of identity for many of the participants. It was a concept through which many perceived their social and cultural integration. Sense of identity included how they perceived themselves as Irish speakers and how the ability to speak Irish impacted on their self-esteem. Speaking Irish was experienced

as ‘feeling Irish’ which contributed to their ‘sense of belonging’ to both Irish and other native cultures. The ‘sense of identity’ also related to their ability to speak Irish and impacted on their perception of themselves as Irish citizens.

..it affects how I see myself in terms of my level of Irish-ness and my sort of belonging here, it sort of cements that a bit more, in that this is a big part of my life and it’s part of me and then it solidifies my identity as Irish.(P2)

So, like I’m like the one who’s always posting on like the class page, trying to get people to come to Irish things.(P3)

..But I do love it, (the Irish language), I think it’s fantastic that. Although I can speak, I didn’t maybe appreciate it until I left the school.(P4)

..So, it was a very good way to distinguish myself at that level.....It was a very obvious way to stick with my Irish-ness in a way that I could speak the language. (P8)

Confidence, Pride and Self-esteem:

Almost all of the participants experienced positive self-esteem in their ability to communicate through Irish. The Irish language induced feelings of confidence and pride and contributed to their ‘sense of identity’ as Irish speakers. These experiences related to social and cultural activities in their local communities and as they got older and while living abroad.

I’m very proud to be able to speak Irish, or not when a lot to people, just to be able to speak Irish.(P4)

I feel more confident about speaking it because I feel like I’m, as good as everyone else and like that I kind of have the right to speak it and because it’s a thing that it reminds me of home and things like that, like it’s much more of my identity now, than it was.(P5)

..It was more, it wasn’t up until I hit about 5th Year and I went to the Gaeltacht. It was the worst three weeks of my life, but I came home and I was miraculously like ‘I love Irish, I love it. So...I realised that ‘oh no, people use this every day. It was really good for your confidence and I knew I could actually speak this and this was like something I could actually use.(P2)

Many noted how the Irish language provided positive experiences when speaking Irish abroad. The language provided a mechanism through which they forged relationships and established communication with both Irish people and strangers in many social situations. Some participants spoke of a sense of regret at their lack of awareness of the longer term benefits when learning the Irish language at school.

..Although I can speak, I didn't maybe appreciate it until I left school and I went to X (European city) last week with (an Irish group) and it was my first time to speak Irish for a long time to speak Irish for 2-3 weeks straight, so I do think it's fantastic.(P4)

..I think a lot of us regret not having worked harder at Irish, when we were at school, you know we're all in our mid-20's and you know having families and that kind of think isn't looking as far away as it was.(P7)

..So, the Irish language was actually the main reason I wanted to come to Ireland, so in a way, it impacted me before I came here. So, yes, it's part of my personality, the Irish language.(P6)

Participants also noted that the Irish language was valued as a mechanism through which some experienced their social and cultural 'reintegration' into Irish society on their return from periods spent abroad.

..a whole bunch of my friends from primary school, none of whom had any huge interest in Irish during secondary school are all learning Irish on (website) now. Yeah, and I couldn't say why really, but everyone, I mean a lot of us have emigrated now, maybe that's part of it. It's wanting to feel connected when you go back home.(P7)

..I think I was quite proud actually of having kept it up and I enjoyed the opportunity to show that I'd kept it up, you know. But then again I had a reason to keep it up, because I was away. I think it became a little bit more valuable to me as a little kind of marker.(P9).

Citizenship and Sense of Identity:

The findings show that for some of the participants the Irish language impacted on their 'sense of identity' as an Irish citizen. Their Irish Citizenship was experienced as a 'sense of belonging' and also an identity through which they processed their relationship with other

cultures. A number of participants spoke of their experiences of the citizenship process at 18 years of age, when they had to reapply as adults. It impacted them significantly. This process was experienced by different participants negatively, positively and with a sense of ambivalence. One participant's experience was of a 'sense of rejection'. Some experienced pride in their citizenship and others perceived it as 'tangible evidence' of their 'sense of belonging' to Ireland. Other participants were precluded by regulations in their country of birth from holding dual citizenship and opted to retain their native citizenship.

Getting Irish citizenship is possibly the biggest thing that ever happened in my life, because we were there for such a long time'and when I realised that I had to go through the citizenship thing again by myself it just felt like the most utmost rejection to have like the country that's yours being like 'start again.(P7)

I consider myself primarily Irish, like I have a 'Y' and 'Z' citizenship as well, but consider myself primarily Irish.(P4)

I think they're two pillars and I wouldn't want to say which one is stronger, but I feel they're both very important to me.(P6)

Summary:

In summary, the findings show the many ways in which learning the Irish language impacted on the participants' social and cultural integration into Irish society. It is not unexpected that the wide range of impacts reflected the varying extent and individual circumstances with which the participants experienced their immersion into the language. The duration, consistency and depth of their exposure to the language reflected a broad scope of opportunities to use it in their social and cultural interactions. It is not surprising that many had experienced complex relationships with the Irish language at school, as these findings support much of the recent research outlined in the literature and are commensurate with the considerable anecdotal evidence with regard to perspectives on the Irish language. Many spoke of how their family support influenced their experiences of learning Irish. Almost all considered it important to continue their participation in Irish social and cultural activities.

Unexpectedly, the strength and depth that the role of the language played in their 'sense of belonging' and 'sense of identity' belied the range of individual circumstances to which the participants were immersed in the language. Equally, the longer term and enduring role that the language provided in terms of 'sense of identity' and 'sense of belonging' was surprising,

particularly as participants left school and moved abroad to circumstances where their exposure to the language diminished. Their experiences of ‘sense of belonging’ and ‘sense of identity’ impacted on their experiences of social and cultural integration

It's one of like, it's very much a cornerstone of my life, I think at this point. Even though I don't like speak it very much in (country abroad) any more I do speak it with one Irish girl on my course in (college abroad). But I l feel it's very much a fundamental part of who I am now.(P8)

The majority experienced leaving school as limiting their access to speaking Irish at social activities; however, they found that it didn't impact on cultural activities in the same way. Interestingly, the participants note that involvement in cultural activities promoted social interaction, which positively impacted their social integration.

Although social and cultural integration were the main focus of this research the theme of ‘sense of identity’ emerged as a core concept through which participants experienced social and cultural integration into Irish society.

These findings provide the framework for discussion in the next chapter under the themes identified from the fieldwork.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction:

This chapter discusses the findings in the context of the literature reviewed. As already noted, the new phenomenon of large scale immigration in Ireland has created significant social and economic challenges in respect of integrating immigrants into local communities. Language is recognised as a key tool for integration, but almost no research has been undertaken on the impact of using Ireland's minority Irish language to improve integration outcomes.

A review of the literature identified themes for exploration and influenced the methodology adopted. The review also showed that there is no one single common definition or measurement for integration and that goals and approaches also vary between countries. Ireland's viewpoint of integration largely adopts the EU approach of a two-way process of mutual accommodation by immigrants and their host society (EU Commission, 2004: CBP1). This is also the viewpoint adopted for this study. However, little is known about how integration is understood and processed by young immigrants and the need for further research on integration is supported by earlier studies (Berry 1990, 1997; Berry and Sabatier, 2010; Ward and Kus 2012, and Ward, 2013). Equally, there is a need to understand how integration is processed by young immigrants to Ireland (Gilligan, McGrath, Ní Raghallaigh, Scholtz, 2009 and Doyle, 2013).

Ireland uses language as a tool for integration, but focuses on the everyday English language as the target language. Studies (UK Govt. 2014, cited by Ros I Sole, 2014) have shown how language policies continue to evolve and how some governments' are making language a cornerstone of their integration policies. A number of countries with two state languages also use their minority language as a tool for integration. Although Ireland has two state languages, current integration policy does not promote the Irish language. This chapter discusses the different experiences of social and cultural integration identified by the participants in this study through learning the Irish language. A key theme of 'sense of identity' as a concept through which the participants experienced their social and cultural integration into Irish society emerged and is therefore included.

A qualitative approach was taken for this study, as it was best suited to exploring a subject with little prior research. Choosing first generation immigrants provided for a deeply rooted exploration of their knowledge and understanding of themselves (Ritchie, 2014:37) and supported the identification of their 'lived experiences'. This study provided an insight into

how Ireland's minority language could impact on social and cultural integration for immigrants. The chapter concludes with a summary of the study's findings.

Social Integration:

Social integration for the participants in this study was experienced as a 'sense of belonging' and sense of 'acceptance' within their communities. Integration was also experienced through 'making friends' and being able to communicate with their peers and other Irish speakers. All the participants in this study had learned the Irish language for a period of not less than three years.

The mechanism provided by the Irish language through which many in this group 'made friends,' also supported their sense of 'fitting in'. This was experienced at school, in their local community and at periods spent at the Gaeltacht. Earlier research into integration shows how young people adopt strategies to settle into their host society (Berry and Sabatier, 2010) and language is identified as an effective strategy which can be used for social interaction (Mendoza-Denton and Hall, 2010). Although some of the participants learned the Irish language at school as a result of the government's Irish language policy, three of the participants chose to learn it and found it provided a mechanism through which they made friends when they first came to Ireland. Particular reference was made to periods spent at the Gaeltacht, where speaking Irish was part of daily communal life. One participant perceived the ability to speak Irish as a 'unifier' which helped to create close bonds with peers and with the local Irish-speaking community. Most experienced the Irish language as a facility through which they made friends and which positively impacted on their social integration.

For those who learned the Irish language outside of Ireland and were self-taught, this facility to make friends was particularly valued when they first came to Ireland. Studies on integration support the experiences of 'making friends' and 'being accepted' as significantly impacting on the integration outcomes (Berry, Phinney, Sam and Veder, 2006 cited by Ward and Kus, 2012). The importance of making friends as part of integration was also highlighted in earlier research (Ní Laoire, Buskin, Fina-Carpena-Mendez and Allen White, 2009) which reflected that friendships were made through shared interests and provided important points of connection for young immigrants. Most of the participants continued to make friends through the Irish language after they left school.

Many of the participants experienced a 'sense of belonging' through use of the Irish language and this was particularly experienced when living abroad. Knowledge of the language

supported their perception of Ireland as 'home'. This finding concurs with earlier research into how integration is experienced which showed that a 'sense of belonging' was experienced as part of the integration process Clements (1980) and Noels and Clement (1996) and (Ward, 2013). Similarly a 'sense of belonging' was shown to be an intrinsic link to an immigrant's perception of their host country as 'home'. It also provided a sense of 'inclusion' and 'welcome' in their host society. (Schellenberg, 2004; Soroka, Johnston, Banting 2007 in Wu, Schimmele and Hou, 2012, and Ward, 2013).

Although all of the participants in this group spoke Irish, a number referred to the nuances of a hierarchy of Irish speakers in Irish-speaking communities which impacted their use of the language. All immigrants who come to Ireland before the age of 11 years learn the Irish language, although the learning needs for many prioritise English as the everyday spoken language. The Irish language policy exempts immigrants coming to the country after the age of 11. As noted in the literature review (Darmody and Daly, 2015), the viability of a minority language is dependent on people's motivation, the prestige attached to it and opportunities to use it. The learning of the Irish language by immigrants learning has the potential to be of benefit to both the immigrants themselves and to the Irish language. In addition to the benefits to the immigrants previously discussed, there is potential benefit to the language, through its promotion and use by a new population demographic.

The longer-term positive impact that learning Irish provided was surprising for those participants who moved abroad, particularly as access to the language then diminished. Knowledge of the language provided a facility through which they continued to experience social integration into Irish society. Also, for those living abroad the Irish language provided a mechanism through which they connected with Irish people in social situations and provided a mechanism through which they experienced social integration on their return. The positive impact that a 'sense of belonging' provided through use of the Irish language was unexpected, as it reflected a level of social integration which was beyond the definition adopted for this study.

Cultural Integration:

Cultural integration was experienced as 'participation in society', through cultural activities such as sport, music and drama. The Irish language provided a process through which the participants involved themselves in cultural organisations and events. Integration was also

experienced through familiarity with local customs and norms. A number of the participants experienced the Irish language, literature and history as providing an insight into the Irish mentality and character. Participation in cultural activities was also perceived as creating a ‘cultural identity’, particularly among those who moved or lived abroad.

Participation in Irish cultural activities led to a willingness to adopt roles and responsibilities at school, at college and in their local communities. These included roles in broadcasting, in community and local radio and in social media. Some of the participants who worked in the media found that these roles provided an opportunity to speak about and share their knowledge of the Irish language and culture. Through these roles these participants felt more culturally integrated with Irish society. Recent research (Ward, 2013) on integration supports the adoption of roles and responsibilities within the host country as a strategy which helps immigrants to maintain a ‘balance’ in all aspects of their lives. For those who learned Irish outside of Ireland, cultural interest provided the initial prompt to learn the language. The impact of participation in cultural activities is reflected in research (Ward and Kus, 2012) which showed that integration occurred more frequently when derived from cultural contact rather than from cultural adoption.

Through the Irish language, many of the participants were able to pronounce people and place names; it also provided them with a familiarity with Irish customs and norms. It provided an insight into the Irish mindset (the attitudes of the native Irish people) and character (e.g. the Irish sense of humour and modes of behaviour). The significance of being familiar with customs and norms is reflected in research (Ni Laoire, Buskin, Fina Carpena-Mendez and Allen White, 2009) which stated that such familiarity helped immigrants to settle into their local communities and Irish society.

Knowledge of the Irish language provided a familiarity with Irish words and phrases that have been incorporated into the everyday usage of the English language in Ireland. Some of these words are derived from old Irish customs and traditions which provided cultural insights into their meaning e.g. *Dáil* (meaning a government or assembly), *Áras an Uachtaráin* (*áras* meaning ‘building’ and ‘Uachtar’ meaning ‘authority’/top level), *feis* (festival) and *féile* (meaning festival and feast day). Similarly English words which add suffixes or prefixes taken from Irish words can explain their meaning e.g. ‘*een*’ (‘*ín*’ in Irish), usually denotes a diminution of the noun/word e.g. ‘*cailín*’ meaning a little girl. Knowledge of place names prefixed with the Irish words ‘*cill*’ (church), ‘*rath*’ (moat), *baile* (town)

created a familiarity with the geographical landscape of Irish communities, villages, towns, cities and the Irish countryside. Participants in this study experienced familiarity with these cultural linguistic insights and nuances as a sense of 'inclusion'. This experience was particularly valued at school. Research (Ní Laoire, Buskin, Fina Carpena-Mendez and Allen White, 2009) has shown that schools play an important role in providing interaction between immigrant and native children, as it is frequently where immigrant children first encounter their 'differences' with native children.

Knowledge of the Irish language enhanced many aspects of participation in Irish schools, including sport, drama, music, debate and even curriculum subjects such as English (which has an Irish literary content). Earlier research by Collier and Thomas, (1998) and Kim (1998, cited by Freynet and Clement, 2015) showed that language confidence provided for the understanding of cultural particularities, and research by Phinney (1990) showed that specific cultural practices and customs distinguish one group from another. Although the majority of this group came to Ireland at a young age, those who came later also found that Irish history and literature provided them with an understanding of the Irish character and mindset.

Sharing the Irish wit and sense of humour was valued by this group as it supported their sense of 'fitting in' and helped to create connections with their peers. This experience is reflected in earlier research which identified the importance of understanding 'how things work' (Ni Laoire Buskin, Fina Carpena-Mendez and Allen White, 2009) and showed that families and children who lack this knowledge are disadvantaged. The experiences of these participants showed how knowledge of the Irish language can contribute to familiarity with customs and norms.

Resources for immigrant children to learn the Irish language are focussed on primary and secondary education. However, with only limited resources available for adult immigrants to learn the language, it becomes difficult for immigrant children to share both the facility to speak Irish and their understanding of 'how things work' with their parents at home.

Those who moved abroad and no longer had the opportunity to speak the language have continued to immerse themselves in cultural activities. Having moved, they viewed their identity as principally 'cultural'. Some expressed regret at not having been more aware at school of the longer-term benefits of learning Irish, particularly as they got older and they moved abroad. These longer term benefits of the Irish language which they identified as adults, is reflected in the 2013 Irish language survey (Daly and Darmody, 2015), which

showed that although many Irish parents didn't speak the language they considered it important for their children to grow up with it, particularly from a cultural perspective.

Knowledge of the Irish language provided an insight into the national mindset and character for the participants. These facilities together with a knowledge and ability to pronounce Irish words and phrases, provided positive experiences of 'inclusion' for some of the participants whilst at school. Many felt it allowed for them to build bonds and establish connections with their peers and local communities. As the Irish government's Irish language policy (DES 2010-2013) primarily targets the education sector, its impact is largely experienced by those attending Irish educational institutions and excludes immigrants over 11 years of age and their parents.

Sense of Identity:

Sense of identity was a common theme that emerged in this study. It is a concept through which a number of the participants perceived their social and cultural integration. This included a 'sense of identity' as Irish speakers, a 'sense of identity' through which they belonged to more than one culture, and their 'sense of identity' perceived through their ability to speak the Irish language as citizens (for those who became citizens).

A number of the participants referred to a 'shared identity' as a sense of 'Irish-ness,' which they perceived as being linked to the Irish language. Earlier studies have shown the links between language confidence as a precursor to identity (Clement, 1980 and Noels and Clement, 1996 cited by Freynet and Clement, 2015) and shows that as confidence in using the language grows, so too does the identification with the corresponding language group.

Many experienced a sense of 'pride' and 'confidence' as Irish speakers. This pertained to how they perceived themselves and how they were perceived by their peers and their local communities. This was experienced by the majority as positively impacting on their self-esteem. This finding was supported by earlier studies Phinney (1990), Cameron (2004, cited by Ward and Kus, 2012) which found that identity is commonly assessed in terms of pride and also reflected how belonging to a particular group can impact on an individual's overall sense of self.

The Irish language provided a sense of 'Irish-ness' to some, through which they perceived their 'sense of identity' of being 'part-Irish' and 'part-another or other cultures'. Research in Ireland supports the experience of the use of hybridization or hyphenation by immigrants to negotiate their identity between the Irish culture and other cultures to which they belong (Ní

Laoire, Buskin, Fina Carpena-Mendez and Allen White, 2009). Conversely, being part of two cultures was experienced as ‘conflicting’, by one participant. However, ‘being able to speak Irish was experienced as bringing that participant closer to Irish society. The experience of conflict and negotiation between cultures was perceived as a ‘journey’ that unfolded over a period of time. Recent research (Ward, 2013) supports this experience, where immigrants negotiating their identities experienced integration as a ‘process’ or ‘journey’.

The ability to speak the Irish language was experienced by the participants as impacting on their sense of identity as Irish citizens Clement (1980) and Noels and Clement (1996). The participants expressed different experiences in terms of citizenship. Some who became citizens as children experienced it as a sense of pride. For other participants, regulations in their country of birth precluded their dual citizenship. Those who held dual citizenship as adults noted how speaking Irish reflected positively on their cultural connections to Ireland. Having to reapply as an adult at the age of 18 for citizenship prompted feelings of rejection for one participant. Some experienced their knowledge of Irish as promoting their identity as ‘global Irish citizens’. They experienced this as a facility through which they connected with many people worldwide.

Summary:

The Irish language provided a mechanism through which most participants experienced the facility to ‘make friends’. This in turn positively impacted on their social and cultural integration. Although the majority of participants learned the Irish language at school, three chose to learn it. This provides an insight into how a mechanism such as a minority language can be adopted as a strategy through which to make friends and facilitate immigrants’ integration.

Participation in cultural activities through the Irish language provided an understanding of ‘how things worked’ and provided an in-depth identification with Irish society. Knowledge of everyday Irish words used in English and an ability to pronounce names led to a sense of ‘inclusion’. Participation in cultural activities frequently provided a social interaction which impacted on their experience of social integration.

The ‘sense of identity’ through the Irish language provided a mechanism through which most perceived their social and cultural integration. The participants directly linked their shared ‘sense of identity’ to speaking the Irish language, to the extent that they saw themselves as ‘part or fully Irish.’ This study has shown that learning the Irish language played an

influential role in the experiences of social and cultural integration into Irish society for the participants in this study.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion:

Immigration is ongoing in Ireland and many of the first large wave of immigrants who came to Ireland in the 1990's are now part of Irish society. Their experiences of integration are largely unknown. This study explores the experiences of a group of first generation immigrants who learned the Irish language, and examines how it impacted their social and cultural integration into Irish society.

The language focus of the Irish government's current integration policy is on the English language being the everyday spoken language. Knowledge of English is crucial to integration as it affects immigrants' social, cultural and economic contribution. The majority of young immigrants who came to Ireland before the age of 11 will have learned the Irish language at school but little is known about how it impacted on their experiences of social and cultural integration. The sample in this study was small and not designed to provide this causal link. However, the exploration of the experiences of integration among first generation immigrants in this study provides a detailed understanding of the many simple and complex ways that learning a minority language can facilitate social and cultural integration.

This study supports earlier research into the value of learning a language towards social and cultural integration (Berry and Sabatier, 2010). Similarly, the impact of using a minority language as a tool for integration is supported by studies (Freynet and Clement, 2015) which showed that acknowledgement of being able to both speak the host language and the second state language provided minority members with a 'sense of belonging to' and 'identification with' both communities.

Key points from the findings include:

- The Irish language provided a mechanism through which the participants experienced 'a sense of belonging', and 'a welcome' to Irish society. It also provided a valued facility through which to 'make friends' and impact their social integration.
- Cultural integration was experienced through participation in Irish organisations and activities at both local and national level, which provided a deep identification with Irish society. Knowledge of the Irish language provided valuable insights into 'how things were done' and 'how people thought,' which provided a significant benefit for those who had learned the language. Knowledge of history, folklore and literature

provided insights into the Irish mentality. The ability to pronounce people's names and place names provided a sense of 'inclusion'.

- A 'sense of identity' was experienced through speaking the Irish language which impacted on the participants' self-esteem. Knowledge of the language provided a shared identity through which the participants experienced both their 'being Irish' and belonging to their country of birth. The Irish language positively impacted their sense of identity as Irish citizens.

This detailed and nuanced exploration of integration through the experiences of first generation immigrants helps to show the many ways that knowledge even of a minority language, can promote a 'sense of belonging' and/or a 'shared identity' with other citizens. It provides evidence to those who question the value of a policy which promotes the learning of the minority language. This study shows how knowledge of a minority language can facilitate social and cultural integration. In doing this, it provides some support for the existing education policy of learning Irish for younger immigrants.

Reflection on the Research Process:

The qualitative approach taken by the study was appropriate for exploring the experiences of the young people involved in this group. As little previous research has been undertaken on the impact of learning Irish on integration, this study 'gave voice' to the experiences of the participants in the group all of whom were first generation immigrants. This exploration supported the choice of the methodological approach. Although there was a concern for 'bias' through accessing a small sample frame through the Cumann Gaelach, the findings revealed rich and in-depth data with many key insights from the interviews. As only nine people took part in the study, it is accepted that generalisations cannot be taken from the findings.

RECOMMENDATIONS/IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL POLICY

Research:

The research aim of this study was to explore the impact of learning Irish on the social and cultural integration of first generation immigrants. Research into the literature for this study highlights the need for further studies into how the process of integration is understood by young immigrants in Ireland. There is also a need for further studies into how the Irish language impacts on immigrants' integration in Irish society. Such research should be expanded to cover a wider demographic and over a larger geographical base.

Attitudes to the Irish Language:

Schools and teachers have considerable influence on attitudes towards learning the Irish language and this influence is sometimes perceived as negative. There is a need for these attitudes to be addressed. This study shows the potential benefits of the Irish language for immigrants in creating a greater understanding of, and familiarity with, many aspects of Irish life. The potential benefits of learning Irish at school are different for immigrants than those of their Irish peers. Awareness and interest in how the Irish language could be used in schools for integration purposes needs to be addressed.

As the Irish language policy is heavily focussed on the education sector, it limits the facility for young people to use their language learning outside of school. It limits the opportunity for adult immigrants to learn Irish and impacts the facility for the children to speak the language with their parents and within their communities. The language policy is not supported by resources outside the education sector. Resources and facilities need to be made available within communities to allow adult immigrants and families to learn Irish and come together to speak it.

Familiarity with Customs and Norms and Irish Culture Awareness:

The impact of learning the Irish language, regardless of fluency levels, on cultural integration was shown in this study to be far-reaching. Familiarity with customs and norms, everyday Irish words and the ability to pronounce Irish words had an influence on providing a sense of 'inclusion'. Participants noted that the ability to pronounce even the names of their peers correctly was experienced as a facility appreciated in their community. Consideration should be given to a separate cultural education for young immigrants and their families when they arrive in Ireland. Community initiatives which bring native Irish people and immigrants

together in social and educational settings together through the Irish language would be a valuable starting point.

Small simply illustrated booklets as 'An Introduction to Ireland' could be provided to immigrant children and their families when they come to Ireland. These would provide a simple introduction to everyday aspects of Irish cultural life. The use of tools such as the Irish (Pingu) DVD's could be shown in the evening time or at weekends in schools or community halls to provide linguistic and cultural support to families who are willing to learn the Irish language.

Cultural awareness through the Irish language also has implications for third level education. Some students coming to Ireland do so to learn about and become familiar with the Irish language and culture. Similarly, immigrants who have attended primary or secondary school in Ireland for a period of time and subsequently left, may return to Ireland for or during their third level education. Familiarity with Irish culture, customs and norms provides a facility for their reintegration. University phone and tablet 'apps' could provide an introduction to 'Irish culture' for students coming to Ireland. These would provide a facility through which immigrants to Ireland could become familiar with and participate in cultural events.

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Appendix A: Instruments - Questions for Interviews

PROFILE:

OPENING/LAUNCH QUESTION: Tell me about when you started learning Irish?
(exploratory)

Probe Questions:

When did you move to Ireland?

What age were you when you moved here?

Where did you move from?

Why did you come here?

Where are your parents from?
Often?

Do you go back to the country you moved from?

Do you speak other languages?

What language do you speak at home?

Do your family speak other languages? Do you find it easy to speak more than one language?

Does speaking Irish help learning other languages?

How do you feel being able to speak Irish? (Why?)

MINORITY/STATE LANGUAGE:

LAUNCH QUESTION: “Tell me about when you started to learn Irish”

Probe questions:

What were the decision that made you decide to learn it? (Pressure/factors influencing it)

Why did you start to learn Irish?

Did you like learning it when you started?

Does anyone else at home speak Irish?
Irish?

How did your parents respond to you learning

How long did you learn it for?

Do you still speak it? (if so, where?) (Why?)

Is it easy to speak it to others now?

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION

LAUNCH QUESTION: “Tell me about learning Irish at school?”

Probe Questions:

Did you speak Irish to friends at school?

Did it help you to understand your Irish classmates?

Did it help being able to pronounce Irish names

Did learning Irish help getting to know Irish people?

Did speaking Irish help you living in Ireland?

How did your Irish classmates respond to you speaking Irish?

Was your Irish teacher helpful to you learning Irish?

Did learning Irish encourage you to learn other things Irish e.g. sport, music, drama?

LAUNCH QUESTION: “Tell me about speaking Irish now?”

Probe Questions:

Did you speak Irish outside school? Where?

Do you have friends who are Irish? non-Irish?

How do you like to socialise? **Where** do you like to socialise?

SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION:

LAUNCH QUESTION: Do you continue to speak Irish?

Probe questions:

Where do you speak it?

Why do you continue to speak Irish?

Does speaking Irish help you to make friends? Irish friends? Non-Irish friends?

How do other people respond to you speaking Irish?

Do you participate in Irish festivals and traditions? St Patrick's Day, Halloween, Easter, etc.

Are you involved in Irish projects within College? Within your community? Within your neighbourhood?

Do you do other Irish activities such as music, drama, sport?

If you hear someone speaking Irish would you talk to them in Irish?

IDENTITY/CITIZENSHIP:

LAUNCH QUESTION: "I'm interested in how you feel about being in Irish society?"

Probe Questions:

Do you feel you belong to Ireland?

Tell me how you feel about your identity now?

On a scale of 1-10, how much do you feel you do things the 'Irish way'/'other ways

Do you think more like your Irish friends/peers? Do you think more like your non-Irish friends?

Do you think more like the culture your parents come from?

Does speaking Irish affect/influence how you feel living in Ireland?

Would you like to continue to live here? Do you feel more Irish/non-Irish/culture of origin?

Appendix B: Information Sheet for Agency (Cumann Gaelach)

Dear Cumann Chairperson/Reachtaire

I am currently a post graduate student in Trinity College Dublin doing a Masters' programme in Applied Social Studies. As part of my course, I must carry out a piece of research. I have chosen to do a study on the role of learning the Irish language on the social and cultural integration of first generation immigrants into Irish society.

What does this involve?

I would hope that you would be willing to allow me to circulate information on this research to members of the Cumann via your notice boards, newsletter, and in person. I would like to meet members in the Cumann rooms and at Cumann events, also to circulate information on this research via noticeboards and to attendees in the Irish Language room. If you consent to providing access, the only action that is required on your behalf is to make the information sheet available to your members. Each member is then free to decide whether to participate in the research or not. If he/she wishes to participate, they should contact me at the email address or phone number on the information sheet.

Participation in the research would involve a one to one interview. The whole process would take about one hour and would be completely confidential, no individual will be identified in the study. Participation will be completely voluntary, participants will be free to withdraw from the research at any time. Transcripts of interviews will be stored in a secure cabinet and destroyed upon completion of the project. I hope you will consent to forward information on my study as outlined above – I am available to answer any questions or clarifications you may have regarding my proposed study on 087 2317565 or email bowringj@tcd.ie. Supervisor contact: Julie Byrne at byrnej18@tcd.ie

Appexdix C: Consent form for Agency - (Cumann Gaelach and Seomra na Gaeilge)

I/We _____ have read and understood the information sheet provided for research on the experience of learning Irish on first generation immigrants. We give our consent to participate in this study in the manner set out.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Appendix D: Information sheet for participants

EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING THE IRISH LANGUAGE ON SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INTEGRATION

This purpose of this study is to explore the experiences of young adults, born outside of Ireland, who have learned the Irish language, on their cultural and social integration into Irish Society.

Increasing numbers of people are coming to Ireland every year and this has a social, cultural and economic impact on society. For this reason, it is important that when people come here, they can participate and feel part of Irish society.

All participants are treated with total confidentiality. This study is part of a Masters being undertaken in Applied Social Studies at TCD this year. (My BA is in the Irish language, from Trinity College Dublin.) I can be contacted on 087 2317565 or email: joanneboring@eircom.net

Supervisor: Julie Byrne – email address: byrnej18@tcd.ie

What does taking part involve? If you agree to take part, I will arrange with you to have a chat that will last 1 hour at a time and a place that you suits you in March 2016. If you agree, I will tape the interview so that I can be sure that I record what you said correctly.

Some of the things I would like to ask you about are: -The age you started to learn Irish? The length of time it took you to learn it? The responses to people around you learning it? Whether it impacted your sense of cultural identity? Whether learning the language helped your understanding of Irish Society?

Your participation is voluntary and if you decide at any time before or during the discussion that you do not want to continue stop the interview. You can also decide what questions you do, or do not, want to answer.

Anticipated risks/benefits: If your experience has not been a positive one, recounting it might become challenging for you. If it has been a positive or confusing one, it may help to clarify how this may have happened. We will hold a post interview conversation to discuss any queries or confusion that may have arisen. If you would like to contact me at any time after the interview, my phone number is 087 2317565. If after the interview, there may be

something you said that I or you would like to clarify, I will ask you if you will agree to my contacting you?

Confidentiality: The purpose of this study is to research the experiences of those who participate, in how learning the Irish language impacts people's participation in life in Irish society. The name and the information you give during the interview will be treated confidentially, within the boundaries outlined. If you disclose something which may be illegal, this may need to be passed on to official authorities. The interview will be tape recorded for accuracy of transcription and no other purpose. Some notes may be taken during the interview to highlight something of interest to your particular experience. You can terminate the interview at any time and without penalty.

Information safety/dissemination: It is intended that the result of these discussions will contribute to a Masters' dissertation evaluating the quality, effectiveness and outcomes of the study. It may also be used in articles and presentation of conference papers. The audio tapes of our discussion will be anonymised and typed. The information will be stored securely on a password protected PC that has had all USB ports disabled and will be destroyed once the data has been converted to a suitable format suitable for analysis. Typed transcripts will be stored securely in an office that only I will have access to the transcripts of our discussion. Once the study is completed the written transcripts will also be destroyed. The file will be destroyed in accordance with Data Protection requirements.

You may access the information you have given under the Freedom of Information Act at any time.

Appendix E: Consent form for participants

I _____ agree to talk to Joanne Bowring (Masters student, Trinity College Dublin) as part of the Masters study on the Irish language and cultural and social integration for those born out of Ireland. The study will consider whether the Irish language can be used as a tool for social and cultural integration for people coming to live in Ireland.

I understand that:

The researcher will talk to me about my experiences and opinions on learning the Irish language and how it impacted me in living in Ireland. I have a week to consider participation.

My participation is entirely voluntary. I am free to end the interview at any time and I do not have to answer any question I do not feel comfortable with.

All information I give to the researcher will remain confidential and my name will not appear on any study. The study will not contain any information that could identify me.

If the researcher is told something that indicates that the participant might be in danger, the researcher may need to talk to somebody else about this. If this happens such information will be discussed with me before it is discussed with anyone else.

I can change my mind about my participation in the study at any time.

I can access the data I have given at any time under the Freedom of Information Act.

Signed: _____ Participant

_____ Researcher

_____ Date

Appendix F: Interview Sample

R: Researcher

P: Participant

(R: Tell me a little bit about your background and when you came here and you started to learn Irish.

P: I was born (another country) and we moved in the August 2001 so I was 5 or I was 4, 11 ½ months or whatever so I was 5, I started school that September. So I learned Irish all the way up from Junior Infants, up until secondary school. I did it at higher level all the way up. I do, I like, I have, I just really like Irish. So, there's free classes, they do here, so I do the free classes. em Yeah

(R: and your parents, are they Irish/non-Irish). P: Yeah, my parents are both Irish, but neither of them speak Irish like they did it at school. They're both Irish and they just moved out there for work and stuff and moved back home for work as well. **(Me: ok and they've stayed here?)** P: yeah, we've been here now since 2001.

(R: And what about other languages, are there other languages you speak or your parents speak?) No, well I did Spanish in school, so I have a bit of Spanish and my Dad's just one of those people who has a few different words in about 10 different languages, but English is what's predominantly spoken at home. **(R: ok, ok, your love, but it's you who loves Irish? And how do your family respond to that, that you, your family and your friends?)** P: They're generally quite supportive of it, so I would like, if there was just a phrase that came out in Irish, they, my parents specially would not be able to respond, but they'd understand what had been said, so, the response would probably be in English or whatever. My younger sister who is still in the whole school side of Irish, where it's not quite so, it's hard to love it, she is less enthusiastic when I come out with, like oh whatever, as Gaeilge, so she's a bit less on board. And then my older sister never took a particular interest.

My friends now would be, they would all have quite a good level of Irish and things like that but none of them study it outside of school, or the ones who are doing teaching. So, if I were to have a conversation with them, it would be no problem, normally it would be very rare,

unless we were, unless we were somewhere we didn't want people to not understand you, that's generally the only time it would come out. **(R: No, I can appreciate that, it's very handy to have that and did you find having Irish helped learn other languages or not?).**

P: Well, I'm not really sure. Well, there were things when you were learning other languages you could compare it so, you know the Irish language is so fiddly and like a puzzle, whereas Spanish is a whole lot more straightforward and so, it's easy to compare and you can look and its more being able to compare them. Now, it probably does, because it would like they say having one language helps you learn another, so probably without realising, it did help by just getting your brain used to seeing something different and hearing something different. But I haven't consciously noticed a benefit to either, or like an affect from one to the other.

(R: Ok and can I ask you was it an all-Irish school when you started off at 5-6 years?)

No, mine was, they were English speaking schools all the way up.

(R: Ok, but the enthusiasm came when you were there?). It was more, it wasn't up until I hit about 5th year I went to the Gaeltacht in between 5th and 6th year. It was the worse 3 weeks of my life, but I came home and I was miraculously like 'I love Irish, I love it'. So, it was, I think it was because I went and I realised that 'oh no, people use this every day and because I went to an incredibly strict Gaeltacht, there was no English at all. And you know, it was really beneficial for my level of Irish but like, and you know, you came home and it was really good for your confidence and I knew I could actually speak this and this was like something I could actually use. But up until that point, I enjoyed the subject and I was relatively good at it, em but there was no like great, like, now I'd always been sort of people would argue, you know, what's the point of Irish, and it has no value, but I, for as long as I can remember I would have disagreed with that. But, I never had a personal love for Irish, I think until I came back from the Gaeltacht when I was really like, 'this is a real useful thing'.

(R: And what does it mean for you, I mean, how does it make you feel being able to speak Irish?) Em, it's sort of like, I guess it makes me feel more Irish and it's so, I feel it's sort of a poetic language and its quite, lots of stories and stuff like that, so it's really like 'magical' isn't the word because it sounds ridiculous, but it's like em, I'ts just, its real, how do I put this? It's real nice to have it, I just enjoy having it. It makes me feel a bit more connected to Ireland and to like the history of everything and I think It's really like historic and you know arty language, that I just see, like I guess that I see the beauty behind the weird way we put stuff together and the funny little stuff we that do and that makes no sense at all,

but you know it's its own little thing. So, yeah it just, it did make me feel more like 'I'm Irish', I am Irish, I have Irish.

(R: No, I can appreciate that and when you were at school and you were doing Irish, what was the motivation behind that at the time, was it compulsory? Was it a choice?).

P: Irish was compulsory through school so, and then I suppose when I got to the Leaving Cert level, it was more it was a subject I was good at so, I did higher level in order to get the points, cos it would have been just pure laziness to drop. Now it was hard work, it was, it's a difficult subject in school, but yeah, so that would have been the reason why I had to take an interest in Irish, was because I was doing higher level in order to get the points.

(R: did you like it when you started?) P: I don't, I can't actually remember through primary school or things like that, if I had much of a, if I was, I was indifferent towards the whole thing and I did enjoy like Irish classes because of the nature of the curriculum and stuff for secondary school. It was a lot of rote learning, stuff like that. It was, my teacher was very much like 'you need to learn this off' so it was quite pressurised, in that you had to come in and you had to know this. So, there was that sort of, sometimes the classes would have been a bit more like stressful, but the actual subject I never minded. There were some days really, like 'I don't know this poem and what am I going to do and I don't want to go to this class, but it was never like 'I don't like Irish'.

(R: And what about the teachers you had?) I had a really, really good teachers, I had one really mainly through school, I had one, my primary school I don't particularly remember. I had one teacher from Donegal who was always like 'oh my Irish is different and you have to learn it because you'll have different things when you're older and you'll need this'. So, we came out with Mayth instead of 'maith' and all of this stuff but through secondary school I had one particular teacher and she was very good, but again, she was gearing you up towards getting the best grade as opposed to necessarily, you know loving the language. Like she was there to get you through as opposed to get you to love it. But she was good and em she would always've encourage us to go to the Gaeltacht and watch TG4 and do these things which were mainly beneficial for our marks, but she was also sort of like 'you need to do the Irish thing'.

(R: and doing the language, speaking the language as you did, did that motivate you to do other Irish activities, music or sport or drama or anything else like that?). P: When I was younger my parents put us into things like 'Comhaltas' I think, it was solely because,

you know it was musical instruments so like and then all the way through primary school, we were taught the tin whistle, so I have a basic understanding of that. So other than that, em like we were, I never played gaelic football or camogie or anything like that. I played un-Irish sports like hockey and cricket and then otherwise so, aside from the school and that aspect of Irish and a little bit of comhaltas and trad music, we weren't particularly involved in anything else.

(R: And would you have spoken Irish to some of your classmates when you were growing up or not?) P: Probably not like my friends, it might have been a few lines here or there, but conversations like predominantly were always in English. **(R: And what about activities outside of school, did you get involved in activities maybe in your community, or your neighbourhood with regard to Irish?)** Eh no, there probably were ones, I imagine there are ones around but it was never something that we particularly looked into or were involved in at all.

(R: and what about speaking Irish now – is it easy?) P: It gets a lot harder, I can feel it like, slipping away because there's things that I know I would have understood that I had no difficulty with a year ago, and suddenly I'm like, I know, I know that word, but I don't know that word, I can't remember, so that you do feel things. Also, I suppose it's like because I feel I'm not using it all the time, that you know my confidence of my grasp of Irish is going so, now it is a bit harder, to just the language, it's not that it's a bit harder because I don't use it, I can feel it sort of going away, which is sad. **(R: inevitable, I suppose).**

(R: And what about opportunities to speak it, for example, now, in College, at home, outside?) We have like Cumann Gaelach, I'm sort of bad in that I don't go to them. So, I'm a member, I haven't quite got there yet. I have an hour a week of Irish classes, although, there, it's sort of a mixed ability level so, in the class there'd be people who haven't done it in, say 20 years since and, there's an American girl who just came over and her parents are Irish, so she's learning so there's a real mixture, so I'm not really being pushed to use my Irish, like it's a lot of grammar that I did in 1st year and 6th class and stuff like that. So, it's good in that it's constantly, it's Irish and it's an Irish environment but otherwise it's not wildly beneficial, towards, it doesn't push me, I don't need to think, I don't need to use my brain.

(R: and outside of College would you hear people speaking Irish, for example, in a shop or in a restaurant or in the supermarket or anything like that?) P: There's been the odd

time ive heard them like on the train and I've was like 'I know what they're saying', but otherwise like I live in a very, like I'm from Dublin it's not a particularly Irish area, in terms of - it's not like, I don't know any gaeilgoirs around me, so for the most part I would rarely hear it.

(R: so, when you came to Ireland from (country) when you started learning Irish at 5, did it help you then living in Ireland?) P: It could've, I did not adjust well to Ireland at all, I didn't like it. I couldn't stand it. I told my parents they'd ruined my life, I was really unhappy, so I think. I have absolutely no memory of anything from those earlier years, other than that. Like I could not tell you what I learned in school with Irish. Like my parents had a little, story books and they'd be like 'cat' 'madra' that sort of thing and I know they were in the house, but I've no memory of ever using them or I've no memory of Irish in those early years at all.

(R: And were you born in (placename?) P: yeah, I was born there and then moved. **(R: And do you go back at all?)** P: We went back there in October but for, my Dad used to go back, because we have a house out there so Dad used to go back in order to keep his citizenship and it made stuff like that easier. He had to go back on a yearly basis, but we went back there this year for the first time in 14 or 15 years. **(R: How was that?)** P: It was really weird because I went and I was like 'I should remember that, because my mum was kept being like, 'do you remember this?' I'd say 'No' and she seemed so sad and the first few days was so odd and I didn't like it because I was, I feel so bad because I'm supposed to remember this and like I have always identified as being Irish and (another culture) Like and that's what I am and I got there and I was, I'm not (another culture) at all like I don't know any of this, so it was tough and I just looked at these people and they had like these mad lifestyles and it seemed like so much more exciting than everything we have here and I was like 'why didn't I grow up there' and then, so it was weird but, it was really really good, really nice country, I'd recommend it. **(R: yeah, noted, definitely).**

(R: so, you said you consider yourself more Irish-(another culture) and what do you feel now?) P: I suppose it made me realise that I'm a whole lot more Irish, em you know, I'd like to accept, just because for myself like, when I was younger it was such a big I was not Irish 'I am not Irish', whereas no, now I am 'No, I am Irish, but I was born in (another country), whereas it used to be ' oh, I'm (other culture) but I live here. See both my parents are Irish, so

really, I am Irish through blood and whatever, but so it did change it does make me feel, realise like no, you're a bit more the Irish side of things.

(R: And do you feel that speaking the language as you do, impacts that in any way?) P: Yeah, it probably does, because I remember going to the Gaeltacht and seeing all these kids from the like the country you grew up in, these areas and their Irish was so good and played GAA and were gadgers and they were so Irish and I remember looking at them going I'm really from the Pale, like I'm really not Irish. But then you get to somewhere like (another country) and you're like no, I'm not, I'm Irish . So, I probably did and I think without it you'd feel, well I don't know, maybe without it I wouldn't notice. But I imagine if it was say taken away, I'd be like No, I'm not that Irish, it would disconnect you a bit, or like it does make me feel bit more connected to Ireland.

(R: interesting and when you would have been at school when you came here, would your friends have been mainly Irish or would there have been some non-Irish or would it have been a mix or and going up through school?) P: I went to our school, our primary school was the biggest primary school in Ireland but it was possibly one of the least diverse primary schools going. There was, like the diversity was nil like, there were very few. And then through secondary school, again the 3rd biggest secondary school in Ireland and probably one of the least diverse. There was not a single Asian pupil. There was I think 3 black kids. There was no, about 4 eastern Europeans out of about 197 in my year, so I had a very, like all my friends were Irish, just because no one else was there.

(R: And what about now, now in College?) Yeah, there's a bit more of a diversity, but again, most of my friends, you know have come up through the Irish school system or most of them, like 90% of them are Irish still. **(R: ok, and although you continue to speak Irish now with the lessons and that would you participate in quite a few of the like Irish festivals as such or is just more of the language?).** It would be more of the language. When you say festivals?

(R: St Patrick' day, the music aspect, or really getting into it, that kind of thing, the traditional aspect. Do you feel because you have the language you would get more into that or is just not something that you, impacts you?) P: It probably like be would a route into it, if you get me, like you can see how the two would be connected. But like, you know, like if someone took me to a fleadh, it wouldn't go unappreciated. I'd go like 'oh that's cool',

but I wouldn't bring myself, like I'd wouldn't go. So passing and the normal ones like St Patrick's Day and things like that would be, aren't particularly involved in anything really.

(R: And projects like outside of college, if somebody was looking for an Irish speaker someone who could speak Irish to do a project, like broadcast on a radio station or something like that, is that something that you find you might like?) P: I'd be happy to do it, I don't know if my Irish would be capable of it, but I'd like be like 'yeah, sure I'll give it a go', no problem, yeah, that sort of thing. I'd have no problem with, again, my level might not be quite there, but if someone was like 'would you do it?' I'd say yes.

(R: and your friends that you have this interest, how do they respond to that, your friends when they know you have this interest?) P: They, em it gets a few, it's not laughed at, but they find it quite amusing this you know the fact that, because I send text messages they'd be English Spanish and Irish and they were like 'X', come on now, we can't read that. Em so it is met with a bit of humour, but for the most part they wouldn't be like shut up or like stop talking like, or they'd get a bit of Irish, they'd probably respond with, but they wouldn't be, I might get a funny look, but they wouldn't discourage it entirely.

(R: And would you send texts like that now to friends who are non-Irish?) P: yeah, it's like the habit, it's lessened, now so a year or so ago you'd have been like X, please, just like one language stick to one language please, so and it was because it was my grasp of all the other two, aside from English weren't good enough to form my full message in one or the other, so I was just sticking to the 3.

(R: And your sisters as well, they're not influenced as well?) P: I think it's sort of because I've got a positive attitude towards it and I'd say that at home my little sister is being slightly influenced by, like my Mom keeps saying 'keep talking like that, keep talking, like that because we need her, we need her to go to the Gaeltacht and that, so keep being positive about it. Whereas my older sister, she's passed that so, I don't think like, she might, because when I'm at home, I would have more positive views, she might then, you know sort of, they might rub off on her a bit, or she might be able to see the positive side. But she's the kind of person you might have one point of view and she would purposely take the other, so I don't know what **(R: sisters)** P: yeah, that's how sisters are. I'm probably the same in many ways but.

(R: And would she have learned Irish when you came back from (another country) or would she have been exempt at that stage?), No she, I think they could have pushed for an

exemption, but I don't think, it like it wasn't an issue at the time because both myself and her have dyslexia, but it's quite a low level, so that exemption didn't cover that either. I think my parents would have, they didn't see it as an issue, it wasn't an issue because she was seven when she came, so I think she went into 2nd class so I think you have to be in 3rd class before you get an exemption (**R: I think 11 or 12, I think before you get the exemption**). P: yes, so she wasn't qualified but I don't know if she had qualified would they have bothered pushing it, I don't really know. (**R: But she's not on the same level in terms of interest as you?**) P: No, not even close. No. (**R: interesting, how it all does**).

(**R: and would you say that, and I know we touched on this that but speaking Irish kind of affects and influences how you feel living in Ireland?**) P: Yeah, I mean it does makes you feel more Irish and it doesn't, because you know Irish isn't the first language it's not predominantly spoken. You don't need it, it doesn't, It's sort of, it's a thing that you can speak Irish. But so, I think because we don't use it, it's not as much, it's not a necessity it's not like an integral part of life here, so it's easy to just not feel anything about it.

(**R: But you feel that it impacts your identity?**) P: Yeah, it does, definitely, it makes, it affects how I see myself in terms of my level of Irish-ness and my sort of belonging here, it sorts of cements that a bit more, in that this is a big part of my life and its part of me and then it solidifies my identity as Irish.

(**R: And what about the future X, have you thought about, I should say longer term, maybe I shouldn't say longer term, have you thought about the next few years, do you see yourself staying here, do you see yourself maybe going abroad, do you see yourself, do you have any idea?**) I'm not the kind of person who would like to stay in the same place for ever, so realistically, Id you know be and because of what I'm doing, I don't know if jobs in, because I'm do earth science, then I'd be a geo-scientist or geologist or whichever one I pick (**R: Ok**). I don't know how employable that is in Ireland at the moment, so, I don't know how much of an option I'll have. But, I would, I'm the kind of person who'd go anyway, so in the next few years I can't, like past graduation, unless there's something keeping me here. I can't see why I'd stay.

(**R: and is there a pull to go back to (other country) at all to just maybe see?**) yeah, definitely, we were there and I was like looking, because at the time I was finding it very difficult to settle into College. So at the time, I very much did not want to come back to college at all, so I was looking at all these things and I was, I could come work here and I

could do that and I could stay with this person, whatever reason, so there is definitely a pull to go back there. Like the lifestyle it just seemed so exciting and it's so exotic and so different to everything, to here and we came home and life was so mundane. It was so boring. So, there's a definite pull to just go there, but just also like anywhere.

(R: it's nice nonetheless, to have the opportunity and to have that kind of experience behind you, to know that you could that, that all sounds very interesting. When you're speaking, when you're doing the classes here with the Cumann, can you speak, do you speak to others in Irish who might be, in the Cumann or interested in Irish, or not something you do?)

P: Outside the classes that's the only involvement I have, is the classes at the moment. Like I went to one event in Freshers week, but it was like a concert, so it wasn't and there were a few words spoken in Irish but you weren't really there to speak, it was more, you were there to see this band play. But, you know in the classes you have to do group work and you are speaking. Our teacher now I'd say is on a wider scale part of Cumann na Gael, but she's not, I don't think she's not involved in like Trinity, sort of thing. She's involved, like I know she's involved with TG4 and stuff like that, so on a wider scale, I've no connection to her through Cumann Gaelach or anything like that.

(R: And what about socialising, where would you socialise, would you do Irish oriented socialising or not?)

P: No, no like, if I was going out it's very much, non-Irish related. Yeah, like other than telling your friend how annoying this guy is behind you, that's about the extent our Irish is in a social context. **(R: But you can converse and could converse?)**

P: yeah, like I've been in nightclubs and heard people speaking Irish and been like 'oh my goodness, I speak Irish too and then you like have a conversation with them and stuff like that. **(R: would you? Interesting, so you would).** Like I recognised, there was a guy I recognised from my chemistry labs and I was like "you're in my Chemistry" and he was like "sorry what?" I was like, because he was speaking Irish and I was speaking Irish to him about that. **(R: that's interesting, is that something you might come across from time to time?)**

P: yeah, it has happened on more than one occasion especially, because the kids he, this particular student went to a gaelscoil, so and all of his friends were from the gaelscoil and they were speaking Irish, so maybe it's a gaelscoil thing, like that's, I suppose that's their school friends that's how they've always conversed. **(R: sure)** it must be the norm, so I'm like, 'me too'.

(R: that's interesting, so, for example, if you heard somebody talking in the supermarket, for example, if you heard say a mother saying to her child, where is the? And you heard it, is that something you might actually join in or would you kind of go – I'm not getting involved here?)P: I suppose unless she was like asking a question and couldn't find it here. I don't know if I'd respond in English or Irish, I suppose, yeah, I actually don't know. I suppose if she was in Irish, I'd be in Irish.

(R: and if you were hypothetically on a train and you're going to Galway, Kerry or wherever and there's maybe some other students, but you wouldn't necessarily know them, but they're chatting away in Irish, would you?) P: It would depend, because I don't know if I'd just have the confidence just even in English or any language to turn around to strangers and be like 'oh Hi', unless there was some sort of where I needed to like say something, or I'd just probably leave them alone. Ok.

(R: and let me just go back over X, because it's given me a very good picture of how you do it, you do it, and where you see it coming from. There are no other languages, you said, your Dad speaks a smattering of a cupla focail in a couple of different languages. There are no other languages, you don't speak any other languages at home? P: No. (R: what about in (other country) what's?) P: there's first, there's like 7 national languages there, so one of them, there's one like the kids learn in school, it's like their Irish, it's called (local language). So like my older sister learned the basis of (local language) in, she was in primary school for 3 years or whatever over there, so that is, so that they'd grow up with the same and like its actually very similar and their view of people's view of (local language) and Irish is very similar, in terms of you know, it's the native language but like, when the colonies came in, they were very much like 'we're not speaking that, so'. It's a native language, but it's taught in schools because it's a national language. **(R: And you wouldn't have learned any, you were too young?)** P: I was too young, but like there'd be the odd word, like it's a word they might have come across like, but other than that.

(R: And would your parents have had any of that?) P: Dad might have had a bit, he. I don't think his even stretched to conversational at all, I don't think it was there, but like there'd be a few words and stuff like that, but my mom never needed it so, because English is wherever you go anyone will speak English to you, it's not a problem, so it was never a necessity.

(R: And can I ask you, the Cumann Gaelach classes that you're in at the moment, are they all Irish or are a mixture, you mentioned an American girl that was there?) P the people in them is quite a mixture and lots of, there's an American girl I know there's a guy from Poland, he is Polish but he moved here when he was young and he's been in school and then I think I'm probably the youngest of the lot of them. Or a lot of people doing them are actually staff who are like 'I want to pick this up'. but I know, there's a guy who wants his kids to go and he just wants to be able to speak to his kids and help them with their homework or whatever in Irish, so that's why he's doing it. So, there's a big range. Predominantly the people are Irish there are a few non-Irish. **(R: ok that's an interesting point about the guy who is Polish wanting to help his children)** Oh no, the Polish guy, sorry is a student but the other guy just wants to help his children. Sorry that was

(R: No, No, actually that was something I was interested to ask you is that, obviously there's a lot of people coming into the country from different countries and their children are going to school like you would have and Irish is compulsory, particularly if they're starting at that age, how do you think it is for kids who are coming in and parents have no Irish, though you did say your parents had no Irish, but would they have had no Irish?) P: definitely when I came in and had junior infants level of Irish they would have been able to help. But, I play cricket and there's a family come over from South Africa and their daughter went into Junior infants and they speak Afrikaans and English and then there's here and their youngest child is learning Irish, so I would turn round to her and say 'Oh Conas atá tú?' And she'd like 'go maith', conas tá tú and I'm like 'go maith' and then her Mum would be standing like 'Oh my goodness, what is going on. So, I think the younger kids, she's grasped the language very well, probably because she's, probably something to do with, because there's two languages at home, so she's used to whatever. But for a child, I was so impressed for a child her age there was no problem, 'just Irish, you know. She was quite happy with it, so, anyone I've met who's maybe non-national and has to learn Irish at that age has no issue with it.

(R: interesting, no interesting. And the Cumann Gaelach and the Seomra na Gaeilge, would you use the Seomra na Gaeilge, at all?) P: I have yet to be up there, I'm a bit **(R: it's a great resource)**. They have free food on a Wednesday **(R: I'm going on Wednesday, yes)**. So there are certain things I have to like push myself more to do. Like I've signed up for all these things and I've done so little in my like few months here, so I. **(R: are you just in first year here?)** P: yes, **(R: ok ok)**.

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Appendix G: Declaration

Please mark with an X

I hereby declare that this submission is entirely my own work.
It has not been submitted as an exercise towards a degree at this
or any other university

I have read and I understand the plagiarism provisions in the
General Regulations of the University Calendar for the current
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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is entirely my own work. It has not been submitted to this or any other institution for degree or publication.

I authorise the University of Dublin to lend this thesis to other institutes or individuals. I further agree that this thesis may be copied at the request of other institutes or individuals for the purposes of scholarly work.

Joanne Bowring

16th June 2016