

**Second-level Students' Perceptions of Immigrants**  
**Investigated in the Classroom: an Imagological**  
**Mixed-Methods Approach**

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for

the degree of Doctor of Philosophy awarded by

Dublin City University

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School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies

September 2015

# Declaration

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*Dedicated to my parents*

# Acknowledgements

First and foremost, I would like to thank my parents for all your support. You have always encouraged me to pursue my interests and instilled in me an appreciation for education, reading and learning from a young age.

I am very grateful to Áine and Brigitte for all the help and support you have given me over the past three years. I have enjoyed working with you both and am very glad to have had you as my supervisors for this research.

To Gearóid, for always making me laugh and being positive, for helping me to appreciate the luxury of pursuing my love of study and learning on a full-time basis and for performing proof-reading duties, I am grateful.

A special thanks to the students involved in the research for their participation, enthusiasm and honesty. I hope I have done you and your views justice and that you benefitted from the experience as much as I did.

To Sarah, Karen and Sean, thank you for always showing an interest in my research, asking about my progress and proof-reading.

To all the friends I've made during my time as a PhD researcher at DCU thank you for making it such an enjoyable experience. In particular, thank you Tuan, Eamonn, Lizie and Buse for always being there when I needed to chat or vent or take a break or get a coffee or go for a walk!

Thank you to all the girls, Laura, Eimear, Fiona, Emma and Bernadette for ensuring that I maintained an active social life throughout my PhD.

I am grateful to the teachers and principals who allowed me in to their schools and classrooms and showed an interest in the research.

Finally, thank you to the School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies and DCU for awarding me a scholarship to complete the research, without which it would not have been possible.

# Table of Contents

Declaration .....	ii
Acknowledgements .....	iv
Table of Contents .....	v
List of Figures .....	ix
List of Acronyms .....	xi
Abstract .....	xii
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
Introducing Imagology .....	2
Defining Multiculturalism and Interculturalism.....	5
Research Aims and Objectives.....	11
Objective 1: Investigating students’ views .....	11
Objective 2: Using Imagology in the classroom to enhance interculturalism .....	12
Objective 3: Assessing the impact of the intercultural module on student opinions ....	13
Impetus for the research and background of the researcher .....	13
Significance of the research.....	15
Context of the research .....	17
National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School: Guidelines for Schools .....	20
Intercultural Education Strategy .....	21
Research in Intercultural Education in Ireland .....	23
Where is the research taking place and why?.....	26
Note regarding use of terms .....	29
Outline of the Thesis .....	29
<b>Chapter 1: Critical Review</b> .....	32
Part 1: Intercultural Education .....	33
Critiquing the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Guidelines .....	33
Reviewing the ESRI study: ‘Adapting to Diversity: Irish Schools and Newcomer Students’ (2008) .....	42

Institutional Racism.....	49
Racism in Irish Society and Schools .....	57
English as an Additional Language and the Intercultural Education Strategy .....	70
Part 2: Using Intercultural/ Multicultural Literature in Education .....	75
Part 3: Imagology .....	82
Conclusion.....	95
<b>Chapter 2 Methodology .....</b>	<b>98</b>
Selecting a Mixed-methods Approach .....	98
Epistemological Stance .....	101
Interpretivism.....	103
Ontological Considerations .....	103
Social Constructivism.....	104
Advocacy Approach .....	105
Research Design .....	108
Concurrent Nested Strategy .....	108
Sample .....	110
Rationale for Selecting Transition Year Students.....	116
Research site: Dublin .....	117
Research methods.....	118
Quantitative Data: Survey.....	119
Qualitative Data .....	122
Data Checking.....	126
Data analysis.....	127
Ethics .....	130
<b>Chapter 3: Using Imagology and Reader Response Theory to Enhance</b>	
<b>Intercultural Education .....</b>	<b>135</b>
Imagology.....	136
The Role of Reader Response Theory.....	140
Developing the module .....	151
Selecting the texts.....	152
An Imagological Examination of the Texts .....	167

Perspective .....	169
Religion.....	174
Language.....	183
Appearance .....	190
Using Imagology in the Classroom .....	199
Imagology and Second-level Education.....	205
<b>Chapter 4 Research Findings</b> .....	207
Part 1: Analysis of Survey Responses.....	208
Defining Interculturalism and Multiculturalism.....	208
Multiculturalism .....	209
Defining Multiculturalism Correctly: Pre-test, Post-test and Comparison Groups Compared.....	210
Defining Multiculturalism Correctly: Schools Compared.....	211
Defining Multiculturalism: Gender Comparison .....	213
Interculturalism .....	214
Defining Interculturalism Correctly: Pre-test, Post-test and Comparison Groups Compared.....	214
Defining Interculturalism Correctly: Schools Compared .....	215
Defining Interculturalism: One Culture? .....	218
Racism .....	220
Defining Racism .....	221
Explaining Racism.....	226
Survey findings: Students' experience of Racism.....	236
Experiencing Racism at School.....	236
Experiencing Racism: Irish Students and 'Oppression Privilege' .....	240
Experiencing Racism: Gender Comparison.....	241
Experiencing Racism in Public .....	242
Witnessing Racism in Public.....	244
Witnessing Racism in School.....	245
Witnessing Racism in School: Comparing Schools .....	245
One Student's Personal Experience of Racism .....	246

Reflecting on Racist Behaviour.....	250
Racist Behaviour and non-Irish Students .....	252
Survey findings: Students' views on Interculturalism in Irish second-level schools.....	253
Intercultural Education and the Junior Certificate.....	254
Intercultural Education and Cultural Diversity .....	255
Intercultural Education: Important? .....	257
Part 2: Analysis of Students' Responses to texts .....	259
<i>Black Hoodie</i> .....	259
<i>The Weight of Water</i> .....	266
<i>The Cinnamon Tree</i> .....	271
<i>Making Ireland Home</i> .....	277
Exploring Attitudes to Minority Groups with <i>The Walk of Life</i> Activity .....	297
Analysing the Reader-Response and Imagological Approach .....	307
Chapter 4 Overview.....	309
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	311
Bibliography.....	323
Primary Sources .....	323
Secondary Sources .....	323
Appendix A .....	1
Appendix B .....	1
Appendix C .....	1



# List of Figures

Figure 1.1 Information on Areas Surveyed for School Patronage

Figure 2.1 Visual Model: Concurrent Nested Strategy

Figure 2.2 Table 1: Information on Schools Involved in Research Study

Figure 2.3 Visual Model: Glaser and Strauss's Constant Comparative Data Analysis Strategy

Figure 4.1 Barchart: Defining Multiculturalism Correctly: Pre-test, Post-test and Comparison Groups Compared

Figure 4.2 Barchart: Defined Multiculturalism Correctly

Figure 4.3 Barchart: Defining Interculturalism Correctly: Pre-test, Post-test and Comparison Groups Compared

Figure 4.4 Barchart: Defined Interculturalism Correctly

Figure 4.5 Tag cloud: Responses to 'Define racism' survey question generated with Nvivo 23.07.14

Figure 4.6 Pie chart: Explaining Racism

Figure 4.7 Barchart: 'I have been a victim of racism in this school.'

Figure 4.8 Linear Regression Graph: Charting the number Experiencing Racism at School against the Number of Non-Irish in the School

Figure 4.9 Barchart: Charting the number Experiencing Racism at School against the Number of Non-Irish in the School

Figure 4.10 Barchart: 'I have been a victim of racism in public.'

Figure 4.11 Barchart: 'I have witnessed racism in public.'

Figure 4.12 Barchart: 'I have witnessed racism in this school.'

Figure 4.13 Barchart: 'I have said something racist or acted in a racist way in the past.'

Figure 4.14 Table 2: Racism Experienced at School and Racist Behaviour: Comparing Schools

Figure 4.15 Barchart: 'I think the Junior Certificate course is intercultural.'

Figure 4.16 Barchart: 'I think intercultural education is important.'

Figure 4.17 Barchart: 'I think education should be more intercultural.'

Figure 4.18 Barchart: 'Immigrants are treated fairly by the Gardaí.'

Figure 4.19 Barchart: 'There is nothing we can do about racism in Irish society.'

# List of Acronyms

ASTI:	Association of Secondary Teachers in Ireland
CSO:	Central Statistics Office
CSPE:	Civic, Social and Political Education
DEIS:	Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools
DES:	Department of Education and Skills
EAL:	English as an Additional Language
ESRI:	Economic Social Research Institute
ICI:	Immigrant Council of Ireland
IES:	Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010- 2015
MRCI:	Migrant Rights Centre Ireland
NCCA:	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
NGO:	Non-Governmental Organisation
NVivo:	Qualitative Data Analysis Software
OECD:	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PGDE:	Postgraduate Diploma in Education
SPHE:	Social, Personal and Health Education
SPSS:	Statistical Package for Social Science
TEFL:	Teaching English as a Foreign Language
TUI:	Teachers' Union of Ireland
TY:	Transition Year
VEC:	Vocational Education Committee

# Abstract

## **Second-level Students' Perceptions of Immigrants Investigated in the Classroom: an Imagological Mixed-Methods Approach**

**Laura Dooley**

Over the past two decades, there has been a change in the demographic of Irish society as a result of large scale immigration. Consequently, diversity has become the norm in many classrooms in Ireland, particularly in the Dublin area. This research investigated the views of second-level students on interculturalism and immigration in Ireland. A method of enhancing intercultural education in the English class using intercultural literature and Imagology, the study of national stereotypes in literature, was also proposed.

Employing a mixed-methods approach within an Interpretive framework, a specially designed module was implemented with two hundred and seventy-three Transition Year students from nine schools in Dublin. Using Imagology as a critical lens, students analysed three texts by Irish authors that featured immigrant characters: Roddy Doyle's 'Black Hoodie', Sarah Crossan's *The Weight of Water* and Aubrey Flegg's *The Cinnamon Tree*. Students' responses were examined to explore their opinions on issues such as immigration, interculturalism and racism. Data was collected as follows: a survey at the beginning and end of the module; recording of class discussions; and the collection of students' personal responses to the texts. SPSS and NVivo were used to help to organise the data for analysis.

The findings revealed that students' perceptions of immigration and interculturalism improved as a result of studying and discussing texts that include immigrant characters and Imagology was proven to be a useful tool in the classroom to assist students in developing their critical reading skills and enhancing their intercultural learning and awareness. The majority of students supported the view that education should be more intercultural. Racism was highlighted as an issue of concern. It was found to be more prevalent in schools with a higher percentage of non-Irish students. The study underlines the need to address intercultural education in Ireland without delay.

# Introduction

This research focuses on the area of intercultural education at second-level in Ireland. Over the past two decades, there has been a significant change in the demographic of Irish society as a result of large-scale immigration. In 2006 the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment acknowledged this increased diversity and published guidelines for intercultural education in second-level schools.<sup>1</sup> These guidelines outline the benefits of intercultural education for students and the important role that schools play in it. However, as we shall see, these guidelines have been criticised as they have not been accompanied by any in-service training for teachers and do not seek to alter the curriculum.<sup>2</sup> Recent research indicates that the guidelines have not been implemented and budget cuts to the education sector mean that previous recommendations to provide teachers with in-service training on interculturalism are unlikely to be met.<sup>3</sup> The reduction in provision of English as an Additional Language (EAL) hours will also impact on the level of intercultural education in schools as previous studies indicate that the degree to which interculturalism is implemented in the classroom can depend on individual teachers and that teachers with experience teaching EAL are more likely to incorporate intercultural practices in their mainstream classroom than teachers with no

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<sup>1</sup> National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Guidelines for Schools: Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School* (Dublin: NCCA, 2006). [http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/publications/interc%20guide\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/publications/interc%20guide_eng.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> Audrey Bryan, 'The co-articulation of national identity and interculturalism in the Irish curriculum: educating for democratic citizenship?' *London Review of Education*, 6 (2008), 47-58.

<sup>3</sup> Emer Smyth, Merike Darmody, Frances McGinnity and Delma Byrne. *Adapting to Diversity: Irish Schools and Newcomer Students* (Dublin: The Economic and Social Research Institute, 2009). <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/ESRI-Research-Series-Number-8-June-2009-Adapting-to-Diversity-Irish-Schools-and-Newcomer-Students.pdf>

experience of working with students of immigrant backgrounds in this way.<sup>4</sup> At a time when increasing diversity in Irish classrooms is the norm, attention to interculturalism should be a priority. However, resources and support in this area are not forthcoming. The present study endeavours to address these concerns by offering a possible practical solution in the form of an intercultural module that employs the theory of Imagology (outlined below) and the use of intercultural literature to enhance intercultural education without the need for extensive and costly teacher training. The research also investigates the views of second-level students on interculturalism and immigration in Ireland.

## **Introducing Imagology**

A significant element of the thesis is the novel imagological approach taken in teaching the module. Imagology is a literary theory that evolved from comparative literature studies. Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen define Imagology as ‘the critical analysis of national stereotypes in literature.’<sup>5</sup> Specifically, Imagology ‘applies to research in the field of our mental images of the Other and of ourselves.’<sup>6</sup> The fact that the study of Imagology relates to ‘mental images’ is significant. As Leerssen underlines, Imagology is not a sociological pursuit seeking to question the truth of representations of national characters: ‘[t]he ultimate perspective of image studies is a theory of cultural or national stereotypes, not a theory of cultural or national identity.’<sup>7</sup> Indeed, in his essay, ‘Imagology: History and Method’, Joep Leerssen notes that the theory of Imagology could only develop ‘after people had abandoned a belief in the ‘realness’ of national

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<sup>4</sup> Dymphna Devine, *Immigration and Schooling in the Republic of Ireland: Making a Difference?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen, *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters, A Critical Survey* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), p. xiii.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 27.

characters as explanatory models.’<sup>8</sup> This occurred after World War II when German theorists, in particular, had a vested interest in challenging the validity of ideas about national characters. Marius-François Guyard in ‘L'étranger tel qu'on le voit’ proposed the study of representations of nationality.<sup>9</sup>

Leerssen argues that representations of national character are formed in a binary involving a contrast between the *spected*, the group or nationality observed, with the *spectant*, the group observing. Emer O’Sullivan holds that images of the spected group can tell us more about the spectant as what the spectant chooses to identify as ‘Other’ provides an insight into what is feared and can actually reflect some social problem in their own society or group:

Stereotypes held say more about their holders than those whom they are supposed to denote, as it is through the images of others that one’s national identity is defined. National stereotypes can reveal a great deal about the norms, forms of social behaviour and fears of the group which is stereotyping.<sup>10</sup>

Images of the ‘Other’ are also referred to as hetero-images and images of the self or in-group are termed auto-images. Questions about how these images are constructed and where they are employed and why, are central to the study of Imagology.

The study of images of national character and stereotypes in literature is important because attitudes and ideas about national character can heavily influence both the writing and reception of literary works. As Leerssen argues, images of national identity inform not only the author’s understanding of himself, but also impact on the audience, as the work either contradicts with or conforms to their perceptions. Images of national

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 21.

<sup>9</sup> Marius-François Guyard, *La littérature compare*, (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1965).

<sup>10</sup> Emer O’Sullivan, *Friend and Foe: The Image of Germany and the Germans in British Children's Fiction from 1870 to the Present* (Tubingen: Narr, 1990), p. 22.

character can be the source of stereotypes or propagate and reinforce them and these literary depictions can influence and inform opinion and behaviour. It is because of this influence that an imagological analysis of texts is vital.

Imagology seeks to serve a function: to encourage the questioning of images and enhance people's awareness of their purpose and impact.

It is the aim of imagology to describe the origin, process and function of national prejudices and stereotypes, to bring them to the surface, analyse them and make people rationally aware of them.<sup>11</sup>

Therefore, the Imagologist's role is to scrutinise the depiction of national characters and to determine how and why these images are portrayed in the literary work. This examination can prompt the following questions:

- Where are stereotypes of national character used in the creation and representation of literary characters?
- How are these stereotypes used: are they denounced, contradicted, subverted, played with or maintained?
- How are various images (both auto- and hetero-) accordingly constructed?
- To what purpose (whether political, sociological, ethical, etc.) do authors employ these images?

This research proposes that Imagology can be used in the classroom in a practical way to enhance students' intercultural awareness and understanding. Contemplating questions like those above can result in students becoming aware of different perspectives. Imagology is discussed in further detail in the Critical Review and its use in the classroom is outlined in Chapter 3.

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<sup>11</sup> Beller and Leerssen, p. 12.



## Defining Multiculturalism and Interculturalism

The understanding of the terms multiculturalism and interculturalism are both investigated in this research. Sometimes these terms are used interchangeably in international research concerning intercultural education. However, Irish researchers tend to differentiate between the two terms and the following definitions reflect the meaning of interculturalism adopted in this thesis:

The choice of the term ‘interculturalism’, rather than, for example, ‘multiculturalism’ is quite notable. It indicates the sort of society the Government envisages we should aim to live in: while the term multiculturalism may denote a society in which different cultures live side by side, the term interculturalism is intended to go further, denoting the “belief that we become richer persons by knowing and experiencing other cultures, that we add to our personality because of encounters with other cultures” (Exchange House Travellers Service, 2002).<sup>12</sup>

Interculturalism is what Fanning refers to as ‘strong multiculturalism’- a multiculturalism that overtly addresses issues of structural inequality and institutionalised racism.<sup>13</sup>

Interculturalism could be understood as aiming to address some of the areas that multiculturalists neglected – by consciously and deliberately promoting interaction between cultures and also by incorporating an anti-racism component which was seen to be lacking in multiculturalism.<sup>14</sup>

As evident from the quotes above, interculturalism is considered an advancement of multiculturalism. It is a more progressive approach than multiculturalism because it takes into account issues such as institutional racism and anti-racism policies. In simple terms, multiculturalism acknowledges the existence of different cultures and nationalities in a society while interculturalism denotes a connection between these

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<sup>12</sup> Neil Haran and Roland Tormey, *Celebrating Difference Promoting Equality Towards a Framework for Intercultural Education in Irish Classrooms* (Limerick: Mary Immaculate College, 2002), p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> Hilary Tovey and Perry Share, *A Sociology of Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan 2000), p. 287.

<sup>14</sup> Barbara O’Toole, ‘Separating ‘development and intercultural education’: meeting the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Ireland’ in *Challenging Perspectives Teaching Globalisation and Diversity in the Knowledge Society: An E-Book of Development Education and Intercultural Education Research for Teacher Educators*, ed. by Matthias Fiedler and Astrid V Pérez Piñán (Dublin: DICE Project Irish Aid, 2008), pp. 11-20 (p. 12-13). <http://www.diceproject.ie/docs/ChallengingPerspectives.pdf>

nationalities and cultures. A multicultural society is considered one in which people of different cultures coexist but do not relate to one another. Each group stays within its own culture. Friendships are not cross-cultural and people know very little about the culture, background or religion of those outside their own group. Segregation between groups is clear-cut and apparent. In contrast, an intercultural society is characterised by a well-integrated community where mutual respect dominates. In such a community different cultures, backgrounds and religions are accepted as normal and are treated equally, different perspectives and traditions are valued and discrimination on the basis of race, culture or religion is challenged. A multicultural society is thus easily achieved by the presence of people from a variety of cultures and nationalities. Interculturalism however, requires effort on behalf of all the groups involved to integrate and accept others.

In line with the central argument of this thesis that an intercultural approach to education is both necessary and preferable to a multicultural one, the literature studied as part of the intercultural module in the research is referred to as ‘intercultural literature’. To date, ‘multicultural literature’ has been the term most often used to refer to texts like those in this research that enhance students’ awareness of different cultures and embrace diversity. However, as Anne M. Dolan states in her book, *You, Me and Diversity: Picturebooks for Teaching Development and Intercultural Education*, ‘the term *multicultural* is problematic.’<sup>15</sup> (Emphasis in original) Despite this assertion, and the argument for intercultural education as opposed to multicultural education put forward, Dolan chooses to retain the term ‘multicultural literature’ to discuss the various texts she

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<sup>15</sup> Anne M. Dolan, *You, Me and Diversity: Picturebooks for Teaching Development and Intercultural Education* (London: Trentham Books, 2014), p. 26.

identifies as suitable for use in the primary classroom to enhance students' intercultural learning and awareness because 'there is no other term that sufficiently encompasses them.'<sup>16</sup> However, this view is not accepted in this research.

In his book, *Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults: Reflections on Critical Issues*, Mingshui Cai reflects that 'multicultural literature' is a contested term that is difficult to define. Cai argues that definitions fall in to two categories, literary and pedagogical: 'Multicultural literature can be defined in terms of its intrinsic literary nature or the pedagogical purposes it is supposed to serve in education.'<sup>17</sup> The literary definition considers that literature in English can be deemed multicultural because it is produced and read by people of many cultures. However, 'controversy centres around the pedagogical definition.'<sup>18</sup> This is because the level of inclusion varies in pedagogical definitions of multicultural literature. As a result, literature can be defined as multicultural even if it only depicts one culture if this culture is an underrepresented or minority culture because added to other works about minority cultures it can make a curriculum more multicultural. As Cai highlights, definitions of multicultural literature include narrow conceptions of what should be included like that by Kruse and Horning that contend that only '[w]orks that focus on "people of colour"' should be considered as well as more inclusive understandings like that of Harris who defines multicultural literature as '[b]ooks that feature people of colour, the elderly, gays and lesbians, religious minorities, language minorities, people with disabilities, gender issues, and

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., p. 1.

<sup>17</sup> Mingshui Cai, *Multicultural Literature for Children and Young Adults: Reflections on Critical Issues* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2002), p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

concerns about class'.<sup>19</sup> Cai underlines that despite the differences in definitions, they all agree that multicultural literature focuses on people that may be considered 'Other', different as a result of ethnicity, culture, language or religion. Effectively, those that do not fit into what Cai terms the 'dominant white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant, patriarchal culture'.<sup>20</sup> As will be discussed in detail in Chapter 3, this concentration on the 'Other' underlines intercultural literature's suitability for an imagological approach to reading as Imagology seeks to question and examine representations of the 'Other' in literature.

Notably, Cai's definition of multiculturalism fits in with the definitions of interculturalism discussed above because of its concentration on power struggles and social change in society:

Multiculturalism involves diversity and inclusion, but, more importantly, it also involves power structure and struggle. Its goal is not just to understand, accept, and appreciate cultural differences, but also to ultimately transform the existing social order in order to ensure greater voice and authority to the marginalised cultures and to achieve social equality and justice among all cultures so that people of different cultural backgrounds can live happily together in a truly democratic world.<sup>21</sup>

The emphasis on achieving equality and mutual understanding between members of different cultures indicates that it is interculturalism, as it is understood in this thesis, that Cai is advocating. Confusion between the terms 'multicultural' and 'intercultural' is inevitable when different critics are using them in different ways. Indeed, particularly in America, 'multicultural' is still the more common term in use while in Europe 'intercultural' tends to be used more widely. Martha Montero-Sieburth and Hana Alhadi attribute this varying terminology to the different historical contexts of Europe and

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 7.

America. They argue that the legacy of race relations and increasing immigration led to multicultural education in the US while:

In contrast, the majority of European countries, with a history of conflicts and violence stemming from national and cultural differences, adopted intercultural education as a way to ameliorate diversity in schools and encourage integration.<sup>22</sup>

In an attempt to reduce the level of uncertainty between these terms, in this thesis at least, intercultural is the term that will be used to discuss both the educational model and the literature selected for study in the research. All of the texts selected for use in this research feature an immigrant character that interacts with members of the dominant culture. The texts present diversity as normal, as a feature of modern society. They represent and engage with the process of developing relationships between different groups in society and the ramifications this can have with issues such as racism, difference and exclusion portrayed. As a result of this focus on interaction and developing relationships between different cultural groups the designation of these texts as ‘intercultural literature’ is appropriate. However, some reference to ‘multicultural literature’ in the thesis will be unavoidable, particularly in the critical review, as a result of previous research that has overwhelmingly used this term. Consequently, the section in Chapter 1 that examines studies in this area is referred to as ‘Using Intercultural/Multicultural Literature in the Classroom’. As clearly outlined above, the terms multicultural and intercultural are not considered equal. The placing of the two terms together here serves only to make a connection between the present study and prior

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<sup>22</sup> Martha Montero-Sieburth and Hana Alhadi, ‘From Intercultural Education to Citizenship Education in the Netherlands: Enhancement of Cultural Values or Development of Critical Democratic Citizenship?’ in *Intercultural Education in the European Context*, ed. by Marco Catarci and Massimiliano, (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2015), pp. 203- 227, p. 205.

research that has also argued for the inclusion of more diverse texts in the curriculum but has used different terminology i.e. ‘multicultural literature’.

The relevance of an intercultural approach using intercultural literature is clear when the latest census figures are considered: 12% of the population (544,357 out of 4,588,252) in Ireland are non-Irish nationals.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, 90% of second-level schools record immigrant students in their student body.<sup>24</sup> It is important that interculturalism is fostered so that interaction and relationships form between the different cultural and national groups currently resident in Ireland. Intercultural education at second-level is essential to assist with this process; to increase knowledge and awareness among students about cultures outside their own and to encourage communication with others. This study seeks to demonstrate how this can be achieved in the English classroom using intercultural literature and the theory of Imagology which encourages students to consider different perspectives and question images and stereotypes presented in texts. This approach facilitates intercultural education as it increases students’ awareness of other cultures as well as urging them to question the status quo. This attention can lead to the recognition of institutionally racist practices within Irish society and the need for more stringent anti-racism strategies, both of which are fundamental elements of interculturalism.

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<sup>23</sup> Central Statistics Office, *Census 2011 Profile 6: Migration and Diversity* (Dublin: Stationery Office, 2009) p. 7.

<sup>24</sup> Smyth et. al, p. xiv.

## **Research Aims and Objectives**

The research aims to refocus attention on the importance of interculturalism and to suggest ways to enhance intercultural education at second-level. More specifically, the three main objectives of the study are to:

1. Investigate the views of second-level students towards immigration and intercultural education in Ireland.
2. Demonstrate how the literary theory of Imagology can be applied in a practical manner in a classroom setting to enhance intercultural learning and awareness.
3. Explore whether an intercultural module can have an impact on students' receptiveness and understanding of immigration-related issues.

### **Objective 1: Investigating students' views**

The views of students were sought as they are at the frontline of educational transformation and are the group for whom innovation matters most. In addition, the focus on student views addresses a gap in previous research where the student perspective has been seriously underrepresented. Earlier research in the area of intercultural education has revealed that teachers and principals feel that education is not truly intercultural and have acknowledged that there is room for improvement.<sup>25</sup> This study investigates whether students agree with this assessment. As students and teachers are situated at opposite ends of the teaching and learning spectrum, it is possible that their perspectives on this issue may be different and so an exploration of their views constitutes a valuable expansion of knowledge on the subject. Considering the student

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

viewpoint also has the advantage of including individuals from various nationalities and socio-economic backgrounds. In contrast, the studies concentrated on adults within the educational environment were quite limited to a largely homogenous group characterised as Irish and middle-class as the majority of teachers and principals fall into this category.<sup>26</sup> This objective is related to one of the main aims as it divulges students' current thoughts and opinions about immigration and interculturalism and gives an indication of the level of awareness students possess. Researching students' knowledge on these subjects can provide valuable data and can reveal areas for improvement and development. Students' positive attitudes towards intercultural education may also lend support to this study's goal to enhance it.

### **Objective 2: Using Imagology in the classroom to enhance interculturalism**

As highlighted above, it is clear that a more varied approach to research in intercultural education is required. This study attempts to address the shortcomings of previous research which correctly assessed that there were issues with the implementation of intercultural education connected to the curriculum and teaching practices but failed to propose any solution to these problems other than suggest further training for teachers. The present research puts forward a selection of texts that can be included on the syllabus in order to meet recommendations for more intercultural literature. The research is also designed in such a way as to demonstrate how these texts might be studied in the classroom and combined with an imagological approach to enhance intercultural learning and develop critical reading skills. As discussed above, Imagology as the study of national characters in literature is highly suitable for this purpose as '[i]t

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<sup>26</sup> Aisling Leavy, "When I meet them I talk to them": the challenges of diversity for preservice teacher education', *Irish Educational Studies*, 24 (2005), 159-177.



is the aim of imagology to describe the origin, process and function of national prejudices and stereotypes, to bring them to the surface, analyse them and make people rationally aware of them.<sup>27</sup>

### **Objective 3: Assessing the impact of the intercultural module on student opinions**

Gauging the effect of the module on student opinions is an important aspect of the research as any change will provide an indication of the success of such an approach in enhancing students' intercultural awareness. To facilitate this evaluation, students are surveyed at the beginning and end of the module. Comparing the responses to each survey can expose any adjustment in students' views. Written responses to texts and class discussions are also collected to reveal students' perspectives as they progress with the module. A positive impact of the module would lend support to the argument that an intercultural module that employs Imagology can enhance intercultural education at second-level.

### **Impetus for the research and background of the researcher**

The motivation for this research study is strongly linked to my own history and experience and, as a result, these two sections are combined together. From a young age, I wanted to be a teacher. I entered university with the intention of completing my undergraduate degree in Arts and Humanities and continuing on at postgraduate level to receive my qualification as a second-level teacher. Despite never having initially considered social science subjects, I graduated with a BA degree in English and Sociology. The critical thinking and research-based aspects of Sociology strongly

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<sup>27</sup> Beller and Leerssen, p. 12.

appealed to me and it was here that I first started to develop my research skills. Rather than continue straight into the Postgraduate Diploma in Education, I decided to travel for a year and was fortunate to visit parts of South-East Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the US and Canada. This experience broadened my horizons and brought me into contact with different cultures and traditions. While living in Australia, I continued to learn and develop skills, and succeeded in being awarded a certificate to teach English as a foreign language. This qualification was to have a major impact on my future teaching experience and research interests. When I returned to Ireland I qualified as a second-level teacher. I was influenced by the two schools I worked in, which both had a significant percentage of students from non-Irish backgrounds. Through my role as a teacher of English as an Additional Language, I had close personal experience with a number of these students and I became aware of how little diversity pervaded mainstream classes and the curriculum. Furthermore, I discovered how difficult it was to source texts that represented and included these students. At the same time, I was also engaged in a Masters in Comparative Literature at Dublin City University. This course introduced me to various literary theories including Imagology. I realised how valuable Imagology was as a critical reading tool that encourages the reader to question the images presented in texts and consider alternate perspectives. I believed it would be a very useful strategy to employ in the classroom, particularly with students that are accustomed to studying literature located within a Eurocentric framework, as is the case for the majority of students in Irish second-level schools. Along with this realisation, I desired to affect change in the curriculum and increase the level of intercultural awareness among staff and students in Irish secondary schools. I determined that a

possible way of achieving this goal was to conduct research in the area of intercultural education in Ireland. Thus, underlying my research project is the aspiration to influence future policy-making and teaching and learning practices with regard to intercultural education.

Equipped with the knowledge developed as a result of my studies and experience as a teacher, I was able to design a module that incorporated the use of texts that feature immigrant characters and the theory of Imagology. The decision to conduct the research using the module format served two purposes. Firstly, the module was planned so that it would fit easily into a school timetable without causing disruption either to students or teachers. Secondly, the module acted as a model for the approach which might be adapted by teachers in their own classrooms following the completion of the research study. Subject to the same constraints as a regular class would be and tested in several school settings, the module can attest to the applicability of the Imagological approach.

### **Significance of the research**

As outlined above, this study seeks to draw attention to the importance of intercultural education at second-level and to provide a possible avenue to enhance intercultural teaching and learning. The research is novel as it offers a solution that employs Imagology in a practical manner in a classroom environment. Imagology is a comparative literary theory that to date has only been used in an academic context by literary theorists. Emer O'Sullivan, a leading Imagologist, has argued for the relevance of Imagology to children's literature stating that:

Children's literature is a particularly rich seam for research in imagology, since in it a culture's identity is formulated. [...] A reservoir for the collective memory of a nation,

children's literature is the branch of literature which is read and shared by the greatest numbers of members of most communities and a sanctioned location of intergenerational communication (albeit in one direction) about what it means to belong to that specific group. As a site for tradition of information, beliefs, and customs, children's literature overtly or latently reflects dominant social and cultural norms, including self-images and images of others.<sup>28</sup>

Imagology has, to the best of my knowledge, never been introduced to second-level students to be considered as a critical tool in the examination of children's literature. This study proposes to adapt Imagology's theoretical applicability to literature and treat it in a more concrete manner as a guide for students to enhance intercultural learning. Intercultural education is defined as education that reflects cultural diversity, is accessible to ethnic minority groups, promotes equality and challenges unfair discrimination. Imagology encourages readers to question images and consider alternate viewpoints. As Beller and Leerssen assert, texts' 'subjectivity, rhetoric and schematic nature must not be ignored, explained away or filtered out, but must be taken into account in the analysis.'<sup>29</sup> Reading texts with attention to imagological concerns induces students to recognise cultural diversity and query depictions that may imbue discrimination and counteract equality. Using Imagology, students can become better critical readers and it may lead them to become more conscious of other cultures and perspectives thus enhancing their intercultural knowledge and awareness. This study thus broadens the field of Imagology to include this innovative practical approach.

As previously mentioned, the research also provides an insight into the student perspective on intercultural education and immigration which has been overlooked in educational studies in Ireland to date. The student cohort includes young people from

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<sup>28</sup> Emer O' Sullivan, "'S is for Spaniard': The representation of foreign nations in ABCs and picturebooks', *European Journal of English Studies*, 13 (2009), 333-349 (p. 334).

<sup>29</sup> Beller and Leerssen, p. xiii.

immigrant backgrounds who also form part of an under-researched group in the Irish context. The research therefore delivers a valuable extension to prior research in the field of intercultural education and immigration in Ireland.

As this study has both educational and comparative literature dimensions, it will be of benefit and interest to those that work in both fields. In the educational sphere, the research may be relevant to policy makers, stakeholders in education such as teachers and principals and their respective unions, organisations involved in preparing the second-level curriculum and syllabus such as the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and the Department of Education and Skills as well as students themselves represented by the Irish Second-Level Students' Union. In the domain of comparative literature the research may be of note for literary theorists of other areas outside Imagology as well as Imagologists with a focus on children's literature. Non-governmental organisations that work with a range of groups including migrants such as Migrant Rights Centre Ireland and the Immigrant Council of Ireland, minority groups such as the Irish Traveller Movement and Pavee Point, the Lesbian Gay Bi-sexual Transgender community such as BelongTo and the Gay and Lesbian Equality Network and students such as YouthConnect may also be interested in the study.

### **Context of the research**

As underlined earlier, despite the increase in diversity in Irish society, little real change has been implemented in the second-level education system.<sup>30</sup> The lack of intercultural

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<sup>30</sup> I say increase in diversity as other researchers have convincingly argued that the population of Ireland has never comprised one homogenous group. The Travelling Community and other minority groups such as Jewish and Vietnamese immigrants have lived in Ireland for decades and have also been ignored and left on the periphery in terms of representation and inclusion in education.

resources is particularly evident in the curriculum. A recent study revealed that textbooks are not representative of contemporary Irish society and another report found that teachers and principals do not think that the curriculum takes adequate account of cultural diversity.<sup>31</sup> In response to these findings, this study highlights intercultural texts that are suitable for use in the classroom. The texts were selected because they were judged to reflect the increased diversity in Irish society as they feature immigrant characters and they engage with intercultural issues.

Previous research in the area of intercultural education has criticised educational policy documents as ‘rhetoric’ that have outlined changes without providing any resources. To overcome this shortcoming, this study was designed to provide useful resources to teachers. Careful consideration was given to the design of the module to ensure that the same kind of teaching and learning could be achieved in any English classroom. The module was conducted within the normal class environment and with materials readily available to teachers. In addition to identifying texts suitable for use in the classroom, the Imagological approach (discussed in detail in Chapter 3) provides teachers with a methodology. Practical classroom activities to assist students’ understanding of intercultural issues are also outlined.

The lack of training provided for teachers in the area of intercultural education has also been condemned.<sup>32</sup> Various studies, including those mentioned previously by Bryan and Devine, have recommended continual professional development for teachers to assist

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<sup>31</sup> Daniel Faas and Wendy Ross, ‘Identity, diversity and citizenship: A critical analysis of textbooks and curricula in Irish schools’ *International Sociology*, 27 (2012) 574- 591. Smyth et. al, *Adapting to Diversity*.

<sup>32</sup> Faas and Ross.

them in engaging in intercultural education in their classrooms.<sup>33</sup> However, in the current economic climate with budget cuts severely affecting the education sector, it is extremely unlikely that this recommendation will be met. The module implemented in this research is designed to work as a model for teachers to enhance intercultural education at second-level without the need for significant training. The imagological approach is clearly outlined and an imagological analysis of the selected texts is provided as an example. Further suggestions for supporting an imagological approach to teaching and learning in the classroom in a cost-effective way are detailed in the recommendations in the Conclusion chapter.

These studies highlight issues with the current situation regarding intercultural education in Ireland and stress the need for change and expansion. Through the measures outlined above, this study aims to provide possible solutions to some of these issues.

Previous research in the field of education has indicated that migrant students face barriers to integration in schools. Among these, the lack of intercultural focus and materials has been identified as an issue. Educational policy has attempted to address these concerns but recent research would suggest that, to date, these measures have failed to be completely successful. The two most recent policies addressing intercultural education in Irish schools are the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Intercultural Guidelines and the Intercultural Education Strategy.

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<sup>33</sup> Audrey Bryan, 'The co-articulation of national identity and interculturalism in the Irish curriculum: educating for democratic citizenship?'. Dymphna Devine, *Immigration and Schooling in the Republic of Ireland: Making a Difference?*

## **National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School: Guidelines for Schools**

In 2006, the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) produced the document, *Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School: Guidelines for Schools*. These guidelines were sent to all schools and the document is also available to download for free online. In it, intercultural education is defined as:

- [E]ducation which respects, celebrates and recognises the normality of diversity in all parts of human life. It sensitises the learner to the idea that humans have naturally developed a range of different ways of life, customs and worldviews, and that this breadth of human life enriches all of us.
- It is education which promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination and promotes the values upon which equality is built.<sup>34</sup>

This definition is provided to students in the survey for this research. It was selected over others as it was believed that students may be familiar with it as a consequence of the guidelines. The document outlines the important role education has to play in creating an intercultural society and its potential impact on society. It notes that schools are a significant factor in promoting interculturalism. While recognising the limitations of education in being completely successful in eliminating racism, it highlights how schools can assist in facilitating intercultural skills, attitudes, values and knowledge. This document is valuable as it acknowledged the changing demographic of the Irish school population and proffered to provide guidance to teachers on increasing intercultural practices in schools. However, it has been heavily criticised and these criticisms will be discussed in the following chapter. As discussed above, the knowledge of these criticisms informed the design of this research. As a result, the aim of the study

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<sup>34</sup> NCCA Guidelines, p. i.



was to provide a practical solution for teachers to assist them in enhancing intercultural education in their classrooms. In contrast to the guidelines, this research presents a tested model and a clear methodology for achieving this objective.

### **Intercultural Education Strategy**

The most recent policy document on intercultural education, *Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010- 2015* (hereafter referred to as IES) was published by the Department of Education and Skills (DES) and the Office of the Minister for Integration in 2010.<sup>35</sup> The aims of the IES were to ensure that:

1. **all students** experience an education that “*respects the diversity of values, beliefs, languages and traditions in Irish society and is conducted in a spirit of partnership*” (*Education Act, 1998*).
2. **all education providers** are assisted with ensuring that inclusion and integration within an intercultural learning environment become the norm.<sup>36</sup> (Emphasis and italics in the original)

The document purports to be able to assist education providers with intercultural education. It acknowledges that the presence of non-Irish students at second-level is increasing and that the interests of second-generation immigrants will need to be considered in the future. The IES cites international research that supports the ‘adoption of an intercultural approach as an integral part of both formal and informal education in Ireland.’<sup>37</sup> However, despite outlining such research as a starting point for the strategy, it contradicts the recommendations made in other publications that call for much needed change instead stating that ‘[t]he IES is about thinking, planning and doing things

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<sup>35</sup> Available online. Department of Education and Skills and the Office of the Minister of Integration (2010) *Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010- 2015* [http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Intercultural-Education-Strategy/mig\\_intercultural\\_education\\_strategy.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Information/Intercultural-Education-Strategy/mig_intercultural_education_strategy.pdf) (Accessed 22 November 2012).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, Executive Summary (no page number).

differently, conscious of diversity and the need to create intercultural learning environments. It is not about radical change and is not resource intensive.’<sup>38</sup> As other researchers have also noted, guidelines alone are not sufficient to provide the appropriate assistance required by teachers to enhance intercultural education. As previously mentioned, this study advocates a different approach that emphasises that change is necessary and required for real intercultural education to occur. Rather than just providing guidelines this research presents a model of how this change can be implemented. Other shortcomings of the IES are examined thoroughly in Chapter 1.

These two documents are the only guidelines for intercultural education in Ireland provided by the state.<sup>39</sup> Despite the fact that a large scale national survey of the migrant experience of education was conducted by the ESRI in 2009 which pointed to the areas in need of urgent attention including the lack of diversity present in textbooks and the curriculum and the requirement for training for teachers in the area of interculturalism, the IES did not address these issues. Neither policy provided resources for teachers nor has either been enforced or monitored in schools. In contrast, this research aims to provide a possible solution to these problems. Such an approach is imperative as diversity continues to increase in Irish secondary schools while the focus on intercultural education appears to have declined. Monitoring of the Intercultural Education Strategy was discontinued after the first year. The policy is now five years old and has not been updated since.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Educate Together have also produced guidelines relating to the non-denominational ethos for their schools. <http://www.educatetogether.ie/about/mission-and-values> (Accessed 17 February 2015).

## Research in Intercultural Education in Ireland

This research follows other examples of doctoral research that have aimed to refocus attention in this area. Mary Gannon's thesis entitled *Framing diversity: responding to cultural diversity in Irish post-primary schools* was completed in 2004. Gannon's research focused on examining and analysing the responses to cultural diversity among educators within the Irish second-level sector. Similar to Smyth et. al, Gannon found that teachers were not adequately equipped to deal with diversity in the classroom. Moreover, teachers lacked awareness about the frameworks they employed that influenced their teaching methodology and as a result, '[e]ducational approaches were mainly absorptionist.'<sup>40</sup> While Gannon's research predates both of the policies outlined above, neither went very far in addressing the findings that arose from it or toward meeting the recommendations proposed. Gannon called for further training and development in the area of interculturalism and suggested 'that a study of students' attitudes, experiences, and ideas on appropriate educational responses to cultural diversity be undertaken.'<sup>41</sup> This research follows this recommendation focusing solely on students' views on immigration and interculturalism. As stated previously, students' views are important to consider as they are at the forefront of education and are for whom developments matter most. Students' opinions also provide a fresh perspective on the issue of intercultural education at second-level and can result in new insights.

Dympna Devine has engaged in research focusing on newcomers' experience in Irish schools, although this is almost exclusively concerned with primary level. Devine's

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<sup>40</sup> Mary Gannon, 'Framing diversity: responding to cultural diversity in Irish post-primary schools' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Trinity College Dublin, 2004), p. 4.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., p. 306.

research highlighted that Irish students tended to see migrant students in terms of ‘Other’ and in order to combat this, immigrant students tried to assimilate to Irish norms and conceal their cultural differences.<sup>42</sup> These findings indicate that the intercultural guidelines have failed to have an impact in influencing students to respect, celebrate and recognise the normality of diversity in all parts of human life. This reinforces the call for a different, practical approach such as that outlined in this study.

Another doctoral research project completed by Anita Gracie in 2011 entitled *Education Law, Policy and Practice for Newcomer Students in Irish Secondary Schools* also involves research with students. Gracie’s study sought to examine the experience of immigrant students within a human rights framework, to investigate whether second-level schools were providing an education in line with that expected according to human rights standards. Gracie adopted a mixed-methods approach involving questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. One hundred newcomer students were surveyed from three schools in Dublin. Of these, nine were interviewed on a one-to-one basis and a number were involved in focus groups. In addition, ten teachers were interviewed from the three schools and a number also participated in separate focus groups. Gracie’s findings emphasised the different perceptions teachers and newcomer students hold of the level of interculturalism in the school environment:

While teachers interviewed for this study felt that the content of the curriculum was diverse and embraced other faiths and beliefs, that was often not how it was experienced by the students who recognised its fundamentally Christian perspective and the

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<sup>42</sup> Dympna Devine, ‘Mobilising Capitals? Migrant Children's Negotiation of their Everyday Lives in School’, *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 30 (2009), 521-535.

portrayal of non-Christian, beliefs, and practices as strange, different and by extension, inferior.<sup>43</sup>

Attention was also focused on lack of interest in students' home culture and negative portrayals in textbooks and classroom teaching. Supporting the argument put forward in this study, Gracie concluded that government guidelines have not been implemented and 'few actual changes are being made to teaching practice in the classrooms or to school management policies in order to create authentically inclusive schools.'<sup>44</sup> This study follows on from Gracie's, Devine's and Gannon's research. It makes a contribution in terms of its focus on the student perspective and through the presentation of a possible practical solution to overcome some of the issues identified.

These guidelines and research attest to the fact that immigration has impacted on education in Ireland. The cultural and national diversity that characterises modern Irish society has been acknowledged by educational policy makers and some effort has been exerted to make adjustments to accommodate this. However, as outlined briefly above, these guidelines have not gone far enough and further development is required. Moreover, despite the fact that the level of diversity in Irish schools has increased, in recent years, interest in the level of intercultural education appears to have fallen significantly. This is particularly evident from the failure to continue the review of the IES after the first year. It is within this context that this research is situated. It is imperative that intercultural education remains a priority at second-level and is expanded to overcome the shortcomings of the current policies.

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<sup>43</sup> Anita Gracie, 'Education Law, Policy and Practice for Newcomer Students in Irish Secondary Schools' (unpublished doctoral thesis, Queen's University Belfast, 2011) p. 141.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

## **Where is the research taking place and why?**

The research was conducted in nine second-level schools in Dublin. Dublin was selected for two reasons. The first is related to ease of access. I am based in Dublin and had developed links to several schools here prior to beginning the research study. Schools can be difficult sites to access for research purposes and these connections were valuable as a result. Secondly, the last Census figures demonstrated that Dublin hosts the highest number of immigrants, with the administrative counties of Dublin City and Fingal County Council recording the most.<sup>45</sup> All the schools were located within the confines of these areas.

There are also a large number of secondary schools in Dublin encompassing the three different sectors: voluntary secondary schools, vocational schools and comprehensive and community schools. Voluntary secondary schools can be fee-paying or non-fee-paying. They are privately owned and are generally managed by religious orders or by one of the protestant churches. These tend to be single-sex schools and have an overt Catholic or Protestant ethos. Vocational schools (including community colleges) are owned by the local Vocational Education Committee. These originally functioned to teach technical subjects and were considered less prestigious than the voluntary secondary schools which had a more academic focus. However, these schools now offer the full curriculum including more practical subjects like Technology and Technical Graphics which are not always available in the single-sex schools that cater to girls, just as Home Economics is not always an option in voluntary boys' schools. Vocational

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<sup>45</sup> CSO, *Census 2011 Profile 6*, p. 10.

schools tend to be mixed schools and have an interdenominational or multid denominational ethos. The difference between these as is that:

Inter-denominational refers to a school with more than one patron, for example it could be the local ETB (formerly VEC) and the diocese. Multi-denominational refers to the fact that students may come from all religious backgrounds or may have no particular religious affiliation.<sup>46</sup>

While vocational schools are state-established and administered by VECs, community and comprehensive schools are managed by Boards of Management of differing compositions.<sup>47</sup> The Catholic Church played a large role in providing education after the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1922 and its presence can still be felt in the majority of schools in Ireland irrespective of its designation as voluntary, vocational or community or comprehensive. In response to this apparent lack of choice for parents who do not wish their child to be educated in a school with a specific religious doctrine, Educate Together established their first second-level schools in 2014. The Mission Statement of Educate Together underlines the desire to provide choice and implement change:

Educate Together will be an agent for change in the Irish State Education System seeking to ensure that parents have the choice of an education based on the inclusive intercultural values of respect for difference and justice and equality for all. In Educate Together schools, every child will learn in an inclusive, democratic, coeducational setting that is committed to enabling and supporting each child to achieve their full potential while at the same time preparing them to become caring and active members of a culturally diverse society.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Information obtained via email correspondence with employee of DES Statistics Section (27 March 2014).

<sup>47</sup> Department of Education and Skills website, 'Post Primary Education' <http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Post-Primary/#sthash.SAzChFm5.dpuf> (Accessed 07 July 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Fiona Richardson, *Taking the Next Step: A Blueprint for Educate Together Second-level Schools* (Dublin: Educate Together, 2009) p. 2.

At the time of writing (June 2015), there are only three Educate Together secondary schools operating in the country with plans to open a further five in 2015 and 2016.<sup>49</sup> As these schools only opened in 2014 they do not have Transition Year students and thus are not included in the present research.

The schools in this study are made up of two community and comprehensive schools, three secondary schools and four vocational schools. At the outset, a balance between the different school types was sought. However, because the research was voluntary in nature and the fact that, as previously mentioned, schools can be difficult to gain access to for research purposes, there is an imbalance. Regrettably, no private fee-paying schools are included in the research as none responded to the invitation to become involved. Reflecting the higher number of vocational schools involved, these tended to be the most enthusiastic about participating. Five of the schools have DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) status which categorises them as located in disadvantaged areas. Previous research by Smyth et al. indicated that DEIS schools tend to have a higher proportion of immigrant students which justifies the proportion of DEIS schools included in the study.<sup>50</sup> The selection of schools, although relatively small in number by quantitative standards, reflects a cross-section of almost all of the different school types. Consequently, the research is deemed representative of second-level education in Ireland.

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<sup>49</sup> <http://www.educatetogether.ie/our-schools/second-level> (Accessed 17 November 2014).

<sup>50</sup> Smyth et. al, p. 175.



## **Note regarding use of terms**

A number of terms have been used in recent years to refer to immigrant students in schools. While immigrant is the main term of reference used throughout this study to describe students who are not Irish, some other descriptions are also used. The expressions migrant, newcomer, non-national and non-Irish national have all been used to refer to this group. With the exception of non-national which can be considered offensive as it could be interpreted as devaluing any nationality other than Irish by suggesting the individual has no nationality, the terms are used here interchangeably. The reason for this is to maintain a link to previously published research that may utilise some of the other terms.

## **Outline of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into four chapters. and facilitates the consideration of the three research questions:

1. How can the literary theory of Imagology be used in a practical manner in a classroom setting to enhance critical pedagogy and learning?
2. What are the views of second-level students toward the representation of immigrants in Irish texts and toward intercultural education in Ireland?
3. Can an intercultural module have an impact on students' opinions on immigration-related issues?

**Chapter 1** contains a detailed critical review of previous research. The review builds on the background information provided in this chapter. It is divided into three main

sections which focus on intercultural education, Imagology and using intercultural/multicultural literature in the classroom.

**Chapter 2** concerns the methodological approach taken in the study. As identified earlier, this study uses a mixed-methods approach. This methodology is justified and the research is placed within a social-constructivist framework. Details regarding the selection of the sample and the data-analysis strategy are discussed. The research design, a concurrent nested model, and how the computerised data analysis programmes *SPSS* and *Nvivo* are used to assist in examining the qualitative and quantitative data are explained. Ethical issues are also considered. Imagology and Reader Response theory are discussed separately in Chapter 3 because they form an integral part of the innovative approach taken in this research. The study is a model of how intercultural education can be enhanced at second-level and therefore a detailed explanation of the approach is important.

**Chapter 3** addresses the first research question concerning the implementation of an intercultural module that uses Imagology. The design of the module is explicated in detail with special attention dedicated to the selection of the texts used in the module: Sarah Crossan's *The Weight of Water*, Roddy Doyle's 'Black Hoodie' and Aubrey Flegg's *The Cinnamon Tree*.<sup>51</sup> All the texts are by Irish authors and feature an immigrant character. Imagological analyses of the texts are presented. The relevance of Rosenblatt's Reader Response Theory to the approach is also discussed.

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<sup>51</sup> Sarah Crossan, *The Weight of Water* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2012). Aubrey Flegg, *The Cinnamon Tree* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2000). Roddy Doyle, *The Deportees* (London: Vintage Press, 2008).

**Chapter 4** outlines the findings of the research. The chapter is divided into two parts. The first section reviews outcomes of the quantitative data collected through the surveys. The information relates to students' success at defining interculturalism and multiculturalism, their opinion of intercultural education and their views and experiences of racism. The second part concerns the results of the qualitative data analysis. Students' personal responses and reflections on the selected texts are discussed and analysed. Class discussions are evaluated and examined to explore underlying attitudes to minority groups in Ireland. This chapter combines the responses to the second and third research questions relating to the views of second-level students on immigration and intercultural education and the impact of the module on students' receptiveness and understanding of immigration-related issues.

In order to provide adequate context for the research study and to discuss previous research in the fields of intercultural education and Imagology, the following chapter contains a review of critical works on related subjects.

# Chapter 1: Critical Review

Intercultural education has always been important but is even more imperative now as a result of increased diversity in Irish society. As outlined in the introduction, previous research has identified issues with current intercultural educational policies and their implementation. Moreover, various studies have indicated that stakeholders in education including principals, teachers and teacher educators, do not believe that enough is being done to promote intercultural education. Despite the findings of these studies and recommendations for change and further training for teachers, little has been done to improve the situation. It is essential to redirect attention to this vital area. This research aims to enhance intercultural education at second-level through the combination of Imagology with intercultural literature. This chapter will provide a critical review of prior research conducted in the following three areas: Intercultural Education, Intercultural/ Multicultural Literature in the Classroom and Imagology. The first section contains an analysis of current intercultural education policies in Ireland. Previous criticisms of the policies are considered and evaluated and recent studies in intercultural education are discussed. This section also concentrates on the issues of racism and institutional racism in Irish society and draws attention to concerns about the inadequate provision of English as an Additional Language in schools. The second part of the chapter concerns the use of intercultural/ multicultural literature in education. As outlined in the introduction these terms are not considered equal. The argument in this thesis is for the use of intercultural literature in the classroom. However, to date,

multicultural literature has been used more frequently. The juxtaposition of the two terms here serves only to make a connection to the previous research that has used the term multicultural literature. The benefits of using intercultural/ multicultural literature in a classroom environment are highlighted with reference to previous studies that have tested this approach. Finally, the theory of Imagology will be introduced. Examples of its application to literature are examined and its usefulness as a critical reading tool is established. Only the theoretical aspect of Imagology is discussed in this chapter. Its adaptation in a classroom environment will be developed in Chapter 3.

## ***Part 1: Intercultural Education***

### **Critiquing the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment Guidelines**

The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment guidelines for intercultural education that were published in 2006, *Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School: Guidelines for Schools*, acknowledged the changing demographic of the student population and the challenge that increased diversity represents for teachers. The guidelines underlined the important role that education and schools hold in influencing and developing an intercultural society and emphasised the value of intercultural education to all students. It lists several benefits of intercultural education:

- It encourages curiosity about cultural and social difference.
- It helps to develop and support young people's imagination by normalising difference.
- It helps to develop critical thinking by enabling people to gain perspective on and question their own cultural practices.
- It helps to develop sensitivity in the student.
- It helps to prevent racism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *NCCA Guidelines*, pp. 15-16.

While the guidelines provide a thorough overview of the history and context of immigration in Ireland and a clear definition of racism, it contains few practical resources for teachers to help them to achieve more intercultural education in their schools and classrooms. Similar to Imagologists Joep Leerssen and Manfred Beller's (whose work will be discussed later in this chapter) argument that it is important to question and analyse the images of national character presented in literature, the guidelines draw attention to the significance of representations in textbooks and the impact these portrayals can have on the attitudes and views of students toward other cultures, religions and nationalities. Similarly, the document underlines that '[d]eveloping the ability to recognise bias is a key skill for helping students become critical readers for life.'<sup>2</sup> Indeed, assisting students to develop their critical reading skills in order to enhance their intercultural awareness is also one of the objectives of this study. However, there is no advice as to how this can be achieved in the guidelines. This gap is addressed later in this research where a method of enhancing intercultural learning and awareness through the application of Imagology to intercultural literature is outlined. In contrast, the guidelines simply declare that 'teachers do not need to look beyond their existing texts and curriculum documents to find the necessary resources.'<sup>3</sup> Supporting the argument put forward in this study that the current curriculum and materials are in need of change, Faas and Ross disagree with the NCCA assessment and maintain that textbooks do not take adequate account of diversity. In their examination of selected textbooks at primary and secondary level they concluded that the

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

[...] promotion of a civic identity and recognition that Ireland has had a long experience of diversity in the NCCA documents often contradict the content of textbooks and other curricular material relating to citizenship education which sometimes present diversity as a recent phenomenon and promote an explicit (usually Catholic) notion of Irish identity.<sup>4</sup>

They found that the primary curriculum was more inclined to incorporate diversity and attributed this to its 'child-centred' focus. At second level even the limited intercultural focus present at primary school was absent. They acknowledged that in a system dominated by examinations, change would prove challenging.

In a somewhat contradictory manner, the guidelines consider the absence of suitable material as a resource in itself:

Where existing resources offer limited opportunities to explore difference, to promote equality or to develop critical thinking skills, this can, in itself be turned into a resource. Through questioning what perspectives are missing and how the same material or event might be presented or viewed differently or through comparing texts with other possible source materials, teachers can use limited material to develop pupils' capacity to think about the way in which information is presented to them.<sup>5</sup>

The suggestion that a teacher can create a resource from a lack of resources is unreasonable. The expectation for students to undertake the abstract thinking that would be required to succeed with the above suggested approach is even more so. If students have never been presented with other perspectives, they will find it very difficult to consider them, which is why the present study addresses this problem by using texts that provide different viewpoints.

Even when teachers make the effort to source other texts, they can face difficulties accessing suitable resources. When William Gaudelli attempted to introduce a multicultural module to an American high school, he found that the lack of available

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<sup>4</sup> Faas and Ross, p. 122.

<sup>5</sup> *NCCA Guidelines*, p. 40.

resources greatly increased the difficulty in achieving his task. In his article 'Reflections on Multicultural Education: A Teacher's Experience' he details how more time was required to plan for this module which took away from the time spent planning for other classes.<sup>6</sup> At a time when teachers in Ireland are already required to take on additional responsibilities and spend more of their time engaged in unpaid school activities, it is unlikely that they will have the time or desire to take on another time consuming task such as this. Gaudelli's module did have a positive impact on the school and curriculum changes were made to a number of subjects as a result. This underlines the need for change in the curriculum.

Rather than advocate for change to the standard approach and curriculum, the guidelines advise that intercultural education can be 'integrated into the curriculum in post-primary schools.'<sup>7</sup> This contrasts directly with the argument by James Banks that true intercultural education requires 'substantial changes' to ensure that all students experience educational equality.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, in his article, 'Multicultural literacy and curriculum reform', Banks states that transformation within the curriculum is necessary and that '[m]erely inserting ethnic and gender content into existing curricular structures, paradigms, and assumptions is not enough.'<sup>9</sup>

Audrey Bryan also criticises this aspect of the guidelines which she views as an 'add diversity and stir' approach. She argues that '[i]ntercultural education thus constitutes a slogan system that may suggest curricular reform while actually conserving existing

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<sup>6</sup> William Gaudelli, 'Reflections on Multicultural Education: A Teacher's Experience', *Multicultural Education*, 8 (2001), 35-37.

<sup>7</sup> *NCCA Guidelines*, p. iii.

<sup>8</sup> James A. Banks, *The Routledge International Companion to Multicultural Education* (London: Routledge, 2009) p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> James Banks, 'Multicultural literacy and curriculum reform' *Education Digest*, 57 (1991), p. 10.



restrictive practices and understandings of Irishness and identity.’<sup>10</sup> Bryan relates the kind of intercultural education practiced in Ireland to Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence.<sup>11</sup> Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic violence describes a process where inequalities within existing systems are disguised and promoted as egalitarian.<sup>12</sup> He argues that symbolic violence is evident in the education system as arbitrary decisions about what kind of knowledge and form of expression is privileged in schools and examinations reflect the values of those in the dominant social group. However, this cultural bias is not acknowledged, rather the system is legitimised and the school is presented as neutral. Furthermore, the field of education is imbued with power relations. Success within the system is governed by the possession of cultural capital. Cultural capital is directly related to the dominant culture and the social structures within society. As a consequence, children of parents from the dominant group, usually the upper and middle classes, possess more cultural capital and perform better within the socially-constructed, culturally-biased field of education. In this way the ruling classes reproduce inequality under the guise of a fair and just system and maintain power.

Bryan contends that intercultural education in the Irish context actually abnormalises diversity and is more likely to reproduce racism as a consequence. Bryan underlines the need for a more inclusive curriculum and argues that the current curriculum projects a singular Irish identity that contrasts with the supposed aim to promote diversity as the norm. Furthermore, she asserts that the ‘integration’ of material without any change to

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<sup>10</sup> Audrey Bryan, ‘Corporate multiculturalism, diversity management, and positive interculturalism in Irish schools and society’ *Irish Educational Studies*, 29 (2010), 253-269 (p. 266).

<sup>11</sup> Bryan, ‘The co-articulation of national identity’, p. 47.

<sup>12</sup> Pierre Bourdieu and Jean Claude Passeron, *Reproduction in Education, Society and Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1977).

the curriculum results in the majority culture being reinforced as the superior or correct culture while the minority cultures are seen from this position as something to be ‘celebrated’. The cultures are not presented in an equal way which can lead to some cultures being undervalued and seen as ‘Other’. In her chapter with Melíosa Bracken, “‘They think the book is right and I am wrong’ Intercultural Education and the Positioning of Ethnic Minority Students in the Formal and Informal Curriculum’, Bryan highlights that

[...] some intercultural interventions have the ironic effect of reinforcing an ethnically homogenous Irish (white, Christian) centre, against which the Otherness of ethnic minority students is highlighted or exposed to ridicule. [...] institutional materials can reinforce overly-negative and inaccurate portrayals of ethnic minority cultures while simultaneously endorsing restrictive, ethnic nationalist understandings of Irishness.<sup>13</sup>

In support of this argument that a singular Irish identity is promoted as the norm, they allude to geography books that portray negative images of some countries, interfaith services that identify Jewish, Hindu and Islamic prayers and blessings but fail to identify the opening and closing prayers as Christian, and students that are marked on the information in the book rather than their own knowledge of their religion. This reiterates Faas and Ross’s argument that textbooks do not take adequate account of diversity. Bryan and Bracken also contend that changes to curricular content are required to amend restrictive understandings of Irish identity that are currently proliferated consciously and unconsciously through schools and curricular material and textbooks. The imagological approach advocated in this research can lead students to investigate and question these images of Irish identity presented in texts. Through this examination,

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<sup>13</sup> Audrey Bryan and Melíosa Bracken, “‘They think the book is right and I am wrong’ Intercultural Education and the Positioning of Ethnic Minority Students in the Formal and Informal Curriculum’ in *The Changing Faces of Ireland: Exploring the Lives of Immigrant and Ethnic Minority Children*, ed. by Merike Dermody, Naomi Tyrell and Steve Song (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2011), pp. 106-120 (p. 106).

students can become aware of other worldviews and recognise bias and prejudice in curricular material. Furthermore, the study of the selected texts that feature immigrant characters provides an opportunity to reconsider what constitutes an 'Irish' identity.

Similarly, Anita Gracie in her study, 'Education Law, Policy and Practice for Newcomer Students in Irish Secondary Schools' concluded that 'few actual changes are being made to teaching practice in the classrooms or to school management policies in order to create authentically inclusive schools.'<sup>14</sup> Gracie's research was conducted in three second-level schools and comprised student questionnaires and individual and focus-group interviews carried out with newcomer students and their teachers. As part of the questionnaire students were asked if they felt their ethnic origin was respected in school. The responses varied from school to school with between 46% and 55% agreeing or strongly agreeing. However, when students were asked whether their Irish classmates knew about their country or whether they had ever learned about their home country in class, most newcomer students answered negatively. Gracie reported that these students felt 'disappointed' and 'left out' as a result.<sup>15</sup>

In their article, 'A need to belong? The prevalence of experiences of belonging and exclusion in school among minority ethnic children living in the "White hinterlands"', Biggart, O'Hare and Connolly found that Irish Traveller, Chinese/Asian and European migrant children experience lower levels of belonging and higher levels of exclusion compared to their white, settled Northern Irish peers in school.<sup>16</sup> They discuss how

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<sup>14</sup> Gracie, p. 141.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>16</sup> Andy Biggart, Liam O'Hare and Paul Connolly, 'A need to belong? The prevalence of experiences of belonging and exclusion in school among minority ethnic children living in the 'White hinterlands'', *Irish Educational Studies*, 32 (2013), 179-195.

belonging is a powerful psychological concept, with evidence to suggest it may impact on a range of educational outcomes and as a result, should be awarded special attention. They cite evidence from previous research that suggests that it may be possible to enhance minority ethnic pupils' sense of belonging at school and postulate that schools and teachers could do more to recognise the value and importance of trying to foster a sense of belonging among all pupils. A more intercultural, inclusive educational experience could increase the level of belonging for non-Irish students and students from minority groups such as the Travelling Community.

In another study focusing on immigrant student perspectives, 'Mobilising capitals? Migrant children's negotiation of their everyday lives in school', Devine found that

[...] migrant children in this research walked a delicate line between recognition versus rejection that was predicated on the extent to which they accommodated to dominant ways of "being" and "doing" among their indigenous Irish peers.<sup>17</sup>

Contrary to the intercultural ideal promoted by the NCCA Guidelines where diversity is recognised as an opportunity to enhance every student's education, Irish children in this study spoke of the difference of ethnic groups (especially those from Africa and the Middle East) in deficit terms, as outside the norm. This would appear to confirm Bryan's argument that the intercultural approach currently adopted in Ireland serves to increase racism by incorporating an add-on approach that highlights the otherness of cultures that differ to the white, Catholic, settled nature of the Irish majority. The migrant children in Devine's study tried hard to assimilate to the Irish norm by becoming involved in traditional Irish activities such as GAA and Irish dancing as well as learning the Irish language. The study revealed that, in general, children hid aspects

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<sup>17</sup> Devine, 'Mobilising capitals?' p. 526.

of their ethnic identities. Instead, they chose to adopt Irish accents and eat non-ethnic food in the presence of Irish children. Devine outlines how little social capital was associated with the migrant students' first languages and highlights how this was reinforced by teachers who discouraged them from speaking to each other in their mother tongues at school. The migrant students did express a wish to have their cultures included more at school but only in circumstances where it was valued properly, such as with project work. This underlines Bryan's and Banks's respective arguments that adding to the existing framework rather than redesigning it is insufficient and potentially harmful.

Other shortcomings of the NCCA document relate to the unrealistic view it presents of students and the manner in which it identifies potential issues that may arise without providing any practical advice or solutions. According to the guidelines:

At post-primary level, students should now be able to discuss and express emotions in a non-threatening way, listen actively to both concepts and emotions, negotiate with each other and begin the process of practising peaceful resolution of conflicts.<sup>18</sup>

However, as most teachers and parents are astutely aware, adolescents are not always successful in practising 'peaceful resolution of conflicts'. Once again, the document appears to contradict itself as it acknowledges that 'intercultural education may give rise to some conflict and to a range of strong emotions' which can cause people to get defensive, angry or upset.'<sup>19</sup> The guidelines concede that '[w]hen controversial issues are addressed in the classroom teachers need special skills to ensure a positive outcome' but fail to indicate how these skills may be developed.<sup>20</sup> The most revealing sign that the

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<sup>18</sup> *NCCA Guidelines*, p. 60.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

guidelines provide little in the way of resources is that there is only one suggested exercise to do with students which is focused on developing listening skills rather than dealing with intercultural issues. The resources listed at the end point to publications by other organisations that deal with interculturalism and while helpful they are also limited. In contrast, this study suggests several appropriate activities to complete with students, which are outlined in Chapter 3. Furthermore, the imagological approach as outlined in this research provides teachers with a methodology to assist them with handling any ‘controversial issues’. Because Imagology focuses on literary representations of national character it allows students to voice opinions about imaginary individuals. This concentration on the fictional element creates a level of detachment. This distance permits students to reveal their thoughts about different groups and cultures without the fear of being labeled racist. However, this gap also lets teachers question and explore these understandings and more importantly, suggest alternate perceptions without appearing to openly reproach students’ views. This imagological methodology can thus provide teachers with a safe means of exploring and discussing topics that otherwise might be considered contentious.

### **Reviewing the ESRI study: ‘Adapting to Diversity: Irish Schools and Newcomer Students’ (2008)**

The ESRI study was the first national survey of primary and second-level principals on diversity.<sup>21</sup> Information was collected from four hundred and fifty-four second-level principals and seven hundred and forty-six primary principals. In addition, eighty-two

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<sup>21</sup> Smyth et. al.

in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with staff in twelve case-study schools and two hundred and fifty-eight Irish and migrant students participated in focus group interviews. Echoing the findings of Faas and Ross and Bracken and Bryan discussed above, teachers reported that textbooks and teaching materials do not take adequate account of diversity. Teachers in schools with higher numbers of migrant students were the most critical and '[t]eachers often outlined that they searched for suitable material to reflect diversity.'<sup>22</sup> The study revealed that the vast majority of teachers would like to see more professional development in the area of intercultural education which indicates that teachers did not feel that the NCCA guidelines adequately prepared them to provide a more intercultural experience in Irish schools. Another remarkable finding relating to this aspect of teacher preparation for facilitating intercultural learning was that '[o]nly a third of principals feel that pre-service and in-service education prepares teachers for working in a multicultural setting.'<sup>23</sup> Aisling Leavy investigated pre-service primary school teachers' attitudes toward and experience of diversity. Two hundred and eighty-six pre-service teachers enrolled in a college of education were participants in the study. She discovered that 65% of participants had limited exposure to people of different nationalities. She concluded that these teachers demonstrated a 'concerning lack of familiarity with other cultures.'<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the fact that 92% of the pre-service teachers involved in the study were from hegemonic national, religious, and cultural groups in Ireland influenced their view of the education system and as a result, they minimised the reality of racism and perceived schools as inherently fair institutions. She also refers to other studies which have found that

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<sup>22</sup> Smyth et. al., p 170.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>24</sup> Leavy, p. 171.

teachers prefer to teach students with similar backgrounds to their own and that teachers have different expectations for students based on their backgrounds which can affect their performance at school. Leavy notes the lack of research that has been conducted in the area of pre-service teacher attitudes in Ireland and advocates that ‘a steadfast commitment to diversity must permeate every level of the Irish education system.’<sup>25</sup> Leavy calls for a reform of the current teacher education system to include a space for teachers in training to consider their own views and how these may impact on students.

Bree Picower engages with this issue in the American context. In her article ‘The unexamined Whiteness of teaching: how White teachers maintain and enact dominant racial ideologies’, Picower examines how a teacher’s perceptions of race can influence their teaching.<sup>26</sup> She focused on a multicultural module at a teacher-training college that aims to highlight how issues of power and class can be associated with race. The module was designed to assist teachers in reflecting on their racial identity and the impact this had on their views, beliefs and teaching practices. Although the research was conducted in the American context, like Ireland, the majority of students engaged in teacher training were white, settled and middle-class. She found that teachers felt out of their comfort zones teaching in schools where the majority of students were not white. She also found that teachers held deeply entrenched ideologies about the experience and reality of groups different in race and class to their own. She underlines how these students never questioned the dynamic of power afforded to them as a member of the

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>26</sup> Bree Picower, ‘The Unexamined Whiteness of Teaching: How White Teachers Maintain and Enact Dominant Racial Ideologies’, *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 12 (2009), 197-221.



white majority population. Picower recommends that initial teacher education should provide teachers with an opportunity to reflect on this issue.

Thinking about the power relations that exist in schools and wider society is also an important consideration according to Jemma Min Shim. Employing Bourdieu's theory of cultural reproduction outlined above, Shim advises that:

Intercultural educators must recognize that we are all a part of the system that we are trying to work against and our unreflective thinking about ourselves, students, and curriculum will only reproduce the current inequality.<sup>27</sup>

Evidence of this practice is suggested in Bell McKenzie and Scheurich's research. In their study of a school in Texas where the majority of students were Latino or African-American, while the staff were mainly white, they found that teachers tended to attribute the low success rate of their students to external measures and believed that any changes made internally by them would have little real impact.<sup>28</sup> Bell McKenzie and Scheurich's research emphasises that, influenced by their own backgrounds and bias, teachers can be among the biggest resistors to change.

Yet, not all teachers are resisting change. Devine's research in the Irish context and Colarusso's in Canada indicate that some teachers are already working on their own initiative to respond to increasing diversity in the classroom.<sup>29</sup> However, an issue with relying on individual teachers to make the effort to employ more intercultural methods in their classes is that it allows some teachers not to engage in intercultural education at

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<sup>27</sup> Jenna Min Shim, 'Pierre Bourdieu and intercultural education: it is not just about lack of knowledge about others', *Intercultural Education*, 23 (2012), 209-220 (p. 216).

<sup>28</sup> Kathryn Bell McKenzie and James Joseph Scheurich, 'Teacher resistance to improvement of schools with diverse students', *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 11 (2008) 117-133.

<sup>29</sup> Dymphna Devine, 'Welcome to the Celtic Tiger? – Teacher responses to immigration and increasing ethnic diversity in Irish schools', *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, 15 (2005), 49-70. Dana Colarusso, 'Teaching English in a Multicultural Society: Three Models of Reform', *Canadian Journal of Education*, 33 (2010), 432-458.

all. Devine found that teachers who had experience in teaching English as an Additional Language (EAL) were more likely to incorporate intercultural perspectives in their mainstream classrooms.<sup>30</sup> Though, with cutbacks severely affecting this area and fewer teachers involved in EAL this could lead to a decline in the level of interculturalism in mainstream classrooms.

O'Brien's research also revealed that teacher educators do not believe that the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) adequately prepares teachers to work in a multicultural environment and deal with associated issues such as racism. In his article, 'Institutional Racism and Anti-Racism in Teacher Education: Perspectives of Teacher Educators', O'Brien investigated the views of lecturers involved in teaching pre-service second-level teachers in five Irish universities, (National University of Ireland Galway, Maynooth University, Trinity College Dublin, University College Cork and University College Dublin) on the level of anti-racism education provided to students enrolled in the PGDE. The majority of those interviewed felt that there was little time and space within the course to address issues such as racism. Furthermore, O'Brien found that 'a majority of those interviewed felt that there are some aspects of the Irish post-primary education system that are institutionally racist.'<sup>31</sup> The lack of space for the expression of cultural difference, inadequate English language support and a limited view of Irish identity were cited as the main issues where racism in the Irish education system was apparent. Issues connected to the homogenous nature of Irish teachers and the lecturers' lack of skill in providing anti-racism education, were also commented on by some

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<sup>30</sup> Devine. *Immigration and Schooling in the Republic of Ireland*, p. 97.

<sup>31</sup> Joe O'Brien, 'Institutional racism and anti-racism in teacher education: Perspectives of teacher educators', *Irish Educational Studies*, 28 (2009), 193- 207 (p. 200).

respondents in the interviews. It remains to be seen whether, with the extension of the PGDE to a two-year course in 2012, these recommendations for greater focus on anti-racism, power relations and interculturalism in general are being addressed more comprehensively. No study focusing on this aspect has been conducted to date.

If the revised PGDE course does contain a more comprehensive approach to intercultural education including the use of intercultural texts, then newly qualified teachers could introduce some change through their choice of texts. This possibility is borne out by a study by Stallworth et al in the American context. In the study of one hundred and forty-two teachers in seventy-two schools in Alabama to investigate the use of multicultural texts, Stallworth et al found that teachers with one to five years of teaching experience were more likely to use texts with a multicultural focus. They argue that '[c]onceivably the curriculum will continue to become more diverse as more teachers graduate from teacher education programs that intentionally include multicultural perspectives.'<sup>32</sup> This underlines the importance of including interculturalism as part of initial teacher training. The findings of Stallworth et al. also revealed that censorship played a role in teachers' choices of texts. Some teachers admitted that they perceived some texts might raise objections by parents or the school and were thus, not chosen. The article also highlighted another common finding in educational research: teachers teach what they know. Some teachers in the study revealed that they did not feel qualified to teach certain texts. In line with this, the lack of relevant in-service courses and resources was mentioned as a related issue.

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<sup>32</sup> Joyce B. Stallworth, Louel Gibbons and Leigh Fauber, 'It's Not on the List: An Exploration of Teachers' Perspectives on Using Multicultural Literature' *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 49 (2006), 478-489 (p. 484).

Unfortunately, in the Irish context, the choice of texts is not always made by the individual class teacher but can be assigned by a senior member of the English department who may be more likely to choose a text with which they are familiar. In some schools, the choice of texts can also be dictated by the books that have been previously purchased as part of a book rental scheme. It is also pertinent to note that, in the current economic climate, very few newly qualified teachers are being hired on a permanent basis. Newly qualified teachers can find themselves working on a temporary basis or covering maternity leave. In this situation, very little power is afforded to them over the selection of texts. Added to this, Honan identifies another challenge in relying on pre-service training. She argues that, at the beginning of their career, teachers are less likely to innovate as a consequence of their preoccupation with gaining employment. Therefore, in-service rather than pre-service training in this area may be more beneficial as a result. Although Honan's article focuses on the inclusion of Development Education in second-level schools, her point is nonetheless valid in relation to the implementation of any training PGDE students receive in anti-racism and interculturalism in general.<sup>33</sup> The *OECD Reviews of Migrant Education Ireland* report highlighted that '[e]xisting teachers have prioritised the need for professional development to meet cultural diversity in a number of studies.'<sup>34</sup> In contrast to the average of 14% across the other countries involved in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), 24% of teachers of Junior Cycle students who

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<sup>33</sup> Annette Honan, 'Mapping the Past, Charting the Future: A Review of Development Education Research in Ireland and its Implications for the Future', *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review*, 13 (2011).

<sup>34</sup> Miho Taguma, Moonhee Kim, Gregory Wurzburg and Frances Kelly, 'OECD Reviews of Migrant Education IRELAND' (OECD, December 2009) <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Education-Reports/OECD-Review-of-Migrant-Education-Country-Report-for-Ireland.PDF> (Accessed 1 October 2012).

participated in the survey reported that they had a ‘high level of need’ for professional development in the area of teaching in multicultural settings. Teacher education and training is essential because as the ESRI study asserts: ‘Teachers play a key role in implementing intercultural education and helping students develop open and respectful attitudes and behaviour.’<sup>35</sup>

## **Institutional Racism**

Similar to the issues raised by Bryan and in O’Brien’s research, Enda McGorman and Ciaran Sugrue in their report *Intercultural Education: Primary Challenges in Dublin 15* identified areas within the Irish education system where institutional racism was evident.<sup>36</sup> They discuss the issue some migrants have in accessing schools as a consequence of the fact that the majority of schools in Ireland are denominational. The ESRI report also points to the ‘discriminatory nature’ of allotting places to children with siblings already in the school before others which favours the settled population.<sup>37</sup> The impact of such discriminatory practices is beginning to be seen in the composition of primary school populations. A recent article in *The Irish Times* highlighted the extent of segregation between schools reporting that ‘[f]our out of five children from immigrant backgrounds were concentrated in 23 per cent of the State’s primary schools, the annual school census for 2013-14 shows.’<sup>38</sup> The article draws attention to the fact that these figures may not be entirely accurate as the data was obtained from the Department of

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<sup>35</sup> Smyth et. al., p. 26.

<sup>36</sup> Enda McGorman and Ciarán Sugrue, *Intercultural Education: Primary Challenges in Dublin 15*, (Dublin: Department of Education and Science, 2007).

<sup>37</sup> Smyth et. al., p. xiv.

<sup>38</sup> Pamela Duncan and Joe Humphreys, ‘Census figures raise concerns of ethnic segregation in schools’, *The Irish Times*, 24 February 2015, <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/census-figures-raise-concerns-of-ethnic-segregation-in-schools-1.2114559> (Accessed 24 February 2015).

Education's annual school census request and the accompanying guidelines sent to schools outline that 'only the best estimate of nationality where relevant data is not available at school level' is required.<sup>39</sup> As a result, the number of students from immigrant backgrounds could be underestimated depending on whether students were registered as Irish or, attributed the same nationality as their parents in the report. Indeed, this point is emphasised in the comments section where a number of parents note that the composition of some schools is incorrect and that there is, in fact, a higher number of immigrant children enrolled than that recorded. It is remarkable that the Department of Education and Skills is not more concerned with obtaining accurate information about the number of immigrant students in schools. It is perhaps, another indication of the lack of importance attributed to intercultural issues. It also suggests that the recommendations in the NCCA Intercultural Guidelines are not being followed, as this document clearly demarcates that information relating to a student's nationality and first language should be collected and acknowledged within the school environment.

The *Roadmap to Integration 2012* report produced by the Integration Centre recommended amending the Equal Status Act to forbid schools' differential treatment between pupils based on religion. To address this concern, Minister for Education and Skills, Jan O'Sullivan, published the Education (Admission to School) Bill on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2015. The bill's objective 'is to provide an over-arching framework to ensure that how schools decide on who is enrolled and who is refused a place in schools is more structured, fair and transparent.'<sup>40</sup> One of the measures outlined in the bill designed to

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Department of Education and Skills, 'Enrolment' [www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/School-Enrolment/](http://www.education.ie/en/Parents/Information/School-Enrolment/) (Accessed 7 June 2015).

target what the department has identified as ‘soft barriers’ to admission, is to force schools to publish entrance policies and to make it illegal to reject a student as a result of their race, religion or disability. However, while the bill appears to have made it potentially more difficult to do so, it still permits schools to protect their ethos and admit pupils on the basis of religion:

In the case of  
[...]

(b) a school which section 7(3)(c) of the Act of 2000 applies, whose objective is to provide education in an environment which promotes certain religious values, the admission statement of the school shall include a statement that the school does not discriminate in relation to the admission of students where it admits persons of a particular religious denomination in preference to others or it refuses to admit as a student a person who is not of that denomination and, in the case of a refusal, it is proved that the refusal is essential to maintain the ethos of the school.<sup>41</sup>

Essentially, schools can refuse to admit a student on the basis of religion provided they can prove that the refusal is necessary to maintain the ethos of the school. Educate Together expressed alarm at the lack of change in this regard. In the opinion of Educate Together CEO Paul Rowe,

The fact that an increasing number of Irish parents consider that it is necessary to get their children baptised in the Catholic faith in order to access publicly funded schools, rather than out of personal religious conviction, is a shocking alarm note for a modern democratic state.<sup>42</sup>

Educate Together used the opportunity to repeat their call to the government to ‘provide an alternative to the overwhelming monopoly of Catholic schools (93% of the entire

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<sup>41</sup> Department of Education and Skills, ‘Education (Admission to Schools) Bill 2015’, p. 6. [www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Legislation/Education-Admission-to-Schools-Bill-2005.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Legislation/Education-Admission-to-Schools-Bill-2005.pdf) (Accessed 7 June 2015).

<sup>42</sup> Educate Together News Releases, ‘Draft Admissions Bill Highlights the Need for National Network of Educate Together Schools’, 8 April 2015, [www.educatetogther.ie/media/national-news/draft-admissions-bill](http://www.educatetogther.ie/media/national-news/draft-admissions-bill) (Accessed 7 June 2015).

primary school system) in Ireland.<sup>43</sup> Educate Together is discussed in further detail below.

Under the Education (Admission to School) Bill 2015, discrimination may also be allowed in other certain derogations which have yet to be finalised. These include discrimination in favour of children of past pupils, siblings of students already enrolled, children of staff members, students living in the catchment area and those attending a recognised feeder school. As highlighted in an article in *The Irish Times* about the bill, some of these practices negatively impact minority groups such as Travellers and immigrant children:

The Ombudsman for Children has said that past-pupil derogation was “unjustifiable given its impact on Travellers and immigrant children”, and this view was shared by an Oireachtas committee in a report last year.<sup>44</sup>

One major change this bill introduces to school admissions policies is the prohibition of waiting lists for schools. Admission to a school will no longer be permitted to be determined based on date of application. The new regime is planned to be in place for September 2015. It remains to be seen whether it will have any real impact on the situation.

In 2013 the Department of Education published a *Report on the Surveys regarding Parental Preferences on Primary School Patronage*.<sup>45</sup> Following calls for changes to be made within the education sector in light of increasing diversity in Irish society, parents

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> [No byline], ‘School Admissions Bill: battle looms over rules on past pupils’, *The Irish Times*, 7 April 2015, [www.irishtimes.com/news/education/school-admissions-bill-battle-looms-over-rules-on-past-pupils-1.2166728](http://www.irishtimes.com/news/education/school-admissions-bill-battle-looms-over-rules-on-past-pupils-1.2166728) (Accessed 7 June 2015).

<sup>45</sup> Department of Education and Skills, *Report on the Surveys regarding Parental Preferences on Primary School Patronage*, (Dublin: Department of Education and Skills, 2013) <http://www.education.ie/en/Publications/Policy-Reports/Report-on-the-surveys-regarding-parental-preferences-on-primary-school-patronage.pdf> (Accessed 27 February 2015).



in thirty-eight areas were surveyed to assess the demand for various schooling options. The areas were selected using the following criteria: population of between 5,000 and 20,000 inhabitants according to the 2011 census and population has increased by less than 20% during the intercensal period 2006 to 2011. These selection criteria ensured the areas surveyed had relatively stable populations and new schools would be unlikely to be established in the future for demographic reasons. As a result, the only way for other patrons to become involved in school provision 'is through the possible divestment of some existing school provision in the areas provided there is sufficient parental demand for wider choice of patronage.'<sup>46</sup> The areas concerned were situated around the country and combined urban and rural regions. Figure 1.1 outlines the areas surveyed and the survey outcomes. The areas that voted in favour of Educate Together patronage are highlighted in yellow.

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

**Figure 1.1 Information on Areas Surveyed for School Patronage**

Area	Survey outcomes	Area	Survey outcomes
<b>Ballina</b>	Educate Together	<b>Loughrea</b>	Educate Together
<b>Ballinasloe</b>	Insufficient demand	<b>Malahide</b>	Educate Together
<b>Bandon</b>	Insufficient demand	<b>Monaghan</b>	Insufficient demand
<b>Birr</b>	An Foras Patrunachta	<b>Nenagh</b>	Educate Together
<b>Buncrana</b>	Insufficient demand	<b>New Ross</b>	Educate Together
<b>Carrick-on-Suir</b>	Insufficient demand	<b>Palmerstown</b>	Educate Together
<b>Carrigaline Cork</b>	VEC	<b>Passage West</b>	Educate Together
<b>Celbridge</b>	Kildare VEC	<b>Portmarnock</b>	Educate Together
<b>Clonmel</b>	Educate Together	<b>Roscommon</b>	Insufficient demand
<b>Cobh</b>	Educate Together	<b>Roscrea</b>	Insufficient demand
<b>Dublin 6</b>	Educate Together	<b>Rush</b>	Educate Together
<b>Dungarvan</b>	Educate Together	<b>Shannon</b>	Educate Together
<b>Edenderry</b>	Insufficient demand	<b>Skerries</b>	Insufficient demand
<b>Enniscorthy</b>	Insufficient demand	<b>Thurles</b>	Insufficient demand
<b>Fermoy</b>	Educate Together	<b>Tipperary</b>	Insufficient demand
<b>Kells</b>	Educate Together	<b>Tuam</b>	Educate Together
<b>Killarney</b>	Educate Together	<b>Westport</b>	Educate Together
<b>Leixlip</b>	Educate Together	<b>Wicklow</b>	Insufficient demand
<b>Longford</b>	Insufficient demand	<b>Youghal</b>	Insufficient demand

The findings suggest that there is sufficient parental demand supporting immediate changes in school patronage in twenty-three areas. Parents in twenty-two of these twenty-three areas surveyed voted in favour of the establishment of an English language multidenominational school. It is significant and indicative of the level of demand that over half of the areas supported a change. It is also important to note that the report

found that there was also support in the remaining fifteen areas but not at the level that would prove viable to maintain a school. The level of support for Educate Together schools is also signified by a recent report that Educate Together national schools in a number of areas are oversubscribed ‘receiving up to six times more applications than they have available places.’<sup>47</sup> As previously mentioned, there are currently three Educate Together second-level schools and a further two are scheduled to open in September 2015. The establishment and support of such schools emphasises the fact that state-run schools are not fully meeting the demand for a more intercultural learning experience.

Kitching addresses the issue of institutional racism in his article ‘An excavation of the racialised politics of viability underpinning education policy in Ireland’. Kitching outlines how the state has been complicit in promoting a racialised agenda where white-Irish is promoted as the norm. He cites the 2006 census as an example. While Black Irish was an option, ‘there seemed no need to state ‘White Irish’.’<sup>48</sup> Kitching also critiques the approach by the State to immigrant students’ education solely in terms of English language acquisition. Banks and Devine also concur that such an approach is problematic. In her article, ‘Welcome to the Celtic Tiger? Teacher Responses to Immigration and Increasing Ethnic Diversity in Irish Schools’, Devine argues that the concentration on English language can lead teachers to hold a deficit view of migrant students. International research conducted by the OECD indicates that as a consequence

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<sup>47</sup> Fiona Dillion, ‘Educate Together Schools massively over-subscribed’, *Irish Independent*, 18 February 2015, <http://www.independent.ie/irish-news/education/educate-together-schools-massively-oversubscribed.html> (Accessed 27 February 2015).

<sup>48</sup> Karl Kitching, ‘An excavation of the racialised politics of viability underpinning education policy in Ireland’, *Irish Educational Studies*, 29 (2011), 213-229 (p. 219).

of teachers' assumptions about migrant students' academic ability based only on their language ability, migrant students are more likely to be found in lower streams and channelled into less academically demanding courses at school.

The practice of institutional racism is discussed in the NCCA Guidelines. However, it is not revealed that the legislation mentioned, the Equal Status Acts and the Education Act, actually permits discrimination and by extension, institutional racism, through the provision for religious affiliated schools to prioritise the enrolment of Catholic students over others. The ESRI report found that in areas where schools were oversubscribed, enrolment policies can favour the settled Irish community. Kitching argues that as a result, Catholic white Irish identity is promoted as the norm, and this is an example of institutionalised racism at work in the Irish system. As discussed previously, it remains to be seen if the Education (Admission to School) Bill will sufficiently address these issues.

Other examples of institutional racism can also be identified in the teacher-educator sector, particularly for primary teachers. In her article, 'The next generation of teachers: an investigation of second-level student teachers' backgrounds in the Republic of Ireland', Manuela Heinz draws attention to studies which have 'highlighted how important it is for children from disadvantaged and ethnic minority backgrounds to have teachers of their own background as role models who can instil positive attitudes towards school and learning and provide culturally relevant pedagogy.'<sup>49</sup> The Immigrant Council of Ireland have already identified this weakness in the Irish education system

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<sup>49</sup> Manuela Heinz, 'The next generation of teachers: an investigation of second-level student teachers' backgrounds in the Republic of Ireland', *Irish Educational Studies*, 32 (2013), 139- 156 (p. 141).

and have taken steps to amend it through their ‘Ambassadors for Change’ Programme which seeks to ‘promote equality among teenagers and combat problems such as racism’ and ‘fill the gap caused by the current lack of migrants in Irish public life.’<sup>50</sup> Although the Intercultural Education Strategy (IES) (which is discussed later in this chapter), recommends in its conclusions that migrants should be encouraged to become teachers, migrants can face exclusion from qualifying in Ireland as a result of the Irish language requirement for primary school teachers. Migrant students who move to Ireland can be exempt from learning Irish and thus, cannot meet this requirement. They may also face barriers as a consequence of the religious affiliation of colleges. Teachers who have gained qualifications elsewhere can also face problems having their qualifications recognised in Ireland. Even if migrants manage to surpass these obstacles some can face further difficulties in gaining employment due to the fact that the majority of schools in Ireland are denominational and legislation that permits employers to discriminate on the basis of religion.

### **Racism in Irish Society and Schools**

Racism and bullying emerged as important issues in the ESRI report. Contrary to the view of teachers and principals who did not perceive racism to be a problem, students at several schools reported either witnessing or experiencing racism.<sup>51</sup> Kitching highlights that racism is not a new problem in Irish society and points to the long-established history of racism towards the Travelling Community as well as other minority groups in

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<sup>50</sup><http://www.immigrantcouncil.ie/media/press-releases/618-ambassadors-for-change-to-work-with-dublin-teens-mentors-to-start-work-with-dublin-schools-> (Accessed 18 June 2013).

<sup>51</sup> Smyth et. al., p. 94.

Ireland.<sup>52</sup> Mary Daly in her chapter ‘Cultural and Economic Protection and Xenophobia in Independent Ireland, 1920s-1970s’ in *Facing the Other: Interdisciplinary Studies on Race, Gender and Social Justice in Ireland*, argues that the tradition of xenophobia in Ireland is linked to the establishment of the Irish Free State and the development of an Irish identity.<sup>53</sup> She contends that the ideology of Irish nationalism bred anti-Semitism and anti-foreigner policies in the workplace. Other sections in the book focus on different groups spanning several decades including German-speaking refugees during World War Two, Italian immigrants, the Vietnamese and Igbo population as well as those defined as ‘Other’ through their membership of the Travelling or Gay and Lesbian communities, that have experienced discrimination as a consequence of the narrow conception of what constitutes Irishness. The imagological examination of the texts in the module in this study provides an opportunity for students to examine and explore understandings of Irish identity. Imagology helps to create an awareness of the ‘Other’ and questioning how that ‘Other’ is represented can lead to discussions about racism, difference and diversity in Irish society. In this way the imagological approach can expand students’ awareness and perception of intercultural issues.

Ronit Lentin and Robbie McVeigh explicate further on the tradition of racism in Irish society in their book, *Racism and Anti-Racism in Ireland*. They maintain that racism operates on ‘individual and institutionalised levels.’<sup>54</sup> In their qualitative research on migrant young people, Gilligan et al. reported in *In the Front Line of Integration: Young*

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<sup>52</sup> Kitching, p. 214.

<sup>53</sup> Mary Daly, ‘Cultural and Economic Protection and Xenophobia in Independent Ireland, 1920s-1970s’ in *Facing the other: interdisciplinary studies on race, gender and social justice in Ireland*, ed. by Moynagh Sullivan and Borbála Faragó (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008) pp. 6-18.

<sup>54</sup> Ronit Lentin and Robbie McVeigh, *Racism and Anti-Racism in Ireland* (Belfast: BTP Publications Ltd., 2002) p. 29.

*People Managing Migration to Ireland* that '[r]acism emerged spontaneously as an issue in almost all of the focus groups. Many participants talked about how they encountered racism on the street from strangers (including adults), peers in school, at work and in the search for work.'<sup>55</sup> The report, *Getting On: From Migration to Integration: Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian, and Nigerian Migrants' Experiences in Ireland* also highlighted that migrants tended to experience harassment in public spaces and '[y]oung people were highlighted as a source of anti-migrant sentiment.'<sup>56</sup> One of the texts studied as part of the module in this research, Roddy Doyle's 'Black Hoodie', engages specifically with the issue of racism in Irish society. This text brings the existence of racism to students' attention and stimulates discussion about appropriate responses to racist behaviour.

Mary Gannon's research revealed that even some teachers and principals conceive of minority ethnic and traveller students as 'Other'. The difference in conception became apparent through the language used to describe each group. Teachers tended to say 'our own students' when referring to Irish students emphasising that other minority groups did not belong in the same way as Irish students.<sup>57</sup> This reinforces the impression that racial discrimination is still an issue in Ireland. The NCCA guidelines underline the importance schools play in combating racism in society and contend that anti-racism

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<sup>55</sup> Robbie Gilligan, Philip Curry, Judy McGrath, Derek Murphy, Muireann Ní Raghallaigh, Margaret Rogers, Jennifer Jean Scholtz and Aoife Gilligan Quinn, *In the Front Line of Integration: Young People Managing Migration to Ireland* (Children's Research Centre: Trinity College Dublin, 2011) p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> The Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative, UCD, *Getting On: From Migration to Integration Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian, and Nigerian Migrants' Experiences in Ireland* (Dublin: Immigrant Council of Ireland, 2008) p. 15.

<sup>57</sup> Gannon, 'Framing diversity', p. 297.

forms an integral part of intercultural education. However, as Kitching and O'Brien point out, anti-racist training is non-existent for teachers.<sup>58</sup>

Despite these reports of racism in Irish society and schools, the findings from the ESRI report suggest that:

The majority of the Irish students interviewed expressed positive views about the number of newcomers coming to Ireland, feeling it made Ireland a more diverse society and allowed exposure to different cultures.<sup>59</sup>

Several other studies support this positive outlook. Roland Tormey and Jim Gleeson conducted a large-scale quantitative study to investigate the attitudes of second-level students towards ethnic minorities and presented the findings in their article 'Irish post-primary students' attitudes towards ethnic minorities'.<sup>60</sup> With the exception of the Travelling Community, attitudes towards minority groups were found to be largely positive. The students in the study reported low levels of social distance to Black African Immigrants, Muslims and Eastern Europeans. This would appear to reflect the results from the *European Commission Eurobarometer 2012* on perceptions of discrimination which revealed that discrimination in Ireland is perceived to be significantly lower than in other EU countries.<sup>61</sup> Overall, the results indicated that in Ireland discrimination is perceived as less widespread than in Europe. In Ireland only 35% reported that discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin is widespread in contrast to the European average of 56%. Discrimination on the basis of religious beliefs was also perceived to be significantly lower than in Europe with only 13% reporting it to be

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<sup>58</sup> Kitching, p. O'Brien, p.

<sup>59</sup> Smyth et. al., p. 89.

<sup>60</sup> Roland Tormey and Jim Gleeson, 'Irish Post-Primary Students' Attitudes Towards Ethnic Minorities', *Irish Educational Studies*, 31 (2012), 157-173.

<sup>61</sup> European Commission, *Eurobarometer 2012 on Perceptions of Discrimination in the EU-Ireland*, (2012) [http://ec.europa.eu/public\\_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs\\_393\\_fact\\_ie\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_393_fact_ie_en.pdf) (Accessed 22 November 2012). \*There has been no new Eurobarometer data published on this topic since 2012.



widespread in contrast to 39% in Europe. In line with this only 15% perceived the efforts made in Ireland to fight discrimination as not effective in comparison to 31% in Europe. However, it was reported that 56% of people surveyed thought that as a result of the economic situation policies promoting equality and diversity in Ireland are being regarded as less important or receiving less funding. This could partly explain why the Intercultural Education Strategy is no longer being monitored and why spending in the area of Intercultural education has remained limited at best.

In the analysis of their study, Tormey and Gleeson considered that the results may not be a true reflection of students' opinions. They argue that as racism, especially towards black people, is seen as socially undesirable and students may be aware of this, they may not have admitted to feeling a social distance to minority groups even when they did. This reasoning could also apply to the Eurobarometer findings. While age was not found to be a factor that affected opinion, gender was. Boys were more likely to report a social distance than girls. The research also revealed that students who completed Transition Year were less likely to possess negative attitudes towards ethnic minority groups. This was attributed to the fact that development education with a focus on global justice and inequalities tends to be an element of the Transition Year syllabus. Those that reported that they had discussed multicultural issues at school were more likely not to record any social difference to minority groups. Tormey and Gleeson highlight that only 40% of students do Transition Year and, as a result, transmission of these ideas needs to occur in other ways in schools. This supports arguments for a more inclusive curriculum and an intercultural emphasis in second-level education in general. A focus on interculturalism which includes a concentration on minority groups in Irish

society like the Travelling Community, is especially important considering the worrying results of this research that only 27% of respondents expressed no sense of social distance from members of the Travelling Community. If the argument of Tormey and Gleeson that ideas about what is deemed acceptable influenced the reporting of opinions about Black people, this would suggest that racist views of the Travelling Community are not only held by a large number of students but that racism against Travellers is also deemed acceptable.

MacGréil also found a high level of discrimination towards the Travelling Community in his research which is based on a national survey of Irish intergroup attitudes and prejudices carried out between November 1988 and April 1989 by the ESRI. The study contained a sample of one thousand three hundred and forty-seven people chosen randomly from Register of Electors.<sup>62</sup> While the research is undoubtedly dated, it does provide some indication of the level of prejudice in Ireland in the past. Only 13.5% of those surveyed would marry a member of the Travelling Community or accept them as a family member and 3% would debar or deport them. In comparison, Nigerians would be accepted as family or married by 29.1% and debarred or deported by 2.1%. Polish people were also more accepted with 54.6% and .6% respectively. The only group subject to a similar level of discrimination was the gay community. Only 12.5% would accept a gay person as a family member/marry, and 15.2% would debar or deport them. Ireland recently became the first country in the world to approve gay marriage by a popular vote which demonstrates that attitudes have improved since. However, the passage of time does not necessarily account for less prejudice. These findings were

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<sup>62</sup> Micheal Mac Greil, *Prejudice in Ireland revisited: based on a national survey of intergroup attitudes in the Republic of Ireland* (Maynooth: Survey and Research Unit, St Patrick's College, 1996).

compared to a similar survey carried out between 1972 and 1973.<sup>63</sup> While most attitudes relating to racial aspects did improve between the two surveys, there was an increase in prejudice against the Travelling Community. Younger people tended to hold more positive opinions about minority groups. MacGréil attributed this to higher education levels among the younger respondents and argued that the impact of urbanisation was having a tolerant effect. However, contrasting other categories, those with a higher education were more likely to hold negative views of Travellers. This confirms the view of the NCCA and the ESRI that education can play an important role in influencing attitudes, but it also underlines how education can reproduce inequality and have a negative impact if intercultural education and focus on minority groups are not properly addressed.

Tom Turner in his article ‘Why are Irish Attitudes to Immigrants among the most liberal in Europe?’ also reflects on the apparent positive attitudes of Irish people towards immigrants.<sup>64</sup> He seeks to explain why Ireland differs from the rest of Europe in this regard. Turner states that the two main reasons for hostility towards immigrants relate to the perceived threats that they pose. Firstly, in terms of the labour market, immigrants can be feared for two reasons: they can be perceived as increasing unemployment in the native population by displacing workers or, alternatively, as a burden to the native working population by depending on the welfare system. Secondly, immigrants can be perceived to pose a threat to the national identity and culture of a country by being too different to the accepted norm. Turner argues that the latter does not apply to Ireland as

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Tom Turner, ‘Why are Irish Attitudes to Immigrants among the most liberal in Europe?’, *European Societies*, 12 (2010), 25-44.

a large proportion of immigrants are from Eastern Europe. This group of immigrants does not appear overtly different to the majority of the Irish population because they are white. A large number of immigrants from Eastern Europe are also Catholic, which does not challenge a traditional view of Irish identity. However, Turner also highlights that negative views towards immigrants are more common in countries with a long history of immigration as:

Over time there is a greater likelihood of ethnic enclaves forming that emphasise the differences between host country natives and immigrants. [...] Attitudes take time to form and immigrants may be perceived as transient and short term.<sup>65</sup>

The 2011 Census indicates that immigrants are not leaving Ireland and over time, it is possible that the differences between cultural groups living in Ireland will become more apparent. MacGréil alluded to this when he described racism in Ireland against black and Asian people as ‘largely vicarious and dormant.’<sup>66</sup> It is important to concentrate on intercultural education and anti-racism in Irish schools now to ensure that any ‘dormant’ racism is neither activated nor preserved but eradicated completely.

In ‘Why are Irish Attitudes to Immigrants among the most liberal in Europe?’, Turner highlights that:

[...] more negative attitudes towards immigrants are likely to be associated with those groups most likely to experience relative deprivation. Essentially, groups and individuals in vulnerable positions are most likely to develop negative attitudes.<sup>67</sup>

This reflects the findings of Anna Keogh who conducted research with second-level students to investigate their attitudes towards refugees and asylum seekers. In her

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<sup>65</sup> Turner, p. 37.

<sup>66</sup> MacGréil, p. 131.

<sup>67</sup> Turner, p. 28.

chapter ‘Talking About the Other: A View of How Secondary School Pupils Construct Opinions about Refugees and Asylum-seekers’, Keogh reveals that the most negative attitudes were found among boys in a non-fee paying boys’ school in the city centre, despite the fact that this school had done the most work on educating students about asylum seekers and refugees. She postulated that a possible reason for this was that ‘the boys perceive refugees to be predominantly male working class, and the working-class boys thus perceive them to be a real economic threat.’<sup>68</sup> She noted that students mentioned those threats that Turner identifies relating to the labour market and loss of culture. Students also discussed whether the refugees would stay which connects to Turner’s argument that Irish people could view immigrants as a temporary presence. Similar to Devine’s research that revealed immigrant students assimilate to Irish norms, Keogh reported that: ‘In general, the international students perceived that Irish people were more likely to be friendly the more the students adapted themselves to Irish culture.’<sup>69</sup> This research would suggest that interculturalism and its inherent values, where diversity is accepted as the norm, has not been achieved in school or public environments. Keogh’s findings highlight the necessity for a greater focus on intercultural education especially in light of one of the conclusions of the ESRI report that immigrant students tend to be located in disadvantaged schools.

It is also pertinent to consider the argument raised by Bryan and Varvus in their article ‘The Promise and Peril of Education: the Teaching of In/Tolerance in an Era of Globalisation’ that differences between groups can become more pronounced as a result

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<sup>68</sup> Anna Keogh, ‘Talking About the Other: A View of How Secondary School Pupils Construct Opinions about Refugees and Asylum-seekers’ *Cultivating Pluralism Psychological, Social and Cultural Perspectives on a Changing Ireland*, ed. by Malcolm MacLachlan and Michael O’Connell (Dublin: Oak Tree Press, 2000), pp. 123-136 (p. 134).

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 128.

of social and economic conditions. They contend that social conditions can ‘act as catalysts activating the psychological processes and motivations that cause people to exclude ‘Others’ from their moral universe.’<sup>70</sup> They include economic deprivation among the motivations that can act as justification for treating a group differently. Considering the economic climate in Ireland and increased rates of unemployment since 2008, the level of racism in Irish society could rise. The fear of ‘them stealing our jobs’ is something which became apparent in this study and can be seen to exist in responses to news articles online (*The Journal/ The Irish Times*).<sup>71</sup> Hinton refers to this as ‘scapegoating’ where frustration is transformed into aggression against minority groups that are perceived to be the root of the problem. Hinton considers that negative stereotypes can be maintained by people for motivational as well as cognitive reasons: ‘People may not be able to, or may not wish to, alter their stereotyped way of thinking, as it confirms their prejudiced opinions of others.’<sup>72</sup> In addition to scapegoating, Hinton outlines two other examples of motivational reasoning: authoritarian personality and intergroup competition. According to Hinton, a person prescribed an authoritarian personality has displaced feelings of anger towards strict parents which are projected onto a weaker social group. A positive view of the in-group, ‘We’ is maintained and bolstered by the negative view of the out-group, ‘They’. Hinton’s concept of intergroup competition is similar to the idea discussed by Keogh and Turner above where two groups compete for the same resources. Maintaining a negative view of the out-group in

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<sup>70</sup> Audrey Bryan and Frances Vavrus, ‘The promise and peril of education: the teaching of in/tolerance in an era of globalisation’, *Globalisation, Societies and Education*, 3 (2005), 183-202 (p. 186).

<sup>71</sup> Michelle Hennessy, ‘New figures on foreign nationals ‘debunk migrant welfare myth’’ *The Journal*, 1 March 2013 [http://www.thejournal.ie/foreign-nationals-welfare-815425-Mar2013/?utm\\_source=shortlink](http://www.thejournal.ie/foreign-nationals-welfare-815425-Mar2013/?utm_source=shortlink) (Accessed 15 March 2013).

<sup>72</sup> Perry R. Hinton, *Stereotypes, Cognition and Culture* (Sussex: Psychology Press, 2000), p. 14.

that situation justifies the claim that the in-group is more entitled to the resource. Cognitive reasons relate to human cognition and ‘faulty thinking’. He explains stereotyping as a feature of human cognition which refers to the way people use categorisation in order to process information. For Hinton, ‘faulty thinking’ suggests that people are unaware of the mistake they have made in their thinking about others. The influence of culture is important in this regard because if the same view of a particular social group is repeated by friends, acquaintances and the media, it is unlikely to be questioned. Rather, ‘we will accept this *normative* influence as the appropriate way to view the group’<sup>73</sup> (emphasis in original). For this reason, it is essential that students are presented with diverse perspectives in school and are encouraged to question the images and portrayals of various groups. The imagological approach combined with the use of intercultural literature can ensure this is achieved.

In their article ‘Complex and Contradictory Accounts: The Social Representations of Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities held by Irish Teenagers’ based on the study of teenagers’ attitudes towards immigrants, Sinead Meade and Michael O’Connell posit that beliefs are not fixed and can contradict one another.<sup>74</sup> Utilising Social Representation theory, they refer to ‘cognitive polyphasia’ which is the ability to hold simultaneously contradictory ideas about a concept. They argue that ‘[p]articipants’ contradictory views function to justify arguments and rationalise anxieties about the presence of immigrants while seeking to maintain social acceptability and

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<sup>73</sup> Hinton, p. 19.

<sup>74</sup> Sinead Meade and Michael O’Connell ‘Complex and Contradictory Accounts: The Social Representations of Immigrants and Ethnic Minorities held by Irish Teenagers’, *Translocations*, 4 (2008), 51-66.

competence.<sup>75</sup> They contend that teenagers seek to express their own views but also wish to conform to what their peers expect of them. Social Representations allow teenagers to find a balance, to negotiate the ways they present themselves in the group. The opinions of the teenagers in the study varied depending on the topic of conversation and the communication of those involved, with the result that the participants expressed positive and negative comments about immigrants. Meade and O'Connell concluded that the participants did not want to be labelled racist and consequently their position remained fluid and subject to change. As the students in the present study are given the opportunity to express opinions both through class discussion and in private written responses, any discrepancy between personal views and those divulged in the presence of classmates should become apparent.

Similar to the argument put forward by Tormey and Gleeson above, Jasmin-Olga Sarafidou, Christos Govaris and Maria Loumakou in their article 'The subtle–blatant distinction of ethnic prejudice among ethnic majority children', hold that the views expressed by individuals may be tempered by their desire to appear politically correct rather than reflect their true views.<sup>76</sup> They postulate that modern prejudice differs to traditional forms of prejudice that were overt and direct. In contrast, modern prejudice is subtle, indirect and concealed and centres on a defence of specific traditional in-group values or culture. Echoing the findings of Tormey and Gleeson, Sarafidou, Govaris and Loumakou report higher levels of overt prejudice among males but suggest that the level of subtle prejudice is higher in women. They call for intercultural education that allows

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<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>76</sup> Jasmin-Olga Sarafidou, Christos Govaris and Maria Loumakou 'The subtle–blatant distinction of ethnic prejudice among ethnic majority children', *Intercultural Education*, 24 (2013), 264– 276.



students' to examine their social representations of the ethnic 'Other'. The module implemented as part of this study aims to provide a space for this.

Kristen E. Birchard and Landon D. Reid also postulate that people are more concerned now about appearing racist. As a consequence, they strive to appear non-prejudiced to others as well as themselves.<sup>77</sup> In their study, they tested whether the length of a person's written explanation for an instance of subtle racism related to their perception of racism, levels of prejudice, and social dominance orientation. They argue that subtle racism can persist as people provide non-racist explanations for discrimination against minority groups. This practice allows them to maintain their self-image as un-biased and distance themselves from an accusation of, or association with, racism. Citing research in social dominance theory, they suggest that individuals higher in social dominance orientation can also be prone to deny the existence of racism as it is in their interest to maintain the status quo. These personalities 'are more likely to endorse consensually shared, socially constructed myths that legitimise the existing social order'.<sup>78</sup> Meritocracy is an example of a legitimising myth that permits people to blame members of minority groups for being lazy or not trying hard enough to succeed. Accepting that institutional racist practices favour some groups over others undermines this view. Birchard and Reid found that individuals who do not perceive situations as instances of subtle racism were more likely to write longer explanations to justify their view. The longer explanation was motivated by a desire not to appear racist. These arguments are taken into consideration in the analysis of student views discussed in Chapter 4. In the

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<sup>77</sup> Kristen E. Birchard and Landon D. Reid, 'The People Doth Protest Too Much: Explaining Away Subtle Racism', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 29 (2010), 478-490 (p. 481).

<sup>78</sup> Birchard and Reid, p. 479.

present study, students are surveyed so their opinions and attitudes can be assessed outside the influence of their peers. It provides students with the opportunity to be honest about their true feelings on interculturalism and immigration. While a certain desire to appear politically correct may still influence the kind of responses recorded, it is likely to have a lower impact than the pressure exerted in a classroom situation where their views are shared in front of others. As mentioned previously, the use of the imagological approach and intercultural literature also provides a certain level of distance for students. Rather than express an opinion about a real person, the fictional nature of the texts allows the students to be more critical and to be perceived as less offensive.

### **English as an Additional Language and the Intercultural Education Strategy**

Another important finding of the ESRI report was that principals reported difficulty in recruiting trained language teachers and highlighted the lack of professional development opportunities available in the area of English as an Additional Language (EAL). The report outlined that there is considerable dissatisfaction with the teaching resources and guidelines available for EAL and furthermore, highlighted the lack of books and materials suitable for older students. As discussed earlier, the provision of EAL in schools has also been hampered by budget cuts.

The area of EAL is addressed in the most recent educational policy document dealing with interculturalism, ‘Intercultural Education Strategy, 2010- 2015’.<sup>79</sup> In the section entitled ‘Resource implications’ the plan for ‘some €100 million for English as an additional language in the primary and post-primary sectors, over and above regular educational resources in these sectors’ is mentioned.<sup>80</sup> Of course, this is put in the context of the ‘current economic climate’ and, in direct opposition to the findings of Devine, Smyth et al, and Bryan, available resources are described as ‘significant’. Notwithstanding this oversight, the figure for the provision of English as an Additional Language needs to be considered in light of the cuts that have already been made to this area prior to the publication of this document. From 2009, schools witnessed significant reductions in their allocation for English as an Additional Language, ‘The budget measures will mean that the level of EAL support will generally be reduced to a maximum of two teachers per school, as was the case before 2007.’<sup>81</sup> In the 2012/2013 school year, alleviation measures were put in place for schools with a high concentration of EAL students. Where a significant number of the total enrolment is made up of students with less than B1 (Level 3) proficiency in English or where a significant number of students that require EAL support are in third year or in senior cycle, schools can lodge an appeal for a review of their proposed allocation.<sup>82</sup> However, this support is

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<sup>79</sup> National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, *Guidelines for Schools: Intercultural Education in the Post-Primary School* (Dublin: NCCA, 2006).

[http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/publications/interc%20guide\\_eng.pdf](http://www.ncca.ie/uploadedfiles/publications/interc%20guide_eng.pdf)

<sup>80</sup> Ibid., p. 46.

<sup>81</sup> Department of Education and Science Schools Division Circular 0015/2009, ‘Meeting the needs of pupils learning English as an Additional Language (EAL)’ (March, 2009) [http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Archived-Circulars/cl0015\\_2009.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Circulars-and-Forms/Archived-Circulars/cl0015_2009.pdf).

<sup>82</sup> Department of Education and Skills, ‘Community & Comprehensive Schools Approved Allocation of Teaching Posts 2015/16 School Year’, 22 January 2015, <http://www.education.ie/en/Schools-Colleges/Services/Teacher-Allocations-Staffing/Teacher-Allocation/Approved-Allocation-of-Teaching->

not guaranteed and provision of adequate support could be delayed as a result of this application process.

The provision of two teachers is not enough to restore the initial levels of EAL support and certainly cannot be considered as a real commitment to increasing interculturalism in Irish schools. It is also important to note that as previously discussed with reference to Kitching, Banks and Devine, intercultural education should not be considered solely in terms of additional resources provided to help migrant students acquire a level of competence in the language of instruction.

The IES references an impressive amount of international research on the topic of intercultural education and summarises the recommendations of various reports conducted both in Ireland and internationally by OECD and other organisations: EAL and Continuous Professional Development (hereafter referred to as CPD) is required for teachers, migrants should be encouraged to become teachers, a contact person and centre for resources to promote the use of texts that enhance diversity should be facilitated, etc. However, like other policy documents, no practical solutions are presented. In fact, on more than one occasion the document appears to contradict itself. One such example can be found in the concluding pages of the report. The following general statement is made:

An intercultural learning environment must be brought about by intentional design, and not left to develop on an ad hoc basis. This Strategy is a key tool to enabling this vision to become a reality. Leadership and CPD are vitally important in this regard.<sup>83</sup>

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[Posts-for-2015-2016-in-Community-and-Comprehensive-Schools.pdf](#) (Accessed 8 June 2015). \*The same application process is required for voluntary secondary schools and VEC/ETB schools.

<sup>83</sup> IES, p. 67.

This is in line with the research cited but apparently at odds with the purpose of the statement which does not, as it outlines from the beginning, aim to affect any real change. Furthermore, despite the acknowledgement that CPD is ‘vitally important’, none was provided subsequently. However, the most evident indication of the inconsistency of the document appears in the final statement: ‘In summation: **It is the efforts of the single school/ institution which matter**’ (emphasis in original).<sup>84</sup> In the absence of any resources and training how else is a single school or institution to develop an intercultural learning environment but on an ad hoc basis?

Perhaps another indication of the (lack of) importance attributed to intercultural education in Ireland is the fact that the annual stakeholder forum which was supposed to monitor the implementation of the IES was held only once since 2010. Furthermore, the recommendations made by those who did participate in this ‘Intercultural Education Conference- One Year On’ forum were ignored. The English Language Support Teachers’ Association (ELSTA) added their voice to the call for more training and resources for teachers, the Irish Traveller Movement called for the IES to incorporate the Travelling Community and the Dublin City University Access programme highlighted the issue of third-level fees which prevents some migrants from progressing to university level and underlined the need for clearer legislation in this area.<sup>85</sup> None of

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<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 68.

<sup>85</sup> Intercultural Education Strategy 2010-2015 Submission on behalf of the National Executive of the English Language Support Teachers’ Association (ELSTA) [http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Conferences/Intercultural-Education-Strategy/migrants\\_implementation\\_conf\\_submissions\\_elsta.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Conferences/Intercultural-Education-Strategy/migrants_implementation_conf_submissions_elsta.pdf) Retrieved 30/04/13. Irish Traveller Movement Submission Intercultural Education Strategy [http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Conferences/Intercultural-Education-Strategy/migrants\\_implementation\\_conf\\_submissions\\_itm.pdf](http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Conferences/Intercultural-Education-Strategy/migrants_implementation_conf_submissions_itm.pdf) (Accessed 30 April 2013). Dublin City University Access Programme Migrant Participation in Higher Education An Access Perspective <http://www.education.ie/en/Press-Events/Conferences/Intercultural-Education->

these requests were met and with no follow-up the following year, there is little evidence that they were even considered. It would seem that the IES is yet another example of empty government rhetoric in the area of intercultural education. In July 2014, Labour Party TD Jan O’Sullivan succeeded Ruairí Quinn as Minister for Education and Skills. Although Minister O’Sullivan has instigated reforms in other areas such as the Junior Certificate, no update to the intercultural education policy has been undertaken.

The IES aims to guarantee that ‘all education providers are assisted with ensuring that inclusion and integration within an intercultural learning environment become the norm.’ It is quite clear that this has not occurred. What emerges strongly from the literature is that the Irish system has a tendency to engage in rhetoric in the area of intercultural education without following through with resources and further training. Despite the consistent reports of the dearth in this area and several calls for this to be amended, recent educational policy has continued the tradition of ignoring the real issues and promulgating the add diversity and stir approach much criticised by the majority of researchers and experts in the field.

This study aims to promote a different approach. It is clear from the research discussed above that change is required in the Irish education system. Intercultural texts should be incorporated in the curriculum and the syllabus should reflect the social diversity and various cultures evident in modern Irish society. Previous research supporting the use of intercultural texts is discussed below.

## ***Part 2: Using Intercultural/ Multicultural Literature in Education***

In *Print and Prejudice*, Zimet underlines that '[l]eft to our own initiative, we select our reading to support our biases rather than in order to change them.'<sup>86</sup> Discussing other studies, Zimet maintains that children's beliefs and biases can be influenced by exposure to the media. She argues that counter-teaching can be effective in discouraging children from forming prejudiced views. Counter-teaching can be achieved through the provision of a broad spectrum of reading materials which include other viewpoints and by discussing these perspectives and related values. Zimet notes that children's literature and schoolbooks in particular, tend to mirror the prejudice found in society at large. While it is unlikely that the same level of prejudice is evident in textbooks as there was in the 1970s when Zimet wrote this book, it is still imperative that teachers introduce literature to students that is outside their usual reading choices. Furthermore, along with this exposure to different texts, it is essential that teachers create a space for conversation and discussion about them as these combined activities can lead to 'even more significant positive attitude changes than when children just read the stories.'<sup>87</sup> The selection of materials for teaching is thus an important one. Texts should feature a wide representation of various people and cultures and teachers should be prepared to engage with such texts and facilitate meaningful discussion among students. As outlined above, the current intercultural guidelines and policy fall short in this regard.

Ruth McKoy Lowery and Donna Sabis-Burns in their article, 'From Borders to Bridges: Making Cross-Cultural Connections through Multicultural Literature', argue that

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<sup>86</sup> Sara Goodman Zimet, *Print and Prejudice* (London : Hodder and Stoughton, 1976), p. 9.

<sup>87</sup> Zimet, p. 20.

children's literature offers 'the capacity to provide students with vicarious experiences they would not otherwise have.'<sup>88</sup> They maintain that it is important for children and young people to see people like themselves as well as different groups represented in books. In this way, children come to realise that diversity in society is normal. Guang-Lea Lee and Willis Johnson argue a similar point in 'The Need for Interracial Storybooks in Effective Multicultural Classrooms' and emphasise how intercultural literature benefits all children.<sup>89</sup> Echoing the views of Leavy and Picower discussed earlier, Lowry and Sabis-Burns underline the necessity for critical thinking and the need for teachers to be aware of their own biases.

Susan A. Colby and Anna F. Lyon raise similar issues in 'Heightening Awareness about the Importance of Using Multicultural Literature.'<sup>90</sup> They contend that a child is less engaged and interested when they do not see themselves and their lives represented in classroom literature. Underlining the criticisms around inequality and cultural capital inherent in the critical pedagogy approach, they argue that the exclusion of minority groups and culture from classroom reading materials reinforces the subtle message that 'school is for someone else, not people like you.'<sup>91</sup> They highlight that students are often asked and expected to make connections to what they are reading and that the failure to include intercultural texts in the curriculum is thus asking the impossible of some students. They stress the role that literature can play in either perpetuating or dispelling stereotypes as texts contain messages about culture and society and representations in

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<sup>88</sup> Ruth McKoy Lowery and Donna Sabis-Burns, 'From Borders to Bridges: Making Cross-Cultural Connections through Multicultural Literature', *Multicultural Education*, 40 (2007), 50-54 (p. 51).

<sup>89</sup> Guang-lea Lee and Willis Johnson, 'The Need for Interracial Storybooks in Effective Multicultural Classrooms', *Multicultural Education*, 8 (2000), 27-29.

<sup>90</sup> Susan A. Colby and Anna F. Lyon, 'Heightening Awareness about the Importance of using Multicultural Literature', *Multicultural Education*, 11 (2004) 24-28.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 26.



literature can influence ideas and images held by readers. This is discussed in further detail in relation to Imagology below.

In 'Exploring bias using multicultural literature for children' Jim Barta and Martha Crouthers Grindler also hold that children's literature can serve as a tool to help educate children about different cultures.<sup>92</sup> They emphasise that bias can be well hidden in some societies and that creating awareness of this bias should be a central tenet of education. Furthermore, they argue that multicultural children's literature can be helpful in achieving this goal and that educators have to guide readers in critical analyses of these texts to achieve these aims. Susan M. Landt also holds this view in 'Multicultural Literature and Young Adolescents: A Kaleidoscope of Opportunity.'<sup>93</sup> Chapter 3 outlines how the module implemented as part of this research demonstrates how this can be achieved through the use of Imagology and Reader- Response Theory.

In their article 'Educational Interventions on "Otherness": Co-operative Learning through Intercultural Children's Literature in Muslim Minority Schools in Greece' Fokion Georgiadis, Anna Koutsouri and Apostolos Zisimos discussed changes made to address bias in minority Islam schools in Thrace, Greece.<sup>94</sup> With funding from the EU and the Greek Government the PAM project overhauled the education system creating new textbooks and resources that promoted intercultural communication and education. The article outlines how the use of a 'multicultural' story and co-operative learning,

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<sup>92</sup> Jim Barta and Martha Crouther Grindler, 'Exploring Bias using Multicultural Literature for Children', *Reading Teacher*, 50 (1996), 269-270.

<sup>93</sup> Susan M. Landt, 'Multicultural Literature and Young Adolescents: A Kaleidoscope of Opportunity', *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 49 (2006), 690-697.

<sup>94</sup> Georgiadis, Fokion, Anna Koutsouri and Apostolos Zisimos, 'Educational Interventions on "Otherness": Co-Operative Learning through Intercultural Children's Literature in Muslim Minority Schools in Greece', *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 31 (2011), 31 – 48.

group-work and activity-based learning led to significant improvement in the attendance at school by the minority group students and developed and enhanced relationships between the dominant and minority students within and outside the classroom. The role of the teacher in devising learning situations was crucial in facilitating student-to-student communication which allowed them to learn from each other. As a consequence of this intervention strategy, dropout rates, although still higher than the Greek average, have since reduced and more females now participate in education. This study takes the same kind of approach encouraging student interaction and involvement, action-based learning and the use of intercultural literature to enhance intercultural education at second-level. The use of an intervention strategy also indicates how intercultural awareness and learning can be enhanced by such an approach.

Another article that highlights the important role of the teacher as a facilitator of learning is Mireya Esther Castañeda Usaquén's 'Adolescent Students' Intercultural Awareness When Using Culture-Based Materials in the English Class.'<sup>95</sup> This article describes research undertaken with teenagers aged fourteen to fifteen in Bogota, Columbia. In their English class they read and watched different texts about the US and the UK. As part of the class the students were encouraged to critically analyse the representations and relate these to their own experiences. Using the information provided in class, the students were able to compare cultures and identify areas worthy of criticism and praise in both their own and foreign cultures. Through communication, debate, critical assessment and reflection the class became politically charged as

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<sup>95</sup> Mireya Esther Castañeda Usaquén , 'Adolescent Students' Intercultural Awareness when using Culture-Based Materials in the English Class', *PROFILE Issues in Teachers' Professional Development*, 14 (2012), 29-48.

students questioned the structures of power both within their own society and those outside it. Through employing and encouraging a critical approach to reading texts, Usaquén empowered her students and assisted them in becoming socially conscious. In the present study, Imagology is identified as a useful tool to assist students to read texts critically and encourage them to become more socially aware.

In ‘Multicultural literature and discussion as mirror and window?’ Jocelyn Glazier and Jung-A Seo also explore how ‘multicultural literature’ can provide the opportunity for students to learn about their own culture and the cultures of others. They argue that the text must ‘act as both mirror-allowing students to reflect on their own experiences-and as window, providing the opportunity to view the experiences of others.’<sup>96</sup> In this way the text can inspire communication across and between cultures and opens up possibilities for students’ voices to be heard. Through discussion students learn from one another that their views and opinions are influenced by their experiences and as a result they can differ from others. In the analysis of a class in the study, Glazier and Seo discovered that the students spoke most when they were making text-to-self comparisons which supports the use of the discursive, dialogic approach proposed by critical pedagogy. Crucially, they highlight that this kind of analysis of texts can inspire further critical thinking and allow students to reflect on the assumptions held in relation to their own lives and the society in which they live. As will be discussed in Chapter 4, the students involved in this study also engaged in self-text comparisons and derived meaning based on their own experiences and contexts.

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<sup>96</sup> Jocelyn Glazier and Jung-A Seo, ‘Multicultural Literature and Discussion as Mirror and Window?’, *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*, 48 (2005), 686-700 (p. 687).

The studies discussed above argue that the use of intercultural/multicultural literature can have a positive effect on the attitudes of students. It is important to note that the need for discussion and analysis within the classroom environment is essential in light of the evidence that suggests that our attitudes can influence not only what we read but also how we interpret it. Remarkably, Zimet explains that often, readers can choose to disregard elements of texts that they disagree with. This can occur especially when the material presented conflicts with their own world view. Information in support of a different perspective is either neglected completely or misinterpreted in order to match the reader's original viewpoint.<sup>97</sup> In 'Some Research on the Impact of Reading' David H. Russell supports this argument.<sup>98</sup> Russell postulates that reading alone can have little impact on feelings and behaviour. He hypothesises that instead, the effect can be determined by the situation, expectations, purpose of reading, personality, conscious or unconscious needs of the reader or any combination of these. The research also suggests that exposure to texts must be maintained for the impact on attitudes to remain. Zimet reports that a study by Jackson where students were post-tested two weeks after the implementation of the educational intervention revealed that attitudes had returned to their pre-test level.

In 'The Use of Multicultural Curricula and Materials to Counter Racism in Children', Bigler also highlights the dearth of studies in intervention literature that have measured long-term attitude change.<sup>99</sup> He underlines that studies in which post-test attitudes are

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<sup>97</sup> Zimet, p. 10.

<sup>98</sup> David H. Russell, 'Some Research on the Impact of Reading', *The English Journal*, 47 (1958), 398-413.

<sup>99</sup> Rebecca S. Bigler, 'The Use of Multicultural Curricula and Materials to Counter Racism in Children', *Journal of Social Issues*, 55 (1999), 687-705.

measured after a significant period of time usually indicate that initial positive changes are reversed and previous beliefs and prejudices return.

In 'Does Multicultural Education Improve Students' Racial Attitudes? Implications for Closing the Achievement Gap' Ogo Okoye-Johnson also examined previous studies to determine if multicultural education had an impact on the racial attitudes of students between the ages of three and sixteen and, similar to the other studies, found that multicultural education did improve attitudes.<sup>100</sup> She does note that the majority of studies were not compared across time and that the impact of the views and beliefs of teachers on students were not considered. However, she also discovered that curricular intervention strategies achieved the best results and postulates that curricular intervention may work better as students view multicultural education as inherent in the curriculum rather than as something added on. In light of this finding and the fact that short-term educational interventions are not effective in the long-term, the need for the curriculum to be restructured rather than added to is clear. The argument for curriculum redesign rather than an add-on approach to the current curriculum is supported by Banks and Bryan whose work was previously discussed. Okoye-Johnson calls for policy makers to ensure that multicultural education forms part of the curriculum and advises that funds should be made available to rewrite the curriculum and provide training and support to teachers to guarantee successful implementation.

While reiterating the need for further training and resources and underlining the necessity for the long-term inclusion of intercultural texts on the curriculum, this study

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<sup>100</sup> Ogo Okoye-Johnson, 'Does Multicultural Education Improve Students' Racial Attitudes? Implications for Closing the Achievement Gap', *Journal of Black Studies*, 42 (2011), 1252-1274.

proposes a unique approach by demonstrating how the literary theory of Imagology can be applied to help achieve this aim. This thesis also contributes to a gap in research into the use of intercultural literature in the classroom in the Irish context.

### ***Part 3: Imagology***

Emer O'Sullivan defines Imagology as 'the study of national, ethnic and racial stereotypes as they appear in all literary contexts.'<sup>101</sup> As outlined in the introduction, Imagology developed once the idea that an individual's national character could explain behaviour, attitude or appearance was rejected. In contrast, images of national character are understood to:

take shape in a discursive and rhetorical environment; they are representative of literary and discursive conventions, not of social realities. Rather, imagology is concerned with the typology of characterizations and attributes, with their currency and with their rhetorical deployment.<sup>102</sup>

The study of images of national character and stereotypes in literature is important because of the impact they can have. Images of national character can be the source of stereotypes or propagate and reinforce them and these literary depictions can influence and inform opinion and behaviour. Indeed, in *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Development and Literary Expression prior to the Nineteenth Century*, Leerssen argues that the idea of an Irish nationality was first introduced in literature before being adopted in a political context.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Emer O'Sullivan, *Friend and Foe*, p. 27.

<sup>102</sup> Beller and Leerssen, p. xiv.

<sup>103</sup> Leerssen, Joep, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael: Studies in the Idea of Irish Nationality, its Developments and Literary Expression Prior to the Nineteenth Century* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 1986).

As previously noted, the terms *spected* (referring to the nationality portrayed) and *spectant* (referring to the observer) as well as auto-image (in-group) and hetero-image (out-group) are important in Imagology. Images of the 'Other' are hetero-images and these are formed in a binary against auto-images, or images of one's own group. Each informs the other and cannot exist independently as the concepts of national character are formed in part, by what they are not. Negative traits are identified against which the in-group, or auto-group can differentiate themselves. The auto-group creates an image in contrast to the perceived undesirable and destructive characteristics of the out-group or hetero-group. The auto- and hetero-images held by groups can influence each other. Declan Kiberd in *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation*, notes that 'If England had never existed, the Irish would have been rather lonely. Each nation badly needed the other, for the purpose of defining itself.'<sup>104</sup> Kiberd underlines how Ireland was fixed as 'Other' by British writers in order to provide a foil to the controlled and refined image they sought to cultivate for themselves. The Irish natives were depicted as inferior in order to help justify the colonising desire of Britain. Adding to this point, Emer O'Sullivan, in her article, "'S is for Spaniard': The Representation of Foreign Nations in ABCs and Picturebooks", notes that 'images of foreign nations are never innocent [...]. The images tell us more about the observer than the observed, even more acutely when the observer is the object of a self-representation.'<sup>105</sup> The Imagologist's role is to scrutinise the depiction and determine how and why characters are portrayed in the literary work. This examination can prompt the following questions:

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<sup>104</sup> Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London: Vintage, 1996), p. 2.

<sup>105</sup> Emer O' Sullivan, "'S is for Spaniard': The representation of foreign nations in ABCs and picturebooks', *European Journal of English Studies*, 13 (2009), 333-349 (p. 345).

- Where are stereotypes of national character used in the creation and representation of literary characters?
- How are these stereotypes used: are they denounced, contradicted, subverted, played with or maintained?
- How are various images (both auto- and hetero-) accordingly constructed?
- To what purpose (whether political, sociological, ethical, etc.) do authors employ these images?

In an imagological analysis a consideration of genre and socio-historical context is important as images of national character and the figure conceptualised as ‘Other’ can change over time. In his article, ‘Image and Power’, Jan Nederveen Pieterse highlights that all the attributes assigned to non-European peoples have also and first been attributed to European peoples in a gradually expanding circle from neighbouring to further removed peoples. He reiterates that images of ‘Others’ are not maintained because they are based on truth but rather because they reflect the concerns of the image producers and consumers.<sup>106</sup>

The ‘Other’ is that which is unfamiliar, that which poses a threat. Corinna Albrecht, in her chapter entitled ‘Foreigner’, outlines how:

For as long as human beings have been living together in groups, cultures, or societies, differentiation from one’s Other has been a major concern in order to guarantee in-group coherence as well as allow for external differentiations from other groups. [...] In the process of identifying and constituting one’s own Self, each society and period generates its own specific figures of the foreign as exemplary, counter, or oppositional images.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Jan Nederveen Pieterse, ‘Image and Power’ in *Alterity, Identity, Image: Selves and Others in Society*, ed. by Joep Leerssen and Raymond Corbey (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1991), pp. 191-204 (p. 24).

<sup>107</sup> Beller and Leerssen, p. 326.



In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva argues that the ‘Other’ represents all that we fear within ourselves. She contends that instead of acknowledging this part of ourselves, we deny it and impose it on foreigners. When we recognise that part of ourselves in a foreigner we experience Freud’s sense of the uncanny, something familiar yet strange. But ‘the foreigner is neither a race nor a nation. [...] Uncanny, foreignness is within us: we are our own foreigners.’<sup>108</sup> Rather than accept this, our reaction is to reject it and thus, we come to reject foreigners and view them as a threat as they remind us of that part of ourselves that we wish to forget.

As communities and countries come into contact with one another through trade and other means, familiarity increases and the threat is relocated to people and places further away. In line with Benedict Anderson’s idea of nation as an ‘imagined community’, Tovey and Share in *A Sociology of Ireland* refer to a nation as ‘the invention of nationalists.’<sup>109</sup> Nations as imagined or invented can be subject to reconfiguration. In his book *Imagined Communities* Anderson specifically links print-capitalism with the creation of the modern nation arguing that the availability of books in vernacular languages allowed people to recognise that they held common beliefs. This helped to formulate the idea that a nation consisted of a similar group of people in contrast to an ‘Other’ group who differed. Birgit Neumann, in her article, ‘Towards a Cultural and Historical Imagology: The rhetoric of national character in 18<sup>th</sup> Century British literature’, emphasises that

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<sup>108</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 181.

<sup>109</sup> Tovey and Share, p. 192.

[...] stereotypes that are produced by certain communities to make sense of a specific historical situation and to negotiate the relationship between national self and other are regularly subject to revision or, at least, invested with new meanings.<sup>110</sup>

In *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael* Leerssen demonstrated this process with reference to the transformation of the Irish character on the English stage. He argues that in line with the changing social, historical and political situation, the representation of Irish national character improved. Leerssen notes that the Stage Irishman, which due to proximity and political involvement had long been a stock character on the English stage, ‘grew more sympathetic and sentimental in direct proportion to the extent in which political fears for Gaelic Jacobitism dwindled after 1745.’<sup>111</sup> Positive representations of the Irish served to reassure the English audience that they would be loyal in a time of growing nationalism with the political situation in America (independence) and war with France playing on their minds. The connection between amelioration in the representation of national character and the political situation is also marked by Emer O’Sullivan in *Friend and Foe: the Image of Germany and the Germans in British Children’s Fiction from 1870 to the Present*.<sup>112</sup> She reveals how the portrayal of West German characters in British texts altered over time as a consequence of social and political circumstances. Prior to the World Wars, the image of Germany and its people was relatively positive in British literature and complimentary representations that focused on their musicality predominated. This changed during the war years when the Germans were interpreted as the enemy and were viewed as untrustworthy. O’Sullivan noted, however, that soon

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<sup>110</sup> Birgit Neumann, ‘Towards a Cultural and Historical Imagology: The Rhetoric of National Character in 18th Century British Literature’, *European Journal of English Studies*, 13 (2009), 275-291 (p. 279).

<sup>111</sup> Leerssen, *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael*, p. 92.

<sup>112</sup> Emer O’Sullivan, *Friend and Foe*.

after the end of World War II, the portrayal of Germans began to alter and a more positive picture was once again presented.

Similar to the process through which Irish characters were depicted as inferior to act as a foil to British characters, Edward Said in *Orientalism* holds that the Orient has helped to define Europe and the West by means of contrast. Said defines orientalism as ‘a Western style for dominating, restructuring and having authority over the Orient.’<sup>113</sup> Like the development of other notions about national character, Said ascertains that the Orient was not a fixed place but rather a concept that had been created and fortified through repetition in writing and literature. Through this process of representation, the Orient came to be conceived as a real place:

In the system of knowledge about the Orient, the Orient is less a place than a *topos*, a set of references, a congeries of characteristics, that seems to have its origin in a quotation, or a fragment of a text, or a citation from someone’s work on the Orient, or some bit of previous imagining, or an amalgam of all these.<sup>114</sup>

As discussed above with reference to Kiberd, the presentation and replication of a negative image of national character can sometimes be linked to power relations between groups. Said equates Orientalism to a kind of discourse that was used to construct and maintain power. He argues that the promulgation of ideas about the Orient prefigured colonialism. By depicting the inhabitants of Asia as childlike and inferior, and mystifying the land and customs in a romantic manner, colonialism became acceptable. This portrayal of the Orient led the conquering force to believe that their

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<sup>113</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (London : Penguin, 1995), p. 3.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 177.

domineering ambitions were justified. How could a people so obviously simple-minded with their backward, barbaric customs govern themselves? Leerssen argues that the same process occurred in the literature written about Ireland. Images of Ireland were created by English authors and repeated, in part to justify the unfair treatment of the Irish. As a result, the Irish, like the Orientals portrayed by the Orientalists, were represented as a barbaric, simple, uncultivated people with crude practices and were sometimes accused of cannibalism or incest. As iterated previously, whether the images were true representations is not the subject under study in Imagology. Rather, the questions how and why the images are produced are pertinent. By studying such portrayals, the Imagologist can discover the source of literary stereotypes and postulate why some are still in use while others have faded away.

Reception and intertextuality are important considerations in Imagology. Reception theory holds that meaning is not inherent in a text but rather, is dependent on what the reader brings to it. The reader brings with them their past experiences and prejudices and this informs their reading and interpretation of a literary work. Jauss refers to these preconceptions as the reader's 'horizons of expectation.'<sup>115</sup> A reader's horizon of expectation is partly influenced by previous texts. Their experience of other literary works has informed their opinions of what a text should be. Intertextuality feeds into this process. Graham Allen in *Intertextuality* notes that:

Reading thus becomes a process of moving between texts. Meaning becomes something which exists between a text and all the other texts to which it refers and relates, moving

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<sup>115</sup> Hans Robert Jauss, *Toward an Aesthetic of Reception* (Brighton: Harvester, 1982).

out from the independent text into a network of textual relations. The text becomes an intertext.<sup>116</sup>

Intertextuality holds that there is no original text. Instead, every text speaks to and draws from another. The reader is constantly reminded of other texts when they read and it is from these that they draw their point of reference. Intertextuality and reception are relevant to Imagology because traces and influences of previous literary works can be identified in any text. As Said argues in *Orientalism*, sometimes representations can be entirely formulated as a consequence of other texts and have no bearing on reality. Leerssen in *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael* uncovers the same process in the texts written by British authors about Ireland and the Irish in the eighteenth century. He examines portrayals of the Irish through various publications and establishes common links and repetitions. The reception of texts is underlined and intertextuality is clearly established as an important facet of Imagology.

The reception of texts can play a significant role in the development of ideas of national characters and the subverting of stereotypes. In *Culture and Imperialism*, Said holds that the preoccupation with national identity is prevalent among writers of former colonies as:

narrative is crucial [...] stories [...] become the method colonized people use to assert their own identity and the existence of their own history. [...] The power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Graham Allen, *Intertextuality* (London: Routledge 2000), p. 1.

<sup>117</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Vintage, 1994), p. xiii.

Said argues that Anglo-Irish writers engaged in a form of ‘writing back’ to the colonial British centre.<sup>118</sup> In this way they had the opportunity to respond to the representations that had been projected about them. O’Sullivan in *Friend and Foe* also refers to this process of ‘literary revenge’ and describes it as ‘group A mocks group B in its literature and portrays its representatives as being inferior or stupid because group B did this to group A in its literature at some stage in the past.’<sup>119</sup> Interestingly, in *Remembrance and Imagination*, Leerssen argues that the Anglo-Irish authors inherited some of the ideas that the English held. While they sought to combat the negative ideas perpetuated about Irish characters in British texts, they ‘in fact agreed with its most basic point: the fact that the ‘real’ Ireland is that which differs most from England.’<sup>120</sup> As a consequence, aspects of Irish culture that were most uncharacteristic of England were emphasised and these became identifiers of ‘Irishness’. In particular, the Irish language, Catholicism and Irish myth and folklore were celebrated by some Anglo-Irish authors and playwrights.

In this study representations of immigrants in Irish texts are investigated. This examination is directly linked to the portrayals of Irish characters because, as discussed previously, auto- and hetero- images are always constructed in contrast to one another. In the past, the image of Irish as non-British proliferated and has continued to be prevalent in some texts by Irish authors up to recent times.<sup>121</sup> Because of this

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 35.

<sup>119</sup> O’Sullivan, *Friend and Foe*, p. 42.

<sup>120</sup> Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), p. 76.

<sup>121</sup> Laura Dooley ‘Representing “Others”: An Imagological Examination of three Irish Children’s Historical Fiction Texts Analysing Portrayals of Irish and British Characters’, (unpublished MA thesis, Dublin City University, 2012).

indissoluble connection between auto- and hetero-image it is deemed necessary here to provide some background on the development of Irish national character in literature.

Leerssen in his article, 'Wildness, Wilderness, and Ireland: Medieval and Early-Modern Patterns in the Demarcation of Civility', discusses how religion became an important indicator of Irish national identity as an assertion of non-Englishness.<sup>122</sup> In *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael* Leerssen explains how the political system in Ireland prior to the nineteenth century contributed to this development. Due to the division of the country into chiefdoms and the lack of centralised government, Bardic culture and the Catholic religion were all that the different clans held in common. As the process of colonisation was also accompanied by an attempt to convert the people of Ireland to Protestantism, resistance came to be viewed in religious terms. Petros Panaou in his article, "'What in the nation am I supposed to be?': Child and Nation in two picture books from Ireland', describes how Catholicism became equated with Irishness:

the Irish essentialized — idolized even — their Gaelic-Catholic identity and eventually nationalized it as a means of resistance to colonization. Catholics responded to oppression and discrimination in an interesting and perhaps unexpected way; they took up the Protestants' conflation of Catholicism with Irishness, internalized it, and turned it against the oppressors and originators of the stereotype.<sup>123</sup>

Comparing two picture books, one from Northern Ireland and one from the Republic of Ireland, Panaou discovered that religion played a role in the determination of national

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<sup>122</sup> Joep Leerssen, 'Wildness, Wilderness, and Ireland: Medieval and Early-Modern Patterns in the Demarcation of Civility', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 56 (1995), 25-39 (p. 35).

<sup>123</sup> Petros Panaou, "'What in the nation am I supposed to be?': Child and Nation in two picture books from Ireland', *The Looking Glass: New Perspectives on Children's Literature*, 13 (2009), no page numbers.

character in the text from the Republic but was absent from the Northern Irish one. This indicates that religion is still being represented as an important indicator of national identity in the Republic. As Valerie Coghlan has noted in her article, “‘What Foot Does He Dig With?’” ‘Inscriptions of Religious and Cultural Identity’ in *Irish Children’s Literature and Culture: New Perspectives on Contemporary Writing*, ‘[t]o be Irish was synonymous with being Catholic.’<sup>124</sup>

In *Imagology*, Leerssen refers to the Irish national character as contradictory. Along with the penchant for associating the Irish with religion, a portrayal of the Irish as violent is also common. Leerssen notes that ballad singing and a link to the Irish language are often associated with Irish national character too. He holds that this image ‘is as current nowadays in postmodern and New Age literature, and in post-colonial criticism, as it was in the Victorian *fin de siècle*.’<sup>125</sup>

In ‘Representing “Others”: An Imagological Examination of three Irish Children’s Historical Fiction Texts Analysing Portrayals of Irish and British Characters’, three children’s historical fiction texts are examined and it is argued that the British characters act as a foil to the more positively portrayed Irish characters. Furthermore, an Irish identity was evoked in terms of the Catholic religion, the Irish language and a strong nationalist viewpoint with the British depicted clearly as an enemy ‘Other’.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>124</sup> Valerie Coghlan, ‘‘What Foot Does He Dig With?’’ ‘Inscriptions of Religious and Cultural Identity’ in *Irish Children’s Literature and Culture: New Perspectives on Contemporary Writing*, ed. by Valerie Coghlan and Keith O’Sullivan (Oxon: Routledge, 2011), pp. 56- 66 (p. 56).

<sup>125</sup> Beller and Leerssen, pp. 193- 194.

<sup>126</sup> Laura Dooley, ‘Representing “Others”: An Imagological Examination of Three Children’s Historical Fiction Texts Analysing the Portrayal of Irish and British Characters’ (unpublished MA thesis, Dublin City University, 2012).



A study by Pike and Waldron demonstrates how these ideas about national character can become ingrained.<sup>127</sup> The study of primary school children, “What does it mean to be Irish? Children’s construction of national identity”, revealed that the children involved, all of whom were Irish citizens, equated Irishness with the Irish language, sport, music and dancing. When Pike and Waldron returned to discuss the findings with the children, they reported that the children recognised that their view and impressions of Irishness were influenced by the media and popular representations of Ireland and the Irish. As noted previously, images of national identity can also change over time. In line with this, Pike and Waldron remark that the absence of religion in the children’s writing was striking. While they note that the children were open to the idea of cultural pluralism, they also found that there was a fear of losing part of their Irish identity as a result. Pike and Waldron identified the lack of acknowledgement of internal diversity in Irish society and the conceptualisation of Irish people as able-bodied, settled and white as causes for concern. However, they do assert that schools can make a difference and they call on educators to take responsibility to ensure that children are ‘given the space and opportunities to explore, question and challenge existing conceptions of national identity.’<sup>128</sup> As discussed in the previous section, the inclusion of intercultural literature can help to facilitate such exploration. The module proposed in this study aims to offer this opportunity and Imagology provides a valuable tool to help achieve this.

The combination of Imagology and children’s literature is recommended by Emer O’Sullivan. She holds that children’s literature represents an ‘untapped seam’ for

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<sup>127</sup> Susan Pike and Fionnuala Waldron, 'What does it Mean to be Irish? Children's Construction of National Identity', *Irish Educational Studies*, 25 (2006), 231 – 251.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., P. 248.

research in Imagology and contends that ‘both fields stand to gain’ from this meeting.<sup>129</sup>

In her article, “‘S is for Spaniard’: The Representation of Foreign Nations in ABCs and Picturebooks’, O’Sullivan identifies children’s literature as an appropriate site for imagological analysis because it is

A reservoir for the collective memory of a nation, children’s literature is the branch of literature which is read and shared by the greatest numbers of members of most communities and a sanctioned location of intergenerational communication (albeit in one direction) about what it means to belong to that specific group. As a site for the tradition of information, beliefs, and customs, it overtly or latently reflects the dominant social and cultural norms, including self-images and images of others.<sup>130</sup>

Hetero-images in children’s literature are important to examine especially in light of their extra-textual functions. In *Comparative Children’s Literature*, she argues that these images which are produced through contrast with the in-group or own nation, can function to instil a sense of national identity or constitute propaganda. The comparison of the foreign with the known serves to ‘reinforce awareness of the reader’s own cultural identity or to criticise factors of the self-image perceived as undesirable.’<sup>131</sup> How the authors of the texts studied in this research subvert and contradict expectations of national characters is discussed in detail in Chapter 3.

Knowles and Malmkiaer in their work, *Language and Control in Children’s Literature*, concur that children’s literature contains the underlying ideologies and accepted social

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<sup>129</sup> Emer O’Sullivan, ‘Imagology Meets Children’s Literature’, *International Research in Children’s Literature*, 4 (2011), 1-14, (p. 11).

<sup>130</sup> Emer O’ Sullivan, “‘S is for Spaniard’: The representation of foreign nations in ABCs and picturebooks’, *European Journal of English Studies*, 13 (2009), 333-349 (p. 344).

<sup>131</sup> Emer O’Sullivan, *Comparative Children’s Literature*, (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 39.

norms of a given society.<sup>132</sup> Furthermore, in another article, ‘Comparative Children’s Literature’, O’Sullivan states that ‘[c]hildren’s literature is a body of literature that belongs simultaneously to the field of literature and the field of education.’<sup>133</sup> Considering children’s literature is often used in educational settings, it is important to assess books and texts for underlying ideologies and Imagology can prove a useful tool to assist with this. Chapter 3 details how Imagology is introduced to students and used as a critical reading tool to investigate the images of national character presented in the texts. This study seeks to question whether new images of modern Irish identity are produced in these texts.

## **Conclusion**

The analysis of the current intercultural education policies in Ireland outlined in the first section of this chapter revealed that they are not sufficient to enable teachers to create a more intercultural learning environment for students at second-level. Rather than advocate for change to the standard approach and curriculum, as recommended by Banks, the existing guidelines promote what Bryan refers to as an ‘add diversity and stir’ approach. Studies by Devine, Gracie and Biggart, O’Hare and Connolly found that as a consequence, students from minority backgrounds can be configured as ‘Other’ by their Irish classmates and are more likely to feel excluded by the mainstream curriculum and textbooks. Institutionally racist practices within the Irish education system can reinforce this impression of migrant and minority students as outsiders. As highlighted

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<sup>132</sup> Murray Knowles and Kirsten Malmkjaer, *Languages and Control in Childrens Literature* (London: Routledge, 1996).

<sup>133</sup> Emer O’Sullivan, ‘Comparative Children’s Literature’, *PMLA*, 126 (2011), 189-196 (p. 191).

by McGorman and Sugrue, as well as Kitching, school entry policies can discriminate against newcomers. The existence of racism on an individual basis was indicated by several reports discussed including those by Gilligan et al, Keogh, and Tormey and Gleeson. The acceptance of racism towards some groups such as the Travelling Community indicates the need for immediate action in this regard. Meade and O'Connell's research revealed that teenagers' beliefs are not fixed. Therefore, implementing intercultural and anti-racism education at second-level could be an effective measure to help combat racism. In light of these issues, the present research study posits a different approach to intercultural education involving the combination of Imagology with intercultural literature. The argument that literature can play a significant role in influencing the perpetuation or dispelling of stereotypes was put forward and is supported by research conducted by Colby and Lyon. The fact that studying and discussing intercultural literature that features diverse characters can have a positive impact on students' attitudes on and opinions of minority groups was reinforced by Zimet. McKoy Lowery and Sabis-Burns's and Guang-Lea Lee and Willis Johnson's research underlined that the inclusion of more diverse texts on the curriculum can introduce students to experiences outside their own and enhance their intercultural awareness as a result. However, as highlighted by Russell, reading texts is not enough to counteract prejudice and impact on intercultural learning. Discussion and exploration of the texts is essential. Bigler's and Okoye-Johnson's studies also emphasised that continued exposure to intercultural literature is crucial in order to maintain the positive impact on students' attitudes. This further illustrates why an add-on approach to intercultural education is ineffective. As discussed above, Imagology can provide a

valuable tool to assist with critical reading as it encourages readers to question images presented in texts and consider prejudice in the portrayal of characters. Examples of imagological analysis by O'Sullivan and Leerssen demonstrated how useful Imagology can be in identifying national stereotypes in literature. Pike and Waldron's study outlined how images of national character are influenced by representations in texts and the media and that the repetition of these images can cause them to become ingrained. The importance of providing a space to investigate and challenge these ideas was underlined. In conclusion, this chapter has advocated studying intercultural literature with the assistance of an imagological approach to help make students aware of the biased views they may hold and to provide them with the opportunity to consider different perspectives. In line with Banks's and Bryan's arguments, this approach to enhancing intercultural learning at second-level facilitates a reorganisation of the curriculum and teaching to be more inclusive rather than the reductive add-on approach that has been practiced to date. The following two chapters address how a module was designed that combined Imagology with selected intercultural literature in order to conduct research on the views of second-level students and to enhance intercultural education at second-level.

# Chapter 2 Methodology

Alan Bryman holds that social research ‘is done because there is an aspect of our understanding of what goes on in society that is to some extent unresolved.’<sup>1</sup> As established in the introduction and critical review, previous criticisms of intercultural education in Ireland have not been addressed. This study suggests a possible resolution for enhancing intercultural education at second-level in the form of a specially designed intercultural module that incorporates the use of Imagology, a literary theory, applied in a practical way in the English class. The research also seeks to investigate the views of second-level students in Ireland on interculturalism and immigration. This chapter outlines the mixed-methods approach to the research detailing the research design, sample selection and the data analysis strategy. In addition, ethical issues are considered. The design of the module and the application of Imagology in the class setting are explained in Chapter 3. Imagology and Reader Response theory are discussed in a separate chapter because they form an integral part of the innovative approach taken in this research. The study is a model of how intercultural education can be enhanced at second-level and therefore a detailed explanation of the approach is important.

## **Selecting a Mixed-methods Approach**

Due to the unique nature of this research with its theoretical and practical components and multidisciplinary concern, a creative approach to data collection and methods was required. A mixed-methods methodology was selected as the most appropriate in order

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* 4<sup>th</sup> edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 5.

to adequately address the different research questions. A mixed-methods approach incorporates both qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis methods.

Onwuegbuzie and Turner provide the following definition:

Mixed-methods research is an intellectual and practical synthesis based on qualitative and quantitative research; it is the third methodological or research paradigm (along with qualitative and quantitative research). It recognizes the importance of traditional quantitative and qualitative research but also offers a powerful third paradigm choice that often will provide the most informative, complete, balanced, and useful research results.<sup>2</sup>

Creswell and Plano Clark also posit that this combination of qualitative and quantitative methods allows for greater understanding of research questions.<sup>3</sup> Teddlie and Tashakkori identify further advantages of mixed-methods designs over those that use a single method. They hold that mixed-methods researchers can answer questions other researchers cannot. They believe that mixed-methods research can provide stronger inferences and maintain that mixed-methods allow for a representation of a greater number of opinions and perspectives.<sup>4</sup> Creswell and Plano Clark add to these advantages the fact that using qualitative and quantitative methods together can reduce some weaknesses of each method as both numerical and narrative data is collected and analysed facilitating a more comprehensive understanding of the research problem. They highlight that mixed-methods research encourages collaboration between qualitative and quantitative researchers and supports the use of multiple worldviews. It is also a practical way to approach research as it allows the research questions take precedence over a paradigm for the selection of the data collection methods.

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<sup>2</sup> Onwuegbuzie and L. Turner, 'Toward a Definition of Mixed Methods Research', *Journal of Mixed Methods*, 1 (2007), 112-133 (p. 129).

<sup>3</sup> John W. Creswell and Vicki L. Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting Mixed-Methods Research* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), p. 5.

<sup>4</sup> Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie, 'Chapter 1: Major Issues and Controversies in the Use of Mixed Methods in the Social and Behavioural Sciences' in *Handbook of Mixed-Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, ed. by Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie (London: Sage Publications, 2003).

Creswell and Plano Clark also note some challenges associated with doing mixed-methods research. These relate to the time consuming nature of collecting and analysing two different data sets and the fact that researchers are often only trained in one tradition. However, they hold that '[t]he value of mixed-methods research seems to outweigh the potential difficulty of this approach.'<sup>5</sup> These issues were considered before selecting a mixed-methods study. The length of time allotted to complete the research was sufficient to collect and analyse both the qualitative and quantitative data. The selection of one quantitative instrument, a survey, and the use of an online surveying tool assisted both the collection and analysis of this data, significantly reducing the time required to complete these phases of the research process and greatly simplifying the overall data collection. Although more practiced in qualitative research, training was undertaken to acquire the skills required to complete the quantitative aspects of the research. Through these measures the disadvantages associated with conducting mixed-methods research were considerably reduced.

A mixed-methods methodology is best suited to this study as utilising a single qualitative or quantitative method would limit the ability to fully answer some of the research questions. As previously outlined, the main research questions are:

1. How can the literary theory of Imagology be used in a practical manner in a classroom setting to enhance critical pedagogy and learning?
2. What are the views of second-level students toward the representation of immigrants in Irish texts and toward intercultural education in Ireland?

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<sup>5</sup> Creswell and Plano Clark, *Designing and Conducting mixed Methods Research*, p. 10.



3. Can an intercultural module have an impact on students' opinions on immigration-related issues?

A quantitative approach would be useful to measure the effectiveness of the module on students' opinions, but it would be harder to gain any real insight without qualitative investigation. Likewise, a qualitative approach would be beneficial in understanding student opinions, but it would be hard to gauge the success of the module without any quantitative measures. The combination of qualitative and quantitative information also facilitates the collection of a greater volume of information and provides a deeper insight into the research participants' views. The mixture of the two traditional models combats a criticism sometimes levelled at qualitative research that it is not very generalisable and overcomes a criticism occasionally aimed at quantitative research that it does not provide an understanding of social phenomena.

### **Epistemological Stance**

Paul Sullivan holds that an epistemological approach 'consists of the assumptions you make, whether these are implicit or explicit, concerning the nature of the knowledge which you regard as valid in order to resolve the research question.'<sup>6</sup> Identifying the worldview in which a research study is situated is important as it can define what is researched and have an impact on how the research is conducted, evaluated and interpreted. As a mixed-methods study is a relatively new approach to doing research, debate is on-going about which worldviews should be incorporated in these studies. Traditionally, quantitative researchers align with the positivist stance which 'advocates the application of methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality and

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<sup>6</sup> Paul Sullivan, *Writing Your Thesis* (London: Sage Publications, 2004), p. 105.

beyond.’<sup>7</sup> This approach is characterised by testing hypotheses and a belief in an objective truth that can be reached by gathering facts. In contrast, qualitative researchers favour the interpretative approach which focuses on gaining understanding. Interpretive researchers believe that a different approach to studying people and social organisations is required than that practised in the natural sciences.

Various options that allow a combination of these approaches and perspectives are available to mixed-methods researchers. Kenneth Howe posits the use of a pragmatic approach where the data collection method that is considered best for the type of inquiry is utilised with little consideration afforded to the various theoretical perspectives.<sup>8</sup> Mixed-methods researchers can also adopt a dialectical worldview that permits the use of multiple worldviews or a logic model where methodological choices are made based on their suitability to the study and delivering the best results. However, none of these approaches were adopted in this study. As noted by Caracelli and Greene, mixed-methods inquirers who do not consider theoretical frameworks can be critiqued for failing to be reflective and for neglecting to consider shortcomings of their approach.<sup>9</sup> They underline that each paradigm holds value as they reveal different understandings of our social worlds and, as a result, philosophical beliefs should matter in mixed-methods inquiry. They conclude that a balance between the philosophical, conceptual, practical and political considerations of empirical research is required. Taking this

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<sup>7</sup> Bryman, p. 28.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth R. Howe, ‘Against the Quantitative-Qualitative Incompatibility Thesis or Dogmas Die Hard’, *Educational Researcher*, 17 (1988), 10-16.

<sup>9</sup> Valerie J. Caracelli and Jennifer C. Greene, ‘Chapter 3: Making Paradigmatic Sense of Mixed Methods Practice’ *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioural Research*, ed. by Abbas Tashakkori and Charles Teddlie (London: Sage Publications, 2003).

recommendation for balance into account, an interpretivist epistemology was identified as suiting both the theoretical perspective and the nature of the research in this study.

### **Interpretivism**

As outlined above, understanding is the central tenet of the interpretive paradigm. Interpretivists recognise that social action is meaningful to individuals and they seek to understand it from their perspective. In the present study, second-level students' perceptions of interculturalism and immigration-related issues are investigated.

### **Ontological Considerations**

Along with identifying an epistemological stance, ontological considerations are also important for this research. Ontology outlines whether social entities can and should be considered objective bodies that exist outside the influence of social actors or, whether, on the other hand, they can and should be conceived of as social constructions dependent on the shared meaning and actions of social beings.<sup>10</sup> There are two opposing ontological positions, objectivism and constructionism. Objectivism is a position that holds that organisations are outside the influence of social actors. Rather, they exist independently and exert pressure on the behaviour of individuals. Constructionism (also called constructivism), by contrast, is a position that asserts that social phenomena and their meanings are constantly formulated and negotiated by individuals. Meaning is created by social interaction and is subject to change. This study employs the social constructivist approach.

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<sup>10</sup> Bryman, p. 32.

## **Social Constructivism**

Social Constructivists believe that meaning is varied, multiple and subjective. Understanding is influenced by the personal experiences and social histories of individuals. Social constructivists do not believe that there is one quantifiable truth, but rather that meaning and social worlds are constructed by, and negotiated between individuals. Interpretation is crucial in this approach. A researcher within this paradigm seeks to investigate how individuals view the world. The Social Constructivist approach is well suited to this study as it is inductive in nature, seeking to investigate students' interpretations of specific social phenomena, interculturalism and immigration.

In order to investigate the views of second-level students, an intercultural module was developed for implementation with Transition Year students in a number of Dublin schools. Equipped with the knowledge gained through my qualification as an English teacher and my experience teaching in second-level schools, I developed and taught the module. Given that interpretation is crucial to the social constructivist approach, an important variable for consideration in the implementation of the module was my impact as the teacher. Social constructivist researchers recognise that they cannot maintain an objective stance in research. As social beings, they are influenced by their experience and surroundings and must be aware of possible biases while conducting research. Social constructivist researchers acknowledge that their interpretation will be coloured by their own experiences. In his chapter, 'Effective teachers: What they do, how they do it, and the importance of self-knowledge' in *The Role of Self in Teacher Development*, Hamachek posits that 'Consciously, we teach what we know; unconsciously, we teach

who we are.’<sup>11</sup> In ‘Exploring How Teachers’ Emotions Interact With Intercultural Texts: A Psychoanalytic Perspective’, Jenna Min Shim also holds that it is important for teachers to evaluate how they behave in the classroom as ‘teachers’ emotional worlds affect how they perceive the world, their teaching, and their students.’<sup>12</sup> In her article, Shim emphasises the ‘long socialization histories’ that students and teachers bring with them to the classroom. The study involving fourteen teachers who live and teach in South Korea, China and the United States found that the teachers’ opinions and feelings towards the intercultural texts selected for study in the research was affected by usually invisible, forgotten events and experiences from their own past. She maintains that if teachers become aware of their own bias they will be able to better adapt their intercultural teaching to their students. Similarly, in their article, ‘What is ‘good’ teaching? Teacher beliefs and practices about their teaching’ Dympna Devine, Declan Fahie and Deirdre McGillicuddy note the important role beliefs play in a teacher’s understanding of and behaviour towards their students.<sup>13</sup> It is thus important for teachers to reflect on who they are and how they teach. For this reason, I carefully considered my background and experience and this is outlined in the introduction to the study.

## **Advocacy Approach**

In addition to the Social Constructivist stance, this study also adopts an advocacy approach. While still part of the Interpretive tradition, John Creswell holds that this

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<sup>11</sup> D. Hamachek, ‘Effective teachers: What they do, how they do it, and the importance of self-knowledge’ in *The role of self in teacher development*, ed. by R.P. Lipka and T.M. Brinthaup (Albany, N. Y.: State University of New York Press, 1999), pp. 189-224 (p. 191).

<sup>12</sup> Jenna Min Shim, ‘Exploring How Teachers’ Emotions Interact With Intercultural Texts: A Psychoanalytic Perspective’, *Curriculum Inquiry*, 42 (2012), 472-496 (p. 473).

<sup>13</sup> Dympna Devine, Declan Fahie and Deirdre McGillicuddy, ‘What is ‘Good’ Teaching? Teacher Beliefs and Practices about their Teaching’, *Irish Educational Studies*, 32 (2013), 83 – 108.

approach goes further than the constructivist position as action is paramount to the research. This type of research is characterised by a programme for reform that will result in change and is likely to focus on the needs of groups and individuals in society that may be marginalised or disenfranchised. Creswell identifies four elements in this approach:

1. Participatory action is recursive or dialectical and focused on bringing about change in practices. Thus, at the end of advocacy/participatory studies, researchers advance an action agenda for change.
2. This form of inquiry is focused on helping individuals free themselves from constraints found in the media, in language, in work procedures, and in the relationships of power in educational settings. Advocacy/participatory studies often begin with an important issue or stance about the problems in society, such as the need for empowerment.
3. It is emancipatory in that it helps unshackle people from the constraints of irrational and unjust structures that limit self-development and self-determination. The advocacy/participatory studies aim to create a political debate and discussion so that change will occur.
4. It is practical and collaborative because it is inquiry completed *with* others rather than *on* or *to* others. In this spirit, advocacy/ participatory authors engage the participants as active collaborators in their inquiries.<sup>14</sup> (Emphasis in original)

This approach is very compatible with the overall objective of this research as it seeks to bring about change and reform within the current school curriculum and to empower students to become critical readers and develop their intercultural awareness. It meets the criteria for the advocacy worldview because:

1. A change is sought in the current curriculum and a model of how that change could be enacted is provided. It is envisioned that at the end of this research, a report will be submitted to the Department of Education and Skills advocating reform in the area of intercultural education and detailing how that transformation could begin through the inclusion of texts such as those used for

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<sup>14</sup> John W. Creswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, 3rd edn. (London: Sage, 2009), p. 10.

the module, and by introducing the theory and practice of Imagology studies to students and teachers.

2. Empowerment is a feature of this research on two levels. First, in the sense that students who are sometimes overlooked in educational research are provided with an opportunity to share their opinions and become part of the process of decision making and reform. Secondly, immigrants are recognised as a group within Irish society that do not possess an equal position and face challenges such as the serious issue of racism. Through this research students from an immigrant background can share their experiences and educate their classmates rather than being forced to conform to a system that may not value their strengths and history.
3. The focus on the representations of immigrants within the module aims to encourage students to question the status quo within their schools and society and thus aims to foster debate and discussion. The dissemination of the study also aims to cause those involved in second-level education in Ireland to discuss and debate possible avenues of change for the future of intercultural education.
4. Finally, the research is situated within the advocacy stance because it is a practical approach to the issue of enhancing interculturalism in schools in Ireland that involves student participation.

Both the social constructivist perspective and the advocacy approach are usually accompanied by a qualitative methodology. However, as this study adopts mixed-methods, both qualitative and quantitative measures are employed.

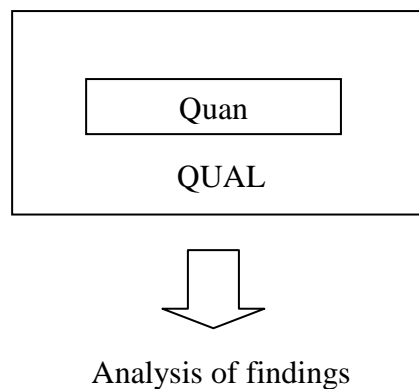
## Research Design

Research design refers to the outline of how the research is conducted. It includes information about the type of research model as well as the methods involved. As previously established, qualitative and quantitative methods are used in this study. There are several different ways these two methodologies can be combined. This study employs a Concurrent Nested Strategy.

### Concurrent Nested Strategy

In this design, researchers undertake the qualitative and quantitative data collection at the same time. In a nested approach, there is a predominant method that guides the project, in this case, qualitative. The data collected from the two methods are mixed during the analysis phase of the project. Cresswell outlines that ‘[o]ften this model is used so that a researcher can gain broader perspectives as a result of using the different methods as opposed to using the predominant method alone.’<sup>15</sup> (See visual model below)

**Figure 2.1 Visual Model: Concurrent Nested Strategy**



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<sup>15</sup> Cresswell, *Research Design*, p. 218.



The timing of the collection and analysis of data in a mixed-methods study is an important consideration. This study employs concurrent timing where both the qualitative and quantitative data are collected, analysed, and interpreted at (approximately) the same time. This method is used as the data complements each other and it assists in providing the possibility of more in-depth perspectives on the research. As previously stated, the research is weighted in favour of qualitative methods as a result of the experience of the researcher and the philosophical underpinnings of the study. The quantitative survey results are important for determining if the module has an effect on students' attitudes and they provide additional information about students and their opinions on interculturalism and immigration. However, slightly higher priority is awarded to the qualitative data which provides an insight into the views of the participants and helps explain why they hold these views. Creswell and Plano Clarke hold that '[a] rigorous and strong mixed-methods design addresses the decision of how to mix the data in addition to timing and weighting.'<sup>16</sup> In this study the data sets are merged at the analysis stage. Creswell et al cite many strengths of this method. It allows for the simultaneous collection of qualitative and quantitative data and provides a study with the advantages of both kinds of data. However, they also underline the fact that there has been little written to assist the researcher with this process and as a result, there are no guidelines for dealing with any inconsistencies that arise out of the data collected by the two methods.

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<sup>16</sup> Creswell and Plano Clark, p. 83.

## **Sample**

The research was conducted with Transition Year (TY) students in a variety of second-level schools around Dublin. Teachers and other adult members involved in the school community were not asked to participate. This decision was made as adults are often involved in educational research and this study sought to fill a gap in the field by focusing on the views of students alone. Purposive sampling, which purposefully selects participants, was used in this research. As this research is situated within the interpretivist paradigm which seeks to understand participants' views, a group of participants has been selected smaller than would be the case in a study that had a sole quantitative methodology. However, the sample is also larger than it would be in a sole qualitative study in order to facilitate the representation of different school types and to support any positive findings related to the impact of the module. The sample is made up of two hundred and seventy-three TY students from Dublin schools aged between fifteen and seventeen. External validity relates to the level to which findings can be applied to the general population. External validity thus depends heavily on the sample. Purposive sampling ensures that the different kinds of schools are represented in the sample and therefore, the findings will be more reflective of the cohort of schools in Ireland.

TY students were selected to participate in the research for a number of reasons. Before discussing these motivations, the Irish school system and TY will be briefly outlined. Second-level schooling in Ireland is divided into two cycles at the end of which students sit state examinations. Students enter second level around the age of twelve and

complete three compulsory years before sitting the Junior Certificate.<sup>17</sup> Following this, students have three options. They can leave school, go straight into the two-year senior cycle at the end of which they sit more state exams in the form of the Leaving Certificate, or they can opt to do TY before progressing to senior cycle. Gerry Jeffers, in his article, 'The Transition Year programme in Ireland. Embracing and resisting a curriculum innovation', defines Transition Year as:

an optional, one-year, standalone, full-time programme offered in 75% of second-level schools in the Republic of Ireland. Aimed at those in the 15–16 age group, TY has a strong focus on personal and social development and on education for active citizenship.<sup>18</sup>

TY differs from other school years as students are not required to take state exams upon completion of the year. The aim of TY as set out in the Guidelines by the DES is to 'promote the personal, social, vocational and educational development of students and prepares them for their role as autonomous, participative and responsible members of society.'<sup>19</sup> The focus is less on academic achievement and more on personal and social development. Jeffers' statement that the year is optional is not true of all schools. In some schools TY is compulsory. This is more likely to be the case in private fee-paying schools as TY usually incurs additional costs. Along with the usual fees for enrolment, the uniform and books, payment for activities outside the school environment and for trips is required. In other schools, TY is not offered at all. Obviously all the schools

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<sup>17</sup> The Junior Certificate is awarded after students complete a number (between nine and eleven) of state exams at the end of the three year junior cycle of second-level education. The exams are marked independently and anonymously by markers outside the school. The Minister for Education and the Department of Education and Skills has plans to phase out this system and replace it with Junior Certificate short courses. This method of assessment differs as continuous assessment is a feature and teachers will be responsible for grading their own students work. However, teacher unions are currently objecting to these changes.

<sup>18</sup> Gerry Jeffers, 'The Transition Year programme in Ireland. Embracing and resisting a curriculum innovation', *Curriculum Journal*, 22 (2011), 61-76 (p. 61).

<sup>19</sup> Department of Education and Science, *Transition Year Guidelines* (Dublin: Department of Education, 1994) <http://ty.slss.ie/> (Accessed 8 November 2012).

selected to participate in this study offered TY to students. The number of TY classes also differs from school to school. Except for those schools where the year is compulsory, there are usually not as many classes of TY as there are in the third year year-group. This means that students are required to apply to do TY and, in the event that more students apply than there are places, teachers or the TY Yearhead make the decision about who is successful in gaining a place. The selection process, like the curriculum on offer, varies from school to school. In some schools, priority can be afforded to students who have a good academic record. In others, different criteria such as the age of the student, their reason for applying to TY and a wish to create a mixed-ability class, can apply. According to Jeffers, who analysed participation rates in TY across all schools in the Republic of Ireland, there were higher levels of uptake among girls, in schools that charge fees and in schools in the (relatively better-off) east of the country. Correspondingly, boys were less likely to participate, especially if they came from families with low levels of formal schooling or attended small VEC schools in rural areas.<sup>20</sup>

There were 34,721 students enrolled in the TY Programme in the 2012/2013 school year. This represents 37.67% of the total number of students enrolled in the first year of second-level senior cycle education. The majority of students opted to do the traditional Leaving Certificate (36,061 or 39.12%). 19.63% chose to do the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the remaining 3.57% enrolled in the Leaving

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<sup>20</sup> Jeffers, p. 64.

Certificate Applied programme.<sup>21</sup> TY is thus the second most popular choice for students after the Traditional Leaving Certificate. The greatest numbers of students that opt to do TY are enrolled in secondary schools (21,937) with vocational schools and community and comprehensive schools making up a much smaller number (7,403 and 5,381 respectively). In accordance with Jeffers' analysis, the most recent figures available reveal that there were more females than males enrolled in TY in the 2012/2013 year. Females constituted 52% of the total figure compared to 48% males. This percentage differs to that presented in this research where males make up 55% of the sample compared to 45% females.

The schools in the study are made up of two community and comprehensive schools, three secondary schools and four vocational schools (see Figure 3 below for further information). Vocational and community and comprehensive schools have a higher number of males than females participating in Transition Year. In all of the mixed schools involved in the study there were a higher number of males to females. This in part explains the difference between this study and the numbers enrolled in Transition Year at a national level. Due to the voluntary nature of participation in the study, there was one less all-girls school involved in the research which also accounts for the difference.

Private schools are excluded from the study as they were particularly difficult to access. It is possible that these schools are more reluctant to allow outside parties in. The

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<sup>21</sup> All figures taken from *EDA70: Pupils Enrolled in Second Level Schools by Sex, Type of School, School Programme and Year*, <http://www.cso.ie/px/pxeirestat/Statire/SelectVarVal/saveselections.asp> (Accessed 12 March 2014).

highest interest in the module originated from VEC and DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) schools. A potential explanation for this may be that as a result of increased pressures on these schools, the provision of a free module to Transition Years was viewed as very valuable. The same value may not have been associated with the module for private schools that generally have access to more resources than other schools. However, it is difficult to know why there was a lack of interest as private schools did not respond to either post or email invitations to become involved.

Because of this and the voluntary nature of the study with a reliance on schools to opt to participate, a balance of the different school types was not wholly achieved. Mixed VEC schools make up the majority of the sample. All schools are situated within either the Dublin City Council or Fingal County Council boundaries which is significant as these two areas were identified in the 2011 Census as containing the largest population of immigrants.<sup>22</sup> All of the school names have been changed in order to preserve the anonymity of participants. Five of the schools involved in the study have DEIS status (Merton High School (MC), Dunvara School (DCS), Sycamore High School (SK), Larkvale School (LCS), Barton Community School (BCS)). The aim of DEIS is to address and prioritise the educational needs of children and young people from disadvantaged communities. These schools receive additional funding from the state to support a number of initiatives for students including literacy and numeracy strategies. DEIS schools also tend to have a higher proportion of students from migrant backgrounds.<sup>23</sup> These schools have a lower teacher to student ratio than other schools. Four of the schools already had a connection to DCU through the DCU Access scheme

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<sup>22</sup> CSO, 'Profile 6: Migration and Diversity'.

<sup>23</sup> Smyth et al.

(Dunvara School (DCS), Silveroaks College (SD), Sycamore High School (SK), Merton High School (MC)). The three single-sex schools involved in the study are Catholic schools while the others are categorised as inter-denominational or multi-denominational. The differences between these designations are outlined below:

Secondary schools are privately owned and managed. Vocational schools are state-established and administered by Education and Training Boards (ETBs), while community and comprehensive schools are managed by Boards of Management of differing compositions.<sup>24</sup>

Inter-denominational refers to a school with more than one patron, for example it could be the local ETB (formerly VEC) and the diocese. Multi-denominational refers to the fact that students may come from all religious backgrounds or may have no particular religious affiliation.<sup>25</sup>

Information on the schools relating to their ethos or religion, their designation, DEIS status, size, gender and the breakdown of the male and female population of the school, the number of nationalities and the percentage non-Irish in the school is provided in Figure 2.2. The 'Size' and the second '% non-Irish' columns indicate how the schools place in order of ranking with one marking the highest number or amount and nine marking the least. In terms of size, Lonfield College (LCC) is the largest school and is therefore ranked at one while the smallest school, Merton High School (MC), is ranked at nine. Similarly, Collegewood School (CPS) has the highest proportion of non-Irish

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<sup>24</sup> Department of Education and Skills website, 'Post Primary Education' <http://www.education.ie/en/The-Education-System/Post-Primary/#sthash.SAzChFm5.dpuf> (Accessed 07/07/2014).

<sup>25</sup> Information obtained via email correspondence with employee of DES Statistics Section (27 March 2014).

students and is thus ranked at one in this category while Merton High School (MC) is ranked at nine as it has the lowest percentage of non-Irish students at 4.53%

**Figure 2.2 Table 1: Information on Schools Involved in Research Study**

School	Ethos/Religion	Designation	DEIS	Gender	Size	Female	Male	nation alities	% non- Irish	% non- Irish
Fawnlodge College	Interdenominational	Vocational	No	Mixed	4	43.7%	56.3%	36	34.60%	2
Merton High School	Catholic	Secondary	Yes	Girls	9	100.0%	0.0%	12	4.53%	9
Lonfield College	Interdenominational	Vocational	No	Mixed	1	43.1%	56.9%	32	10.23%	6
Dunvara School	Interdenominational	Community	Yes	Mixed	5	43.3%	56.7%	14	5.92%	7
Silveroaks College	Catholic	Secondary	No	Boys	2	0.0%	100%	26	10.54%	5
Sycamore High School	Catholic	Secondary	Yes	Boys	7	0.0%	100%	13	5.58%	8
Larkvale School	Interdenominational	Vocational	Yes	Mixed	8	34.8%	65.2%	24	16.63%	4
Barton Community School	Interdenominational	Community	Yes	Mixed	6	48.2%	51.8%	34	27.47%	3
Collegewood School	Multidenominational	Vocational	No	Mixed	3	46.9%	53.1%	47	43.25%	1

### **Rationale for Selecting Transition Year Students**

The decision to involve Transition Year students in the research was made for a number of different reasons. One of the motivations was the fact that Transition Year students are not an exam year and it was anticipated that schools would be more willing to grant access to these students as a result. The flexible structure of the Transition Year programme also means that there is a space for the introduction of an experimental module as proposed in this study. The absence of a set curriculum means that teachers are enthusiastic to embrace established modules. The aim of the module, to increase the level of interculturalism in schools and encourage students to think about racism and social responsibility, is in keeping with the goals of the Transition Year programme which, as outlined above, concentrates on the social development of the student. Transition Year students were also selected because of their age and education level. After completing the Junior Certificate they are better equipped than younger students to analyse texts and express their opinions about them. Participating students consisted of a



convenience sample made up of an entire classgroup. In a situation where there was more than one TY class group in a school the decision about which class would participate was made by the school.

### **Research site: Dublin**

Dublin was selected as the research site for a number of reasons. On a practical level, the researcher is based in Dublin and had built up links to several schools which agreed to grant access to conduct the research. Access to schools was also provided through the Dublin City University Access Programme which is partnered with local schools with designated disadvantage (DEIS) status. This consideration of access was important as schools are not easy to infiltrate and usually contact with an individual within the school is required. Through professional contacts and those made through DCU four schools were selected for participation in the research. The other four schools were accessed through a combination of emails and letters. Dublin was also selected because, as mentioned previously, according to the Census 2011, the administrative counties of Dublin City and Fingal host the highest numbers of immigrant inhabitants in the country. This was an important factor to consider as the research focuses on the representation of immigrants. Mindful of the aims of the advocacy approach, a conscious effort was made to ensure students of immigrant backgrounds were involved in the research. With the highest number of immigrants situated here, schools in Dublin were more likely to have students of immigrant backgrounds enrolled.

## **Research methods**

The research is of a quasi-experimental nature. A survey was conducted at the beginning and end of the module with the TY class group. The survey was also conducted at the end of the module with a comparison group in some schools. Initially, it was planned that a comparison group who had not participated in the module would be surveyed at the beginning and end of the five-week period in order to compare their responses with the students that had been involved in the module. However, it soon became apparent that this was not feasible in most schools as it was very difficult for teachers to organise availability to another class group and the computer room, particularly in schools with only one class of TY. However, a comparison group was surveyed at the end of the module in four of the schools.

Administering the survey twice allowed for any changes in opinion or attitude to be recorded. This method was used in conjunction with participant observation, group discussion and written personal responses. As highlighted in the Critical Review, teenagers can change their opinions in discussion with their peers. The Social Constructivist position also informs us that meaning is constantly being formed and negotiated in association with other social actors. Therefore, it is possible that opinion will change over time and could differ from what is reported when the student is not influenced by others, as when they are filling out the survey, and when completing a personal response that they know will not be seen by their peers.

### **Quantitative Data: Survey**

Surveys were selected as an appropriate research tool in this study as one of the aims of the research is to investigate students' attitudes towards intercultural education and immigration. The survey was administered to a sample of Transition Year students in order to generalise the findings to the larger second-level student population. It was used to gauge the knowledge of students and to gather data about their attitudes towards immigration and intercultural education. It was also useful for collecting basic information about the students and their backgrounds (nationality, age, gender, languages spoken, parental employment etc.) The survey contained both open and closed questions as well as scale questions where students had the option of selecting an answer ranging on a five-point scale from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. Space for students to comment on their responses or give further detail was also provided. The survey was designed specifically for this research. The decision to create a new instrument rather than use an existing one was made as no existing survey instrument met the requirements for this study. To ensure reliability the survey was pilot tested with a sample group before being implemented to collect data for research purposes. Transition year students from a school not otherwise involved in the research were given the survey and asked for feedback. The same group was then surveyed again two weeks later. The survey was tested twice with a gap in the middle to ensure it was a reliable instrument. Piloting the survey in this way revealed some minor issues mainly relating to the wording and language used in some questions. Following the feedback received from the students in the sample group, the language was simplified and the survey was ready to be used as an instrument for data collection.

One of the advantages of using a survey to collect data over other methods is the speed at which data can be collected. The survey was administered to entire class groups in the space of a thirty-five to forty-minute class period. This yielded a lot of information for analysis in a quick, efficient manner. The inclusion of comparison groups in some schools increased internal validity as it helped to determine if the module had an impact on the attitudes of the students in the experimental group. Donnelly and Trochim define Internal Validity as ‘the approximate truth about cause-effect or causal relationships.’<sup>26</sup> Essentially, you can attribute any change in attitude to the programme or treatment and not an outside influencing factor. In order to do this, Donnelly and Trochim argue that three criteria need to be met: temporal precedence; covariation of cause and effect and; no plausible alternative explanation. Temporal precedence can be determined in this study as the cause is the module and the pre- and post-testing provided an indication of whether it had an impact on students’ attitudes. Covariation of cause and effect could be determined through analysis of the experimental and comparison groups’ survey responses. As the module was implemented in different schools at different times the history effect was negated. Due to the multiple group design of the study the main threat to internal validity was selection bias. As discussed above, the groups were not randomly assigned in this study and therefore, will not be matched. However, King, Keohane and Verba argue that random selection is not always the best way to select a sample. They contend that random selection can lead to the exclusion of important cases.<sup>27</sup> The rationale for the selection of the sample was discussed in detail above.

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<sup>26</sup> James P. Donnelly and William M. K. Trochim, *The Research Methods Knowledge Base*, 2nd edn (Atomic Dog Publishing: Cincinnati, 2000), p. 100.

<sup>27</sup> Gary King, Sidney Verba and Robert Keohane, *Designing Social Inquiry: Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 125.

Because the survey was done in class as a requirement of the module the response bias is very low. Efforts were made to ensure that every student completed the survey at the beginning and end of the module even if they were absent at the time the rest of the participants completed it.

An online survey instrument was utilised to collect the data. Creating the survey online was advantageous for a number of reasons. The online medium collected the data in one place and was easily transferable to word and spreadsheet formats. This saved valuable time as the information did not have to be inputted manually. The online system also allowed a greater degree of control over the way the surveys were completed and reduced the possibility of incomplete or unanswered questions as respondents were unable to move ahead until all questions on each page had been answered. This was an appropriate survey method to use with the students as they were all computer literate and familiar with accessing internet sites and typing, although some students were more competent than others in this regard which led to students finishing at different times. To allow for this, there was no set time limit on completing the survey. In addition to these advantages, there was no cost involved in using the online survey website. This was also an environmentally-friendly option as there was no need to print or post paper copies of the survey.

However, despite these benefits there were some issues with this method of surveying. Access to a computer room was required for the students to complete the survey. Some schools have better equipment and faster internet speeds than others. In selected schools, this posed a major problem and teachers sometimes found it difficult to access the

computer room at the time the students were scheduled to have English. Another issue that presented in certain schools was an insufficient number of computers for every member of the class. I found this surprising and reflected on how it must severely impact on teaching and learning related to I.T. and in particular, to the development of students' computer and online research skills. In some schools, restrictions on what sites could be accessed led to further problems accessing the survey. In one school in particular, the level of protection was very high and useful educational blogs and websites such as Youtube, Twitter and Dropbox were blocked. Internet speed was a factor that sometimes inhibited the ability of students to complete the survey in a timely manner. While the survey was designed to take approximately twenty minutes to answer, which was well within the limits of a forty-minute class period, slow internet speeds meant it could take significantly longer and occasionally resulted in students failing to complete it within one class period. In one circumstance, the internet was not working in one school for over a week. As a consequence, the students had begun the module before they had completed the survey (which was usually conducted in the first class of the module). However, the advantages of having the information all collected and collated in one area outweighed these difficulties.

### **Qualitative Data**

During the module qualitative data was also collected. According to Cresswell, qualitative research involves a natural setting, the researcher as a key instrument in data collection, multiple data sources, inductive data analysis, investigating the participants'

meanings of social fields or phenomena, an emergent design, the use of a theoretical lens, interpretive inquiry and providing a holistic account or full picture of the issue under study.<sup>28</sup> This study meets some of these criteria. The research took place in a natural setting, i.e. second-level schools. Participants were studied in this setting and were not asked to undertake any activity outside their usual classroom activities or outside the educational environment they were used to. The module was designed with this goal in mind so that the research would not deviate on a large scale from their usual school experience. This was purposefully done so that the research could be considered generalisable to all second-level settings and to avoid criticisms that findings were specific to an artificial laboratory type setting. Face-to-face interaction over an extended period of time is an important aspect of the research with information gathered by observing and interacting with participants. All of the data in a qualitative study was collected by me and instruments developed by other researchers were not employed. Although surveys, usually associated with quantitative research, were used for data collection, I developed the instrument and was present when participants completed it. As previously mentioned, I implemented the module in schools and so was able to engage in participant observation, discussion and was in a position to question why participants held certain views or opinions. As a result of this active role in the research, multiple data sources were available to me for analysis including observations, survey data, audio recordings of class discussions and written work completed by students as part of the module. I engaged in inductive data analysis comparing and examining each of the data sources for emerging themes. While conscious of my own bias, the focus remained on the construction of meaning and understandings held by the participants

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<sup>28</sup> Cresswell, *Research Design*, pp. 175-176.

towards intercultural education and immigration. The experimental nature of the module resulted in the research being planned in advance. Although there was space for slight alterations to be made to the data collection methods, for the most part, the module was implemented in the same way with the same texts in each school. This was important for the generalisability of the study to other schools, a concern more often related to quantitative research.

### ***Participant Observation and Class Discussion***

Participant observation is one source of data collection in this study. The research in this study is explicit and the participants were aware of the type and aims of the research and the role of the researcher. The advantages of this form of research are that the researcher engages in first-hand experience with the participants and can record observations as they occur. It adds to the information provided as body language can be observed and noted by the researcher. This information supplements that provided by the participant and gives a clearer picture of the participants' views or opinions on a topic. Of course, it must be noted that this information is interpreted by the researcher and so is subject to some bias and cannot be considered completely objective. This method also has some limitations. As I was also the teacher of the module, it is possible that some relevant observations were missed. My familiarity with the role of teacher may have caused me to miss observations that other researchers unfamiliar with the environment may have noticed. To minimise the likelihood of this occurring, I recorded class discussions for analysis later and notes were taken as soon as possible after class. Although an outside figure, I was identified to participants as a teacher and addressed formally as Ms Dooley. I also managed the classes like a teacher and was responsible for maintaining



discipline. When required, participants were corrected and the usual discipline procedure for the school was followed in the event of misbehaviour. My presentation to students as a teacher rather than as a researcher was given careful consideration. However, due to the advocacy aim of the module, it was decided that this was necessary to prove that the impact of the module would be similar in other schools when the module was implemented by an English teacher.

### ***Personal Written Responses***

Qualitative data collection also occurred through the collection of written responses from participants throughout the module. Students were asked to express their reactions to the texts and analyse differences between them. These were collected and analysed. They were usually completed after the class which gave the students time to reflect on what had been discussed or examined. As noted above, class discussions were digitally recorded for transcription and analysis. This provided direct quotes from participants about various topics. The decision was made to digitally record rather than videotape as it was felt that the presence of a camera may affect some students' willingness to speak and participate in discussion. Although they were informed that classes were being recorded and this is clearly outlined in the consent form, due to the unobtrusive nature of the digital recording equipment which is placed on the teacher's desk and left untouched for the duration of the class, students often forgot about it or were not conscious of it. The disadvantage of this method was that sometimes it was unclear who was speaking. To help with this, I often said the name of the student speaking and repeated the comment for the rest of the class. Facial expressions and body language could not be captured this way which meant I was reliant on my observation notes for this

information. Recordings were only listened to and transcribed by me. Participants were also occasionally asked to tweet about the module or a particular topic. This provided another method to monitor participants' views and opinions.

Due to the mixed-methods nature of the project and the time frame for collecting data, two full school years, there was a large amount of data to analyse. Typical of qualitative research, some of this analysis took place at the time of collection. Notes on observations were collated, transcriptions were typed soon after recording, interesting quotes were highlighted and some papers were presented based on the information collected in the early phases.<sup>29</sup> The majority of the data analysis occurred after the completion of data collection. The use of data analysis software and the analytical strategy are discussed in detail in the section on data analysis below.

### **Data Checking**

Cresswell discusses 'qualitative validity' and distinguishes how it differentiates from the quantitative understanding of the term. 'Qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures.'<sup>30</sup> Cresswell recommends triangulating data sources, using member checking (consulting participants about findings) and using detailed description to convey findings. He also suggests clarifying the bias of the researcher, presenting negative or discrepant information that contradicts themes as this is reflective of real life, spending a protracted time in the field, using peer debriefing to review the qualitative aspects of the study to see if it makes sense to someone outside the study and using an external auditor to review the

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<sup>29</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>30</sup> Cresswell, *Research Design*, p. 190.

entire project. A number of these steps were taken in this study. Triangulation was guaranteed as a result of the different data analysis methods used in the study. The findings chapter addresses contrasting and negative data that was collected. The study was also subject to peer debriefing and external auditing. The time spent in schools varied from three to four times per week over a five-week period which is substantial by quantitative standards, but may not be considered so in qualitative terms. However, it was deemed sufficient time to gather information about the attitudes of students and the school environment. Member checking which would require returning to the school to discuss my analysis with students was not used in this study and the reasons for this are discussed below in the Ethics section. However, because several other methods were used the study can be considered qualitatively valid.

## **Data analysis**

As mentioned above, the analysis, like the collection of the qualitative and quantitative data, occurred simultaneously in this research design. Merriam describes data analysis as ‘a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts, between inductive and deductive reasoning, between description and interpretation.’<sup>31</sup> Two computer-assisted programmes were used to assist in the analysis of data in this research, NVivo and SPSS. SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is a software package used for statistical analysis. In this study, the programme was employed to perform basic descriptive and bivariate statistics on the quantitative data collected. The programme was also used to produce graphs of the data which assisted in analysing the large volume of information collected. NVivo is a

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<sup>31</sup> Sharan B. Merriam, *Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), pp. 175- 176.

computer software package which is used to assist with qualitative data analysis. As NVivo is intended to help users organise and analyse non-numerical or unstructured data, it was useful in this research for the analysis of students' written responses. The software allows users to classify, sort and arrange information, examine relationships in the data, and combine analysis with linking, shaping, searching and modelling. An important factor to note in the use of computer software programmes such as these is that they assist the researcher in analysis rather than perform the analysis alone. The researcher is integral to the analysis process and these packages in no way undermine that role:

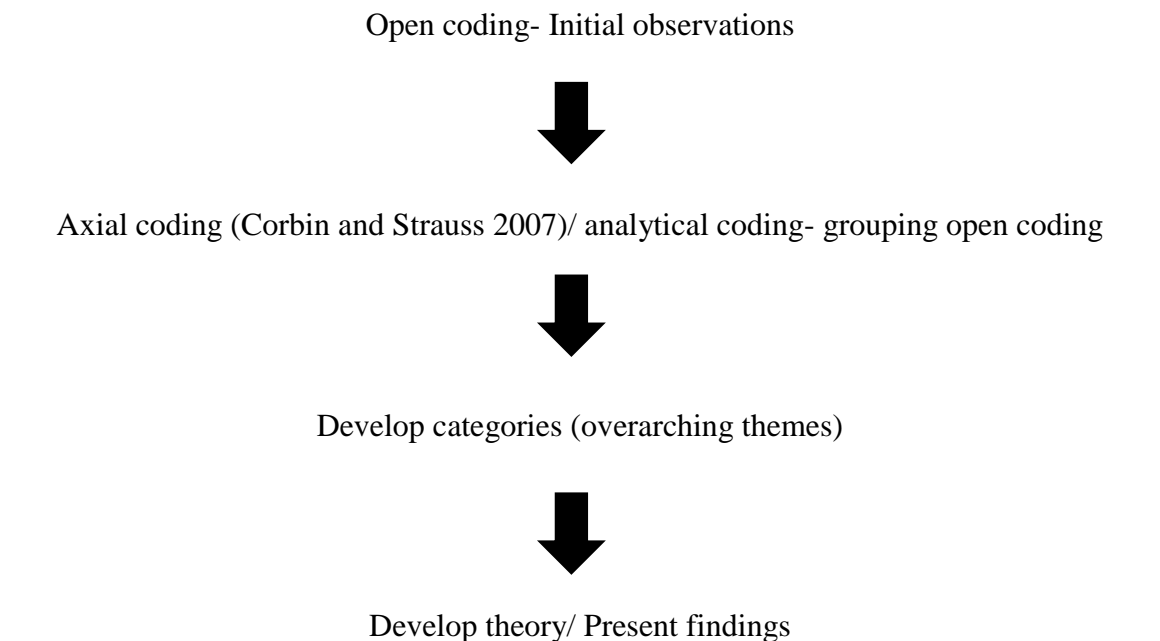
Bogdan and Biken (2007) point out that “assisted” is the operative word here, because “the computer program only helps as an organizing or categorizing tool, and does not do the analysis for the researcher”.<sup>32</sup>

The data analysis strategy used in this study follows the constant comparative method outlined by Corbin and Strauss:

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<sup>32</sup> Merriam, p. 194.

**Figure 2.3 Visual Model: Corbin and Strauss's Constant Comparative Data Analysis Strategy**



Bazely underlines that ‘[c]oding or categorising of data is undertaken to facilitate understanding and retrieval of information in almost any approach to analysis.’<sup>33</sup> Corbin and Strauss state that:

A researcher can think of coding as “mining” the data, digging beneath the surface to discover the hidden treasures contained within the data. [...] In interacting with data, analysts make use of thinking strategies.<sup>34</sup>

As mentioned above, the quantitative data was collected by an online survey tool, *groupsurveys.com*.<sup>35</sup> This website provided the option of downloading the responses in Excel format. Once this data was cleaned (checked for missing responses and any irregularities that may interfere with analysis later), it was transferred to *SPSS*.

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<sup>33</sup> Pat Bazeley, ‘Issues in Mixing Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches to Research’ in *Applying qualitative methods to marketing management research*, ed. by R. Buber, J. Gadner and L. Richards (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp. 141-156 (p. 149).

<sup>34</sup> Juliet Corbin and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of Qualitative Research*, 3rd edn (London: Sage Publications, 2008), p. 66.

<sup>35</sup> This website ceased operating on 14 October 2014 (after the data collection had been fully completed).

Descriptive analysis was performed and data was graphed to check again for missing information and incorrectly entered data as well as to become familiar with the data.

The qualitative data in this study was not as easy to analyse and required more time and consideration. The data was generated from observation notes, class recordings and students' written responses. Some of the data that was collected through the survey such as the open-ended questions were also analysed qualitatively. As mentioned above, the class recordings were transcribed soon after they were collected and some of the analysis was completed at the time of data collection. Some themes were identified early on, interesting quotes were highlighted and grouped together and general thoughts and observations were recorded. At a later stage, all of the data was input to NVivo to help identify common themes. During the analysis, the two data types were compared for similarities and differences. The findings of this analysis are discussed in Chapter 4.

## **Ethics**

Ethics are an essential consideration in any research study involving participants under the age of eighteen. As a qualified teacher, I have the experience and training required to conduct such research without causing harm to the participants. As part of teacher training completed prior to the start of research, I received training in child protection and had been Garda vetted.

Before commencing the data collection phase in schools, ethical approval for the study was received from the DCU Institute for Ethics. This process involved submitting a written application detailing the nature of the research and kind of data collection involved. Any risks involved in partaking in the research also had to be considered and

noted. In this research study, there were no perceived risks for participants. The anonymity of the students is preserved by changing the names of the schools and participants in all disseminated information related to the study. The students are also given detailed instructions about the importance of maintaining anonymity during their online activities for the module. Students were instructed to set up anonymous twitter accounts and not to mention their school or post any pictures or information that could identify them. The data collected from students through the survey and in-class and homework activities was stored in password protected locations on a personal laptop and PC.

The Plain Language Statement provided to the students outlined the research aims and provided information about the module in clear, simple terms. As the students were under the age of eighteen, parental permission was required to participate. This document and the informed consent form ensured that students and their parents had the necessary information about their participation in the research.<sup>36</sup> The Plain Language Statement emphasised the voluntary nature of partaking in the research and the procedure for opting out at any time. It also provided information about the activities involved in the module and possible benefits associated with it such as helping to develop critical reading and writing skills required for the Leaving Certificate. The source of funding for the project, a School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies (SALIS) scholarship, was also included in the information provided. This research was conducted with full disclosure to the participants about the nature and aim

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<sup>36</sup> See Appendix A.

of the research. In this way, some ethical issues were minimised. However, some other issues required consideration.

In a research design that involves an intervention, such as this one, ethical questions arise over the decision to withhold a treatment from one group over another. In this study, in the event that there was more than one TY class group in a school, the decision about which group participated in the module fell to the teachers. As some of the benefits of participating in the module include developing skills required for the Leaving certificate, increasing understanding about interculturalism and boosting students' understanding of social responsibility, this could be perceived as unfair. Unfortunately, due to the time limitations and the amount of work involved the module could not be provided to every TY class.

When dealing with issues such as immigration, racism and interculturalism, as in this module, it was important that the study did not contribute to further marginalisation of minority groups. I was very aware of the fact that students from immigrant backgrounds would form a minority of the class group in almost all of the classes. It was important not to make those students feel isolated as a special group or to make other students perceive them in a different way. There were also concerns about the possibility of students expressing racist remarks that other students would find offensive. In order to minimise the risk of this, students were instructed to be respectful to other students during class discussions. Students were invited to express their undiluted opinions in their written responses and the surveys which were only seen by me.



As the research was conducted with students under eighteen years of age, it was clearly outlined that should any student feel that they needed to speak to the researcher about sensitive personal issues, for themselves or others – then the school’s child protection policy and procedures would determine the course of action. It was also agreed that if at any point a participant requested support or was deemed to need support they would be directed to an appropriate party such as the school guidance councillor, or the designated liaison person for Child Protection within the school and, or the Principal. Teachers were entitled to stay in the room while the research was being conducted. This occurred at some schools but not in others.

Due to the large number of participants and the different research sites, the decision was made not to allow those involved in the research to review the study before publishing. This raises some ethical issues as a researcher can be accused of misrepresenting or misinterpreting some of the data. However, it would be impractical to try and verify all the findings before publication, especially as, at that stage, those involved in the first year of data collection would be in the process of completing their Leaving Certificate or may have left school. Even if the participants were easy to contact it would be very time-consuming to collect feedback from all participants, analyse it and make any adjustments. This study is located within the interpretive worldview and as such the role of interpretation is underlined and the researcher’s bias is acknowledged. As a consequence, the findings as interpreted by me are valid.

This chapter has detailed the approach taken in the design of the research study. The selection of a mixed-methods methodology was deemed the best option to facilitate the investigation of the three research questions. The interpretivist epistemological stance

was chosen and ontological considerations were discussed. The research was grounded in the social constructivist and advocacy worldviews. The concurrent nested research design strategy outlined how a qualitative approach guided the study. Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through the use of a survey, participant observation, recorded class discussions and personal written responses. The procedure for data analysis was explained with reference to Corbin and Strauss's constant comparative method. Computer software analysis systems SPSS and NVivo were used to assist with the data analysis. As the research involves participants under eighteen years of age, special attention was awarded to ethical concerns. This section noted that ethical approval was received from the DCU Ethics committee for the research and the measures taken to ensure participants and their parents were aware of what was involved in the research, including the provision of a Plain Language Statement and the necessity for an informed consent form. The rationale for selecting the sample, two hundred and seventy-three Transition Year students from Dublin schools, was also outlined. The next chapter follows on from this account of the research design and deals specifically with the development and implementation of the intercultural module including a close examination of how the theory of Imagology is used in the classroom to help enhance intercultural learning and awareness.

# Chapter 3: Using Imagology and Reader Response Theory to Enhance Intercultural Education

This chapter details how the theory of Imagology is applied in Transition Year English classes in order to enhance intercultural education. As previously outlined, there is a need for a new approach to intercultural education in the wake of increasing cutbacks and the abandonment of plans to meet the recommendations of research to provide training for teachers in this area. In the first section Louise Rosenblatt's reader response theory is employed to help explain how the introduction of imagological tools to the critical reading process can increase intercultural awareness and learning for students. This approach is congruent with the aim of critical pedagogy, which will also be discussed in this chapter, to allow students to develop social consciousness and become critical thinkers. Fostering a student's ability to read and think critically is an important aspect of intercultural education. A discussion of the rationale behind the development of the five-week module and the selection of the three Irish Young-Adult fiction texts that are incorporated in it follows. The literary texts, Roddy Doyle's short story 'Black Hoodie', Sarah Crossan's novel *The Weight of Water* and Aubrey Flegg's book *The Cinnamon Tree*, are analysed imagologically under the themes of perspective, appearance, religion and language and an argument supporting their inclusion on the English curriculum is advanced. The final section concerns how Imagology is introduced to students and some practical class activities are outlined.

## Imagology

Joep Leerssen states that ‘Imagology may be loosely defined as the study of the discursive or literary expression of national attitudes.’<sup>1</sup> He argues that these images of national character can influence the writer creating the text and also, the reception of it. Thus an imagological approach to the teaching and learning of English literature has value. In an imagological study consideration of genre is important as the genre can determine the ideology or didactic content of the work. Leerssen contends that:

texts which imagologists study are ‘literary’ in the broad sense of the term and will often include genres such as history-writing, critical essays or other forms of cognitive prose<sup>2</sup>

However, he highlights that the genres of narrative fiction, poetry or drama, which he refers to as ‘literature in the strict sense’, are particularly important for imagological analysis because ‘national imagery often takes up a central, integral part in such genres.’<sup>3</sup> Leerssen notes that these types of texts tend to be more influential in the formulation and dissemination of stereotypes than other genres. This greater impact can perhaps be attributed to what he terms their ‘fictionality convention’, the necessity for the reader to suspend disbelief while reading. Leerssen argues that this deferral of judgement is not as likely to occur when reading other genres and, as a result, representations of national character in history-writing (for example) may be subject to scepticism and may not be accepted. Furthermore, texts that fall into the categories of narrative fiction, poetry or drama can become canonical and maintain their popularity over extended periods of time which supports the imperative of imagological analyses of

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<sup>1</sup> Leerssen, *Mere Irish*, p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> Joep Leerssen, ‘Literature’ in *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters, A Critical Survey*, ed. by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 351-354, p. 353.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

such texts. All of the texts selected for study in this research, Roddy Doyle's short story 'Black Hoodie', Sarah Crossan's novel *The Weight of Water* and Aubrey Flegg's book *The Cinnamon Tree*, are categorised as narrative fiction or a combination of narrative fiction and poetry in the case of *The Weight of Water*.

These texts were all published in the last decade. Leerssen notes that national stereotypes are less prominent in more recent literature. He identifies 'trivial genres' (crime and espionage thrillers, sentimental romances, pulp fiction) as a site where national stereotypes are more apparent but holds that 'serious' recent and contemporary literature 'will tend to eschew convention and stereotyping, and will usually present national clichés under the cloak of irony.'<sup>4</sup> However, Leerssen does not consider the genre of children's literature. The texts studied in this research are all classified as Young Adult literature which is a sub-genre of children's literature. As Emer O'Sullivan asserts, children's literature:

is not determined by special textual features, but by its identification by various social authorities – educational institutions, figures active in the literary market (publishers, distributors) and those who produce the books (editors and authors) – as suitable for children and young people. Adults, therefore, assign texts to children and, in the process, transmit dominant morals, values and ideals of their time and culture.<sup>5</sup>

It is because of this adult intervention and the fact that children's literature can be used to communicate specific ideologies that it can be considered serious rather than trivial literature. As Emer O'Sullivan has argued, these factors mark children's literature as an important and valuable site for imagological examination.<sup>6</sup> As discussed in the critical

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 354.

<sup>5</sup> Emer O'Sullivan, 'Children's Literature' in *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters, A Critical Survey*, ed. by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 290-293, p. 290.

<sup>6</sup> O' Sullivan, "'S is for Spaniard'", p. 334.

review with reference to the work of O'Sullivan, and Knowles and Malmkiaer, children's literature texts are a site of cultural and national identity formation and it is thus vital that these texts are assessed, evaluated and questioned. As more attention is called to the need for the production and publication of texts reflecting diversity in society, and the strong encouragement for these texts to be used in the education of young people, it is important that the texts are analysed imagologically to reveal stereotypes and any underlying ideologies.<sup>7</sup> As Beller and Leerssen affirm:

It is the aim of imagology to describe the origin, process and function of national prejudices and stereotypes, to bring them to the surface, analyse them and make people rationally aware of them.<sup>8</sup>

The examination of auto- and hetero-images is central to any imagological study. As previously outlined in Chapter 1, an auto-image is the image that a group have of themselves. This is usually formulated with the help of, and in contrast to, a hetero-image, the image the group holds of another, outside, separate group. Auto- and hetero-images are formed in a binary, in opposition to one another. As Leerssen states '[t]he auto-image is thus the embodiment of the ethnocentricity against which the foreign becomes recognisably foreign.'<sup>9</sup> The examination of these literary images is important as they can have an impact on readers' attitudes. In *Mere Irish and Fíor-Ghael*, Leerssen argues that a literary idea of Irish nationality was formed before it became significant

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<sup>7</sup> Alison Flood, "'We Need Diverse Books' calls for more representative writing for children', *The Guardian*, 1 May 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/may/01/we-need-diverse-books-campaign-children> (Accessed 8 May 2014). <http://weneeddivebooks.tumblr.com/> (Accessed 8 May 2014). Anne M. Dolan, *You, Me and Diversity: Picturebooks for teaching development and intercultural education* (London: Trentham Books, 2014).

<sup>8</sup> Beller and Leerssen, p. 12.

<sup>9</sup> Leerssen, *Mere Irish*, p. 12.

politically.<sup>10</sup> This indicates the importance literary representations of national character can have. Auto-and hetero-images can be influenced by stereotypes. Auto- and hetero-images can also be the source of stereotypes and help to propagate them. As O'Sullivan notes, we can glean information and insight from the type of representation portrayed, as stereotypes often reveal more about the spectant than the spectated group.<sup>11</sup> Auto- and hetero-images are not fixed, but will change depending on what they are contrasted against. This is because they are formulated in part, by what they are not. With respect to auto- and hetero-images Imagology seeks to answer the following questions:

- Where are stereotypes of national character used in the creation and representation of literary characters?
- How are these stereotypes used: are they denounced, contradicted, subverted, played with or maintained?
- How are various images (both auto and hetero) accordingly constructed?
- To what purpose (whether political, sociological, ethical, etc.) do authors employ these images?

The theory of Imagology is further developed in the examination of Doyle's, Crossan's and Flegg's texts later in this chapter. How Imagology is used with the students to enhance intercultural education is explicated on in the section 'Using Imagology in the Classroom'.

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>11</sup> O'Sullivan, *Friend and Foe*, p. 22.

## The Role of Reader Response Theory

Students are first and foremost asked to read and react to the texts under study to reveal their thoughts about the images and characters presented. Reader response theory becomes relevant in this respect. Reader response theory is an approach in literary criticism that seeks to explain what happens when a reader reads a text. Of central importance is the process by which meaning is formed. There has been much debate in recent decades about whether meaning is formed by: the author, in which case the text provides it; the reader, who brings the meaning to the text (Wolfgang Iser); a combination of both (Louise M. Rosenblatt); or, another outside influencing factor (Stanley Fish).<sup>12</sup> Reader response theory is pertinent to this study as the process of how students read and interpret texts is integral to the research.

Reader response theory has stagnated somewhat following Fish's challenge of Iser's theory of the Implied Reader which emphasised 'the wandering viewpoint' and the reader as gap-filler. Fish argues that neither the text nor the reader determines the meaning but rather, that this is predetermined by a 'community of interpretation' which the reader inhabits. According to Fish, 'there is no single way of reading that is correct or natural, only "ways of reading" that are extensions of community perspectives.'<sup>13</sup> This accounts for the range of interpretations of various texts. Fish holds that the approach a reader takes to a text is influenced by the way they have been taught to read and gather meaning, which in turn is affected by the dominant values in that particular 'interpretive community.' Fish argues that as a result, literary criticism is about

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<sup>12</sup> Iser, Wolfgang, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1978). Stanley Fish, *Is there a text in this class?* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1980). Louise Rosenblatt, 'The Aesthetic Transaction', *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, 20 (1986), pp. 122-128.

<sup>13</sup> Fish, p. 16.



persuasion, persuading someone to read as you do. He maintains that theory cannot succeed in raising self-consciousness in a reader because every decision she makes is located within this community. In this study, the influence of an interpretive community is acknowledged. However, it is argued that theory, namely Imagology, can be applied in a practical manner in the classroom to enhance students' critical reading skills and intercultural awareness. The consideration of imagological questions helps students to identify some of their own reading prejudices. Because of this departure from Fish's viewpoint, his theory is not adopted fully in this research.

In her article, Kathleen McCormick argues that as a consequence of Fish's failure to sufficiently explain, 'the interaction of the text and the reader. [...] he did the next best thing: he explained them away.'<sup>14</sup> She maintains that:

Fish's attempt to give priority to interpretive communities undermines itself when one recognizes that interpretive communities are made up of readers: the readers create its ideas, and they develop many of their ideas about texts and about reading through reading.<sup>15</sup>

The role of the reader cannot be overlooked. Fish acknowledges that interpretive communities are not fixed and determinate bodies and that the 'dominant values' can shift. As a consequence, investigating interpretations, even within a community, is an essential exercise. Brigitte Le Juez also attributes some independence to the reader. While acknowledging the existence of prior knowledge and its impact, she also attests to the reader as a 'creator' of meaning within the reading process:

As it is read, a transformation of a literary text takes place, according to the reader's sensitivity and experience. Potentially, the text is the starting point for some reader's

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 67.

<sup>15</sup> Kathleen McCormick, 'Swimming Upstream with Stanley Fish', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 44 (1985), 67-76 (p. 71).

action and/or creation. If literary texts do not retain a fixed value or elicit uniform responses across generations, endless (re) interpretations are possible. [...] Literary works become timeless because their interpretation is constantly renewed, demonstrating the role of the creative reader.<sup>16</sup>

Rosenblatt's theory of reader response takes account of this concept of a 'creative reader' and was formulated within an education context and as a result is employed in this study. She suggests that meaning occurs in a 'transaction' between reader and text. Rosenblatt uses this term over 'interaction' as she believes it demonstrates how both parties are vital to the process and play an equal role:

*Transaction* lacks such mechanistic overtones and permits emphasis on the to-and-fro, spiralling, nonlinear, continuously reciprocal influence of reader and text in the making of meaning. The meaning- the poem- "happens" during the transaction between the reader and the signs on the page.<sup>17</sup>

The reader and the text form a 'live circuit' and the poem is an 'event' that is specific to that exact reader, time and place.<sup>18</sup> Rosenblatt promotes the value of literature in examining attitudes and perceptions as well as encouraging in-depth critical reading. Literature can also influence intercultural learning as: 'Literature gives us concrete evidence of how differently men have phrased their lives in different societies. But literature, by its very nature, helps also to bridge those differences.'<sup>19</sup> These two aspects are central components of this study. Rosenblatt believes that '[p]rolonged contact with literature may result in increased social sensitivity.'<sup>20</sup> Rosenblatt's theory is thus well

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<sup>16</sup> Brigitte Le Juez, 'Creative Reception: Reviving a Comparative Method', The 2014 - 2015 Report on the State of the Discipline of Comparative Literature ACLA (2014) <http://stateofthedisipline.acla.org/entry/creative-reception-reviving-comparative-method#sthash.VSa2e8wZ.7TRFiNU.dpuf> (Accessed 1 May 2014).

<sup>17</sup> Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th edn (New York: The Modern Language Association, 1995), p. xvi.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 24. Louise M. Rosenblatt, *The Reader, the Text, the Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn (Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1994), p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> Louise M. Rosenblatt, 'Toward a Cultural Approach to Literature' *College English*, 7 (1946), 459-466 (p. 460).

<sup>20</sup> Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, p. 175.

suited to this research and helps to explain how Imagology is used in the module in a practical way to increase intercultural awareness in students.

In the foreword to *Literature as Exploration*, Wayne Booth credits Rosenblatt with influencing ‘more teachers in their ways of dealing with literature than any other critic’.<sup>21</sup> He argues that she was well ahead of the theorists that were identified as the first critics in the field of reader response in the 1960s, (including Iser and Fish), and posits that this may be due to the fact that she does not believe that all interpretations are equally valid. This is one aspect of Iser’s theory of reading that Fish criticises heavily:

In literary criticism this means that no interpretation can be said to be better or worse than any other, and in the classroom this means that we have no answer to the student who says my interpretation is as valid as yours.<sup>22</sup>

Rosenblatt believes that there are many possible readings of a text and these are influenced by the reader’s own personal experience and expectation: ‘each reader is unique, bringing to the transaction an individual ethnic, social, and psychological history’.<sup>23</sup> Rosenblatt’s approach contrasts with Fish’s because even though all interpretations and responses are worth exploration, they do not hold the same merit. Students should be helped to recognise this through closer reading and evaluation of the text. The student should be encouraged to compare her views and interpretations with those of other students and the teacher. This action will contribute to the interrogation of the origin of her initial viewpoint and its basis in the text. It will lead her to question why she came to this particular understanding and allow her to recognise that some interpretations can be more valid than others. Rosenblatt suggests using group

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>22</sup> Fish, p. 317.

<sup>23</sup> Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, p. 175.

discussion among students as a mode to work out different interpretations and understandings which will encourage them to revisit the text, examine it more critically and re-evaluate their original view in light of this new information. She argues that an active interchange of ideas between students should be promoted. Initially it may occur in the format student-teacher-student where the student addresses the teacher who invites other students to comment. Eventually, this should transpire into a student-student-teacher interaction where the teacher participates in the discussion as one of the group rather than as a controlling mechanism. This approach is similar to that advocated by critical pedagogists.

Critical pedagogy developed from a Marxist criticism of society which views the education system as a site of cultural reproduction. Yves Bertrand in *Contemporary Theories and Practice in Education* argues that the aim of critical pedagogy is to allow the student to develop social consciousness.<sup>24</sup> Paulo Freire, in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, argues for a pedagogy of communication centred around dialogue between equal partners.<sup>25</sup> The traditional student-teacher relationship, which he equates to a 'banking' system where the student acts as a container to be filled with deposits from the teacher, needs to be deconstructed. Freire contends that the banking system, like Bourdieu's concept of symbolic violence, works in favour of the ruling classes as it does not reveal the inequalities within a school system or transform it. Similarly, Giroux also sees schools as sites of cultural reproduction.<sup>26</sup> Schools are not neutral or free from bias, but rather reinforce the rules that work to the advantage of, and privilege those in

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<sup>24</sup> Yves Bertrand, *Contemporary Theories and Practice in Education*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn. (Madison, Wisconsin: Atwood Publishing, 2003) p. 220-221.

<sup>25</sup> Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (London: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 1970).

<sup>26</sup> Bertrand, p. 221.

control. Furthermore, schools legitimise these social and cultural inequalities hiding the disadvantage at work. In *Teaching and Learning Pedagogy, Curriculum and Culture*, Alex Moore discusses how institutional racism is concealed by a system of ‘merit’ which appears to be a fairer method of rewarding privilege.<sup>27</sup> What is more, the process of meritocracy does not question the cultural bias of texts on the school curriculum which advantage the middle-class majority and promulgate certain views and values.

Freire contends that the deconstruction of the ‘banking’ system allows both parties the freedom to express themselves and only in this way can true education occur. As a consequence of critical pedagogy, power is rebalanced rather than reproduced through cultural, social and economic norms. Crucially, dialogue encourages reflection which is a key marker of a critical thinker. Critical thinking and reflection in turn can inspire action. Critical pedagogy leads to critical thinking and allows questioning that may result in social change. According to Freire, the teacher’s role is to develop a dialogue with students that facilitates reflection on and debate about the structure of society. By providing ways the student can make connections to their own life and experience, the teacher allows the student to become involved in their own learning. A distinct move away from the traditional teacher-led learning and the old system of unqueried reproduction is thus achieved. In much the same way as Imagologists investigate representations in texts, critical pedagogy should provide for the recognition, transparency and analysis of the ‘hidden curriculum’. In this way students will become literate in the Freirean sense which makes one ‘aware of their culture and of the

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<sup>27</sup> Alex Moore, *Teaching and Learning Pedagogy, Curriculum and Culture* (London: Routledge Falmer, 2000).

necessity for everyone to participate in the collective and democratic construction of culture and history.’<sup>28</sup>

The focus on the representation of immigrants and, in some texts, the perspective of the immigrant allows students to discuss the issues surrounding immigration and interculturalism in Ireland. In contrast to some other areas of the curriculum where the ethnic majority may possess the most cultural capital and thus an upper hand, this approach allows for a more even exchange between majority and minority ethnic groups as both can share their opinions and reflect on them. Immigrants in particular may benefit from this restructure of power within the school environment as they have something to offer to the conversation that the majority ethnic may not, that is, their own experience of immigration in Ireland.

In her article, ‘Re-imaging Reader-Response in Middle and Secondary Schools: Early Adolescent Girls’ Critical and Communal Reader Responses to the Young Adult Novel *Speak*,’ Jie Park tested this student-student-teacher interaction approach.<sup>29</sup> In the study conducted with voluntary book club readers aged 12-13 years old, Park noted that discussions about the novel revealed how the girls reacted to the text but also revealed some of their personal experiences and perspectives. Sharing their experience and opinion of the book, the girls realised that their viewpoints differed. This led them to inquire how and why the different attitudes were formulated. The students related aspects of the novel to their own lives and this resulted in their reconsideration of the ways they acted or spoke outside the book club environment. Their reading and

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<sup>28</sup> Bertrand, p. 245.

<sup>29</sup> Jie Y. Park, ‘Re-imaging Reader-Response in Middle and Secondary Schools: Early Adolescent Girls’ Critical and Communal Reader Responses to the Young Adult Novel *Speak*’ *Children’s Literature in Education*, 43 (2012), 191–212.

discussion of the text caused them to look critically at their own perspective and behaviour, and in some cases led to an awareness of harmful practices that they then decided to change. Park emphasises the value in participating in group-reading practices like this where perspectives are discussed and deliberated as a solitary reader can find it difficult to escape from a way of reading and assumptions that have become normalised:

Reading together makes visible how readers respond differently to the same text depending on what they bring to it, and makes possible for readers to be challenged, supported, and even transformed by the interpretations, perspectives, and life experiences of others.<sup>30</sup>

This approach to reading thus has value. However, Jeanne Connell argues that ‘Rosenblatt was perhaps too optimistic concerning young students’ abilities to examine on their own what views of the world to accept, reject, or change.’<sup>31</sup> She holds that teachers play an important role in assisting students to make connections in and with texts and in creating ‘opportunities for open and free discussions that stimulate further reflection.’<sup>32</sup> Through the provision of imagological tools to students and my guidance as a teacher, the module offered in this study overcomes this difficulty. The process of re-evaluation and revision of perspective is augmented in the module by the inclusion of an imagological focus in the re-examination of the texts. Through the combination of group discussion proposed by Rosenblatt and Friere and the use of Imagology, English classes at second-level can be improved and enhance intercultural education. The module designed for this study embraces this model.

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 209.

<sup>31</sup> Jeanne M. Connell, ‘The Emergence of Pragmatic Philosophy’s Influence on Literary Theory: Making Meaning with Texts from a Transactional Perspective,’ *Educational Theory*, 58 (2008), 103-122 (p. 112).

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 114.

Rosenblatt differentiates between two approaches to reading: efferent and aesthetic. Efferent reading occurs when a reader is looking for information which they take away with them to suit a particular purpose as would occur when reading an instruction manual. The reading serves to provide the reader with a specific piece of information they seek. Once recovered the text is not reflected on or responded to in any other way. In contrast, an aesthetic reading is associated with an emotional response and occurs when a reader chooses to engage with the text and the 'qualitative lived-through experience.'<sup>33</sup> Rosenblatt acknowledges that a reader's intent or predilection and previous information will likely determine which way the reader reads but she does not prohibit the fact that texts can be read either way. In fact, Rosenblatt contends that most reading occurs somewhere between these two poles. Selective attention on behalf of the reader is what makes efferent and aesthetic reading possible and differentiates them. Rosenblatt encourages rational thought about emotional responses formed in aesthetic reading. She believes that this process 'can nourish both aesthetic and social sensitivities and can foster the development of critical and self-critical judgment.'<sup>34</sup> This combination of aesthetic and efferent reading can occur when students read with an imagological focus.

Rosenblatt draws attention to the fact that teachers and testing within the English classroom can cause students to become confused, as contrary to being asked to provide a personal aesthetic response to a poem, students are asked to complete an efferent reading of it. The importance placed on the efferent stance, of being able to get the 'right' answer can lead students to favour this mode only and neglect the aesthetic

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<sup>33</sup> Rosenblatt, *The Reader*, p. 30.

<sup>34</sup> Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, p. xviii.



stance completely. Students, in this sense, have been influenced by their prior experience and the interpretive community of the school environment. Indeed, I often came across this with the students in this study. Students sometimes found it difficult to respond aesthetically to a text as this mode of inquiry was alien to them. Their previous experience had taught them that this was not what was valued. Indeed, even when explained, students continued to provide efferent reading answers, giving summaries of the plot when asked for their response, for example. In the Leaving Certificate Chief Examiner's Report on English (2013), this inability on students' behalf to adapt their knowledge and ways of reading to respond to different questions was commented on and highlighted as an area that required improvement.<sup>35</sup> Such is the infrequency that an aesthetic response is asked of students that even in the report it is described as 'more demanding':

The more demanding requirement, "to relate texts to their own experience, generate personal meanings, discuss and justify those meanings, and express opinions coherently" (Leaving Certificate Syllabus, English, para. 5.5) was less frequently achieved successfully.<sup>36</sup>

This is despite the fact, as Rosenblatt discusses in her article, 'The Literary Transaction: Evocation and Response', that when we initially learn to read we automatically respond aesthetically and tend towards the emotional, seeking to read what brings enjoyment.<sup>37</sup> However, as a child grows older, they are conditioned to react to a text efferently, abstracting the 'meaning' and demonstrating an ability to summarise or answer

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<sup>35</sup> State Examinations Commission, 'Leaving Certificate Examination 2013 English Chief Examiner's Report', [http://www.examinations.ie/archive/examiners\\_reports/Chief\\_Examiner\\_Report\\_English\\_2013.pdf](http://www.examinations.ie/archive/examiners_reports/Chief_Examiner_Report_English_2013.pdf) (Accessed 6 May 2014).

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Louise M. Rosenblatt, 'The Literary Transaction: Evocation and Response' *Theory into Practice*, 21 (1982), 268-277.

questions about it. Aesthetic reading is undervalued in the current system and this is to students' detriment as aesthetic reading allows a student to relate and compare experiences which leads to further cognitive and emotional development. Rosenblatt links this devaluation of the aesthetic to the difficulty teachers often have in teaching poetry. Poetry is a genre which more naturally lends itself to aesthetic reading. However, because students have been trained to read efferently, they usually search for meaning and understanding first rather than taking pleasure in poetry for its lyrical or evocative qualities. Rosenblatt contends that 'In the teaching of literature, then, our primary responsibility is to encourage, not get in the way of, the aesthetic stance.'<sup>38</sup>

The aesthetic response is of particular importance in this study as it can reveal students' attitudes towards immigration and interculturalism. Rosenblatt holds that:

When the student has been moved by a work of literature, he will be led to ponder on questions of right or wrong, of admirable or antisocial qualities, of justifiable or unjustifiable actions. The average student spontaneously tends to pass judgement on the actions of characters encountered in fiction.<sup>39</sup>

This appraisal divulges their beliefs, values, biases and prejudices to a certain degree as students make judgements based on them. The analysis of students' responses to fictional characters can reveal their thoughts on the areas under investigation: immigration and interculturalism. Reading fiction can also act as an impetus for students to examine and reflect on these values and act as a starting point to open up discussion.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 275.

<sup>39</sup> Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, p. 16.

## **Developing the module**

The module was designed with the classroom environment in mind. In order both to replicate standard school practices (to reduce any possible criticism that the findings would not be applicable in a normal school environment with a regular English teacher), and encourage teachers to avail of the module and allow their students to participate in the research, careful consideration of practical matters was required. The normal length of class periods, the frequency of English classes each week and the length of school terms required particular attention and influenced the design of the module. In addition to these requirements, the module also had to be long enough to provide time to read, analyse and reflect on the texts under examination.

Due to the fact that all three school terms are not the same duration and the fact that the study would be conducted at different research sites at different times of the year, the shortest term of the year dictated the maximum length of the module. The module could have been implemented over two school terms or continued after a break in the case of shorter terms. However, it was considered preferable to complete the module in one solid block so as not to interfere with the development of the themes and issues discussed over the course of the module. Ensuring the module would fit within each school term also meant that each module would be more comparable. Mindful of the fact that the module was operating on an optional basis, it was important that it would be easy for teachers to fit it into their schedule and plans for the year also.

Taking all of these aspects into account, the module was designed to be implemented over a five-week period with four classes per week. Five weeks was judged sufficient time to cover the selected texts and develop a rapport with students so they felt

comfortable sharing their opinions on the topics of immigration and interculturalism in Ireland. The module format allowed students to be surveyed at the beginning and end of the five weeks to gauge any change in attitude. The module was designed so that it can be easily adapted for either a new Junior Cert short course or for use at senior level. This was important as the emphasis was on providing a useful resource for teachers in addition to completing research in the field.

From an ethical perspective and in light of the advocacy approach adopted in the research it was also important that the research did not take advantage of students or exploit them but rather, be beneficial. The comparative nature of the module helps students to prepare for the Leaving Certificate English course where the comparative question is compulsory at both ordinary and higher levels. The module, with its unique imagological approach, also increases students' knowledge by introducing them to a new concept and develops their critical reading and analytical skills through the implementation of imagological tools in their reading. The development education focus of the module with its emphasis on issues such as racism and immigration encourages students to think about these issues and consider their social responsibility. The module provides students with an opportunity to participate in educational research and share their opinions and voice on the issues of interculturalism and immigration.

### **Selecting the texts**

The selection of the texts for the module required important consideration. It began with a basic set of criteria. As discussed previously, fictional texts were chosen to provide students with a safe way of sharing their opinions on immigration and interculturalism. Moreover, Leerssen advocates for the imagological analysis of texts from the narrative

fiction, poetry and drama genres. Each selected text would have to feature an immigrant character and have been written by an Irish author. The inclusion of the immigrant character is necessary as part of the study was an imagological focus on the representation of immigrants in Irish texts and second-level students' perceptions of this. Texts featuring immigrant characters were also likely to deal with issues of interculturalism, immigration, racism and other areas of interest for discussion with the students. Crucially, selecting texts with an immigrant character for use in the module served to contrast with the current English curriculum where there are very few texts that embrace interculturalism and reflect diversity in Irish society and where even the few texts currently available go unused. The reading level of the material and the potential interest to teenagers were also important considerations. For this reason, the focus of the search was mainly within the genre of Young Adult Fiction. Two of the selected texts, Sarah Crossan's *The Weight of Water* and Aubrey Flegg's, *The Cinnamon Tree*, fall firmly within this category and are marketed as such. The third text, Roddy Doyle's short story 'Black Hoodie', is slightly more ambiguous. It is taken from his collection *The Deportees* which is not specifically aimed at young adults. However, the focus on Transition Year students and the use of simple language ensured it also met my criteria. Furthermore, during the course of the research in schools, it was discovered that 'Black Hoodie' is included in the Transition Year English textbook, *Text*, which some schools use. However, despite its inclusion, only one class out of the nine involved in the research had previously studied it. One teacher admitted that she felt ill-equipped to teach the text as it dealt with 'too many issues'. This emphasises the need to provide teachers with a way of tackling any wariness they might feel about using such a text. It

also underscores the point that providing guidelines or a selection of recommended texts is not sufficient to encourage teachers to use them. This module proposes to meet this demand as it demonstrates how Imagology can be used as a teaching and learning tool to assist with the study of such texts in the English class. The highest reading level of any text included in this study is Grade 10 (15-16 year olds) for *The Cinnamon Tree*. *The Weight of Water* has a reading level between Grade 6-8 (11-14 year olds), and 'Black Hoodie' has a reading level of Grade 7 (12 year olds).<sup>40</sup> Most of the students enrolled in Transition Year are between 15-16 years old and as such, should be capable of reading all of the texts.

As the focus was on intercultural education in the Irish context, the search for texts was limited to texts by Irish authors as they are familiar with this setting. 'Irish author' is defined in this study as anyone who was born in Ireland and lived here for at least two years as an adult. Two of the authors, Roddy Doyle and Aubrey Flegg, are both still resident in Ireland and base all or part of their stories here. Sarah Crossan is Irish-born and currently lives in England and her book is situated in an English context. The aim was to demonstrate that there are texts with an intercultural focus available for use in schools. However, as it transpired, there is certainly a dearth of texts that fit these intercultural criteria. Finding texts by Irish authors that feature immigrant characters was not an easy task and furthermore, finding texts still in print was even more difficult. The fact that a search was required is acknowledgement in itself that such texts are not as openly and readily available as they should be. It could also suggest that the lack of engagement with intercultural texts in Irish second-level schools may not be just due to

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<sup>40</sup> Reading levels checked using [www.read-able.com](http://www.read-able.com) (Accessed 16 May 2014).

some teachers' lack of confidence in introducing such texts, but also, perhaps, could be attributed to a lack of awareness about them. It is for this precise reason that guidelines for intercultural education alone are not sufficient. The provision of resources including a method to use them is imperative.

In order to assist with the search for suitable texts I contacted a number of people currently working in the area of Young Adult literature and publishing in Ireland. The editor of *Inis* magazine at the time, David Maybury, recommended *The Weight of Water*. *The Weight of Water* traces the story of a young Polish immigrant, Kasienka, who comes to England with her mother. They have come in search of her father who left them two years previously. Kasienka has a tough time at school. She is frustrated to be placed in a lower class because of her English and when she is moved to the correct year group she becomes a victim of bullying. At home, things are not much better as her mother is obsessed with finding her father. When Kasienka does eventually find him, she discovers that he has a new family and decides not to tell her mother. Kasienka is torn between her mother and this new family and is also distracted by her growing friendship with William, a boy from school. With the help of her hobby, swimming, she learns to overcome the obstacles that face her.

*The Weight of Water* was well received on publication and has since won several awards including The CBI Eilís Dillion Award 2013, Coventry Inspiration Book Awards (Read It Or Else) for best book for 11-14 year olds 2013, WeRead Prize 2013, UKLA Book Award for 7-11 year olds and the Luchs Prize for February 2014. Although *The Weight of Water* is not set in Ireland, it fits the criteria of featuring an immigrant character and is written by an Irish author. The number of people from Eastern Europe in Ireland, and

in particular from Poland, has increased exponentially over the last decade. The results from the last census reveal that the nationality group with the largest increase in Ireland between 2006 and 2011 was Polish with 122,585 people resident in Ireland in 2011.<sup>41</sup> The examination of a text containing a representation of a Polish person was thus very pertinent. *The Weight of Water* is directly related to this study as it deals with the issues of immigration and racism and is set in a school environment. It is also interesting as a consequence of its unusual format; it is written in free verse rather than prose and therefore allows for a different teaching approach.

The novel is divided into individual poems that together make up the story. This format facilitates a group work approach to the study of this text as students can be divided and given different poems to read and analyse. Each group can report on their poem and present their interpretation of it to the class. Through discussion the story can be woven together and considered as a whole.

This text also allows for reflection on aesthetic features that are absent from the other two narrative formats. The selection of specific words and images and their layout on the page have significance in *The Weight of Water*. For example, in 'Pale' the placing of 'In the corner/ Of the yard' mimics the character's physical positioning in the yard separate to her classmates:

At lunch time

I hide

In the corner

Of the yard

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<sup>41</sup> CSO, 'Profile 6: Migration and Diversity'.



By a drinking fountain<sup>42</sup>

This technique is used throughout the text to emphasise Kasienka's difference, distance and alienation from others. Another feature which is apparent and characteristic of poetry is the use of metaphor and figurative language. These elements give students the opportunity to reflect on different readings and interpretations and to appreciate the distinctive style of the novel.

*The Weight of Water* is published by Bloomsbury, based in the UK. Publishers in the UK appear to be much more successful at publishing and promoting books that engage with diversity in general. This point was underlined by Jenny Murray, the Communications Officer at Children's Books Ireland. In response to my enquiry about books with a intercultural theme, Murray mentioned Alanna Books, a small publishing company based in the UK but run by an Irish woman.<sup>43</sup> She also suggested Frances Lincoln publishers who have published a number of intercultural titles for children.<sup>44</sup> She drew my attention to another Irish author, John Newman, who like Sarah Crossan, has had books published by a UK publisher, (in his case, Walker Books).<sup>45</sup> The apparent reluctance of Irish publishers to publish books with an intercultural theme, and the lack of availability of such texts in Ireland is a cause for concern. This issue was addressed in the Ibby publication, *Cross-Currents: A Guide to Multicultural Books for Young People*, published in 2005. In the foreword, Robert Dunbar acknowledges the way teachers have been limited in their classrooms by available material and methodologies. Similar to the criticisms of Faas and Bryan discussed in Chapter 1, he argues that the novels available:

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<sup>42</sup> Crossan, p. 17.

<sup>43</sup> <http://www.alannabooks.com/> (Accessed 3 May 2014).

<sup>44</sup> <http://www.franceslincoln.co.uk/childrens/> (Accessed 3 May 2014).

<sup>45</sup> <http://www.johnnewmanchildrensauthor.com/index.html> (Accessed 3 May 2014).

[...] rather than provoking constructive discussion of the society in which our young people are growing up, have tended to endorse the values of that society and to focus almost exclusively on its more obvious stereotypes.<sup>46</sup>

He is hopeful for the success of the publication in assisting teachers to move away from such a mono-cultural approach and, like Rosenblatt, acknowledges the important role that literature can play in highlighting our shared experience as people, in spite of apparent differences. In the introduction, the editors, Susanna Coghlan and Liz Morris, also attest to the significant place books hold in promoting respect for human and cultural diversity and in helping readers to understand and value an intercultural society.<sup>47</sup> These arguments underpin this research. However, less than a decade later, three of the five books recommended in the first article, 'Race and Realism in Irish Writing,' by Valerie Coghlan, are out of print.<sup>48</sup> The statement at the beginning of the article that, 'Irish writing and publishing for young people is struggling to keep pace with the rapid development of Ireland into a multicultural society,' is possibly even more accurate now.<sup>49</sup> The three texts, Patrick Devaney's *Tribal Scars* (2004), Siobhán Parkinson's *The Love Bean* (2002) and Vincent Mc Donnell's *Out of the Flames* (2002), deal with the issue of immigration and in particular, asylum-seekers, and would have been ideal for use in this research.<sup>50</sup> Considering the relatively recent publication dates, it is surprising that they are out of print. When contacted, O'Brien Press, publisher of *The Love Bean* and *Out of the Flames*, cited lack of sales as the reason for discontinuation of the books. They would not reveal the sales figures of either book. The

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<sup>46</sup> *Cross-Currents: A Guide to Multicultural Books for Young People*, ed. by Susanna Coghlan and Liz Morris (Dublin: IBBY Ireland, 2005), p. 7.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>50</sup> Patrick Devaney, *Tribal Scars*, (Dublin: Mentor Books, 2004). Siobhán Parkinson, *The Love Bean*, (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2002). Vincent McDonnell, *Out of the Flames*, (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2002).

publisher of *Tribal Scars*, Mentor Books, no longer have a children's books section, and this was cited as the reason this book is no longer in print. Because of the aim of the study to conduct research with texts that could be included on the syllabus in future, these three texts could not be included. A comparison of the level of publications between the UK and Ireland could be considered unfair as the UK has a larger population and has been a multicultural society for some time.<sup>51</sup> However, it is significant that some of the books that have been published with an intercultural theme are no longer in print, and it is important to consider the message this conveys, especially at a time when diversity in Irish society is more prevalent than it has been ever before.

The only publications by Irish authors with an Irish publisher that Murray recommended, was the Bridges series by O'Brien Press. Like Alanna Books publications, the Frances Lincoln texts and the books by John Newman, the Bridges series is a collection of children's picture books. Written by four different authors and illustrated by Cartoon Saloon illustrators, *Oleanna's Big Day*, *The Romanian Builder*, *The Dreaming Tree* and *I Won't Go to China* engage with intercultural issues and represent non-Irish characters.<sup>52</sup> However, as with the majority of picture-books, they are aimed at a younger age-group, or at least, are perceived to be aimed at this group.<sup>53</sup> Despite the convincing argument by Emer O'Sullivan that picture books are excellent texts for imagological study, and the fact that O'Brien Press highlight that '[t]he unique

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<sup>51</sup> The term multicultural is used here as the UK has not yet achieved an intercultural society.

<sup>52</sup> Natasha Mac a'Bháird, *Oleanna's Big Day* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2009). P.R. Prendergast, *The Romanian Builder* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2009). Eithne Massey, *The Dreaming Tree* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2009). Enda Wyley, *I Won't Go to China* (Dublin: O'Brien Press, 2009).

<sup>53</sup> O'Brien Press, 'Bridges is an exciting new series of multi-cultural and inter-cultural books for children aged 6+', <https://www.obrien.ie/childrens/bridges/> (Accessed 2 May 2014).

illustrative approach and engaging stories in the Bridges series make these books ideal for different reading abilities and age levels,' I made the decision not to include them, or any picture-books, in the study.<sup>54</sup> I made this decision based on my experience teaching English at second-level. As a result of my familiarity with the second-level educational environment, I felt that students would not engage with these texts and would be resistant to them as a result of their belief that they were for younger children. Students do not like to be associated with or confused with younger age-groups. This is a factor that Joy Alexander of Queen's University Belfast discovered in her research for *Project 500: Promoting Science through Libraries*. Alexander observed young people aged 8-14 years involved in discussing texts shortlisted for the Royal Society Young People's Book Prize. She found that young people did not gauge the age appropriateness of a text by reading ability or content. In fact, the text with the highest reading age of the six books under review was designated by the young people to be suitable for younger children because it was a picture book.<sup>55</sup>

Added to this consideration, the Bridges series has been criticised by Patricia Kennon who, in her chapter, 'Building Bridges to Intercultural Understanding: The Other in Contemporary Irish Children's Literature', argues that, while well-intentioned, the books

[...] are more concerned with assimilating the foreign protagonists, rather than gaining a reflective understanding of the power relations and potential for intercultural enrichment and interchange between established majority culture and minority communities.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Joy Alexander, 'Prizing Children's Science Books', Paper presentation at the Irish Society for the Study of Children's Literature Biennial Conference, 'Be Merry and Wise: Children's Literature from Chapbooks to the Digital Age' held in An Foras Feasa, NUI Maynooth, 28-29 March 2014.

<sup>56</sup> Patricia Kennon, 'Building Bridges to Intercultural Understanding: The Other in Contemporary Irish Children's Literature' in *Our Chums in the Family Nations: Internationalism in Children's Series* ed. by

Supporting the argument of this thesis, Kennon holds that intercultural children's literature affords 'valuable opportunities for promoting dialogue and reflection around issues of social justice and citizenship'.<sup>57</sup> She outlines how children's critical thinking skills can be developed as a result of discussion and reflection on such literature. Kennon highlights that it is essential that children's literature and picture-books reflect 'today's ethnically diverse classrooms and learning communities.'<sup>58</sup> However, this series ultimately fails in its attempt to promote meaningful intercultural awareness as the books 'are embedded and complicit in the agenda of absorbing minority groups into the Irish mainstream.'<sup>59</sup> Analysing the images and their position on the page, Kennon attributes the books with reflecting a multicultural rather than an intercultural ideal. Attention is drawn to the fact that aspects of the Christian faith are presented without explanation revealing the 'biased presumption of the reader's familiarity with, if not membership of, Christianity.'<sup>60</sup> The presence of religion in texts is important to examine and its place in the selected texts for this study is discussed in detail below. Kennon underlines that the immigrant's process of acclimatisation becomes the focus, particularly in *I Won't Go to China*, and Irish readers are not encouraged to critically examine how images of Irishness might be changed and developed. This lack of opportunity for critical reflection makes the books an unsuitable choice for inclusion in the module for this research.

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Karen Sands-O'Connor and Marietta Frank (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), pp. 194-209 (p. 198).

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 194.

<sup>58</sup> Kennon, p. 198.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid., p. 197.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 202.

The selection of texts was also influenced by the fact that I wished to use texts that could be added to the syllabus following my research. As two of the aims of this study are to highlight the lack of intercultural texts currently in use, despite the guidelines, and present a model to amend this, it was important to select texts that could conceivably be used in future. A picture-book, however valuable, creative or critically acclaimed, is unlikely to be included on the second-level English syllabus. There are valid reasons why this should change, especially in light of the excellent graphic novels produced by authors and illustrators, such as Shaun Tan. While that argument is beyond the scope of this study, it does provide an interesting avenue for further possible research and reform in the education sector. This issue has been addressed to some extent at primary level with Anne Dolan's publication *You, Me and Diversity: Picturebooks for teaching development and intercultural education*.<sup>61</sup> There is also an on-going study in the UK about the use of graphic novels in the primary classroom.<sup>62</sup> However, the use of picture books or graphic novels at second level appears to be thus-far unexamined.

One text which featured in *Cross-Currents* which is still in print is Aubrey Flegg's *The Cinnamon Tree*, published in 2000 by O'Brien Press. This book is accompanied by an O'Brien Press Teaching Guide which is provided free of charge on the website.<sup>63</sup> Whether or not teaching guides have an impact on sales is unknown but it could be argued that the provision of the teaching resource encourages teachers to use it in the classroom which, in turn, increases sales of the book and keeps it in print. *The Love*

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<sup>61</sup> Anne M. Dolan, *You, Me and Diversity: Picturebooks for Teaching Development and Intercultural Education* (London: Trentham Books, 2014).

<sup>62</sup> Eve Tandoi, 'Reading Hybrid Novels in the Primary Classroom' Paper presentation at the Irish Society for the Study of Children's Literature Biennial Conference, 'Be Merry and Wise: Children's Literature from Chapbooks to the Digital Age' held in An Foras Feasa, NUI Maynooth, 28-29 March 2014.

<sup>63</sup> O'Brien Press, 'Teaching Guides: Teaching guide for The Cinnamon Tree from O'Brien Teaching Guides for Second Level Schools' <https://www.obrien.ie/aubrey-flegg> (Accessed 01 May 2013).

*Bean* and *Out of the Flames* are unaccompanied by such a resource and this could be part of the reason they were not more successful in sales terms. *The Cinnamon Tree* was selected as one of the texts for this research as it features an African character who comes to Ireland. It engages with a range of global issues and provides a suitable impetus for discussion on several topics related to this research.

*The Cinnamon Tree* follows the story of Yola, a young African girl who loses her leg in a landmine accident. She becomes acquainted with the head of a charitable organisation that seeks to teach people about the dangers of landmines, and is offered a job. As part of her training, she is sent to Ireland to go to school and be fitted with an artificial leg. While in Ireland, she meets Fintan, an Irish teenager whose father owns an engineering company. After Yola returns to Africa, Fintan also finds himself there, when his father gets a contract to work with a local company. However, the contract is not what it seems and the two teenagers find themselves involved in the deadly Arms Trade. To further complicate matters, Yola's cousin has been abducted and forced to become a child soldier and they must rescue him.

The author of *The Cinnamon Tree*, Aubrey Flegg, was influenced by his personal experience working in Africa as a geologist. This text presents a different perspective as it is set, for the most part in Africa, a place with which most students are unfamiliar. The novel is also interesting as it presents a perceived outsider's view of Ireland. The practices of Yola's culture and community, some of which the students find strange, like polygamy, are presented as normal. When Yola comes to Ireland she perceives some of the social norms in Irish society as perplexing. This causes the students to reflect on what they take for granted and acknowledge how it informs and sometimes can limit

their own worldview. The novel raises interesting questions around the idea of social values as well as engaging with development education issues such as the impact of capitalisation and outsourcing on third world countries. It underlines the connection between and joint responsibility towards people all over the world irrespective of background, country of origin, race or religion. It won the International Youth Library White Ravens Award in 2000. This award ‘is given to books that deserve worldwide attention because of their universal themes and/or their exceptional and often innovative artistic and literary style and design.’<sup>64</sup>

Unlike *The Weight of Water*, *The Cinnamon Tree* conforms to the usual conventions of a novel. However, the third person omnipotent narrator permits insight into the thoughts of two characters, Yola and Fintan, which marks a difference from the other texts which present only one perspective. The descriptive writing style is evocative and helps students to form clear images in their minds of the characters and the landscape, which is significant as the majority of students have a limited frame of reference for specific African settings. The length of the novel dictated that only excerpts of the text were selected for study in the module.

The final text selected for inclusion in the research was Roddy Doyle’s ‘Black Hoodie’ from his collection *The Deportees*. All of these narratives were originally written for inclusion with the immigrant newspaper *Metro Éireann* and were published in serial format on a monthly basis. In the introduction to the book, Doyle explains that he

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<sup>64</sup> <http://www.childrenslibrary.org/servlet/WhiteRavens> (Accessed 10 April 2014).



became interested in the paper and was inspired to write the stories to combat the negative myths he had heard about immigrants in Ireland.<sup>65</sup>

‘Black Hoodie’ tells the story of a young Irish protagonist in Transition Year who forms a mini-company with his friend and the Nigerian girl he secretly loves. The mini-company involves highlighting people’s prejudices. The students go to shops, and with the help of some hooded jumpers and a wheelchair, demonstrate how security guards’ inherent biases towards black people and teenagers can distract them from thieves who do not fit their conception of a criminal, for example, someone in a wheelchair. The students make money by charging a consultancy fee when they show the managers how the security guards are failing to notice real thieves. During the course of their work in a large department store they are arrested and brought to Pearse Street Garda Station where Ms Nigeria is subject to racist abuse by the Gardaí.<sup>66</sup>

This text engages with issues of racism and discrimination in Irish society as well as questions around the appropriate action to take when it occurs. The story presents Nigerian characters, both young and older, interacting with Irish people, which serves as a pertinent area for examination. How the characters are represented and the treatment they receive by other characters is worthy of imagological study.

The book was mostly well received on publication. Several critics emphasised the ‘moral underpinnings’ of the stories and argued that they were ‘written with a single purpose in mind: to foster tolerance in ticklish circumstances.’<sup>67</sup> The book has not won

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<sup>65</sup> Doyle, p. xii.

<sup>66</sup> Gardaí is the official name for the police in Ireland. Garda is the singular form.

<sup>67</sup> John Matthew Fox ‘The Deportees and Other Stories Roddy Doyle Review’, [theshortreview.com](http://www.theshortreview.com/reviews/RoddyDoyleDeportees.htm) <http://www.theshortreview.com/reviews/RoddyDoyleDeportees.htm> (Accessed 28 April 2014). Patricia

any awards but one of the stories, 'New Boy' was adapted as a short film by Steph Green and this won several awards.<sup>68</sup> Another short story from the same collection, 'Guess Who's Coming for the Dinner', in addition to its inclusion in the Transition Year textbook, *Text*, alongside 'Black Hoodie', was also adapted for the stage in 2001 as part of the Dublin Theatre Festival.<sup>69</sup>

Similar to *The Weight of Water* this text employs first person narration and as a result, the viewpoint of the other characters remains unknown. However, this provides an opportunity to invite students to take on the persona of one of the characters and write 'their' version of events. This assignment can draw attention to stylistic elements of the text. Use of vernacular North Dublin language and slang is characteristic of Doyle's writing style. Students, assuming alternate perspectives, would have to suitably adapt the style to match the character's 'voice'. For example, the narrator in 'Black Hoodie' remarks on how Ms Nigeria speaks like 'she's on the News or something.'<sup>70</sup> Consequently, her version of events would not contain the same level of slang. The short story can be studied in its entirety in class. The comedic elements and the drastic turn of events for the characters provide the opportunity for students to engage in dramatic enactments of the text.

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Craig, 'The Deportees, by Roddy Doyle: Diversity and tolerance in Dublin hymned in demotic immigrant songs' *The Independent*, 11 September 2007  
<http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/features/the-deportees-by-rodgy-doyle-464146.html> (Accessed 28 April 2014).

<sup>68</sup> Best Irish Short Film - Foyle Film Festival UK, Best Short Film - Irish Film and Television Awards, Best Short Film - Tribeca Film Festival USA, Best Short Film - Vail Film Festival USA  
<http://newboythemovie.com/> (Accessed 9 May 2014).

<sup>69</sup> Michael Billington, 'Guess Who's Coming For the Dinner St Andrew's Lane Theatre, Dublin', *The Guardian*, 9 October 2001 <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2001/oct/09/theatre.artsfeatures1> (Accessed 9 May 2014).

<sup>70</sup> Doyle, p. 134.

## **An Imagological Examination of the Texts**

O'Sullivan contends that Irish literature has been preoccupied with portraying and investigating Irish identity. She argues that there has been a focus, in particular, of contrasting this against an English identity:

The question of identity what it is exactly that sets the Irish apart from their powerful English-speaking neighbours is one of the central themes and impetuses of Irish culture. National identity- aspired to, imagined, projected is a central theme of Irish literature in the English language.<sup>71</sup>

Indeed, Said has equated the work of the Anglo-Irish writers as a form of 'writing back' to the colonial British center 'which not only misrepresent[ed] them but assumed they were unable to read and respond directly to what had been written about them.'<sup>72</sup> However, following increased diversity in Irish society and the advent of the 'new Irish' community, there are a range of new 'Others' against which an image of Irish identity can be constructed. This study looks at how these 'Others' are presented in Irish fiction and the significance this holds for the representation of an Irish identity. The imagological examination of these texts will seek to answer the following questions:

1. Who is considered 'Other' in Irish YA literature?
2. How is an 'Other' character constructed and portrayed in Irish YA fiction?
3. Are new images of a modern Irish identity produced in these texts?

The three texts under examination in this study are analysed below in terms of characterisation of the 'Other' presented under the themes of perspective, religion,

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<sup>71</sup> Emer O'Sullivan, 'The Development of Modern Children's Literature in late Twentieth Century Ireland', *Signal*, 79 (1996), (p. 191).

<sup>72</sup> Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 35.

language and appearance. These themes are selected because they are all obvious markers of difference and as Leerssen highlights, ‘nations have come to see their character, their individuality, primarily in those aspects in which they differ most from others.’<sup>73</sup>

Physical appearance is one of the most noticeable elements of otherness. Elena Agazzi contends that ‘[r]acial distinctions are subsumed under the most easily visible quality: that of skin colour’.<sup>74</sup> However, she also notes that in Europe where racial prejudice extended to Jewish people, aspects of difference were also identified in ‘the visible typology of dress’.<sup>75</sup> Leerssen holds that in the consideration of ideas of national character, factors such as manners, customs and language become significant. He cites seventeenth-century maps as an example as these:

maps are often embellished, not only with allegorical figures symbolizing the earth and the relations between countries and realms, but also with little vignettes depicting the various nationalities who inhabit the area in question – and marked out as such by the ‘characteristic’ dress and habit.<sup>76</sup>

Thus to examine images of national character under the themes of appearance, language and religion is appropriate.

Perspective is also worthy of examination in an imagological analysis because as Ann Rigney argues ‘characters in a story play an important role in the way readers react to

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<sup>73</sup> Joep Leerssen, ‘Character (Moral)’ in *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters, A Critical Survey*, ed. by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 284-287, p. 287.

<sup>74</sup> Elena Agazzi, ‘Body’ in *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters, A Critical Survey*, ed. by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 270-272, p. 271.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Leerssen, ‘Character (Moral)’, p. 286.

fictions and process plots.’<sup>77</sup> Rigney considers that the ‘focalization’ of texts, the viewpoint from which a reader accesses the story (or the perspective), is significant because it can influence how different characters are viewed and which viewpoints and ideas are accepted or rejected:

Focalization is relevant to our understanding of characterization, then, since it helps to direct the sympathies of the reader and thereby establishes a certain hierarchy between characters. Thus ‘thinking along’ with a character usually gives that character an advantage over those characters who are only perceived from the outside<sup>78</sup>

The perspective adopted influences the auto- and hetero-images presented in texts. As part of an imagological analysis, it is important to examine the perspective of the main character in the texts and the impact this has on the role of the ‘Other’ in the narrative.

A thematic analysis of *The Weight of Water*, *The Cinnamon Tree* and ‘Black Hoodie’ under the headings of appearance, religion, language and perspective is suitable because these elements all constitute aspects that inform ideas of national character. The concentration on these themes allows students to understand how these factors can be used in the construction and representation of auto- and hetero-images in literature. The application of the same thematic analysis to the three texts also assists students to make comparisons between the creation and portrayal of national characters in each.

### **Perspective**

In *The Weight of Water*, the perspective is that of a young Polish girl. As outlined above, auto- and hetero-images can change depending on what they are contrasted against. In *The Weight of Water* the auto- and hetero-images are in a constant state of flux as the

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<sup>77</sup> Ann Rigney, ‘Character (Narrative)’ in *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters, A Critical Survey*, ed. by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 287-289, p. 287.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 289.

characters are associated with and define themselves as ‘Other’ in comparison to various people in the text. One of the auto-images presented is influenced by Kasienka’s Polish nationality and one of the hetero-images depicted is shaped by the image of an English national character. Although Kasienka is the narrator in *The Weight of Water* and the story is told only from her point of view, she still occupies the place of the ‘Other’. Through her story we understand how she is viewed by others and how she comes to view herself. The impact that others have on Kasienka’s conception of herself is illustrated most clearly in the poem entitled ‘Split’ where she reveals that ‘[t]here are many Kasienkas now.’<sup>79</sup> Kasienka states that when she is alone she does not know who she is. This is because she requires others as a counterfoil in order to define herself. She adopts different traits in the company of different people with the result that she has various versions of herself for Mama, Tata, William and Clair. For example, Kasienka is conceived of as ‘Other’ by Clair, the class bully, who says that ‘She smells of cabbage and fear.’<sup>80</sup> This is juxtaposed against William’s image of her as ‘[a] girlfriend with a mouth and breasts.’<sup>81</sup> As the reader progresses through the novel, the myriad of images compete and transform, so that at various points in the text the auto- and hetero-images change. This reflects the change in Kasienka as she becomes assimilated and more accepted in English society.

As she explained in an interview, Crossan decided to make use of a particular literary device to heighten the sense of ‘Otherness’ imbued in Kasienka. She opted for free verse rather than prose because Kasienka is ‘Other’, she speaks differently, has a different

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<sup>79</sup> Crossan, p. 170.

<sup>80</sup> Ibid.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

command of language and this is represented in the way the story is told. The novel is made up of poems with individual titles that together form the story. This gives the impression of fragmentation, a distance between Kasienka and everyone else, including the reader:

I didn't want to allow her to speak in prose because she's other, she's different, she's from outside and so poetry was a perfect way for her to express herself because poetry is a little bit Other and poetry is a little bit outside.<sup>82</sup>

The protagonist in 'Black Hoodie' is Irish, and it is from this viewpoint that the reader experiences the events. The young woman nicknamed 'Ms Nigeria' is never given the opportunity to speak for herself, so the reader is ignorant of her interpretation of the circumstances. The auto-image is Irish and the hetero-image presented is Nigerian. O'Sullivan argues that one of the main reasons foreign characters are represented in literature is to contrast with the native or familiar character. She holds that this comparison can serve one of two purposes: either to make the native character look more favourable by presenting the foreign or 'Other' character in a negative light or, by using the foreign character to criticise aspects of the auto-image:

Extra-textual functions of image [...] are usually produced by means of contrast. The foreign element acts as a foil against which the writer's own nation appears more clearly, with the familiar image and the foreign image contrasted in order to reinforce awareness of the readers' own cultural identity or to criticize factors of the self-image perceived as undesirable.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> The CILIP Carnegie and Kate Greenaway Children's Book Awards website, 'Questions about *The Weight of Water*' <http://www.carnegiegreenaway.org.uk/shadowingsite/watch.php?authorid=1andquestionid=111> (Accessed 22 May 2013).

<sup>83</sup> Emer O'Sullivan, *Comparative Children's Literature* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 39.

Ms Nigeria is construed as ‘Other’ by the Gardaí. However, the author uses the hetero-image, in this case of Nigerian characters, to emphasise the negative aspects of the Irish characters. When depicted against the Nigerian characters, the Gardaí are shown to be foolish. This allows the reader to reflect on the behaviour of the Gardaí towards the young woman nicknamed Ms Nigeria. The irony of the fact that the Gardaí are meant to embody justice may cause the reader to question the racist attitudes of the Gardaí and perhaps, their own personal prejudices also. As outlined above, Doyle’s desire to respond to negative stories circulating about immigrants was the main reason he wrote the short stories in *The Deportees*, including ‘Black Hoodie’.

*The Cinnamon Tree* is interesting as two perspectives are presented, an Irish and an African one. For the majority of the story, Yola’s viewpoint dominates. White people occupy the place of the ‘Other’ and African cultural norms and practices are represented as the norm. However, on some occasions throughout the text, Fintan’s perception is revealed. When Yola is narrating, an African identity is presented as the auto-image and a white, Irish identity forms the hetero-image. When Fintan narrates, the reverse is true. Flegg set his novel in a fictional African country. As a result, a specific African identity is not depicted. The dual narrative technique allows for a contrast between the two viewpoints. Flegg also employs stereotypes in the formation of his characters.

In an imagological study, consideration of historical context and target audience are also essential. *The Weight of Water* was written in 2012 and *The Cinnamon Tree* in 2000. Both engage with the issue of immigration. However, in Crossan’s more recent text we can identify an acknowledgement of the increase in migration from Eastern Europe in the last few years. The setting of this text in England places it in a different migration



context to the other two texts. The UK has a long history of immigration and this is referenced in the poem 'Pale' which reveals that the 'black children play with the brown children' but that Kasienka is excluded because she is 'too white'.<sup>84</sup> This suggests that, at least in the context of the UK, despite the existence of a multicultural society, immigrants from Eastern Europe are not readily accepted and welcomed. It reveals some of the underlying tensions surrounding immigration even in a society where there has been a long history of it. As the UK Independence Party, with its openly anti-immigration policies, gains increasing support in the UK, Crossan underlines and mirrors a real issue. This contrasts with the Irish context where emigration rather than immigration would have been the norm for several decades prior to the economic boom in the late 1990s. Flegg's book was published in 2000 and therefore reflects a different political context, prior to the large increase in immigration into Ireland and the economic collapse. Perhaps for this reason, unlike the characters in Doyle and Crossan's texts, Yola does not experience racism. As indicated in the critical review chapter, attitudes towards migrants tend to become less favourable in times of economic recession and the Annual Monitoring Report on Integration has reported a decline in the level of acceptance of immigrants in recent years. Both of these texts were also written for an English-speaking audience. While both texts have since been translated into other languages, the expectation at the time of writing would have been that they would be accessible, and promoted, to the Irish and UK markets. This has an impact on the kind of auto- and hetero-images presented in the texts. Crossan's (or her publisher's) assumption that the reader would be unfamiliar with Polish words and food is revealed in the Glossary which is included at the back of the book where some of the Polish

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<sup>84</sup> Crossan, p. 17.

words used in the novel, such as *pierogi*, *babcia* and *golabki*, are explained. Flegg's assumption that the implied reader is Irish is revealed more subtly in his neglect to explain the significance of small things, such as the religious medal that Yola is given by a fellow plane passenger. As argued below, Flegg portrays an Irish identity that is closely associated with the Catholic religion. Flegg may assume that Irish readers will be aware of the Catholic faith and religion, which is not always the case. Indeed, even some students who were raised with the Catholic faith were unfamiliar with this reference.

As mentioned before, Doyle's text was not written with a Young Adult audience specifically in mind. Nor, was it written with the intention of being included in a series of short stories later published as a collection. Doyle's text was written and published later (2008) than Flegg's (2000) and as a consequence there is a much stronger engagement with some of the issues experienced in multicultural Irish society. This is reflected in the text by the inclusion of Ms Nigeria as a peer of the Irish protagonist and the impact of immigration is referenced in the name of the staff member in the department store, Svetlana, a name not traditionally associated with an Irish person. Doyle's text was written for an immigrant newspaper, *Metro Éireann*, which would suggest that unlike Crossan and Flegg, Doyle may not have assumed that the audience would be native-English speakers. However, the setting in Dublin anticipated that they would be familiar with the Irish capital and the colloquial language of its inhabitants.

### **Religion**

Religion is a significant theme in all three texts. Religion is employed by the authors as a means of constructing and representing specific identities within the texts. Catholicism

is the specific faith that is represented in all three although it is used to assist in the depiction of different national characters. In 'Black Hoodie' and *The Cinnamon Tree*, Catholicism is connected to the portrayal of an Irish identity, while in *The Weight of Water* it is associated with the depiction of a Polish identity. Catholicism is employed to varying degrees in the texts to establish these identities and contrast against others.

In *Imagology*, André Gerrits and Joep Leerssen extrapolate on Poland's, 'national-characterological image: as a rustic nation of proud petty nobles (the *szlachta*) with a passionate sense of honour but little practical sense.'<sup>85</sup> This representation can be seen to some extent in Kasienka's mother. The move to England in search of her husband seems to be motivated by a sense of honour; she appears to expect her husband to be honourable despite the fact that he abandoned her and his daughter two years previously. She acts rashly without much consideration for practical matters and when things are not working out in England she is too proud to admit defeat and return home. She is passionately determined to stay and is angry with her own mother for suggesting otherwise. Gerrits and Leerssen also stress the presence of Catholicism in the Polish self-image. They argue that this has been bolstered by historical circumstances that saw the Polish state pressured by both Russian orthodoxy and Prussian Protestantism. They contend that this image has been strengthened since the fall of Communism which occurred during Polish-born Pope John Paul II's reign.

The evocation of a strong Catholic identity with regard to the Polish characters is consistent throughout *The Weight of Water*. Like in *The Cinnamon Tree*, religion

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<sup>85</sup> Beller and Leerssen, p. 217.

becomes a marker of Otherness. Those who are not Catholic are described as ‘nasty people’:

We hear nasty people every night  
Cursing Christ and  
All the Saints In Heaven.<sup>86</sup>

Kasienka and her mother react to this belief in a very religious way by praying and cleansing their room with holy water. It is unclear if the people described are ‘nasty’ because they curse and blaspheme, or for some other reason. From another poem, the reader is aware that English people do not live in the building because they ‘wouldn’t fit here,/In a place infested with aliens.’<sup>87</sup> The self-identification as an alien reveals Kasienka’s awareness of her foreign ‘Other’ status in society. The description of the building as ‘infested’ invokes images of vermin and other unwanted pests. The negative connotation of Kasienka and her fellow immigrants is clear. The ‘nasty’ people mentioned previously are evidently other immigrants. Despite being an immigrant and an ‘Other’ herself, Kasienka also defines herself against these ‘Others’. This emphasises the changing nature of the auto- and hetero-images presented throughout the text. Irrespective of their nationality, the auto-image of Catholic Polish is clearly projected against these ‘Others’ who are inferior and obviously not Polish. The connection between a Polish self-image and Catholicism is reinforced at several points throughout the text. Praying is mentioned again later in the novel when Kasienka recalls that ‘Tata took me to church [...] Tata taught me my prayers.’<sup>88</sup> Kasienka mentions the celebration of Christmas, a Christian holiday with ‘carols and presents.’<sup>89</sup> Kasienka’s *Babcia*

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<sup>86</sup> Crossan, p. 26.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>88</sup> Crossan, p. 159.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

exclaims: ‘Lord have Mercy!’<sup>90</sup> Kasienka laments that her father is not dead because ‘Dead fathers don’t deliberately leave home. / They can be sainted. / We can hold candles to their memories/ And keep their headstones clean.’<sup>91</sup> The reference to saints clearly identifies a Christian faith, as does the practice of burying the dead and marking the grave with a headstone. The religion of other characters is not commented upon but there are subtle indications that they are not Catholic. Dahlia wears a veil and is thus associated with the Muslim faith. In her description of William, Kasienka notes that he is ‘Like a shaman, and I am bewitched.’<sup>92</sup> This portrayal of William as somewhat otherworldly distances him from the Catholic faith. Although both William and Dahlia are Kasienka’s friends, their difference to her in this regard serves to further highlight her Otherness. Religion is not mentioned in the school context. That the students stand in silence to remember the terrorist attack on the London underground in 2011 in ‘July 7’ as opposed to praying suggests that the school environment is secular. The auto-image of Kasienka as Catholic and Polish is thus contrasted against Dahlia who is Muslim, William who is conceived as spiritual, but not in a Christian sense, and the girls in school whose behaviour could be perceived as un-Christian. Crossan employs religion to construe Kasienka’s ‘Polishness’ but also to construct her as ‘Other’ among the different characters.

As discussed above, an Irish identity has been constructed in the past in contrast to an English image. Leerssen ascertains that part of the construction of a non-English Irish identity was achieved through a strong association with the Catholic religion. He argues

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<sup>90</sup> Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid., p. 102.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid., p. 108.

that after the Reformation ‘Irishness becomes increasingly defined in terms of Roman Catholicism, and Roman Catholicism in Ireland becomes increasingly an assertion of non-Englishness.’<sup>93</sup> Valerie Coghlan concurs with this contention and asserts that ‘To be Irish was synonymous with being Catholic, and until quite recently a lingering suspicion prevailed in some quarters that non-Catholics are not properly Irish.’<sup>94</sup> Although the Irish-as-Catholic identity is not strongly evoked in ‘Black Hoodie’, there certainly are allusions to it. Coghlan notes how religion can be ‘invisibly present but not discussed.’<sup>95</sup> In this novel, references to religion become apparent in the protagonist’s speech patterns and exclamations: ‘You’re probably thinking, Jesus, he’s giving in quickly. Thank God he wasn’t in the War of Independence, or whatever.’<sup>96</sup> The reference to God and Jesus creates a link to a Christian religion. This is replicated later when the protagonist includes the word ‘Jaysis’ in an observation. (Jaysis is a colloquialisation of Jesus, usually uttered in a strong North Dublin accent.) Doyle also creates an intertextual reference through an allusion to Jim Sheridan’s film, *In the Name of the Father* (1993). The title alludes to a Christian prayer, ‘Our Father’ (Catholic)/ ‘The Lord’s Prayer’ (Protestant). Because of the setting in Dublin in the south of Ireland rather than in the north, the link with the Catholic religion is more likely where it is the dominant faith.<sup>97</sup> Although the references are subtle, they nonetheless indicate the connection between religion and an Irish auto-image. This is contrasted against the image of Ms Nigeria held

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<sup>93</sup> Leerssen, ‘Wildness, Wilderness, and Ireland’, p. 35.

<sup>94</sup> Valerie Coghlan, ‘What Foot Does He Dig With?’, p. 56.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>96</sup> Doyle, p. 145.

<sup>97</sup> ‘Roman Catholicism remained the predominant faith of Ireland in 2011 as it has done, according to census records, since at least 1881. [...] While the proportion of Catholics continued to decline in 2011, to reach its lowest point at 84 per cent, its congregation, at 3.86 million strong, was the highest since records began.’ (CSO, ‘Profile 7: Religion, Ethnicity and Irish Travellers’, p. 6.) <http://www.cso.ie/en/census/census2011reports/census2011profile7religionethnicityandirishtravellers-ethnicandculturalbackgroundinireland/> (Accessed 28 May 2013).

by the Gardaí who associate her with the ‘Dark Continent’ concept of Africa. Janos Riesz discusses this image of Africa and explicates on how Africa was ‘A synonym for what was unknown, a distant land of fables’.<sup>98</sup> Riesz emphasises the association with a ‘lack of rational, moral or legal restraint on a lifestyle dominated (animal-like) by physical urges.’<sup>99</sup> This image is in evidence in the story as the Gardaí tell Ms Nigeria to ‘Shut your sub-Saharan mouth,’ and ask for ‘The jungle drums in your case, love’, instead of a contact number.<sup>100</sup> The vision of Africa as an inferior place populated by a backward, barbaric people is further reinforced by a reference to torture: ‘And don’t worry, he says. – We don’t torture people in this country. Amn’t I right, lads?’<sup>101</sup> However, Doyle firmly calls this perception into question both in the exchange between Ms Nigeria’s father and the Garda (which will be discussed below in the section on language) and in the reference to Jim Sheridan’s film. The protagonist’s comment that he is ‘like your man coming out of the court at the end of *In the Name of the Father*: ‘I am an inno-cent mon!’” generates a parallel between the treatment received by him and his friends, including Ms Nigeria, and the main character in the film. *In the Name of the Father* is based on the real life story of Gerry Conlon who was falsely accused of involvement with the bombing of a pub in Guildford in the UK which killed four off-duty British soldiers and a civilian in 1974. The film depicts Conlon’s struggle for justice and freedom after his arrest. The film also portrays the beating and torture he is subjected to by the British police to force him to confess. Through the invocation of the

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<sup>98</sup> Janos Riesz, ‘Africa’, in *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters, A Critical Survey*, ed. by Manfred Beller and Joep Leerssen (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 79-82 (p. 79).

<sup>99</sup> Ibid.

<sup>100</sup> Doyle, p.141.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid., p. 142.

film the Gardaí are likened to the British police, both figures of justice and authority, who are guilty of injustice and wrong-doing. The Gardaí's allusion to torture in Africa is therefore ironic, given they are in fact responsible for mistreating Ms Nigeria. This reference is characteristic of Doyle's subversive sense of humour. British characters have traditionally been categorised as not-Irish and have often been portrayed negatively in Irish fiction to enhance the positive image of Irish characters.<sup>102</sup> The allusion to the similarities between the behaviour of the British police in the film and the Gardaí in 'Black Hoodie' emphasises their transgression in their treatment of Ms Nigeria. In this depiction, negative traits associated with the established 'Other', the British, are evoked and transferred on to the Irish characters. The stereotype of a Catholic Irish identity is thus elicited through speech patterns and Doyle exploits the established connection between British characters and negative qualities to critique the racist behaviour of the Gardaí.

The strongest use of religion as an indicator of national character is evident in *The Cinnamon Tree*. Catholicism is used in the construction of Irish characters and as a means to distinguish them from Yola and her community. The first three Irish characters presented in the story are religious. Leerssen affirms that Ireland 'was famous for the important role its monks and missionaries had played in the revival of Christian learning'.<sup>103</sup> Flegg engages strongly with this 'Saints and Scholars' image of Irishness and draws on the history of Irish missionaries in Africa. The first Irish character represented, Sister Martha, upholds this stereotype as she is a nun and the headmistress of the local school. She is described by Yola as a 'little Irishwoman', who 'looked like

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<sup>102</sup> Laura Dooley, 'Representing "Others"'.

<sup>103</sup> Beller and Leerssen, p. 192.



an alert pink-and-grey parrot on a perch.’<sup>104</sup> This contrasts with the depiction of her father who is perceived as ‘frightening’ in his ceremonial outfit.<sup>105</sup> Sister Martha’s Catholic faith is an indicator of her Otherness as she disagrees with polygamy, a common practice in Yola’s community. This difference is acknowledged by Yola after Gabbin offers to marry her:

No boy could marry his first cousin, even as one of many wives. Then there was Sister Martha: she’d be horrified by the suggestion. The Catholic Church took a very serious view of men, even chiefs like father, who had more than one wife.<sup>106</sup>

From Yola’s perspective, Sister Martha represents the Catholic Church and this is connected to her identity as an Irish person. Sister Martha’s religion is also reflected in the way she chooses to interpret Gabbin’s actions. She perceives Gabbin’s marriage proposal as noble and calls him, ‘the perfect little Christian!’<sup>107</sup>

This connection between the Catholic Church and images of Irishness is reinforced later in the novel when an Irish plane passenger gives Yola a medal with Saint Christopher on it. The passenger’s faith is also reflected in her expression ‘God bless you child.’<sup>108</sup> The only detail provided about the medal is that it is a ‘white metal medal of a saint, a child on his shoulder and waves about his feet.’<sup>109</sup> The significance of the medal as being that of Saint Christopher, the patron saint of travellers is not explained. It is intimated by the comment ‘I’m sure he’s sorry he’s late, but he will help you on your travels, dear,’ but this is not sufficient to explain the relevance of the medal to Yola or the reader.<sup>110</sup> Flegg

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<sup>104</sup> Flegg, p. 20.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

assumes a certain familiarity on behalf of the reader with Christian saints and their patronage in order to understand this exchange. The medal is only explained to Yola twenty-six pages later by another Irish character, Fintan: ““That’s Saint Christopher,” he commented, turning the medal over. ‘He’ll look after you – he looks after travellers.’”<sup>111</sup> Yola also meets another two Irish nuns in the course of the story. Sister Attracta collects her from the airport and later the principal of her school is addressed as Mother Superior, indicating her status as the head of an order of nuns. Catholicism is also associated with Yola’s friend from school who invites her to spend Christmas with her. This experience is novel for Yola and she enjoys learning about new things such as decorating a Christmas tree. This communicates to the reader that the Catholic religion and its related holidays are not familiar to Yola and develops the strong correlation between Irish characters and the Catholic religion.

All of the Irish characters represented in *The Cinnamon Tree* are in some way associated with the Catholic religion. The presence of religious Irish characters outweighs that of any of the other characters represented and confirms the image of the Irish as religious, and specifically as Catholic. Unlike the Irish characters, the Norwegian characters, Hans and Knutt, the only two other main white characters that are portrayed in the novel, are not connected to any religion. Yola’s own beliefs are not overtly discussed. There is some mention of ‘medicine men’ and ‘spirits’ that fight for her life when she is injured. However, it is clear that the Catholic religion is employed by the author to assist in the construction of Irish characters and furthermore, to affirm their place as ‘Other’ from Yola’s perspective.

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<sup>111</sup> Ibid., p. 98.

All of the authors employ religion as a tool to assist in the construction of national characters and in order to help define certain characters as ‘Other’. Both Doyle and Flegg draw on the stereotype of an Irish Catholic character although Flegg is much more overt in this endeavour. Crossan applies the Catholic image to reinforce the portrayal of a Polish national character. In each text, religion becomes a marker of identity through and against which other characters can be formed and defined.

### **Language**

Language plays an important role in all three novels. The control of English that characters possess or, that they are perceived to possess, has implications for their portrayal and expectations of them. Language is central to Kasienka’s predicament in *The Weight of Water*. She is Othered and feels like an ‘Other’ because of her lack of proficiency in English. The reader is told that she feels nervous and has to practice what she says in her head:

I know I am not at home  
When talking makes my tummy turn  
And I rehearse what I say  
Like lines from a play  
Before opening my mouth.<sup>112</sup>

‘I know I am not at home’ has a double meaning. She is literally not at home in Poland, but she is also metaphorically not at home because she is uncomfortable speaking English. The reference to a play and rehearsing lines suggests the idea of a performance and the existence of an audience. Kasienka is ‘Other’, subject to the Lacanian gaze. As expounded by Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, the concept of the gaze has important

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<sup>112</sup> Crossan, p. 6.

considerations in the power/knowledge relationship.<sup>113</sup> Using the panopticon prison design as a prime example, he explains how behaviour can be influenced as a result of one's lack of knowledge about whether or not they are being observed. The layout of this design ensures that inmates can be seen at all times from a central viewing point. However, there is an imbalance in the power dynamic as the inmates are unable to see when they are being observed. As a result, they must act as if they are always being watched. Kasienka's self-awareness of her Otherness has an impact on her behaviour and perception of herself. She feels that she is watched, that she is inferior. This sense of inferiority is heightened when she goes to school. The teacher is described as 'Crouching down,/ Resting her hands on her knees/ As though summoning a spaniel.'<sup>114</sup> Kasienka is twelve, almost thirteen but is treated like a small child. This is linked to her ability to speak English as the teacher asks: 'Do you speak English, dear?', and is relieved to discover that she does even though Kasienka is embarrassed to use her, 'crooked English.'<sup>115</sup> The lack of power that Kasienka can exert as a consequence of her Polishness and her associated deficiency in the English language is compounded by her name. Kasienka embodies the 'Other' also through her Polish name which becomes anglicised, changed to Cassie, without her consent by the teacher. The teacher associates Kasienka with an 'Other' Polish identity and has the power to change her name, while Kasienka is cautioned by her mother not to correct it. Kasienka's English also determines her placement in a class with eleven-year olds even though, as she asserts: 'I don't read well/ In English./ That is all I can't do.'<sup>116</sup> Kasienka is defined by her lack of

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<sup>113</sup> Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: the birth of the prison* (London: Penguin, 1991).

<sup>114</sup> Crossan, p. 10.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

ability in English rather than her capability in other areas. Crossan's depiction of the ineptitude of the teacher to recognise this could be indicative of a wider criticism of the education system that views immigrant students in this way, in terms of deficit rather than showing an appreciation for what they contribute and are capable of. This is underlined in 'Examinations' where Kasienka is given extra time that she does not need to complete a maths exam. When she finishes an hour early the invigilator is annoyed and tells her to read over her work but she does not 'Because I don't have special needs./ And I'm not eleven.'<sup>117</sup> After this exam 'Mrs Warren admits her mistake'.<sup>118</sup> Kasienka constantly questions the teachers throughout the novel. In 'Change', she describes them as 'bored teachers/ Who don't seem/ To notice I'm new.'<sup>119</sup> In 'Group Work', she is critical of the way they divide up groups and comments that 'Teachers aren't stupid./ But maybe they think we are'.<sup>120</sup> The most negative portrayal is apparent in 'Teachers' where she is resentful that they do not notice that she is being bullied: 'They see what they want/ Because if they didn't it would be a lot of work,/ And they don't have time for this; [...] But why can't they just ask if I'm OK?'<sup>121</sup> This could suggest that some teachers are failing immigrant students.

Polish becomes a secret language that other people do not understand. The teacher does not realise that the boys speaking Polish to Kasienka are saying things a girl 'Should not hear/ If she is any kind of/ Lady.'<sup>122</sup> *Babcia* does not like Coventry because 'No one

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<sup>117</sup> Crossan, p. 57.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>119</sup> Ibid.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid., p. 48.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., p. 131.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

speaks Polish./ “Why don’t they try?””<sup>123</sup> English is perceived as more valuable. Mama chides *Babcia* criticising that she has ‘Only a little Russian,’ and asks why she doesn’t try to learn English.<sup>124</sup> Kasienka is glad when Kanoro cannot understand what is being said when Mama and *Babcia* argue. This gap in understanding serves to emphasise Kasienka’s difference, her Otherness, when surrounded by those that speak English. When Kasienka finally stands up to Clair, it is Polish she speaks, not English. This is because Polish is where she feels she has more power and control but also because Polish, as an ‘Other’ language, is more threatening and intimidating to Clair. Thus, language becomes a signifier of Otherness on two levels. Kasienka’s inability to speak fluent English identifies her as ‘Other’ in school where she is perceived as inferior and placed in a class below her academic level. The Polish language also emphasises her difference as other people fail to understand it and even her name is transformed to the English-sounding ‘Cassie’.

The novel is about the importance of being able to speak out but for Kasienka this difficulty is exacerbated by her level of English. Kasienka is foreign and because of this she has to prove her value. Kasienka is not in control and it is because of this that swimming is so valuable to her. Swimming is a universal activity and one she has command of: ‘Water is another world:/ A land with its own language/ Which I speak fluently.’<sup>125</sup> In the water, she is equal and can reveal her proficiency. It is through swimming that Kasienka meets William. Because of this circumstance, her English is not a barrier. Swimming also helps her to overcome her difficulties with Clair.

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p. 213.

The role of English as a means of exerting power is also evident in 'Black Hoodie'. In contrast to Kasienka, the 'Other' character in this text, Ms Nigeria, has an excellent command of the English language. The protagonist admires this ability and compares her to a newsreader because of her eloquence: 'She always talks like that, like she's on the news or something. I like it – a lot.'<sup>126</sup> Ms Nigeria is intelligent and articulate. This is juxtaposed against the Irish characters depicted that are often foolish and inarticulate. When Ms Nigeria is explaining the idea for their mini-company, the teacher misinterprets Ms Nigeria and not the other way around. Ms Nigeria is also clever enough to recognise the Gardaí's error by pointing out that they have not yet left the shop and therefore are not guilty of shoplifting: 'And we can tell; it's on their big faces – she's caught them rapid.'<sup>127</sup> Ms Nigeria's articulateness is contrasted against that of the other Irish characters that compare poorly. Once in the Garda van, not-Superman's brother becomes incomprehensible and begins to babble:

He's mumbling in a language that isn't English, and I don't think it's Irish. I sit beside him in French, and it's not that either. I stop looking at him. I'm afraid his head will start spinning, like your woman in *The Exorcist*.<sup>128</sup>

The protagonist himself also has an issue explaining events to the Garda: 'Like ... I start again. But I don't know how to start.'<sup>129</sup> While the description of all the Irish adults in the story is less than favourable (Ms They-Don't-Know-I-Was-Locked-Last-Night, Mr I'm-So-Cool-In-My-Jacket, Fat Larry) the most negative portrayal is reserved for the Gardaí. From early on, the Gardaí are depicted as lazy, greedy and somewhat incompetent. The reader is told they learn how to say 'Move along' in 168 different

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<sup>126</sup> Doyle, p. 134.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>128</sup> Ibid., p. 139.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

languages. Even before they learn how to eat their jumbo rolls without getting butter all over their shirts.’<sup>130</sup> The Gardaí attempt to confine Ms Nigeria to the place of ‘Other’ but are proven inferior when they come into contact with Ms Nigeria’s father. In contrast to the comical way the Gardaí are depicted, Ms Nigeria’s father is serious:

Her da’s arrived and he looks the business. His suit is blue and serious looking. But the really serious thing about him is his face. He’s the most serious-looking man I’ve ever seen. I’d say Ireland’s overall seriousness went up at least 25 per cent the day he got here from Nigeria. [...] I can tell from the heads on the cops: they wish they were in sunny Baghdad.<sup>131</sup>

Ms Nigeria’s father is powerful and commands attention, ‘he’s massive and so is his voice.’<sup>132</sup> Similar to the portrayal of Yola’s father in *The Cinnamon Tree*, he is described as impressive and frightening. In response ‘The Fed is trying to make himself taller. He’s up on his toes.’<sup>133</sup> While Ms Nigeria’s father is confronting the Garda, the protagonist’s father wants to escape. The difference between the two is further apparent in the way they speak. Ms Nigeria’s father has a booming voice that ‘takes over the room, the station, and the street,’<sup>134</sup> whereas the protagonist’s father ‘kind of whispers.’<sup>135</sup> The Irish characters are meek and powerless when compared with the Nigerian characters that exude confidence and control. The Garda attempts to meet Ms Nigeria’s father on the same level but is found inadequate: ‘You can tell. He’s trying to talk like her da. But it’s not working. ‘Perspective’ comes out like he’s not all that

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Doyle, p. 151.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid., p. 152.



certain what it means.’<sup>136</sup> Once again this serves to highlight the superiority of the Nigerian characters and contrasts negatively with the foolish behaviour of the Irish ones.

In *The Cinnamon Tree*, the English language is also an indication of Otherness. Yola’s tribe do not speak English. For Yola, English is a ‘private language’ for her and her mother: ‘Mother had always said it would help Yola to get a job, but what Yola really wanted to do was travel.’<sup>137</sup> English is conceived of as granting access and providing opportunities both in terms of work and travel. Crucially, both of these options result in a move away from the compound and tribal responsibilities, the life familiar to Yola. English is the language through which Yola communicates with the characters identified as ‘Other’ in the novel, (i.e. the white characters), and by association is thus imbued with Otherness. The language that Yola speaks within her community is not named. This is significant as it indicates that the English language is special and different. Yola’s command of English is closer to Ms Nigeria’s level than Kasienka’s but there are still limits to her knowledge. Although her grasp of the language is good and it allows her to converse with the white characters in the novel, she reveals that ‘There’s so much I don’t know. Just because I speak English, people think I understand, but I don’t really.’<sup>138</sup> This comment is preceded by her observation about Fintan: ‘He’s nice, but ... well, he’s European and I’m African.’<sup>139</sup> This remark is indicative of the dual perspective in the story and acknowledges that they are ‘Other’ to each other and even the adoption of the ‘Other’ language (English) on Yola’s behalf cannot bridge that gap between them. Language thus becomes the means through which Yola experiences the

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<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Flegg, p. 36.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p. 94.

<sup>139</sup> Ibid.

‘Other’ but is also the way in which she expresses both her and Fintan’s roles as ‘Others’ within the text.

Language functions as a means through which authors can reveal the Otherness of characters in the texts. Ms Nigeria’s command of English subverts the image of an ‘Other’ who cannot speak and foils the Gardaí’s attempt to confine her to this role. Kasienka’s English and Polish highlight her Otherness in contrast to the other characters. The English language provides Yola’s access to the world of the ‘Others’ but is also the means through which she acknowledges Otherness, both within herself and the white characters.

### **Appearance**

The physical descriptions in texts provide the reader with an insight into what is perceived as ‘Other’ as usually an author will not feel the need to describe what the reader already knows. Usually, a reader will assume that the protagonist is similar to them. The perspective will determine what gets described and what is placed in the role of ‘Other’.

As discussed above, ‘Black Hoodie’ is told from the perspective of an Irish character. There are very few physical descriptions of the Irish characters’ appearance, but the Nigerian characters are portrayed in specific ways that indicate their place as ‘Other’ and serve to depict the Irish characters in a negative light by comparison. Ms Nigeria is stated to be Nigerian, ‘lovely’ and black, whereas the protagonist describes himself as a

‘white fella.’<sup>140</sup> Ms Nigeria is placed in the role of ‘Other’ because she is black. That she is different from the white norm is apparent:

No one really noticed me until I started going with her, kind of. Now they all look, and you can see it in their faces; they’re thinking, *There’s a white fella with a black girl*, or something along those lines.<sup>141</sup> (Emphasis in original)

The protagonist on his own is unworthy of attention because he is so unremarkable. As a white Irish person, he fits in with the norm and holds no interest for casual observers. However, the same is not true for Ms Nigeria. She is identified as ‘Other’, different, foreign, because of her skin colour. Precisely because of her perceived Otherness, she is noticed and as a result, so is the protagonist. The Gardaí are described as ‘three big men and a huge woman.’<sup>142</sup> However, unlike the description of Ms Nigeria’s parents where ‘big’ is seen in a positive light, this depiction is not complimentary. This is revealed in the protagonist’s observation that ‘Black-big has a lot more going for it than white-big.’<sup>143</sup> The garda that interrogates the protagonist is compared to Henry Fonda in *Once Upon a Time in the West* and later to Dennis Hopper. Both of these allusions contribute to a negative view of the garda. Henry Fonda’s character in the film is a villain. Dennis Hopper also plays the villain in a number of his films. These comparisons paint the garda in a negative light and associate him with misdeeds. Conflicting with this unattractive image of the Gardaí, Ms Nigeria’s parents are depicted in a positive way. Although described as ‘black’ and ‘big’, this is not considered unfavourable. Rather, this adds to their construction as confident and impressive people. Ms Nigeria’s father is compared to ‘a whole African country,’ and her mother is ‘the country’s biggest

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<sup>140</sup> Doyle, p. 130.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid., p. 130.

<sup>142</sup> Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

lake.’<sup>144</sup> This is in direct opposition to the image of the protagonist’s father. While Ms Nigeria’s father is wearing a blue suit and is ‘serious looking’, the protagonist’s own father ‘smiles like it hurts’ and is anxious to leave the station without any further trouble. Ms Nigeria’s mother is also described as ‘lovely’ and her hairstyle is ‘not a ma’s hairstyle at all.’<sup>145</sup> The implication inherent in this comment is that it is not a hairstyle with which the Irish character is familiar. Ms Nigeria’s mother is attributed the role of ‘Other’ because she does not meet the expectations of an Irish character’s image of a mother. However, it is important to note that the Irish protagonist views this difference in a positive light. He is attracted to Ms Nigeria and finds her mother beautiful. Doyle highlights that different isn’t necessarily bad and the ‘Other’ need not be feared. The association of the black characters with positive attributes such as beauty, intelligence, confidence, power and control act as an inverse reflection of the Irish characters who are portrayed as weak, mistaken, inarticulate, racist and villainous. Appearance is an element that Doyle takes advantage of in order to place the Nigerian characters in the role of ‘Other’. However, by using positive hetero-images of the Nigerian characters to contrast against the negative auto-images of the Irish characters, Doyle allows the reader to reflect on the representations and the inherent criticisms within the text.

The black character in *The Weight of Water*, Kanoro, is also portrayed in a positive light. Like the characters in ‘Black Hoodie’, Kanoro is depicted as beautiful and is described as ‘So, so black!’<sup>146</sup> This is contrasted against Kasienka who is ‘too white.’<sup>147</sup> Crossan

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<sup>144</sup> Ibid., p. 151.

<sup>145</sup> Doyle, p. 153.

<sup>146</sup> Crossan, p. 61.

evokes the stereotypical African image of tribal life, close to nature, carefree: ‘Kanoro remembers stories/ Of elephants and tribal chiefs.’<sup>148</sup> However, Crossan also refutes this image by disassociating it with Kanoro’s reality and ascribing them the place of ‘myths and histories/ Meant to entertain,/ They are not his own truths.’<sup>149</sup> In this evocation of a recognised image and subsequent disavowal of it as a reality that concerns Kanoro, Crossan subverts a stereotype. She engages with the image only to distance Kanoro from it. Crossan engages in a similar process when she reveals that Kasienka is scared by Kanoro ‘Until he smiles’.<sup>150</sup> Kanoro is constructed as an ‘Other’ who is ‘blacker’ than anyone Kasienka has ever met. The image of the ‘Dark Continent’ is conjured with this description. Kanoro is foreign and something to fear. However, this image is immediately found to be false as he smiles: ‘Pink,/ All gums,/ A smile that makes his eyes twinkle.’<sup>151</sup> The image is further dismantled as it is revealed that he is a paediatrician. This profession endows Kanoro with the positive traits of both intelligence and friendliness. He is described as a ‘good man’.<sup>152</sup> Kanoro’s wisdom and calm, patient personality is also displayed when he comments ‘It is Kanoro who is ignorant,/ If he thinks he is better./ There is honour in all things,’ in response to Mama’s observation that the ‘Ignorant English’ think they are better than him because he works as a cleaner in the hospital.<sup>153</sup> Unlike Mama and Kasienka who could be identified as economic migrants, there is a suggestion that Kanoro may be a refugee. When Kasienka discovers Mama and a visibly upset Kanoro in their room, she wants to know if Kanoro

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<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid., p. 118.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid.

<sup>150</sup> Ibid., p. 44.

<sup>151</sup> Ibid.

<sup>152</sup> Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. p. 45.

explained the scar on his cheek but she is given no clarification. In projecting the positive image of Kanoro as a refugee who is happy to work in a job for which he is overqualified and his eventual acquisition of a job as a doctor, Crossan recants any negative perceptions of refugees as freeloaders who take advantage of the welfare system.

The positive portrayal of Kanoro also serves to act as a foil to the depiction of Clair and the other girls at school who bully Kasienka. Clair is represented the archetypal English girl, she has 'long hair./ Hair that's flat/ And sits neatly/ On their shoulders.'<sup>154</sup> This contrasts to Kasienka's short, unruly hair that 'sticks up in/ The morning/ Like moody fur.'<sup>155</sup> The reference to fur follows a consistent allusion to animals that permeates the text. Kasienka feels that she is 'a fox surrounded by beagles./ They will eat me alive and spit out the fat.'<sup>156</sup> Kasienka is continually on the outside, inferior, hunted, due to her status as 'Other'. When Clair speaks to Kasienka, she associates her with a sexual 'Other' when she asks if Kasienka has short hair because she is a lesbian. The acknowledgement of this status as 'Other' is apparent in her decision to grow her hair 'And wear a flower in it,/ So I won't look/ Like a Polish lesbian/ Any more.'<sup>157</sup> Kasienka is also told that her schoolbag is '*all wrong*.'<sup>158</sup> She notices that she is hairy in comparison to the 'women/ In the pool/ With their velvety skin.'<sup>159</sup> Kasienka is also

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<sup>154</sup> Crossan, p. 80.

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid., p. 96.

perceived as different because of her clothes. When it rains she wears snow boots to school which makes '[t]he other children stare.'<sup>160</sup>

Both Kanoro and Kasienka are 'Others' because of their appearance. Neither fit in to the common perception of 'Englishness'. However, like in 'Black Hoodie' Kanoro's Otherness is represented in a positive way and serves to demonstrate the negative aspects of the English character. Kasienka's differences are highlighted as a means of reinforcing her position as 'Other' in the novel. She is foreign and this is apparent to her English counterparts in the way she looks and dresses.

In *The Cinnamon Tree* it is white people who constitute the 'Other'. The first mention of white people is in relation to a cinnamon tree 'planted long ago by the white people for its spicy bark, which they used to flavour their food.'<sup>161</sup> The difference of this group is communicated to the reader through the designation 'the white people', which suggests that they do not belong to the speaker's auto-group. This is further suggested through the identification of 'their food.' As a hetero-group their food differs. The first white person encountered in the text is Sister Martha who is compared to a parrot. This contrasts with Senior Mother who is portrayed as 'a vulture.'<sup>162</sup> The zoomorphic comparison of Sister Martha with a parrot associates her with a colourful, friendly and talkative bird while Senior Mother's comparison with a vulture induces an image of a dark, surly and sinister creature. Sister Martha is described as being perched on Father's right side while Senior Mother is 'hunched' on the left. The positive depiction of Sister Martha suggests that, despite her role as an outsider in the community, she is not feared,

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<sup>160</sup> Ibid., p. 30.

<sup>161</sup> Flegg, p. 12.

<sup>162</sup> Flegg, p. 21.

in contrast to Senior Mother who is portrayed in a more negative way as somewhat threatening. White people are not the norm in Yola's society and this is obvious in her observation that Gabbin had 'hardly ever seen a white woman before, let alone been hugged by one.'<sup>163</sup> The presence of a white person is also revealed as unusual by Sindu's reaction to Hans: 'Oh look, there's a white man!' said Sindu, waving excitedly.'<sup>164</sup> The sight of a white man is cause for excitement because it is so out of the ordinary. After meeting the eyes of a man in the car, 'Yola realised she had never smiled at a white man before.'<sup>165</sup> The Otherness of Hans as a white person is evident in Yola's surprise at his outstretched hand in greeting and her expectation of the texture of white skin:

She looked at his hand. What should she do? She had to balance while she freed her hand from her crutch in order to take his; it felt warm and strong. She had thought a white man's hand would be soft and flabby. He had a tousle of short fair hair and blue eyes. Sister Martha had blue eyes too, so Yola was no longer disturbed by them.<sup>166</sup>

A hand-shake as a form of introducing one-self appears to be a custom unfamiliar to Yola as she is surprised by it. Furthermore her expectation of what a white person's hand will feel like is mistaken. Yola's expectation that his hand would be 'soft and flabby' may suggest a connection between white people and laziness. This is reinforced later when Yola registers surprise that Hans has walked from the hill to the compound as she did not think 'that Europeans walked anywhere'.<sup>167</sup> The most obvious implication that white people are viewed as 'Other' is in the acknowledgment that blue eyes once 'disturbed' Yola. Yola is unaccustomed to seeing fair people and later finds it difficult

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<sup>163</sup> Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid., p. 34.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 44.



to believe that she is seeing Catherine because she is 'so fair and fuzzy'.<sup>168</sup> Yola finds white people unfamiliar and as a result finds it difficult to decipher their age.<sup>169</sup> She is also amused 'by how Europeans went pink when they were embarrassed.'<sup>170</sup>

Yola's perspective on a black person, Isabella, is also revealed and like the portrayals of black people in the other two texts, the character is associated with beauty:

Yola stared at her open-mouthed. She had expected a European, but this woman was African, vibrant and sophisticated at the same time. She was dressed very simply in tight blue jeans and a black halter-neck top. She was the most beautiful woman Yola had ever seen!<sup>171</sup>

It is noteworthy that Yola appears to be astonished that Isabella is 'African, vibrant and sophisticated at the same time'. An inference could be drawn that vibrant and sophisticated are qualities usually associated with a European person. Nonetheless, she is the most beautiful woman Yola has come across. It may also underline class issues. It is possible Yola feels intimidated by Isabella as for the first time she has become aware of a wider society in her country. Her experience at the compound has been limited and as a result, she may never have considered that there were more affluent African people than her.

Yola is also considered beautiful in the eyes of the Irish characters. Fintan refers to her leg as 'beautiful, like a young athlete's'<sup>172</sup>. One of the workers in the clinic admits that he is 'sick of pink!' and instructs Fintan to look at Yola's hands, 'Beautiful! Fintan, just

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<sup>168</sup> Ibid., p. 74.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>171</sup> Flegg, p. 65.

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

look at those, stroke them! Pure mahogany.’<sup>173</sup> Similar to the protagonist’s attraction to Ms Nigeria in ‘Black Hoodie’, Fintan also finds Yola alluring. This sets up a positive correlation between blackness and beauty. No white character is described in the same way, or referred to in relation to beauty at all.

The authors make use of physical descriptions to help construct images of ‘Other’ characters in the texts. Remarkably, white characters are transposed to the place of ‘Other’ in two of the texts and overall, the three texts promote positive images of their black characters. The black characters are associated with traits such as beauty, confidence, intelligence, power, strength, ambition, sensitivity, articulateness and friendliness. These depictions subvert old stereotypes of African characters as comical, dim-witted or bestial and liberate them from roles of servitude. Such characterisations are a positive step in the right direction. The inclusion of diverse characters in novels and texts for children is important. It is also important to pay attention to the kind of images presented. Texts that include diverse characters and promote equality are vital for intercultural education and should be included on school curricula.

The imagological examination of these three texts sought to answer three main questions:

1. Who is considered ‘Other’ in Irish YA literature?
2. How is an ‘Other’ character constructed and portrayed in Irish YA fiction?
3. Are new images of a modern Irish identity produced in these texts?

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

‘Other’ characters are still constructed in contrast to an auto-group and are still employed for the same reasons, either to bolster the auto-image of a group or criticise some aspect within it. However, as the analysis of these texts has demonstrated, the role of ‘Other’ can be adopted by a variety of national characters, including Irish. This marks a welcome change in the standard representation in Irish fiction of the British as ‘Other’ in the past and an Irish auto-image as white and Catholic. The image of the British as ‘Other’ is still recalled and can be employed by authors in identifying negative traits in characters (as Doyle illustrates in ‘Black Hoodie’). However, there appears to be a shift away from this depiction as the norm. The increase in immigration to Ireland over the last decade has increased diversity in Irish society and it is important that this ‘new Irish’ identity is portrayed in literature and investigated. An increase in the representation of diverse characters in Irish fiction for Young Adults should result in an increased choice on the English syllabus at second-level to ensure that diversity in society is presented and accepted as valuable and normal. This would help to guarantee that intercultural education occurs in the Irish education system. The three texts considered in this study champion difference and invite questioning of cultural stereotypes and are suitable and would be appropriate to use at second-level for this reason.

### **Using Imagology in the Classroom**

Students are first introduced to the concept of Imagology in the second class of the module. (The first class is concerned with surveying the students to gather information about them and their views on immigration and interculturalism.) To contextualise on the Irish situation with regard to immigration, information is provided to the students

about the level of immigration over the last decade and the laws relating to it. Significant terms like nationality and citizenship are discussed and defined. Prior to the examination of the first text, students are asked to engage in a number of activities to familiarise them with the core ideas involved in an imagological study, such as stereotypes, perspective and critical reading. The first exercise creates an awareness of the student's position in an intercultural setting. Students are asked to write down words in as many languages as they can and are then instructed to compare them with other students. This emphasises the range of languages spoken in the class and starts the conversation about interculturalism and what it means. It draws students' attention to the fact that they are knowledgeable about aspects of other cultures. It also draws attention to the most popular languages and leads to questions about why this is the case. The reason certain languages are offered in schools over others is questioned and explored. For example, why are French, German and Spanish the most common when a greater number of people in the world speak Mandarin? How does Ireland's position in Europe influence the kind of education provided and the values promoted? Most of the languages students are familiar with are European which creates an awareness of a Eurocentric perspective.

In the second activity students are asked to write down words they associate with being Irish. This reveals popular images and stereotypes and stimulates a conversation about what influences the images we hold of our own nation and others. In most classes there are non-Irish students and this allows an opportunity to discover if the views differ. In most cases they do not. In part, this may be because teenagers do not like to be identified as different and are unlikely to say something they think will highlight this.

Perhaps this occurs also, because the image of Ireland and Irishness is quite uniform. The same words were often suggested. This activity demonstrates that stereotypes are used in the formation of images about different countries and people. Students are asked to consider where these images are formulated and why and how they are disseminated. This alerts students to the power of representations. Following these activities the students are introduced to the theory of Imagology. Imagology is explained simply as a literary theory that examines stereotypes in literature. Students are informed that they will be engaging in this process as they read the texts assigned in the module.

Auto- and hetero-images and the concept of the 'Other' are described to students in basic terms. For the most part, the students do not use these technical terms but they understand what they are. Of prime importance are the kinds of questions Imagologists ask. Students are asked to use these questions and think about them after they have read and responded to a text. Using these questions the students are able to perform a rudimentary imagological analysis of the texts. This helps them to achieve a deeper critical reading as they question why authors have presented characters in certain ways and consider the use of stereotypes in the creation and representation of images in the text. It is valuable for students to learn to read imagologically because books can transmit dominant morals and values and project images that can be altered or maintained over time. By becoming cognisant of the way in which images are constructed and questioning why they change or persist, the student can become a better critical reader.

On their first reading of a text, students are asked to reveal their reactions. They do this by keeping a reading journal where they record their thoughts and feelings. They are

then asked to compare their response with other students. Discussion and group work are central to the module. Students are then reminded of the kinds of questions Imagologists ask and are instructed to apply these to the texts and reconsider their initial reception of the text in light of this. Usually 'Black Hoodie' is the first text introduced to the students. It is told from an Irish perspective, based in an Irish setting and features Transition Year students, so every student can relate to some part of it. This is followed by *The Weight of Water* where group work is paramount and students work to interpret individual poems before considering them as a whole. *The Cinnamon Tree* is read last because it is the longest text and one of the most complicated. This sequencing of the texts results in a gradual distancing from a familiar perspective for the majority of students. Secondary material is also used to develop their awareness of different perspectives. Factual material containing information about the lives of immigrants is provided through news articles, a documentary film and additional material collected from organisations working with and on behalf of migrants. 'The Walk of Life' game is particularly effective in encouraging students to consider different perspectives as they are placed in the position of an 'Other' and have to consider how that would impact on their treatment in and by Irish society. The game works by providing each student with a card with details concerning a specific identity and background. There are six categories: majority ethnic, minority ethnic, disability, LGBT, asylum seeker and refugee. For the course of the game the student adopts the identity on the card. They are required to think about their position and how they would be perceived in terms of this new identity. A series of statements are read aloud, such as: 'When I turn on the television or open the newspaper I expect to see people like me.' If students agree with

the statement based on their assumed identity, they step forward; if they disagree they step back. As the students do the activity, they are asked to explain why they are moving either forward or backward. At the end of the activity, students will be positioned at different points in accordance with their movement during the game. This allows students to contemplate different perspectives and consider the treatment afforded to various groups in society. It is through these activities and the discussions about the representations in texts that the students' attitudes and views towards immigration and interculturalism can be examined.

The students, as amateur Imagologists, do not produce an imagological analysis of the texts like that presented in the section above. However, they are capable of identifying some of the issues. For example, students are adept at recognising that the depiction of the Gardaí in 'Black Hoodie' is exaggerated in order to serve as a critique of racist behaviour. They also realise that the depiction of the Nigerian characters is overwhelmingly positive in comparison to that of the Irish and postulate on why this is the case. Students marvel at the representation of polygamy as the norm in *The Cinnamon Tree* and question the surprise of Yola's initial view of white people. They are encouraged to examine their own response to reveal why they felt surprise or disagreed. This draws attention to the fact that their personal experience and expectation has an impact on how they read and interpret texts. In turn, this leads them to question the stance of the author, which can form part of an imagological preoccupation. As the students employ the imagological questions and tools in their examination, they increase their critical reading ability and discover new things in the text about which they were previously unfamiliar and unaware. Because their opinion and reading is influenced by

their personal views, it can reveal their perspective on the other areas under examination in this study: immigration and interculturalism. The use of Imagology increases intercultural learning in the classroom precisely because it brings these issues to the fore and draws attention to them. When students become conscious of the fact that they are reading from one cultural perspective, they recognise that there are alternative viewpoints. The first step in increasing interculturalism is to acknowledge these multiple outlooks.

Using Imagology in the classroom in this way with texts that contain immigrant characters can enhance intercultural education as students are encouraged to query the images presented. The Intercultural Guidelines aim to enable students, ‘to respect and celebrate diversity, to promote equality and to challenge unfair discrimination.’<sup>174</sup> Including texts that feature diverse characters, such as those included in this study, is an important step in respecting and celebrating difference and promoting equality. This imagological approach to teaching English at second-level meets the requirements of an ‘inclusive English programme’ as set out in the NCCA Intercultural Guidelines:

- students are provided with opportunities to express and respond to differing opinions, interpretations and ideas, thereby broadening their social and cultural experiences while developing skills in listening, speaking, reading and writing; students are helped to recognise prejudice, bias and stereotyping in print and images, and thereby develop a critical consciousness with respect to all language use
- students are enabled to empathise with the experience and point of view of others by being encouraged to interpret texts orally and attempt performances and productions<sup>175</sup>

Initiating students into an imagological mindset is a practical way of ensuring that students recognise any bias in the images with which they are presented in texts,

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<sup>174</sup> NCCA Guidelines, cover.

<sup>175</sup> NCCA Guidelines, p. 65.



consider different viewpoints and are thus capable of challenging unfair discrimination. Rather than accepting the images presented to them, students learn to question the representations and consider perspectives different to their own. An imagological approach can enhance intercultural learning because it emphasises the existence and importance of other cultures and perspectives.

## **Imagology and Second-level Education**

In the Leaving Certificate students are asked to demonstrate critical reading ability and are rewarded for expressing independent viewpoints:

It is important that teachers avail of all of the opportunities offered by the Leaving Certificate English course to develop students' critical thinking skills and to enhance students' skills in critical literacy. Students should be encouraged to assess the validity of assertions in texts, to challenge the ideas presented and form independent views.<sup>176</sup>

Imagology can assist with developing such skills as it initiates students into the practice of investigating representations and teasing out various meanings and interpretations. If students are educated in this manner they can learn to develop the skills to both recognise and consider alternate viewpoints (an aspect of intercultural education) based on an in-depth critical reading. Imagology enhances critical pedagogy and learning because it asks students to reflect and react to texts but also encourages a re-examination with new questions and a fresh insight.

This chapter has outlined how Imagology can be used in the English class to enhance intercultural education. It highlights how Imagology combined with Rosenblatt's Reader Response theory can improve students' critical reading abilities. The importance of discussion and student-student-teacher interaction on an equal basis was underlined. The

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<sup>176</sup> 'Leaving Certificate Examination 2013 English Chief Examiner's Report', p. 21.

three texts incorporated in the research, Roddy Doyle's short story 'Black Hoodie', Sarah Crossan's novel *The Weight of Water* and Aubrey Flegg's book *The Cinnamon Tree*, were analysed imagologically under the four themes of perspective, appearance, language and religion. This examination revealed that while 'Other' characters in Irish texts are still constructed in contrast to a hetero-group and are employed for the same reasons, either to bolster the auto-image of a group or criticise some aspect within it, the role of 'Other' can be adopted by a variety of national characters, including Irish. This marks a welcome change in the standard representation of the British as 'Other' in some Irish texts in the past and an Irish auto-image as white and Catholic. It is argued that more books like these, which feature immigrant characters and represent diverse perspectives, need to be included on the English curriculum. However, the difficulty of finding books with an intercultural theme by Irish authors or, produced by Irish publishers, can present a challenge in this regard and is an issue of concern considering the increased diversity in Irish society. It is recommended that Imagology is incorporated in the second-level English syllabus at junior and senior levels to build understanding and develop critical reading skills. An imagological approach such as this would have the advantage of enhancing students' abilities to perform in-depth critical analysis and boost their confidence in expressing their own views, improving their capability to meet the requirements of the Leaving Certificate course as outlined above. This practice would also train students to read imagologically and could encourage a new, more intercultural reading approach to more traditional texts at senior level. The following chapter addresses the findings from the module.

# Chapter 4 Research Findings

As outlined previously, a module was implemented in nine schools to test an imagological approach to intercultural education and to investigate the views of second-level students on interculturalism and immigration. The findings from this research study are outlined here. The chapter is divided into two main parts. Part 1 focuses mainly on the quantitative findings from the survey responses. It involves a review of definitions of multiculturalism and interculturalism and issues connected to racism. Racism emerged as an issue in all schools in the study and is considered and explored in detail as a result. The students' understandings of and explanations for racism are outlined. An analysis of students' experiences of racism is also construed. Finally, students' views on intercultural education are discussed.

Part 2 contains an analysis of the qualitative data consisting of personal written responses and class discussions appropriated during the module. It concerns the analysis of students' responses to the various texts featured in the module. The application of imagological tools in their reading and reflection on the texts is evaluated. A documentary film, *Making Ireland Home*, studied during the module, is introduced. The analysis of the students' responses provides an indication of their attitudes towards minority groups in general. These two sections combined answer the first research question: What are the views of second-level students on immigration and interculturalism in Ireland? It is argued that the findings presented in this chapter attest

to the fact that an intercultural module can have an impact on students' understanding of immigration related issues (the third research question).

## **Part 1: Analysis of Survey Responses**

### **Defining Interculturalism and Multiculturalism**

As outlined in the introduction chapter, there is a difference between the terms 'multiculturalism' and 'interculturalism'. To reiterate, a multicultural society is considered one in which people of different cultures coexist but do not relate to one another. Each group stays within its own culture. Cross-cultural friendships are rare and people know very little about the culture, background or religion of those outside their own group. Segregation between groups is clear-cut and apparent. In contrast, an intercultural society is characterised by a well-integrated community where mutual knowledge and respect dominates. In such a community different cultures, backgrounds and religions are accepted as normal and are treated equally. Following on from this, and in line with the Intercultural Guidelines, intercultural education is defined as education that reflects cultural diversity, is accessible to ethnic minority groups, promotes equality and challenges unfair discrimination. As identified earlier, one of the aims of this study is to investigate what students thought about the level of intercultural education they receive at second-level. This research revealed that the majority of students were unfamiliar with the term 'intercultural'. Reflecting the literature, this would appear to suggest that despite the importance placed by policy makers on an intercultural approach to education at second-level, policy alone is not sufficient to

make an impact at ground level with students who remain on the whole largely unaware of the nature of interculturalism or its importance.

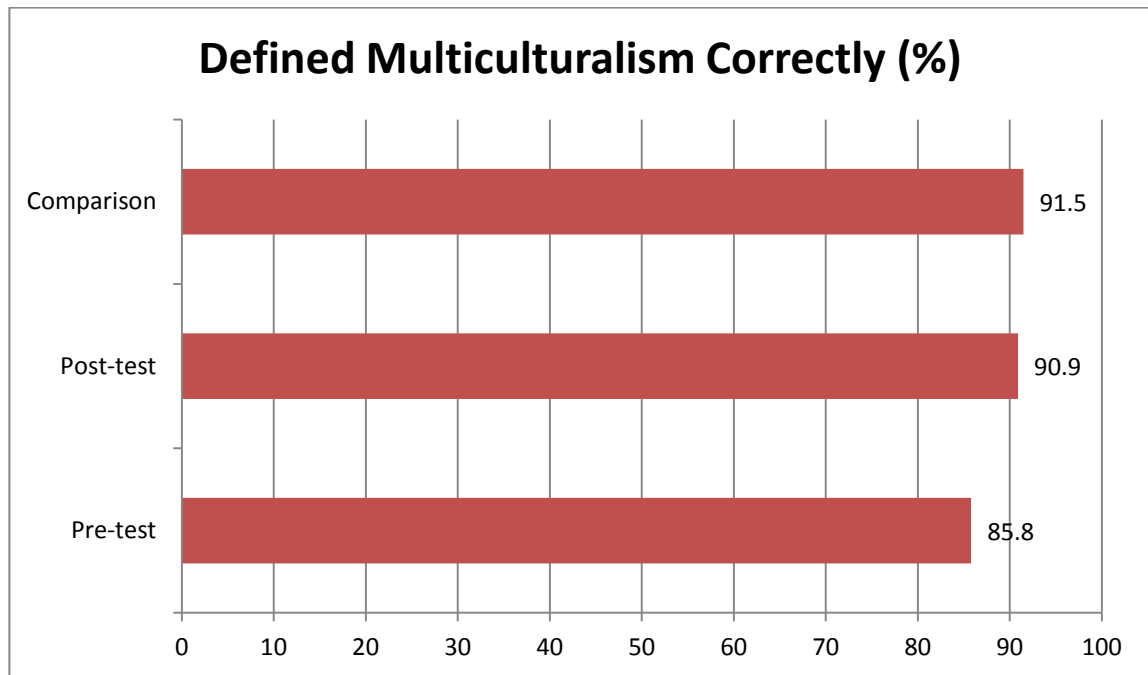
In the survey students were asked what they thought the terms ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘interculturalism’ meant. The results revealed that students’ knowledge of interculturalism was quite limited reflecting the observation that inspired this research, that intercultural practices and education are not prevalent at second-level in Ireland. In contrast there was a much greater familiarity and awareness of multiculturalism. Indeed, there was a significant difference between the number that could correctly explain multiculturalism and the number that were able to define interculturalism. In line with the definitions provided previously for multiculturalism and interculturalism, responses were coded as correct for multiculturalism if reference was made to multiple cultures, nationalities or religions. For interculturalism, reference to a connection between these cultures, nationalities or religions had to be made in order for it to be coded correct. While 88.8% of the total sample could accurately describe multiculturalism, less than half (45.3%) could provide an explanation for interculturalism.

## **Multiculturalism**

As explicated in the methodology chapter the survey was administered to students in three groups. The group participating in the module in each school was surveyed at the beginning and end of the module. The results from the first survey are referred to as the pre-test group and the results from the second survey are referred to as the post-test group. In some schools, the survey was also administered to a separate group of students who did not participate in the module. This comparison group served to highlight any differences from the test groups.

## Defining Multiculturalism Correctly: Pre-test, Post-test and Comparison Groups Compared

*Figure 4.1 Barchart: Defining Multiculturalism Correctly: Pre-test, Post-test and Comparison Groups Compared*



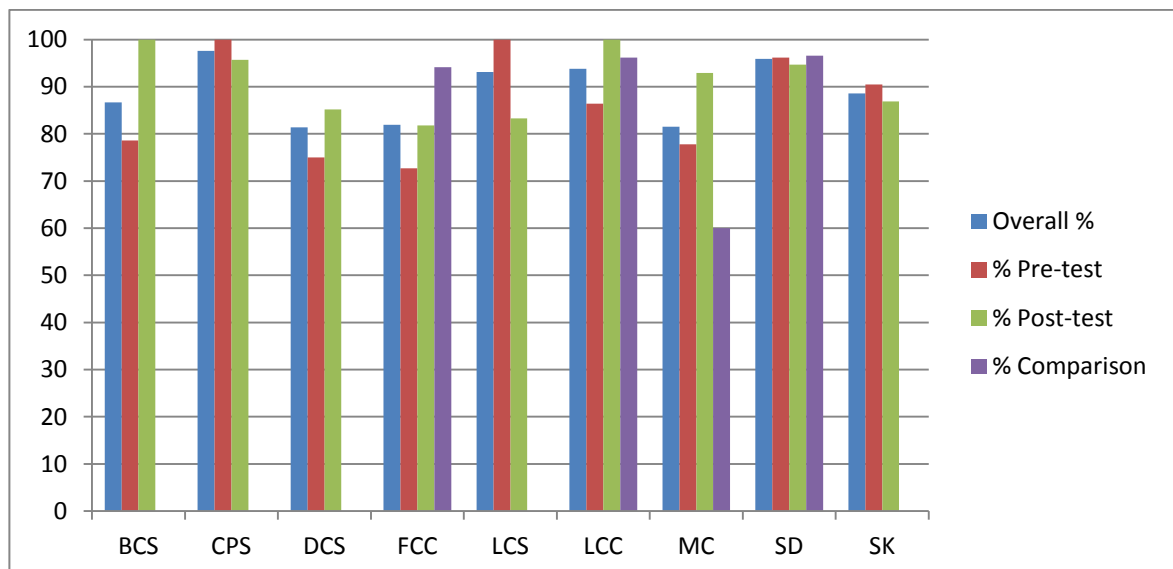
At the pre-test stage 85.8% of participants were able to explain multiculturalism in their own words. This increased to 90.9% for the post-test group indicating that the number of students who understood the term had increased after the module had been implemented. 91.5% of the smaller comparison group were also able to outline the meaning. Added to the fact that the comparison group was smaller, the pre-test and comparison groups were not matched which could explain why the comparison group performed better. The comparison group was made up of students in fifth year at three of the schools (Fawnlodge College (FCC), Merton High School (MC) and Silveroaks College (SD)) as there was only one Transition Year class in these schools. These fifth-year class groups could have included students who had completed Transition Year the

year before. As highlighted in the Critical Review, Tormey and Gleeson's study identified that students that had completed Transition Year were less likely to possess negative attitudes towards ethnic minority groups as a consequence of the fact that development education with a focus on global justice and inequalities tends to be taught during this school year. Development education includes a concentration on multicultural issues and accordingly, these students may have been more familiar with the meaning of multiculturalism.

### Defining Multiculturalism Correctly: Schools Compared

The bar chart below depicts the percentage of success students in each school had at correctly explaining the term multiculturalism at the different survey intervals. The blue colour correlates to the overall success rate taking all responses into account. The red colour relates to the pre-test survey answers and the green to the post-test results. As previously mentioned, comparison groups were only surveyed in four of the nine schools and these responses are represented in purple.

**Figure 4.2 Barchart: Defined Multiculturalism Correctly**



As evident from the graph, 100% of students at Collegewood School (CPS) and Larkvale School (LCS) correctly defined multiculturalism in the pre-test survey. Collegewood School (CPS) is the school with the highest proportion of non-Irish students (43.25%) and the only designated multi-denominational school in the study. Larkvale School (LCS) is an inter-denominational, mixed, DEIS, VEC school where 16.63% of the student body are non-Irish students. Conversely, students at both schools were less successful at the post-test stage. At Larkvale School (LCS), in addition to one student that responded with 'I don't know' the second time, another student provided a correct explanation in his own words in the first survey but copied and pasted a definition from the internet in the second survey. There was also a decline in the percentage of successful definitions at the post-test stage at Silveroaks College (SD) and Sycamore High School (SK). This could suggest that students became confused during the course of the module about the meaning of multiculturalism. However, another possible explanation is that students were impatient to complete the survey quickly and responded with 'I don't know' or a copy-and-pasted answer as a result. This is a more likely explanation as the proportion of students that initially were unsure or gave an incorrect explanation but provided the right answer in the second survey outweighs those that performed in the opposite way moving from correct to 'I don't know'.

While Fawnlodge College (FCC) had the lowest rate of success, over 70% of students were still able to provide an explanation of multiculturalism. Fawnlodge College (FCC) is an inter-denominational mixed VEC school with the second highest number of non-Irish students at 34.6%. It is therefore surprising that students are not familiar with the term. Merton High School (MC), Barton Community School (BCS) and Dunvara School



(DCS) also had less than 80% success. Dunvara School (DCS) is also an inter-denominational mixed VEC community school. It has DEIS status but has the third lowest percentage of non-Irish students at 5.92%. Merton High School (MC) is an all-girls DEIS Catholic secondary school and is the smallest school in the study. It has the lowest percentage of non-Irish students at 4.53%. Fawnlodge College (FCC) and Dunvara School (DCS) showed some improvement at the post-test stage although 18% and 14.8% of the respective groups still recorded an incorrect answer. Both Barton Community School (BCS) and Lonfield College (LCC) recorded 100% correct answers at the post-test stage.

These findings suggest that the type of school attended by a student is not an indicator of whether knowledge about multiculturalism is widespread. One might expect that schools with a higher proportion of non-Irish students and those with a multi or inter-denominational ethos would be more familiar with the term, but it does not appear to be the case in this study. This may support Kitching's assertion, discussed in the Critical Review, that some schools do not take adequate account of diversity but rather, project a Catholic white Irish identity as the norm. As a consequence of the lack of recognition, acknowledgement or celebration of diversity in these schools, students are not familiar with, and have a poor understanding of, the notions of multiculturalism and particularly interculturalism.

### **Defining Multiculturalism: Gender Comparison**

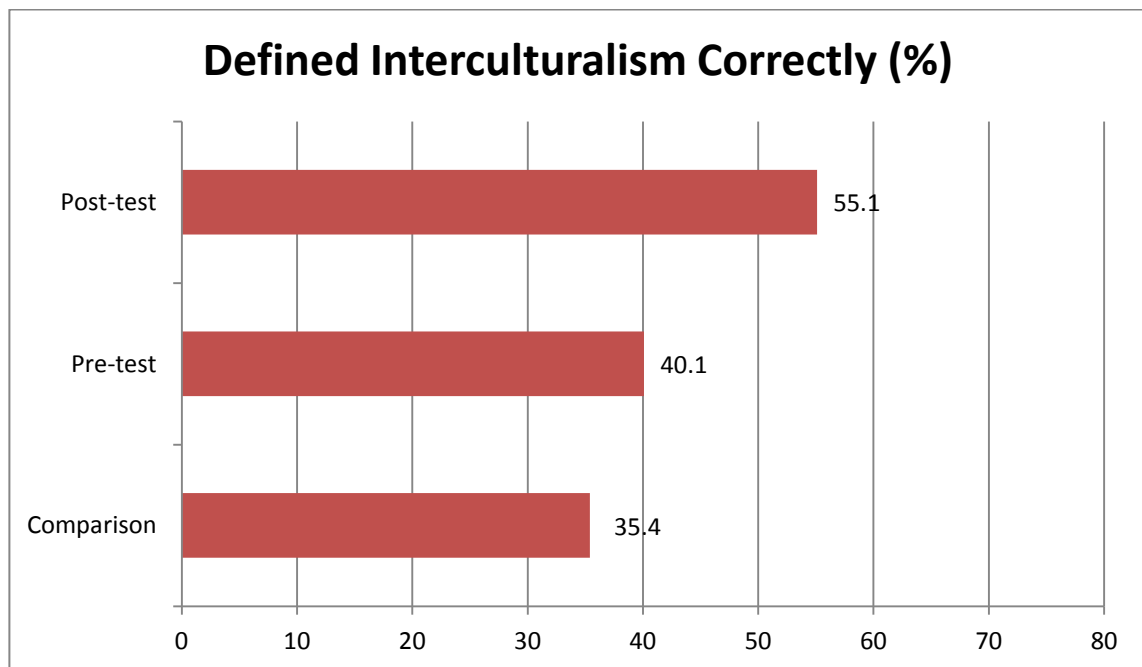
Although there were more boys than girls in the study, girls were more likely to say that they did not know. Girls were also more likely to get it wrong and to 'Google' the answer. It is possible that this discrepancy between the male and female responses is

connected to what psychologist Carol Gilligan refers to as adolescent girls' 'loss of voice'. According to this concept 'adolescent girls learn to suppress their true personalities and beliefs. Instead of saying what they really think about a topic, they say either that they have no opinion or what they think others want to hear.'<sup>1</sup>

## Interculturalism

### Defining Interculturalism Correctly: Pre-test, Post-test and Comparison Groups Compared

**Figure 4.3 Barchart: Defining Interculturalism Correctly: Pre-test, Post-test and Comparison Groups Compared**



As noted above, the majority of students failed to define interculturalism correctly. At the pre-test stage only 40.1% of students could explain the term. This increased to 55.1% for the post-test group. Contrasting with the results for the multiculturalism question, the comparison group performed worse than the pre-test group for this

<sup>1</sup> Jack and Rick McCown, *Psychology Applied to Teaching*, 13<sup>th</sup> edn (Australia: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2012), p. 131.

question with just 35.4% providing an accurate definition of interculturalism. In fact, no student from the Merton High School (MC) comparison group could provide an explanation.

Looking at the overall figures, those in the comparison group were least likely to provide a correct definition of interculturalism. This could in part be explained by the fact that students participating in the module were given some information about the nature of the module prior to completing the survey. This could have given them a better indication of the meaning than the other students who were not provided with any real knowledge.

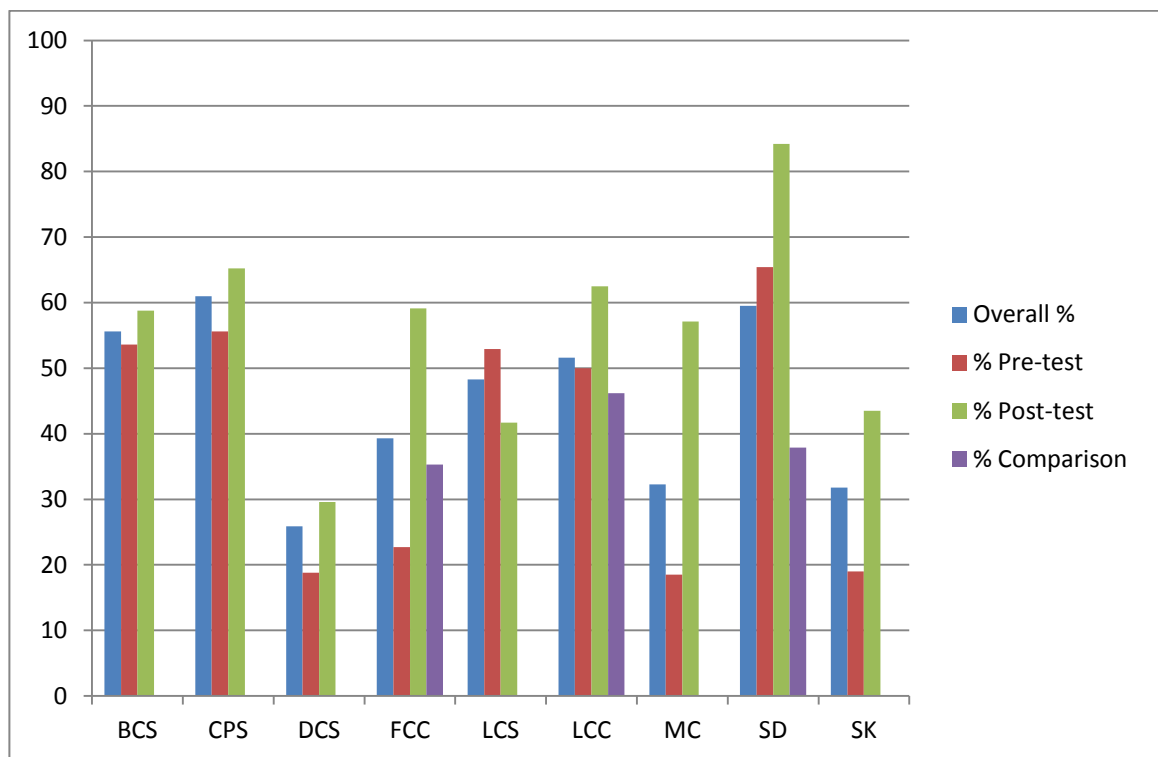
As indicated by the figures discussed above in relation to the individual schools, there was an increase in the percentage of students that were able to correctly define Interculturalism after participating in the module. While at the pre-test stage only 40.1% of those that completed the survey were able to provide a suitable explanation, following the module 55.1% of students that completed the post-test survey were able to accurately describe the word.

Unsurprisingly, of those that correctly defined interculturalism, the majority were from the post-test group. This would indicate that students' knowledge about interculturalism did increase as a result of their participation in the module.

### **Defining Interculturalism Correctly: Schools Compared**

As before, in the graph below the blue colour correlates to the overall success rate taking all responses into account. The red colour relates to the pre-test survey answers and the green to the post-test results. The comparison group is represented in purple.

**Figure 4.4 Barchart: Defined Interculturalism Correctly**



Consulting the bar chart above, it is apparent that the students at Silveroaks College (SD) were the most successful at defining interculturalism with 65.4% providing a correct definition at the pre-test stage. Silveroaks College (SD) is an all-boys Catholic secondary school. Silveroaks College (SD) is the second largest school in the study and has a non-Irish population of 10.54%. The students in the Transition Year class were described as high achievers by their English teacher. By contrast, only 37.9% of the students in the comparison group at Silveroaks College (SD) correctly defined interculturalism. Silveroaks College (SD) students also performed the best at the post-test stage where 84.2% of the group provided a correct definition. This indicates that awareness of interculturalism increased as a result of participation in the module.

Significant improvements were also recorded between the pre- and post-test stages for students at Merton High School (MC) and Fawnlodge College (FCC). Merton High School (MC) students were the least successful at the pre-test stage with only 18.5% providing a correct definition. However, this increased to 57.1% post-test. Dunvara School (DCS) students also had a similar rate of success at the pre-test stage where 18.8% provided a correct explanation. The improvement was not the same here as at Merton High School (MC) as only 29.6% of students provided a correct definition at the post-test stage. There was a high level of absenteeism at Dunvara School (DCS) which could in part explain why the improvement was less significant than that at Merton High School (MC) where the attendance was relatively good throughout the course of the module. Sycamore High School (SK) was the only other school where less than 20% of the pre-test group were able to correctly define interculturalism. Sycamore High School (SK) is an all-boys DEIS Catholic school with the second lowest proportion of non-Irish students at 5.58%. The percentage that correctly defined interculturalism increased to 43.5% at the post-test stage. Once again Collegewood School (CPS) students performed relatively well with 55.6% able to provide a correct explanation at the pre-test stage. This increased to 65.2% at the post-test stage.

Excluding Dunvara School (DCS), Fawnlodge College (FCC) students were significantly less successful than their other mixed VEC school counterparts at providing a correct definition for interculturalism. While Barton Community School (BCS), Collegewood School (CPS), Larkvale School (LCS) and Lonfield College (LCC) recorded percentages higher than 50% at the pre-test stage for correct definitions of interculturalism, only 22.7% of Fawnlodge College (FCC) students were correct. This

figure increased to 59.1% at the post-test stage but was still lower than the figures for Collegewood School (CPS), Larkvale School (LCS) and Lonfield College (LCC). Like Collegewood School (CPS), the students at Fawnlodge College (FCC) appear to be well integrated and friendships exist between students of different nationalities. It is somewhat perplexing that they performed so badly as a group in this context. However, this could be construed as a positive finding as perhaps students are unaware that they are engaging in interculturalism. It could just be usual everyday experience for them unworthy of comment or reflection. On the other hand, it could suggest that, similar to the findings identified by Devine earlier, non-Irish students have successfully assimilated to Irish norms and as such their Irish classmates fail to recognise that they are from a different culture. This point will be revisited later when the responses to question 24 ('I would like if my culture or background was talked about more in school') are discussed. Nonetheless, not all students at Fawnlodge College (FCC) felt that they were accepted and racism was a serious issue for some. One student's personal experience of racism will be expounded on later in this chapter.

### **Defining Interculturalism: One Culture?**

As discussed above, the majority of students in the pre-test and comparison groups were unable to correctly define interculturalism. Along with a high number of 'I don't know' answers, there was one other response that occurred with some frequency. A number of survey respondents defined Interculturalism as relating to one culture. As the question followed that on multiculturalism, it is possible that students assumed that interculturalism was the opposite of multiculturalism and having defined that as relating to many cultures, deduced that interculturalism meant one. Some of the students

believed it meant the complete opposite of its actual meaning relating it to the same culture or religion in an area. This lack of understanding is cause for concern. It is clear that these students did not think about other words that contain the prefix 'inter-' and the meaning of those, for example inter-denominational, international, interspersed etc. Although some of the students attended schools with an inter-denominational ethos, it is possible that they did not know the meaning or significance of this either. A surprising finding from the survey results was that many students were not actually aware of the ethos or denomination of their particular school. While this may be considered positive in the case of Catholic schools which may not be overtly religious, it is less encouraging for the inter-denominational schools where students stated that the school was Catholic, as it may suggest that this one faith dominates over others.

The school where students were most likely to relate interculturalism with one culture was in Sycamore High School (SK) where 33.3% of the pre-test and 34.8% of the post-test responses alluded to this. It is notable that six students answered the same way in both the pre- and post-test demonstrating that they had not learned the correct meaning throughout the course of the module. Only one student correctly changed their answer in the post-test survey. 33.3% of the pre-test answers at Merton High School (MC) also related to one culture. However, this decreased to 14.3% at the post-test stage.

At Dunvara School (DCS) there was also an increase in the number of students that believed interculturalism related to one culture from 18.8% at the pre-test stage to 22.2% at the post-test stage. The majority of these were accounted for by people who initially said 'I don't know'. It is disappointing that this answer was selected rather than the correct one. However, as mentioned previously, poor attendance was a serious issue

at this school and this may have been a contributory factor to the incorrect transmission of information about interculturalism.

Lonfield College (LCC) was the next school most likely to respond with this answer with 20.31% of overall responses relating to one culture/ same culture or religion. Lonfield College (LCC) is the largest school in the study and is an inter-denominational, mixed, vocational school. Although the largest school in the study it only has the sixth highest percentage of non-Irish students at 10.23%. This is most likely accounted for by the fact that the nearby Avondale Community College (ACC) has a non-Irish student population of 45.7%. However, of the 20.31%, the majority (12.5%) belonged to the comparison group that had not experienced the module. Two students corrected their answer in the post-test but two did not and one changed to the incorrect one culture definition, having correctly defined it in the pre-test survey. This may suggest that students were conferring with one another while completing the survey and this could account for the large proportion of incorrect answers. Lonfield College (LCC) was the school least open to the module and its content. Students voiced opinions about feeling threatened and feeling certain circumstances were unfair due to the large immigrant population in the area. This is discussed in further detail in the section relating to responses to texts below.

## **Racism**

The Intercultural Guidelines for schools outline that intercultural education should include anti-racist teaching: ‘Intercultural education is one of the key responses to the changing shape of Irish society and to the existence of racism and discriminatory



attitudes in Ireland.’<sup>2</sup> A positive result from the surveys indicated that the majority of students are familiar with the meaning of racism and understand how harmful it can be. Only 3.3% of the total surveyed did not provide a definition. Of those, a number offered an opinion about racism or provided an example of a racist slur rather than a definition as requested. However, this did indicate that they were aware of what racism was. A small number of people responded to the question with ‘I don’t know.’ However, two of these offered opinions on why they thought people were racist which indicated that they did understand the term.

### **Defining Racism**

The diagram below demonstrates the kind of terms used in the explanations provided by students in response to the question ‘Define racism’. Nvivo was used to analyse the responses and display the most popular words in a tag cloud. The Word Frequency Query function in Nvivo works by analysing all the words provided in a selected document. The tag cloud option depicts the words in varying sizes depending on their frequency and importance in terms of the responses. This tag cloud indicates the way in which the students understand racism and the kind of words they use to describe it.

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<sup>2</sup> *NCCA Guidelines*, p. 11.

*Figure 4.5 Tag Cloud: Responses to 'Define racism' Survey Question Generated with Nvivo 23.07.14*



It is apparent from the tag cloud that important words to students in their definition of racism are 'race' and 'colour' which have almost equal weighting.<sup>3</sup> 'Race' has become an outdated term. While it was once used to differentiate between people in a biological sense, advancing scientific research proved that the associations with it as a term, which implied the superiority of some races over others, were false. 'Race' as a term became associated with propagating racist views and fell out of use in official policies and research. However, as McVeigh notes, the notion of 'race' is still widely held and 'continues to have enormous explanatory power for many people' in explaining differences between peoples.<sup>4</sup> Ethnicity, which according to Gannon 'is generally used to refer to memberships of minority groups, that is, groups which are a minority in one country, although they may very well be a majority in another country' is the term more often used now.<sup>5</sup> This is not a term that students appear to be familiar with as it was not mentioned in any of the definitions provided which is concerning.

The fact that the words 'colour' and 'skin' are in the top five most popular words selected by students suggests a strong correlation between skin colour and students' understanding of racism. The words 'black' and 'white' also appear although 'black' is rated at a higher weighted percentage (1.29% compared to 0.59%). It is significant that 'white' and 'black' are specifically referenced. This would suggest that students are aware of the history of racism involving black and white people, particularly in America. This in part may be due to the fact that a number of texts on the Junior Certificate course such as *To Kill A Mockingbird* and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*

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<sup>3</sup> See Appendix C: Word frequency table.

<sup>4</sup> Robbie McVeigh, *The Racialization of Irishness. Racism and Anti-Racism in Ireland*. (Belfast: Centre for Research and Documentation, 1996), p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> Gannon, 'Framing diversity', p. 34.

deal specifically with racism in the southern American states. While the inclusion of these texts on the syllabus creates a certain awareness among students of the issue of racism, it permits students to view racism as a matter distanced from the Irish context and related to the past. Indeed, when asked about racism, many students reported that they felt it was more a feature of history than a contemporary issue.

The affiliation between black people and the conception of racism is identified by Raby in her study with Canadian adolescent girls.<sup>6</sup> Raby's findings suggested that racism was narrowly conceptualised in terms of which 'races' it involves, most often in terms of blacks and whites, which neglected the experiences of other racialised minority groups in Toronto. However, students in this research demonstrated a wider understanding of the term. While 'race' and 'colour' are the two most popular words selected, 'culture', 'religion' and 'nationality' also feature highly. Combining these words with the prominence of the word 'different' underlines that students recognise that a range of factors can be considered in the conceptualisation of racism. It is significant that the students identify a multitude of issues in their consideration of racism illustrating their understanding of racism as a complex subject. Students recognise that difference is a significant aspect and that this can relate to skin colour, religion, culture, nationality or background. This awareness may be attributed in part to the large number of people that have immigrated to Ireland from Eastern Europe. Irish students and their classmates from countries such as Romania, Poland and Lithuania would realise that racism is not limited to a concern with skin colour. This may also explain why the word 'black' is not as strongly depicted in the word cloud as some might expect. The term 'Others' features

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<sup>6</sup> Rebecca Raby, '“There's no racism at my school, it's just joking around”: ramifications for anti-racist education', *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 7 (2004), 367-383.

in the tag cloud. The concept and characterisation of the ‘Other’ is central to the theory of Imagology and its representation here could reflect the students’ increased awareness following their introduction to it in the module.

In addition to explaining the concept with these words, some groups are alluded to specifically, for example, with words like ‘paki’ and ‘nigger’. This would indicate that although students are aware that some of these words can be considered racist, they are not opposed to using them.

‘Gender’ also features in the tag cloud, although it is of much smaller significance compared to some of the other words. The inclusion of gender is particularly interesting as the findings from this survey suggest that girls are slightly more likely to suffer from racism than boys in a school environment. The inclusion of it in definitions of racism underlines an awareness of a level of sexism in racist discrimination. Gender was considered in Tolsma et. al’s study. They cited research that confirmed that boys are less likely than girls to be victimised. They also highlighted that the kind of bullying tended to differ between the sexes with girls associated more with relational bullying (social manipulation such as excluding others from a group, spreading rumours, breaking confidences and getting others to dislike another person) and boys with general and physical bullying.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Jochem Tolsma, Ioana van Deurzenb, Tobias H. Starkc and René Veenstrad, ‘Who is bullying whom in ethnically diverse primary schools? Exploring links between bullying, ethnicity, and ethnic diversity in Dutch primary schools’, *Social Networks* 35 (2013), 51– 61 (p. 53).

The prominence of the word ‘discrimination’ may indicate that racism has been discussed at length with the students as this is a more official term than the more colloquial ‘slag’ which is used to a lesser degree by the students.

Students appear to realise that racism can be abuse that is both oral in the form of being called names (also identified as ‘slagging’ by some students) and through physical attack. That the word ‘bullied’ is mentioned is noteworthy as many schools do not have separate policies for dealing with bullying and racism although this is recommended in the intercultural guidelines. While both are serious concerns, considering them to be the same can lead to a denial of the existence of racism.

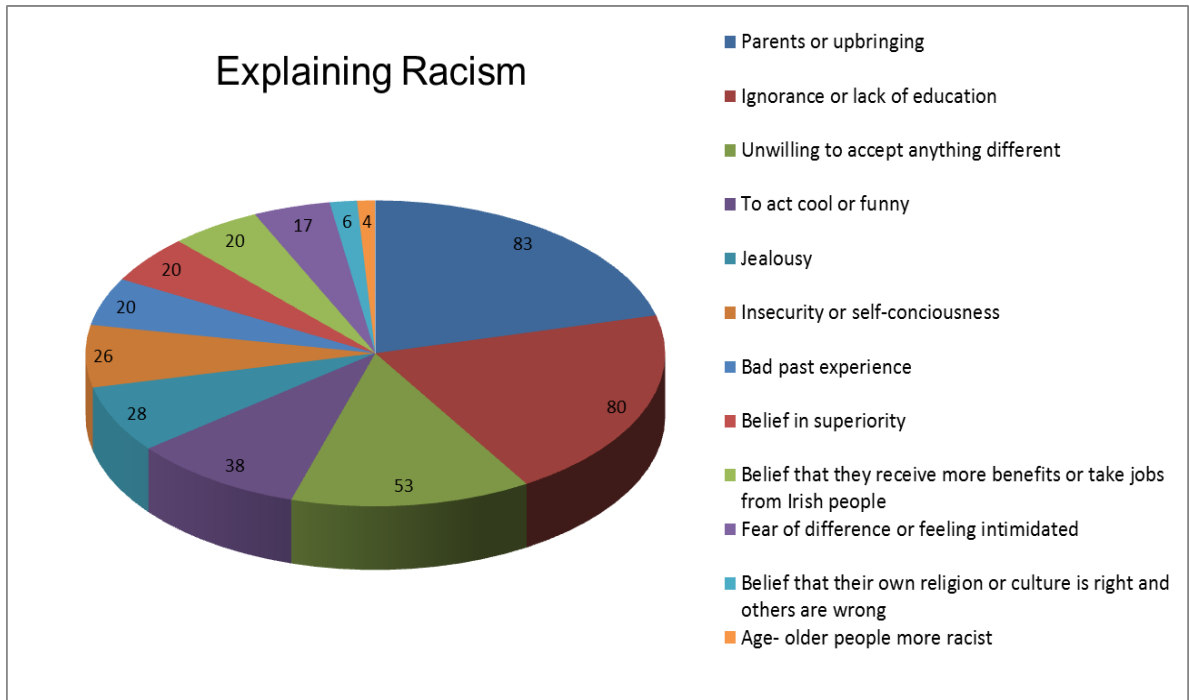
Some of the explanations that students suggested as causes of racism are apparent here: ‘hatred’, ‘ignorant’ and ‘job’. These are discussed in detail in the section below.

It is noteworthy that although students may not be certain of the meaning of interculturalism, at least the aspect of intercultural education relating to racism has been more successfully undertaken at second-level. Students, on the whole, have a clear understanding of what racism is. However, this does not imply that racism is not an issue in Irish schools. Furthermore, some students were unaware of the level of racism in Irish society.

### **Explaining Racism**

When asked why they thought people might be racist, students had a variety of opinions. Some were repeated frequently. The most popular reasons are displayed in the chart below. The chart was generated using data coded in Nvivo. The figures represent the number of times each reason was referenced by the respondents.

**Figure 4.6 Pie-chart: Explaining Racism**



Each of the explanations in Figure 4.6 are discussed separately below.

### ***Parents' influence and upbringing***

The most common reason students attributed to acquiring racist views was parents' influence or their upbringing. While Nesdale's study revealed children as young as five can acquire 'adult-like racist expressions', the evidence suggested parents *and* peers were important in the acquisition of such language.<sup>8</sup> Vygotsky's sociocultural theory of cognitive development asserts that social and cultural factors influence development including parents *and* schools.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, Piaget's theory emphasises that cognitive

<sup>8</sup> Drew Nesdale, 'Language and the Development of Children's Ethnic Prejudice', *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 20 (2001), 90- 110 (p. 90).

<sup>9</sup> Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978).

development is more strongly influenced by peers than adults.<sup>10</sup> He hypothesises that as a result, it is important for students to have the opportunity to discuss and debate with each other.<sup>11</sup> Irrespective of the theory one ascribes to, it is apparent that attributing the cause of racism solely to the influence of parents is an oversimplification. These theories emphasise the important role of school and other socio-cultural influences in the formation of young people's viewpoints. This suggests that while parents may have an influence on the views young people hold towards minority groups, these perceptions can be challenged and altered as a consequence of education and peers.

### ***Ignorance or lack of education***

The next most common answer students provided as an explanation for developing racist attitudes was reference to a lack of education and understanding about other cultures. As discussed previously, Ogo Okoye-Johnson examined studies to determine if multicultural education had an impact on the racial attitudes of students between the ages of three and sixteen and found that multicultural education did improve attitudes.<sup>12</sup> However, as confirmed by Zimet and Bigler, it is essential that this education be continuous in order to maintain the initial positive changes and prevent any reversal to previous beliefs and prejudices.<sup>13</sup> This may be why a number of students felt that intercultural education is important and that education should be more intercultural.

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<sup>10</sup> Jean Piaget, *The Origins of Intelligence in Children*, (New York: International Universities Press, 1952).

<sup>11</sup> McCown and Snowman, p. 49.

<sup>12</sup> Ogo Okoye-Johnson, 'Does Multicultural Education Improve Students' Racial Attitudes? Implications for Closing the Achievement Gap', *Journal of Black Studies*, 42 (2011), 1252-1274.

<sup>13</sup> Sara Goodman Zimet, *Print and Prejudice* (London : Hodder and Stoughton, 1976). Rebecca S. Bigler, 'The Use of Multicultural Curricula and Materials to Counter Racism in Children', *Journal of Social Issues*, 55 (1999), 687-705.



These results are discussed in more detail in the section on students' views on interculturalism below.

### ***Unwilling to accept difference***

The responses in this category asserted that racism was a result of an individual's choice not to accept difference. Sometimes it was related to their feelings of superiority over other people and cultures. This opinion underlines the view that some students hold of racism that it is illogical and based on the narrow-mindedness of some individuals. Fear of difference is discussed separately.

### ***To act 'cool' or funny***

The fourth most cited reason for explaining racism, to act 'cool' or funny. Raby noted that young people can simultaneously hold contradictory ideas about racism, at once denying racism while also making comments or behaving in a way that could be considered racist. Referencing Hachter and Troyna who posit that racist ideologies can provide children and young people with strategies with which to gain situational dominance, while also embracing anti-racist ideologies, Raby considered that 'racist comments or stereotypes are part of building personal popularity and of joking with friends. Here all insider/outsider distinctions are fair game in attempts to be cool, reframing racism as tactical such that it can be used alongside anti-racist beliefs.'<sup>14</sup> That racist comments seem acceptable in some cases is apparent from some of the student opinions discussed in part two of this chapter. These comments tend to be defended by the rejoinder that the students involved are 'just joking' or meant 'no offence'. Crossan engages with this aspect of racist behaviour in her poem 'No Offence, But...' which is

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<sup>14</sup> Raby, 'There's no racism at my school, it's just joking around', p. 372.

read during the module with students. It is important that students understand that making racist remarks is not admissible under any circumstances. As a suggested explanation for racism, this also points to the power dynamics involved and the collusion required by other people and peers in the situation. Although adolescence is generally associated with an attempt at homogeneity for the majority of teens, it is essential that this does not extend to harmful practices including racism.

### ***Jealousy***

The selection of jealousy as a motive for racism by some students may suggest that racism is viewed in a similar vein to bullying. Bullying is sometimes attributed to jealousy on the part of the bully toward the victim and it is possible that students applied the same logic in their consideration of the cause of racism. However, as underlined earlier, the misappropriation of racist behaviour as bullying can be harmful as it provides the opportunity to deny the existence of racism. Denying racism can be damaging to the victim as it undervalues the racial discrimination.

### ***Insecurity or self-consciousness***

Unlike explanations attributed to acting ‘cool’, these responses tended to be related to feelings of inadequacy rather than a desire to fit in and be popular: ‘they are not happy with themselves so they want to put people down.’ Through the identification of another as weak or inferior, the individual can feel better about their own personal standing and situation.

### ***Bad past experience***

Bratt’s article lends credence to the possibility that a bad past experience with a member of a minority group could influence the future interpretation of all members of the group

by the person involved. Bratt holds that '[u]npleasant experiences may induce fear of new contact, i.e. intergroup anxiety.'<sup>15</sup> Meanwhile, a positive interaction can also impact on outgroup attitudes in a constructive way but only if the contact is made with a person who is considered typical of the group. In contrast, individuals belonging to an outgroup may be seen in a positive way but this will not change the overall outlook on the outgroup as a whole if this individual is considered an exception to the general rule that applies to the entire group.

### ***Belief in superiority***

These responses were often connected to the reasoning that racist people believe that their own religion or culture is 'right' and others are 'wrong.'

### ***Belief that 'they' receive more benefits or take jobs from Irish people***

In their explanations of why they felt people might be racist, some students revealed an awareness of some of the common misconceptions and fears around the increase in the number of immigrants in the country. An equal number of male and female students proposed the above as an explanation. Students made reference to stereotypes related to jobs or the economic climate in Ireland during the recession. Some students' attitudes reflected common myths about immigrants 'taking Irish people's jobs' or receiving 'benefits that Irish people couldn't get'. These views reflect some of the media coverage surrounding immigrants examined in more detail by Kitching and alluded to in Anna Keogh's study discussed in the critical review chapter. A number of students specifically mentioned jobs. The majority of these were from the post-test group. This

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<sup>15</sup> Christopher Bratt, 'Contact and Attitudes between Ethnic Groups: A Survey-Based Study of Adolescents in Norway' *Acta Sociologica*, 45 (2002), 107-125 (p. 108).

could be due to the fact that these issues were examined and debated during the course of the module. However, almost an equal number referenced it in the pre-test survey.

The type of responses differed between those that demonstrated an awareness of these views and those that appeared to hold them. The responses tended to be more negative from the comparative and pre-test groups with responses like ‘because some other nationalities get benefits in this country that native Irish people do not get, or have to pay more for, which is unfair’ (Adam comparison group, Lonfield College (LCC)) and ‘I think some people are racists because this is our country, we have no jobs, but people come from around the world and take whatever jobs are left.’ (Fiona, pre-test, Collegewood School (CPS)) In contrast, those in the post-test group tended to express a more level opinion with statements such as ‘because they feel that people are taking the Irish jobs’ (Frank post-test Silveroaks College (SD)) and ‘Because people feel the need to blame someone for the problems in our country’ (Alex post-test Lonfield College (LCC)). Each school had at least one student who mentioned jobs or benefits although it was mentioned more frequently in Lonfield College (LCC) and Silveroaks College (SD), the two largest schools in the study.

Perry Hinton in *Stereotypes, Cognition and Culture* posits that there are motivational reasons that can explain why people hold stereotypes to be true. These include ‘scapegoating’, ‘authoritarian personality’ and ‘intergroup competition’.<sup>16</sup> Scapegoating occurs as a result of frustration and the misplaced belief that minority groups are the source of the problem, for example the common complaint, as mentioned by some students, that ‘they are taking all the jobs’. The authoritarian personality is characterised

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<sup>16</sup> Perry R. Hinton, *Stereotypes, Cognition and Culture* (Sussex: Psychology Press, 2000).

by an individual who maintains a positive view of the in-group bolstered by a negative view of the out-group, even when evidence to the contrary is provided. It can occur as a result of anger the individual feels towards strict parents being displaced onto a weaker social group. This personality can hold contradictory views of a minority group believing that they are untrustworthy and capable of trickery but simultaneously, that they are less intelligent than the superior in-group. Hinton contends that ‘the prejudiced person may be as sophisticated in arguing the case to maintain their views as the tolerant person.’<sup>17</sup> As will be discussed presently, some students appeared to imbue aspects of this personality. Intergroup competition can become apparent when there is an attempt to control the same limited resources. This incentive supports Keogh’s reasoning that working-class males can possess more racist attitudes to immigrants as they perceive them as a threat and as rivals for the same low-skilled jobs. However, contrasting the findings of Keogh’s study (discussed in Chapter 1), there was no indication that students from disadvantaged areas held more negative views about immigrants. The four most negative comments came from students at Lonfield College (LCC), Larkvale School (LCS), Merton High School (MC) and Collegewood School (CPS). Collegewood School (CPS) and Larkvale School (LCC) are mixed community colleges with a multi-denominational and inter-denominational ethos. Collegewood School (CPS) has 43.25% non-Irish population and Lonfield College (LCC), 10.23%. Neither have DEIS status. Larkvale School (LCS) and Merton High School (MC) are DEIS schools. Merton High School (MC) has 4.53% non-Irish population while the Larkvale School (LCS)’s figure stands at 16.63%. Merton High School (MC) is an all-girls school with a Catholic ethos, while Larkvale School (LCS) is also a mixed-community school with an inter-

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., p. 16-17.

denominational ethos. Although the responses were negative, it is encouraging that none were recorded in the post-test responses after the module had been completed. This suggests that such negative attitudes were modified as a consequence of the module. Two were from the pre-test group and two were from the comparison group.

### ***Fear of difference or feeling intimidated***

Some students attributed racism to people's fear of difference and a feeling of intimidation in the face of change or something new. Kristeva argues that the foreigner can make us uncomfortable because it brings to the surface the suppressed Other within and our fear of acknowledging its presence: 'Strangely, the foreigner lives within us: he is the hidden face of our identity, the space that wrecks our abode, the time in which understanding and affinity founder.'<sup>18</sup>

### ***Age***

Some students were of the opinion that the older generation were more likely to be racist, as it is perceived by students that it was more acceptable to be racist in the past. Sometimes, specific reference was made to grandparents: 'I think some people are racist because of their age (i.e. older people) because older people like our grandparents wouldn't know that they were doing something wrong as it was accepted when they were growing up.' (James, Silveroaks College (SD) comparison group) This view is in line with the findings of Mac Gréil reported in *Prejudice in Ireland Revisited*, based on surveys conducted with Irish people between 1988 and 1989.<sup>19</sup> Mac Gréil found that there was a higher likelihood of prejudice among the older respondents. However, this

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<sup>18</sup> Kristeva, p. 1.

<sup>19</sup> Micheal Mac Gréil, *Prejudice in Ireland revisited: based on a national survey of intergroup attitudes in the Republic of Ireland* (Maynooth: Survey and Research Unit, St Patrick's College, 1996).

contrasts with the findings of research conducted with students of Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian, and Nigerian backgrounds more recently where '[y]oung people were highlighted as a source of anti-migrant sentiment.'<sup>20</sup> As will be discussed in further detail below, the students in this study often distanced themselves and people of their age-group from any association with racism despite occasionally or frequently revealing racist opinions. One student suggested that the module would be more appropriate for students in schools outside Dublin and urban areas as these students may be less likely to interact with students from different backgrounds and may be more prone to a racist viewpoint as a result. Mac Gréil did note in his research that people brought up in rural areas and those living in Connaught/Ulster were significantly less likely to permit or welcome racial groups into close social distance.<sup>21</sup> However, for reasons explained previously, this research was conducted only within the Dublin area. Further research outside these confines with a focus on schools in rural areas would provide further insight on this topic.

Students were also asked about their experiences of racism, of experiencing and witnessing it both in school and in public.

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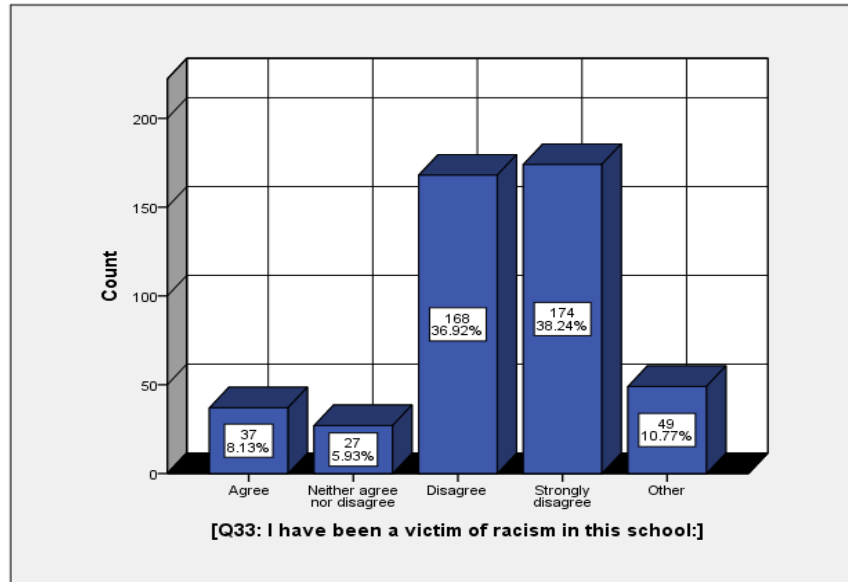
<sup>20</sup> The Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative UCD, *Getting On*, p. 122.

<sup>21</sup> Mac Greil, *Prejudice in Ireland*, p. 147.

## ***Survey findings: Students' experience of Racism***

### **Experiencing Racism at School**

**Figure 4.7 Barchart: 'I have been a victim of racism in this school'**



As evident from the graph above, the majority of students disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that they have been victims of racism in their school. While the number of students reporting racism is quite low, it is still noteworthy that 8.13% report experiencing racism at school. 'Other' in the barchart refers to students who commented on this question. The responses in this category ranged from 'sometimes' to examples of specific instances of racism. For example, one student notes how she is called a 'chink because [she has] small eyes'. Each school in the study had at least one student that reported experiencing racism in school.

Larkvale School (LCS) had the largest percentage of students (relative to the total number of students that participated in the research at each school) that reported racism in school. Of these students, a small number recorded their nationality as Irish. The



majority were Eastern European. Larkvale School (LCS) is a city centre school with the fourth highest percentage of non-Irish students of the schools included in this research. Collegewood School (CPS) and Fawnlodge College (FCC) had the second and third largest percentage of students (relative to the total number of students that participated in the research at each school) that reported racism in school. As previously discussed, these two schools have the two highest percentages of non-Irish students out of the schools included in this study. At Fawnlodge College (FCC) the majority of students who agreed that they had been a victim of racism were Eastern European, Filipino or English, but at Collegewood School (CPS), the majority were Irish.<sup>22</sup> It appears from these results that there is a correlation between the percentage of non-Irish students in a school and the level of racism. This hypothesis was tested using the Pearson correlation coefficient statistic and was found to be true ( $r=0.733167904860202$ ).<sup>23</sup> The linear regression graph below demonstrates the strong positive correlation between the number of students that reported being a victim of racism at school and the total number of non-Irish students in the school.<sup>24</sup>

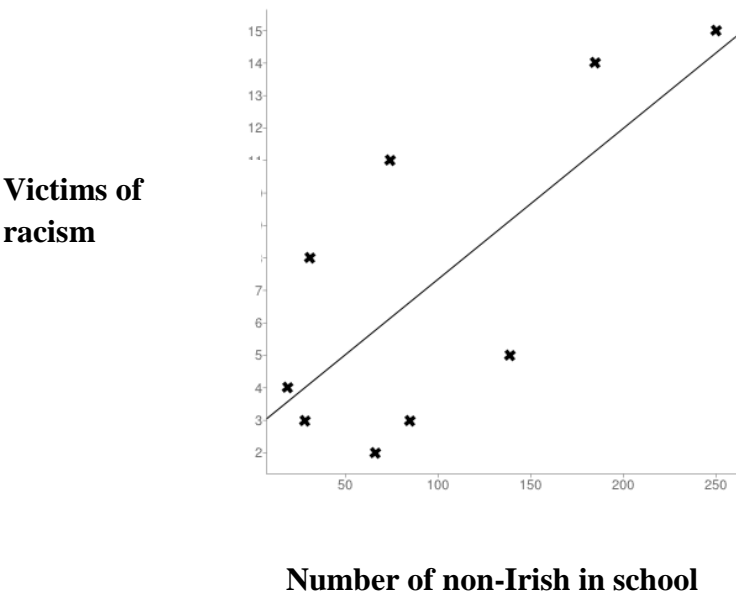
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<sup>22</sup> Students identified their nationality/ nationalities in the survey. These students were all ethnically Irish. Students with dual nationality are identified as such and are not included in the 'Irish' category.

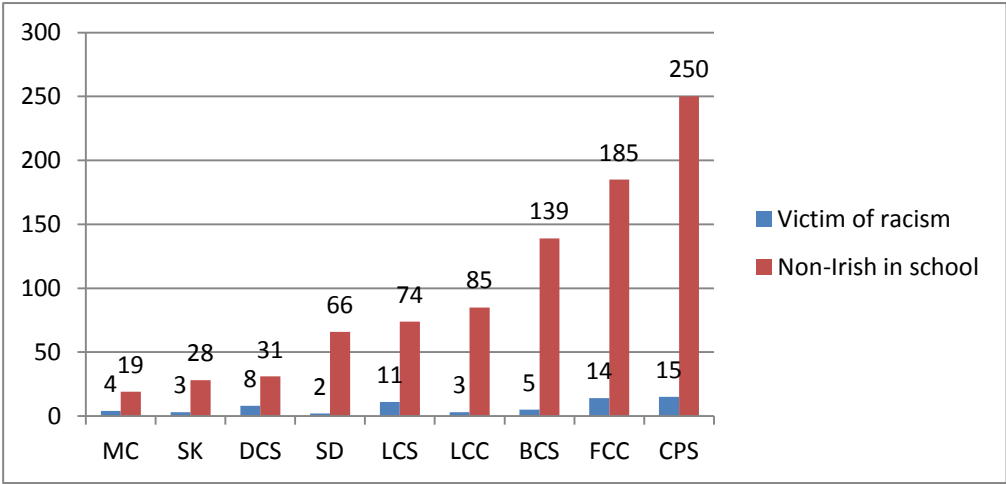
<sup>23</sup> Calculated using online correlation calculator tool: <http://www.alcula.com/calculators/statistics/correlation-coefficient/> (Accessed 1 October 2014). See Appendix E for table of values and other statistical information.

<sup>24</sup> Calculated using online calculator tool: <http://www.alcula.com/calculators/statistics/linear-regression/> (Accessed 1 October 2014).

**Figure 4.8 Linear Regression Graph: Charting the number Experiencing Racism at School against the number of Non-Irish in the School**



**Figure 4.9 Barchart: Charting the number Experiencing Racism at School against the number of Non-Irish in the School**



Generally, as the number of non-Irish in the school increases, so too do reports of racism. This is a notable finding and underlines the importance of intercultural education, especially in schools with a high number of non-Irish students. When the

total number of students in the school was taken into account the positive correlation increased to  $r = 0.808342664256362$ , indicating that the larger the number of non-Irish in a school the greater the likelihood of students reporting racism, regardless of the overall size of the school.<sup>25</sup> The correlation between the number of students in a school and the number reporting racism is negative and quite weak ( $r = -0.238541591853459$ )<sup>26</sup> which illustrates that the size of the school alone is not a determining factor.

Tolsmaa et al. also came to this conclusion in their study on students in Dutch primary schools. Their results indicated that in more ethnically diverse classrooms, the occurrence of bullying behaviour increases substantially. They hypothesised that this could be explained by the fact that in an ethnically diverse class pupils may find it difficult to receive social support from peers and hence bullying increases. They also discovered that ethnic groups do not differ significantly from one another when it comes to being victimised. Parental education and the socio-economic background of students influenced bullying behaviour. Children of parents with higher education were less likely to be bullied than children of parents from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

Similar to other studies, these findings appear to refute the 'contact hypothesis' which 'proposes that contact between different groups, such as in schools or the workplace, will increase positive relations between them.'<sup>27</sup> Bratt's study on contact and attitudes between ethnic groups in Norway found that there was no distinct relationship between the proportion of ethnic Turks at the school and majority members' attitudes towards

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<sup>25</sup> Calculated using online partial correlation calculator tool  
[http://www.wessa.net/rwasp\\_partialcorrelation.wasp#output](http://www.wessa.net/rwasp_partialcorrelation.wasp#output) (Accessed 1 October 2014).

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Charles Stangor, *Stereotypes and Prejudice: Essential Readings* (Hove: Psychology Press, 2000), p. 16.

Turks. However, this was not the case for ethnic Pakistanis or ethnic Vietnamese. For these two groups, the attitudes tended to be more favourable if the proportion of Vietnamese or Pakistanis at the school was higher.<sup>28</sup>

In Eslea and Mukhtar's study focusing on bullying and racism among Asian schoolchildren in Britain, they found that Hindu, Indian Muslim and Pakistani children were 'equally likely to report being bullied by white children, but in no case was this the most frequent kind. Instead the most frequent bullies were other Asian children from a different ethnic group.'<sup>29</sup> These findings indicate that the anti-racism aspect of intercultural education in this regard is as important for immigrant students as it is for Irish students.

### **Experiencing Racism: Irish Students and 'Oppression Privilege'**

It is noteworthy that Irish students reported experiencing racism at school. As discussed above, racist behaviour is not limited to majority ethnic groups in school. It is possible that Irish students are affected by discrimination in school. However, another explanation could be that these students are experiencing what Hatchell has termed 'oppression privilege'.<sup>30</sup> 'Oppression privilege' describes the process through which anti-racist education and affirmative action can lead to white people believing they are racially disadvantaged. She holds that this is significant in the US but also in Australia with regard to indigenous Australians and the way they are perceived as receiving significant amounts of government benefits. She argues that '[s]tereotypes need to be

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<sup>28</sup> Christopher Bratt, 'Contact and Attitudes between Ethnic Groups'.

<sup>29</sup> Mike Eslea and Kafeela Mukhtar, 'Bullying and racism among Asian schoolchildren in Britain', *Educational Research*, 42 (2000), 207-217 (p.213).

<sup>30</sup> Helen Hatchell, 'Privilege of whiteness: adolescent male students' resistance to racism in an Australian classroom', *Race Ethnicity and Education*, 7 (2004), 99-114.

deconstructed in classrooms as well as in society but students also need critical analysis skills to successfully accomplish deconstruction of ideologies prevalent in society.<sup>31</sup> Similar to the argument put forward in this thesis, Hatchell believes that '[s]chools are a powerful site within which changes to understanding are possible. Through discussions of issues highlighted within literary texts, students were provided with opportunities to discuss issues such as stereotypes and racism. Literary texts are a particularly influential medium.'<sup>32</sup> As will be discussed in the second part of this chapter, some students do feel that non-Irish people are entitled to and receive more than they do. These opinions came to light as a consequence of reading and discussing the literary texts in the module.

### **Experiencing Racism: Gender Comparison**

An equal number of girls and boys reported experiencing racism at school. When taken into consideration that a greater number of boys than girls participated in the research, girls were more likely to experience racism at school than boys. (15.49% compared to 12.65%) When asked if they felt racism was a problem in their school, 27.9% of the total surveyed agreed or strongly agreed. Perhaps because more girls are likely to experience racism at school, a larger percentage of girls believed it was a problem than boys. In line with the finding above that Larkvale School (LCS) had the highest proportion of students reporting racism in school, Larkvale School (LCS) was also the school that had the highest percentage of students who felt racism was a problem (55.2%). Dunvara School (DCS) and Sycamore High School (SK) followed with 41.9% and 40.9% respectively. While Fawnlodge College (FCC) had the fourth-highest percentage of students that felt racism was a problem in school (37.7%), Collegewood

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., p. 104.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., p. 107.

School (CPS), which had the second-highest percentage of students reporting racism in school, had the third-lowest percentage of students who believed it was an issue (17.1%). Based on student surveys carried out in 2003 and 2004 by the Curriculum Development Unit, Mary Gannon emphasised in her chapter, 'Frameworks for responding to diversity in schools', that 'majority ethnic students were either unaware of racist name-calling occurring in the school, or where they were aware of it, generally felt it did not concern them.'<sup>33</sup> In contrast, minority ethnic students reported experiencing racism. Due to the large percentage of Irish students that participated in this research, this could indicate that the level of racism experienced in school by non-Irish students is underrepresented and furthermore, that the seriousness of the problem is also underreported.

### **Experiencing Racism in Public**

Students were also asked about their experience of racism in public. As can be seen from the graph below, there was an increase in the number of students who agreed that they had been a victim of racism in public compared to those that had experienced racism in school. This would suggest that racism is more likely to occur in public than in a school environment. The *Getting On* report stressed that harassment occurs in public spaces.<sup>34</sup> 15% of the total number of girls surveyed in this study reported experiencing racism at school compared to 12.6% of the total boys in the study. However, the figure was nearly equal for girls and boys when asked about experiencing racism in public, 18.3% for girls and 18.9% for boys which would suggest that boys are as likely to

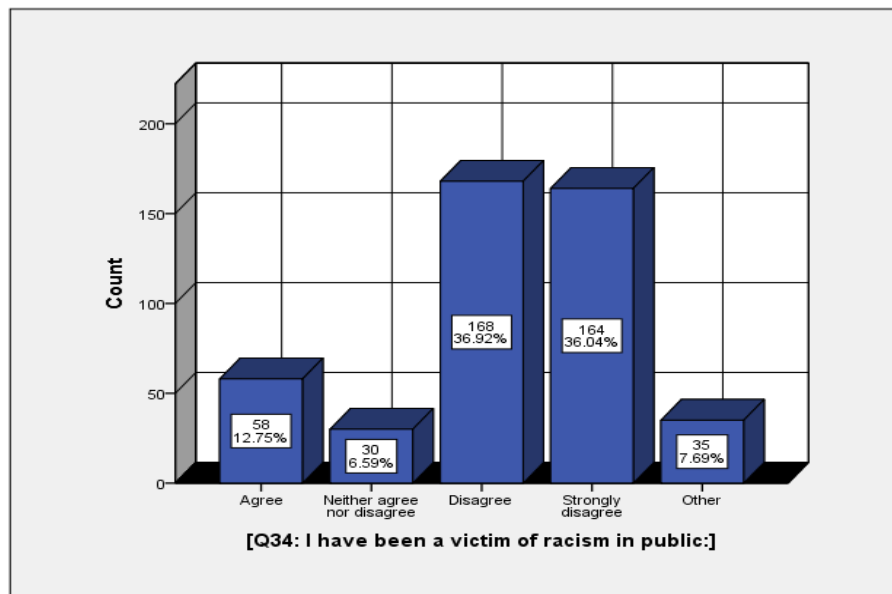
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<sup>33</sup> Gannon, 'Framing Diversity', p. 129.

<sup>34</sup> The Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative UCD, *Getting On*, p. 15.

experience racism in public as girls. A possible explanation for the increase in racism outside the school environment could be related to the absence of figures of authority in some public spaces. Schools are highly supervised spaces and as such, some students may be less likely to behave in a racist manner due to the risk of being caught by a teacher. Another possibility may be that adults are the instigators of racist abuse in public spaces but students did not specify this in their responses.

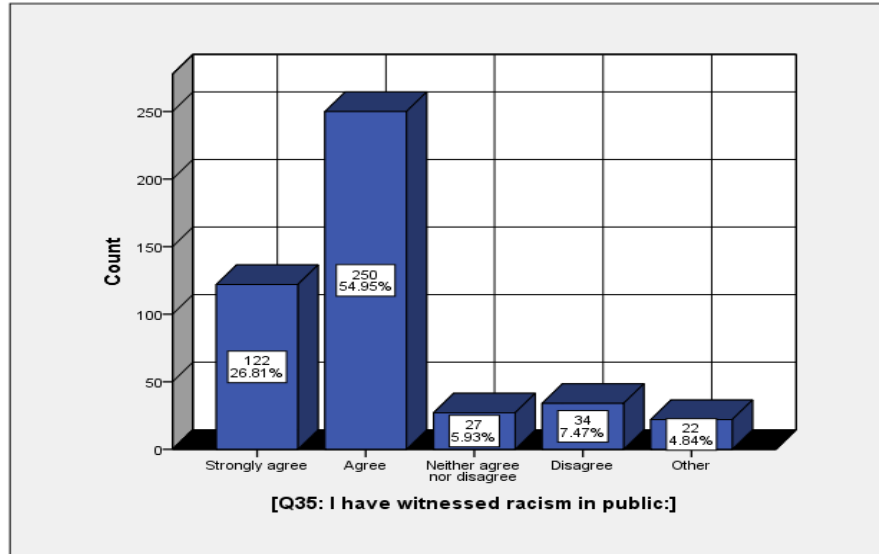
**Figure 4.10 Barchart: 'I have been a victim of racism in public'**



The figures increase significantly when students are asked about witnessing racism.

## Witnessing Racism in Public

**Figure 4.11 Barchart: 'I have witnessed racism in public'**

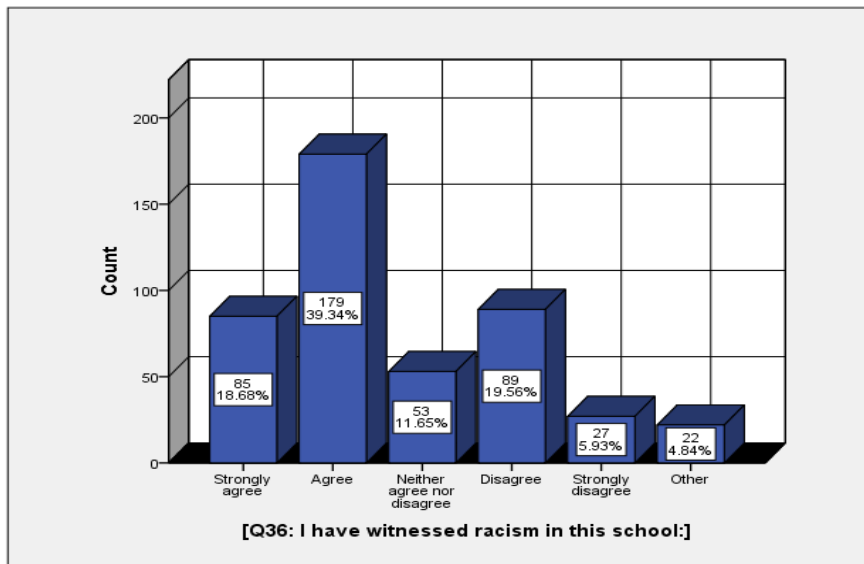


As the graph demonstrates, the majority of students have witnessed racism in public. This is a remarkable finding considering the responses to *Making Ireland Home* which are discussed in detail later in this chapter. Although most students have witnessed racism and are aware of it, some of the students felt that the immigrants in the documentary film were painting a very negative picture of Ireland with regard to their experiences of racism and some even questioned the veracity of the accounts. Worryingly, a large proportion of students also record witnessing racism in their school.



## Witnessing Racism in School

**Figure 4.12 Barchart: 'I have witnessed racism in this school'**



As evident from the graph above, over 50% of the students surveyed agreed that they had witnessed racism in their school. The divergence between this figure and those students reporting experiencing racism is worthy of consideration. There are several possible explanations for this. The first is that students have different definitions of what racism is and therefore witnessing and experiencing racism are subjective to the individual. However, considering similar definitions of racism were provided by students (see above) this may not be a plausible explanation. Another explanation could be that some of the students that have experienced racism witnessed by others were not included in the study.

## Witnessing Racism in School: Comparing Schools

Once again, reflecting the findings above, Larkvale School (LCS) was the school with the highest percentage of students agreeing that they had witnessed racism in their

school. 82.8% of the students surveyed at Larkvale School (LCS) agreed with this statement. This was followed by the students at Collegewood School (CPS) where 75.6% agreed and Fawnlodge College (FCC) where 72.1% agreed. Barton Community School (BCS) had the fourth highest percentage of students with 71.1% reporting that they had witnessed racism in their school. These four represent the schools with the four highest percentages of non-Irish students. They are all also mixed-sex community schools or colleges. As mentioned above, this further supports the strong correlation between the prevalence of racism in a school and the percentage of non-Irish students in that school. Considering 50% or more of the students surveyed in eight of the nine schools included in the study agreed that they had witnessed racism in school there is certainly cause for concern. In fact, racist abuse was so frequent for one student that participated in the module that he decided to use the end of module presentation as an opportunity to speak to his classmates about it.

### **One Student's Personal Experience of Racism**

Marc, a Lithuanian student at Fawnlodge College (FCC), the school with the second largest non-Irish population in the study, felt very strongly about the issue of racism and the treatment of some immigrants in Ireland. Rather than select a text and talk about one of the issues raised in the module such as interculturalism or the representation of immigrants, Marc decided to discuss his own experience of racism since moving to Ireland. The text of his speech is below. It is written verbatim.

For my English Presentation I want to talk about Racism in Schools [...]. I want to talk about how much racism I have gotten over the six years I've spent [o]n [this] little Island.

Racism is everywhere, home, school, streets, jobs basically everywhere you can imagine. There is very little to even fight racism because it's happening every minute, everywhere around the world. People are being racist without even knowing [it]. Some cold hearted people realise they are being racist but they take it as a hobby and keep being racist. Racism has caused a lot over the years such as deaths, people cutting themselves and so on. It is happening worldwide and as I already stated earlier, it is almost impossible to even fight racism.

August 2006, the time I came to Ireland. Before that I have never heard of a country called Ireland, even though as a kid I use[d] to love travelling and liked to know about other countries. When I came here I was 10 years of age, not knowing what racism is because I've never heard of it. I had lack of English, in fact, I did not know a single word. It was hard to find friends and was hard to start [a] new language as I came from Spain where I use[d] to live before. If it was not for my father I would still be living in Spain and [would] not know any of you.

At first I did not get any abuse but when I finally picked [up the] English language I was slightly becoming to know what racism was. As a kid I use[d] to talk to people and try and make friends but many of them turned me away. I still see a lot of them in my school these days. Instead of talking to me or trying to be friends they use[d] to do the opposite and call me names such as 'Ugly foreigner' [and say] 'leave Ireland, No one wants you here.'

Each time, someone says it, EVEN now! (I do get it once or twice a week, from people over Facebook.) I sit down and think to myself, 'What is so different about me?' I am the same as you, a human. Each one of us should respect each other no matter of race, country or anything! I really don't like when people call me "An ugly foreigner" because I just want to make [the point], what's so different about me? But I already know their answer, 'You are ugly and you're a foreigner.' Instead I just stay quiet, even though I can't take it anymore at time[s] because [the] same person calls me foreigner all over again or, when walking past me, call[s] me 'ugly'. I really don't [know] how they are cool [for] saying it? Course they might say it because they hate me? But I do not know the reason why, I am just like you and that is what matters. That is what I get in school but I do not care, I try and overcome the racists!

I also want to make a[n] argu[ment] about foreigners taking over Irish jobs. If you think that is right, you are wrong! There are so many jobs I can list where an Irish person won't even go near! For example, hotels. Irish people don't work there, [or in] McDonald's, office cleaning, shopping centre cleaning and so on! These are the main jobs foreigners work in. Irish people like to work easy jobs, such as inside of the office and so on. There is also a high rate of Irish people getting good jobs. But there is also bad things, if there were no foreigners working the jobs Irish people don't work in, [the] Irish Economy would keep going down until Irish people WOULD be forced to work the jobs they do NOT like.

Foreigners do not take Irish jobs. They are simply trying to get in ANY job that is possible because in Lithuania, Poland, Latvia, Ukraine people are use[d] to working those type of jobs and they are not scared to work them in Ireland. The only reason why many foreigners work jobs that they COULD be working in their countries is because they get more wages weekly than they get back at home.

Since moving to Ireland six years ago Marc reports being racially abused on a near constant basis. Marc specifically mentions school as an area where he is subject to racist comments. In addition to addressing how racist abuse makes him feel Marc also engages with the false assumption that immigrants are taking ‘Irish’ jobs. He explains what it is like from an immigrant perspective. Marc reveals that he cannot take it anymore but does his best to ignore it. It is significant that he states that ‘it is almost impossible to even fight racism.’ This reveals how powerless he feels in the face of racism. It links to the recent report by ENAR that most racist incidents go unreported because people feel nothing will be done about it.<sup>35</sup>

Marc’s classmates’ reaction to the speech was stunned silence followed by comments that it was awful or unacceptable. However, the majority of students then distanced themselves from the reality of racist abuse in their school by stating that they had never said anything racist to him and so could not be held responsible for it. Some students commented that the onus was on him to do something about it. This distancing was easier to achieve for students at other schools. With Marc’s permission and protecting his identity, I presented the text of the speech to students at Lonfield College (LCC) and asked them what they thought. There was a strong tendency to dissociate racism from Lonfield College (LCC). It was stated that no-one ever treated anyone in such a way at

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<sup>35</sup> ‘Reports of racism in Ireland 3rd quarterly report of iReport.ie January-February-March 2014’, [http://enarireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/iReport3\\_Final\\_150dpi.pdf](http://enarireland.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/iReport3_Final_150dpi.pdf) (Accessed 1 September 2014).

their school, despite reports to the contrary by members of the class and my own observations. Similar to the reaction of some students at Fawnlodge College (FCC), it was suggested that Marc needed to sort the situation out himself or to ignore it and not let it affect him. The distinct lack of empathy for Marc and his experience was mirrored in some students' reactions to *Making Ireland Home* which will be discussed in the second part of this chapter. The repudiation of acting in a racist manner by students was an easy way for them to justify their lack of involvement in a situation where they had an option to take action. By accepting that Marc had experienced racism and condemning it they had succeeded in appearing non-prejudiced while simultaneously detaching themselves from the situation and maintaining their worldview. As Hatchell contends, the maintenance of this worldview is important because it permits people to justify their position of privilege and overlook institutionally racist practices that allow them to maintain this position.<sup>36</sup> According to Hinton, appearing non-prejudiced is also important and people are strongly motivated to appear non-prejudiced both to themselves and others as they fear being labeled 'racist'.<sup>37</sup> However, conflicting with this comfortable position and underlining the false, constructed nature of such disavowals of other people's experience of racism, a large proportion of students agreed that they had acted in a racist way or said something racist in the past. As the graph below illustrates, 26.37% agreed that they had done so.

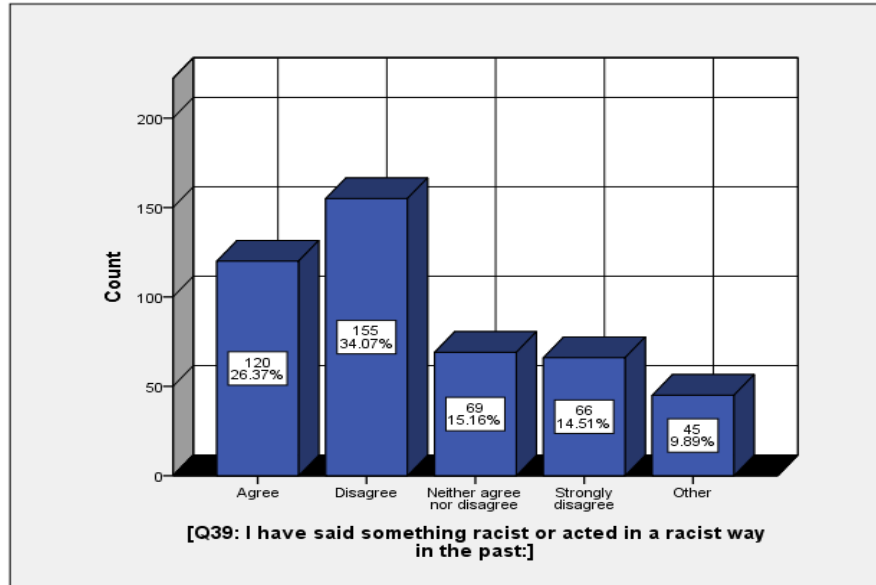
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<sup>36</sup> Hatchell, 'Privilege of whiteness: adolescent male students' resistance to racism in an Australian classroom'.

<sup>37</sup> Hinton, *Stereotypes, Cognition and Culture*.

## Reflecting on Racist Behaviour

**Figure 4.13 Barchart: 'I have said something racist or acted in a racist way in the past'**



Those at Larkvale School (LCS) were most likely to report that they had said something racist or acted in a racist way in the past as 55.2% of those surveyed agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. 47.7% of students surveyed at Sycamore High School (SK) also agreed or strongly agreed. These are both DEIS schools. However, the third-highest rate was recorded at Collegewood School (CPS) which does not have DEIS status. It is the newest school included in the study and the one with the highest percentage of non-Irish students. 39% of students surveyed agreed or strongly agreed. The school where students were least likely to agree with the statement was Silveroaks College (SD) (20.3%), an all-boys school which diverges from the findings of Tormey and Gleeson that suggest that boys are more likely to show a greater social distance to immigrants than girls.<sup>38</sup> Silveroaks College (SD) is followed by Barton Community School (BCS)

<sup>38</sup> Tormey and Gleeson, p. 164.

(22.2%) which is another DEIS school. As demonstrated by the table below, the order in which schools were placed according to the percentage that reported experiencing racism (column 1) does not match the order in which schools are placed according to the percentage that assented that they had acted in a racist way or said something racist in the past (column 2) where one represents that highest percentage and nine the lowest.

**Figure 4.14 Table 2: Racism Experienced at School and Racist Behaviour: Comparing Schools**

	Victim of racism	Said something racist
LARKVALE SCHOOL (LCS)	1	1
COLLEGEWOOD SCHOOL (CPS)	2	3
FAWNLODGE COLLEGE (FCC)	3	4
DUNVARA SCHOOL (DCS)	4	5
BARTON COMMUNITY SCHOOL (BCS)	5	8
SYCAMORE HIGH SCHOOL (SK)	6	2
MERTON HIGH SCHOOL (MC)	7	6
LONFIELD COLLEGE (LCC)	8	7
SILVEROAKS COLLEGE (SD)	9	9

Only Larkvale School (LCS) and Silveroaks College (SD) have maintained the same position for both categories. Meanwhile Sycamore High School (SK), which is only sixth highest in terms of the percentage of students that reported experiencing racism at school, has the second highest percentage of students reporting that they have said something racist. The other schools have shifted accordingly by one place either up or down. This difference could be explained by the fact that these students may not have acted in a racist way within the school environment and thus, the figures for the level of racism in the school have not been affected. However, another factor to consider in the

analysis of these results is that some students differentiate between racism and 'slagging' (teasing) among friends. Several of the responses in agreement were qualified by statements such as 'I have said something that could be considered racist, but I meant no offence', 'Not to intentionally be a horrible person, as a joke around friends', 'As a joke, never as a serious insult or directed to someone in a hateful way.' It is noteworthy that students make this differentiation. Similar to the findings of Raby previously discussed, the students as a whole were very careful to distance themselves from an association with racism even when they were admitting to it. This became more difficult for them to achieve when presented with the documentary film, *Making Ireland Home*. This short film made by the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland in 2011 depicts young immigrants talking about their experiences of living in Ireland and details some of the challenges they face. A number of people in the film speak about experiencing racism. Although students have admitted to either being racist or witnessing it, some students dislike the fact that the immigrants talk about it and are frustrated that they cannot distance themselves from it in the same way they can with the fictional texts.

### **Racist Behaviour and non-Irish Students**

Reflecting the research discussed earlier, racist attitudes and behaviour were not limited solely to the Irish students in the study. The survey results revealed that a number of non-Irish students also admitted that they had said something racist or acted in a racist way in the past. Although this is unsurprising, there has been no research to date done in this area, focusing on the attitudes of migrant young people in Ireland to 'Others' including Irish people although the studies by Tolsmaa et al. and Elsea and Mukhtar discussed above have dealt with it to some extent in the British and Dutch contexts.



82.6% of those that agreed or strongly agreed recorded their nationality as Irish or had dual citizenship including Irish. The other 17.4% were from outside Ireland from countries including England, Albania, Nigeria, Lithuania, Poland and the Philippines. 41.3% of the total non-Irish students involved in the survey agreed or strongly agreed that they had acted in a racist way or said something racist in the past.

Racism was an issue that was often discussed during the module and was raised with each text. Students' awareness of the level of racism in Irish society and their attitudes toward it became apparent in their responses to the texts which are discussed in part two of this chapter.

Along with their views on racism, the survey investigated students' opinions about intercultural education in Ireland.

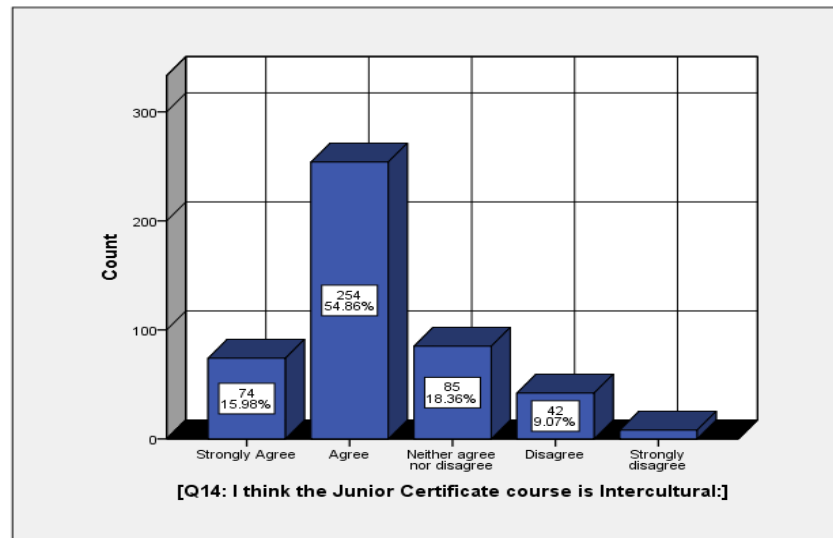
### ***Survey findings: Students' views on Interculturalism in Irish second-level schools***

In the survey students were asked if they felt that the Junior Certificate is intercultural. Students were provided with a definition of intercultural education on which to base their answer: 'If Intercultural education means that the school curriculum: reflects cultural diversity; is accessible to ethnic minority groups; promotes equality and; challenges unfair discrimination, to what extent do you agree with the following statements'. As can be seen from the graph below, the majority of students agreed that the Junior Certificate is intercultural. It is possible that the students had the texts referred

to above (*To Kill A Mockingbird*, *Roll Of Thunder, Hear My Cry*) in mind when considering this question.

## Intercultural Education and the Junior Certificate

**Figure 4.15 Barchart: 'I think the Junior Certificate course is intercultural'**



Combining those that disagree and strongly disagree brings the number of students who feel the Junior Certificate is not intercultural to 50, only 10.8% of the total surveyed. In contrast, 70.8% either agree or strongly agree. Of the 50 that disagree or strongly disagree, 11 are from the comparison group, 23 are from the post-test groups and 16 are from the pre-test group. This demonstrates that some students changed their opinion following the module. 14 of the 50 identified themselves as having dual nationality including Irish or were not Irish which represents 14.4% of the total non-Irish and dual nationality students included in the study. Students from Sycamore High School (SK) were the most likely to disagree or strongly disagree out of all the schools.

Following participation in the module, there is a slight decrease in the percentage of those that agree that the course is intercultural. However, the majority still either agree or strongly agree. While this appears like a positive finding for intercultural education, the depth to which the students considered the issue could be questioned. It is possible that students have confused tokenistic interculturalism with true interculturalism in the school curriculum. In other words, students may consider that one text may constitute an intercultural approach when it does little in terms of the definition of intercultural education outlined above that specifies that minority groups are included and equality promoted. The fact that some groups are not represented in school is highlighted by a Polish student's comment after studying *The Weight of Water* that he was happy to read about a Polish person because he had not been able to do so since coming to Ireland. In class discussions, particularly those following 'The Walk of Life' activity that specifically asks students to consider the place and representation of different groups in society such as minority ethnic groups, students mention that these groups are sometimes featured in Religion or CSPE textbooks. However, other subjects where this could occur are not mentioned. Reflecting the findings of Faas and Ross that the primary curriculum is more intercultural, some students specifically mentioned their experience of projects and texts studied in primary school.

### **Intercultural Education and Cultural Diversity**

98 students agreed and 27 strongly agreed with the statement: 'I would like if my culture or background was talked about more in school.' This represents only 26.94% of the total students surveyed. Notably, 78.4% of these students identified Irish as their nationality. Only 27.84% of the total number of students that had a dual nationality

including Irish or were not Irish agreed with the statement. While some students stated that they were unconcerned by the lack of inclusion and representation of their culture or background in the school environment and curriculum, other students expressed doubts about how this inclusion would occur. Similar to the findings of Devine's research where pupils only wanted to see their culture included when it was properly valued, such as in project work, some students feared that an insincere add-on approach to inclusion could have a negative impact.<sup>39</sup> For example, one student qualified her agreement with the statement by adding: 'as long as we are not being blamed for wars or famines as it usually is talked about.' (Grace, British female, Collegewood School (CPS) pre-test) Grace, as a British national would like to hear more about her culture and background in school, although only if it means a move away from a one dimensional aspect that emphasises the British government's negative impact on Irish affairs in the past. Similarly, Gemma, a Black Irish student at Lonfield College (LCC), highlights the stereotype of Africans where 'people just assume that everyone in Africa [is] poor or live[s] on streets.' (Gemma, Black Irish female, Lonfield College (LCC) pre-test) The fear of an add-on approach that stresses the 'otherness' of cultures that differ to the white, Catholic, settled nature of the Irish majority could explain why more students of a non-Irish or dual nationality did not agree with the statement. The fact that some cultures and backgrounds were not respected in the school environment was apparent from student comments such as: 'In the school if I tell people I was born in England I'd be slagged off' (Keith, English Irish male, Sycamore High School (SK) pre-

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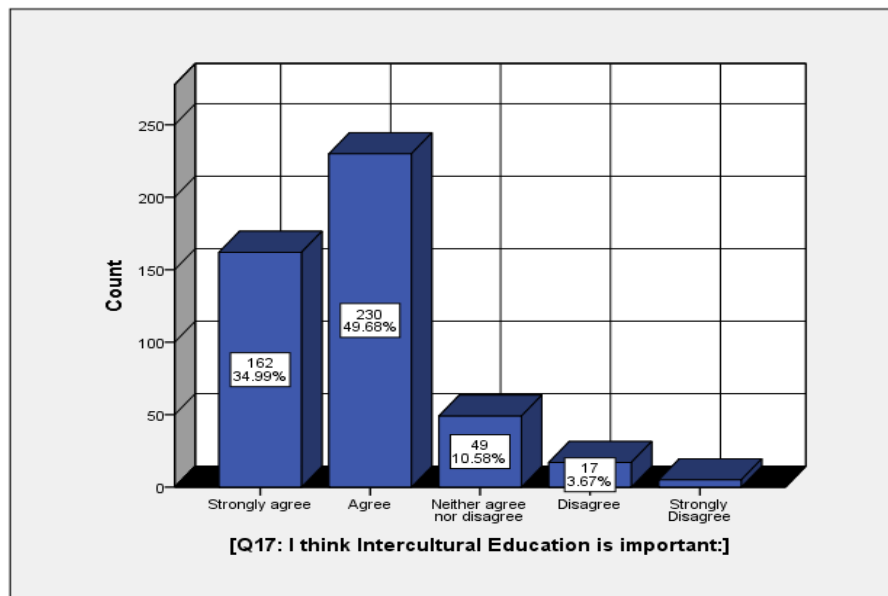
<sup>39</sup> Devine, 'Mobilising capitals?', p. 526.

test) and ‘You get criticised if your culture is not to the liking of certain people.’  
(Gemma, Black Irish female, Lonfield College (LCC) pre-test)

### **Intercultural Education: Important?**

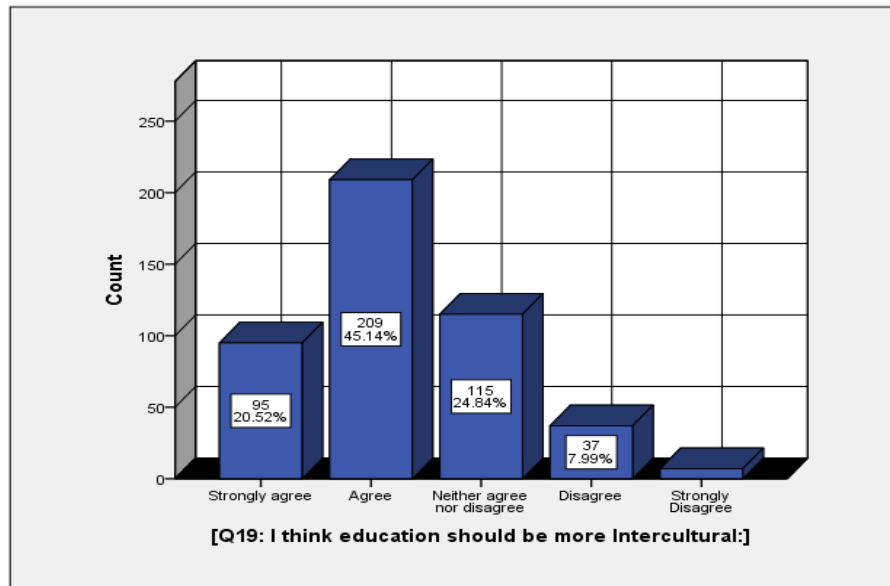
Overall, students felt that intercultural education is important. As can be seen from the graph below only a very small percentage of students disagreed (4.75% combining disagree and strongly disagree).

**Figure 4.16 Barchart: ‘I think intercultural education is important’**



Despite the fact that the majority of students felt that the Junior Certificate course is intercultural, the majority agreed that education at second-level should be more intercultural. 65.7% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement while only a small minority disagreed or strongly disagreed (9.5%).

**Figure 4.17 Barchart: 'I think education should be more intercultural'**



There is strong support among students for a more intercultural education system at second-level. This support is further espoused by the responses students provided in feedback about the module. Students were asked if they would recommend the module to other students and to explain why. The majority of students that completed the survey would recommend it (82.8%). Some explanations students provided in support of this view are: 'It is something different from other subjects and you learn about cultures and racism in Ireland' (Ben, Barton Community School (BCS)). 'You get to learn more about other people and maybe people in your class's culture'<sup>40</sup> (Alan, Silveroaks College (SD)). 'It educates people more about other people's cultural backgrounds' (Denise, Merton High School (MC)). Students tended to note that the module was different to their normal school experience and emphasised that it increased their

<sup>40</sup> As mentioned in the introduction all quotes by students are verbatim and grammar and spelling mistakes have not been corrected.

knowledge of other cultures. These comments suggest that there is certainly room for improvement to the current intercultural approach taken in schools.

The next section focuses on the students' responses to the texts studied in the module.

## **Part 2: Analysis of Students' Responses to texts**

As outlined in Chapter 4, students were introduced to the theory of Imagology and were encouraged to use it as a tool when reading the selected texts. To use Rosenblatt's expression, students engaged in a 'transaction' with the text to form meaning. Students' reactions to the texts are discussed below and the subsequent individual interactions as a consequence of the imagological approach to the texts are analysed. As posited previously, the analysis of students' responses sheds light on their thoughts on the areas under investigation in this study: immigration and interculturalism.

### ***Black Hoodie***

'Black Hoodie' was the most popular text with students. 55% of students who completed the feedback survey at the end of the module selected this title as their favourite. As stated in the previous chapter, this text was selected first as it presented a perspective familiar to the majority of students. Indeed, a number of students said that they liked it the most because they could relate to it. The story is set in Dublin and is told from the perspective of an Irish Transition Year student. The story depicts Gardaí racially abusing a young Nigerian character. The students liked the humour in the story.

I like the story a lot it is very easy to relate to a story set in Ireland and I realised that some Irish people can be very racist. (Ryan Collegewood School (CPS))

Following the exercises completed early in the module to familiarise students with aspects of Imagology such as stereotypes and auto- and hetero-images, some students like Ryan recognised on reflection that they liked the story because it replicated a background, culture and attitudes similar to their own. As will be discussed below in relation to the other texts, attitudes are an important aspect in terms of interpretation.

As the first text studied in the module, a large number of the responses to ‘Black Hoodie’ demonstrated an efferent rather than an aesthetic reading of the text. As opposed to writing about their thoughts and feelings about the story and engaging in the ‘qualitative lived-through experience’ expounded by Rosenblatt, a large number of students, instead, provided summaries. This was very common among students in all of the schools in the study. Even those students who did reveal their thoughts about the story often only did so after they had described what had happened in the story. This occurred despite the fact that they had been specifically instructed not to do this. Students apparently found it difficult to supply just their opinion as this is not something regularly asked of them about a text studied in the classroom. This observation reflects the comment in the Chief Examiner’s report referenced in the previous chapter that states that this is a particular area of weakness for students. It indicates that it is a practice that has been established before students enter Senior Cycle. This draws attention to the fact that the issue needs to be addressed sooner, while students are at the Junior Cycle stage. The introduction of the new Junior Cycle programme provides an opportunity to correct this pattern.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> The new Junior Cycle programme was launched in September 2014 with English as the first subject. The introduction of new programmes for other subjects will follow over the next few years.



Of the students who did contemplate the text in the manner anticipated, there was a division between those who felt that the text accurately depicted Irish society and those who questioned the portrayal and felt it was too negative. The comments below outline how some students felt that the representation was accurate and that it depicted Irish society in a realistic, though unflattering manner:

There is no ‘beating around the bush’ so to speak regarding racism and the writing is meant to shock the reader, despite the fact that most of us have witnessed this sort of behaviour multiple times in our lives. [...] underneath the witty banter exchanged between the teenagers and the authority figures, there is a dark problem that demands to be acknowledged- that we are in fact a racially intolerant country. (Seamus Collegewood School (CPS))

I liked this story because I felt it dealt with racism which is a big problem in Ireland today. (Patrick Silveroaks College (SD))

My opinion on this piece is that it is very representative of Irish culture because even nowadays when Ireland has started to become more ethnically diverse when a coloured person walk down a street many of the people will stare at him. Also many of the jokes that people make in Ireland are very often at the expense of racial and cultural minorities that reside in Ireland and most of the time these jokes are seen as being perfectly acceptable. (Evan Silveroaks College (SD))

All of these comments demonstrate that the students have recognised that there is an underlying message being conveyed by the author about racism in Ireland. Seamus’s comment acknowledges the fact that the majority of people have witnessed racism in Ireland and perhaps, have ignored it. Seamus recognises that Doyle is using humour to raise an important topic and offer a critique on contemporary society. Likewise, Evan’s observation relates to the comments made by the Gardaí in the story to Ms Nigeria. He understands that Doyle is questioning the prevalence and acceptance of racism as a source of humour. Patrick’s comment emphasises that the story draws attention to the

issue of racism and he concurs that it is a problem. Through their responses to the text, the students have revealed their own views on racism. Rosenblatt holds that:

When the student has been moved by a work of literature, he will be led to ponder on questions of right or wrong, of admirable or antisocial qualities, of justifiable or unjustifiable actions. The average student spontaneously tends to pass judgement on the actions of characters encountered in fiction.<sup>42</sup>

Some students demonstrate that they have fully engaged in a transaction with the text and that it has resulted in some critical self-reflection:

I think the racism experienced by Ms Nigeria really does spark an inner outrage towards the Gardaí and it forces us to think about what we would do in that certain situation. (Ivan Collegewood School (CPS))

The story was entertaining and pushed you to think about the issues in society. (Tim Fawnlodge College (FCC))

Black Hoodie made me think if I had ever not said anything about seeing racism near me and just walked away, I had a good think about that. (Finn Fawnlodge College (FCC))

In this case Ivan has been motivated by the text to think about what he might do. Tim's comment also underlines that the transaction with the text has encouraged him to contemplate things in society, and Finn reviews his own past behaviour. However, not all students agreed with the portrayal of racism in Irish society depicted in 'Black Hoodie':

I think Ireland is different now compared to the story. You would see interracial groups of friends hanging around with each other and you will see interracial couples. (Lauren Lonfield College (LCC))

Lauren appears to think that racism is less of an issue now than in the past. Because of the increased diversity in Irish society, she thinks that people would be less likely to pay attention to a mixed-race couple or make racist comments. This contrasted with the

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<sup>42</sup> Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, p. 16.

views of students at Collegewood School (CPS). Interestingly, the majority of the class felt that it would still be unusual to see a white and black person together and that they would be stared at 'but not in a bad way', just as something out of the ordinary. Another student stated that it would be unusual among young people. There was one black girl in the class who felt differently and said 'not anymore'. At other schools, in particular Larkvale School (LCS), students also felt this opinion was outdated. The view expressed by students at Collegewood School (CPS) was surprising considering the high number of non-Irish students in the school. As examined in the Critical Review chapter with reference to Turner, increased diversity in society can actually have a detrimental effect on the attitudes of the majority group towards immigrants. Finn also feels that negative images are something associated with the older generation:

It showed that a few years ago in Ireland black people were all looked upon as being robbers and poor. Now I know that this image has definitely changed to a certain extent because people are less ignorant than they used to be. This image is still the same for some people in modern day Ireland but these people are very racist or ignorant. (Finn Lonfield College (LCC))

This view was repeated by several students at various schools. Despite the survey results discussed above that revealed that a large number of students agreed that they had said something racist or acted in a racist way in the past, students still believed that racism was more prevalent among older people. Another student questioned the verisimilitude of the racism depicted:

I thought the way the Gardaí talked to the Nigerian girl was completely rude and disrespectful but I don't think it would happen in real life. (Caoimhe Merton High School (MC))

There was a tendency among some students to question or disbelieve any representation of Irish people as racist. This became more pronounced when the students were

presented with different perspectives other than Irish. This will be discussed in more detail in relation to *Making Ireland Home*. In contrast to Caoimhe's disbelief that the Gardaí would act in such a racist manner, some students had the opposite opinion. A number of students seemed to have a negative view of them:

The points the story brings up about racism and stereotyping are interesting, and I don't disagree with what they're trying to say. It shows them in a realistic light - the Gardaí being racist isn't something completely unbelievable. (David Lonfield College (LCC))

I think the story can be quite funny at times but in the end it is telling a serious story about racism and stereotyping in Dublin. The guards are shown to be racist in this story and I think that a lot of them actually are when in fact they shouldn't be. (George Silveroaks College (SD))

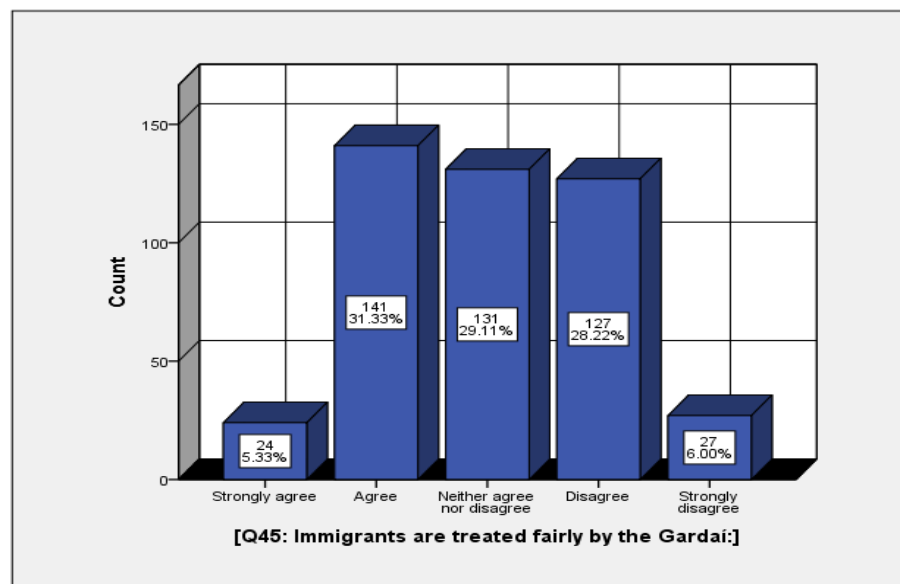
It should not be acceptable for any person to be racist in Ireland, never mind the guards! Unfortunately however, I think that this racist behaviour does occur between guards and black people. Guards are more suspicious around people of different races and I believe that they treat them worse than they would treat people of the same race. (Mark Silveroaks College (SD))

Mark in particular has a very negative opinion of Gardaí and feels that they treat non-Irish people differently to Irish. It is unclear why the students feel that the Gardaí would be racist. It may be a result of a previous bad experience on a personal level that has left the impression that Gardaí are prejudiced people who treat young people unfairly. Another possible explanation is that the students perceive Gardaí as members of the older generation. As outlined in the section above, some students were of the opinion that older people are more likely to be racist because racism was more acceptable in the past. As the survey results discussed below demonstrate, a large number believe immigrants are not treated fairly by the Gardaí.

When asked in the survey if they felt immigrants were treated fairly by the Gardaí, students appeared to be split down the middle between those that agreed and disagreed. As can be seen from the graph below, 36.66% agreed or strongly agreed that they were

treated fairly but an almost equal amount, 34.22% disagreed or strongly disagreed. Of the 154 students that disagreed or strongly disagreed, the majority were from the post-test group which could indicate that reading the short story influenced their views. At the pre-test stage, only 25.4% of those surveyed disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. This increased to 41.2% of the post-test group. The percentage of the comparative group was also relatively high at 31.7%. Students at Collegewood School (CPS) were most likely to disagree, followed by students at Fawnlodge College (FCC) and Larkvale School (LCS).

**Figure 4.18 Barchart: ‘Immigrants are treated fairly by the Gardaí’**



This is the only text narrated entirely from an Irish perspective as the other texts feature an immigrant character’s view. The students seemed more accepting of reports of racism when it came from an Irish perspective. As discussed below, the students condemned the behaviour and actions of the racist characters in ‘Black Hoodie’ but took issue with the reports from young people in the documentary *Making Ireland Home*. It is also

possible that students found it easier to deal with a fictional rather than a factual account of racism.

### ***The Weight of Water***

This text was significantly less popular with the students. The text is written as a series of poems. Reinforcing Rosenblatt's observation that students dislike poetry, a lot of students were more reluctant to engage with this text because of this poetic element. Some of them also disliked studying the poems through group work. Rather than approach the text aesthetically, students tended to perform an efferent reading, seeking for 'meaning' first. As a consequence, a number of students reported that they found the poems difficult to relate to and hard to understand although the selected excerpts from the text were short and within the reading ability of all students. The perspective in this text is that of a young Polish girl who has immigrated to England with her mother. The chosen excerpts deal with her first experiences at school and her difficulty understanding English and making friends. Some of the students were able to overlook the fact that the speaker differed from them and found other areas to relate to such as the universal feeling of finding yourself in a new environment when you do not know anyone.

Today in class we discussed a poem about a foreign girl (Cassie) entering a new school. The theme of the poem is about racism and how people feel when they are new to a place. The poem is based in school and the teacher tries to be friendly to Cassie by asking her name and talking to her. Cassie shows a sense of shyness towards the teacher as she is 'different' to all the other students. I can relate to this poem because it can be very hard being new to a place and it can also be very nerve racking. (Sean Silveroaks College (SD) 'First Day')

I found the poem relatable as I've been put into a group of people who I don't always

wish to be with by teachers many times. (Richard Fawnlodge College (FCC) 'Group Work')

As evident from Sean's comment, most of the responses contained summaries of the poem demonstrating an efferent approach to reading. However, Sean does recall a similar experience and is able to empathise with the speaker in the poem. Similarly, Richard is able to relate to another encounter in another poem. Identification with these incidents increases the students' understanding and helps them realise that immigrant students can face similar issues to any other student at school and are not as different and 'Other' as perhaps first assumed. However, these interpretations are influenced by their position as members of the ethnic majority groups which limits somewhat the extent of empathy the students can feel for Kasienka. In 'First Day' for example, whether the teacher is really attempting to be friendly and make Kasienka feel welcome is questionable. In fact, the teacher is depicted as appearing somewhat frustrated and is shown to be inconsiderate of Kasienka's cultural background. Instead of learning how to pronounce Kasienka's name correctly, she anglicises her name to Cassie. Twice during the poem the teacher is described as sighing and 'ridges appear on her brow.'<sup>43</sup> Mrs Warren only smiles once when she finds out that Kasienka can speak English. She is 'Relieved.'<sup>44</sup> Concerning 'Group Work', Richard relates to the fact that he has been forced to work with people in a school environment that he did not want to. However, Kasienka is the person that is 'Unwanted and misused/Like old boots dragged/From a river'.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Crossan, p. 10.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., p. 49.

Through this text Irish students are presented with a series of experiences for which they have no previous frame of reference. It is perhaps also for this reason, that some students found the text more difficult than 'Black Hoodie'. Through discussion with other students, unfamiliar references can be teased out and explored. In some cases, students learn more about their classmates as a result of such dialogue. Using texts that feature different perspectives allows immigrant students to fulfil the role of expert which they may not always have the opportunity to possess in the context of the normal syllabus that is concentrated within an Irish framework. For example, in 'First Day', Kasienka starts school in a class below her correct age level as a consequence of her perceived incompetence in English. Some Irish students are unaware that this practice occurs and are sometimes surprised by it. In Fawnlodge College (FCC), while discussing this poem, two students revealed that they had a similar experience when they moved to Ireland. Their classmates were, for the most part, unaware of this and were interested to ask more about how they found it and about their previous schooling experience in other countries. Studying the text allowed a change in dynamic and an intercultural flow in communication where experiences were shared and discussed. In this situation the conversation moved from teacher-led to student-student-teacher as recommended by Rosenblatt. The poems in *The Weight of Water* also provided students from a non-immigrant background other insights into the kind of issues immigrant students face when moving to a new country and the challenges they face settling in a new school:

I liked this story as it gave the opinion of people who move to different schools in different countries and how hard and scary it can be for the person and if they don't speak that country's language they will have a really hard time in the school. I found out



that how it felt to a person when they have to switch schools in other countries and how frightening it can be. (Conor Fawnlodge College (FCC) Mistaken)

This poem made me understand more clearly how immigrants must feel to come over to a strange country and learn a completely new language. It has also showed me that it isn't easy to move from their home and the people they love. I really liked this poem! (Alex Lonfield College (LCC) Stansted)

The poem is good because we know what immigrant person feel to stay in different country and culture. We must treat them nice because when we treat them nice they treat us nice too. So no trouble will happen. (Alexis Silveroaks College (SD))

Through the transaction with the text the majority of students are presented with a different perspective where they as the majority ethnic are represented as the 'Other'. Students, perhaps for the first time, consider what it might be like to be in that situation and reflect on their own behaviour. Using Glazier and Seo's terminology, the poems 'act as both mirror – allowing students to reflect on their own experiences – and as window, providing the opportunity to view the experiences of others.'<sup>46</sup> It is apparent from the kind of language that the students use in the comments above: 'understand', 'found out', 'know', that the students' knowledge and awareness is increased. Alexis' comment underlines that mutual understanding is important to prevent any possible friction or difficulties. Through the combined efforts of immigrants and the host population, the process of migration and integration can be peaceful and free from tension.

For students of an immigrant background, the text provides experiences they can relate to:

The poem that I read with my group is 'Mistaken'. I found it very interesting as it was based about a girl from Poland moving to England which I found interesting as I am from Poland and I have move to Ireland so I think I could connect to it. I was quite surprised that the poem was based about a Polish girl especially after I found out that the author herself was Irish so I didn't know how could she know what a polish person feels when moving to England since Irish people know the English language while poles don't. I enjoyed reading

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<sup>46</sup> Glazier and Seo, 'Multicultural Literature and Discussion as Mirror and Window?', p. 687.

the poem, I was happy to read a poem about a polish person since I never got to do that in Ireland as well as since I moved to Dublin I can relate to what the girl felt like by not knowing anyone nor the language as well as having to leave all your friends and relatives back in Poland. (Peter Fawnlodge College (FCC) 'Mistaken')

Peter reflects that he was happy to read about a character he could relate to. As discussed in Chapter 2 with reference to research in using intercultural/ multicultural literature in education by McKoy Lowery and Sabis-Burns and Colby and Lyon, it is important that all students can see themselves in texts used in school to reinforce the idea that education is for everyone and to encourage every student to remain engaged in the learning process.<sup>47</sup>

One student outlines how *The Weight of Water* draws attention to racism from a different perspective than usual in that the victim is a white person:

I liked the poem because it is aimed at teenagers and young people. I found it interesting because most of the time black people suffer from racism, but this poem was about racism against a white person. (Agita Fawnlodge College (FCC) Pale)

This demonstrates that while students are familiar with stories and texts that feature a black character as the victim of racism, the same is not true for white characters. As discussed above in relation to Marc's presentation, this is an area where attention is required. While students have learned that racism is not acceptable and texts dealing with this issue have been on the school curriculum, they are usually set in the past and feature black characters as the victims. With this text, students are reminded of the wider influence and experience of racism.

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<sup>47</sup> Ruth McKoy Lowery and Donna Sabis-Burns, 'From Borders to Bridges: Making Cross-Cultural Connections through Multicultural Literature'.

### ***The Cinnamon Tree***

This text was not as popular as ‘Black Hoodie’ with the students. This was in part to do with its length. Due to the short duration of the module, only excerpts were read from the text and students did not like this. They would have preferred to have read it in full. The short duration of the module was something that a number of the students commented on in the feedback survey. Despite making such comments only a small number were willing to read the full text in their own time outside the English class.

In their initial reactions a number of the students referred to the ‘strange traditions’ detailed in the novel:

My first reaction to the book was surprise. There were so many strange traditions and occurrences described. (Aleks Fawnlodge College (FCC))

I was surprised to see their crazy names, I’ve never heard names similar before and was curious to know where they got them from. (Curtis Fawnlodge College (FCC))

My first impression of the text was that the place that Yola and Gabbin live is a very different civilisation from us. (Niamh Fawnlodge College (FCC))

In recording their first impressions of the text, most of the students commented on differences they noticed between their own lives and that of the protagonist, Yola. The comments above demonstrate how these students identify Yola’s life as ‘Other’. Aleks calls the traditions ‘strange’, Curtis mentions ‘crazy’ names and Niamh clearly differentiates herself by referring to ‘us’. This reveals that the students are judging from their own perspective and experience but also, as in the case of Niamh, display an awareness of different cultures. As they progress through the book and are encouraged to read critically and imagologically the students begin to realise that white people are configured as ‘Other’ in the text and they find this very unusual. It leads them to reflect

on the limited perspective that is often presented in the texts they usually read in the school environment. Through the transaction with the text, some students are led to analyse their own perceptions and views and consider the perspective of others:

Their different culture surprised me. Having three wives doesn't really seem normal to me but I guess to people living that way, our system would appear abnormal. The way even the children were doing jobs of adults made we wonder is our society just a tad bit lazy? The way they lived in mud huts seemed almost unreal to me and frankly the idea just sounds uncivilised! The landmines planted everywhere seems so scary. It's even scarier knowing somewhere out there, there is real people living like that, living in war and fear. It's hard to think of people suffering because we don't see it. We don't experience hard lives to the level they do. The truth is we're just blind to the situation and choose to ignore it. (Niamh Merton High School (MC))

Niamh's response reveals something of a dichotomy. While trying to see from a different perspective, judgement based on her own cultural background and experience filters through. This is evident in the admission that the mud huts seem 'uncivilised'. She also honestly comments on the sense of fear that is associated with the 'Other' lifestyle presented. It is possible that this is a comment with dual relevance. It is scary as a result of the real danger posed by the presence of the landmines but also because it is so different to what she is familiar with. However, the comment reveals that her awareness of this different culture and lifestyle has been increased and she does attempt to have an open mind in her consideration of it. The presentation of this culture causes Niamh to consider another perspective and reflect on how her culture and traditions might be viewed by others. She demonstrates an awareness that her opinion on what is 'normal' is influenced by her own experience. Other students are less reflective and base their judgment entirely on their own beliefs and values:

My reaction to the story so far is shock and confusement. I'm shocked about how the tribe system in Africa works. To hear how young Sindu is when she married Yola's dad. Also, to see how different Yola's life [is] to a normal person's life: she has three

mothers, she is involved in a war and the boys are trained to be soldiers. Also Yola's life has changed dramatically because her leg got blown off in a mine. (Ciarán Silveroaks College (SD))

Ciarán considers his own life and upbringing 'normal' and attributes anything outside this narrow experience as abnormal or 'Other'. The most significant aspects of Yola's life that differ to his are identified as polygamy and war. Ciarán describes his 'shock' at the culture described demonstrating his previous lack of knowledge. Unlike Niamh, Ciarán does not acknowledge that his view is influenced by his own background. Some students, while commenting on the differences between their own lives and Yola's, also reflected on what they perceived as their good fortune at not having to deal with similar issues:

I wouldn't be able to cope with any of that especially finding out about her leg, I get weak when I think of a needle at the dentist. In my eyes Yola is a strong, brave girl. Looking at Yola's situation, it makes you think twice about what you have and that there's worse off out there than you. (Chloe Dunvara School (DCS))

Chloe's comment simultaneously paints Yola in a positive and negative light. While viewing Yola as a strong person, she is also 'worse off'. Similarly Madison views herself as lucky because of her different circumstances:

The book made me think how lucky we are that we don't have to work at a young age and get married so young. [...] I think it's really unfair the way she can't do some jobs because they're seen as men's jobs. (Madison Dunvara School (DCS))

The different gender roles were referenced by a number of students. George emphasises how the society differs from Ireland and focuses particularly on the practice of paying a bride-price for a wife:

I think the book gives a realistic view of how life is like in Africa and how it's culture differs from ours for example, the buying of brides. I think that Yola may be a victim to

racism and will find Irish culture a lot different from her own when she arrives in Ireland. (George Silveroaks College (SD))

This was an issue that surprised many students. George's comment also reveals that his conception of Africa is as a single homogenous nation rather than as a large continent with many different countries, cultures, practices and beliefs. This was a common misconception held by a large number of students. Along with the novel, it was important to introduce other resources to assist students in gaining a more accurate picture of Africa. Students were shown maps and the vastness and difference within the continent was emphasised. It is important that students are presented with texts that represent cultures other than their own. However, it is also imperative that context is also provided to prevent generalisation like that assumed by George above that paying a bride price is practised throughout Africa.

The students noted the issue of the lack of apparent gender equality, which most of them found hard to understand. It is significant that George expects that Yola will be subject to racism in Ireland. This may suggest that George views racism as a common occurrence in Irish society. It may also be connected to his own experience. Although George was born in Ireland, his parents are Romanian. In the survey he strongly agreed that he had experienced racism both in school and in public. In fact, this does not occur in the novel. It was noteworthy that boys were more likely to comment on the practice of polygamy than girls. This could suggest that some of the girls were already aware of the practice or perhaps, were just not as surprised to find out about it.

I really liked this book so far. It gave us a good insight into how another culture lives. We learned how society is very different in some parts of Africa. Women are treated like slaves and bought for a bride price. I found it hard to believe that some societies still don't treat women equally to men. (Ciarán Silveroaks College (SD))

In contrast to George's comment above, we can see that Ciarán is conscious that the representation of African society presented in *The Cinnamon Tree* is not true for all African societies. While some students try and engage with another viewpoint, others make judgements based on their own personal views. Some students felt that the treatment Yola received following her accident was quite unfair and felt the type of tribal lifestyle was quite harsh on those with disabilities who were unable to work like others:

I know that their way of life is as farmers and that everyone is expected to work the land as evident in the story, I just think that it's not right that she is treated as if she died since she's unable to work. (Ryan Collegewood School (CPS))

I thought it was sad when the girl got her leg blown off. I didn't get why her cousin wanted to marry her because that's a bit weird. It's also weird that an old man could marry a teenager. And if I was the girl I wouldn't go off with a random man called Hans, it would be a bit sketchy. (Keith Dunvara School (DCS))

Keith's comment demonstrates how some students tried to make sense of the story based on their own frame of reference. As it differs completely they found some things very difficult to understand. Some students felt very little empathy for Yola and were not interested in the story:

It's a very clichéd story for an African setting, war, marriage at a young age and then the character overcoming her injuries blah blah blah. It's almost as if the story is already over and I don't want to know what happens. (Jamie Collegewood School (CPS))

It is remarkable that Jamie refers to the story as 'clichéd' and specifically mentions war and marriage. Similar to O'Sullivan's argument that an image can say more about the spectant than the spected, this reveals some of Jamie's own views on Africa which correlate with some of the more common stereotypical images held about Africa:

I dislike the story because it does not seem interesting to me but also because it stereotypes people, how the black tribe leader, Yola's father, has many wives and the

only white person there is a nun and is religious. It paints the picture that all white people going to Africa are there to help people. (Dawid Collegewood School (CPS))

Dawid makes an interesting point about the representation of white characters in the novel, highlighting that the only white characters in Africa are depicted in an aid-giving role.

An aspect of the novel some students particularly enjoyed was finding out information previously unknown to them.

It's a very interesting book to read because you get the idea what life is like for someone who lives in a different culture and I like reading about their views on marriage for example. (Stacey Merton High School (MC))

I think that the book so far is interesting since I never really thought about what the lifestyle is like in Africa, for example I didn't think that they still used arranged marriages (Peter Fawnlodge College (FCC))

I think the novel is gripping and the story is interesting because it's a culture so different to ours. Learning about their life: how labour is shared, the family and community etc. is great. (Rebecca Collegewood School (CPS))

I like the fact that we learn about African culture in this. (Fiona Collegewood School (CPS))

Supporting Barta and Crouthers Grindler's argument that multicultural literature can serve as a tool to help educate children about different cultures, students embraced the new information provided.<sup>48</sup> However, as previously stated, it is important to ensure that this information is interpreted in the correct context. As the following comment indicates, some students had little to no knowledge about Africa before reading this text:

So far I like the book. It's changed my opinion on Africa because I didn't think they even had hospitals. The description is good. I enjoy reading it because it opens your eyes about young girls in Africa and how they marry young. (Chloe Collegewood School (CPS))

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<sup>48</sup> Barta and Crouthers Grindler, 'Exploring Bias using Multicultural Literature for Children'.



Chloe's comment again demonstrates that some students have very little knowledge about Africa and often conceive of it as one country rather than a large disparate continent with many different countries, languages, traditions, cultures and economies. Chloe clearly had an image of Africa as a poor, underprivileged place. On a positive note, reading the text has appeared to increase her awareness about the lifestyle of some people in Africa and has altered her opinion slightly. However, she still imagines Africa as one place where the same conditions and experiences apply universally to everyone. This is obviously not the case and points to the need to include other texts in the curriculum that explore different parts of Africa.

It is also significant that the aspects that the students focused on tended to be negative. More positive realities of this community life such as the strong bonds of family and friendship were overlooked. Apart from gender, which admittedly is a large factor, there was very little other discrimination in society depicted. While the students referred to their lifestyle as 'hard' the fact that the workers were portrayed as happy and satisfied was overlooked. There is still a large amount of improvement to be made to encourage students to fully consider and appreciate different values and traditions.

### ***Making Ireland Home***

As mentioned above, *Making Ireland Home* is a documentary film made by the Migrant Rights Centre of Ireland in 2011. The film features young adult immigrants talking about their experience of moving to Ireland and living here. In contrast to the other texts involved in this study, this is not fictional and as such, cannot be treated in the same way. The decision to include this in the module was made as it was considered important to include a migrant perspective that reflected reality, to provide a real

migrant voice as opposed to solely Irish authors' interpretations of the experience. The film helped students to view immigration and the different reasons for it as a complex issue. It provided most students with the opportunity of seeing from a new perspective.

The responses to this text were varied and demonstrated that students hold completely different views and opinions about the reality of racism in Ireland. On one end of the spectrum were students who had either experienced or witnessed racism and were unsurprised by the kind of stories that the immigrants told. On the other were students who refused to believe that these things had happened in Ireland and some actually questioned the veracity and reliability of the immigrants and their reported experiences. In between these two poles were students who registered surprise and disgust at the level of racism the young people had experienced since coming to Ireland and those that attempted to justify some of the instances by arguing that they were perhaps meant in jest and as such, did not constitute 'real' racist behaviour. The insistence that this kind of 'slagging' is acceptable was difficult to shake among students who viewed it as a normal part of Irish social life.

### ***Surprise***

Although aware of some level of racism, some students were not conscious of the extent of it. The students less likely to be aware of racism were white Irish students. This could be because they do not often see it in their own area but is more likely to do with the fact that they do not experience it themselves.

All in all I think the video was a wake-up call to how much racism goes on around you and how little is being done about it. (Adam, Fawnlodge College (FCC))

I didn't realise how bad people from other countries had it. (Gavin Dunvara School (DCS))

I didn't think there was that much racism in Ireland until Larry on the video said we don't notice it because it doesn't happen to us. I actually never realise[d] how hard it was for people who don't come from Ireland and move here and go to school here. Alena wished to talk to people more. I didn't think racism was bad like a fella in the video said that he was put in hospital and I thought it was just calling a few names I didn't think it was that bad in Ireland. (Madison Dunvara School (DCS))

The explanation that Larry provided in the film about why Irish people are less aware of racism resonated with Madison. This lack of awareness was mirrored in many of the comments students made after watching the short documentary including Gavin's and Adam's above. Madison reveals that she had never before really considered what it is like for people that move to Ireland, despite having several classmates from immigrant backgrounds. It is remarkable that Madison differentiates between 'calling a few names' and physical abuse. It appears that the name calling is acceptable to her. This attitude will be discussed further in the section below.

The film also informed Irish students about aspects of the immigrant experience that they had previously not considered, for example the rate of third-level fees for non-European immigrants and visa requirements for travel.

I didn't think that people from different country had to apply every year to stay in Ireland. [...] I thought it was a bit unfair that people from different countries have to pay double college fees because if I was in a different place I would like to be able to go to college. (Madison Dunvara School (DCS))

Madison, unlike some of the other students involved in the study, considers what it would be like for her if she was in an immigrant's position facing barriers to further education. This demonstrates that she has engaged with the film and it has incited her to think from a different perspective. She has become aware of new information and imagines how she would feel in the situation. She reflects that it is 'a bit unfair'.

Similarly, her classmate Sean feels that he has a better understanding of the reality of racism after watching the film and he is able to sympathise:

I understand racism a lot more now. It made me look at racism in a different way. It also made me understand how people feel when they are affected by racism. (Sean Dunvara School (DCS))

Similarly, following the film Adam felt that Irish people should be more accepting:

it was very educational and eye opening about Ireland and immigrants. it explained about the situation they go through to get citizenship. it showed me that it's very hard to be a foreign person in Ireland and also that it's hard for them to get an education and also that we should accept them into our country. (Adam Dunvara School (DCS))

This is contrasted with other students who feel that immigrants to Ireland are not in a position to complain and should be satisfied with the treatment they receive here and those that questioned the actual level of racism in Ireland.

### ***Questioning the Portrayal of Racism in Ireland***

Some students felt that Ireland was not as racist as the film seemed to suggest and particularly associated racism with the older generation, distancing it from themselves and their view of people their own age. As mentioned previously, this was a common practice among students at all schools. It reveals that the students view themselves as a distinct group in Irish society defined by their youth and as such, separate to the 'older generation'. From an imagological viewpoint they consider older people as 'Other' and attribute the negative trait of racism to them. This permits them to distance themselves from a damaging image:

I don't think Ireland is that racist compare[d] to other countries, I especially don't think our generation is. (Caoimhe Merton High School (MC))

I didn't think Irish people were racist. I think the future generation are not as much racists to people then as the older generation. (Andrea Merton High School (MC))

The belief that the older generation is to blame for racism was also reflected in the survey responses where students were asked why they thought they were racist.

I think some people are racist because of their age (i.e. older people) because older people like our grandparents wouldn't know they were doing something wrong as it was accepted when they were growing up (Jordan Silveroaks College (SD))

[B]ecause the older generation thought it was okay to be racist (Glenn Dunvara School (DCS))

While in some schools there was disbelief at the level of racism among young people in particular, at others there was anger and a disavowal of the information presented. Lonfield College (LCC) in particular had a number of students who felt very strongly that Ireland and Irish people were being unjustly represented in the film. As discussed above in the section on racism, Lonfield College (LCC) was the school with one of the lowest reported levels of racism either witnessed or experienced by students. This could be why some students found it difficult to accept the assertion that racism was prevalent in Irish society. However, it should also be remembered that Lonfield College (LCC) is the largest school in the sample with one of the lowest percentages of non-Irish students. Racism may not be as apparent as in other schools as a consequence.

I disagree with the short film because they were literally saying feel sorry for me 'cause I'm only new to this country. [...] Who cares if you're black, they shouldn't feel sorry for themselves, take it on the chin or ignore a stupid comment. (Adam Lonfield College (LCC))

Adam, as a member of the white ethnic majority, feels no sympathy for people who experience racism. Immigrants' reaction to racism and not the existence of it is at fault according to this opinion. What is interesting is that Adam does not deny that people are racist. In his opinion, the correct way to deal with it is to ignore it. He views the young

people in the film as complainers. His classmate Karen also questioned the way Ireland was presented in the film:

I felt it was very bias[ed] because the majority of them were just saying about how they were being badly treated etc, really that doesn't happen it made it look like all/most of anyway Irish students are racist when they're really not I don't think (Karen Lonfield College (LCC))

Karen's comment is interesting as it creates the impression that the immigrants are lying without explicitly stating this. She undermines their stories by stating that 'that doesn't really happen'. She fails to believe that some Irish people are 'really' racist. A student at Larkvale School (LCS) also felt that the film was depicting 'Irish people [...] as a bunch of racists' (Jordan Larkvale School (LCS)).

Some students refused to believe the information that was provided. Students became quite defensive and were of the opinion that the young people in the film were exaggerating their experiences:

I think this video was not showing an objective view I think it was quite one sided as it only showed the bad things Ireland does when it comes to this subject. Especially when it came to the racism section of the video it only showed this people and how they were racially abused, although I know racism exists in Ireland and it isn't acceptable. Not everyone in Ireland is racist and I'm sure there are examples of immigrants in Ireland that have not experienced racism, however there were no examples of this in the video instead only negative views or experiences. I think this video showed only a bad side of racism in Ireland and nothing containing how much we try to be open to immigrants needs. (Andrew Lonfield College (LCC))

What is ironic about this response is that the objectivity of the piece is called into question. This does not occur to Andrew in texts where Irish people narrate. However, because no Irish people were interviewed in this film, for obvious reasons, it did not depict an accurate portrayal of Ireland and Irish society in his opinion. What Andrew failed to realise was that he felt this way because it was not an accurate portrayal of his

experience of Irish society. The reality for migrants is different and this was precisely why this documentary film was created: to try and inform Irish people about what it is like to be a migrant in Ireland. Aside from that, the young people in the film did in fact talk about positive things they had experienced in Ireland, such as the great friends they had made and the many opportunities they had and aspirations they hold as a result of their move to Ireland. These appear to be overlooked in the majority of the responses:

I believe that if you tell lots of people that they will be on T.V. if they tell you some problems that they will exaggerate about their problems. For example I don't believe the Brazilian girl was asked to have sex at 13 by a 16 year old guy. I also don't believe that she went home and asked her mum for bleach because that is just stupid. I do believe that there are problems with racism in Ireland but the best way to show these problems isn't through television but through books where people's names aren't published so there is no reason for them to make their stories far worse than they actually are. (Darren Lonfield College (LCC))

Darren cannot comprehend that the kind of things Nally, the Brazilian girl, talks about actually happened. He believes that she has exaggerated or made them up in order to get on television. This film, to the best of my knowledge, has never been shown on television. The young people involved are not actors and did not get paid for their participation. It is interesting that Darren considers that books would be a better medium through which to communicate the message about racism in Ireland. It is possible that this is because such a form would allow him to distance himself from it. Added to the fact that he believes that their names should not be published may suggest that he believes they should be ignored, that perhaps they do not have the right to make people aware of this uncomfortable truth, particularly Irish people.

The distrust that some students at Lonfield College (LCC) felt towards the immigrants' stories reflected views expressed in an earlier class discussion where it became apparent

that a number of the students believed that immigrants only moved to Ireland to take advantage of the social welfare system. The discussion evolved out of a class where students were being shown the immigration figures for Ireland for the years 2000-2010. The opening up of the borders to the ten new EU member states in 2004 (Cyprus, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia) and the fact that workers from these countries were not required to obtain a visa to work in Ireland was put forward as one reason immigration increased during this period. The following exchange then occurred:

- |                     |  |
|---------------------|--|
| Luke- Irish male:   | And they're all on the dole now.   |
| Irish female:       | Ms would that be considered racist?  |
| Another Irish male: | And now they're going back because its crap here now   |
| Me:                 | We're going to talk about that. There are still a significant number of people coming in to the country (about 20,000 in 2010) |
| Luke-Irish male:    | Why would they still come here though?   |
| Irish male:         | Because the jobs are good  |
| Leon:               | I don't think it needs to be discussed, it's not a big deal, like is it a problem?   |

What is interesting about this exchange is that it begins by associating immigrants with social welfare. The implication is that people are coming to Ireland to take advantage of the system and claim payments. Immediately, another student enquires if that comment can be considered racist which signifies an awareness that it is, at the very least, a sweeping generalisation or stereotype about an entire group of people. The next comment is spoken with a hint of derision that immigrants are leaving as a result of the economic downturn instead of sticking it out. This is significant as it appears to suggest



that these people are working as the downturn would not have as much of an impact on people already on social welfare. Moments later, another student acknowledges that the reason immigrants are still coming to the country is precisely because of the jobs which refutes the previous comment that immigrants are 'all on the dole' and that they are leaving. As identified earlier with reference to Hinton, prejudiced people can hold contradictory views about minority groups. Luke in particular had a very negative attitude towards immigrants. This could in part be linked to the fact that his father was a tradesman who appeared to suffer as a result of the increase in migrant workers in the country. Luke revealed that his father was unable to get the same amount of work because migrant builders worked for less pay and claimed the dole at the same time. He was adamant that this was common practice. Despite the obvious resentment fostered by some students in the class, another student felt that the issue was not worth discussing which points again towards the tendency of some students to ignore the problem. Contrary to arguments against this view, the students were insistent that immigrants only came for social welfare and I was accused of 'only arguing because you're a teacher you know it's true.'

I don't have any problem with them. I blame the country. If they have the opportunity to come over and take free money they're not going to say no are they? It's not their fault I'd take it as well. (Luke Lonfield College (LCC))

The issue of social welfare was again raised by a student at Silveroaks College (SD). This student also felt that immigrants had no right to complain as in his opinion they received better care than Irish people from the state. Ownership and belonging appeared to be important where rights were entitled to someone from the country but not others. There was very little empathy and understanding shown by some students.

I liked the clip because it told the story of immigrants and their opinion of how they think they are mistreated when they are treated fairly and get the same benefits if not more than Irish people who are actually from this country. (Ryan Silveroaks College (SD))

Underlying some of the xenophobia appeared to be a fear of being overrun by immigrants. The nearest second-level school to Lonfield College (LCC) was cited as an example. Lonfield College (LCC) is located close to a newly established suburb highly populated by immigrants to Ireland and their families. As a result of increased demand for school places, a new second-level school was opened not far from Lonfield College (LCC). The school, Avondale Community College (ACC), has a high population of non-Irish students (45.7%). As can be seen from the exchange below, the figure is grossly exaggerated by one Irish student:

Irish male: In Avondale it's like 90% foreign people and 10% Irish

Leon: It's crazy

Me: Is it crazy? Why?

Leon: It's not a problem it's just weird

Me: Why is it weird?

Leon: You know it's weird

Me: I don't understand why it's weird. Can you explain it to me?

Leon: Because we're in Ireland and 5% of the school are Irish

Leon views this population of non-Irish as 'crazy'. Interestingly, when asked to explain why this constitutes a crazy occurrence, he cannot explain or does not want to, perhaps for fear of being labelled racist. He tries to distance himself from appearing this way by stating that 'it's not a problem.' He then starts to become irritated at my continued request for him to explain what he means. Again he tries to dissociate himself from the statement by attributing the knowledge to me. He never fully explains himself because

he assumes that the reason he considers it 'weird' is explicit and that others have the same opinion about it as he does. To add weight to his argument he also reduces the percentage of Irish in the school. The reason he believes it is strange is because he thinks Ireland should be populated only by Irish. The proportion of non-Irish students at Avondale Community College (ACC) is viewed as a threat to the status quo in a country where Irish people constitute the majority. Before I can ask him to consider why there is a marked difference in the intake of students between Avondale Community College (ACC) and Lonfield College (LCC) where the non-Irish population is only 10.23% despite the short 2km distance between the two schools, another student interjects:

Me: Why has that happened? Why is it not more intercultural?

Sean: Ms I don't think that's right.

Me: Why?

Sean: Because people can't even get into our school so they're going down to that school.

It is interesting that although Sean does not specify, it is clear that by 'people' he means Irish people. It is also clear that Lonfield College (LCC) is considered the better school in Sean's view as it is unfair that the students (Irish students) who cannot get into Lonfield College (LCC) have to go to 'that' school with its apparently negative connotations. I draw attention to the fact that Sean has overlooked how unfair enrolment procedures can appear to people new to an area. However, Sean feels that being Irish and living in the area for longer entitle a student to access to a school:

Sean: I think it's a bit unfair if someone from Ireland who's been living here longer doesn't get into this school or any school because someone came a year ago or something but lives closer to the school. But if they've been going to a feeder school for longer than the other person... I think that needs to be looked at.

Harry: My sister can't come to this school because there's no places.

Sean: There's no racism for white people it doesn't work both ways.

Similar to the theory of oppression privilege discussed above, Sean seems to interpret the fact that Harry's sister's inability to get a place in Lonfield College (LCC) equates to a form of racism against white people, despite having just demonstrated that he is aware that the kind of things that determine a school place are to do with practical elements such as distance from the school and feeder primary schools.

Some students held very negative opinions of immigrants and frequently differentiated between 'us' and 'them'. The fear of 'them' taking over was also related to religion. Interestingly, the fear was not that a religion other than Christianity would dominate but that secularism would become the norm. This demonstrates that an image of Irish people as Catholic is still sometimes invoked:

Alex: If they come over here and we change like we can't have crosses in our hospitals anymore or cribs to mind all these other religions and be multinational but if we went over there it would be their religion everywhere. (Irish female, Lonfield College (LCC))

Me: Ok where are you talking about? 'there' where?

Alex: Any place!

Me: I think you're referring to other countries that are religious. Ireland is unusual in the fact that a lot of state run hospitals or schools are in part or organised by the church, that's really unusual. In a lot of countries its secular organisation so the church wouldn't have a place in schools or hospitals.

Alex: Yeah but we can't show anything like in America you can't say happy Christmas to someone you have to say Happy holidays cos they find it offensive not everyone has Christmas.

Me: Is that an issue, do you think?

Alex: Yeah.

The issue for some students in Lonfield College appeared to be that immigrants were coming to Ireland and fearing change because of that. For others, it was that immigrants were coming and criticising things about Ireland:

There's a girl in our school put a status up on Twitter before 'I can't understand why my Mam would move to this country' So she's basically saying this is a bad country so I go to her if you don't want to be here then go home no-one wants you here and she said don't be racist but that's not like, being racist. (Darren Fawnlodge College (FCC))

It is telling that this student fails to see how this comment can be interpreted as racism. For him, it is acceptable to tell someone to 'go home'. He does not accept that Ireland is her home and that she has as much right to complain about it as he does. Ironically, a number of students had just returned from an exchange in Germany and held a very negative view of Ireland by comparison. They made statements such as 'our education system is bad' and 'there's nothing over here, no clubs or anything'. In contrast to the experience the Irish students had there, the German students would have to endure boredom in Ireland, in the view of the Irish students. Another student questioned why anyone would move to Ireland at all. Despite this, the students seemed to be extremely annoyed at any criticism that the immigrant students in the film held of Ireland.

### ***Relating to Personal Experience***

Students from immigrant backgrounds were less likely to register surprise at the kind of things the young people on the film mentioned in terms of racism. Some could relate to their experiences and watching the film led them to reveal things that they had encountered. Although some students believed that Ireland is not a racist place or as racist as they felt the film made it out to be, the experiences revealed by their own classmates would lend strong evidence to the contrary. Because the majority of the

responses were written pieces, they were read only by me. This may also be a significant factor, explaining why some students doubt that racism occurs. As they do not experience it themselves and their classmates may not want to discuss it in front of them, they distrust any reports that suggest otherwise:

I could relate to their experiences because I was also given some racial remarks in the past; about my skin colour, where I came from, my eyes, etc. (Maureen-Filipino-Irish female Fawnlodge College (FCC))

In my opinion this video was accurate, people in Ireland tend to show racism, sometimes without intending to do so. Nothing in particular has really surprised me since I have witnessed as well as experienced racism on my own. [...] you never really know if you're welcome here or not since many people want you out of the country, for example I heard a cashier say to my father 'Why don't you go back to your country and make things easier for us?' (Peter- Polish male Fawnlodge College (FCC))

Some of the things they were saying I kind of agreed with like me being a foreigner and everything like people making comments like monkey and banana (Leletu- South African female Larkvale School (LCS))

The kind of racism experienced by students reflects the definitions of racism provided by students discussed earlier reiterating the point that racism can be attributed to different factors. Students that differed from the traditional white Irish norm were more likely to receive comments about their skin colour and appearance while students from Eastern Europe were more likely to receive comments about 'stealing jobs'.

Unlike in the film, no student reported being physically assaulted in a racist encounter.

After viewing the video I was surprised and not surprised at some points. I really liked the video because the students were telling almost everything that is got to do with me. For example people tell me to leave Ireland and that I am unwanted here, they also say that my parents are taking over the jobs and some Irish people try to say as many negative things to me as they can. (Marc- Lithuanian male, Fawnlodge College (FCC))

Like some of the other students' reactions to the texts studied in the module, Marc appreciated this text because he could relate to it, even though in this case it was to

something negative. Like Marc, students from an immigrant background were certainly more aware of racism than their Irish counterparts despite living in the same general area and attending the same school. This contrasts with the views of some students that experiencing racism is a more localised occurrence that would depend on where they lived (Shane Sycamore High School (SK), Katie Larkvale School (LCS)). Shane in particular defended his own area assuredly stating that there was no racism there. The relation between racism and place was something that students considered during ‘The Walk of Life’ activity and is discussed in further detail below.

### ***Differentiating Racism from ‘Slagging’***

Mirroring the responses given in the survey that racism is unacceptable and should be stopped, students tended to distinguish between ‘slagging’ and racial abuse. ‘Slagging’ in this sense is an Irish slang word meaning mocking or jeering. The sole difference depended on whether you were friends with the person or not and not the actual words spoken. ‘Slagging’ among friends, whether racial in nature or not, was considered ‘normal’:

Sometimes you do be messing with your friends and you call someone yellow or whatever. (Leletu- South African female, Larkvale School (LCS))

Yeah that’s normal. (Angel- Irish female, Larkvale School (LCS))

For Leletu and Angel, making a racist comment among friends is considered ‘normal’, in essence, that it is acceptable. This is contrasted against an experience that Leletu describes where she was verbally abused by a stranger on a bus. Racist comments from a stranger appear to equate to ‘real’ racism while comments of a racial nature among friends are considered harmless slagging.

Kieran in Sycamore High School (SK) also felt that a racial comment made among friends did not equate to being racist. He attempted to argue that in this situation it was acceptable. It is interesting that in his comment he notes that people would get mocked for having a big nose so therefore it should be fair to say something about the colour of someone's skin. What Kieran seems to fail to realise is that through this comment he is effectively associating any skin colour other than white with a negative connotation or construing it as something of a disadvantage. He mentions that 'slagging' is normal in Ireland and that it should not be taken offensively. However, his fellow students disagreed that making fun of someone because of their skin was acceptable. The following exchange is an example of the student-student-teacher interaction that Rosenblatt encourages. In this way they are able to compare their views on the subject and reconsider their stance:

Kieran: I don't think it's like, fair because em like, if you have a big nose you're going to be slagged over it (laughter from class) so like, if you're being equal you're going to slag them over their skin. You're going to slag people in Ireland.

Sean: Oh my God Kieran / Oh my God, Larry (black student) is right there.

Kieran: Stop. I hate you all. I hate you all! (laughs) No, but you're going to slag people anyway, over stuff they can't control.

[A lot of talk among students, some laughter. Two comments can be heard clearly:]

Shane: Yeah but you don't slag people over their skin.

Owen: You're promoting racism!

Kieran: I'm not saying that!

[Lots of arguing. Kieran is defending himself, other students disagreeing.]

Kieran: I'm not racist.



Me: Do you think when someone makes a comment about someone's skin or where they're from, it's the same as someone slagging someone else off over something? Is the incentive the same? Is it all in good humour or good jest?

Callum: It depends. I could slag Harvey and he could slag me and Larry could slag someone the same colour as him.

Larry: You're stepping over the line.

Kieran: If you're trying to have an intercultural it wouldn't really be a big deal if you slagged someone over their skin because everyone would be so together they wouldn't mind.

Me: What do you think about that?

Kieran: If your friends with someone...

Callum: The next black person you see walking down the road are you going to say something to them?

Me: Kieran, would you slag someone over their skin colour?

Kieran: No I wouldn't slag someone over their skin. I'm just saying people get slagged over things they can't control so what's the big deal about it?

Dillion: Some people would take it as a joke, two fifth years, Chanelle and Remi and they're both Asian and they'd be the first to slag themselves so there's a limit to where you can go but you can have a laugh about it.

Me: Ok so if you're friends with someone you might be able to say something?

Kieran: Yeah, like you're not going to walk up to a random person and just tell someone they have a big nose.

It is notable that Kieran equates 'slagging' someone over their skin colour with treating them equally. Kieran attempts to justify his stance and distance himself from being identified as racist by appealing to an equality discourse. His classmates disagreed but Kieran maintained that he was not racist. 'Slagging' is an apparent form of negotiated discourse. In order to make a seemingly racist remark but not be considered racist, the compliance of peers is required, as demonstrated above when Angel agrees with Leletu. Kieran mistakenly assumes that his argument will be backed up by the class. It is

possible that he thinks that the lack of collusion is a joke at his expense as he responds to the comments about Larry, a black student in the class, by laughing and joking that he hates them for disagreeing with him. He then continues to try and justify his stance. However, it is stated again by another student that it is unacceptable. Only then does Kieran realise that he is unsupported and quickly states that he is not racist. Callum argues that skin colour can only be mentioned by someone else of the same skin colour although Larry does not appear to appreciate being mentioned in this way as different to Callum and Harvey. Similar to the equality excuse previously mentioned, Kieran attempts to argue that an intercultural context allows for such things as everyone is 'together' and viewed equally. However, the long history of racism experienced by non-white people affects the power dynamic. Kieran admits that he would not comment on the appearance of a stranger.

Kieran, while not overtly defensive like some of the students in the other schools on the subject, was also of the opinion that embracing interculturalism posed a threat to Irish culture: 'We are in Ireland so we do kinda have to celebrate our own culture more than any others. If we do it on an equal footing then we'll kind of lose our culture.' (Kieran) Again, other students in the class disagreed with him:

Shane: No we won't.

Kieran: People come to Ireland to see Irish culture not to see loads of different cultures.

Keenan: Do you not think we should accept other cultures as well?

Callum: Just because you're celebrating it doesn't mean you're accepting it.

Interestingly, Kieran's point about people coming to Ireland appears to relate to tourists. Tourists are welcome visitors, while immigrants are not considered in the same light.

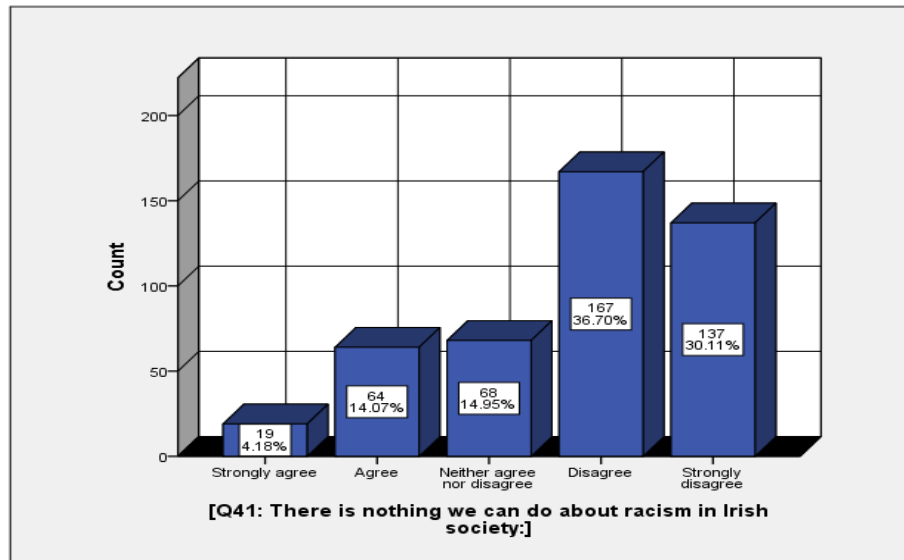
For Kieran, the increase in the number of immigrants appears to represent a threat to Irish culture becoming diluted through the encounter with other cultures. It is clear that interculturalism is not viewed in a positive way as something to celebrate and advertise and that culture is viewed as a fixed thing that must be protected rather than as hybrid and fluctuating. When America is cited as an example of another country that has adopted parts of Irish culture, Kieran disagrees: 'They haven't really, they don't speak Irish. They don't do Irish dancing.' It is interesting that he has picked these two things as indicators of Irish culture as he himself cannot speak Irish or Irish dance. The myth of Irish culture has been so well promoted that it is adopted even by people that aren't represented in it. These two aspects of Irish culture clearly form part of the auto-image he holds about Irishness, despite not conforming to this image himself.

Some students had the negative opinion that racism would always exist and that there is nothing that can be done about it:

It's never going to stop. (Murmurs of agreement.) Yeah you can never stop racism.  
Generation after generation it's just going to be there. (Idris- Nigerian male, Larkvale School (LCS))

However, as evident from the survey data depicted in the graph below, this is the minority opinion. The majority of students disagree or strongly disagree that nothing can be done about racism.

**Figure 4.19 Barchart: 'There is nothing we can do about racism in Irish society'**



Disagreement about whether racism has worsened in recent years was evident. In the view of Irish students, the level of racism in Ireland has decreased and was significantly worse in previous generations. As previously discussed, the Irish students associated the older generation with a higher level of racism. This contrasted with the views of some of the immigrant students who felt that racism has worsened. As these students are more aware of it and in some cases have been victims of racism themselves, this may be more reflective of contemporary Irish society. This is something that is also examined in the documentary film. Several researchers have noted that Ireland has mistakenly been considered a monocultural society when it never was in reality. With the increase in the number of immigrants in the country, the level of racism has risen. As immigrants become more visible, so too does racist behaviour: 'They're becoming more racist now.' (Greta Lithuanian female (LCS)) Interestingly, her South African classmate, Leletu associates this with an increase in knowledge, which is markedly different from the

opinion of other students who feel that lack of knowledge and education is one of the main reasons people are racist in the first place. Greta makes the point that years ago it used to be just about skin colour, now it can be about religion, culture, where you are from, accent, etc. Perhaps it is because the increased awareness and education about different cultures and religions provides additional ammunition to would-be racists on the topics they can choose to abuse. Or perhaps this apparent increase could be attributed to the fact that skin colour has become a topic that is deemed untouchable but culture, religion or accent are considered acceptable to comment upon. However, another reason why Greta has experienced more racism in recent years may be connected to the general increase in hostility towards immigrants, particularly those of Eastern European origin who are associated with ‘stealing Irish jobs’.

On the subject of racism and the discussion following *Making Ireland Home*, Travellers were only mentioned at one school (Larkvale School (LCS)) and were brought up by an immigrant student who could not understand why Irish people in general were racist towards them. Similar to the research conducted by Tormey and Gleeson, most Irish students did not consider them a minority group subject to racism. Abuse was acceptable towards the Travelling Community and this point is illustrated by a comment made by one student who clearly dissociates the type of abuse travellers get with racism: ‘Why are we talking about Travellers? We were talking about racism.’ (Katie, Larkvale School (LCS))

### **Exploring Attitudes to Minority Groups with *The Walk of Life* Activity**

In addition to revealing the attitudes of students towards immigrants, the module also assisted in uncovering the attitudes of students towards some other minority groups in

Irish society, specifically the LGBT and Travelling communities. The definition of an intercultural society in this study is characterised by a well-integrated community where mutual respect dominates and different cultures, backgrounds and religions are accepted as normal and are treated equally. Different perspectives and traditions are also valued and discrimination on the basis of race, culture or religion is challenged. Essentially, interculturalism is conceived of as being about achieving an equal and fair society where everyone is treated with respect. The Travelling Community is not recognised as a separate ethnic group despite calls from Traveller organisations such as Pavee Point.<sup>49</sup> However, like the LGBT community, it is a distinctive group which forms part of Irish society and therefore, both are deemed important to discuss in relation to this study. Furthermore, organisations such as the *Irish Traveller Movement* have embraced the idea that intercultural education should include everyone and celebrate diversity. They have set up the Yellow Flag Programme to assist schools with this.<sup>50</sup> The programme

[...] aims to work with students, staff, management, parents and the wider community so that issues of diversity and equality are not merely seen as ‘school subjects’ but can be understood and taken outside the school setting into everyday life.<sup>51</sup>

The *Irish Traveller Movement* emphasise that the Travelling Community ‘are often left out of the intercultural debate’ and this contributes to Travellers ‘isolation and rejection in classrooms all over the country.’<sup>52</sup> Following the model of inclusive education proposed in this research both groups are included in this analysis and are considered in

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<sup>49</sup> Pavee Point, ‘‘Counting Us In- Human Rights Count’ OSF Project Ethnic equality monitoring within a human rights framework in Ireland’, <http://www.paveepoint.ie/project/ethnic-data-monitoring-initiative/> (Accessed 25 June 2015).

<sup>50</sup> Yellow Flag Programme, <http://www.yellowflag.ie/>.

<sup>51</sup> Aoife Titley, *The Irish Traveller Movement Yellow Flag Programme Handbook for Schools*, [http://www.yellowflag.ie/uploads/page/English\\_YF\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.yellowflag.ie/uploads/page/English_YF_Handbook.pdf) (Accessed 25 June 2015).

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

light of their conceptualisation as ‘Other’ in Irish society. No students identified as a member of the Travelling Community in this research. As the survey did not specifically ask students if they were Travellers, it is possible that some students are members of this group and chose to keep this aspect of their identity hidden from me and their classmates in discussion.

The ‘Walk of Life’ is an activity taken from the *All Different All Equal IRELAND An Anti-Racist and Intercultural Education Resource for Youth Workers* activity pack available to download for free online.<sup>53</sup> The activity involves assigning students a role card and asking them to consider statements such as: ‘I can be sure that in school I will learn about the history of my group’ and ‘If I ask for the ‘person in charge in a shop I can be pretty sure that I will be dealing with a person like me’, in terms of that identity. Lined up in the centre of a room, students are asked to step forward if they agree with the statement or step back if they disagree. As previously mentioned, the role cards fall into six categories: majority ethnic, minority ethnic, refugee/ asylum seeker, disability, Travelling Community and LGBT.

What was immediately evident with this activity was the level of acceptance students had towards certain groups. There was also a lack of understanding of the terms in some cases. The difference between asylum seeker and refugee was difficult for some students to grasp. Some students were also confused by what majority ethnic meant. The group that students, particularly boys, appeared to least like being attributed was LGBT. There

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<sup>53</sup> National Youth Council of Ireland, *All Different All Equal IRELAND An Anti-Racist and Intercultural Education Resource for Youth Workers*, [www.youthdeved.ie/sites/youthdeved.ie/files/All\\_Different\\_All\\_Equal\\_Ireland\\_2006.pdf](http://www.youthdeved.ie/sites/youthdeved.ie/files/All_Different_All_Equal_Ireland_2006.pdf) (Accessed 9 November 2012).

were a lot of stereotypes associated with this group which will be discussed as part of the analysis on reactions to the 'Walk of Life' activity. Students were more likely to express negative opinions about the Travelling Community than about any other group. This was considered acceptable in a way making disparaging remarks about a minority ethnic group would not be. There was also a distinct lack of knowledge and awareness about mental illnesses and some students did not know what schizophrenia was.

At Collegewood School (CPS), unlike some of the other schools, no-one attempted to switch their card and there was a lot more acceptance of LGBT, although there were still some comments about how Lesbians are identifiable by 'boys clothes' and 'short hair'. Specific reference was made to Tom Daly. It may be that the increase in well-known sports personalities revealing that they are gay may be having a positive impact on the acceptance of homosexuality as normal. However, this was not the case at Dunvara School (DCS). One male student, Sean, who was initially assigned an LGBT identity for the activity changed it almost immediately with a female classmate. It was quite apparent that he did not want to be associated with this particular identity despite the fictional nature of the activity. No other student tried to change their group. When I asked why he had decided to change he became uncomfortable and somewhat defensive: 'You're going on as if I'm some sort of terrorist or something.' Another male student in the class that he is friends with mocked him for not being comfortable with his sexuality. After that student revealed that he had also been assigned an LGBT card, Sean decided to swap back. There is a lot of work to be done in the area of homosexuality and stereotyping of LGBT people. These two students felt that gay people are well represented on television: 'They're always talking about gays, gay rights, gay marriage'.



When asked about the history of their group Sean said that ‘You don’t really learn about gays in school’. This indicates that he does not view LGBT people as people like him but as a separate group. Or it could indicate that LGBT is not discussed in the school environment. This is also reflected in his comments about the way LGBT people look and behave. He believes that they are easily recognisable. The girls in the class disagreed. Typical stereotypes about the way LGBT people behave and dress are expressed by some of the male students:

Me: How do you know?

Sean: You know.

Me: How?

Dean: By the way they talk.

Sean: Some are real camp and some you wouldn’t even know that they’re gay.

Me: Do you not think that’s also a stereotype?

Sean: No.

Me: Sean do you know any gay people? Personally? Not know of, friends or family members?

Sean: No.

Me: Do they all conform to your view?

Sean: Yeah.

Me: How would you know what a lesbian looks like?

Dean: Because lesbians cut their hair short.

Sean: When you see a gay person, you know what they are.

It is significant that gay people are considered ‘Other’ by some of the students. This is clear from the distinction that is made by saying that ‘you know what they are’. There is a strong indication that this student views LGBT people as different to the norm.

Interestingly, in the all-boys environment of Silveroaks College (SD), no student reacted negatively to an LGBT card or tried to change it. The location of LGBT card-holders at the end of the activity tended to differ from school to school with extremes from the very front to the very back which reflects the differing levels of acceptance among students. It would be interesting to repeat this activity now that gay marriage has been approved by a popular vote in Ireland. Future research could investigate whether this amendment has had an impact on how LGBT people are viewed and whether the change in law has had an impact on the level of acceptance of LGBT people among second-level students.

Often those students who had been assigned as a member of the Travelling Community for the game were situated at the back of the room near the minority ethnic and asylum seeker and refugee group at the end of the activity. This demonstrated that students are aware that Travellers are not treated equally in Irish society. In contrast, majority ethnic card holders were usually placed at the front of the room at the end of the exercise. Despite this, students still felt that it was permissible to voice negative opinions about members of the Travelling Community. At Collegewood School (CPS), there was a lot of hostility towards the Travelling Community, and it was deemed acceptable by students to discriminate against them as a group and talk about them as they would not another group: 'They're all bad', 'They don't help themselves'. Personal interaction with members of this group was described as being negative and overall they were not considered nice people. One student asked about (the lack of) Traveller representation in politics and cited this as an important factor and something of a justification for their poor treatment. It is noteworthy that, as can be seen from the survey responses discussed

above, students at this school were among the most accepting and welcoming of immigrants out of all the schools involved in the study. It is thus surprising that such negative opinions are held about this group. While there was awareness among the students of the variety of nationalities, religions and cultures of students in the school, one student did mention that she did not know if there were any travellers in the school. This would indicate that the Travelling Community is still viewed in a very negative way by students and that this individual culture may not be valued and celebrated as others are. The students at Silveroaks College (SD) believed that travellers and LGBT people were the most discriminated against in Irish society. At Silveroaks College (SD) travellers were described by three students as ‘outcasts’. They were conceived of as being ‘different’ and having ‘weird’ traditions:

Me:                Why?

Seamus:        No-one likes them.

George:        Because they’re different.

Daniel:        People think Travellers and their traditions are weird. A girl marries at 16, they can marry their cousins.

The only school where these kinds of comments were challenged was in Fawnlodge College (FCC) where some of the students were friends with members of the Travelling Community. There appeared to be a greater awareness among the students about Traveller culture:

Niamh: It does matter because boys stay at school and girls have to stay at home and mind their younger brothers and sisters.

Orla:    They don’t get their hair cut ‘til their communion, they’re not allowed.

Niamh: Itinerant is a politer word. They take offence if you call them a traveller. They refer to themselves as Travellers but don’t like to be called that by others.

Chloe: They have respect for themselves but they don't show it in the way we do.

However, it was unclear if students were taking this information from their own experience or from television shows such as *My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding*. This programme was mentioned specifically. While I cautioned students to question such representations, one student insisted that this was a true portrayal of the Traveller lifestyle. She mentioned that her father (who is a Garda) attended the wedding of a traveller who was under Garda protection. He told her it was exactly like the TV shows 'and then the next week they were all on the *Late Late* show saying it's nothing like that but my dad said it's *exactly* like that.' (Her emphasis)

The issue of where students get information about minority groups was raised during this activity. At Dunvara School (DCS), there was an interesting note concerning learning about the history of minority groups and refugee and asylum seekers. The students were in disagreement about whether you would learn about them in school and resulted in the following exchange:

Chloe: You would in a class project.

Madison: It wouldn't be taught, like you wouldn't get an exam on it or anything.

This underlines how the official curriculum does not take account of the history of different groups. One student felt that you would be more inclined to learn about backgrounds of other groups if there was someone in your class from a different place or culture. However, this did not appear to be the case in a number of the schools. In particular, in Larkvale School (LCS) students did not seem to know where some students were from, nor have any information about their culture:

Me: Do you learn about the history of the Travelling Community? (me)

Sean: No.

Chloe: Yeah we did in Geography.

Mark: In primary school they brought in a wagon.

Liam: We learn about it in CSPE too.

The representation of minority groups appeared more frequently to be in subjects that were not exam-focused. Students sometimes tend to take these subjects less seriously because of this. If this is the case, then it is possible that even if information about other backgrounds and cultures is being discussed, students do not value it.

At Dunvara School (DCS) the issue of an area having an impact on the likelihood of experiencing discrimination was raised again with respect to disability. One student questioned whether they would be harassed while shopping because they were in a wheelchair. Students thought it would depend on the area of Dublin they were in.

Luke: Obviously you will be harassed.

Niall: It depends on what part of Dublin you're in.

Me: Why? What part of Dublin?

Luke: Darndale ha ha, no the Northside and you wouldn't be harassed in the Southside.

Niall: In Ballyer and Crumlin and all you would be.

[Disagreement over whether difference between northside and southside]

Sean: The southside has bad places too.

Luke: Like where, Blackrock? Ha ha.

Niall: No Ballyfermot and Crumlin are on the southside.

Luke: There's more rough places on the northside than the southside.

The students felt that people would be more likely to be harassed on the northside of Dublin than the south, although some students did demonstrate that they were not aware

that certain places were not on the north side. The places that they mention above are characterised by low-wage income and higher unemployment rates than other areas in Dublin with the exception of Blackrock which would be considered a relatively wealthy area. They are described as being ‘rough’ by the students meaning they are considered less safe than other areas. This issue about various areas of Dublin and their related friendliness was also mentioned at Collegewood School (CPS) in a different context. In a conversation about common Irish stereotypes, the students suggested very negative views of Irishness to do with drunkenness and addiction. On the subject of friendliness, one student felt that it would differ from place to place. He associated typically lower socio-economic areas such as Tallaght and the city centre with being less friendly.

Silveroaks College (SD) was the only school where the issue of religion arose. One student felt that non-believers and religions other than Catholic were not represented in school textbooks. The student also felt that the non-believer would be more likely to be harassed while out shopping, although I questioned how anyone would know if someone was religious or not by looking at them. Religion also came up when discussing the LGBT community. A student suggested that the reason some people may be uncomfortable with being attributed an LGBT card during this activity could be because of their religion:

Darren: Some people could be Catholic and that’s why they’re against it.

Kenneth: That’s true.

David: It says it in the bible.

Me: Does it?

David: I don’t know, I don’t read the bible.

Me: Do you believe that if you're a Catholic you can't be LGBT?

Darren: It's not allowed. They don't like it.

The fact that 'they' is used by the student could suggest that he is not revealing his own opinion on the subject but rather that this is his perception of the view of the Catholic Church. While it is somewhat reassuring that this may not be his own view, it is of concern considering Silveroaks is a Catholic school and could suggest that this is a message conveyed in the school.

The students also felt that an LGBT person would not be in charge in a shop and like some of the students at other schools felt they would be easily identifiable, especially lesbians because they dress 'like a boy'. There is a lot of work to be done on the attitude towards the LGBT community among students. In particular, it is surprising that stereotypes about the group are still so widespread.

The prevalence of these attitudes demonstrates how important it is for students to have the opportunity to consider the 'Other', whether it comprises those identified as different as a result of nationality, culture, religion, way of life, sexuality or any other difference. As mentioned previously, the Yellow Flag Programme has been designed to assist schools with this. However, a more integrated approach in school would be preferable. Students need to be equipped with a way to appreciate perspectives other than their own and an imagological approach is one possible way of achieving this.

### **Analysing the Reader-Response and Imagological Approach**

Through their imagological reading the students recognised that the type of representation of the immigrant character differed from text to text. Although some of the experiences might have been the same, for example of racism, the characters and

their situations were not very similar. This encouraged students to view immigrants as individuals like them, not as a group subject to stereotypical images. Studying the texts encouraged students to think about what it is like to move country and have to learn a new language and make new friends in an unfamiliar place. Some students admitted that reading the texts during the module had led them to change their opinions about racism and immigrants in Ireland. Reading texts that include Traveller and LGBT characters may also have a positive impact on students' attitudes towards these groups. Several students revealed that the module had increased their awareness of the level of racism and discrimination in Irish society and they felt that more should be done about it. Certain issues discussed during the course of the module had never been brought to the attention of students or mentioned in school before. Some students disliked the texts where the immigrant characters were the protagonists because they were not used to this perspective and sometimes claimed that they found the text difficult to understand as a result. Other students appreciated the change and wished to learn more about these different cultures and backgrounds. Students need to feel that the presence of people from other countries and different backgrounds and values is an opportunity for learning and increased understanding about other cultures, languages, traditions and countries and does not represent a threat to Irish culture and traditions. The same can also be said for the Travelling and LGBT communities. Students should be presented with texts that feature all manner of 'Others' and assisted in their examination of the various representations of 'Other' characters. Increased representation in the school curriculum of minority groups can lead to greater discussion, awareness and understanding of other cultures. In this way true intercultural education can occur at second-level in Ireland.



## **Chapter 4 Overview**

This chapter reviewed the findings from the information collected from the students in the nine schools in the research study. Through the combined analysis of quantitative and qualitative data the answer to the first research question concerning the views of second-level students on intercultural education and immigrants was explored. One of the outcomes of the research was that students are more familiar with the term ‘multiculturalism’ than ‘interculturalism’. Furthermore, while intercultural education is viewed positively by students, the majority believe that their education could be more intercultural. These findings indicate that criticisms of the intercultural guidelines as being ineffective in enhancing intercultural education in schools are well-founded. This finding applied across the different school types outlining that all schools need to take a more adequate account of diversity.

Racism emerged as a major theme. While the research indicated that students possess a good understanding of racism as a complex issue, Irish students are less likely to be aware of the prevalence of racism in Ireland and are more reluctant to believe it is a serious issue in Irish society than their immigrant and minority group classmates. Racism experienced by students from an immigrant background can focus on appearance or relate to economic factors, such as the perception that migrants are ‘stealing jobs’. The findings suggest that students at schools with a higher proportion of non-Irish students are more likely to experience racism at school. However, racist attitudes and behaviour are not limited to Irish students underlining the need for anti-racism education for all students.

A concerning finding that emerged from the research is that discrimination against the LGBT and Travelling communities is widespread and deemed more acceptable than other forms of prejudice. Immediate action is required in this regard to prevent the further propagation of these views.

Part 2 of the chapter outlined how Imagology proved an effective method to investigate students' views and increase their critical reading skills. Students' limited knowledge about cultures outside their own was revealed. However, the students' reflections on the texts as a consequence of their imagological reading highlighted their increased awareness of different cultures and perspectives following their interaction with the intercultural literature texts. This demonstrates the value of including literature that features diverse perspectives on the curriculum and the benefits of introducing students to the imagological approach. The discussions outlined demonstrated how students engaged in student- student- teacher interaction, a marker of critical pedagogy. Students reported enjoying finding out more about different cultures and other perspectives outside their own. They characterised the module as 'different' to their normal classroom experience highlighting how little intercultural education occurs on a day-to-day basis in some Irish schools. Although the module was implemented over a short period of time, the improvement in students' level of consciousness about immigration-related issues suggests that an intercultural module can have an impact on students' understanding of intercultural and immigration issues. Adopting an imagological approach to reading and including texts on the syllabus that represent members of minority groups including immigrants and the LGBT and Traveller communities could, therefore, enhance intercultural education at second-level.

# Conclusion

During the course of this research which investigated students' views on interculturalism and immigration, one student questioned the necessity of discussing issues related to these topics: 'I don't think it needs to be discussed, it's not a big deal, like is it a problem?' This thesis has argued that immigration and interculturalism are indeed important issues and require examination, especially in light of increased diversity in Irish society and a rise in the number of reported incidents of racism. As several critics have highlighted, Ireland is in the unique position of being able to learn from other societies' mistakes with respect to immigration and intercultural integration. Education is undoubtedly a key area in this regard. However, the implementation of intercultural teaching and learning practices in Ireland, particularly at second-level, are limited. As discussed in Chapter 1, the Irish education system is criticised for adopting an 'add diversity and stir' approach to intercultural education rather than introducing real change to the curriculum to ensure that diversity is promoted as the norm. In contrast to this model, the present study demonstrated how intercultural education can be achieved in the English class through the use of intercultural texts that feature immigrant characters and the use of Imagology as a critical reading tool. This approach facilitates intercultural education as it increases students' awareness of other cultures as well as teaching them to question images of national character represented in texts. This kind of critical reading can alert students to the power exerted by images and the importance of questioning any underlying ideologies or prejudice at play in these portrayals. This is in line with the position held by educational theorist James Banks that

‘it is not sufficient to help students to read, write, and compute within the dominant canon without learning also to question its assumptions, paradigms, and hegemonic characteristics.’<sup>1</sup>

A mixed-methods approach facilitated the exploration of the three main research questions:

1. How can the literary theory of Imagology be used in a practical manner in a classroom setting to enhance critical pedagogy and learning?
2. What are the views of second-level students toward the representation of immigrants in Irish texts and toward intercultural education in Ireland?
3. Can an intercultural module have an impact on students’ opinions on immigration-related issues?

Qualitative and quantitative data was collected as follows: surveys, students’ personal written responses, participant observation and recorded class discussions. In order to facilitate the research and test the proposed model of enhancing intercultural education, a specially designed five-week module for Transition Year students was implemented in nine schools in Dublin. The module combined the use of three intercultural literature texts by Irish authors with an Imagological approach. Students’ intercultural awareness and critical reading ability was enhanced by this application of Imagology in a practical manner in the classroom. Two community and comprehensive schools, three secondary schools and four vocational schools from the Fingal and Dublin City areas participated in the research. Schools within these areas were purposely selected as the most recent

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<sup>1</sup> C. A. M. Banks, and J. A. Banks, ‘Equity pedagogy: An essential component of multicultural education’, *Theory into Practice*, 34 (1995), 152-158 (p. 155).

Census figures highlighted that they contained a larger population of immigrants than other locations in Dublin. The inclusion of immigrant students was an important feature of the research, particularly in light of the advocacy approach adopted which is characterised by a programme for reform that will result in change and focuses on the needs of groups and individuals in society that may be marginalised or disenfranchised.

As emphasised in Chapter 1, the use of intercultural literature in the classroom is important and beneficial for all students. Students need to see themselves represented in textbooks and books as this reinforces the idea that education is for everyone. Furthermore, the representation of characters from diverse cultures and backgrounds helps to educate students about experiences outside their own and increases their awareness of other perspectives. As identified by Faas and Ross and Smyth et al, current textbooks and other curricular material do not take adequate account of diversity. As part of the module in this research students examined three intercultural texts, Sarah Crossan's *The Weight of Water*, Roddy Doyle's 'Black Hoodie' and Aubrey Flegg's *The Cinnamon Tree*, using Imagology as a critical reading tool. Rosenblatt's Reader Response theory informed the application of the imagological approach in the classroom. Students were encouraged to provide an aesthetic response after their initial reading of each text: to reveal their thoughts and feelings about the story and the characters represented. With guidance and assistance from me as their teacher and through discussion with their classmates, they were then asked to reflect on this response, to think about what influenced their opinion and view of the text and why this may differ to others' perspectives. In this manner, students came to realise that their views of the characters and in a wider context, their views on immigration and

interculturalism, are influenced by their own experience, their culture, background and upbringing. This approach made students more aware of other cultures and experiences outside their own and also enhanced their critical reading skills. Imagology was thus demonstrated to be a useful tool in assisting students to read more critically and to enhance intercultural learning and awareness in the English class. As a result of their participation in the module, students' views on interculturalism and immigration were developed. This impact was indicated by the differences in responses provided by students in the surveys at the beginning and end of the module. The effect of the module was also evident in the different responses provided by students in the comparison groups. Following the module, students displayed a greater awareness of the meaning of interculturalism. Students were also less likely to hold negative views of immigrants following the module. The findings revealed that students believe that intercultural education is important and furthermore, that education should be more intercultural at second-level. The positive response to the module is apparent in the fact that the majority of students surveyed reported that they would recommend it to other students. They remarked how it was different from their usual school experience.

In addition to these findings, racism emerged as a major theme in the research. While students demonstrated a good understanding of racism, students' written responses to the texts and class discussions revealed that Irish students tended to be less aware of racism in Irish society than immigrant students. However, the experience of racism was not limited to non-Irish students. Worryingly, racism was experienced and/or witnessed by students in all nine schools involved in the research highlighting that it is an issue across all school types. Furthermore, the findings indicate that the likelihood of

experiencing racism increases in line with the number of non-Irish students in a school. The size of the school and DEIS status did not affect this correlation. This finding supports Tolsma et al.'s research, conducted in Dutch primary schools that indicated that in more ethnically diverse classrooms, the occurrence of bullying behaviour increases significantly. However, the most negative attitude towards immigrants was found at Lonfield College where the population of non-Irish students was relatively small at 10%. This school is located within two kilometres of another school, Avondale Community College, where the population of non-Irish students is 45.7%. Some students at Lonfield College voiced hostility towards immigrants who were accused of taking away school places from Irish students who were considered more deserving. Although Avondale Community College is a newer school with excellent facilities, it appeared to have negative connotations for some students because of the high number of non-Irish students enrolled there. This underlines an issue relating to segregation between schools in the same area.

When asked about the causes of racism, a large number of students attributed a lack of education and the influence of parents and background to racist attitudes. This emphasises that students believe that intercultural education can have an effect in preventing and combating racism.

Mirroring the findings of other studies by Tormey and Gleeson and Gracie, discrimination against the LGBT and Travelling communities was apparent among students and seemed to be deemed more acceptable than other forms of discrimination. Sometimes racist comments were not considered racist when expressed among friends. In this situation the comment was considered as non-harmful 'slagging'. This underlines

the need for more anti-racist education for second-level students which could have a positive effect on students' attitudes to members of the Travelling and LGBT communities.

The study contributes a valuable addition to research in the area of intercultural education in Ireland as it is one of few that concentrate on the student perspective. The student viewpoint is important as it provides an indication of the level of intercultural education occurring on a day-to-day basis in schools. Previous studies have considered the perspectives of teachers and principals on this matter. However, the experience of students can differ from that perceived by adult members of the educational community. The findings reveal that students have an interest in learning more about experiences and perspectives outside their own and believe that education should be more intercultural at second-level. This supports calls for a review of policy and practice in this area.

The research also contributes to previous research in this field by providing a practical model to enhance intercultural education. Criticisms of current policy and guidelines have emphasised the lack of resources provided to teachers to assist them with creating an intercultural learning environment for students. In contrast, the present research offers a possible viable solution for teachers to enhance intercultural education in their English classes through the application of Imagology as a critical tool and the use of intercultural literature. The research draws attention to the necessity of intercultural education, especially in the context of increased diversity in Irish society and the rising number of reports of racism.



The study also makes a contribution to research in the field of Imagology. This research responds to a call by imagologist, Emer O'Sullivan for a greater focus on children's literature which she identifies as a valuable site for imagological analysis. The imagological analysis of recent Irish children's literature which features immigrant characters, as examined in this study, is of particular interest as Ireland is going through a demographic change in population and concerns and fears around this may be reflected or challenged in children's literature texts. The three texts incorporated in the research, Roddy Doyle's short story 'Black Hoodie', Sarah Crossan's novel *The Weight of Water* and Aubrey Flegg's book *The Cinnamon Tree*, were analysed imagologically under the four themes of perspective, appearance, language and religion. This examination revealed that while 'Other' characters in Irish texts are still constructed in contrast to a hetero-group and are still employed for the same reasons, either to bolster the auto-image of a group or criticise some aspect within it, the role of 'Other' can be adopted by a variety of national characters, including Irish. This marks a welcome change to the standard representation of the British as 'Other' in some Irish texts in the past to reinforce a stereotypical Irish auto-image as white and Catholic.

The study also demonstrates how Imagology can be applied in a practical manner in a classroom setting. Prior research has limited the imagological approach to literature on a theoretical basis. The approach taken in this investigation highlights the possibility for the wider use and application of Imagology outside a strictly academic setting. It also contributes to research in the area of Reader Response theory as it underlines the relevance of Rosenblatt's approach in a teaching environment and demonstrates its efficacy when combined with an imagological approach. The present research lends

support to its inclusion in PGDE training for English teachers. The model is also easily transferrable to education systems outside Ireland and could be used to explore other prejudices.

This study adds to the growing body of research in the field of mixed-methods research. The research reveals the advantages and flexibility of using a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods. The mixed-methods approach in this study permitted research to be conducted with a large sample and allowed for the collection of more data than the use of a single approach would have done.

The research conducted in this study was necessarily limited with schools outside Dublin and private schools excluded from the cohort. It would therefore be valuable for future research to investigate the views of students in second-level schools outside Dublin, particularly in rural areas, to determine if they differ. It is possible that students in areas with a less diverse population will have other views on immigration and interculturalism. This information could influence policy making and its implementation in the area of intercultural education.

Based on the findings from this research it is recommended that more multicultural texts are included on the English Junior and Leaving Certificate curriculums. The benefits of studying such texts have been clearly demonstrated by this study where the exposure to *The Weight of Water*, 'Black Hoodie' and *The Cinnamon Tree* broadened students' horizons and increased their intercultural awareness. However, the difficulty of finding books with an intercultural theme by Irish authors or, produced by Irish publishers, was noted and is an issue of concern considering the increased diversity in Irish society. It is

possible that an increased demand for intercultural literature from the education sector would have an impact on the number of such texts produced and published in Ireland.

Following the model for enhancing intercultural education outlined in this study, Imagology and Rosenblatt's Reader Response theories should be introduced to English teachers during their initial teacher training. The value of using such an approach has been illustrated in this study where the application of Imagology as a critical reading tool helped students to become more reflective and critical readers. This approach promotes intercultural learning and awareness in addition to enhancing students' critical reading ability, a skill identified as requiring development in the Chief Examiner's Report on English. Knowledge of Reader Response and Imagology theories will also encourage teachers to be aware of their own biases and enhance their intercultural awareness. It could be facilitated through a three-pronged approach:

1. As a component of the PGDE English module
2. Provided in a resource supplied free of charge via the NCCA website. This resource would include sample texts and lesson plans.
3. An accompanying video that explains the key concepts of Imagology, provides examples of how to apply it and a model of its use in the classroom.

This approach would facilitate training of teachers in a cost-effective manner.

To further promote intercultural awareness amongst teachers, EAL training should be undertaken as part of the PGDE. Previous research has highlighted that EAL teachers tend to engage in more intercultural education in their mainstream classrooms. The

ESRI Report also revealed that principals reported difficulty in recruiting suitably trained EAL teachers. Adopting this measure would help to alleviate this problem.

Embedded within this research study is an aspiration to affect change in future policy relating to intercultural education in Ireland. The research was conducted in a bid to draw attention to the importance of intercultural education and emphasise the lack of diversity inherent in the current curriculum. Considering the findings regarding the prevalence of racism in Irish secondary schools an important recommendation concerns a review of the recently implemented two year PGDE course to evaluate its inclusion of intercultural teaching and learning practices and anti-racism training for teachers. As identified by O'Brien, the majority of lecturers involved in pre-service teacher education in five universities in Ireland were of the view that the PGDE did not adequately prepare teachers to deal with issues of racism and that this was a result of the restrictions of time and space in the course to do this.<sup>2</sup> The expansion of the course to two years should allow for greater attention to be paid to this concern. The review should also include online learning academies such as Hibernia which award teaching diplomas.

In a similar vein, an investigation into the intercultural teaching and learning practices in the newly established Educate Together second-level schools may provide an interesting comparison. These schools, as non-denominational entities, may provide more intercultural learning opportunities for students.

An anti-racism campaign designed particularly for schools, perhaps with the collaboration of students in the form of a national or regional competition which would

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<sup>2</sup> Joe O'Brien, 'Institutional racism and anti-racism in teacher education: Perspectives of teacher educators', *Irish Educational Studies*, 28 (2009), 193- 207.

serve to raise awareness, is recommended. The ‘Stop Racism’ campaign initiated on public transport in 2014 has been very successful in raising awareness about racism and has been commended as an example to be followed by other European cities.<sup>3</sup> A similar campaign designed specifically for schools could be highly effective in illuminating and reducing racist behaviour.

Reiterating a recommendation of the Intercultural Guidelines for schools, anti-racism guidelines need to be developed separately to the bullying policy in all schools. More stringent anti-racism policy in schools with specific guidelines for students on what they should do if they experience racism and what students should do if they witness someone else experiencing racism are required. This should lead to fewer students believing that there is nothing that can be done about racism and should go some way to reducing the level of racism experienced by students in schools. This should be followed up with the assistance of teacher unions. The anti-racism policy for each school should be made accessible on individual school websites. This would provide the NCCA, Teaching Council, DES and other organisations with the means to monitor progress on this recommendation.

It is recommended that the Teaching Council and NCCA keep track of and publicise on-going research in education in Ireland. These organisations could promote educational research and provide encouragement for schools to participate where appropriate. This would provide researchers with greater access to schools which, as identified in this

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<sup>3</sup> [No byline], ‘Dublin transport anti-racism campaign to be held up as example to other cities’, *BreakingNews.ie*, 6 November 2014, <http://www.breakingnews.ie/ireland/dublin-transport-anti-racism-campaign-to-be-held-up-as-example-to-other-cities-649972.html> (Accessed 2 February 2015).

study, can prove difficult to access as research sites. It would also provide teachers with the opportunity to familiarise themselves with current educational research which may benefit their teaching practice.

Finally, it is recommended that a special edition of a children's literature journal such as *Children's Literature in Education* should be created to focus on imagological evaluations of various intercultural texts. This edition could be made available free to teachers as a resource.

Intercultural education has been somewhat overlooked in recent educational policy in Ireland as a result of the increased pressures related to the economic downturn and the controversy over the proposed changes to the Junior Certificate. This research has emphasised the need to refocus attention on this important area. The present study has demonstrated how beneficial an enhanced intercultural approach can be to students of all backgrounds. The investigation of students' views has revealed that students are in favour of more intercultural education at second-level. Furthermore, the proposed model of enhancing intercultural education using intercultural literature and Imagology as a critical reading tool was effective and received positive feedback from students. Through the combination of an Imagological approach and the use of literature that features characters from a variety of different groups, students can succeed in reading critically while being presented with the image of diversity as normal. Following this outline, intercultural education in the second-level English class can and should be enhanced. Such enhancement can lead to a greater appreciation of other cultures and a consequent reduction in racist behaviour.

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# Appendix A

## Plain Language Statement and Informed Consent Form<sup>1</sup>



### Plain Language Statement

*Comparing “Others”*: An investigation into the representation of immigrants in fiction and its impact on the education of second level students in the Republic of Ireland is a doctoral research project by Laura Dooley (laura.dooley3@mail.dcu.ie) under the supervision of Dr Brigitte LeJuez (School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies, DCU) and Dr Áine McGillicuddy (School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies, DCU). The research aims to investigate the views of second level students to representations of immigrants in four literature texts. The project is in receipt of funding via a SALIS<sup>2</sup> scholarship.

The research involves the implementation of a Transition Year module designed and delivered by Laura Dooley, a qualified English teacher. The module is structured to be taught over five weeks with four to five class periods per week. Students will analyse and compare four texts with a multicultural theme. The module will raise awareness of racism, multiculturalism and immigration. The research will be conducted by Laura in a number of schools in Dublin between January 2013 and May 2014. Data will be collected from students in a variety of ways including surveys, interviews, participant observation<sup>3</sup> and through students’ reading journals and personal reflections to the texts which they will be asked to record through the use of social media such as Twitter® and online blogging. Students will be required to attend class and participate in activities including class discussion, debate, group work and drama. Students will be expected to record their opinions of and reactions to the texts and the issues covered in class in addition to completing questionnaires.

There are no perceived risks involved in participating in this research. All classes will take place during regular school time in a classroom at their school.

It is the intention of this research to enhance intercultural education in second level schools. The module aims to increase the importance that students attach to interculturalism and raise their awareness of the issues of racism and immigration and to foster a sense of social responsibility. It is beneficial to students as it encourages them to think about these issues, form their own opinions and practise informed discussion and debate. Students will also increase their media literacy and IT

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<sup>1</sup> The title of the thesis was changed after the schools were recruited which is why it is different here and on the informed consent form.

<sup>2</sup> School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies at Dublin City University, Dublin 9.

<sup>3</sup> Participant observation refers to the practice of note taking or process of reflection that a researcher engages in while doing research.

skills through the use of online blogging and Twitter®. It is important that students use aliases in their online participation in the module to protect their anonymity. Students will be reminded of this in a special class dedicated to setting up their Twitter and blog accounts. In addition, the module is designed to help students develop critical reading and comparative skills which will benefit them at Senior Cycle.

The identity of the students and schools participating in this research will be protected subject to legal limitations.

Participation in this research is voluntary and students may withdraw at any time. If students wish to withdraw, they are requested to inform Laura Dooley in writing. Depending on the school arrangement, students who do not wish to participate may still be required to be present in class. However, they will not have to participate in class activities. For clarification of this issue please contact the school directly.

**If participants have concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:**

The Secretary, Dublin City University Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice-President for Research, Dublin City University, Dublin 9. Tel 01-7008000



## DUBLIN CITY UNIVERSITY INFORMED CONSENT FORM

- I. Research Study Title:** *Comparing “Others”: An Investigation into the representation of immigrants in Irish texts and its impact on the education of second level students in Ireland.*

**Researcher:** Laura Dooley B.A., P.G.D.E., M.A. (Qualified English teacher)

**DCU School:** School of Applied Languages and Intercultural Studies (SALIS)

### II. Clarification of the purpose of the research

The research will involve the implementation of an Intercultural module over the course of five weeks. The module has been designed to raise awareness of racism, immigration and multiculturalism in Irish society. Four texts with a multicultural focus will be read, analysed and discussed by students. Students will be required to read/ watch the four texts and attend four classes a week. Class activities will include becoming involved in discussion, debate, group work, drama, completing surveys and focus groups. Students will be asked to create an online blog and keep a reading journal to record their reactions to the texts under study. The purpose of the research is to test whether the module has an impact on the attitudes of second level students towards immigrants and interculturalism in Irish schools.

### III. Confirmation of particular requirements as highlighted in the Plain Language Statement

Participant – please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question)

*I have read the Plain Language Statement (or had it read to me)*

*Yes/No*

*I understand the information provided*

*Yes/No*

*I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study*

*Yes/No*

*I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions*

*Yes/No*

*I am aware that I will be asked to complete a survey*

*Yes/No*

*I am aware that I may be asked to participate in a focus group and this will be digitally recorded*

*Yes/No*

*I am aware that I will be required to keep a reading journal*

*Yes/No*

*I understand that I may withdraw from the Research Study at any point.*

*Yes/No*

### V. Confidentiality

The names of the students and schools involved in the study will be changed in all published or presented material. Any notes taken by the researcher containing sensitive data will be password secured on a laptop. Students will be advised to use aliases for their blogs and twitter participation in the module to protect their anonymity.

### VII. Signature:

I have read and understood the information in this form. My questions and concerns have been answered by the researchers, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

**Participants Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name in Block Capitals:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Parent/ Guardian:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name in Block Capitals:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

# Appendix B

## Paper Presentations based on Research

*“Add diversity and stir”: The Problems with Intercultural Education policy at second level in Ireland*

Educational Studies Association of Ireland (ESAI) Conference 2013, Radisson Blu Hotel, Limerick (23 March 2013)

*“I don’t think it needs to be discussed, it’s not a big deal, like is it a problem?”: Investigating Transition year students’ attitudes towards immigrants and Intercultural education in Dublin schools*

Mater Dei Institute of Education Third Annual Postgraduate Conference in Humanities and Education (12 April 2013)

*“You’re only arguing because you’re a teacher you know it’s true”: Transition Year students’ attitudes towards immigrants and Intercultural education*

All Ireland Conference for Doctoral Researchers in Education, School of Education, University College Dublin (17 May 2013)

*Using Children's Literature to Enhance Intercultural Education in the Classroom*

Irish Society for the Study of Children's Literature Biennial Conference, An Foras Feasa, Iontas Building, NUI Maynooth (29 March 2014)

# Appendix C

## Word Frequency Table for NVivo Tag Cloud

Word	Length	Count	Weighted Percentage (%)	Similar Words <sup>1</sup>
race	4	199	6.49	race, races, running
colour	6	199	6.45	bias, biased, color, colored, colour, coloured, colours, dark
racism	6	189	6.19	racial, racism
different	9	161	5.27	difference, differences, different, different', differently
skin	4	146	4.78	skin
discrimination	14	111	3.61	discriminate, discriminated, discriminates, discriminating, discrimination, discriminative, separate
culture	7	105	3.42	civil, cultural, culture, cultures, culturs, ethnic, ethnicities, ethnicity, polish
religion	8	101	3.31	religion, religions
nationality	11	76	2.49	countries, country, country', national, nationalities, nationality, nationalitys, nations
slag	4	66	2.16	slag, slagged, slagging, slags
think	5	77	1.88	believe, consider, mean, meaning, means, reason, reasons, supposedly, think, thinking
treating	8	47	1.51	addressing, treat, treated, treating, treats
names	5	65	1.37	call, called, calling, calls, make, makes, making, name, names, refering
black	5	40	1.29	black, "black", "black", blacks, dark, disgraceful, negro
abuse	5	36	1.18	abuse, abused, abuses, abusing,

<sup>1</sup> The tag cloud was generated from students' written responses in the survey. As with the rest of the quotes used in the thesis, students' spelling mistakes were not corrected. The 'Similar Words' column indicates which words were subsumed under the correctly spelled word in the left column for the purpose of creating the tag cloud.

				abusive, insult, insulting, mistreat, mistreating
hatred	6	47	1.17	hate, hateful, hates, hating, hatred
comments	8	33	1.08	comment, commenting, comments, remark, remarks
background	10	32	1.05	background, backgrounds
way	3	45	1.00	direct, directed, directly, mean, meaning, means, way
another	7	27	0.88	another
making	6	56	0.85	cause, form, forms, get, gets, getting, give, giving, hit, make, makes, making, taking
one	3	28	0.77	one, ones, single, singled, singling
nigger	6	22	0.72	nigga, nigger, 'nigger, nigger', 'nigger', niggers, 'niggers'
beliefs	7	26	0.70	belief, beliefs, feel, feelings, impression, opinion
look	4	31	0.68	appearance, appears, depending, expressed, face, feel, feelings, look, looks, see, seeing, seems, tone
like	4	21	0.67	careful, compared, like, liking, probably
bad	3	22	0.65	bad, badly, big, poor, poorly
bullied	7	20	0.65	bullied, bully, bullying, bullies
judging	7	20	0.65	judge, judged, judges, judging, trying
towards	7	20	0.65	towards
based	5	31	0.62	based, mean, meaning, means
come	4	29	0.60	come, comes, fair, following, get, gets, getting, number, seems
gender	6	18	0.59	gender, sex, sexuality
racist	6	18	0.59	racist
white	5	18	0.59	blanking, blankly, caucasian, purely, white, white", "white"
due	3	18	0.57	due, referring
speak	5	19	0.53	addressing, mouth, speak, talk, talking, verbal, verbally
just	4	19	0.49	exactly, fair, good, just, right, simply
certain	7	14	0.46	certain
group	5	14	0.46	group, groups
calling	7	27	0.43	addressing, call, called, calling, calls
else	4	11	0.36	else, elses

act	3	12	0.33	act, acting, acts, behave, behaving, number, play, turn
others	6	11	0.33	others, separate
saying	6	12	0.33	expressed, order, saying, supposedly
mean	4	33	0.32	hate, hateful, hates, hating, mean, meaning, means
pick	4	10	0.30	blamed, pick, picked, picking, picks, taking
hurtful	7	9	0.29	hurt, hurtful, hurting, offends
physically	10	9	0.29	physical, physically
backround	9	9	0.29	backround
fun	3	9	0.27	fun, play
human	5	9	0.26	human, humanity, humans, man, world
dont	4	8	0.26	dont
paki	4	8	0.26	paki, paki', 'paki', paki"
get	3	20	0.23	aimed, bring, find, get, gets, getting, 'go, letting, taking
negative	8	7	0.23	negative, negatively
slaging	7	7	0.23	slaged, slaging
something	9	7	0.23	something
hating	6	18	0.22	despise, hate, hateful, hates, hating
school	6	7	0.21	civil, school, schools
direct	6	16	0.20	addressing, aimed, direct, directed, directly, head, heads, place, places, point, pointing, taking
foreign	7	6	0.20	foreign, foreigner, foreigners
giving	6	13	0.20	big, committed, give, giving, pass, passing
job	3	6	0.20	job, problem
lot	3	6	0.20	lot, lots, much
might	5	6	0.20	might
things	6	6	0.20	matter, thing, things
unfair	6	6	0.20	unfair, unfairly
use	3	7	0.20	employers, purpose, use, used, using, victimise
descriminatio n	14	6	0.20	descriminated, descriminating, discrimination
differnt	8	6	0.20	differnt
cause	5	13	0.18	cause, reason, reasons
even	4	6	0.18	equally, even
excluding	9	6	0.17	except, excluding



behaviour	9	5	0.16	behaviour
body	4	5	0.16	body
dislike	7	5	0.16	dislike, dislikes, disliking
ect	3	5	0.16	ect
friends	7	5	0.16	ally, friends
ignorant	8	5	0.16	ignorance, ignorant
language	8	7	0.16	language, word, words
may	3	5	0.16	may
minority	8	5	0.16	kid, kids, minority
offensive	9	5	0.16	crime, offensive, offensive
origin	6	5	0.16	origin, origine
religious	9	5	0.16	religious
singling	8	11	0.16	exclusion, separate, single, singled, singling