Local Identification and ‘Authenticity’ Among the Irish Diaspora in England

Marc Scully

Abstract
Drawing on my PhD research, this paper will explore constructions of Irishness among the Irish diaspora in England with a specific focus on narratives of ‘authenticity’ and the ways in which local identities may be employed in these. While narratives of Irishness as a diasporic identity that is not necessarily bound have become more prominent in recent years, this has been accompanied by a growing concern with what it means to be ‘authentically’ Irish. This is particularly the case in England, where multiple waves of migration, the influence of factors such as age, class and gender, and the emergence of a specific, hybridised second-generation Irish culture has resulted in the Irish population in England becoming more diverse than ever before. Given that this is occurring in an English context where a commodified version of Irish culture is unprecedentedly popular, the result has been that the meanings of ‘Irishness’ in England have become multiple and contested. Given that the historically oppositional nature of Irishness and Englishness has precluded any high-profile equivalent of the Irish-American hybridised identity from being articulated, it has been argued that many Irish people, particularly those who are second-generation Irish, have come to identify with the city rather than the nation. While research has demonstrated the prevalence of identities such as London-Irish, Liverpool-Irish etc. there has been less focus on how local Irish identities are constructed and maintained. This paper traces moments where local Irish identifications may be more important than national identifications among members of the Irish diaspora in England, and through this builds an argument for the importance of the local in diasporic identity. I also argue that local identifications may provide a way of affirming an ‘authentic’ identity in a scenario where meanings of Irishness have become contested.

Key Words: Diaspora, hybridity, authenticity, Irishness, local identities

1. Introduction: Irishness as diasporic

The notion of an ‘Irish diaspora’ has become so rooted in public and academic discourse, that it is easily overlooked that both the concept and the use of the term ‘diaspora’, as opposed to ‘emigrants’ or ‘exiles’ is a relatively new one. However, this does not necessarily imply a transformation in the understanding of Irishness abroad or Irish identity more generally. It can legitimately be argued that many writers, especially those concentrating on historical aspects of Irish migration, have simply taken the word ‘diaspora’ as a useful and fashionable terminological description (Brubaker, 2005) rather than interrogating the implications a diasporic reading of Irishness might have for contemporary Irish identity.

The same may be said of popular uses of the term. In other words, ‘diaspora’ simply becomes a catch-all term for Irish migrants and those of Irish descent[1], while Irishness itself is assumed to be the preserve of the (ethnically bound) nation, whose exported version of Irish identity is to be viewed as the correct, ‘authentic’ one. Such a viewpoint does not allow for the possibility that different Irishnesses might be constructed outside the nation-state without reference to contemporary Ireland. At the other extreme, worldwide commercialised versions of Irishness as a commodity, aimed at profiting upon the recent popularity of Irish culture (described as ‘Riverdance revivalism’ by O’Boyle (2006)) explicitly promote the slogan that ‘anyone

can be Irish', thus both de-territorialising and de-ethnicising Irishness (Casey, 2006; McGovern, 2002; Nagle, 2005).

My focus in this paper is on more nuanced constructions of Irishness as diasporic. On a public level the term was popularised by President Mary Robinson (1990-97), who made 'Cherishing the Irish Diaspora' one of the themes of her presidency, addressing the Joint Houses of the Oireachtas[2] on the topic. In this speech, she appealed to Irishness as a 'concept' rather than a nationality, and suggested that :

> It can be strengthened again if we turn with open minds and hearts to the array of people outside Ireland for whom this island is a place of origin … If we expect that the mirror held up to us by Irish communities abroad will show us a single familiar identity, or a pure strain of Irishness, we will be disappointed. We will overlook the fascinating diversity of culture and choice which looks back at us. Above all we will miss the chance to have that dialogue with our own diversity which this reflection offers us (Robinson, 1995).

Robinson, then, attempts to prise open the category of Irishness beyond that which is nationally bounded in Ireland, while simultaneously seeking to highlight the diversity of Irishness *in* Ireland. Gray (2000) has examined Robinson's reconceptualisation of Irishness as diasporic in this speech and others, and contends that this diasporic identity is characterised in terms of pluralism, hybridity and newness. She situates this speech as part of an emerging discourse of diaspora in 1990s Ireland, one that:

> emphasizes a transnational and progressive Ireland that involves a remembering of Famine and emigration in the past and a (re)production of the Irish 'homeland' as the liberal modern state of the Republic of Ireland in the present. (Gray, 2000, p. 181)

Much has been made of the possibilities this conception of the diaspora has in 'freeing' notions of Irishness beyond the various homogeneities associated with it, in terms of class, ethnicity, religion and territoriality. In other words, seeing Irishness as diasporic and hybrid deconstructs essentialised versions of Irishness rooted in the 'homeland', while simultaneously contributing to a more progressive nation-state. As Anthias has critically described such viewpoints, "merely to occupy the space of the 'hybrid' constitutes an emancipatory human condition" (Anthias, 2001, p. 622).

Of course, public discourses of diaspora do not necessarily reflect how diaspora is lived by those who have migrated or their descendants. The task of the researcher, then, is to distinguish between diasporic theories, discourses and practices (Clifford, 1994). For example, in challenging the above, almost utopian discourse of the Irish diaspora, Gray draws on her own research among diasporic Irish women and concludes that:

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

It must also be recognised that 'progressive' discourses of Irishness as diasporic, while recognising the cultural diversity of the diaspora, overlook the extent to which Irishness is contested within the diaspora itself, in ways that do not necessarily refer to the territorial 'homeland' of Ireland. Drawing

on Avtar Brah's assertion that "all diasporas are differentiated, heterogenous, contested spaces, even as they are implicated in the construction of a common 'we'" (Brah, 1996, p. 184), Mary Hickman has argued:

> The Irish diaspora is shot through with divisions of power and class. The idea of 'a global Irish imagined community' or an 'Irish diaspora', suggests communal interests whereas in fact the Irish diaspora is actually fractured (as are national imagined communities) by class, gender and other differences which in many cases reveal deep conflicts of interests among the Irish abroad (Hickman, 2002, p. 20).

It can be argued then, that while diasporic Irishness may be hybrid*ised*, it is not yet fully hybrid, in an unbounded, pluralistic fashion. There are both structural and discursive constraints on the expression of diasporic Irishness, and it is not apparent that it has become fully deterritorialised (although the growing commercialisation of Irishness might suggest that it is heading in that direction). The major way in which diasporic Irish identity is discursively constrained bounded is through constructions of authenticity. This has the effect of excluding certain members of the diaspora, particularly those of Irish descent from claiming Irishness i.e. certain forms of Irishness are seen as more legitimate than others, and there is not equality of access to the symbols and public expressions of Irishness across the diaspora.

For example, modern public discourses of Irishness abroad tend to privilege a particular subgroup of relatively transnational, middle-class migrants. Perhaps not coincidentally, at a similar time that Irishness began to be constructed as diasporic, a public discourse arose around the youthful Irish emigrants of the 1980s and 1990s, that constructed them as a 'new wave' of Irish migrants: "a people set apart from their predecessors and their peers by their spirit of adventure and enterprising spirit" (Mac Laughlin, 2000, p. 323). By and large, they were seen as being middle-class, well-educated and with the ability to return to Ireland regularly, therefore being constructed as a 'transnational elite'. While there is some demographic truth to this depiction, it's likely that it has been overemphasised and tended to overshadow the fact that migrants from socially disadvantaged backgrounds remained a significant strand of Irish emigration. (Mac Éinrí & Lambkin, 2002; Mac Laughlin, 2000).

2. The Irish diaspora and contestation of Irishness in England

The majority of the migrants in the 80s and 90s migrated to Britain and more specifically to South-East England. Here, they encountered the children of earlier waves of Irish migration, particularly those of the cohort that emigrated in the 1950s, who in many cases had a strong Irish identity of their own, arising from their upbringing in Irish communities, particularly around such areas in London as Cricklewood, Kilburn and the Caledonian Road. London, therefore, acts as a peculiar type of Irish 'diaspora space', where these different cohorts of Irish people encountered each other, without necessarily recognising the Irishness they saw in the other. A number of commentators have argued that in order to preserve their self-image as an 'economic emigrant aristocracy', the 'young elite workers' who migrated in the 80s and 90s distanced themselves both physically and discursively from established Irish communities in England (Gray, 2004; Hickman, 2002; Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2003). Physically, this was done by, to a large extent avoiding Irish pubs, clubs and centres associated with older migrants in favour of social networks facilitated by telephone contact, newsletters, and more recently, websites and e-mail. Discursively, as argued by Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, this was done by constructing themselves as the 'true heirs of the national community' and the only ones who could legitimately speak 'of and for the category 'Irish''.

> This social group presents itself self-reflexively as the transnational generation, inhabiting a temporary bodily relocation outside of Ireland, while making frequent visits home. Its accomplishment of itself as nationally authentic within the cultural storylines available to it depends on its active disidentification with the second generation, which it positions as culturally recidivist, retelling 'the same old story' of nationalist Ireland to which the second generation, as non-national, is seen as making illegitimate claims. … the elite workers are central to constructing and circulating around the Irish diaspora in Britain an internal cultural script positioning the second generation as 'not properly Irish'. (Mac an Ghaill & Haywood, 2003, p. 391)

Thus, a certain conception of diasporic Irish identity in England is privileged, through the construction of one form of Irishness as 'authentic', to the detriment of others, particularly second-generation Irishness. While a number of discursive strategies are employed by the second generation Irish in order to combat accusations of inauthenticity, what I wish to focus on in this paper is the adoption of local identifications as a means of doing this. As illuminated by the Irish2Project, which was conducted in various locations in England and Scotland by Mary Hickman, Bronwen Walter, Sarah Morgan and Joseph Bradley, many second-generation Irish people guard against accusations of inauthenticity by adopting local-national hyphenated identity labels, such as London-Irish, Birmingham-Irish, Liverpool-Irish etc. This was seen as 'a way of articulating allegiances to more than one domain, conjoined as their 'second generationness' and contingent on their locational specificity' (Hickman, Morgan, Walter, & Bradley, 2005, p. 178). Many participants in the Irish2Project claimed to identify equally strongly with Irishness and with the city of their birth, while not particularly identifying with Englishness, which might be said to be both a factor in and a product of the absence of a prominent 'British-Irish' or 'English-Irish' hyphenated identity. This then, is a specific type of hybridity, with the use of the local serving to further complicate the concept. Also, it must be noted that the kind of hybridity adopted in these cases tends rather more towards the defensive than the emancipatory.

In this paper, I wish to further examine the ways in which second-generation Irish people construct a diasporic Irish identity for themselves that is authenticated by reference to local, rather than national Irishnesses. This will serve as an illustration of the ways diasporic concepts of Irishness intersect, collide and exist alongside notions of authentic Irishness, in a way that simultaneously seems to confirm and refute the pluralistic nature of diaspora. Also, I argue that this focus on the local represents something of a reterritorialisation of diasporic identity, but one that refers specifically to the local, rather than the nation-state. While making reference to the role of local urban identifications within England, I also wish to examine the role of local identifications that are situated in Ireland, something that has been under-researched to date.

3. Methodology

Over the course of 2008, I have carried out 30 individual interviews and 4 group discussions with a variety of people of both Irish birth and descent in England. The main sites of my research have been London, Birmingham and Milton Keynes. In addition, since late 2006, I have made note of constructions of Irishness in the Irish 'ethnic press' in England as well as attending a number of public events of Irish interest in an informal participant observation capacity. This all comprised an effort to trace moments of continuity and contestation along what Wetherell (1998) has termed the broader 'horizon of discourse' relating to Irishness in England.

The extracts presented in this paper are taken from interviews with second generation Irish people in London and Birmingham. Participants were encouraged to speak about their own personal life experiences of Irishness, in keeping with a narrative-discursive approach to interview data, in which speakers are taken to employ “established and recognised resources to construct an identity which also refers to the unique circumstances of a particular life” (Taylor, 2005, p. 48). In addition to this, in analysing the data, I have attended to the ways in which Irishness as a *concept* is constructed through rhetoric.

4. Hybridised local ‘English’ identities

As already noted, the use of hyphenated identity labels, such as London-Irish, Mancunian-Irish and Liverpool-Irish, have become an available means for second-generation Irish people to articulate their own specific city-based Irish identities, and thus defend them against possible charges of ‘inauthenticity’. I was therefore interested as to how this label might be employed among my own participants and how this would relate to their identification with both Irishness and the city of their birth.

The first extract comes from an interview with one of my London participants: Kate, a woman in her 40s.[3] Kate’s ‘London-Irish’ identity was very much situated in her involvement in the London-Irish music scene of the early 1980s, spearheaded by the Pogues. Campbell (1999) has written of the significance “of the Pogues’ post-punk reconfiguration of Irish ‘folk’ music, which articulated a peculiarly Diasporic (London) Irish experience at a time when it was neither popular nor fashionable to be Irish in Britain”, something of particular relevance to the second generation.

Extract 1:

> **Kate:** that whole scene … was very much about saying
> we're Irish but we're not paddies, we're London-Irish, and it
> was a very different identity to being first generation.

The London-Irish music scene then, for Kate, is constructed as being very deliberately about articulating a type of Irishness that is situated in London and is explicitly differentiated from the “Paddies”, the first generation migrants. This then, is a very specific form of positioning – one that seeks to claim Irishness, but disassociate itself from the possible negative connotations associated with being a “Paddy”. Kate goes on to elaborate on the distinctiveness of London-Irishness as reflected by the music scene at the time:

Extract 2:

> **Kate:** I've got a bit of a collection of kind of Irish hybrid
> music, you know, ska bands playing traditional Irish tunes
> but reggae style, you know so there's-there was a lot of cross
> fertilisation going on which was really exciting and you had
> people like The Pogues who were angry young Irish men if
> you like, John Osborne of the music scene, you know, and
> er in a way that say punk wasn't coz it was like very ethnic,
> you know punk was angry about everything but I think with
> The Pogues singing it was very much 'we're Irish and proud
> of it better believe it but we're not, but we're not the same as
> the Irish, the first generation Irish'
> **Marc:** And in what kind of ways do you think that
> distinction was drawn?
> **Kate:** Erm, weren't going to take any crap you know I
> think that was a clear message was you know 'we're here,
> we're here to stay'

Marc: Coz you were born here in the first place kind of thing?
Kate: Yeah, yeah we've as much right to be here as anybody else, but you know the famous Norman Tebbitt cricket test, I'd always support Ireland when they were playing

By drawing attention to her collection of Irish hybrid music, Kate situates the music of the Pogues as being 'ethnic'; on a par, and interacting with other minority 'ethnic' music in a multicultural London. London-Irishness therefore is defined both by opposition, and by collaboration. She constructs London-Irishness as being something that is opposed to both the assimilationism exemplified by the 'Tebbitt test', and also to the 'low profile' that may have been adopted by the migrant generation at the time in the hopes of avoiding discrimination. Rather the second generation 'weren't going to take any crap'. At the same time, the level of musical 'cross-fertilisation' reflects an eagerness to make links with other minority groups and diasporas in London. This, then may be taken as an example as a kind of a grassroots multiculturalism in an urban environment, as well as how Irishness was performed in the 'diaspora space' that was 1980s London.

London-Irishness as an identity that is constructed and adopted as a reaction to the estranging features of other identities is also present in other narratives of adopting a London-Irish identity. For example, the extract below is from Sinéad, another second-generation woman in her 40s, for whom a London-Irish identity had become salient due to her involvement in the Irish sport scene in London:

Extract 3:

Sinéad: If you had an London-Irish footballer doing very well say playing for London … then you'd get a lot of people, say other players on the pitch from the other team might say something to them 'oh well you're just a plastic anyway' or you'd get people on the side line shouting and things and that really used upset me actually coz I think that I felt they were hitting at me and I thought, God you know you guys come over here-you had no work, people try and help you, you know, give you somewhere to stay give you some work and then you go, you turn round so I almost become very London-Irish which is quite bizarre really.

For Sinéad then, her own adoption of a London-Irish identity is constructed as having been in solidarity with 'London-Irish' footballers, who were having their Irishness brought into question via the use of the 'Plastic Paddy' label. She describes herself as having felt both personally insulted that those born in London wouldn't be considered Irish, and struck by the lack of gratitude of the Irish-born towards London. Adopting a London-Irish identity in this case, is constructed as a reaction against these perceived attitudes. For Sinéad, it is an identity that has persisted, as we explored later in the interview:

Extract 4:

Marc: I mean now you would describe yourself as London-Irish?
Sinéad: I think I would because I never want - I don't think I ever **wanted** to differentiate myself as London-Irish but a few things that were said and done, a few things that have happened to London-Irish people, it makes you feel 'okay well we need to fight-maybe fight your corner a bit

> more' so I don't think I ever wanted to be a London-Irish person but somehow it's evolved.

Although there are similar themes running through Kate and Sinéad's positionings of themselves as London-Irish, particularly the association of 'not taking any crap' and 'fighting your corner', there is less of a sense of actively constructing a new, exciting hybrid diasporic identity in Sinéad's narrative. Rather, by emphasising her claim that she never *wanted* to be London-Irish, she suggests that it is an identity that she has felt obliged to adopt out of solidarity with other London-Irish people.

It should be pointed out here that because of their cultural activities, both Sinéad and Kate move in spheres where the 'London-Irish' label is particularly salient; Sinéad due to her involvement with a London representative team in Irish sports and Kate due to her involvement in a musical scene that combined Irish traditional music with London punk sensibilities. It should not be assumed that the hybridised 'London-Irish' label is adopted by *all* the second-generation Irish in London. Indeed, some of my other participants were less enthusiastic about adopting the label, or in one case, had used it in the past, but now simply described herself as 'Irish'. Meanwhile, other participants did not feel they could label themselves Irish, hyphenated or not, and rather described themselves as being 'of Irish descent'. Therefore, diasporic Irishness is simultaneously regarded as something that can be claimed uncomplicatedly, something that can only be claimed in a hybridised manner, and something that cannot be claimed, but can be related to. This acts as a reminder that a local-national hybrid identity should not be seen as a universally applicable panacea to the difficulties of second-generation identification. As pointed out by Nazroo & Karlsen (2003) while local identities may appear universally accessible, there will be internally and externally imposed constraints on access to them. Agency is not unlimited, and there will be structural and contextual factors that make the adoption of a hyphenated identity more or less salient.

Bearing that caveat in mind, the second-generation people from Birmingham who took part in my research all worked in a community organisation which specifically described itself as being 'Birmingham-Irish', so the hyphenated identity was one that was readily available. The various ways in which the identity is invoked remain illuminating, however. For example, the extract below is from an interview with Eileen, a woman in her 50s:

Extract 5:

> **Marc:** But it is kind of, the Birmingham-Irish term is one that you use as that kind of hyphenated term
> **Eileen:** Yes, and I think it's, you know; to include maybe, to make people feel included like my son, 'erm who are of value to the community and who, you know … proud of their Irish roots but are not a hundred percent Irish then if you put the term 'Birmingham-Irish', then it's a lot more inclusive isn't it?

In this case then, Eileen appears less eager to claim the 'Birmingham-Irish' identity on her own behalf then on behalf of her son, and by extension on behalf of all those who identify with Irishness, but may be of mixed descent. The Birmingham-Irish label is constructed as an inclusive one, that allows those who are not "100%" biologically Irish, to claim Irishness and a sense of belonging in the community. Again, however, the question of equality of access to Irishness is reinforced here. While the hybridised diasporic identity expands Irishness sufficiently to include people like Eileen's son who are of mixed descent, it exists alongside a discourse that suggests that claiming

Irishness is dependent on a kind of ethnic purity, of being “100% Irish”. There is, therefore, something of an ideological dilemma present in this account between two versions of diasporic Irishness, one that is hyphenated, pluralist and inclusive and another that is essentialised and biologically determined. This provides another example of how the diasporic is problematised by the ‘authentic’.

While a focus on the hybridised diasporic identities adopted by second-generation Irish people in England, serves as a useful illustration of the kind of discursive problems that arise around ‘authentic’ diasporic Irishness, it remains only half the story. With the honourable exception of Patricia O’Connor’s (2005) research among the Irish in Australia, previous work on the Irish abroad has tended to overlook that many members of the diaspora effectively identify with two localities as well as (potentially) two nations. The local Irish area where migrants or their descendants originated plays a prominent position in both personal narratives and public displays of Irishness, as evidenced in the following extracts.

5. Localised Irish identities

Extract 6:

> **Finbarr:** No, there are some families who-who'd definitely [**Marc**: yeah] the children are Irish you know and ‘erm whereas in our case ‘erm they don't consider themselves Irish, but there was a thing that used to bug me years ago when people say 'oh my father is f-fro i-is Irish' and you say 'oh, what part?' 'oh I don't know' [**Marc**: right] I used to think that was terrible [**Marc**: yeah] you know so all our children have been over to summer after summer for twenty years back to [*village name*] you know [**Marc**: yeah] so they know the shops, they know some of the people, they know everything

As Extract 6, taken from an interview with Finbarr, a retired Irish migrant living in Milton Keynes, illustrates, local Irish identifications are often central to perceived positive-‘authentic’ diasporic Irish identities. Finbarr expresses his irritation at second-generation Irish people who are unaware of the locality in Ireland from which their father originated, comparing this with the familiarity his own children have with his native village. Given that this follows on from a discussion about whether second generation migrants call themselves ‘Irish’, the implicit argument appears to be that knowledge of the locality one’s parents originated from is a prerequisite for claiming Irishness. Thus, ‘diasporic’ Irishness remains anchored in knowledge of the homeland, where the homeland is specifically conceptualised in terms of the local as well as the national.

While Finbarr is a migrant, this construction of knowledge of the local as an important aspect of Irishness is also apparent in the narratives of second-generation Irish people, as in the example below, again taken from my interview with Kate:

Extract 7:

> **Marc**: Hmm, at the same time would you say you have a sense of being from Galway as well as being from Ireland or?
>
> **Kate**: Erm, yeah I guess it's-I suppose Galway I spent-where I spent most of my time when I was a kid [**Marc**: hmm] so if I had to-yeah I mean I could go into Galway city and still I'd know my way round [**Marc**: hmm] and when my parents moved there they lived in Galway city so

[**Marc**: ah okay, yeah] I know Galway city quite well so I would identify with Galway as the part of the country I know best [**Marc**: hmm] yeah yeah

Marc: Like, does, in terms of talking to other, whether its other London-Irish people or Irish people over here [**Kate**: hmm] does the, erm topic of locality come up very much?

Kate: Oh yeah where are you from, where are your parents from [**Marc**: yeah] that's the first question really [**Marc**: yeah] so yeah and I would say Galway [**Marc**: yeah, yeah] y'know I would always say Galway [so yeah]

Marc: [It's] the first question so it's almost-it's almost like a password in a way is it?

Kate: Yeah it is I guess, is I guess because I notice my mum and one of the first things she said to you was where are you from [**Marc**: yeah] and even when on this course these people I've met in the last few weeks it's [**Marc**: hmm] all been about 'and where are your parents from again?' and you know turning out that one of the guys on the course the older guys is from Galway and knew my dad and [**Marc**: hmm] he knew my dad's brother, [Andy], I went to school with his sister de-de-de-de and different people from different parts of Ireland-oh yeah it's one of the first questions still [**Marc**: yeah] definitely yeah [**Marc**: okay] basically I think you're trying to find out do you know someone they know [**Marc**: yeah] where's the connection you know lets [**Marc**: yeah, yeah] find the connection yeah

While Kate seems a bit unsure about describing herself as *being* from Galway, she goes on to describe the near-inevitability that determining the locality of her Irish origins will arise in conversation and the role this plays in acting as a point of connection between Irish people. (This pattern was also noted by O'Connor (2005)) It can perhaps be surmised that for second-generation Irish people, demonstrating knowledge of Irish localities serves to position them as authentic within a conversation with other Irish people, and has a 'levelling' effect on the conversation, serving as it does to establish mutual Irishness. Of course, the 'password' element of this knowledge serves to exclude those who may not possess it – as with other aspects of diasporic Irishness, this serves to simultaneously expand and bound the category 'Irish'.

It should be noted that when speaking of 'locality' this is often articulated in terms of counties. There are structural as well as discursive reasons for this, given that diasporic Irish cultural/welfare services were generally arranged around a network of County Associations, particularly in the 1950s and 60s. The membership of these associations is now aging and dwindling, but they still have a certain public profile insofar as St. Patrick's Day parades in UK cities tend to be arranged around them. It is notable, although it might be less so to those without the necessary local knowledge, that at public Irish events abroad, county allegiances are, often quite literally flagged, through the prominent display of county colours on banners, sports jerseys etc. Given the inclusive discourse of "everyone can be Irish" associated with such publicly-funded celebrations (Nagle, 2005), these displays may be seen as an assertion of an extra layer of knowledge and authenticity. "While everyone may be Irish, some are more Irish than others", so to speak.

What is debateable is whether diasporic *county* identity is necessarily dependent on the existence of the Associations, or whether it is a social phenomenon in its own right. Based on both my research, and on my own experience, I am inclined towards the latter view, which I believe is evidenced in the following extract, which followed a conversation with Eileen on the

presence of county banners at the St. Patrick's Day parades, which she described as important in fostering a sense of belonging:

Extract 8:

> **Marc:** Yeah. I wonder does it get more, more or less important as you go down the generations? 'Erm, when you talk, not with the people who've migrated themselves, **[Eileen:** mm**]** but their children and grandchildren, for them to actually be able to point to a place on a map and say 'That's where I'm from in Ireland'.
> **Eileen:** 'Erm, I think, like my son **[Marc:** mm**]** will automatically go for Wexford **[Marc:** yeah**]**. I mean he does know that my mother came from Mayo but the links are with Wexford **[Marc:** mm**]**. 'Erm, but he's a great sort of sport enthusiast **[Marc:** yeah**]** and he's got a; I mean, on his bedroom window he's got 'erm a sticker on each pane of the Wexford team **[Marc:** ah, okay**]**, 'erm, the hurling team **[Marc:** yeah**]**, and he's also got a signed photograph of them all as well **[Marc:** oh, okay**]**, and that's in his bedroom **[Marc:** yeah**]**. You know, he'd never 'erm, I mean he's never taken it down; it's been up there donkey's years, but you know he would never take it off the window **[Marc:** mm**]**. 'Erm, you know, the purple and yellow **[Marc:** yeah, yeah**]**; its there; so I don't know. I, I think even, even kids **[Marc:** mm**]** like to feel a belonging.
> **Marc:** Yeah. And that he can point to Wexford like himself **[**
> **Eileen:** Mm, yeah, yeah. I think so; I think if they're, you know; if they're looking at a map of Ireland **[Marc:** mm**]** it's, it's big **[Marc:** yeah**]**, you know, there's all those counties, so to have one to say 'actually my, my granddad came from there' **[Marc:** yeah**]** then I think that's something for them to focus on.
> **Marc:** Mm, yeah. It's 'erm, yeah I suppose something to kind of grab on to **[**
> **Eileen:** Absolutely, absolutely, because otherwise it becomes faceless **[Marc:** yeah, yeah**]**, but all of a sudden it means something

In giving the example of her son, whose identification with Wexford (and in particular the Wexford hurling team) gives him a sense of familial belonging that Ireland itself is too large and 'faceless' to provide, Eileen highlights the importance of localised county identities in terms of claiming Irishness. Implicit in this is that Ireland, the nation is not sufficient on its own to facilitate a sense of belonging, as well as suggesting that those who possess knowledge of their local origins have greater potential for belonging.

It is important to note here that I am not making a case for the local superseding the national in terms of diasporic Irishness. Rather, I am suggesting that in cases where Irishness is contested, the articulation of local identification may add an extra layer of legitimacy to claims of Irishness. This, of course, has added implications for constructions of Irishness as diasporic.

6. Conclusion

What I have set out in this paper are ways in which constructions of Irishness as a progressive, inclusive diasporic identity are problematised by discourses of 'authentic' Irishness, which occasionally manifest themselves through the adoption of localised hybrids. Hybridity is therefore something of a double-bind, insofar as it simultaneously expands and limits who Irishness

can be claimed by, and the manners in which it can be claimed. While I do not mean to suggest that this emphasis on the local means that a deterritorialised Irishness cannot exist, it is perhaps, more complex than might originally have been thought. In order to obtain a greater understanding of the discursive processes that contribute to these multiple belongings and exclusions, I would argue that along with attending to the role of local, multicultural spaces in shaping diasporic Irishness in England, a greater focus is required for the ways in which these identities might be rooted in local points of origin in Ireland. This can be applied to studies of diaspora more generally, as there is a tendency at times to treat the 'homeland' as something of a 'black box' and to equate it unproblematically with the nation (if not the nation-state). A study of the localised aspects of diaspora is not an argument for ignoring the role of the nation, but rather an argument for understanding the increased levels of belonging and exclusion that locality might represent.

Notes

A brief search for the word ‘diaspora’ on any Irish news source will confirm this.
[2] The Irish Parliament
[3] All the names have been changed for anonymity purposes.

Bibliography

Anthias, F. (2001). New hybridities, old concepts: the limits of `culture'. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 24*(4), 619-641.

Brah, A. (1996). *Cartographies of diaspora : contesting identities*. London: Routledge.

Brubaker, R. (2005). The `diaspora' diaspora. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 28*, 1-19.

Campbell, S. (1999). Beyond `Plastic Paddy': A Re-examination of the Second-Generation Irish in England. *Immigrants and Minorities, 18*(2/3), 266-288.

Casey, N. (2006). "The Best Kept Secret in Retail": Selling Irishness in Contemporary America. In D. Negra (Ed.), *The Irish in Us: Irishness, Performativity and Popular Culture* (pp. 84-109). Durham & London: Duke University Press.

Clifford, J. (1994). Diasporas. *Cultural Anthropology, 9*(3), 302.

Gray, B. (2000). Gendering the Irish Diaspora: Questions of Enrichment, Hybridization and Return. *Womens Studies International Forum, 23*(2), 167-185.

Gray, B. (2004). *Women and the Irish diaspora* (1st ed.). London ; New York: Routledge.

Hickman, M. J. (2002). `Locating' the Irish Diaspora. *Irish Journal of Sociology, 11*, 8-26.

Hickman, M. J., Morgan, S., Walter, B., & Bradley, J. (2005). The Limitations of Whiteness and the Boundaries of Englishness. *Ethnicities, 5*, 160-182.

Mac an Ghaill, M., & Haywood, C. (2003). Young (male) Irelanders: postcolonial ethnicities - expanding the nation and Irishness. *European Journal of Cultural Studies, 6*, 386-403.

Mac Éinrí, P., & Lambkin, B. (2002). Whose Diaspora? Whose migration? Whose identity? Some current issues in Irish migration studies. *Irish Journal of Psychology, 23*(3), 127-157.

Mac Laughlin, J. (2000). Changing Attitudes to 'New Wave' Emigration? Structuralism versus Voluntarism in the Study of Irish Emigration. In A. Bielenberg (Ed.), *The Irish Diaspora* (pp. 317-330). Harlow: Pearson Education.

McGovern, M. (2002). The `Craic' Market: Irish Theme Bars and the Commodification of Irishness in Contemporary Britain. *Irish Journal of Sociology, 11*, 77-98.

Nagle, J. (2005). "Everybody Is Irish on St. Paddy's": Ambivalence and Alterity at London's St. Patrick's Day 2002. *Identities, 12*, 563-584.

Nazroo, J. Y., & Karlsen, S. (2003). Patterns of identity among ethnic minority people: Diversity and commonality. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 26*(5), 902-930.

O'Boyle, N. (2006). *Ad*dressing Multiculturalism? Conservatism and Conformity; Access and Authenticity in Irish Advertising. *Translocations, 1*(1), 95-120.

O'Connor, P. (2005). *The Multiple Experiences of Migrancy, Irishness and Home among Contemporary Irish Immigrants in Melbourne, Australia.* University of New South Wales, Kensington.

Taylor, S. (2005). Self-narration as rehearsal: A discursive approach to the narrative formation of identity. *Narrative Inquiry, 15*(1), 45-50.

Wetherell, M. (1998). Positioning and interpretative repertoires: conversation analysis and post-structuralism in dialogue. *Discourse and Society, 9*(3), 387-412.

Marc Scully is a Third Year PhD Student in the Department of Psychology at the Faculty of Social Sciences at the Open University. His interests in discursive social psychology, national and ethnic identities and migration.

1
2
3