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Contesting Racism: Locating Racist Discourse through Discourses on Racism in an Irish Working Class Neighbourhood

Submitted by Nichola Melanaphy for the degree of PhD in Social Anthropology at University of Edinburgh 2011
Abstract

This is a study of the politics of identity in a working class setting in Galway on Ireland’s west coast. It is based on twenty one months of fieldwork using ethnographic research techniques, and several years of library based research. Both of these aspects of research are integral to the analysis, which is centred around the argument that ‘racism’ relies on discourse on ‘racism’ for its ontological status (an issue which ‘anti-racism’ must begin to engage with if it is to be more effective). Particularly since the 1950s when ‘racism’ lost its scientific grounding, this study argues that academia has become just another player in this game of ideological construction (an issue which it must engage if it is to be more useful to ‘anti-racism’). Two equations sum up the contemporary dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’: ‘racism = racialisation/ethnicisation + exclusion/denigration’; and ‘racism = power (the power to exclude/denigrate) + prejudice (prejudice based on racialised/ethnicised identity)’. According to these equations, the dominant discourse (made up of a complex combination of state and non-state discourse) on ‘ethnic’ and ‘national’ identity produced in Ballybane, Galway, and Ireland constructs three ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ ‘communities’ - the Traveller ‘community’, the Immigrant ‘community’ and the Settled Irish ‘community’. Such identity construction involves ‘self-racialisation’/‘self-ethnicisation’ as well as ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ by the other. Indeed, Ireland is witnessing a growth in the field of ‘ethno-politics’, where ‘community development’ is now a political buzz word, state resources are often distributed according to ‘community’ need and entitlement, and recognition of, and recourse for, ‘racist’ victimhood via ‘anti-racism’ often necessitates self-identity in ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ terms. Once constructed in ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ terms, the potential is, arguably, ever present for any of these ‘communities’ to fall victim to ‘racism’ as defined by dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’. Indeed, in terms of such discourse the Traveller ‘community’ and the Immigrant ‘community’ in Ireland are victims of endemic popular and state ‘racism’. A glitch appears in this picture, however, when one re-situates the evidence from academic discourse on ‘racism’ to state discourse on ‘racism’ (which essentially excludes any conceptualisation of ‘state racism’) and popular discourse on ‘racism’ (which, in line with traditional scientific ‘racist’ doctrine sees ‘racism’ as something white people intentionally do to black people). Therein is revealed the biggest problem facing ‘anti-racism’ today – fighting a demon that eludes any clear understanding of its form let alone its causes.
Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the generosity of all the residents in Ballybane and the workers in Ballybane Community Resource Centre who, not only welcomed me into the neighbourhood and into their lives, but also shared their knowledge, experience and insights with me. While there are too many people to mention here, I would particularly like to thank my original gatekeepers – Charlie and Anthony. Without them, my field work would have been a non-starter. Moreover, it would have been a much lonelier, and much less fun, experience.

I would also like to thank my supervisors Professor Anthony Good and Professor Mike Alder for their continual support and encouragement both emotionally and academically.

Finally, I acknowledge the financial assistance provided by the ESRC who made this research possible.
Note on the text

Throughout this text, a number of words (specifically, ‘culture’, ‘community’, ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’ [and their terminological offshoots]) often appear in quotation marks. This is reflective of their socially constructed nature and also the variation in conceptualisations thereof.

With respect to ‘racialisation’ and ‘ethnicisation’, my use of quotation marks is reflective of the fact that they are being quoted or paraphrased from academic discourse on ‘racism’. This discourse identifies these mental and social processes as the foundations of ‘racism’. ‘Racialisation’ refers to the process of ‘racial formation’ - the ‘naturalisation of racial groupings’ in biological terms (e.g., Miles 1989) or cultural terms (e.g., Goldberg 1993). ‘Ethnicisation’, on the other hand, though my own terminology, refers to the process of ‘naturalisation of ethnic groupings’ (e.g., Anthias 1995).

Finally, with respect to ‘racism’, my use of quotation marks is reflective of the fact that there is no agreed on definition of this phenomenon. Essentially, ‘racism’ relies on discourse on ‘racism’ for its ontological status. In using the term in any instance, therefore, I am quoting or paraphrasing it from academic discourse on ‘racism’, state discourse on ‘racism’, or popular discourse on ‘racism’. Which of these bodies of discourse is in play in any such instance will be made apparent by the context of my discussion and analysis.

Throughout the thesis I have also capitalised the three ‘communities’/‘cultures’ constructed in and through the dominant discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identities in Ireland – the Traveller ‘community’/‘culture’, the Immigrant ‘community’/‘culture’, and the Settled Irish ‘community’/‘culture’. While this is now standard practice in written discourse on Travellers in Ireland, I have extended this to Immigrants and the Settled Irish to highlight their socially constructed nature. With respect to Immigrants, for instance, rather than this construct representing simply a person who has migrated to Ireland, it is a much more loaded label, which does not necessarily map onto immigrant in the purely descriptive sense. Similarly, with
respect to the Settled Irish, rather than Settled representing simply a state of sedentariness, it too is a much more loaded label, which, because most Travellers are now sedentary, does not map onto settled in the purely descriptive sense.
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Introduction

The week before I started work here, my sister had a baby. There’s a waiting room outside the delivery room. It was about 11 o’clock at night, and my other sister, my mother and I were waiting there hoping to catch a glimpse of the new baby as it was brought up to the labour ward. Anyway, there was also a Traveller woman and a Traveller girl waiting. Obviously their daughter/sister was also in the delivery suite. Now I’m sensitive to these kinds of things because of my work, and honestly I just thought ‘if I had a camera to capture the difference in attitude.’ Both families are getting news, but its how you’re being spoken to. You know, everyone was being nice and smiling at us, and all ‘you’ll get a minute to see when we’re bringing her across’ - talking to us like we were adults and like we get it, and of course we’re going to cooperate, and sure we’re all the best of friends. You know, we’re gushing back at this nurse, and everything is kind of rosy. And, meanwhile, it’s just the facial expressions, the wariness, when they were talking to the Traveller women. It’s like, they’re being kept at arm’s length - ‘You’re not trustworthy, you’re not fully human. This baby’s arrival is not as exciting as the other baby’s arrival.’ I could really feel the difference... All I could think was, the babies are ten minutes old, and the world is giving them two very different welcomes. It starts here! (Aileen, Interview 07/03/07).

This interview extract signifies everything this thesis is about. It describes a scenario that somehow leaves a bad taste. Whenever I felt disillusioned, confused, or simply fed-up with my work I went to it, and it sent shivers down my spine. ‘Is it “racism”? ’ This whole thesis revolves around this question. It prods and probes this and many similar scenarios involving Travellers, Immigrants, and Settled Irish people. It digs beneath the surface, looking for reasons, explanations, and excuses, listening to all sides of the story, asking all the players involved for their versions of events. The conclusion is perhaps less clear-cut than I would have liked – ‘It is and it isn’t’. However, this conclusion cannot erase that bad taste. Whether it is, or is not, ‘by definition’ ‘racism’, it is not right, and it should be addressed. Before being addressed, however, a clear picture of the problem must be created. This is my aim in this thesis.
**Constructing ‘the problem’**

When I first decided to do research in Ireland, I was adamant I was going to delve into the increasing levels of ‘racism’ that seemed to be accompanying the increase in the level of immigration. Time and again my supervisors warned me that ‘racism’ was a more complex phenomenon than I was appreciating. Citing the academic spiel I had just ingested, I tried to reassure them that I realised there is no such thing as ‘racism’ only ‘racisms’. I provided a long discussion in my research proposal on the pluralistic and multilayered nature of ‘racism’. Having done so (I’m sure despite persisting concerns by my supervisors) I entered the field to look at ‘attitudes towards immigration and immigrants in an Irish working-class urban context’. Even at this stage however, in the back of my mind I still saw this politically correct and non-leading title as a veil covering my real research agenda - ‘racism in Ireland’. Luckily, as in most research situations, the reality of my research site soon blew such one-track thinking out of the water.

During my research, I was careful, for methodological reasons (not leading my informants) and politically correct reasons (not offending them), not to introduce the issue of ‘racism’. Instead, I carefully constructed questions for my Irish informants about how they felt immigration is impacting on Ireland, and on Ballybane (my chosen field site) in particular; and for my immigrant informants about their experiences since arriving there. From responses to such queries, and discourse I was privy to during participant observation more generally, however, I quickly realised that ‘Irish attitudes towards immigration and immigrants’ were part of, indeed inseparable from, a larger and more complex picture involving the politics of ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ identity.

**Re-constructing ‘racism’**

Despite my consciously avoiding introducing the term ‘racism’ during my fieldwork, the term popped up constantly in discourse produced by my informants. ‘Perfect’ one might think - ‘just as expected! “Racism” is prevalent’. Most interestingly however, most
informants (whether Immigrants, Irish Travellers or Settled Irish, and whether they had black skin or white skin) claimed their ‘kind’ as the primary victims of ‘racism’. ‘Okay,’ I thought, ‘Irish Travellers may be phenotypically the same as the majority, but contemporary academic discourse on “new” and “cultural racism” (see Section 1.1) does allow for the notion of anti-Traveller “racism”’. The main problem (or rather anomaly), therefore, lay with accusations of ‘reverse racism’ by Settled Irish informants. This term is commonly used in popular discourse in Ireland to describe and condemn an alleged situation whereby Travellers and Immigrants claim that any negative experience with a Settled person (in the case of Travellers) or Irish national (in the case of Immigrants) is ‘racism’.

According to contemporary dominant academic theory (see Section 1.1), ‘racism’ is inherently about power (‘racism = power + prejudice’). Consequently, while the phenomenon of ‘anti-Irish racism’ outside Ireland is generally recognised, because in a democracy the majority, by definition, hold the power, ‘anti-Irish racism’ within contemporary Ireland is arguably a misnomer. That said, to simply deny or ignore accusations of ‘reverse racism’ would have necessitated painting a distorted picture of my research site, and, more importantly, would have added little to existing knowledge on these issues.

After much bouncing forward and back between the data emerging from my fieldwork and the huge body of academic discourse on ‘racism’, my supervisors’ warnings finally made sense - because its biological basis (‘race theory’) has been scientifically refuted since the 1950s (see Section 1.1), ‘racism’ really is an entirely abstract concept. Without a scientific or biological basis, it is discourses on ‘racism’ that effectively give ‘racist’ discourse its ontological status, and, by extension, give accusations of ‘racism’ their legitimacy. According, I realised that discourse on ‘racism’ was as important to my study as the ‘racist’ discourse I had come expecting to encounter. Further, the lack of any universally agreed or established definition of ‘racism’ made it even more important that I approach accusations of ‘reverse racism’ in the same way as I would the more traditional ‘anti-black racisms’ and ‘majority → minority racisms’.
While necessarily central to the study of ‘racism’, because discourses on ‘racism’ are produced by many different players from many different fields and with many different motives, the body of discourse that exists at any time is hugely complex, ambiguous and internally contradictory. Further, while some fields of discourse (particularly academic and legislative) may have more authority than others, and it is often possible to discern the dominant discourse in particular contexts, the degree of contradiction even within particular fields is significant. Despite these obstacles, in this thesis I attempt to create a narrative which constructs an image of ‘racism’, specifically in the small working-class urban neighbourhood of Ballybane in Galway city, but also, where possible in evidential terms, in Galway and Ireland more generally. The conclusions I draw (when used in concert with other similar work carried out in other spatio-temporal or socio-economic contexts) are aimed at aiding the design and implementation of more appropriate and effective ‘anti-racism(s)’ both in Ireland and elsewhere.

**Structure of thesis**

In chapter one I analyse contemporary academic discourses surrounding ‘racism’. I begin in the era when scientific ‘race theory’ largely provided ‘racism’ with its ontological status (though not necessarily its motivation, energy or momentum\(^1\)). I then move on to the 1950s when ‘race theory’ was effectively disproved, and ‘race’ became recognised in academia as something residing ‘not in nature but in politics and culture’ (Jacobson 1998:9). I describe how, as a result of this disproval, academic focus was redirected to the processes of ‘racial formation’ (usually referred to as ‘racialisation’) or ‘the naturalisation of ethnic groupings’ (what I refer to in this thesis as ‘ethnicisation’). Though the terms of these processes are still debated, they are now essentially regarded in dominant academic discourses on ‘racism’ as one of the common denominators in, and therefore, arguably, one of the foundations of, ‘racism’. Finally, I carry out a comparative review of other research on issues related to ‘racism’ and the politics of

\(^1\) Later, I analyse the theory that it was not science but politics, or more specifically the politics of modernity, which was the driving force behind ‘racism’.
identity. This review spans research from the 1960s to date and from a variety of diverse countries including India and Norway. My aim is to suggest the possibility of the wider applicability of some of my observations and conclusions, and thereby to contribute to the production of broader theories than I could verify through my research alone.

In chapter two I set the stage for the critical analysis of the theoretical discourses analysed in chapter one in the context of my fieldwork site. I introduce Ballybane as a physical and socio-cultural landscape, and then outline and defend my research decisions and methods in terms of their validity, reliability and possible ethical transgressions. Of particular significance here is the status of my research in terms of being ‘at home’. I outline both sides of the debate surrounding ‘anthropology at home’, but then argue that my status as an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ was actually relative - it depended on how I presented my identity and how my informants perceived it in any particular context. This relativity, I explain, allowed me to use my identity strategically to try to get the best of both sides.

In chapters three and four I describe the dominant discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity in Ballybane, and where evidentially possible, Galway and Ireland more generally. Although malleable in its application, at the greatest level of aggregation, I illustrate that such discourse (discourse which surrounds subjects such as immigration, Traveller issues, and national identity) constructs three homogeneous and essentialised ‘communities’ from the population of contemporary Ireland: the Traveller ‘community’, the Immigrant ‘community’ and the Settled Irish ‘community’. I reflect on the discursive construction of each of these ‘communities’ both in the contemporary era and, where possible in evidentiary terms, in historic terms. In chapter three I focus on the construction of the Traveller ‘community’ and in chapter four I focus on the construction of the Immigrant ‘community’. I divide my analysis of the Settled Irish ‘community’

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2 In methodological terms, I did not go looking for some pre-defined ‘cultures’ or ‘communities’ in the social landscape. Instead I concentrated on their discursive construction in and through ascriptions and assertions of cultural and community identity.
between these two chapters as its construction is revealed as dialectically related to the construction of such ‘others’.³

In both chapters three and four, I reveal that the dominant discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity in Ballybane, and, it would appear, Galway and Ireland more generally, is produced by an amalgamation of different state players (for example, state institutions dealing with citizenship, immigration and Traveller issues)⁴ and non-state players (including minority advocacy organisations, and the public in general)⁵. Further, and most importantly from an ‘anti-racism’ standpoint, I illustrate that, according to the dominant academic discourses on ‘racism’ (i.e., those outlined in Chapter 1), such discourse is ‘racialist’/‘ethnicyist’.

During my fieldwork, one of the projects I was involved with in Ballybane was the No Barriers project. This project was set up in February 2006 as a joint project between a local centre for people with disabilities (St. Bridget’s) and a local amateur drama group (Action). Because of my recognised role as a researcher, I was invited to committee meetings for the project, though, in such contexts, I took on an observer role. The committee was made up of four workers from St. Bridget’s, and James who runs Action. While I was not involved in the initiation of the project, so was not privy to the reasons for setting it up, from its early activities (e.g., entering a float into the city’s Saint Patrick’s Day parade with the theme of Ballybane Bridge – No Barriers) and conversations I had with committee members, I gathered that its mission was to bring

³ This analytical structure is in no way meant to support the normalisation of the Settled Irish ‘community’ or the notion of it as ‘non-racial’ or ‘racially neutral’ (Frankenberg 1993:161). It is simply an attempt to reduce the repetition which would result if I looked at it individually.

⁴ I refer here to ‘state players’ in acknowledgement that the state is not a monolithic organism. It is made up of a large variety of politicians, ministers, departments and institutions, who/which sometimes work together or adhere to a common theory, but who/which also sometimes conflict and contradict each other. Because of this, where possible, I avoid using the reference term ‘the state’, and instead reference particular parts thereof - politicians, ministers, departments, institutions, etc. Where I have found that this has not been possible (either because I am drawing an argument from another author who has not been so specific, or because the state discourse involved has been produced by a complex amalgamation of state bodies), I will use the term ‘the state’ with the hope that the reader conceptualises this in non-unitary terms.

⁵ One set of players that is noticeably absent from my analysis throughout this thesis are the different types of media both in Ireland and internationally. My reason for this absence is simply that I feel that their inclusion is beyond the scope of this thesis. For a comprehensive study of these issues, however, one can refer to Fawcett 1998; Pollak 1999; White 2002; Haynes et al. 2005; and R. Lentin 2007.
down social barriers in the local community - to bring people of all ages, colours, ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ groups, and disabilities together. As the following excerpt from fieldnotes (taken at a committee meeting) demonstrates, however, there was a significant amount of disagreement over the best approach to fulfilling this mission.

*No Barriers* committee meeting 16/05/06

The big issue on the agenda was applying for new funding. Ciaran opened the discussion by pointing out that ‘if we are applying for funding we need to have a more clearly defined mission statement for the project.’ This issue basically dominated the rest of the meeting and caused more friction than I could have imagined.

James was the first to step up on the issue. ‘So far’, he claimed, ‘the project’s approach seems to be that if other groups like the Traveller group are having an event then they are being encouraged to invite clients from *St. Bridget’s* and vice versa’. ‘However’, he argued, ‘by even naming groups such as the disabled or Travellers you are going the wrong way. You’re creating a barrier.’ He explained that, for him, *No Barriers* has always been about including everyone and not making any issue whatsoever of identity – whether it be women, African, Traveller, etc. He argued that ‘with Action we couldn’t say how many of the group is this identity or that identity. We couldn’t say “we need to get more Travellers involved”, because our approach to inclusiveness does not allow such identity, and barrier creating issues, to come into it.’

To this, Ciaran retorted, ‘Well, that wasn’t the way that *No Barriers* was conceptualised originally… The focus was about supporting the inclusion of people with an intellectual disability, and exposing *St. Bridget’s* to the community in Ballybane.’ In return, James said, ‘I understand, but if you include everyone, regardless of whether they have disabilities or not, you will still get the result you want. The worst thing that you could do is take a group like Travellers and try to integrate them into the community – because by identifying them like this in the first place you are labelling them and actually creating barriers.’

At this, Josh said, ‘What you say James is brilliant, but we don’t want to run before we can walk. If everyone in the community could have a “no barriers” ethos it would be great, but it isn’t happening. When I started the *No Barriers* project, it was about getting the people in *St. Bridget’s* exposed and involved in other projects in the community.’
Ciaran then suggested that they create a sort of charter which all the different groups in the neighbourhood sign and then give preference to each other when organising events and things. Again, however, James argued that Action couldn’t go and ask a Traveller group to get involved in something because they are so inclusive that they don’t recognise Travellers as such. To this, Josh reiterated: ‘that’s a great idea, but it hasn’t happened naturally, and we have to recognise that there are layers to this process. Once we have broken down the barriers, then we can get a situation where “our people” aren’t from St. Bridget’s, they are simply from the community.’ James jumped in again argued that he didn’t understand their problem because he didn’t see their two perspectives as mutually exclusive.

Ciaran then explained his thinking on the issue in terms of a music group which himself and Josh have set up with some of the clients of St. Bridget’s. He argued that the members of the group are people with disabilities who play music, and as such he wants people to identify them as people with disabilities. This, he argued, would help reduce the stigma of disability and help people see them as just like everyone else. If they didn’t explicitly identify their disabilities, he argued, this aspect of the project would be lost. Josh agreed adding that ‘through No Barriers we can build ourselves into the broader community and build links. We need to identify ourselves as different but also the same.’

It was agreed that we would need to meet again to work this conflict out, as it could go on all day. [In fact, this proved to be the end of the No Barriers project, at least during the duration of my fieldwork.]

The significance of this debate (and my reason for including it here in its entirety) lies not in its particularity but rather in its representativeness. It might just as easily have occurred in similar terms between players within a national level non-governmental ‘anti-racism’ organisation, between state officials debating the best way to approach ‘anti-racism’ in policy or legislation, or, indeed, between social or political scientists debating these same issues. Indeed, this debate – ‘can you have “anti-racism” without contributing to “racialisation”/“ethnicisation”? ’ and, by extension, ‘can you have “racialisation”/“ethnicisation” without racism?’ - is one of the central problems that ‘anti-racism’ must deal with, not only in Ireland, but internationally.
As well as illustrating (in Chapters 3 and 4) that the Traveller, Immigrant and Settled Irish ‘communities’ are being ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ by those outside their boundaries, I show that, increasingly, they are consciously ‘self-racialising’/‘self-ethnicising’. Indeed, I argue that the current political and economic climate, where rights, entitlements and protections are increasingly being structured in ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ terms, has made this not only appealing but necessary in some contexts. Among such rights, entitlements and protections, I highlight the rights to the recognition and protection of one’s ‘culture’ and also, paradoxically, the right to protection against ‘racism’ based on one’s ‘culture’. Most significantly, however, I explain that because, according to dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’, ‘racism = racialisation/ethnicisation + exclusion/denigration’, and ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ involves the ideological (if not actual) exclusion of ‘the other’ (from ‘the Us’), a significant problem for ‘anti-racism’ lies in the fact that in attempting a solution to ‘racism’ it may be reinforcing its foundations. In this context, it becomes clear how and why ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse maintains its dominance.

In the final chapter I re-analyse much of the evidence of ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’ outlined in the previous two chapters to discern whether it also constitutes ‘racism’. Rather than simply situating this analysis in the context of academic discourse on ‘racism’, however, I also analyse it in the context of state discourse on ‘racism’ and popular discourse on ‘racism’. Therein, the accusations of endemic ‘state racism’ and ‘popular racism’ in Ireland (made by academics such as Garner [2004], Lentin and McVeigh [2006], and R. Lentin [2006]) are not falsified, but are necessarily compartmentalised in terms of the discourse on ‘racism’ upon which they are based. My conclusions, while injecting more complexity into a context which is already overwhelming in pragmatic terms, paint a reality which, I believe, must be confronted if ‘anti-racism’ is to be effective.
Chapter 1

Locating ‘Racist’ Discourse in and through Academic Discourses on ‘Racism’

Before introducing the ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ and even ‘racist’ discourses produced in and through the politics of identity in Ballybane, Galway, and Ireland in the following chapters, this chapter locates their ontological statuses within academic discourses on ‘racism’. I describe the debates that have arisen, and continue to exist, and attempt to discern which theories are dominant in academic work on ‘racism’. I also undertake a comparative review of research carried out in other parts of the world or in other times which I believe suggests and supports the wider applicability of my observations and conclusions in this thesis.

1.1: ‘Race’ and ‘racism’ in academic discourses

Prior to the 1950s academic discourses on ‘racism’ were based around a scientifically grounded ‘race theory’. According to this theory:

Race is a framework of ranked categories dividing up the human population… Race consist[s] of a small number of [biologically based] categories, most frequently just five… Race rank[s] these categories in terms of assumed and imputed fixed quanta of cultural worth, intelligence, attractiveness and other qualities [with] White persons to the top and Black persons to the bottom (Sanjek 1996:462).

In and through this theory, ‘race’ came to seem real, natural and unquestionable to millions of human beings, and was hierarchised in what became known as ‘scientific racism’ (ibid).
The birth of ‘new racism’

In the aftermath of the ‘racist’ atrocities of World War II, the UNESCO\(^6\) project was set up to find a solution to ‘racism’. Discrediting scientific ‘race theory’ was the chosen method. The panel in charge of the project included anthropologists, sociologists and geneticists. Its recommendations were presented in the *Statement on race and racial prejudice* (1968). Point 3(b) of the statement reads:

The division of the human species into ‘races’ is partly conventional and partly arbitrary and does not imply any hierarchy whatsoever. Many anthropologists stress the importance of human variation, but believe that ‘racial’ divisions have limited scientific interest and may even carry the risk of inviting abusive generalisation (UNESCO 1968:270).

Despite this refutation of ‘race theory’, many of the empirical characteristics associated with ‘scientific racism’ could still be recognised in society.\(^7\) Consequently, Miles (1989) argued that the definition of ‘racism’ should be revised so that it is appreciated as an ideology that takes a number of different forms. While most experts and academics agreed with this argument, the revision itself has led to much controversy. Indeed, with the number and diversity of definitions now proposed (from within all fields of life), ‘racism’ has arguably lost any substantive meaning as an existential phenomenon.

From within the complexity of contemporary academic discourses on ‘racism’ there are some areas of agreement. For instance, it is generally agreed that ‘race’ is not natural; its boundaries are not fixed, nor are its memberships uncontested. Instead, ‘races’ are conceptualised as ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson 1983).\(^8\) They are defined as ‘ideological entities… discursive formations signalling a language through which differences are accorded social significance’ (Solomos & Schuster 2002:49).

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\(^7\) This was unsurprising to those who pointed to politics rather than science as the impetus behind ‘racism’ (see *Modernity on Trial* below).

\(^8\) Anderson argues that ‘all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined’ (1983:7).
In line with this conceptualisation, British anthropologist Martin Barker (1981) produced the theory of ‘new racism’ or, what is often (arguably, inaccurately) termed, ‘cultural racism’. This theory suggests that ‘scientific racism’ is just one of many forms ‘racism’ can take in the everyday world. With its decline, other forms have emerged more virulent than ever. In these alternative strains, references to ‘race’ are usually coded in the language of ‘culture’, though it is naturalised in the same way as phenotype was in ‘scientific racism’.

Although dominant, the theory of ‘new racism’ is still a matter of intense debate in academia, not least among those who argue that there is very little ‘new’ about it (e.g., Cohen 1988:14, cited in Anthias & Yuval-Davies 1992:15). Indeed, the Irish experience (where ‘cultural racism’ has a long history) has been used as evidence in this argument. The Irish, despite their common phenotype, are generally acknowledged in academia to have been the victims of ‘cultural racism’ in Britain, the United States and other countries they emigrated to in the 19th century (Ignatiev 1995). Garner (2004:27) argues in this respect that ‘what is new is not the presence of the particular forms of expression and representation, but the precise combination of contradictory and overlapping forms.’ Such criticisms call into question the dialectic framework which locates ‘old’/‘scientific racism’ and ‘new’/‘cultural racism’ in distinct and independent positions.

**From race to ‘race’ – the emergence of ‘racialisation’**

Despite the debate over the newness of ‘new/cultural racism,’ the dominant discourses on ‘racism’ in contemporary academia are still largely based around the issues highlighted by this theory. A central tenet of such discourses is the concept of ‘racialisation’. This concept was first introduced by Miles (1989) who defined it as: ‘a representational process whereby social significance is attached to certain biological (usually phenotypical) human features, on the basis of which those people possessing those characteristics are designated as a distinct collectivity.’ By extension, he claimed,

In the past few decades Miles’s concept of ‘racialisation’ has been adopted, and often adapted, by theorists from a wide range of disciplines. Again however, this discourse involves much controversy. The primary issue of debate is whether cultural difference alone is a sufficient basis for ‘racialisation’, or whether it must necessarily imply underlying biological claims. Those involved can be placed on a continuum from one extreme to the other. At one end are those, like Miles (1989), who argue that, while ‘culture’ can be used as a stalking horse for ‘race’, ‘racialisations’ (and their attendant ‘racisms’) must involve connotations of genetic, biological, or phenotypical distinction. According to this perspective, ‘the only difference, if any, between nineteenth and twentieth Century forms of [‘racialisation’] is at the level of surface expression’ (Goldberg 1993:71).

This version of ‘racialisation’ is central to Van den Burghe’s distinction between ‘ethnic group’ (which is ‘socially defined on the basis of cultural criteria’) and ‘race’ (which is ‘socially defined but on the basis of physical criteria’) (Van den Burghe 1967:9, cited in Goldberg 1999:372). Significantly, it does not allow for a conceptualisation of ‘racism’ against the Traveller ‘community’ in Ireland. According to its tenets, while Travellers may have negative experiences with the majority population, because there is generally no contention to biological distinction, such experiences constitute not ‘racism’ but ‘[ethnic] discrimination’. As I describe in Section 5.3, it also resonates with the dominant popular discourses on ‘racism’ in Ballybane, Galway, and, arguably, in Ireland more generally.

At the other end of this theoretical continuum is Goldberg (1993, 1999). According to his version of ‘racialisation’⁹, what is important is not some underlying biological claim,

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⁹ Rather than ‘racialisation’, Goldberg (1993, 1999) uses the term ‘racial discourse’. Indeed, in Goldberg (2002) he critiques the use of the notion of ‘racialisation’ on the basis that scholars appeal to it too easily, without fully explaining or demonstrating the basis for its applicability. Despite this critique, and while Miles’s association with the term appears to have had the effect of limiting its application in some
but the implication of ‘nature’ beneath ‘culture’ - the ‘naturalisation of culture’ (1999:374). According to this perspective, ‘racialisation’ is a plural process - ‘assigning significance to biological or physical [rather than cultural] attributes… is a cultural choice’ (ibid:371-2 [parenthesis added]).

Paradoxically, the naturalisation of ‘culture’ depicted by Goldberg as focal in contemporary forms of ‘racism’ has much in common with past academic discourse on ‘culture’ (particularly that emerging out of American anthropology [Kuper 1999]). However, it goes against contemporary dominant academic discourses, which oppose all essentialist and normative conceptualisations. According to such discourses, as Baumann (1996:11) explains,

[C]ulture is not a real thing, but an abstract and purely analytical notion. It does not cause behaviour, but summarises an abstraction from it, and is thus neither normative nor predictive... Culture thus exists only insofar as it is performed, and even then its ontological status is that of a pointedly analytical abstraction.

In general, Goldberg’s (relatively broad) conceptualisation of ‘racialisation’ appears more dominant than Miles’ version, not only in academia, but in international ‘anti-racism’ legislation, and in state ‘anti-racism’ legislation and policy in Ireland (see Section 5.2). Despite this dominance, however, the complexity injected by this conceptualisation has led to much confusion and debate. The main element of controversy concerns the fact that, by denying the necessity of biological implication, ‘racialisation’ becomes almost vacuous. The boundaries between phenomena that until now have been conceptualised as being of different orders - ‘race’, ‘culture’, ‘ethnicity’, and a myriad of other socially constructed identities - become blurred. For researchers
(and indeed policy makers), the problem with this is that it begs the question: ‘How is “ethnicity” to be consistently and usefully distinguished from “race”’ and “ethnocentrism” from “racism“, and both of these from “xenophobia” and “nationalism”? (Rattansi 1994:53). Must we explain such phenomena with the same theories, and deal with them using similar policies?

Theorising from the most extreme end of the relativist, anti-essentialist and anti-reductionist account of ‘racialisation’, Goldberg (1993:75-6) admits that ‘[m]any (though not all) social groups now specified in the language of ethnicity may be and often are likewise identifiable as races… [T]he criteria of race differentiation may be identical to those for ethnicity’. Later, however, he draws a clearer line between ‘race’ and ‘ethnicity’. He claims that, while ‘race sometimes (is made to) assume(s) ethnic connotation, I am not so much submitting an explanation of race in terms of the ethnic paradigm as I am suggesting one possible contemporary meaning for race’ (1993:78 [Italicics in original]). Indeed, this statement, it later emerges, conveys just one dimension of a much broader, elusive and totalising conceptualisation of ‘racialisation’, ‘race’ and ‘racism’:

That the range of reference [for racism] has largely turned on characteristics such as skin colour, physiognomy, blood or genes, descent or claimed kinship, historical origin or original geographical location, language, and culture is a fact of historical condition; it could have extended, and could extend beyond these. Thus it could be or could have been that ‘exclusion of women’ was defined as racism, if women were, or were so to be defined as, a race (Goldberg 1999:375).

In other words, for Goldberg, ‘race’ is ‘a fluid, transforming, historically specific concept parasitic on theoretic and social discourses for the meaning it assumes at any historical moment’ (1993:74).11 The only generalisation one can make with respect to ‘race’, he argues, is that it ‘serves to naturalise the groupings it identifies in its own name’ (ibid:81).

11 It is in this respect that Stuart Hall’s (1978) conceptualisation of ‘race’ as ‘a floating signifier’ is significant.
Whether ‘race’ is in fact used to identify social groupings at any spatiotemporal conjuncture, Goldberg argues, turns on the prevailing weight of a number of interacting formative considerations, including:

(a) a history of being so named; (b) the processes and criteria of their boundary construction; (c) the rhetoric of their genesis; (d) the sorts of contestational and exclusionary relations the group so circumscribed has with other groups at the time; and (e) the terms of self-identification and self-ascription, given (a) through (d) (1993:78).

In more general terms, he asserts, designation in ‘race’ terms depends on, first, the different ‘referential history of the groups in question’ and, second, ‘the politics of general group reference at the time in question’ (ibid:75).

‘Racism’ and ‘ethnicity’

Although Goldberg’s thesis on ‘racialisation’ and ‘racism’ appears to dominate in academic discourses on ‘racism’, it has not escaped critical analysis. In her analysis of his 1993 work, for example, Anthias (1995) criticises Goldberg’s thesis in a number of respects. Her primary argument is that Goldberg’s relativism is tautological and so extreme that it leaves ‘racism’ without any common social ontological core - His conceptualisation of ‘racial discourse’ relies on the object it naturalises (‘race’ groups), while, in turn, ‘race’ groups rely on ‘racial discourse’ for their existence in the first place (Anthias 1995:285). Further, by implying that, in some contexts, ‘sexism’ may be seen as a form of ‘racism’, she argues, ‘his discourse approach leads to a failure to recognise the different basis of characterisations of fixity’ (ibid). Finally, and somewhat paradoxically considering her allusions to conceptual inflationism, Anthias argues that ‘what are referred to as racist practices or outcomes cannot be understood exclusively as outcomes of race categorisation. There are invisible Others not addressed by the issue of “race”. These include insider minorities, outsider minorities and new migrants’ (1995:288).
Anthias counters Goldberg’s definition of ‘racism’ by arguing that, in the contemporary era, ‘the specificity of racism (as opposed to sexism or class inequality) [lies] in its working on the notion of ethnic groupings’ (1995:294). ‘Racism’, she argues, involves the naturalisation (and the inferiorisation and exclusion) of groups ‘whose boundary is defined in terms of an ethnic or collective origin’ (i.e., ‘the naturalisation of ethnic groupings’ [hereafter ‘ethnicisation’]) (ibid:290). In accordance with this, she argues, ‘[i]t is possible to think of a “racism without race” (Balibar 1991)” (ibid:294). Indeed, with a significant number of academics now writing about ‘racisms’ perpetrated against immigrants and Irish Travellers in Ireland, and the Irish and Muslims in Britain (to name just a few examples), where none of these groups are generally constructed explicitly in ‘race’ terms, the dominant academic discourses on ‘cultural racism’ appear to support Anthias’s conceptualisation.

The entry of the ‘ethnic paradigm’ into discourses on ‘racism’ has added a new dimension, not only to debates surrounding ‘racism’, but also to those surrounding ‘ethnicity’. Within ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse, and within ‘cultural racism’, for instance, ‘ethnicity’ is often essentialised, reified, and naturalised. This conflicts with the way that this concept is conceptualised within contemporary dominant academic discourse on ‘ethnicity’.

‘The intellectual history of the term “ethnicity” is relatively short: prior to the 1970s there was little mention of it in anthropological literature and textbooks contained no definitions of the term (Despres 1975:188; R. Cohen 1978:380)” (Sokolovskii & Tishkov 1996:190). When it was conceptualised (for instance, in Narroll’s definition of ‘ethnic groups’ [Narroll 1964, cited in Barth 1969]), ‘ethnicity’ was constructed in structural terms. Each ‘ethnic’ group was seen as a separate entity structured on a

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12Similarly, its variants ‘ethnicism’, ‘ethnicist’, ‘ethnicising’, and ‘ethnicised’ will all be used with the implication that the object of reference is an ‘ethnic group’.
13For a general survey of ‘ethnicity’ in anthropological discourse see Banks (1996).
14Barth interprets Narroll’s (1964) framework in the following terms: ‘The term ethnic group is generally understood in anthropological literature… to designate a population which:
   1. Is largely biologically self-perpetuating
   2. Shares fundamental cultural values, realised in overt unity in cultural forms
particular ‘culture’, and, because processes of modernisation (national integration and assimilation) were assumed to reduce cultural difference, it was assumed that ‘ethnicity’ would gradually disappear (Barth 1969).

Such structuralist thinking was successfully challenged by Fredrik Barth in his book *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organisation of Culture Difference*. In this book, while culture is not erased from the conceptualisation of ‘ethnicity’, it is seen as important only to the extent that it is used to establish and maintain ‘ethnic’ boundaries between interacting groups (Barth 1969:13). ‘[W]e can assume no simple one-to-one relationship between ethnic units and cultural similarities and differences. The features that are taken into account are not the sum of “objective” differences, but only those which the actors themselves regard as significant,’ Barth argues (*ibid*:14). Indeed, while cultural difference may become less apparent with increased contact between ethnic groups, ‘ethnicity’, Barth argues, can, and often does, become increasingly important under such circumstances (*ibid*:32-33). In accordance with this conceptualisation, for Barth, ‘the critical focus of investigation… [should be] the ethnic boundary that defines the group, not the cultural stuff that it encloses’ (*ibid*:15). While not necessarily deriding Narroll’s framework, in other words, Barth highlights one element in this (‘Has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order’) as the critical feature of ‘ethnicity’. Finally, in terms of what makes a particular identification or categorisation ‘ethnic’, according to Barth, is that ‘it classifies a person in terms of his basic, most general identity, presumptively determined by his origin and background’ (1969:13).15

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3. Makes up a field of communication and interaction
4. Has a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order’ (1969:10-11).

15 Roosens (1994:83) argues that Barth under theorises this issue. For Roosens, ‘[w]hat… makes an ethnic group specific, is the genealogical dimension, which unavoidably refers to the origin, and always involves some form of kinship or family metaphor.’ Thus, somewhat redirecting focus from boundary to content, he claims that, ‘What is found inside the boundary, namely, what one is and what one possesses as a specific social category, cannot be reduced to being the product of boundary formation. One could say that the feeling of continuity, or identity, comes logically first, and that this identity originates from genealogy “before” it has anything to do with boundaries’ (*ibid*:87).
Although Barth’s seminal book has influenced most theorists on ‘ethnicity’ since its publication, the body of work produced on ‘ethnicity’ in the past fifty years is by no means homogeneous. That said, though neither mutually exclusive nor individually homogeneous, three competing approaches to understanding ‘ethnicity’ can now be discerned: primordial approaches, instrumentalist approaches, and constructivist approaches.\(^{16}\)

Primordialism naturalises (or effectively ‘racialises’) ‘ethnicity’. It regards it as ‘a fundamental, primordial aspect of human existence and self-consciousness, essentially unchanging and unchangeable in the imperative demands it makes upon individuals and the bonds it creates between the individual and the group’ (Jenkins 1997:185). While extreme primordialists look to biology as the determining factor of ‘ethnicity’, others emphasise such things as ‘culture’ or ‘history’ (Sokolovskii & Tishkov 1996:190).

Though now relatively uncommon, there are still those who subscribe to primordialism. For instance, van den Berghe (1981:35, cited in Sokolovskii & Tishkov 1996:191) argues that ‘ethnicity’ is ‘rooted in a genetic predisposition for kin selection, or “nepotism”… which “continues to be present even in the most industrialised mass societies of today” (1981:35)’.\(^{17}\) Specifically critiquing van den Berghe’s construction, however, Anthony P. Cohen (1985:105) argues that, ‘[T]he postulate of the primordiality of the “ethny”… takes too literally the myths of common descent which are deployed rhetorically to bolster the ethnic ideology.’ In more general terms, Jenkins (1997:46) points out that ‘too much ethnographic evidence exists of the fluidity and flux of ethnic identification’ to accept primordialist ideas. Of course, despite general refutation within the realm of academic discourse, as Barth argues, ‘the people and

\(^{16}\) In reality, there is usually a synthesis of two or all three of these ideas in any particular context of ‘ethnicity’. This is evident for instance, during my discussion of the controversy surrounding Traveller ‘ethnicity’ in Section 3.5, where there are elements of primordialism, instrumentalism and constructivism involved.

\(^{17}\) Though, like van den Berghe, Barth (1969) focuses on ‘origins’ in ‘ethnic’ ascription, in a later work he explicitly denies primordialism. He argues that ‘ethnic groups and their features are produced under particular interactional, historical, economic and political circumstances: they are highly situational, not primordial’ (Barth 1994:12).
movements we seek to understand make it… difficult for us by their own reifications of these vast social categories constituted as ethnic groups: imagining them, ascribing properties to them, and homogenising and essentialising them’ (1994:13).

In contrast to primordialists for whom ‘ethnicity’ “simply is”, it has no purpose (beyond a psychological one of giving individuals a sense of identity as members of a group)” (Banks 1996:39), instrumentalists ‘treat ethnicity as a political instrument exploited by leaders and others in pragmatic pursuit of their own interests’ (whether economic or political) (Sokolovskii & Tishkov 1996:190). ‘The cultural forms, values and practices of ethnic groups… become symbols and referents for the identification of members of a group, which are called up in order to ease the creation of a political identity’ (ibid:191). Indeed, extreme instrumentalists (e.g., Abner Cohen 1969, 1974, cited in Banks 1996:39) argue that ‘ethnicity is [wholly] motivated, it comes into being for a purpose and its continued existence is tied to that purpose.’

While the instrumentalist approach is much more popular than the primordialist approach (Banks 1996), it has not gone uncriticised. Some argue it cannot explain all expressions of ‘ethnicity’, especially those that have proved particularly durable, and others argue that ‘it fails to take seriously the participants sense of the permanence of their ethnies’ and the ability of such ethnies to arouse collective passions (Hutchinson and Smith 1996:9).

The final, and arguably now dominant, approach to ‘ethnicity’ is the ‘constructivist approach’. Though, in retrospect, Barth argues that the contributors to Ethnic Groups and Boundaries subscribed to what would now be recognised as a constructivist view (1994:12), generally, the constructivist approach is seen as having emerged in the early 1980s (particularly under the influence of Anderson 1983 and Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983). Its emergence involved a shift from ‘ethnicity’ as simply an element of social organisation to ‘ethnicity’ as consciousness or ideology (Govers and Vermeulen 1997). The ‘ethnic group’, according to this view, is an ‘imagined community’ (Anderson 1983), and, in line with this, academic focus has shifted from ‘what an ethnic group is
and what its precise boundaries are, [to] what notions of “group-ness” exist and what boundaries these notions “create” (Govers and Vermeulen 1997:7).

Though his earlier work is ambiguous in this regard, Barth’s later work on ‘ethnicity’ (e.g., Barth 1994) clearly subscribes to a constructivist view. Here he explains that, while culture ‘accumulates in each of us as a precipitate of our own experience’ (1994:14), amidst such flux and discontinuity, ‘[a]n imagined community [can be] promoted by making a few… diacritica highly salient and symbolic, that is, by an active construction of a boundary’ (ibid). Accordingly, he advises, ‘[w]e need to recognise that… the more pernicious myths of deep cultural cleavages [are] formative myths that sustain a social organisation of difference [not] descriptions of the actual distribution of cultural stuff’ (ibid:30).

With the increasing popularity of the constructivist approach, and its central focus on the social and mental construction of ‘ethnic’ identity, much anthropological work on ‘ethnicity’ now focuses on the role of symbolism. One of the most concise discussions of this issue is given in Anthony P. Cohen’s work on ‘community’ (e.g., 1985, 1994). Although much of Cohen’s emphasis is on the role of symbolism in the construction of ‘community’ more generally, as an allotrope of ‘ethnic’ studies, it nevertheless provides a powerful contribution to our understanding in this field. Cohen argues that ‘[t]he reality of [ethnic] community in people’s experience… inheres in their attachment or commitment to a common body of symbols’ (1985:16 [parenthesis own]). These symbols (which include the idea of the [ethnic] community itself, as well as the cultural symbols constituted therein), no matter how seemingly mundane or routine, continuously transform the reality of internal diversity into the appearance of similarity, while, at the same time, enhance the appearance of difference with regard ‘the other’.19

18 Combining this approach with an element of instrumentalism, he suggests that one impetus for the creation of such a boundary is resource competition, i.e., the mobilisation of collective action (Barth 1994).
19 Perhaps unsurprisingly (due to the parallels and interconnections), Cohen’s conceptualisation of ‘community’ is remarkably similar to Barth’s conceptualisation of ‘ethnicity’. ‘A reasonable interpretation’ of community, Cohen claims, ‘would seem to imply two related suggestions: that the members of a group of people (a) have something in common with each other, which (b) distinguishes
Indeed, one of the most important aspects of symbolism in the constructivist view is that it explains why nationalisation, Europeanisation, and globalisation have not signified the end of ‘ethnicity’. As Cohen explains,

[T]he greater the pressure on communities to modify their structural forms to comply more with those elsewhere, the more they are inclined to reassert their boundaries symbolically by imbuing these modified forms with meaning and significance which belies their appearance. In other words, as the structural bases of boundary become blurred, so the symbolic bases are strengthened through ‘flourishes and decorations’, ‘aesthetic frills’ and so forth (1985:44).

Where Cohen adds an extra element to the constructivist approach, however, is in his critique of the neglect of the individual/‘self-consciousness’ in studies of ‘community’/‘ethnicity’. While ‘ethnic’ studies tend to focus on the symbolic boundary (the public face of the group/‘community’) and the group/‘community’ consciousness implied therein, Cohen argues that deconstruction of the collective reveals that, though the symbols are held in common, because they are influenced by idiosyncratic experience, the meaning applied to these symbols (usually unbeknownst to those applying such meaning) can vary significantly. ‘The ethnic group is an aggregate of selves each of whom produces ethnicity for itself,’ he explains (1994:76). Accordingly, ‘[w]e cannot understand cultural boundaries without coming to terms with the discourse they enclose. [And, we] cannot do that without sensitivity to the claims and perceptions of those individuals who constitute the discourse’ (ibid:75).

Another theorist who has made an important contribution to the constructivist view of ‘ethnicity’ is Stuart Hall. In his paper ‘New Ethnicities’ (1992), Hall looks at the changes occurring within black cultural politics in Britain from the 1960s onwards.

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20 Indeed, Cohen argues that this synthesis of commonality and individuality inherent in the symbolic repertoire of an [ethnic] ‘community’ explains its effectiveness - ‘It continuously transforms the reality of difference into the appearance of similarity with such efficacy that people can still invest the “community” with ideological integrity. It unites them in their opposition, both to each other, and to those “outside”’ (1985:21).
During this time, he argues, there has been a shift in the politics and relations of representation surrounding ‘the black subject’. This shift, though by no means marking the end of one era and the beginning of another, involved two inter-connected phases. The first involved a critique of dominant representation of blacks in the form of ‘the essential black subject’ (a simplified, stereotypical, fetishised, and largely negative construct produced in and through predominantly white cultural discourses). The second involved the coining of the the notion of ‘the Black experience’ within ‘anti-racist’ discourse ‘as a way of referencing the common experience of racism and marginalisation in Britain’. ‘The Black experience,’ he explains, ‘came to provide the organising category of a new politics of resistance amongst groups and communities with, in fact, very different histories, traditions and ethnic identities.’ Indeed, ‘as a singular and unifying framework… [it] became “hegemonic” over other ethnic/racial identities – though the latter did not, of course, disappear,’ he explains (1992:252).

This ‘Black experience’ framework of representation, Hall argues, marked the emergence of a new ‘politics of representation’ in Britain (1992:253). It attempted to avoid any kind of essentialism. It represented, or at least attempted, a ‘politics which works with and through difference, which is able to build those forms of solidarity and identification which make common struggle and resistance possible but without suppressing the real heterogeneity of interests and identities, and… without fixing those boundaries for eternity’ (ibid:254-255).

Being inherently about the historical, cultural and political construction of identity and difference, Hall focuses his analysis of ‘the Black experience’ on ‘ethnicity’. This new politics of representation, he argues, has set in motion an ideological contestation around the concept of ‘difference’ as it is mobilised within ‘ethnicity’. ‘We are beginning to see constructions of… a new conception of ethnicity: a new cultural politics which engages rather than suppresses difference,’ he explains (1992:257). Such ‘difference’, he argues, is not that implicated in ‘new/cultural racism’ - “‘difference” which makes a radical and unbridgeable separation.’ It is ‘the “difference” which is positional, conditional and conjunctural, closer to Derrida’s notion of difference’ (ibid).
This analysis shows how dominant academic discourses on ‘ethnicity’ have changed over the last fifty years. In general terms there has been a shift from relatively essentialist and structuralist conceptualisations to much more post-modern conceptualisations – conceptualisations which appreciate, and call for an appreciation of, the fluidity and heterogeneity of ‘ethnic’ groups. While Hall implies that there is evidence of a similar move within popular discourse (evidenced in the emergence of ‘the black experience’ framework within ‘anti-racism’), more generally, as the remainder of my thesis will illustrate, state and popular conceptualisations of ‘ethnicity’ do not appear to have changed accordingly. It is for this reason that ‘new/cultural racism’ is, arguably, still virulent.

**From ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ to ‘racism’**

According to dominant academic discourses on ‘racism’, ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ and ‘racism’ are not equivalent. While ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ is seen as an innate aspect of ‘racism’ (Keith 1993:197), ‘racism’ is not always seen as an inevitable consequence of ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’. Further, what renders ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse ‘racist’ is a matter of some debate.

Frankenberg (1993:7) proposes one perspective on this matter. She argues that, while ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ simply connotes ‘the structuring of certain practices and subject positions with respect to race,’ ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ becomes ‘racism’ when it involves hierarchical ranking and denigration. While ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ can exist without ‘racism’, she argues, they usually co-exist because denigration of ‘the other’ is often the motive behind ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’.

This conceptualisation of ‘racism’ (‘racism = racialisation + denigration’) inherently implicates issues of power (i.e., the power to denigrate). This, in turn, led Frankenberg

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21 Indeed, subsequent critiques of the construct ‘Black’ in ‘anti-racism’ (where certain people and groups including those of Asian descent and females argued that they felt excluded from notions of ‘the Black experience’) suggest that Hall’s interpretation of the situation may have been somewhat optimistic.

22 Miles (1989) makes a similar argument (see above).
to focus her research on what she argued was, wrongly, a largely neglected issue - ‘whiteness’ and the power therein. Frankenberg acknowledges that there are shades of ‘whiteness’ (that it is crosscut by a range of other axes of relative advantage or subordination: class, gender, sexuality, etc. [2004:113]). However, such axes, she argues, ‘do not erase or render irrelevant race privilege, but rather inflect or modify it’ (ibid). Essentially, therefore, her conceptualisation of ‘racism’ relies on a dualist model: white/normative/dominant/powerful/perpetrator versus black/marginal/subordinate/powerless/victim’ (Frankenberg 1993:237).

Having researched minority-majority relations in Rotterdam, Verkuyten (2002:139) rejects such dualist models of ‘racism’. He argues:

> Power relations need to be understood as being actively (re)produced, involving global, national, regional and local circumstances, resources and boundaries. There are [sic] a range of discourses and practices that place individuals and groups in subordinate or dominant positions, but there are always competing constructions and challenges possible.

During his research in Rotterdam, Verkuyten discovered that ‘the charge of racism is one of the strongest moral condemnations of the present day… The taboo on racism… presents a power resource for ethnic minorities’ (2002:135-6). Use of this power source, he argues, has not totally reversed the power matrix, but rather has created a situation whereby ‘power is being dispersed. The perspective of (some) ethnic minority groups has become important, and these groups have institutional means to get their interpretations and definitions accepted and diffused’ (2002:137).

While Frankenberg argues that ‘racism’ must entail denigration, Goldberg (1993) argues that, ‘what distinguishes a racist from a non-racist appeal to the category of race is the use into which the categorisation enters, the exclusions it sustains, prompts, promotes, and extends’ (1993:211 [Italics in original]). In other words, for him, ‘racism =

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23 Although, ultimately, they see ‘anti-white racism’ as ‘racism’ (albeit of a different order), Anthias and Yuval-Davis (1992:16) construct a similar dualist model of ‘racism’.

24 As I argue in Section 3.5 and Section 4.4 during my discussion of ‘ethno-politics’, this argument also applies to Travellers and Immigrants in some contexts in Ireland.
racialisation + exclusion’. Significantly, while he admits that exclusion is sometimes aimed towards subjugation or oppression of ‘the other’, at other times, he argues, it simply involves holding ‘the other’ at a distance for such things as cultural preservation or fear of the unknown. Indeed, it may even be the grounds for counterassault or resistance to expand freedoms, he claims (1993:230). According to this perspective, in other words, rather than ‘racism’ necessarily being directed at ‘the other’, ‘racism’ and ‘anti-racism’ exist in a complex matrix where ‘racism’ can emerge as a by-product of the ‘self-racialisation’ often inherent in ‘anti-racism’.

Like Goldberg, Anthias (1995:293) claims that ‘racism’ can be used for resisting usurpation. However, like Frankenberg, she limits its perpetration to the more powerful groups in society - those with the power to resist such usurpation by inferiorising and excluding. For her, ‘[r]acism can be regarded as the most extreme form of the exclusionary face of ethnic phenomena’. Minority ethnic groups aiming to protect some reified and static notion of ‘culture’ or ‘identity’ are implicated in ‘ethnicity’ [or ‘ethnicisation’] but not ‘racism’, she argues (ibid). Of course, according to Verkuyten (2002), Anthias may simply be failing to critically analyse the true complexity of the distribution of power in society. In the modern era, where ‘multi-culturalism’ (or its more advantaged sister ‘inter-culturalism’) is a political buzzword, there is certainly at least some degree of power in asserting the rights of cultural practice.

While this analysis of the dominant academic discourses on ‘racism’ may appear somewhat overly academic, I feel it is important, indeed imperative, to highlight the degree of contestation within what is often seen as a relatively homogeneous body of work. I also feel that it is important to reveal that, while the terms ‘race’, ‘racialisation’, and ‘racism’ are used by academics from many disciplines, because the meanings implicated in these terms are frequently left unspoken, both authors and readers are often

25 Goldberg discusses various examples of, and the dangers involved in, this tactic. For instance, he argues, ‘Black-only dormitories or student clubs, situationally necessitated by principles of pragmatic antiracism as forms of redress or promotion of long denied autonomy, may fuel the counter charge of reverse discrimination and segregation’ (1993:230).
26 This argument ties in with the now international debate surrounding affirmative action.
(unknowingly) speaking about different things. While the differences in such meaning may appear minor, their effects can be significant in terms of who can and cannot claim victimhood in terms of ‘racism’. Further, if such discourse is used to inform the producers of ‘anti-racism’ policy and legislation, the impact is even more significant.

**Modernity on Trial**

In many respects, the following discussion belongs at the outset of this chapter. It describes a discourse that has become increasingly dominant in the past ten years, but which emerged in the 1930s. This discourse revisits the origins of ‘race’ and ‘racism’. It critiques academic discourse which situates these origins in science, and instead locates them in politics, or, more specifically, in the politics of the modern nation-state. In accordance with this critique, it redefines ‘racism’ in the contemporary era in political and state-centred terms, and highlights the impact that this re-interpretation has on ‘anti-racism’ in theory and practice.

Eric Voegelin (a German Philosopher) was one of the first academics to address the relationship between ‘race’ and state directly. In the 1930s, Voegelin set about ‘trying to theorise... the basis for the idea that human beings should live in defined territories known as nation-states with which they are supposed to identify’ (Lentin & Lentin 2006:3). In doing this, he made a distinction between the ‘race concept’ (the concept as it is found in natural science), and the ‘race idea’ (‘the idea as it is used by modern creeds, of the type of National Socialism, in order to integrate a community spiritually and politically’) (Voegelin 1940:283). In this respect, the ‘race idea’ is effectively a

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27 This phrase is taken from Gilroy (1999:196) (see below).
28 While early supporters of this theory include Eric Voegelin, Frantz Fanon, Aime Cesaire, Hannah Arendt, Stuart Hall, and George Mosse, more recently, the issues and debates have been reinvigorated by authors such as Etienne Balibar, Zygmunt Bauman, Michel Foucault, Paul Gilroy, David Theo Goldberg, Ivan Hannaford, Alana Lentin and Ronit Lentin.
29 ‘At the time of Voegelin’s writing... the belief that racial categorisation was the sole means of making sense of human difference and the consequent organisation of society had reached its peak’ (Lentin & Lentin 2006:4).
political symbol (i.e., a symbol with political implications). It is constitutive rather than descriptive of reality (*ibid*:284).

At the time of the birth of the nation-state, the ‘race idea’ was based on the scientific ‘race concept’. Rather than being ‘a unique notion emerging from the “findings” of racial scientists’ (A. Lentin 2004b:40), however, Voegelin argues that the ‘race idea’ is just the most recent instance of the general class of ‘body ideas’ (‘any symbol which integrates a group into a substantial whole through the assertion that its members are of common origin’) (1940:286). While the ‘race idea’ is the most important in the modern era of the nation-state, Voegelin argues that previous ‘body ideas’, for example, the Greek *Polis* and the Mystical Body of Christ, must be acknowledged for having helped create a context in which it was possible for an idea such as ‘race’ to later emerge (A. Lentin 2004b:40).

In light of all of this history, Voegelin argues that proving the ‘race concept’ (scientific ‘race theory’ or ‘scientific racism’) false (something many of his contemporaries at this time were attempting to do [A. Lentin 2004b:40]) would not mean the end of ‘race’ as an idea or political symbol. ‘The symbol[idea] itself followed in its elaboration and evolution other laws than those of scientific investigation’ (Voegelin 1940:316). Indeed, ‘[t]he elaboration of the symbol [idea] follows its own laws and has nothing to do with the reality of science’ (*ibid*:317). Accordingly, he argued, ‘race’ needs to be contradicted, and ‘racism’ thereby challenged, on political rather than scientific grounds. Unfortunately, Voegelin’s was something of a lone voice at this time. Indeed, as Alana Lentin (2004a&b) describes, even today, most ‘anti-racisms’ in Europe maintain a de-politicised view, and thereby overlook the essence of ‘racism’ (see below).

Sporadic work on the inherent connections between ‘race’ and ‘state’ continued during the decades after Voegelin’s seminal contribution. However, it wasn’t until the 1990s that different aspects of this work were brought together in the now increasingly dominant argument that ‘racism’ is a truly modern phenomenon; that its emergence was inherently and dialectically intertwined with the emergence of the nation-state in
Europe; and that its persistence today is similarly intertwined with the structure of the contemporary nation-state and the political processes inherent therein.

Although the concept of ‘race’ can be traced back much further\(^{30}\), Alana Lentin (2004a:430) argues that, ‘the full development of racism in its modern form cannot be said to have come about before the mid to late nineteenth century.’ This time marks the emergence of what Ivan Hannaford refers to as the ‘the high point in the idea of race’ (1870-1914).\(^{31}\) It is characterised by the emergence of the ‘race state’\(^{32}\), the birth of modern anti-Semitism, and rampant imperialism (Hannaford 1996:227-268).\(^{33}\)

Lentin (2004a:430) argues that there were two things that contributed to the rise of ‘race’ as a political idea which underpins the emergence of the political ideology of racism’ at this time. The first surrounds the issue of Enlightenment and polygenesis, and reflects an argument first proposed by Hannaford (1996). Hannaford argues that the Enlightenment-led shift from theology to science in political thinking on humanity resulted in the shift from monogenesis to polygenesis, and this rejection of the idea that all humankind originated from one god made it possible, in turn, to think about the division of humankind into ‘races’ - groups inherently physically and mentally different from each other (cited in Lentin & Lentin 2006:4).

In addition to this shift from theology to science in political thinking, Lentin (2004b:48-55) points out that ‘race’ and ‘racism’ also required a political impetus to propel them

\(^{30}\) Hannaford (1996:191) claims that the idea of ‘race’ emerges initially with François Bernier’s (1684) publication of *Nouvelle division de la terre ar des espèces ou races qui l’habitent*. This text, he argues, ‘treated human beings mainly in terms of racial and ethnic divisions arising from differences in their observable characteristics, and [marked] a significant methodological departure from the old way of seeing humankind in terms of the age-old distinctions between Christian and heathen, man and brute, political virtù and religious faith.’

\(^{31}\) Hannaford (1996:187) actually divides the rise of the ‘race’ idea into three periods, beginning in 1684 (with Bernier’s publication) and cumulating in the ‘the high point in the idea of race’ (1870-1914).

\(^{32}\) In terms of the emergence of the ‘race state’, Hannaford argues that from the nineteenth century, ‘notions of state drew support from the new literatures of nation and race. The tests of true belonging were no longer decided on action as a citizen but upon the purity of language, colour, and shape’ (1996:14).

\(^{33}\) Hannaford claims, ‘Between 1870 and 1914, anti-Semitism was invented. The English, searching for their true origins as they engaged in a romantic mission to take their civilisation throughout the world, contributed to the ideas of social evolution, hereditarism, and eugenics’ (1996:323).
from the realm of science into that of everyday consequence. This impetus, she argues, came gradually during the ‘the high point in the idea of race’ when European political conditions, particularly imperialist competition, made it advantageous for a marriage between science and politics to occur. In such conditions the infusion of politics with the language of scientific ‘race’ legitimised, as it naturalised, the construction of separate ‘race-states’/nation-states.\(^{34}\) The science of ‘race’/‘racism’, in other words, became a tool used by the state to legitimise the defence of ‘the nation’ from its ‘others’ both externally and internally.\(^{35}\)

At the start of the 1990s, Etienne Balibar produced a number of works which have contributed greatly to explaining this relationship between ‘racism’ and the rise of the nation-state (Balibar 1991, 1994). One link he focused on was that between ‘racism’ and ‘nationalism’ (Balibar 1991). Both of these ideologies, he argued, are essential structuring tools of the state in the era of the nation-state. He describes the relationship between the two as one, not of causation, but of ‘historical articulation’ (1991:50) and ‘reciprocal determination’ (ibid:52). While separate phenomenon, he explains, each determines the other’s political potential in the context of the emergence and growth the nation-state in Western Europe (ibid).

Though Balibar (1991) provides examples from Europe, India, the United States, Algeria and Israel (to name just a few), today the example usually used to illustrate the ‘reciprocal determination’ between ‘racism’ and ‘nationalism’ is Le Pen’s Front National political campaign in France in the 1980s. This campaign involved the expropriation of the ‘anti-racist’ ideology droit à la difference (right to difference) to legitimise the closing of France’s borders to immigrants, and even the repatriation of ‘foreigners’ who had lived and worked in France for decades (or were born there) (Räthzel 2002:8). In other words, in this nationalist context, ‘right to difference’ was

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\(^{34}\) Goldberg (2002:131) describes this in the following terms: ‘Through race there is displaced from the modern state, covered over, the raw expression of state power. Such power, nothing more than created, is projected through racial terms as the given order of things, seemingly intractable and so established by natural or teleological law.’

\(^{35}\) Gilroy (2000:59) refers to this political utilisation of ‘racial’/‘racist’ thinking by the state as ‘statecraft’.
manipulated into ‘the right to a national identity’ – France for ‘the French’. In Irish politics, Aine Ni Chonaill’s *Immigration Control Platform* launched in 1998 perpetuated a similar form of ‘racist nationalism’. When she and several other members of the Platform ran (independently) in the 2002 and 2007 general elections, their campaign claimed the right of Irish people to the ‘integrity’ of the national ‘homeland’, and argued that immigration should be severely restricted to ensure this.

What is perhaps most significant about these two examples is that, according to Balibar’s argument, they are just two extreme manifestations of the inherent relationship between ‘racism’ and ‘nationalism’. Because ‘nationalism’ in the era of nation-states involves the ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ of ‘the nation’; because ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ is a dialectic phenomenon (involving both processes of ‘belonging’ and ‘exclusion’); and because ‘racism’ involves ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ + ‘exclusion’ (Goldberg 1993); then, essentially, we are all ‘racists’ now.

The other aspect of the relationship between ‘racism’ and the emergence of the nation-state highlighted by Balibar is the link between ‘racism’ and ‘universalism’. Balibar (1994) argues that this link is at the core of ‘racism’s’ strength. He describes the two phenomena (in Hegelian terminology) as ‘(determinate) contraries’, arguing that ‘each of them has the other inside itself – or is bound to affect the other from the inside’ (1994:198). He explains the relationship (the ‘contradictory unity’ [1994:199]) in the following terms:

> [While ‘universalism’ implies equality for all,] as soon as universalism *ceases* to be a mere word, a would-be philosophy, and becomes an effective system of concepts, it necessarily incorporates in its very centre *its opposite*. [This is because] no definition of the human species, or simply the human – something which is so crucial for universalism, or universalism as humanism – has ever been proposed which would not imply a latent hierarchy. This has to do with the impossibility of fixing the *boundaries* of what we call ‘human,’ of fixing the boundaries within which all human beings could possibly be gathered (1994:197).
Explaining further, he argues that ‘racism’ is the prism through which ‘the universal’ (‘the general idea of man’ [ibid:198]) is necessarily constructed. Through ‘racism’, the ‘universal’ is constructed in terms of an ideal human type, which people fit or do not fit. As Alana Lentin (2004b:65-7) points out, in the post-colonial era this ideal type was constructed in the image of ‘the European’. ‘The European’ was epitomised as the ‘civilised’, superior human and pitted against the image of the ‘savage’/‘primitive’, inferior human. Individual nation-states, and individuals within nation-states, fit into this ideal or do not, are included in universal humanity or are exempt, she explains.

While the ‘race idea’ (and ‘racism’) may have emerged with the birth of the nation-state (in the mid to late nineteenth century), since then, it has been continually reinforced in and through the existence and importance of the nation-state in both conceptual and institutional terms, and, of course, state projects that ensure this. As Goldberg argues,

[M]odern racial conception in the final analysis is state mobilised or maintained, managed or mediated. In the absence of state prompting or promotion, articulation or ambivalence, invocation or implication, (explicit) racial conception would become marginal at best. But that would imply the end of the peculiarly modern state (2002:149).

Of course, this does not mean that the ‘race idea’ has remained static since its emergence. As Goldberg argues, ‘[while the] modern state is partially produced on the basis of... racial terms and conditions..., it sometimes transforms them’ (2002:38). To demonstrate, he describes a general European trend in the way that ‘racial thinking’ and therefore ‘racism’, has changed since it emerged. This transformation reflects a move away from a ‘naturalist tradition’ towards a ‘historicist tradition’. While within the ‘naturalist tradition’, the ‘racial’ other is constructed as pre-modern, inherently inferior, ‘as surplus value, both as usable labour and discardable detritus’; within the ‘historicist tradition’, it is constructed as ‘racially’ immature, but accorded potential to progress through mimicry of the European. Of course, even when ‘racial’ progress is promised,

[36] In Balibar’s terms, it became ‘the frontier of an ideal humanity’ (1991:61).
[37] Again, this move reflects changes in the political context rather than any changes to the ‘truth’ of ‘race’.
he explains, this promise is ‘at once undermined by racial imposition in being progressively postponed to a future never quite (to be) achieved’ (2002:96).\textsuperscript{38}

In terms of state expression of these ‘racial’ traditions, Goldberg highlights seventeenth century English colonialism of the Irish, Nazism, slavery, and Apartheid as examples of ‘racial’/‘racist’ naturalism; and contemporary neoconservative commitments to ‘racelessness’ in the US, South Africa, Britain and Europe as examples of ‘racial’/‘racist’ historicism (2002:77). However, while it is possible to situate or associate certain ‘racial’ projects (e.g., immigration legislation, assimilation policy, or citizenship legislation) with one or other of these traditions, he warns that in any ‘racial’ state, at any time, both ‘coexist uneasily and sometimes awkwardly’ (\textit{ibid}:45).\textsuperscript{39} Having said this, and though there are exceptions (e.g., Nazism and South African Apartheid), as described above, Goldberg does claim that there is evidence in European ‘racial’ thinking of ‘the more nuanced historicising conception becoming more explicit, even dominant with the twentieth century’ (\textit{ibid}). In terms of state expression, for instance, he claims that ‘the violence of an imposed physical repression [has given way to] the infuriating subtleties of a legally fashioned racial order… [where] the law is committed to the formal equality of treating like alike (and by extension the unlike differently)’ (\textit{ibid}:203).

In terms of the way that ‘racial historicism’ is played out by states in the contemporary (post World War II) European ‘raceless’ era, Goldberg argues:

[R]acelessness is achievable only by the presumptive elevation of whiteness silently as (setting) the desirable standards, the teleological norms of civilised social life, even as it seeks to erase the traces of exclusions necessary to its achievement along the way (2002:206).

\textsuperscript{38} It is in this respect that Lentin and Lentin (2006:7) link Goldberg’s theory on ‘racial historicism’ to Balibar’s (1994) theory on ‘universalism’. ‘Historicist racism is the relationship between racism and universalism in practice,’ they argue.\textsuperscript{39} In this respect, Goldberg warns against totalising the phenomenon of ‘the racial state’. While ‘the racial state’ is a globally generalised condition (he refers to the existence of a ‘worldly web of racial arrangement’ [2002:133]), there is significant variation in the character of ‘racial’ states (2002:33), and ‘modes of racial rule and regulation are never fixed, given, or singular, but multiple, shifting, site-specific, temporally and discursively defined,’ he argues (\textit{ibid}:106).
Accordingly, he argues, ‘racelessness’ is as much about veiling and protecting, historical, yet persisting, ‘racial’ inequities, as it is about promoting equality (ibid:213).\textsuperscript{40} Discourses and policies of ‘racelessness’ are not about ending ‘racism’. They are about deflecting the charge and penalty of ‘racism’ (ibid:228). And, ‘[Raceless states] are racist states absent race, post-racial but not post-racist, raceless yet racist’, he claims (ibid:263). Although it is often presented as such, therefore, Goldberg is adamant that this historicist mode of ‘racial’ governance is no more benign than a naturalist one. The dominant effect of this general move from one mode to the other, he argues, ‘has been not the dismissal of racist commitment and expression as such but the replacement – one might say displacement… of one form of racist articulation by another’ (2002:88).

Ronit Lentin (2006), applies Goldberg’s theory on the ‘racial state’ to the Irish context, and argues that (particularly in light of the 2004 Citizenship Referendum [See Section 4.2]) Ireland has evolved from being, like other nation-states, a ‘racial state’ (evident in the ethnically narrow framing of the Constitution of Ireland [R. Lentin 1998b]) to being a ‘racist state’ (2006:189). Drawing on Foucault’s ideas and theories on ‘technologies of bio-power’\textsuperscript{41}, she argues that the Irish state uses various ‘bio-technologies’ (laws, policies, institutions and apparatuses) to control the population in ‘racist’ ways. In accordance with this, she argues that ‘[r]ace no longer serves one group against another, but becomes a “tool” of social conservatism and of state racism: a racism that society practices against itself, an internal racism, that of constant purification and social normalisation’ (ibid:194).\textsuperscript{42}

While convincing, these increasingly dominant, academic discourses on ‘racism’ (which historicise ‘race’ and ‘racism’ in political and statist terms) appear to clash with the

\textsuperscript{40} In later work, Goldberg refers to ‘racism’ in this context as ‘buried but alive’ (2006:334).
\textsuperscript{41} ‘According to Foucault, there is a difference between sovereign power of the old territorial state (“to make die and let live”) and modern biopower (“to make live and let die”). If the old order exerted the right to kill, the new biopower aims to make the care of life the concern of state power, exercised by governmental technologies such as the hospital, the psychiatric clinic, the prison, and, [Lentin adds], the refugee and the detention centre’ (R. Lentin 2006:193).
\textsuperscript{42} Though Lentin focuses on the Irish context, she implies that her arguments can be applied to other ‘modern, normalising states’ (2006:194).
dominant non-academic discourses (particularly state discourses) on ‘racism’ in Western Europe (see Section 5.2 & 5.3). In and through such discourses, ‘racism’ is conceptualised as ‘a pathology, that may infect politics – often through the extremes of a singular leader or party [or even government] – but which does not emerge from political processes inherent to the state.’ (A. Lentin 2007:2). In place of politics, such discourses tend to produce psychological explanations of ‘racism’.

It is with respect to this disparity between academic and state (and popular) discourses on ‘racism’ that Alana Lentin (2004a&b, 2007) approaches ‘racism’ and the state in her work. She argues that the reason that the dominant non-academic discourses in Western Europe following World War II generally offer a depoliticised and pathologised interpretation of ‘racism’ is because they have been influenced by a common source – the UNESCO project (see above). Having reduced ‘racism’ to its scientific pretensions, Lentin (2007:8) explains, the panel charged with the UNESCO project aimed, on the one hand, to discredit the science behind ‘race’, and, on the other hand, to effect and perpetuate a shift from ‘racial’ thinking on human difference (and the hierarchy it implied) to ‘culturalist’ thinking on human difference (accompanied with an appreciation of ‘cultural relativism’) (ibid:10-11). Their work in this respect, Lentin argues, resulted in the emergence of the ‘UNESCO tradition’ of ‘anti-racism’, the predecessor to most ‘anti-racist’ approaches taken by governments, European bodies, and non-governmental organisations in Europe today (ibid:8).

43 Based on her argument that ‘the majority of explanations of racism available to us have been formulated from an anti-racist perspective,’ Lentin approaches discourses on ‘racism’ via discourses on ‘anti-racism’ (2007:5).

44 Lentin criticises the UNESCO panel on a number of counts. Most significantly, she argues that they were naive in assuming that simply replacing ‘race’ with ‘culture’ would “expunge the ranking of humanity implied by theories of “race”” (A. Lentin 2005:379). ‘While theoretically accepting the validity of “different but equal” cultures, the transposition of this principle into anti-racist action was nevertheless accompanied in practice by paternalism [and notions of superiority and inferiority inherent therein],’ she argues (ibid:388). In an argument reflective of Goldberg’s (2002) surrounding ‘racial historicism’, in other words, Lentin argues that ‘the shift from “race” to “culture” or “ethnicity” is little more than a cosmetic one in terms of the impact it has on the actual experience of racism’ (ibid:389).

45 The term ‘UNESCO tradition’ was first introduced by Martin Barker (1983) in reference to the opposition to ‘racism’-as-science strategy (A. Lentin 2007).
Within ‘anti-racisms’ influenced by the ‘UNESCO tradition’, ‘racism’ is conceptualised as an ‘aberration from the public political culture of the nation-state’ (A. Lentin 2007:24). It is presumed that ‘the Western, democratic European state is de facto anti-racist… [and, by extension,] that the solution to racism may be found within the political and legal apparatuses of the state; not beyond it’ (ibid:2). Discourses of human rights, meritocracy, interculturalism, and, more recently, social cohesion, for instance, are all dominant within this genre of ‘anti-racism’ (ibid).

Alana Lentin has not, of course, been alone in critiquing the ‘UNESCO tradition’. Gilroy (1992, 1998), for instance, argues that the appropriation of ‘race’ (and its reduction to ‘culture’ and ‘identity’) within this ‘tradition’ has had the effect, not only of drifting ‘towards a belief in the absolute nature of ethnic categories’ (1992:50), but also of ‘collud[ing] in accepting that the problems of “race” and racism are somehow peripheral to the substance of political life’ (ibid:52). In order to overcome these problems, Gilroy argues that ‘anti-racisms’ need to renounce and denaturalise ‘race’ by refocusing on ‘raciology’ - ‘the lore that brings the virtual realities of “race” to dismal and destructive life’ (Gilroy 2000:11). ‘Raciology’, he argues, highlights the politics inherent in the construction of ‘race’:

[M]odern raciology required enlightenment and myth to be intertwined. Indeed… theories of culture, ‘race,’ and nation [supplied]

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46 Public political culture ‘refers to a set of “familiar ideas” (Rawls 2001:5), some “more basic than others” (ibid) that “play a fundamental role in society’s political thought and how its institutions are interpreted” (ibid:6). In Europe, such ideas include democracy, liberty, tolerance, equality, freedom, human rights, and solidarity (A. Lentin 2007:6).

47 Lentin links her critique of human rights to Balibar’s (1991) theory on ‘racism’ and ‘universalism’ and Goldberg’s (2002) work on ‘racial historicism’. She argues that human rights discourse is ultimately (though often unknowingly) compliant with ‘racial historicism’ because it promotes a universalistic vision of humanity which ignores the fact that these rights are actually set by ‘whites’ or westerners according to their standards and ideals (A. Lentin 2004a:439), and ‘it will simply not be possible for the Others that human rights seek to protect to gain entrance to that community of individuals’ (ibid:440).

48 ‘If the most dedicated of anti-racist and anti-fascist activists remain wedded to the mythic morphology of racial difference, what chance do the rest of us have of escaping its allure?’ he asks (Gilroy 1998:842).

49 Alana Lentin criticises this argument that the appropriation of ‘race’ by ‘anti-racism’, and even the use of the term in academic work, has contributed to its persistence by reinforcing its essentialisation. She argues that ‘race is given meaning by the persistence of racism’, and therefore simply denying the effectiveness of ‘race’ or using alternative concepts such as ‘raciology’, will not cause it to wither away (2008:496-7).
the logic and mechanism of their dangerous interconnection. This confluence matters... because it presents equally distressing links between raciology and statecraft and shows how modern political theory was being annexed by the imperatives of colonial power even in its emergent phrase (Gilroy 2000:59).

It is in this respect that Gilroy claims that ‘anti-racism’ needs to put ‘modernity on trial’ (1999:196).

While she focuses on the influence of the ‘UNESCO tradition’ of ‘anti-racism’, Alana Lentin argues that there are alternatives. Within some ‘anti-racisms’, for instance, ‘[t]he state itself is seen as a source of racist discrimination, both as reflected in current policy and, structurally’ (2007:7). While individual ‘racism’ is also acknowledged by such ‘anti-racisms’, it is seen as ‘a product of accepted norms about difference that are structurally built into [social, political and economic life]’ (ibid:16). Though more reflective of the lived-experience of those who actually face ‘racial’ discrimination, such anti-racisms’, Lentin argues, remain outside the mainstream due to ‘the difficulty of financing activities that do not conform to the depoliticised emphasis on culture promoted, in particular by the European Union since its 1997 Year Against Racism’ (2004b:110).

Perhaps the most important aspect of Lentin’s theory on ‘racism’, is the way she ties together all her arguments with the idea that there has been a consistency in ‘racism’ from past to present which is not appreciated in theories which focus on the line between (or shift from) biological/scientific ‘racism’ and (to) ‘new racism’ or ‘cultural racism’. What provides this consistency, she argues, is politics, or, more particularly, a politically productive ‘aversion to difference per se’. It is this aversion to difference, and its inherent relationship with the politics of the nation-state, she argues, that ultimately explains the persistence of ‘racism’, and, therefore, should mark the point of attack for ‘anti-racism’ (A. Lentin 2000:16).

The conceptualisation of ‘racism’ described throughout this section leaves ‘anti-racism’ with something of a mammoth task – reshaping the world-system of nation-states at the
international level, and the existence, or at least the contemporary model, of citizenship and immigration laws at the national level (but on an international scale). The lack of short-term pragmatism inherent in this underlying implication, however, does not seem to deter those appealing to this necessity. Goldberg (2002), for instance, devotes an entire chapter to describing what a ‘post-racist’ state would look like\(^{50}\), and, by extension, what achieving this would entail. In the latter regard, for instance, he argues that states would need to adopt a new conception of citizenship – ‘citizenship as state engagement and interaction rather than as state belonging and identification… [Where it is] premised… on openness and flows [rather] than on stasis and fixity, on heterogeneities rather than homogeneity’ (2002:265). Such a conception, he argues, would base citizenship on ‘civic engagement and commitment, interests and investments, powers and responsibilities’ (ibid:267). Whether such a ‘post-racist’ universe is likely in the future, or is even pragmatically possible, however, is open to debate.\(^{51}\) Personally, though with a sense of

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\(^{50}\) He argues, Post-racist (in contrast to merely post-racial) states… would mean, in short, a very different sort of state personality, a different demeanour to those inside and outside the state cast(e), a different disposition to population definition and characterisation, to law and law enforcement, to power and policy making, to kith and kin, ‘legitimate’ family and the shape of class, to sociospatial configurations and schooling, social engagement and accessibility, to national culture (most notably in and through language, the ‘mother tongue’) and historical memory. States after racism… [would also mean] a different set of global arrangements where racial dispositions or calculations no longer determined or set the formative background to international relations, no longer determined or even descriptively characterised the general flows of capital, commodities, workers and executives, refugees and im/migrants, or the radically uneven distribution of human and economic costs of AIDS and its treatment (Goldberg 2002:248-9).

\(^{51}\) Even in terms of Anthony Smith’s ‘territorial’ or ‘civic’ (as opposed to ‘ethnic-genealogical’) model of the ‘nation’, he admits that, often (if not usually), the common values, traditions, historical memories, myths and symbols (i.e., the common ‘culture’) ‘imagined’/‘invented’ in and through the construction of the ‘political community’ and ‘political culture’ (1991:11) were/are largely based on the ‘culture’ of the ‘dominant ethnie’ (ibid:39) or the ‘core ethnic community’ (ibid:110):

Though most latter-day nations are, in fact, polyethnic… many have been formed in the first place around a dominant ethnie, which annexed or attracted other ethnies or ethnic fragments into the state to which it gave a name and a cultural charter… the presumed boundaries of the nation are largely determined by the myths and memories of the dominant ethnie, which include the foundation charter, the myth of the golden age and the associated territorial claims, or ethnic title-deeds (ibid:39).
regret, even Goldberg never quite convinces this reader of the achievability of this ‘post-racist’ utopia.

1.2 Ireland in a comparative context

Ireland has something of a unique history in terms of ‘race’ and ‘racism’. On the one hand, ‘the Irish’ have long been the victims of ‘racism’ both at home and abroad. At home, Ireland’s main role in the, now deemed inherently ‘racist’, colonial project was as a victim (see Curtis 1984, Garner 2004). Further, when famine, political turmoil, and unemployment meant that emigration became something of a norm from the 18th until the 20th centuries, ‘the Irish’ were often ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’, and suffered ‘racism’, in the countries in which they immigrated (e.g., the United States and England) (see Ignatiev 1995; Jacobson 1998; and Garner 2004). Indeed, some argue that they continue to suffer ‘racism’ in many such countries (Mac an Ghaill 2000).

Of course, on the other hand, the Irish were also the perpetrators of ‘racism’ during their role in British Imperialism across the globe, and in slavery and ‘anti-Black racism’ in the Americas (see Garner 2004; Ignatiev 1995). They have also, arguably, produced their own endogenous, ‘home grown racisms’ (McVeigh 1992, cited in R. Lentin 2001, para.2.4) - anti-Semitism, anti-Traveller ‘racism’ (see Sections 5.4 and 5.5), and the unique Church led ‘Black baby syndrome’ (White 2002:112) (see Section 4.3). Finally, during the Struggle for Independence, Irish nationalists actively constructed ‘the Irish’ in ‘racial’ terms - as White (and therefore fit to rule themselves). In doing so, they

To illustrate he admits that even in an ‘immigrant nation’ like the United States, ‘the all-American identity and culture clearly reveals its ethnic roots in the Anglo-American Protestant traditions of the original settlements’ (ibid:149). In accordance with this, he argues, ‘the process of constructing the nation is less one of “invention” than of “reconstructing” the ethnic core and integrating its culture with the requirements of a modern state and with the aspirations of minority communities’ (ibid:111). Indeed, he argues, ’it is where [a] new state is built up around a dominant ethnie..., that, paradoxically the best chance of creating a “territorial nation” and political community exists’ (ibid:116). The consequence of this reality in the West (where this ‘civic/territorial’ model originated), he claims, can be seen in the increasing numbers of ‘ethno-nationalist’ autonomist (or even separatist) movements among previously muted or repressed ‘ethnic minorities’ since the 1950s (ibid:138). Accordingly, even this ‘civic’ or ‘territorial’ model of the ‘nation’ does not escape the kinds of critique outlined in this section.
(inherently) highlighted the differences between ‘the Irish’ and colonial others whose indigenous populations were marked by their predominantly black-skin in ‘racist’ terms (Garner 2004).

Because of this somewhat unique historical legacy, one would expect there to be limited scope for comparison between Ireland and other countries in terms of ‘race’ and ‘racism’, and, by extension, that there would be limited scope for claiming the wider applicability of theories grounded in this context. Contrary to this expectation, however, I found many areas of comparison and possible generalisibility.

Despite the historical cleavages between Britain and Ireland, Gerd Baumann’s (1996) depiction of identity politics among various ‘ethnic minority communities’ living in the Southall area of London in the 1980s and 1990s is, in many respects, very similar to my depiction of similar issues in Ireland. Baumann describes how the dominant discourse on ‘ethnic minority identity’ in Britain at this time constructed an identity framework based on a simplistic and tautological equation between ‘ethnic identity’, ‘culture’ and ‘community’. In effect, it constructed five distinct ‘ethnic-cum-cultural’ bounded and homogeneous ‘communities’ (1996:16). This equation, he argues, reduces all social complexities, by equating ‘culture with community; community with ethnic identity; and ethnic identity with the “cause” of a person’s doings or sayings’ (ibid:6). Through such discourse, he explains, ‘culture’ is reified. It is constructed as natural, a given (and, at times, even biologically preordained or determined); as something that people/‘communities’ ‘have’ or ‘are members of’; and, as such, as ‘normative, predictive of individuals’ behaviour, and ultimately a cause of social action’ (ibid:11-12). He refers to such processes as ‘biologism: the expectation that cultural differences are founded on natural ones’ (ibid:16).

In the context of Ballybane, and indeed in Ireland more generally, as I describe in chapters three and four, discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity in most general and descriptive contexts, constructs three ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ ‘communities’ from within the population of Ireland: the Traveller ‘community’; the Immigrant ‘community’ and
the Settled Irish ‘community’. Within this framework, in many (even most) contexts, the Immigrant ‘community’ is deconstructed into two ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ ‘communities’ usually conceptualised and labeled along the lines of ‘Black/African/Refugee/Asylum Seeker/Non-EU/Non-Worker’ (hereafter Black/African Immigrant) and ‘White, foreign accented/Eastern European/Migrant Worker’ (hereafter Eastern European Immigrant) (see Chapter 4).

Besides those produced by the dominant discourse, Baumann also discusses alternative identities constructed in and through discourses on identity produced within the ‘ethnic minority communities’ themselves. Such (‘demotic’ [lit. ‘Of the people’]) discourses, he explains, ‘denied the congruence between culture and community that was the hallmark of the dominant discourse’ (1996:8). It ‘did not replace [the] dominant discourse, but in many contexts counteracted it by drawing attention to the daily process of “making culture”, rather than “having a culture”’ (ibid:6), of ‘producing culture, rather than being produced by it’ (ibid:13), or of ‘culture as a continuous process and community as a conscious creation’ (ibid:35). He portrays such discourse as being more reflective or considerate of self-definition (ibid:34), and, interestingly, points out that it is more in keeping with current dominant anthropological discourse on ‘culture’ (see Section 1.1 above) (ibid:189).

Like Baumann, I also discerned alternative less reified and essentialist constructions of ‘culture’ and ‘community’ within discourses on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity. For example, while the dominant discourse constructs a bounded and homogeneous Traveller ‘community’, in many contexts, this construction is delegitimised by discourse emphasising the over-riding importance of ‘[extended] family’ identity and allegiance (see Section 3.4). Similarly, with respect to the Immigrant ‘community’, or various ‘communities’ therein, in some contexts, emphasis on the variation within (in terms of culture, legal status, skin-colour, nationality, country of origin, and even tribal group) threatens any notion of general commonality (see Section 4.3).
Of course, there also appear to be significant differences in the processes involved in ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity construction in contemporary Ireland and those in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s. For instance, while Baumann (1996:72-73) was able to stipulate the bases upon which the five ‘communities’ he discusses were constituted (two involved ‘race’ and three ‘religion’), the ‘communities’ constructed in and through dominant discourse in Ballybane, Galway, and Ireland more generally, are constructed in ‘ethnic’ or ‘racial’ terms depending on the context. As Anthias and Yuval-Davis argue:

> It is not possible to distinguish in an abstract way between ethnic, racial and national collectivities but rather one can distinguish their different discourses and projects. In different social and historical contexts, a process of re-labeling or redesignation may occur... Therefore, groups that have been called or have called themselves national at one point, or in one territory, have become ethnic or racial in other contexts... The use of one or other of these categorisations has often been determined by the political intentions of those involved (1992:3-4).

This difference is possibly a reflection of Ireland’s more ambiguous past and the fact that identity manipulation has traditionally been hugely important to the politics of, and within, the country. It is perhaps best illustrated in the context of the Settled Irish ‘community’. This ‘community’ is constructed in ‘ethnic’ or ‘ethno-national’ terms in contexts where it is juxtaposed to the Traveller ‘community’ (see Chapter 3); in ‘national’ terms (as ‘the Irish’) in contexts where it is juxtaposed to the Immigrant ‘community’ (see Sections 4.2 & 4.3); and in ‘national’ and ‘racial’ terms in contexts where they are juxtaposed to the Black African Immigrant ‘community’ (see Section 4.3).

Another difference between Baumann’s observations and my own surrounds the role of the state. Throughout his work, Baumann highlights the primary role of the state in producing and propagating the dominant discourse. State policy based on the dominant discourse, he argues, is disseminated in state guidelines on such things as ‘community’ provision/funding, ‘ethnic’ targeting, ‘community’ consultation, and ‘community’ rights
and protections. The result is that local community politics in Britain also becomes reflective of the dominant discourse (1996:26). In contemporary Ireland however, as I illustrate in chapters three and four, rather than the dominant discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity being controlled by politicians and state institutions, non-state players are often actively and necessarily involved in its production and maintenance.

In contrast to the dominant ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse, when it comes to ‘de-racialising’/‘de-ethnicising’ discourse, Baumann argues that it is produced in and by popular discourse. However, again, as I illustrate in chapters three and four, in Ireland, politicians and state institutions, in some contexts at least, also produce such discourse. Indeed, accordingly, Baumann’s term (‘demotic’) for such discourse is somewhat inaccurate in the Irish context. It cannot at once stand for both popular discourse (which its literal meaning implies) and discourse which ‘[denies] the congruence between culture and community’, because the two are often mutually exclusive.

Finally, while according to Baumann local discourse is secondary or derivative of the nationally produced dominant discourse (it ‘applies’ or ‘denies’ it), my research suggests that it is often constitutive of the dominant discourse. That is, at times, discourses produced by locally-based organisations (including state bodies or state-funded bodies working within local communities) and ‘community’ groups help produce and re-produce the ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ dominant discourse (e.g., see Sections 3.2 and 3.3).

Many of these differences between the Irish and British contexts can be explained by the difference in temporal context. In contemporary Ireland, the state is increasingly present in many small neighbourhoods like Ballybane (e.g., in the form of the various state agencies and state-funded agencies that operate there). In turn, thanks to the growing trend within many state bodies for ‘community’ consultation, and also the pressure of

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52Baumann discusses this discursive environment in terms of ‘ethno-politics’. This term is described by Rothschild (1981:2, cited in Baumann 1996:11) as the process of: ‘mobilising ethnicity from a psychological or cultural or social datum into political leverage for the purpose of altering or reinforcing… systems of structured inequality between and among ethnic categories.’
social movements, many local ‘communities’ are (arguably) increasingly present in the state, and politics more generally, at all levels.

While Britain and Ireland may seem something of a mismatch in terms of historical legacy, Ireland is not completely unique in these terms. In his book *The New Racism in Europe*, Cole (1997) analyses working class attitudes to immigrants among Palermitans of Sicily. This analysis is particularly significant with regard to Ireland because, in terms of each one’s relationship with their most significant other (Italy’s north in the case of Sicily and England in the case of Ireland), the two have a similar historic background. The idea (described above) of the Irish being between two worlds (both the victims and the perpetrators) when it comes to ‘racism’, for instance, mirrors Cole’s claim that: ‘As the “Blacks” and “Africans” of Italy, Sicilians confront the western discourse on race from the ambiguous position of being “black” in relation to Italy’s north but white in relation to new immigrants’ (1997:19). Further, his claim that: ‘This ambiguity certainly does not inoculate Sicilians against racism, as some Sicilians would hope, but it does complicate the question of race and discrimination’ (*ibid*), is also one I would make in terms of the Irish (see Chapter 5).

One particularly significant area of similarity between the Irish and Sicilian cases surrounds the contradiction and ambivalence regarding attitudes on current immigration and past emigration. As appears to be the case in Ireland (see Section 4.3), Cole argues that, ‘Working Palermitan’s views of current immigration resemble in many ways their accounts of Sicilian emigration. According to them, Africans and Asians are fleeing poverty and oppression’ (1997:59). In this respect, he points out that there is a degree of empathy. However, he goes on, ‘for working Palermitans… the basic economic similarities of the two migrations do not so easily translate into an obvious duty towards, or an identification of common cause with, immigrants’ (*ibid*:60). Any empathy, he explains, is challenged by more general class anxieties and insecurities regarding their own current situation. Indeed, as is definitely the case in Ireland (at least as far as the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’ is concerned [see Section 4.3]), Cole refers to the fact that:
Interviewees rehearsed all manner of potentially differentiating features… After countless hesitations and revisions, most hit on this crucial distinction: Sicilians brought skills to their new countries and contributed to their development, while Africans and Asians come from lands without resources… and consequently lack skills and cannot contribute to Italy (ibid:63).

Accordingly, ‘[they] portray immigrants as undeserving of the attention of the Italian government – attention which they believe should by rights be given to the national working-class’ (ibid:22). ‘In short… the idioms and realities of competition predominate over those of solidarity,’ he argues (ibid).

According to Goldberg (2006), the similarities highlighted here between discourse on ‘race’, and also ‘racialist’ and ‘racist’ discourse, in Ireland, England, and Sicily, are also likely to be found in other European countries. In this work, Goldberg introduces the notion of ‘racial regionalisations’ – ‘contours of racist configuration, each one with its own material and intellectual history, its prior conditions and typical modes of articulation’ or ‘regionally prompted, parametered, and promoted racisms’ (2006:333). He delineates Europe as one such ‘racial region’. In Europe, he argues, ‘racialisation’ and ‘racism’ tend to occur under the umbrella of ‘racial europeanisation’ (ibid).53 In the (post World War II) contemporary era, Goldberg argues, ‘racial europeanisation’ is characterised by denial and claims to ‘racelessness’ (see Section 1.1 above) (ibid:334). As I describe in chapter five, Ireland, with its claims of the externality (see footnote 215) and exceptionality of ‘racism’, and with its ‘blame the victim’ excuses for what ‘racism’ is admitted (see Section 5.5), certainly lives up to this typology.54

Of course, there are variations in processes of ‘racialisation’ and ‘racism’ between European countries. For instance, the similarities I have conveyed with respect to

53 Goldberg also identifies several other ‘racial regions linked to different, if neither perfectly isomorphic nor absolutely discrete, spatio-historical conditions and expressions.’ These contexts, he suggests, produce racial ‘americanisation’, ‘palestinianisation’, ‘latinamericanisation’, ‘asianisation’, and ‘southafricanisation’ (2006:233).

54 One particular issue upon which both Britain and Ireland are somewhat unique in Europe is on the common explicit use of the term ‘race’ in political, institutional, and everyday discourse. However, Goldberg argues that this differentiation is simply a surface feature which somewhat masks the similarities in the realities beneath the language (Goldberg 2006).
England and Ireland describe contemporary Ireland but England in the 1980s and 1990s. It is unlikely that, had I carried out my research on Ireland in the 1980s, the pictures would have proved quite so alike. In general, however, such internal variation is accounted for in Goldberg’s argument that ‘distinctions speak to the unevenness of Europe’s racial embrace, of racial europeanisation’ (2006:350), and do not detract from his argument that a broad generalisation in terms of ‘racial europeanisation’ does exist and is meaningful:

Europe continues to be considered by the bulk of Europeans as the place of and for Europeans historically conceived. And historically this… presumes Europeans to be white and Christian… [A]ny person of colour or non-Christian (at least genealogically) in Europe presumptively is not of Europe, not European, doesn’t (properly or fully) ever belong (2006:352).

As I demonstrate in Sections 4.2 and 4.3 this general picture certainly pertains in the Irish context.

When looking at the more unique aspects of ‘racialisation’ and ‘racism’ in the Irish context, for instance, those surrounding Irish Travellers, comparison arguably becomes more limited. Kenrick (1994:21) argues that ‘[t]he most obvious groups to compare Irish Travellers with are the Romanies or Gypsies.’ By ‘Romanies or Gypsies’ he explains, ‘I refer to groups of people who migrated from India through Persia and into Europe between the 5th and 13th centuries A.D.’ (ibid). He lists the following groups who fall into this comparative category: the Sinti who nomadise in Germany and neighbouring countries, the Manouche in France, Belgium and Holland, Finnish Gypsies, various Yugoslav groups, and also the so-called international nomads, the Kalderesh and Lovari, who in larger numbers than any others have travelled to America and Australia (ibid).

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55In this respect, while Ireland appears to be lagging behind England, it also appears to have been directly influenced by it. Indeed, McVeigh (1992, cited in A. Lentin 2004b:52) makes this claim when he highlights the ‘importation’ of British ‘racism’ as one of the forces behind the specificity of Irish ‘racism’.

56 ‘[Many people assume] that Gypsies existed in India many centuries back as a “pure” group or separate society with language, customs and genetic structure hermetically sealed, until some “mysterious event” caused their departure from their mythical homeland. From then on they are said to have been “corrupted” in the course of migration and during contact with non-Gypsies’ (Okely 1982:10).
English and Welsh Gypsies could also be added to this list (Okely 1982). Such groups, Kenrick (1994:21) argues,

[A]re still a distinct ethnic group in most countries of Europe… [T]hey are not one group with a similar lifestyle [though] the majority are still nomadic or are the first settled generation… [but] two unifying factors [connect them]: the Romany language (still in daily use among the majority), and a code of cleanliness.

Despite Kenrick’s claim, this construction of Romani or Gypsies threatens to leave Irish Travellers somewhat outside the bubble of comparison. Like Scottish Travellers, Irish Travellers are associated, not with Indian, but with indigenous origins (see Section 3.1). Indeed, as Acton (1994:38) points out, ‘Irish Travellers are… one of a number of groups across Europe… for whom the starting point of the contemporary social definition of their identity is the assertion both by themselves and by others that they are not Gypsies.’

In terms of the consequences of this origins based differential, Okely (1982, 1994) points out that when she did participant observation among various Gypsy Traveller groups in the British Isles in the 1970s it was often used to create a ‘hierarchy of “real” and “counterfeit” Gypsies.’ In such contexts, ‘the English and especially the Welsh Gypsies [were] given the exotic Indian or Romany origin [and, consequently, deemed ‘real gypsies’], while it [was] said that the Irish and Scottish Travellers or Tinkers [were] “merely” the descendents of vagrants and victims of the Great Famine or the Highland Clearances [and therefore were ‘counterfeit gypsies’]’ (1982:18). Indeed, even among English and Welsh Gypsies, she argues, some were ‘dismissed as “inauthentic” or “corrupted” whenever non-Gypsy observers [failed] to find sufficiently alluring signs of exotic “culture”’ (ibid:13). While ‘real’ gypsies were selectively accepted by the dominant society, she argues, the ‘counterfeits’ were ‘dismissed as drop-outs from the dominant society’ and targeted for assimilation (Okely 1994:6). Similarly, beyond the

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57 Other such groups include the Bargoens-speaking Dutch Woonwagenbewoner, the Jenisch and the Scandinavian Tattare or Resende speaking varieties of Rotwelsch or Rodi, and perhaps the Quinqui in Spain (Acton 1994:38).
British Isles, in Sweden and the Netherlands at this time, she claims, ‘travelling Gypsy
groups without claims to exotic origins [risked] losing their rights as ethnic groups and
[were] more vulnerable to assimilation programmes.’ Such groups, she explains, were
not deemed sufficiently separate from, or different to, the dominant population to
warrant ‘ethnic’ status and the rights associated with this (1982:13).

Applying the argument surrounding indigenous origins, ‘authenticity’ and ‘ethnicity’ to
the Irish context in the 1990s, Acton (1994:40) claims that, ‘If the attribution of minority
rights is predicated on a distinct ethnic identity, and the possession of a distinct ethnic
identity is only allowed upon proof of “exotic” “racial” origins, then it can be argued
that because Irish Travellers “are not Gypsies”, they are therefore “not an ethnic group”
and therefore discrimination against them is not racist.’ As I describe in Sections 3.1 and
3.5, however, this exact interpretation of ‘ethnic’ identity does not actually appear to be
the dominant one in contemporary Ireland. In this context, though ‘exotic’ and ‘racial’
origins are important in terms of claiming ‘ethnic’ status, the presence or absence of
such origins is usually judged not on the basis of foreignness, but on the basis of whether
Travellers originated far enough back in Ireland’s history to legitimise a claim to
essential difference from the dominant population, or conversely whether they originated
relatively recently (e.g., during the time of the Great Famine [1845-1951]) and therefore
are not essentially different from the majority community.

While this issue of origins arguably limits the comparative potential between Gypsies
and Romani groups throughout Europe and Irish Travellers, it has not gone
to it. She highlights the fact that ‘It was not until the late 18th and early 19th centuries
that scholars and linguists claimed an Indian origin for Gypsies’ (1994:8), and argues
that ‘there is very little evidence that Indian origin had been indicated or used by
Gypsies until it was first given to them by Gorgio scholars’ (1982:12). In lieu of this
origins account, she tentatively suggests that, like Irish Travellers, many Romani/Gypsy
bands may have indigenous origins. They may have emerged from the indigenous
vagrant population during the collapse of feudalism and the introduction of a capitalist
mode of production in the West (*ibid*).\(^{58}\) Whether directly consequential to such common origins or not, Okely argues that there are areas of commonality between different Gypsy, Romani and Traveller groups on several continents. One primary commonality is that such groups differentiate themselves from non-Gypsies or non-Travellers (‘from Gorgios, Gajés, payos, “country people” or Flatties’) (*ibid*:27). Others, which not only illustrate the commonality between different groups of Gypsies or Travellers, but also express and strengthen their separation from non-Gypsies/non-Travellers, include the possession and upholding of particular pollution beliefs, of the ideology and practice of self-employment and occupational flexibility (*ibid*:33), of the ideology (if not always the practice) of ethnic endogamy (*ibid*:156), and of the ideology (if not always the practice) of nomadism or travelling (*ibid*:128). In terms of the latter, she argues,

Gypsies, Tsiganes, Tinkers or Travellers... do not fall into the classical anthropological typology of nomads, for they are interdependent with a wider sedentary economy. They do not live in the wild off natural produce as hunter-gatherer nomads, nor do they depend mainly on animal herds as do pastoral nomads... [T]hey provide occasional goods and services where there are gaps in the dominant system of supply and demand (1994:4-5).

As I discuss in Section 3.4, nearly all of these characteristics were ‘ethnic’ symbols (symbols of the boundary between Traveller and non-Traveller) which appeared important to both the Irish Travellers and the Settled Irish I encountered during my fieldwork.\(^{59}\)

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\(^{58}\) In terms of explaining the traces of Sanskrit in Romani language (or dialect) among such groups, she argues that this is probably simply the result of cultural transfer during movements along trading routes (1982:12-13).

\(^{59}\) The one exception surrounded the issue of pollution beliefs. While Okely discusses the objective manifestation of pollution beliefs (e.g., cleanliness rituals) among English Gypsies at length, I found this issue much less important among the Irish Travellers I studied. This is not to say that cleanliness was not important. There was certainly a clear division between inside and outside space in terms of cleanliness, just as Okely’s observed among her Gypsy informants. However, because most of my Traveller informants live in houses, the issue, for example, of different washing basins for clothes and crockery was not as relevant (most houses had washing machines for clothes, and/or dishwashers for crockery). Arguably, therefore, this differential could be explained by Kenrick’s argument that ‘[t]he extreme
More specifically, in terms of self-identity or identity assertion among the Gypsy, Romani and Traveller groups she studied (which included English, Irish, Welsh and Yugoslav born groups), Okely highlights the common and primary importance placed on biological descent:

The Gypsies use the principle of descent as a selfascriptive mechanism for continuity. It restricts entry into the group and offers the means for its survival. Among Gypsies and Travellers it is the most socially relevant and the one necessary condition for being a Gypsy. This main vehicle of separation between Gypsy and Gorgio has probably always been paramount. Among the Gypsies or Travellers, a person must have at least one Gypsy or Traveller parent (1982:67).

Later, she argues, ‘[a] Gypsy or Traveller may not have many of the other characteristics associated with Gypsies and particular groups, but if he or she can prove his or her kinship links with others accepted as Gypsies or Travellers, he or she will be received, though perhaps grudgingly’ (ibid:68-69). Significantly, highlighting the socially constructed nature of descent, she argues that, ‘[b]iology is no determinant. The principle of descent is imposed upon a group with some flexibility in personnel’ (ibid:68). For instance, she explains, mixed (Gypsy and non-Gypsy) offspring have a right to claim Gypsy identity (ibid), and persons can pass into the dominant society. Indeed, ‘a family might choose to drop its Gypsy identity. Then birth claim would become irrelevant; the individual or family would be of Gypsy origin but not Gypsy’ (ibid:130).

As I discuss in Section 3.3, and as Okely suggests, Travellers in Ireland do focus primarily on bloodline or biological descent in their self-ascribed identity. However, I would be cautious in my under-estimation of the essentialism implied in this ascription. Certainly, the evidence suggests that permanent and successful passing is not common (even over several generations). Often (if not usually) those attempting to discard their

attention to cleanliness of food and clothing common to all [Gypsy groups] is more likely due to the necessity for this when travelling, than to a common origin and common set of beliefs’ (1994:28).
Traveller identity are simply not ‘allowed’ to by those ascribing identity (whether the person doing the ascribing is a Traveller or a Settled Irish person).

Finally, perhaps one of the most significant aspects of commonality between both Romani/Gypsy and Traveller groups highlighted by Okely is the ability to survive cultural contact. As Okely points out, even when Gypsies appear to be adopting the cultural attributes of the majority society, these attributes are often ‘transformed or given an inverted meaning…, one which accommodates the Gypsies as an independent group’ (1982:27). In fact, she argues, such manipulation, ‘innovation’ or ‘hybridity’ is (and always has been) part of Gypsy culture – ‘Gypsy culture emerges from culture contact, rather than being an isolate destroyed or undermined by contact’ (2003:152). As I discuss in Section 3.4, in the contemporary era in Ireland, were most Travellers are now settled (living in houses) and many have been forced (or have chosen) to adopt cultural aspects associated with settled living, such processes of manipulation and adaptation (Travellerisation) are perhaps even more pertinent than they were for the still relatively nomadic Gypsies Okely studied. What is important here, in other words, is that ‘[while] “cultural” or “objective” factors are subject to change and adaptation… independent self-ascription and ethnic identity are no less permanent’ (Okely 1982:76). The only thing necessary in this respect, again, it appears, is descent in terms of biologically based kinship (see Sections 3.3 & 3.4).

While comparison between Irish Travellers and English Gypsies (or indeed Romani or Gypsy groups more generally) may appear obvious, perhaps less so is comparison between Irish Travellers today and untouchable castes in India in the 1950s, or between Irish Travellers today and Norwegian ‘Lapps’ in the 1960s.60 Yet, when one takes the perspective that each of these groups has/had a stigmatised identity in the society in which they live/lived, some significant commonalities emerge. In this respect, ‘stigmatised identity’ refers to an identity which disqualifies an individual or group from

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60 I use the term ‘Lapps’ because it is the term used by Eidheim (1966, 1969) whose work I discuss here. However, in acknowledgement that this term of reference is now considered politically incorrect and derogatory, and is generally substituted by the term Saami, I have decided to place in inverted commas throughout.
full social acceptance in his society (Goffman 1963:9), and, by extension, ‘implies deprivation, denigration, subjugation and exploitation – in short – oppression.’ (Berreman 1971:2).  

In his seminal study on stigma, Goffman (1963:14) refers to a wide range of stigmatised groups: those with physical deformities, mental disorders, and addictions; those who are (or have been) imprisoned; homosexuals; the unemployed; those with illegal or stigmatised occupations; and those with tribal stigmas in terms of particular races, nations, and religions. While this variation is significant, Goffman argues that ‘persons with different stigmas are in an appreciably similar situation and respond in an appreciably similar way’ (ibid:156).

Goffman discusses a number of specific ways in which stigmatised groups deal with or react to their stigmatisation. These include: ‘passing’ (the ‘management [concealment] of undisclosed discrediting information about self’ [1963:58]); ‘covering’ (attempting ‘to restrict the display of those failings most centrally identified with the stigma’ [ibid:126]); and ‘ambivalence’. In terms of the latter reaction, he explains that, ‘[g]iven that the stigmatised individual in our society acquires identity standards which he applies to himself in spite of failing to conform to them, it is inevitable that he will feel some ambivalence about his own self’ (ibid:130). The effect is that ‘he can neither embrace his group/stigmatised identity] nor let it go’ (ibid:132). In line with Goffman’s argument, I found that all of these reactions are common among Travellers in Ireland (see ‘Nomadism’ in Section 3.4).

While Goffman looks at stigmatised identity in very broad terms, looking at groups who are stigmatised on similar terms to Irish Travellers is even more enlightening. In this respect, based on fieldwork he carried out in Sirkanda (a hill village in northern Utter Pradesh) for a year in the 1950s (see Berreman 1960, 1971, 1972a), Gerald D. Berreman published a number of papers on the comparative potential of the caste system in India

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61 Interestingly, this perspective is not new. Gmelch and Gmelch (1976:234) looked at the treatment of Travellers in Ireland in the context of Goffman’s work on stigmatised identities over three decades ago.
with alternative rigid systems of social stratification found in other societies. In terms of the caste system in India, Berreman (1972a) conceptualises untouchables as a stigmatised group. He describes how, at the time of his fieldwork, ‘low caste people [were] considered by high-caste informants to be lazy, impulsive, thoughtless, ignorant, irresponsible, childlike, addicted to music, drink, and narcotics’ (1960:220).

Berreman (1960) bases much of his argument on the comparative potential of the caste system in India on a comparison between it and the ‘racial’ system dominant in the southern United States at this time (the 1950s). He argues that ‘[T]he two systems are closely similar in operation despite differences in content’ (1960:120). Based on this, he suggests that it may be useful to conceptualise and analyse other similar systems of stratification as ‘caste systems’ also. For this purpose, he argues, ‘a caste system may be defined as a hierarchy of endogamous divisions in which membership is hereditary and permanent’ (where ‘hierarchy includes [institutionalised] inequality both in status and in access to goods and services’) (1960:120). ‘The crucial fact is that caste status is determined… by birth: membership in them is ascribed and unalterable. Individuals in low castes are considered inherently inferior and are regulated to a disadvantaged position, regardless of their behaviour,’ he argues (ibid:122). He also highlights a cultural aspect of caste systems which distinguishes them from non-caste systems of

62 In general terms, he describes the caste system in India in the following terms:

There is rigid stratification into a number of hereditary, ranked, endogamous groups – castes – comprising two large divisions: the high or twice-born castes and the low or untouchable castes… The low castes, whose members are artisans, are disadvantaged in each respect that the high castes are advantaged. They are dependent on the high castes for their livelihood and are subject to the will of the high castes in almost every way (Berreman 1972a:xxi-xxii).

63 Although, he looks at untouchables as a ‘group’ in this context, he explains that there are several castes (jati) within the untouchable division, and these castes are also ordered hierarchically (though the ordering, and rationalisations for such ordering, depends on context). In other words, he explains, there are particularly stigmatised castes within the stigmatised untouchable division (Berreman 1960:213-215).

64 In a later paper he expands on this pronouncement by arguing ‘I saw striking similarities in the structures, values, interactions, and consequences of the rigid systems of birth-ascribed inequality… in both material and experiential terms: in the allocation of livelihood, power and privilege, in the generation of resentment and anxiety, and in the ways these were acted out’ (1981:5).

65 For Berreman’s response to those who dispute the application of the term caste to societies such as the United States, see Berreman (1960:121&257).
stratification. Caste systems, he argues, ‘are also systems of cultural pluralism, maintained by enforced differential association among culturally distinctive groups’ (1967:354).

Based on this definition and description, Berreman argues that a number of other commonalities can be discerned with respect to ‘caste systems’: the fact that ‘low-caste [stigmatised] status… is actively resented’ (1960:120)\(^{66}\), the existence of ‘differential degrees of power and privilege between castes’ \((ibid:198)\); and the existence of ‘rigid rules of avoidance between the castes’ (aimed at both maintaining and institutionalising the system) \((ibid:122)\). With respect to the latter, he explains, such rules ‘permit, and in fact require, some kinds of interaction among groups while inhibiting the probable consequence of unrestricted interaction: cultural homogeneity and obliteration of cultural or caste boundaries’ (1967:355). Accordingly, rather than the caste system being inevitable, he argues, the rules which maintain it are learned from childhood when one ‘hears the stereotypes about other castes and sees the conventional behaviour between castes’ (1960:204).

Many of the characteristics of Berreman’s ‘caste system’ are common to the relations between the Traveller ‘community’ and the Settled ‘community’ in Ireland. For instance, as I demonstrate in chapter three, in most general and descriptive contexts, Traveller identity is considered hereditary and permanent, and is associated with an essentialised and reified ‘Traveller culture’ (albeit one which has changed over the years according to changing circumstances). This is evident, not only from claims made by Travellers themselves (particularly claims regarding the importance of ‘blood’ or biological descent [see Section 3.3]), the difficulty in ‘hiding’ Traveller identity, and the rarity of permanent ‘passing’ (see Section 3.4), but also from the fact that when the state attempted to implement an assimilation policy in the 1960s it provoked a significant

\(^{66}\) Berreman argues that depictions of contentment and acceptance of the caste system in India, are inaccurate: ‘[Accommodation] to their stigma and disadvantage without conspicuous resistance… does not reflect agreement or endorsement, but rather an accommodation to the realities of the distribution of power, the nature of sanctions, and the opportunities for change. Every opportunity is taken to utilise any crack in the wall of oppression to mitigate it or escape it’ (1971:4).
amount of rejection from the public on the basis that Travellers were ‘unassimilatable’ (inherently different) (see Section 3.2). Of course, as Berreman argued with respect to the caste system in India in the 1950s, in Ireland there are also ‘rules of avoidance’ between Travellers and Settled people (the most significant being marriage endogamy\(^67\)) which help produce and maintain this construction of essential difference.

As Berreman argues was the case among untouchables in India in the 1950s (1960:125), there is significant resentment among Travellers in Ireland today about their treatment by the Settled ‘community’. Indeed, again, as in Berreman’s Indian context (1960:224), resentment is directed not at the ‘racialised’ system itself (Travellers themselves are implicated in the construction an essentialised and reified Traveller ‘community’ [see Section 3.3]), nor, arguably, even at the hierarchical ranking of ‘racialised’ groups (my Traveller informants were, arguably, just as guilty of anti-Immigrant ‘racism’ as my Settled informants), but rather at the placement of Travellers on this hierarchy. Indeed, most of my Traveller informants denigrated the Settled ‘community’’s’ lifestyle no less than vice versa.\(^68\) Of course, because of power differentials, any attempt to resituate Travellers to the top of the ‘racial’ hierarchy is futile.

Though Berreman bases his theory on the comparative potential of the ‘caste system’ on evidence he gathered during research in Sirkanda, in Berreman (1972b), he compares the situation in this rural context with that in the urban context of Dehra Dun, a quite modern, rapidly growing, ethnically diverse North Indian city (where he did research in 1968-69). One particular aspect of comparison he focuses on is resistance to oppression or stigma. ‘The most universal of all escapes from stigmatised identity – in India and elsewhere – is the attempt to shed that identity, either through dissimulation (passing) or

\(^67\)Although this ‘rule’ is associated with the Traveller ‘community’ more than with the Settled Irish ‘community’, as one Settled informant commented on the issue of ‘Traveller – Settled’ marriages – ‘neither side wants that’ (Donna 14/01/07) (see Section 5.5).

\(^68\) This is particularly the case in terms of morals, and particularly in terms of morals surrounding young people. A number of my Traveller informants argued that young Settled children (particularly females) have way too much freedom. They compared this to Traveller girls, whom, once they have reached puberty, have their freedom significantly curtailed (particularly when it comes to mixing with young males) until they are married (where upon restrictions on their freedom are often passed from their parents to their husbands).
through movement to places or milieux where it is wholly or largely irrelevant’, he argues (1971:3). However, ability to succeed in such escape, he explains, varies according to whether the context is urban or rural.

In Sirkanda, because of its rural, small, and therefore familiar and intimate population, status escape, or even manipulation, is ‘relatively’ constricted: ‘[In general] an individual can rise in ascribed status only if his caste does so, and a caste can rise in status only by receiving public acknowledgement that a mistake has been made theretofore in identification of its rank’ (Berreman 1978:233-234). In the large-scale and complex urban context of Dehra Dun, however, at least outside one’s own neighbourhood, ‘a large proportion of interaction occurs in contexts where only specific statuses – parts of the social identity – are relevant or even known, and elements of individual status (ethnic, ritual, economic, occupational, political statuses) are not as highly correlated as in the village’ (1972b:581). Accordingly, individual status manipulation and mobility is much more common. A few particular methods of identity manipulation mentioned by Berreman include: adjustment of manner, patterns of dress, and speech patterns; and the temporary adoption of high caste names (ibid:578).69

Again, there is much in Berreman’s depiction of caste identity manipulation in India in the 1950s and 1960s that appears applicable to Travellers in Galway. Because my research was limited to the urban context, I can really only comment on this issue in terms of Berreman’s arguments surrounding Dun Dehra. However, in this respect, his delineation of identity manipulation in the “‘home territory” of one’s neighbourhood’ and that in the ‘work a day world of the city’ (1972b:581) mirrors somewhat his delineation of identity manipulation in the rural and the urban contexts. It is therefore in this respect that it is relevant to my research context: the delineation between the context

Footnote 69: Tempering the dualism implied here, Berreman does admit that, despite the limitations in Sirkanda, people from lower castes did sometimes manipulate the caste system or escape its effects (see Berreman [1971:7] for his discussion on three young untouchable men from Sirkanda who took three different routes away from the implications of their stigmatised caste identity). Similarly, in terms of Dun Dehra, he admits that, ‘[while] status manipulation and impression management are frequent, status change is infrequent’ (1972b:582).
of the neighbourhood of Ballybane and that of Galway city more generally. For instance, ‘passing’ appears relatively more difficult within Ballybane (where one’s family and ‘ethnic’ background is usually familiar, if not well known) than within the city centre (where subtle and manipulatable ‘ethnic’ symbols such as style of dress, manner, dialect, and surname are usually relied on [see Section 3.4]). Of course, as Berreman argued to be the case among untouchables in Dun Dehra, again, permanent ‘passing’ is rare even in the relative anonymity beyond the neighbourhood.\(^{70}\)

Another stigmatised population with which I feel it is useful to compare Travellers (or, rather, the relationship between Travellers and the Settled Irish) is the minority ‘Lapp’ population situated in the mixed Norwegian – Coast Lappish fjord area of West-Finnmark, Northern Norway, and studied by Harald Eidheim in 1960 (Eidheim 1969). Eidheim highlights the fact that, though there was ‘a conspicuous lack of “contrasting cultural traits” between Lapps and Norwegians [in this area]…. the consistent, though not public use of such labels indicates that an ethnic identity is a topic of importance in the relationships between persons carrying contrasting as well as similar identities’ (1969:40).\(^{71}\) This mix of similarity and difference became the subject of Eidheim’s research, and, though there are significant differences, Eidheim’s observations mirror my own in Galway in many respects.

Having spent some time in the fjord area, Eidheim discovered that the similarities between the ‘Lapps’ and Norwegians were often contrived. ‘[I]n order to achieve the material and social goods they appreciate, and to share the opportunities available in society, [local ‘Lapps’] have to get rid of, or cover up, those social characteristics which Norwegians take as signs of Lappishness,’ he explains (1969:45). Such signs, Eidheim argues, are ‘much of the same order as the term stigma used by Goffman (1963)’

\(^{70}\) Of course, my research is based in the relatively small, and some would say tightly knit, city of Galway. Whether this observation would pertain in a much larger and more anonymous context such as Dublin would have to be determined through further research.

\(^{71}\) Eidheim is clear that his observations are limited to this small population. He compares the situation of apparent acculturation in this fjord area to the situation of ‘Lapps’ in the ‘Lappish’ dominated inland townships of Finnmark, where there is still significant and overt commitment to a distinctive ‘Lappish’ identity (1966:70).
(1969:47). Indeed, as Goffman described in terms of ‘ambivalence’ and stigmatised groups in general, Eidheim describes how: ‘Lappishness has a stigma of inferiority which is sanctioned by ridicule, insults, and avoidance… [However,] a Lappish individual also involves himself in similar cost from a Lappish system of sanctions by thus indicating that he is seeking to change identity’ (1966:40).

As a result of identity management in the fjord, Eidheim explains, there emerged ‘three distinct spheres [of interaction], namely (1) a public sphere, (2) a ‘Lappish’ closed sphere, and (3) a Norwegian closed sphere’ (1969:46). ‘Each of these [spheres] is associated with characteristic codes, themes, and valuations, and further distinguished by the ethnic composition of the acting personnel,’ he explains (ibid). In the public sphere, where the two ‘ethnic’ groups encounter each other in and through the routine of daily life in the community, no reference or implication is made with respect to the ‘ethnic’ dichotomy (1969:47). Further, in contrast to the Lappish closed sphere, there ‘no scope for Lapps to show behaviour which springs from their Lappish identity without great social costs’ (1969:52).72

Significantly, Eidheim claims, this system of identity management is not entirely successful. Despite the various façades, in most contexts signs of ‘Lappishness’ (e.g., physiognomy, use of broken Norwegian, subservient demeanour, and clannish behaviour) are discernible. Indeed, he argues, ‘what perpetuates the axiom of [the] identity cleavage… is the fact that people are able to identify each other as belonging to separate categories on the basis of their performance of any role in the public sphere’ (ibid:48). In other words, he explains, ‘Both parties try to behave as if ethnicity “does not count”; however, we have the paradoxical situation that it is ethnic status which underlies and delimits relations in the public network. In this network, persons of different identities interact in conventional and narrowly defined role-dyads or role-clusters…’ (ibid:54).

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72 Perhaps the best illustration of such spatial identity management, Eidheim explains, surrounds the issue of language. Although, ‘Lappish was the domestic language in about 40 of the 50 households’ (1969:49), in the public sphere (where non-‘Lapps’ are present) the local ‘Lapps’ generally spoke the local Norwegian dialect (ibid:44).
There does not appear to be the same degree of attempted passing’, or rather ‘covering’ (Goffman 1963:126), among Travellers within Irish society as among the ‘Lapps’ Eidheim encountered. It certainly did not appear routine among my Traveller informants in Ballybane. Significantly, this may be a reflection of the fact that Travellers in Ireland have greater rights (often based on their identity) than did the ‘Lapps’ in Norway during Eidheim’s study (see Eidheim 1966:69). While there are social costs to Travellers asserting their Traveller identity in the public sphere (particularly in terms of ‘racism’), there are also benefits (e.g., those inherent in Traveller specific services, and, more generally, those inherent in being able to assert one’s identity in an environment where there are arguably at least some protections against prejudice and discrimination based on that identity) (see Section 3.5).

During the time of Eidheim’s study, the ‘nativistic Lappish movement’ was beginning to emerge throughout the Nordic countries (though it did not have any significant support in the fjord area where he carried out his research). His description of this Movement is significant, however, because of the resemblance between its strategies and approaches and those of the Traveller advocacy movement which emerged in Ireland in the 1980s. In the Norwegian context, Eidheim explains, the ‘Lappish Movement’ calls for ‘progress towards equality between ethnic groups and also the introduction of dignity and self-awareness in [this] stigmatised and rejected minority’ (1966:73). In doing so, however, it not only calls for recognition of ‘Lappish ethnic identity’, but also mobilises, and thereby helps construct, this relatively stable and unified identity from what is essentially a diverse population linguistically, spatially, and even culturally (ibid:10). In order to create such unity, Eidheim explains, the Movement’s innovators or leaders often use group ‘history’, myth and ‘culture’:

Beliefs and practices which have been thought of as Lappish superstitions are [often] codified as folklore and native religion; utensils which earlier were associated with poverty and backwardness become items of art and handicraft, etc. material objects are collected and exhibited in local museums… Objects that for practical and/or idiomatic reasons have no prestige in their original function are thus given a dignified function in new contexts (1966:77).
Significantly, similar methods of identity construction are enacted by the different Traveller Advocacy Organisations (TAOs) throughout Ireland. Pavee Point and the Irish Traveller Movement (including Galway Traveller Movement [hereafter GTM]), for instance, often present exotic origin accounts (see Section 3.1), and highlight images and symbols from the past (e.g., horses and tin-smithing) (see Section 3.4) to help construct an essentialist, reified and homogeneous Traveller identity today. Further, as with the ‘Lappish Movement’, such identity construction is usually, at least partly, aimed at achieving rights and protections based on ‘ethnic’ status (see Section 3.5).

At the time of Eidheim’s study, though the ‘Lappish Movement’ had succeeded in persuading the administration to make small concessions for ‘Lapps’, and there was some evidence of the emergence of ‘Lapps’ as a relatively unified cultural entity, there was no wide-scale mutual recognition and respect of ‘Lappish ethnicity’ in evidence (Eidheim 1966:48-49). Similarly, in Ireland, despite nearly thirty years of lobbying by the TAOs, there still exists a huge gap between the Traveller movement’s aims and its achievements. Indeed, as the coordinator of the GTM put it, as far as Traveller’s are concerned, the state has simply moved from a policy of explicit assimilation to one of ‘sophisticated [i.e., veiled] assimilation’ (interview 08/09/06). Further, as Eidheim argues with respect to the ‘Lappish Movement’, what concessions have been made with respect to Travellers have been made under a welfare ideology (where Travellers are constructed as an essentially dependent/inferior group [see Section 3.2] and given special treatment based on this) rather than on the basis of official recognition of their ‘ethnic’ status.

There were, of course, differences between the situation of ‘Lapps’ in northern Norway as portrayed by Eidheim in the 1960s and that of Travellers in Ireland in 2007. For instance, Eidheim argues that the ‘Lapps’ he encountered appeared to internalise their stigma. They often blamed their Lappishness for their low standard of living and the lack of industrial enterprise in the fjord (1969:44). Although some of my informants, and a number of Traveller advocates (including Pavee Point), made similar claims regarding the internalisation of dependency and inferiority among Travellers in Ireland (see
Section 3.2), I found little concrete evidence of this among the Travellers I encountered. Indeed, most of my Traveller informants expressed a sense of pride regarding their Traveller identity, and a sense of resentment at the stigma applied by non- Travellers. Many also denounced other Travellers who accepted the validity of such stigma. Such Travellers were referred to as ‘Travellers who hate Travellers,’ and were berated even more than ‘non-Travellers who hate Travellers’. In effect, they were regarded as traitors.

**Conclusion**

This review has revealed that the question of whether a ‘group’/‘community’ constitutes a ‘race’, ‘ethnic group’ or otherwise, and therefore whether an incident or situation involves ‘racialisation’, ‘ethnicisation’ or ‘racism, is somewhat mis-directed in its simplicity. What one must focus on instead is determining – ‘why/under what authority/according to what discursive repertoire a “group”/“community” is being constructed as a “race”/“ethnic group” or otherwise?’ Or, alternatively – ‘why/under what authority/according to what discursive repertoire an incident or situation is being categorised as “racialisation”, “ethnicisation” or “racism”? ’

Bearing this logic in mind, in chapter three to five I engage with these issues as they pertain to Ballybane, Galway, and Ireland in general. More specifically, I contextualise the emergence and status of each of the three ‘communities’ constructed in and through dominant discourse on ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ identity at both the local and national level: the Traveller ‘community’, the Immigrant ‘community’ and the Settled Irish ‘community’. By situating the construction of these three ‘communities’ within various fields of discursive repertoire on ‘racism’ (academic, state and popular), I discuss ‘if’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ these constructions correlate with ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ (Chapters 3 and 4), and ‘racism’ (Chapter 5). Further, my comparative review in this chapter (of studies done on similar topics and similar ‘communities’ elsewhere and at different times), demonstrates that the conclusions I reach are unlikely to be limited to my research site.
Chapter 2

Methodology

In this chapter I introduce my research site, Ballybane, explaining my decision to focus my research there in both ethnographic and methodological terms. In terms of methodology, I describe and defend my data collection methods, provide a reflexive account of my own role therein, and, finally, provide a brief analysis and defence of both my research overall and particular aspects thereof in terms of ethical soundness.

Intermixed with this methodological discussion, I introduce Ballybane ethnographically. I describe the physical geography of the neighbourhood and the socio-cultural makeup of the population. I also introduce some of my key informants and situate them within this context. A more rounded picture of the ethnographic character of the people and place however will be built gradually throughout the following chapters as I describe how the neighbourhood evolved (or rather was consciously transformed) from a relatively small, established and mono-cultural neighbourhood into one of the most unstable, multicultural, and some would argue disjointed, areas of the city.

2.1. Choosing my field-site

When it came to sampling, my first decision – to focus on a ‘working-class’ neighbourhood - was based on two considerations. Firstly, while a substantial amount of research on ‘working-class racism’ already exists, it is overwhelmingly quantative. I felt, however, that, because of the complex and contextual nature of ‘racism’, an ethnographic approach would be more appropriate and therefore enlightening.73 Secondly, and in more practical terms, I felt that a working-class neighbourhood would

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73 As R. Lentin (2000:10) points out, ‘racism’ is a complex social phenomenon. It is in knowing subjects, and in biographies and auto/biographies that ‘racism’ is manifest and tangible.
be easier to gain access to, and would provide more opportunity for everyday interaction (more un/under-employment means more participants around during the day).\(^{74}\)

With regard to choosing my research site – Galway city - my decision was hugely influenced by the fact that in 2005 Galway City Partnership launched an ‘anti-racism’ campaign, *Towards a City of Equals – Galway City Anti-racism Strategy 2005-2008*. From a purposive standpoint, I hoped this campaign would provide an extra dimension to my research - I hoped there would be a lot of interest in, and therefore discourse on, the issues highlighted by the campaign among the public in general. That this was not in fact the case, paradoxically, proved revealing in itself.

Within Galway city, I chose a neighbourhood environment as I felt its demarcation from the surrounding area would create a parameter for my immediate focus. The actual neighbourhood chosen was Ballybane – a neighbourhood of high-density mixed, but mainly social, housing located four miles east of Galway city centre (though there is no discernable break between the city and it). According to the recent national census the population of Ballybane is about 9,000 (Central Statistics Office [CSO], Census 2006, Vol.1, Table 6:102).\(^{75}\)

I chose Ballybane over other neighbourhoods in Galway because its designation (along with three other areas of the city) as a RAPID Area under the Government’s RAPID (Revitalising Areas by Planning, Investment and Development) Strategic Plan (Galway City Council 2003) assured me of its working-class status.\(^{76}\) In turn, I chose Ballybane rather than one of the other three RAPID areas for mainly practical reasons. Ballybane has a relatively large number of community facilities from which, in turn, a large

\(^{74}\)While I realise that sampling on the basis of practicality is not ideal, I concur with Arksey & Knight (1999:39) who point out: ‘A research design that is fit for the purpose will be one that… represents the best response to a problem in particular circumstances which are never, ever, ideal.’

\(^{75}\)I cannot be more precise than this because the census refers to Ballybane electoral division, which, though very close in area and population makeup is not exactly equivalent to Ballybane as recognised by those living there and in adjoining areas.

\(^{76}\)RAPID designation identifies it as an area with particularly high levels of disadvantage in terms of both services and quality of life in general. Of course, to label Ballybane ‘working-class’ is not to imply that everyone therein is ‘working-class’, or even that they essentially have anything in common. However, one can arguably assume that the majority of people living there are ‘working-class’ in socio-economic terms.
number of ‘community’ initiatives are run. These provided a variety of possible gateways in terms of access. From a theoretical standpoint, further, I felt that the implication of ‘community’ in these initiatives could also prove to be instructive.

Ballybane neighbourhood is concentrated around a semicircular road which runs through its centre (see map 1 below). Though there is no clear social, economic, or cultural division between the two sides, the road is generally is seen locally as a dividing line between the older and newer parts of the neighbourhood. This is particularly so because two of the oldest estates (Castlepark and Claireview park) lie side by side on one side.

![Map 1: Ballybane (Source: Galway City Council Website, accessed 28/04/08)](image)

In 2007 there were twelve housing estates in Ballybane (though there was at least one other under construction), and a variety of housing types including: city council houses (standard, and Traveller group-housing), private housing, and permanent residential
caravans. Rather than the different types being clearly demarcated according to particular estates, however, each estate has a mixture of each type (though some estates are associated more with one particular type than others).

In terms of the physical (and, indeed, social) environment of Ballybane, the community (resource) centre and the Catholic Church next to it are central. The community (resource) centre, in particular, acts as a base for many state and non-state organisations and ‘community’ groups in the area.\(^{77}\) It was originally built in 1989, but in January 2003 the Ballybane Community Development Support Programme (CDSP) opened a purpose-built Community Resource Centre (containing offices and meeting rooms) beside, and encompassing, the older structure (which now houses the sports hall and a canteen downstairs and offices and a club room upstairs).\(^{78}\)

Though a constant buzz of activity, the community resource centre is strictly organised. Generally, users are not allowed to just hang around (at least inside) unless they are waiting for a project to start or have come (usually having organised an appointment) to see a particular organisation. In the main building, upon entering, there is a reception desk which is manned whenever the centre is open, and, beyond this, there are public toilets on the left, a long corridor with offices on either side on the right, and stairs to the upper floor (where the family services offices are located) straight ahead.

Besides the resource centre, there is also a ‘community’ house in Castlepark which has also been in existence since 1989. It consists of two large meeting rooms on the top floor (used mainly by a local playgroup), and another meeting room and a kitchen downstairs (used, at different times, by the local Saint Vincent de Paul group [see Section 2.2 below], a number of women’s groups, and a senior citizens group). Because of the

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\(^{77}\)Current tenants include: Ballybane and Mervue Community Development Project, the Local Employment Service, Traveller Youth Project, Ballybane Youth Development Project, Ballybane Rainbow Playschool, Neighbourhood Youth Project, Ballybane Family Services, St Brigid’s Study Group, Foroige, The Ban project, Ballybane After-school project and homework club, Hillside Educational and Social Project, and Ballybane Active Retirement Group.

\(^{78}\)An Enterprise centre was opened next to the community centre in 2008 (after I had completed my fieldwork).
nature of the organisations using this facility, the users are much older (or in the case of
the crèche – younger) than those using the community resource centre. Indeed, while
there is something of a permanent teenage presence (outside of school hours) in and
around the community resource centre, this cohort is remarkable absent here. Also
remarkable is the fact that the users of these two main community centres are relatively
separate. Those who utilise the one tend not to utilise the other. Indeed, many of the
users of the community house argued that the new resource centre is for the residents
‘over there’ (on the other side of the road – ‘new Ballybane’), while the community
house is for the residents ‘here’ (on the side it is located – ‘old Ballybane’).

A more recent development in the area is the Ballybane Neighbourhood Centre, which,
according to Galway City Council (2003) constitutes a ‘one stop shop’ for a wide range
of service providers in the area. During my fieldwork, a local library was opened in this
development (though it was always relatively deserted), and the credit union also runs
from there a few days a week. Although it is applauded in official circles as an example
of good practice in ‘community development’, the majority of my informants viewed the
centre negatively as a community resource. Particular complaints included the lack a
doctor’s surgery or post-office, which they argued should have been bigger priorities
than a library.

Finally, there are three shops, a Chinese takeaway, and a relatively small independent
café in the area. Two of the shops, the take away and the café are actually located just
beyond the limits of the neighbourhood proper, but are regularly frequented by its
residents. One of these shops, a large supermarket, is part of a national chain. The other
is a small family run shop selling newspapers and daily essentials. The only shop located
within the neighbourhood is referred to by locals as ‘the African shop’. It is a very small
ethnic food shop, and though few Irish residents in the neighbourhood appear to shop
there, it is frequented by many immigrants resident in Ballybane and the surrounding
locales. The Chinese takeaway was particularly popular among the teenage residents of
Ballybane (particularly in the evenings), while the independent café appeared more
popular with the service providers from the community resource centre and workers from the nearby industrial estates (particularly at lunchtime).

Ballybane’s population is mixed in terms of ‘ethnicity’, nationality, and ‘race’ (though the majority are still Settled Irish). It has long and short-term Settled Irish and Traveller residents, and increasing numbers of Immigrant residents (who, according to my informants, tend to pass through social housing on their way to more permanent accommodation in some of the more desired areas of the city). In fact, many of the Immigrants referred to in this thesis actually reside in one of the areas adjoining Ballybane. Their inclusion reflects the fact that, because they frequently utilise the services available at the community centre, they are perceived as being part of Ballybane’s population by both residents and service providers.

To describe Ballybane in these physical and factual terms is to underplay its character and essence. Indeed, upon walking through Ballybane on my first day in ‘the field’ I had serious reservations about its appropriateness for my study. I needed a ‘working-class’ and ‘multi-cultural’ neighbourhood, and I had a clear picture in my mind of what this would look like. Yet, on the surface at least, Ballybane fulfilled few of my expectations. I had expected a ‘Traveller presence’ in the form of ramshackle Traveller trailers lined up along the road with washing hanging out the windows and a horse tied to a post nearby, but I quickly discovered that most of the Travellers in Ballybane live in terraced houses like everyone else. Where there are trailers, they are parked in the driveways of Traveller houses, and, rather than being ramshackle, most look relatively new and top of the range. I had expected disorder in the environment, but, at first glance, the neighbourhood was like most of the other areas of the city I had driven through - a series of interconnected estates with intermittent green spaces. Indeed, as a relatively new neighbourhood (with many new housing developments), it is difficult at first glance to distinguish Ballybane socio-economically from even the more affluent neighbourhoods

79 Travellers refer to their caravans as ‘trailers’.
80 I did later discover that there are often horses tied to posts in some particular estates, as well as some roaming in the green spaces, but on that first day they were worryingly absent.
in the city. I had expected a sort of working-class ‘roughness’ in the residents, but in terms of dress, demeanour, and manner, again to my dismay, few lived up (or down) to this (romantic and exotic) image. Indeed, as with the environment, there were few distinguishable markers in terms of class.

Of course, first impressions can be shallow and even deceiving. Though it took weeks, and months in some respects, a closer and more perceptive gaze revealed subtle signs of urban and even social decay. Each estate has at least a few houses boarded up. It is not unusual to find a burned out or abandoned car somewhere in the neighbourhood. Litter is a big problem, particularly in the Traveller specific areas. And there is evidence of the sale of drugs (from houses and cars) late at night. Other characteristics of the neighbourhood could also be (and often are) interpreted (both by insiders and outsiders) as evidence of disadvantage and anomie. These include: the few roaming horses on the green or even the road (something that is now against the law [see Section 5.4]); the number of broken bikes, toys, and even vehicles, seemingly abandoned on footpaths or in the middle of the road; and the groups of bedraggled kids playing football, or simply hanging around, on the streets or in the few remaining green spaces (often during school hours). Perhaps even more important than the physical landscape (as Aileen, a service provider in the community resource centre, first pointed out to me), however, disadvantage is almost tangible in the atmosphere in Ballybane:

Aileen 07/03/07

Compared to Knocknacarra [a relatively affluent neighbourhood at the other side of the city], here, there’s just that little bit of [screws up her face as though struggling to find the right word] ‘stress’. I think there’s something about the expectation. It’s like, the kids in Knocknacarra... there’s a sense that the world is their oyster. There’s a kind of optimism. Like, it’s off to the next birthday party. Sure they have their struggles and strains, but it seems to be somehow blocked in here - the world is smaller. There’s a claustrophobic feeling.

Indeed, in this respect, a number of my informants highlighted the significant number of young suicides in the area over the last ten years as evidence of ‘the social problems’ and lack of prospects.
2.2 Dealing with access and sampling

My fieldwork took place between November 2005 and July 2007. For my first few weeks in Galway I tried in vain to find a house to rent in Ballybane. During this time I lived outside the community and travelled in daily to begin my fieldwork. As time went on, still unsuccessful at locating a rental property, I was forced to sign a lease for the flat I was renting in the city. While certainly not ideal in terms of gaining access, I did come to realise that there were some significant advantages with this situation.

Very soon after beginning my fieldwork, I began to witness the effects of segregation and mistrust between residents from various sections of the neighbourhood in Ballybane. I became increasingly aware that, at the day-to-day level of life in the neighbourhood, there is no Ballybane ‘community’. Instead, there are a series of ‘communities’ which are held together by the association of residence at a much smaller scale. For instance, there are factions based on whether one lives in the ‘old’ or ‘new’ part of Ballybane, and, within each of these factions, there are factions based on which housing estate, or even street, one lives in. These factions have a huge effect in terms of creating social cliques, and in some circumstances they even affected the boundaries between the Traveller, the Settled Irish and the immigrant ‘communities’. For instance, most of my informants assessed ‘others’ in their own estate (whether Travellers, Immigrants or Settled Irish) more favourably than such ‘others’ resident in other estates. Further, while mixing between Traveller, Immigrant and Settled Irish residents is relatively rare (particularly among adults), it is more common in intra-estate contexts than in inter-estate contexts. Indeed, over 80% of the members of the Traveller and Settled women’s group I was a member of came from one estate, and many non-members I spoke to often gave this as a reason for their reluctance to become involved. Similarly, most of the members of the Eastside Ladies Group (ELG) (of which I was a member) came from Castlepark. Though there were other women’s groups running from the community resource centre on the other side of the road, most members expressed feelings of not being welcome there.
While it certainly made gaining access into the field a slower process, my residence outside the neighbourhood, though not always obvious to my informants because of my seemingly consistent presence therein (because of my involvement in various groups and clubs and budding friendships, I was present at all times of the day – from early morning to late night – most days), when I deemed advantageous, was a tool I was able to use in gathering information on the politics of the neighbourhood. In effect, I was able to use my outsider status to highlight that I had no overriding affiliation with, or responsibility to, any particular section of the neighbourhood (or residents therein). Certainly, the regular complaints about residents in this or that estate would have been affected if I myself had been associated with one particular estate and its residents. In the end, therefore, I believe that, in some contexts at least, this limitation in terms of ‘physical access’ actually benefited my research in terms of my ‘social access’ (Lee 1993:123).

In my first few weeks in Galway I sent letters to all of the organisations and groups using the community resource centre briefly explaining my research and requesting a place either as a volunteer or group member. After a few nail-biting weeks, and many follow-up phone calls, I was offered a voluntary position as a group leader at the Traveller Youth Project (TYP) helping to supervise thirteen to nineteen year old Traveller males during weekly soccer evenings and club nights. 81 Once I took up this position, my regular presence at the centre slowly allowed me to meet other service providers and members of groups and clubs, and my participation snowballed until I volunteered at several clubs and projects and became a member of several others (both in the community centre and elsewhere in the neighbourhood).

81 When I began volunteering with the TYP there was another female student also volunteering as part of a community development placement. Having been there for three months by this time, she warned me that I shouldn’t expect any conversation from the boys. She maintained that as a woman I am a non-person to a Traveller male. Not to be defeated, I set about trying to at least get the boys to acknowledge me. After six months, thanks partly to my pool playing ability and my five brothers equipping me with the ability to deal with teenage boys in general, the younger boys started referring to me by my name (instead of grunting at me) and seemed to accept my presence as ‘score keeper’ at the soccer club as given. Some even joined me on the sidelines for a chat between games. The older lads (over fifteen years of age) accepted me much quicker, and though I had to be more careful with respect to how I presented myself to them, I have found that, at least when they are on their own or in small groups, they chatted to me relatively easily. Of course, this did not necessarily mean that they trusted me, or that, accordingly, they were honest or completely open with me during our conversations (see Section 2.3 below).
While my use of the community resource centre proved vital to access, it also led to some local residents associating me with the service providers therein, and, by extension, because many of the services are state-funded, with the state. While it is difficult to assess the impact that such an association may have had on informants’ interaction and openness with me (though I suspect it led people to treat me overly cautiously and respectfully), and my success in deflecting such association, I made a concerted effort throughout my fieldwork to present and project myself as an independent student researcher. When participating in groups and clubs, for instance, even when my official role was as a voluntary leader, when possible I maintained a neutral status by sitting or mixing with the other participants rather than the other service providers. That I succeeded in such deflection in at least some contexts was made evident to me when, having been in the field for about nine months, the ladies from the ELG openly admitted that when I had joined the group they had been suspicious of my association with one organisation in particular (the Community Development Project (CDP))\(^{82}\). My subsequent involvement (or rather non-involvement) in a conflict between the managers of the CDP and some of the women in the ELG group, and my later support of the women’s group during a post-mortem of the conflict, however, convinced them, they claimed, of my independence.\(^{83}\)

Most of the projects that I volunteered at were youth clubs and afterschool programmes. While the TYP was Traveller specific, all of the others were mixed. The youths involved in these projects ranged from eight years old (in the afterschool sports and arts clubs) to eighteen years old in the TYP and Foroige.\(^{84}\) While due to ethical considerations, I had decided against interviewing people under eighteen years of age, I found observation within this cohort particularly fruitful. This was largely due to the relative lack of

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\(^{82}\) CDPs are run independently at a local level but are part of a national network. They have an anti-poverty, anti-exclusion focus and promote the participation of people experiencing poverty and exclusion at all levels. In Ballybane, the CDP organises a (Traveller and Settled) women’s group, a men’s group, and a mother and toddler group. It is also centrally involved in organising the annual Intercultural Festival.

\(^{83}\) This scenario reflects my movement from what Lee (1993:122) refers to as ‘physical access’ to ‘social access’ in this context.

\(^{84}\) Foroige is the leading youth organisation in Ireland. It is a universal organisation which runs youth clubs for young people between 10-18 years old.
political correctness and the relatively more open demeanour of those involved (when compared to my adult informants).

Those groups or clubs I joined as a member were relatively varied. In most cases they involved a different set of members and therefore allowed me to meet a wide variety of residents. The different aims and foci of each also meant that the types of natural discussions that occurred at meetings differed in terms of subject. One of the first projects I became involved in as a member was the society of St. Vincent de Paul. This is an international voluntary Catholic organisation. It aims to tackle poverty in all its forms through the provision of practical assistance to those in need. As a member of the organisation, my role was to visit local residents who made an appeal for help at the central office (located in the city centre). More specifically, visits were divided up by estate and the vast majority of residents in the estate I was usually allocated to were Travellers. Indeed, I purposely requested this estate so as to become better acquainted with these residents (whom, having spent a short time in the field, I realised would be difficult to access otherwise). Having gained access, I often casually introduced myself as a researcher and thereby set up a relationship outside of the context of St. Vincent de Paul. In more general terms, before the house visits each week, members met to discuss new cases, and provide updates on ongoing ones. These meetings provided me with background information on a large number of the residents in Ballybane, and, while ethical guidelines mean that much of this information must remain confidential, it played a significant role in guiding my research in terms of substance.

Using informants and contacts made through my association with these various clubs and projects, over the next fifteen months I used opportunistic and snowball sampling to meet more people. By asking each new informant to suggest others, and even introduce me to them, I spread myself throughout the neighbourhood, meeting and getting to know a wide variety of service providers and residents. I drank coffee, went for walks, ate lunch, went shopping, and often simply chatted the day away with informants. I spent

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85 The primary form of help provided was monetary, but we were also encouraged to provide advice, support and information on other issues related to poverty (including loneliness and depression).
time with people in the public realm of the neighbourhood (e.g., the community centre, the street, the local church, the library and the local shops and cafes) and the private realm of their homes. I often got to know their families, listened to their problems (and sometimes attempted to help), and shared in their celebrations. Indeed, a vast amount of my time in the field was spent building rapport and friendships, proving myself as trustworthy and uncritical, and generally establishing a place for myself in the community. While it often felt as though this time was being wasted on preparation for my ‘real fieldwork’, looking back, it was not only necessary work, it also yielded a surprising amount of data in itself.

While I realise there are dangers involved in snowball sampling (especially with respect to bias [Lee 1993:65-68]), I attempted to reduce these to a minimum by beginning with as wide a diversity of initial informants as possible, and later using more strategic/purposive methods of selection where there appeared to be gaps in representation. Indeed, although I do not engage with this in any systematic way in my analysis, by the end of my research my informants and interviewees came from varying age ranges, religions, ethnic groups, genders, and (while it was not something I openly queried or that was made openly evident to me), I presume, sexualities.

As well as sourcing informants within Ballybane, during the duration of my fieldwork, I also contacted and interviewed representatives from various state and non-state agencies located outside of Ballybane, but with interests therein. Among these were two representatives from the GTM (the coordinator [who is Settled] and a worker who is a Traveller from Ballybane), the coordinator of the Galway Refugee Support Group (GRSG), the co-ordinator of the city’s ‘anti-racism’ strategy, Minister Frank Fahy (Minister for the State with special responsibility for equality issues in the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform), a youth advocacy worker for the city (Jason [see below]), a representative from the Traveller training centre, a representative from FÁS86, the coordinator of the African Women’s Association, and the coordinator for SPARK (a Support Project for Adolescent Refugee Kids).

86 FÁS is Ireland’s national training and employment authority.
Key informants and gatekeepers

Among my informants a few stood out as sources of information themselves (key informants), as people who could help me access other people who would be able to help me with what I wanted to know about (gatekeepers), or as both. Two of my most significant key informants were Paul and Henry (the Coordinator of the TYP and his assistant). Paul is in his early thirties and is a Galwegian born and bred. He has spent most of his career working with vulnerable youth, and had been working in Ballybane for over a year by the time I started my fieldwork. He proclaims to be ‘anti-racist’, but at the same time, because of his ‘realism’ (he proclaims to ‘say it like it is’), he has no tolerance for ‘the political correctness brigade’ and ‘wet liberals’. Henry, on the other hand, is in his mid forties, is ethnically Jewish, and grew up in a multi-ethnic area of London. He projects himself as cosmopolitan and liberal (though he objects to Paul’s occasional accusations of “wet liberalism”) both because of his personal identity and the fact that he is relatively well travelled. Having been resident in Ireland on and off for more than ten years, he proclaims to be conflicted by his ‘love-hate relationship with the Irish’ (the ‘hate’ being based on what he refers to as their ‘insularity and almost inherent “racism” against anyone not like them’).

Besides having quite strong personal opinions on my research interests, Paul and Henry were important sources of information on Travellers in the area. As the reality of their jobs required, they had built up a virtual book of information on most of the users of the TYP and their families, and, because ‘the lads’ (the members of the TYP) appeared to trust them (at least to a degree), they were also often made privy to the latest happenings regarding the Travellers in the area (feuds, marriages, arrests, etc.). Of course, this was second hand information which I had to verify for myself, but overall it provided many avenues for more directed research. Also crucial were their roles as gatekeepers in terms of ‘the lads’, and also the Traveller community more generally. In the latter respect, the role they granted to me in the TYP provided me with an extremely useful tool when

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87 Without the TYP, even my physical access to this cohort of Travellers, as a young Settled woman, would have been severally restricted.
attempting to converse with many Traveller adults. Most of the Traveller families in the area had a son or grandson in the project, and my mentioning them and explaining my familiarity often broke down the initial barriers and suspicions. Finally, and perhaps even more importantly, Paul introduced me to Jason, who not only became a vital source of information on Ballybane in general, on the Travellers living there in particular, and on the history of both, but became my main gatekeeper for the local Traveller ‘community’.

Jason is Settled Irish. He worked for the TYP in Ballybane for many years prior to taking up his current role in a city-wide youth advocacy service. Though no longer based in Ballybane, this role means that he still maintains regular contact with most of the Traveller families’ resident there. More importantly, he has developed social relationships with many. The Travellers in the area appear to have great respect for him, and appear to trust him more than any other non-Traveller I came across.

With Jason’s help (effectively, he sponsored/vouched for me\(^{88}\)), I was gradually allowed to *somewhat* penetrate the relatively closed, and understandably mistrusting, Traveller ‘community’. By accompanying me on some (though by no means all) of my visits, in effect, he facilitated my move from ‘physical access’ to relative ‘social access’. Practically overnight, the quantity and the quality of my interactions with local Travellers grew and improved. Gradually the responses I got to queries became less stereotyped and scant. People who had avoided me before now spoke with me, and a few even agreed to be interviewed. Of course, this is not to say that I was suddenly granted access to everyone and everything. Even with Jason’s sponsorship, I was only able to formally interview six Travellers (four women and two men). Consequently, much of the data I collected from those within this ‘community’ was collected using participant observation or casual interviews (i.e., extended conversations). Further, even when Travellers did speak to me, I’m sure they still maintained a degree (even a large degree)

\(^{88}\) Just being seen with Jason, or casually mentioning my acquaintance with him, was often enough in this respect.
of impression management (as, indeed, I imagine did all my informants). However, while I was granted much less access than other Travellers (particularly closely associated ones), I was granted much more than a stranger, or even other non- Travellers in the neighbourhood. Further, as more and more snippets of back-stage information were made accessible to me, I was able to use this to accumulate more - to casually present myself as already relatively informed (clued in) on these issues, and therefore less easily fooled.

While my status as Settled Irish meant that my access to the Settled Irish ‘community’ in Ballybane was relatively straightforward, as with the Traveller ‘community’, I required the help of gatekeepers with respect to the immigrant ‘community’/‘communities’. The CDP proved vital in this respect. Through it, I met a number of immigrants who got my informant ‘snowballs’ rolling. A number of immigrant informants stood out as particularly productive and enlightening sources of information – Nathaniel and Tina from the Black/African ‘community’ and Mika from the Eastern European ‘community’.

Nathaniel came to Ireland as an asylum seeker from Nigeria four years ago. He lived in Ballybane for a year before moving to neighbouring Ballybrit, and he still uses the community facilities in Ballybane frequently. He has three young children, all of whom were born in Ireland, and he has Leave to Remain based on this (see Section 4.2). In Nigeria he obtained a degree in History, but he now earns a living from driving a taxi. Tina, also a Nigerian, has lived in Ireland for six years (having come here as an asylum seeker). Like Nathaniel, she has Leave to Remain based on having an Irish born child. She lives in Ballybane, is active in a number of the organisations run from the community resource centre, and works at a local pre-school. Finally, Mika is a Romanian who moved to Ireland seven years ago on a working visa (as a translator in a legal aid company). Her Nigerian husband came soon after seeking asylum. Hers was one of the few ‘mixed-race’ marriages I encountered. She claims that both she and her

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89 Of course, admitting that informants concealed information or erected ‘fronts’ is not to say that such information was not sometimes accessed through other sources. Indeed, the revelation of such information from other sources, and the realisation that it was something deemed necessary to conceal, often proved significant in itself.
children are very unhappy here due to the level of ‘racism’ they face (her, because of her Romanian origins, and, they, because of their black skin). Indeed, on more than one occasion, she expressed a desire to move to Canada, ‘a much more mixed and multicultural country.’

Finally, in terms of key informants, while not necessarily always the most reliable sources of information, another group of informants who proved invaluable in terms of revealing avenues for research were the neighbourhood ‘gossips’ (Dee, Anne and James were particularly informative in this respect). Though they were by no means a homogeneous or exclusive ‘group’, such informants seemed to know everyone in the area by name, and were able to explain their family and social connections in the area, their length of residence in Ballybane, and their standing in terms of reputation. They usually proved open, opinionated and eager to ‘educate’ me on the ‘reality’ of different situations and events, and they often proclaimed to know the real stories beneath the guises and facades. Though I had to be careful both about the reliability of ‘gossip’ and also about becoming associated with this status myself, the data such informants provided proved indispensible in terms suggesting avenues for me to explore further.

2.3: Collection of data

I used a number of data collection strategies during my research - participant observation, in depth interviewing, and documentary analysis. Each of these provided a different perspective on the issues concerned. Participant observation in various ‘natural’ contexts provided insight into people’s ideas, attitudes and meanings that I couldn’t have obtained directly from interviews because they are so taken-for-granted that people deem them beyond mentioning, or simply because they were too sensitive or discrediting to discuss openly.\(^90\) It also allowed me to compare what people say with what they do, and what people say in formal contexts (such as that of an interview) with what they say

\(^90\) In this respect, it proved particularly important when it came to people from vulnerable groups (see Section 2.5 below). Such people were often weary of the interview process and therefore either refused to participate or else were evasive, or possibly erected ‘fronts’, if they did agree.
in more informal and natural contexts. Finally, it gave me the chance to learn and understand local vernacular and slang (e.g., the use of *country person* or *buffer* by Travellers to refer to non-Travelers), which I could then use myself in later research.

Interviewing also played a specific role. It allowed me to ask about meanings and ideas more directly; and to collect information on past events that I did not personally observe, or on alternative perspectives regarding events I had witnessed and interpreted. Finally, documentary analysis (particularly policy analysis) allowed me to study the issues in question on a larger scale and often in a historical context, and also to corroborate the wider applicability of my conclusions. Beyond each contributing their own unique perspective, however, these different methods complemented each other in terms of corroboration and validation (see Section 2.4).

When I first entered the field, I focused particularly on participant observation. Though initially I used this largely for exploratory purposes, gradually, I used my findings for more focused research. As well as becoming involved in neighbourhood organisations and groups, I immersed myself in the more mundane aspects of everyday life in the neighbourhood - attending the local church, visiting the local shops, park, and library, and chatting to residents wherever and whenever I got the chance. In doing so, I attempted to get an idea of what was going on with regard the social and political structures and dynamics of everyday life within the neighbourhood by watching how people interacted with each other and reacted to people and events in different contexts. At the same time, however, I tried to experience my informants’ world for myself, to put myself into their shoes.91

It is often argued that one of the most difficult aspects of participant observation (particularly when ‘at home’ [see Section 2.4 below]), is finding a correct balance between a total observer role and a total participant role. While the detachment involved in observation can come across as anti-social and can cause reactions from those observed, being highly involved can involve risks of ‘going native,’ bias, and reactivity

91 It is in this respect that Emerson et al (1995:2) describe participant observation as involving ‘being with other people to see how they respond to events as they happen and experiencing for oneself these events.’
(Robson 2002:311). According to Lofland (1971:97, cited in Hammersley and Atkinson 1995:112), the ideal approach in this respect is ‘to maintain a more or less marginal position, thereby providing access to participant perspectives but at the same time minimizing the dangers of over-rapport.’ He refers to this position as the marginal position of ‘simultaneous insider-outsider’. According to Gans (1968, cited in Bryman 2004:302), however, this perspective is too simplistic. He argues that there are effectively three participant observer roles that should be employed at different times for different purposes in any project: total participant\(^92\); researcher-participant\(^93\); and total researcher\(^94\).

Though I attempted to follow Gans’ advice in terms of flexibility, I have to admit that this was one area where I found the negotiation of my position particularly difficult. For instance, at times, though I intended to take on the role of ‘researcher-participant’, I found that my participation was called for by my informants. During the organisation of the annual Intercultural Festival, for instance, members of the organisation committee (aware of my research interests) often asked my advice and opinion on ‘racial’ and ‘intercultural’ issues. In such contexts, because I felt that the views of the other participants would be important data for my research, and I did not want to affect these, I played dumb. I claimed that I wasn’t very knowledgeable about such things yet – for these were the kinds of things I had come here to learn about. On other occasions in the field, whether called on or not, my own knowledge, perspectives, and opinions fought very hard to come forward. In such contexts, I had to decide whether this was acceptable in terms of remaining free to observe and of maintaining a position of neutrality. This was particularly the case in contexts where I felt informants were being ‘racist’. Paul’s argument about ‘Black men and big cars’ (see Section 4.5), and Henry’s ‘racist’ rants and jokes about black Africans (see Section 5.5) were two particularly memorable cases.

\(^92\) ‘The ethnographer is completely involved in a certain situation and has to resume a researcher stance once the situation has unfolded and then write down notes’ (Gans 1968, cited in Bryman 2004:302).

\(^93\) ‘The ethnographer participates in a situation but is only semi-involved, so that he or she can function fully as a researcher in the course of the situation’ (Gans 1968, cited in Bryman 2004:302).

\(^94\) ‘[This] entails observation without involvement in the situation, as in attendance at a public meeting or watching what is going on in a bar. When in this role, the researcher does not participate in the flow of events’ (Gans 1968, cited in Bryman 2004:302).
of this. Thankfully, in both cases I managed to hold my tongue, and feel my relationship with both men, and therefore my later research, benefited as a result.

On a practical note, I took extensive fieldnotes during participant observation. While I constantly had my research focus in mind, because I knew this was likely to change and develop as the field became more familiar, and because I was never sure what was, or what would prove, pertinent, I never restricted my notes to topics I saw as relevant to that. In effect, I became what Lofland and Lofland call a ‘human vacuum cleaner, sucking up anything and everything… that might even remotely prove useful’ (1995:71). I tried in each setting to take note of the spatial, temporal and situational context, the actors present, the activities and events that took place, the general environment and atmosphere, and, in as much detail as possible, what was said (as close to verbatim as possible\textsuperscript{95}), and how it was said (i.e., tones of voice, bodily gestures, and non-verbal expressions and gestures).

In contexts where note taking was not possible in situ (either because I felt it would have caused bias and reactivity or because it simply wasn’t physically possible [e.g., when I was partaking in physical activities in my clubs]), I escaped to the restrooms at opportune moments to scribble pointers or waited until I had finished and wrote up everything I could remember. Later (usually the same night), I wrote my fieldnotes up in more detail on my computer, filling in any gaps, taking note of any problems, confusions or missing information that would need to be followed up, and also of any themes and patterns that emerged.\textsuperscript{96}

In terms of interviewing, I carried out forty six in-depth interviews. Of my interviewees, eight were service providers working at the community centre (four lived in Ballybane

\textsuperscript{95} In this regard, I followed Hammersley and Atkinson’s advice. They warn that, ‘when we compress and summarize we not only lose “interesting” detail and “local colour”, we can also lose vital information. The actual words people use… provide us with valuable information about the ways in which members of a particular culture organise their perceptions of the world, and so engage in the “social construction of reality”’ (1995:182-3).

\textsuperscript{96} This early analysis, though unstructured, was hugely beneficial in terms of providing direction and focus for future observation.
and four outside; six were Settled Irish and two English), and ten more were representatives from various state and non-state agencies located outside of Ballybane, but with interests therein (see Section 2.2 for a list of the latter). More generally, twenty one of the forty six interviewed were Settled Irish (twelve male and nine female), six were Travellers (four female and two male), and nineteen were immigrants (four English [three female and one male], seven African [four female and three male], two white South African [one female and one male], and six Eastern European [three female and three male]). Finally, though the age of interviewees ranged between nineteen years old and eighty three years old, most were in their 30s, 40s, or 50s.

In the majority of cases my interviewees were people with whom I had already built up a relationship through participant observation. Having said this, mainly because they claimed not to be knowledgeable enough, most took some persuading before they agreed to be interviewed. In the case of Travellers, a Traveller informant claimed that the general reluctance to be interviewed among Travellers was due two issues. The first was that Travellers are simply sick of people coming in and ‘doing research on them’. Even in this relatively small neighbourhood my path had been previously trodden by many other researchers (whether from the state or the many Traveller advocacy organisations). Second, he claimed, a lot of Travellers simply do not believe in doing something for nothing, and there appeared to be little benefit in my research for them. I approached these obstacles by trying to get to know as many Travellers as possible through participant observation early on. During this time, I was able to do small favours. I explained and filled in official forms (including the census forms), rang doctors, drove people to doctor’s appointments, read letters, and baked many cakes and scones as gifts. Having done so, when I did bring up the issue of interview, I assume the few who did agree did so, at least partly, out of a sense of friendship and trust.

Interviews averaged an hour and a half, and five of the interviewees were interviewed more than once (two three times and three twice). In some cases I felt that further

97 Upon being introduced to me by Jason, for instance, Jimmy, a middle-aged Traveller, commented ‘another one – well why hasn’t anything come of any of this research.’
interviews were unnecessary. However, in many cases, informants made it clear that, because of their busy schedules, they simply could not do more than one. In these cases, I simply had to do the best I could with what was being offered. However, the fact that I knew most of my interviewees outside of the interview context meant that a number came back to me at a later date (having thought some more about the issues discussed, having remembered something they felt was relevant, or having observed or heard something since the interview which they felt I would be interested in) with additional data.

For the first few months my interviews (particularly with service providers and representatives from organisations outside Ballybane) were primarily investigative. As I gathered more data and patterns began to emerge, however, while maintaining a relatively open-ended style, I began to introduce a semi-structured formula. I began to explore and probe issues that emerged as important or problematic. Further, as my research came closer to an end, I used interviews to double check many of the findings and conclusions that were emerging from my data.

One issue that I was constantly aware of during my interviews (and indeed during participant observation) was the possibility that, because of my presence, informants were using ‘fronts’ to construct and maintain an image that they expected someone with (what they perceived as) my ‘identity’ would approve of. This danger, I realised, was heightened by my decision to digitally record my interviews, and, if it transpired, my social access could be restricted without me even realising.

While it is impossible to determine for certain whether I succeeded in this respect, in order to reduce the probable use of ‘fronts’, I used a number of techniques suggested by Berk and Adams (1970, cited in Lee 1993:134). As mentioned in the previous chapter,

98 This decision was not one I took lightly. Aware of the sensitive nature of my research topic, I realised that doing so could disconcert interviewees, and risk them erecting ‘fronts’ and being overly cautious in their revelations. However, in the end, I felt that the possibility of losing dynamic (and data) in the interview as a result of focusing too much on writing rather than on actively listening and responding (e.g., prompting, probing, and following-up), and also of losing the nuance, complexity and detail of speech through having to rely on my own note-taking skills, were simply risks too big to take.
for instance, throughout my fieldwork I consciously avoided bringing up the (contentious) issue of ‘racism’. Instead, I stressed that I was trying to uncover what life in Ballybane was like for the interviewee (or their ‘kind’), and how they felt about different issues. In effect, I expressed a desire to uncover ‘their side of the story.’ Additionally, when interviewing local residents, before, during, and after interviews, I consciously attempted to create a relaxed and casual context. Whether the interview was held in the interviewee’s home, in an office at the community resource centre, or elsewhere, I provided refreshments in the form of tea and/or biscuits. The preparation of such refreshments allowed a period of small talk to take place, which I hoped would reassure the interviewee that the interview was more of a conversation than a formal interview.\(^9^9\) Once the interview began, I provided clear information on anonymity and confidentiality, as well as a brief explanation of my research interest (emphasising my status as a student) and how the research might be used. And, of course, throughout the interview, I attempted to project a reassuring and non-condemnatory attitude by nodding and smiling in (what I felt were) the right places.\(^1^0^0\)

Also in terms of reducing the use of ‘fronts’, I used my interview format strategically. In this respect I followed the advice of Robson (2002:277) in terms of question sequencing. I began with my introduction (described above). I then followed this up with a few straightforward, ‘easy’ ‘warm-up’ questions which were usually descriptive or experience based. These were aimed at both constructing a background picture of the interviewee and reassuring them that I simply wanted to know about their own lives and experiences. Once I felt that the interviewee had relaxed, and that they had gained confidence in their qualifications as interviewee, I moved on to the main-body of

\(^{99}\) My style differed when it came to interviewing most service providers working in the community resource centre and also representatives from organisations outside Ballybane. Such interviewees, I felt, would be more familiar and less intimidated by the interview context. Indeed, I was afraid that my status as student would result in interviewees not taking me seriously. Consequently, during such interviews, while still using many of the same interview techniques, I created a more formal and professional context, and altered my speech, manner and dress accordingly.

\(^{100}\) While I had anticipated that this would be difficult, in reality, it came very easy. Thankfully, with few exceptions, I liked all of my interviewees. Even when a few made comments I felt were inappropriate, I also usually felt they were said without malice or intent towards ‘racism’, and this made them easier to swallow.
interview. This usually meant eliciting opinions and attitudes on issues emerging from the interviewee’s experiences. At this stage I kept questions short, simple and concise; and (in order to encourage ‘thick description’ [Geertz 1973]) by avoiding leading questions and external concepts, I allowed each interviewee plenty of scope to take the conversation in the direction they deemed important. Throughout, I also encouraged elaborations, clarifications, explanations, narratives, histories and stories (i.e., all the things that would help provide nuance, precision, context and evidence in my findings) by using probing and follow-up questions, pausing between questions, and feigning puzzlement or exhibiting ‘deliberate naïveté’ (Kvale 1996:31). Finally, in order to ease out of the intensity of this section, I asked a few ‘cool-off’ questions, often following up on some minor details mentioned earlier, before closing the interview (usually by stating that I had got loads of useful information, and that I really appreciated their help).

While something of a controversial approach, when I deemed it appropriate, and felt that it would not influence the interviewee, I contributed personal opinions and anecdotes in interviews. For instance, I sometimes explained my personal opinion on immigration in Ireland, or described some of my own experiences with Travellers. While, because of the danger of ‘reaction’, this reciprocal approach certainly wasn’t appropriate with all interviewees, I believe that in some cases it helped maintain a more equal power dynamic in the interview context. This more equal power dynamic, in turn, I believe, helped build trust, and thereby facilitated a more open and honest discussion.

On the issue of interview dynamics and power relations more generally, throughout my fieldwork, but particularly during the one-on-one context of the interview, I was aware of the possible intrusion of the effects of socially constructed power differentials (e.g.,

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101 Explaining this concept, Robson (2002:186) asserts that the main purpose and central virtue of the ethnographic approach is ‘its production of descriptive data free from imposed external concepts and ideas which allows others to understand the culture from inside in the terms that the participants themselves used to describe what is going on.’

102 Indeed, when interviewing a few informants, I sometimes even challenged them with conflicting opinions.

103 In this respect, Seidman (1998:93) argues that ‘[a]n equitable process is the foundation for the trust necessary for participants to be willing to share their experience with an interviewer.’
those based on gender, ‘race’\textsuperscript{104}, and class [Reinharz 1997]) on the interview process. Particularly when it came to the local residents, most of those I interviewed differed from me in one, or indeed many, aspects of identity. Many were immigrants, male, black-skinned, working-class, Traveller, non-Irish, and non-Catholic. In light of this, I took reflexive notes for analytical purposes when I felt that such intrusion may have occurred (e.g., when I felt that people were erecting ‘fronts’ or were simply holding back). Indeed, as well as allowing me to analyse my data in a more informed way, such reflexive notes also allowed me to reflect on whether such intrusions and their effects were reflective of the way informants related to other people with identities similar to my own.

I transcribed most of my interviews immediately (or, at least, in the day or two following the interview), when the experience was still fresh in my mind. With a few exceptions (i.e., where I was sure that the data would not emerge as relevant later on), I transcribed them in their entirety, and included information such as laughter, hesitation, and gestures of puzzlement, embarrassment and discomfort. While there is some debate on whether this is necessary, I personally found it hugely beneficial in terms of analysis. It was during such transcription (in concert with analysis of my methodological notes [see Section 2.4 below]) that my analysis took shape - that tentative themes, patterns, and discrepancies emerged from my data. While patterns could later be tested in terms of their applicability to other informants or other contexts, discrepancies forced me to go back to the field and look closer, or to reinterpret or adapt my conclusions. In effect, therefore, this process encouraged and aided directionality and focus.

During analysis of data gathered from participant observation and interviewing I used an informal style of discourse analysis. This involved trying to locate meaning beneath that directly implied in informants’ speech. Having, similarly, used it to locate ‘racism’ beneath apparently ‘non-racist’ discourse among Irish High School pupils, Keogh (2000) argues that discourse analysis is particularly effective in research on such sensitive

\textsuperscript{104} In terms of doing cross-‘race’ research, Duneier (2004:99) warns that participant observers need to be aware that ‘there are many things members of the different races will not say in one another’s presence.’
topics (where respondents may avoid explicitly producing sensitive or discrediting discourse). ‘[Because] speech is something we do quite naturally, and our choice of words is often unconscious, [b]y actually analysing the discourse surrounding an issue, a lot can be learned about people’s attitudes to the issue,’ she argues (2000:126). In accordance with this argument, rather than focusing only on actively elicited discourse on immigration, Travellers, ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘racism’, etc., I also drew on data produced on these issues in more natural settings, or even produced inadvertently during discussions on other matters.

Finally, in terms of documentary analysis, one primary aim was to inject a historical dimension into my research. For instance, I analysed several state produced reports on Travellers, ‘race’ and ‘racism’, and where possible constructed a link between these reports and contemporary ‘reality’ surrounding these issues. However, documentary analysis also proved vital in terms of accessing state discourse on all the issues concerned (as this is essentially the main form in which such discourse is produced).

2.4: Evidence: validity and reliability

Anthropological ‘evidence’

Anthropological evidence, particularly evidence emerging from participant observation, is often denigrated by other disciplines. We face constant doubt and scepticism in terms of our findings. Rather than rehash the same, evidently ineffective, rebuttals to such denigration however, anthropologists are increasingly actively engaging with their critics. Indeed, the Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute recently dedicated a special edition to this (Royal Anthropological Institute 2008).

One of the most common arguments set against anthropological evidence is that it does not create the level of 'indubitability' that the natural, or even other human sciences which use more quantitative methods of data collection, do. However, my defence here is particularly apt considering the subject of my thesis. The natural sciences cannot (and,
indeed, rarely do) claim certainty in their arguments. The refutation of scientific ‘race theory’ in the 1950s proves that they, no less than the human sciences, are never absolute. All scientific theories are based on the body of evidence (and ‘knowledge’) available at any particular time. Accordingly, Carrithers (1990:272, cited in Engelke 2008) argues that ‘[w]e may ask [of ethnography] not certainty but reliability’. Bearing this argument in mind, below, I discuss a number of ways in which I have attempted to ensure the reliability [and validity] of my research and findings.

Another criticism often levied against ethnographic based theory is the limits of its scope. However, like Bloch (2008), I feel that this is not a weakness but strength. My study, because it is narrow in focus and scope, constitutes a detailed snapshot. This contributes to anthropological knowledge in its own right. However, because it can be compared to other snapshots, it also contains the potential for contributing to the creation of much bolder and/or more comprehensive theories. Indeed, in Section 1.2, I compared several aspects of my findings with those from other similar pieces of research, thereby suggesting the possibility of the wider applicability of my conclusions.105

Validity and reliability in the collection of anthropological evidence

As much as the amount and type of ‘evidence’ collected, the validity and reliability of our arguments depend on the validity and reliability of the methods we use to collect such evidence. In terms of the former, Hammersley (1992, cited in Bryman 2004:276) argues that ‘validity means that an empirical account must be plausible and credible.’ Because ‘the researcher is always engaged in representations or constructions of the world,’ and, because ‘we can never be absolutely certain about the truth of any account,’

105 Williams (2000:215, cited in Bryman 2004:285) refers to this process as the construction of ‘moderatum generalisations’ – ‘ones in which aspects of the focus of enquiry… “can be seen to be instances of a broader set of recognisable features”.’ While Williams admits that ‘moderatum generalisations will always be limited and somewhat more tentative than those associated with statistical generalisations… [he argues that] they… help to counter the view that generalisation beyond the immediate evidence and case is impossible in qualitative research’ (Bryman 2004:285).
he argues, ‘we must judge the validity of claims on the basis of the adequacy of the evidence offered in support of them’ (1992:69, cited in Bryman 2004:277). In terms of making such a judgement, in turn, Kvale argues that validation should be seen as a process of investigation, a continual checking, questioning and theoretical interpretation of the findings (1996:289).

Throughout my research, I applied these standards of validation in terms of the descriptions, interpretations, and theoretical conclusions I produced. With regard to descriptions, as well as observing incidents and events, I collected other participants’ versions of these to compare to my own. With regard to interpretations, in order to avoid ‘imposing [my] own framework or meaning, rather than understanding the perspective of the people studied and the meanings they attach to their words and action’ (Maxwell 1996:89-90), I requested, as well as listened and watched out for, participants’ own meanings and perspectives on the various issues identified through them as important to my research topic, and, as far as possible, reported these using emic terms. Finally, to help validate my theoretical conclusions, I used triangulation (employed a variety of data collection methods [see Section 2.3], and collected data from a wide variety of individuals, settings and contexts to help ensure internal consistency). Of course, I also made sure that at every step in my analysis I considered alternative explanations and understandings of the data, and paid particular attention to discrepancies.

In ethnographic research ‘the observer is the research instrument’ (Robson 2002:314). Because of this, and because researchers carry their identities (gender, ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’, class, etc.), their personalities, and their mindsets with them into the research context, the production of a clear, transparent and reflexive106 account of the research process (from design stage to analysis) is central to the reliability of one’s methods and, by extension, findings.

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106 Reflexivity involves ‘a continuing mode of self-analysis and political awareness’ (Callaway 1992:33, cited in Hertz 1997:viii). It involves acknowledging that our research findings have been sifted through our own experiences, statuses, and cultural lenses, and taking account of this in analysing them.
In accordance with this advice, throughout my research (from design to analysis), but particularly during data collection, I took descriptive and reflexive methodological notes. I noted such things as my emotional state, my relationship with, and personal opinions on, those present, the situation, the environment or setting, and the issues being discussed. I later used these notes in conjunction with my data - to reconstruct my involvement in the research, and therefore to reflect on the degree of certainty on which my findings and conclusions were based. Significantly, I also used them as data in themselves. In effect, I reflected on whether some of the participants or interviewees appeared to have similar emotional responses, and whether there were any clues in the data as to why this may have been the case (e.g., was it due to the setting, some aspect of their identity, or a reaction to some aspect of my identity).

**Anthropology ‘at home’**

I grew up and spent all of my childhood in the north of Ireland. While my research took place in the Republic, for many, my research constituted ‘anthropology at home.’ A great deal of, often conflicting, opinion has emerged regarding the viability, profitability, and problems involved in doing ‘anthropology at home.’ From the negative standpoint, a number of arguments stand out. First, it is argued that such research is inherently biased and essentially subjective: anthropologists will, even if unconsciously or inadvertently, project their own beliefs, views and prejudices onto others of their ‘community’ (Aguilar 1981:16). Second, it is argued that ‘the conduct of research at home often inhibits the perception of structures and patterns of social and cultural life. Paradoxically, too much is too familiar to be noticed or to arouse the curiosity essential to research’ (ibid). Indeed, even when the insider’s curiosity is aroused and they do ask the right questions; Young (2004:187) argues that informants may ‘explain more fully or further elucidate their views to an outsider.’ Further, he argues, while the intimacy and trustworthiness associated with insider status can aid rapport,

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107 This concept was first used by Jackson (1987), though the issues surrounding it have a much longer history.

108 Löfgren (1987:74) refers to this paradox as ‘home-blindness’.
[t]he comfort of familiarity that comes with insider status can also promote impatience or confusion... [O]ne may feel that he or she should not have to say certain things to familiar others because those others should already be ‘in the know’. Being asked to say something about those things can rupture or at least disrupt rapport (ibid:194).

Indeed, Aguilar (1981:17) argues that it is usually the outsider who is deemed the more trustworthy by informants. He claims, ‘the outsider is more readily made privy to secret information and opinions, because he is a disinterested party who can be trusted not to use the information against the informant – because he has no incentive to do so.’

Of course, there are also positive arguments proposed for doing ‘anthropology at home’. Besides the argument about trust and rapport (see Young 2004 above), it is argued that insider researchers, ‘because of their ability to blend into situations... are less likely to alter social settings’ (Aguilar 1981:18). In other words, ‘because they can more effectively meet the social behavioural requirements and expectations of the research community, and because of shared frames of reference and consensual meanings, interaction is more natural’ (ibid). Also in terms of blending in, it is often claimed that an insider will have ‘greater ability to read non-verbal indications of such subjective states as suspicion, confidence and embarrassment. This enables [them] to adopt [their] own behaviour more effectively to facilitate the flow of information’ (ibid:18).

Finally, some claim that insiders are ‘more accepting of complexity and variation than... the outsider, who is more likely to form simplistic caricatures’ (Aguilar 1981:18); and, similarly, that ‘insiders are better equipped to get past the ideal side of social behaviour and opinion and into the area of real life’ (ibid:19).

While each of these arguments (whether ‘for’ or ‘against’ ‘anthropology at home’) are legitimate, rather than the labels ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ applying to different researchers, they can both be applied to all researchers in particular contexts. This is because all of these terms - ‘at home’, ‘insider’, and ‘outsider’ - are relative. As Hastrup

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109 This argument helps explain the advantage I feel I gained from living outside of Ballybane (see Section 2.2).
110 Young makes a similar argument in terms of ability to understand and use verbal terminology and vernacular (2004:187).
(1993:151, cited in Wulff 2000:149) argues, “home” is a conceptual category with shifting references.’ Accordingly, whether I was perceived as an ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ depended on many more aspects of my identity than where I was born or grew up, and varied according to context. I am a 34-year-old woman. I am middle class, Catholic, a student, an Irish nationalist from Northern Ireland, an ‘anti-racist’, and white-skinned. I carried all of these things, and indeed many more, with me during my research. While I was likely to have been seen as an ‘insider’ (by the majority ‘Irish’ population) with respect to my ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’, ‘nationality’, and ‘culture’, it is likely that I was seen as an ‘outsider’ with respect to the social context of the neighbourhood\textsuperscript{111} and my socio-economic status\textsuperscript{112}. Indeed, among immigrants, Travellers, or people with black-skin, I expect I was seen as an ‘outsider’ in many other respects also.

One particular aspect of my identity that stood out in terms of its impact on my access was my status as a woman. This restricted access (or at least made access more difficult) in contexts where I was attempting to converse with men (particularly Traveller men) in the neighbourhood (many of whom did not use community facilities, worked outside the community during the day, and had little time or patience for what they must have regarded as a young lass asking stupid questions that they had nothing to gain from answering). That said, of course, my gender proved hugely beneficial when gaining access to the women of the community. During my time in the field, for instance, I was involved in two local women’s groups: the ELG (whose membership is almost entirely Settled Irish and from one estate, but whose members’ ages range from about thirty to nearly eighty years old) and the Ballybane Traveller and Settled women’s group (a women’s group with both Travellers and Settled Irish members but no immigrant members). Indeed, the ladies from these groups were some of my most open and indulgent informants.

\textsuperscript{111} In this respect, as Caputo (2000:29) argued with respect to her experience of ‘anthropology at home’, ‘my fieldwork [in Ballybane] was often an “exotic” experience.’

\textsuperscript{112} Though I like to think of myself as working class, in reality, it is unlikely that my informants would have shared this view. Indeed, even beyond the socio-economic background into which I was born, as Löfgren points out ‘a spell in academia will leave its middle-class imprint on anybody’ (1987:91).
More generally, recognising the relativity in my status, and also conscious of the pros and cons involved in both ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’ statuses, following the advice of Young (2004:188) I attempted to strategically use my multiple identities (though to what extent I succeeded in this is extremely difficult to determine). In any context, I projected those aspects of my identity I perceived particular informants would be most comfortable with and played-down those I felt might affect their openness in a negative way. For instance, when speaking to Travellers I emphasised the fact that I grew up in a county where there are few Travellers, and therefore had little experience in this respect. In doing so, I hoped to distance myself from the majority Settled Irish/‘Irish’ population (particularly the local population) whom I quickly learned were a source of suspicion, fear and resentment. Similarly, with immigrant informants, as well as empathising with their situation, I emphasised that I had just come back into the country having spent many years away, and that I was shocked at the anti-immigration sentiment that appeared to have transpired in my absence. Finally, with my Settled Irish informants, I constructed myself as Irish, but, again, used the fact that I came from County Fermanagh, (where there are few Travellers) and the fact that I had been away from Ireland for some time, to impress on them my ignorance and naivety about Traveller issues and also the immigrant situation that had risen to prominence during my absence.

What perhaps stands out from this strategic manoeuvring is that, in all contexts and with all informants, the persona that I found most productive in terms of collecting data was not that of ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ per se, but rather that of a student asking to be taught. This asserted status was not straightforward. It involved achieving the correct balance between, on the one hand, demonstrating knowledge of the general issues involved, and projecting an image of capability in terms of understanding what informants had to teach me, and, on the other hand, projecting naivety and ignorance of the complexity of the issues involved, particularly the details of those issues – the way that they are played out in everyday life.  

113 Of course, this process and the actual persona projected had to be adapted as my time in the field
Another perspective on the debate on anthropology ‘at home’ is that, while my personal location placed me relatively ‘inside’ Irish society, in most contexts, from planning through to analysis, I performed this study not as a native but as an anthropologist (albeit when advantageous – a ‘native’ anthropologist). As Aguilar (1981:24) notes, ‘the novice-anthropologist is recruited into and trained by a group with a particular formal and informal ideology which, to a greater or lesser extent, he absorbs and carries with him into the field.’ Accordingly, ‘ideologically, [he/she] is set apart to some extent by their socialisation into the scientific ethos of their profession’ (ibid:25). In other words, my training effectively provided me with a kind of ‘outsider’ status.

Finally, though crucially, because the ‘insider’-‘outsider’ aspects of my identity in the field were complex and dynamic, because they changed according to context and according to whom I was interacting with, and because they were determined not only by how I presented myself, but also by how others perceived me, reflexivity was, again, essential in this respect. Throughout my fieldwork I attempted to determine how my ‘insider’/‘outsider’ identities in any particular context affected my interpretations of data collected, and also how my informant’s perceptions of my ‘insider’/‘outsider’ identity affected the data they produced. Both of these things were then taken into consideration during my analyses. However, I also attempted to build an understanding of these issues and use this productively. In this respect, my ‘insider’/‘outsider’ identities, and how these identities affected my relations with informants, provided data in themselves. For instance, how my research participants reacted to my white skin, my Irishness, my female gender, my newcomer status, or my ‘insider’ or ‘outsider’ statuses more generally, provided insight into how they react to such identities in general.

2.5: Ethical issues

Psychologist Urie Bronfenbrenner commented more than forty years ago, “The only safe way to avoid violating principles of professional [and we would add personal]
ethics is to refrain from doing social research altogether” (1952:453)’ (Lofland & Lofland 1995:64 [parenthesis in original]). While perhaps this is true, researchers tend (as I did) to make ethical decisions based on weighing the contribution of their research against the chances and scale of any harm that is likely to be caused to their participants, to others, and to future research (Hammersley & Atkinson 1995).

Informed consent

In accordance with the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and the Commonwealth’s (ASA’s) Ethical Guidelines (1999:3), when dealing with individuals, as well as explaining issues of voluntarism, confidentiality and anonymity (see below), I verbally informed potential participants about the purposes of my study and the benefits I hoped would result from it.114 When I accessed informants in group contexts (in an organised club or project), I provided this information to the group on the first day of my attendance (and later individually to any new participants), and left it to individuals to voice their dissent (or quietly stay out of my way thereafter).115

Having made this initial introduction, I rarely re-informed participants of my researcher position. While arguably ethically questionable, I decided on this ‘one-shot’ approach to ‘informed consent’ because of Dewalt et al’s argument that,

[I]f informants [are] always consciously aware of our activities as ethnographers, the information we acquire would be less rich. We want them to forget, for a time at least, that we are outsiders. We want them to develop sufficient rapport and to have them become so comfortable with us as community participants that they will share insights and information that only insiders would know (1998:273).

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114 I decided against getting written consent for two reasons. First, I realised that many of my informants would either have poor literacy or would be illiterate, and this was not an issue that I wished to broach in this way. Second, I feared that, due to the sensitive nature of some of the issues I intended to look into, written consent may have created fear in terms of incrimination with respect to any information contributed. This, in turn, I felt may have made people either reluctant to speak to me or more susceptible to erecting ‘fronts’.

115 While many of my participants were under sixteen years of age, because I did not include them in the interviewing process (instead interacting with them only in natural and group situations), I did not feel that any special measures in terms of ethics were necessary.
Finally, and as discussed at the start of this chapter, when introducing myself and my research, I also avoided any direct allusions to ‘racism’. While, again, this decision involved some ethical negotiation with respect to ‘informed consent’, I believe that it was justifiable because: it was necessary in terms of the validity of the research (to avoid reactivity); it did not cause participants to do things they would not otherwise do; and I hoped it would contribute to a greater good (i.e., more understanding of ‘racism[s]’ and therefore more effective anti-‘racism[s]’).

Potential risks to participants

Whether because of immigration status, Traveller status, or otherwise, many of my informants were in positions of relative vulnerability (relative to me and/or society in general). For this reason, I undertook my ethnographic research in a consciously sensitive manner. Particularly during the interview process (because I had the extra responsibility of being the main reason for informants’ involvement), I made clear to all participants that they did not have to take part if they did not want to, and that they could refuse to answer any question (and indeed, if need be, terminate the interview) at any time. Of course, I also promised, as far as possible, to ensure confidentiality, and offered anonymity to all those not in public or official roles.

Also in terms of vulnerable ‘groups’ or individuals, I thought a lot during the planning of my research, during my fieldwork, and during my analysis, about the possibility that my research itself could actually reinforce existing socially constructed power

116 I was particularly clear on this in cases where I had used gatekeepers to access possible informants. In such cases I realised that the vulnerable and often powerless position of many potential informants may have put them in a position where they felt that they could not refuse requests from such gatekeepers.

117 Thankfully, no one actually did withdraw at this point. Indeed, no one ever even refused to answer a question.

118 In terms of those in public or official roles (which included service providers working in Ballybane), this issue of anonymity conflicted me for a long time. I did not offer anonymity to most such informants. Further, particularly as my conclusions on ‘racism’ emerged as much less black and white than I had predicted, I felt that there was little need for anonymity (there was little to discredit anyone). However, I finally decided that what is or is not discrediting was a judgement call that was not mine to make, and therefore, erring on the side of caution, I have, at least, used pseudonyms. The one exception to this rule was Minister Frank Fahy, whom I have named because of his public and official position.
differentials (e.g., those between people with black skin and those with white, and between Travellers and Settled Irish or non- Travellers more generally). Some argue that there is simply no escaping this conundrum. In terms of ‘race’, for instance, Gabriel (2000:173) warns that, ‘[b]eing a white researcher carries a symbolic significance whatever the political direction of the research. Being white and in the position to define the research agenda and hence produce new knowledge can only serve to enhance the authority of whiteness and hence sanction the privileges associated with being white.’¹¹¹⁹

However, not everyone is as critical or resolute as this. For instance, Seidman (1998:83) argues:

> Interviewers and participants of good will who are from different racial backgrounds can create a relationship that runs counter to prevailing social currents. Maintaining sensitivity to issues that trigger distrust as well as exhibiting good manners, respect, and a genuine interest in the stories of others can go a long way toward bridging racial and ethnic barriers.¹²⁰

Perhaps conveniently, accepting Seidman’s argument, and in line with his advice (as I outline in Sections 2.3 above), I actively attempted to create an equitable context during my research, and, in general, I believe that I succeeded.

Finally, although Immigrants and Travellers were the obvious ‘vulnerable groups’ in my research, from the outset I was conscious that people who participated in ‘racism’ could also fit into this category. In this respect, even before I began my study I had to come to terms with the idea of witnessing ‘racism’, and studying and recording, rather than condemning, it. I resigned myself in these terms by following Klockar’s (n.d., cited in Lee 1993:139) logic - that ‘guilty knowledge is the morally dubious means by which a morally good end – social scientific knowledge – is inevitably attained.’ In reality, however, this issue turned out to be something of a non-issue, or rather an issue of

¹¹¹⁹ A parallel argument could be made in terms of being a Settled Irish researcher studying Travellers.
¹²⁰ Indeed, Gallagher (2004:213) argues that ‘if whiteness is treated as a monolithic identity based on privilege or the assumption that all whites harbour certain negative (or positive) attitudes towards other racial groups, researchers will miss the opportunity to examine the social complexities and the social geography of how and where racial identities are constructed and the multiplicity of meanings that define whiteness.’
another sort. I rarely encountered blatant, overt, or ‘traditional’ style ‘racism’ (that reflecting the now discredited scientific ‘race theory’). Also, though I sometimes found myself gritting my teeth at an informant’s ‘racist’ discourse, in most contexts, the inconsistencies, contradictions, and legitimisations inherent in the ‘racisms’ I encountered made them difficult to recognise at the time. While, this was a positive in terms of my neutrality in the field, as I discuss in chapter five, it signifies a big problem in terms of ‘anti-racism’ more generally.

Conclusion

It may seem as though my fieldwork went somewhat unbelievably without problems, obstacles, and mishaps. In many respects it did. However, this result is, at least, partly something that only transpired because of how prepared I was for things not to work out exactly as expected; how prepared I was to adapt to and work with what did transpire\textsuperscript{121}; and perhaps most importantly, my ability, at least in retrospect, to see the advantages in the problems I encountered and the changes I was forced to make.

Perhaps more than anything, the thing that kept me going through my fieldwork, both in bad times and in good, was my dogged belief that I was doing something worthwhile. I believed (and still believe) that the reason most existing ‘anti racisms’ are not very effective is because understanding of the issues is inadequate. Accordingly, I was determined to contribute to rectifying this. Indeed, as the ‘reality’ of Ballybane and its residents failed time and again to confirm my expectations about ‘racism’ in Ireland (expectations based on an extensive literature review), and, more importantly, revealed a degree of complexity and ambiguity that even academic discourse on the plurality and multidimensionality of ‘racism’ (see Section 1.1) failed to convey, I realised the importance of such rectification. It is towards this ‘reality’, in all its complexity and ambiguity, which I turn in the next three chapters.

\textsuperscript{121} In turn, I attribute this level of preparedness to the training I received during my Masters in Research and to the advice and support of my supervisors.
Chapter 3

The Politics of Irish Traveller Identity

Discourse on Traveller identity in Ireland, Galway and Ballybane involves a constant struggle between what Travellers claim to be, how others (e.g., the state, ‘Settled’ people, and the media) see them, and, increasingly, what others (e.g., the state and Traveller Advocacy Organisations [TAOs]) tell them they are.\footnote{122} This chapter explores the collisions and collusions involved in this identity struggle.

More precisely, in this chapter I explore the various ways in which Travellers have been constructed and reconstructed from the 1830s until the present, paying particular attention to the ways in which past constructions appear to have impacted on contemporary constructions. I start by looking at the early discursive repertoires found in literary and academic work, and discuss how these are now often used in different historicisations of Traveller origins. I then describe how the Traveller ‘community’ has been constructed and reconstructed in and through state discourse from the first significant state-sponsored report on Travellers in the 1960s (the Report of the Commission on Itinerancy [1963]) on through the series of reports (and subsequent policies) which followed this (the Report of the Travelling People Review Body [1983], the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community [1995], and finally the Report of the High Level Officials Group on Traveller Issues [2006]). Finally, I look at the issue of Traveller ‘ethnicity’, and examine the case for this in the context of academic and legal definitions of ‘ethnicity’.

Because of the nature of local discourse and popular discourse, particularly the fact that most of it is not recorded in any detail, my discussion of the history of Traveller identity construction is largely focused on national level and state produced discourse. In terms of the contemporary situation, however, I describe and analyse constructions of

\footnote{122 As explained in footnote 5, because of time and space restraints, I have decided not to analyse the role of the media in this thesis.}
Traveller identity produced in and through discourse at the more local level (of Ballybane) as well as that produced nationally, and also in and through popular as well as state discourse. Indeed, rather than focusing only on the different ways discourse produced at the national level has impacted, and continues to impact, on local discourse, and on the different ways that state discourse has impacted, and continues to impact, on popular discourse, I also discuss the ways popular discourse produced in and through the politics of everyday life at the local level interacts with, and possibly even helps produce, state discourse and the dominant discourses at the national level more generally. Finally, throughout this chapter I interject my analysis with discussion of ‘de-racialising’/‘de-ethnicising’ discourse produced by different players at different levels.

3.1: Traveller origins

The issue of Traveller origins is considered of central importance in deciding on the proper/legitimate status of Travellers today. In particular, it appears to have become central to the debate over the legitimacy of Traveller ‘ethnic’ status (see Section 3.5 below). While, as discussed in Section 1.2, acknowledgement of the ‘ethnic’ status of many Gypsy or Romani groups throughout Europe has depended upon the ascription of exotic Indian origins, in Ireland the focus on exotic foreign origins has been replaced by a focus on ‘exotic indigenous origins’ (Okely 1994:14). One of the central issues in these terms is whether or not Travellers have a long enough distinctive history to mark them off as essentially different to the majority population. In turn, this debate seems to centre around the question of whether they existed before the Great Hunger (the famine of 1845-1951) and the colonial context that surrounded it, or emerged as a consequence thereof. Unfortunately, there is little consensus on this issue, and one gets the

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123 Critiquing this element of the Traveller ‘ethnicity’ debate, McCann et al. (1994:xiii) argue that ‘The subjective component of ethnicity means that the claim to ethnic separateness [should] rest primarily on contemporary culture and identity, not on historical origins. It is not [in other words] a question of historical “fact” to be resolved by historical investigation. The crucial question is how Irish Travellers understand their experience at the present time.’

124 The outcome of this debate surrounding Traveller origins has been hindered by the fact that the history of Travellers has not yet been written. Indeed, the lack of historical written source material specifically on
impression that different historicisations often reflect contemporary agendas rather than impartial accounts.

Supporting the argument that Travellers existed before the *Great Hunger*, George and Sharon Gmelch (1976) argue that the Royal Commission on the Poor Laws in the 1830s identified tinker families as a distinct and recognisable group. Similarly, in The Oxford Companion to Irish History, the editor, S.J. Connolly, notes that “The Poor Inquiry of the 1830s distinguished between tinkers and other kinds of vagrant” (2002:572, cited in Equality Authority 2006:51). From another perspective, Robbie McVeigh argues that, while Travellers first went to the USA during the Famine, the fact that they have maintained a separate identity there ever since suggests that they took a fully-formed and robust (‘ethnic’) identity with them (2007:109). Within literature, Hugh Dorian’s (2000) account of social life in Donegal, written in 1890, recounts the visits of ‘tinkers’ to his home place during his childhood before the famine (he was born in 1834) (Equality Authority 2006:51); and Helleiner (2000) describes how Yeats and his contemporaries mention a travelling class or ‘tinkers’ several times in their work, and indeed construct them as almost the last remnant of a lost pre-famine Ireland, the personification of our great Gaelic roots. Today, most significantly, this pre-famine origins account is subscribed to by most TAOs. For instance, Pavee Point claims that Travellers originate from a specialised caste of wandering metalworkers in early medieval times (2005a:12).

At the other side of the origins debate is the view that Irish Travellers are ‘the descendants of peasants forced into landlessness and mobility by the evictions and famines suffered by the Irish during the centuries of British domination’ (Helleiner 2000:30). One of the original protagonists of this account was a folklore collector named Sean McGrath who claimed to have constructed it from the origins accounts of Travellers themselves (1955:28, cited in Helleiner 2000:48). Perhaps most significantly, Travellers means that such a task would be extremely difficult. This difficulty is perpetuated by the fact that, as Helleiner (2000:243) points out: ‘In the archival sources for the period preceding the 1960s, terms such as “tinker,” “gypsy,” “vagrant,” “tramp,” and Traveller were often used interchangeably, suggesting a much more amorphous itinerant population, with much greater fluidity at least in external identification than exists in Ireland today.’

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however, it was adopted by the Commission on Itinerancy, and later the state, in the 1960s to legitimise Traveller settlement (see Section 3.2 below). In effect, the state used it to present its settlement policy as the re-settlement of ‘victims’ of colonialism, rather than the destruction of a natural or long-standing nomadic entity. In this respect it has been hugely criticised by the main national TAOs (the Irish Traveller Movement and Pavee Point) who argue that this was a political move (to justify an easy solution to ‘the Traveller problem’) (Pavee Point 2005b). Of course, any such critique must be assessed in concert with the fact that the TAOs themselves are no less guilty of such manipulation when constructing their (arguably equally speculative) origins accounts.

My informants also appeared divided on the issue of origins. While, for instance, Edward claimed that ‘Travellers always existed in Ireland’ (interview 19/09/06), Mary argued that ‘Travellers took to the side of the road during the potato famine. We had to, we had no choice. But, we decided we liked it that way anyways’ (06/02/07). Perhaps most significantly, however, Traveller origins (not to be mistaken with the Traveller past which regularly came up in anecdotes, folktales and personal histories) was not an issue that I ever heard discussed among Travellers without prompting. Indeed, when directly questioned on the issue, most informants shrugged it off with statements such as ‘oh Travellers have been around as long as I can remember’ (Kathleen 18/01/07) or changed the subject. It simply doesn’t appear to matter to most. Of course, this is understandable if one appreciates the ‘here and now’ (nomadic) mindset that many Travellers, despite settling, appear to possess (see Section 3.4 below).

3.2: Report of the Commission on Itinerancy (1963): The emergence of ‘Travellers’

In 1960 the state set up a Commission on Itinerancy to:

125 This was despite the fact that, as Ní Shuínéar (1998:3) argues, ‘the Commission admitted undertaking no research whatsoever into the origins of Irish Travellers, and that they were unable to find any carried out by others, noting that the task “would more properly be a study for trained historians” (1963:34.1)’. 

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[E]nquire into the problem arising from the presence in the country of itinerants in considerable numbers... to examine the economic, educational, health and social problems inherent in their way of life... [and] to reduce to a minimum the disadvantages to themselves and to the community resulting from their itinerant habits (1963:11).

In 1963 the Commission published its report - the *Report of the Commission on Itinerancy* (hereafter CI). In this report, it concluded that ‘it is not considered that there is any alternative to a positive drive for housing itinerants if a permanent solution to the problem of itinerancy, based on absorption and integration, is to be achieved’ (1963:62). In order to encourage such settlement, it made a number of recommendations. These included the implementation of a licensing scheme for caravans (based on the maintenance of standards of repair, cleanliness and appearance), and the implementation of a policy requiring itinerants to sign on for unemployment assistance more frequently than the normal requirement (1963:97-100).

Many of the CI’s recommendations were implemented in state policy in 1964 when it launched its Traveller settlement programme. Accepting the CI’s origins account (which situated the emergence of Travellers in the *Great Hunger* [see Section 3.1 above]), and also using discourse of nationalism, modernisation and even Christian duty, the state claimed that absorption into the general (i.e., Settled) ‘community’ was for the good of the nation at large (including itinerants themselves). Absorption could be achieved, it suggested, simply by providing itinerants with education, houses and employment (Helleiner 2000).

While obviously guilty of denigrating itinerants, significantly, the CI report, and state discourse subsequent to it, explicitly refused to ‘racialise’/‘ethnicise’ them. The CI report states,

126 How independent and open-minded the Commission was during their enquiry is put in doubt by the fact that during its inaugural meeting the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister for Justice, Charles Haughey, asserted: ‘These terms of reference are comprehensive and they acknowledge that there can be no final solution to the problems created by itinerants until they are absorbed into the general community’ (1963:111).
Itinerants (or travellers as they prefer themselves to be called) do not constitute a single homogenous group, tribe or community within the nation although the settled population are inclined to regard them as such. Neither do they constitute a separate ethnic group (1963:37).

It defined, and subsequent policy codified, itinerants as persons ‘who had no fixed place of abode and habitually wandered from place to place’ (ibid:13). Deviation from the national ‘culture/community’ in these terms was constructed as having been forced upon them, and, accordingly, was presented as a temporary and reparable situation.

While the CI explicitly acknowledged that its ‘de-racialised’/‘de-ethnicised’ construction of Travellers conflicted with popular discourse, this conflict was made even more evident by the reaction of the Settled Irish population to the state’s settlement policy – widespread and sustained dissent and objection based on the argument that Travellers were unassimilable. Indeed, it is such dissent that appears to have affected the gradual adaptation of state discourse in subsequent years. This adaptation process took place predominantly at the county level, where settlement policy was actually implemented\(^\text{127}\), and where dissent was concentrated (see below). However, it later gradually filtered up to the national level (see Section 3.3).

The implementation of discourse on Traveller identity in urban design: The creation of Hillside

It was during the implementation of the state’s first Traveller settlement policy that some of the most important elements of my field site emerged. In Galway, local dissent over the policy entered new levels when some residence groups (from the mainly working class areas where settlement was proposed) took their opposition to the courts. Largely as a result of this, the Galway Itinerant Settlement Council was forced to adapt its approach to Traveller settlement. Rather than accepting the dominant essentialist (‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’) discourse of the dissenters and giving up on the state’s

\(^{127}\) Itinerant Settlement Councils were set up within each county to implement the state’s settlement policy.
assimilation policy, however, it adopted a more gradual approach. This involved the provision of interim forms of accommodation where Travellers could be gradually re-educated into Settled living (Helleiner 2000).

It was during this re-negotiation of policy that the idea for a Traveller village emerged. As reported in a local paper, Travellers would enter this housing project/village ‘on the understanding that they were agreeable to undergo a process of familiarisation in [S]ettled circumstances as a transitional stage to qualify for a Local Authority dwelling in the normal way’ (Connacht Tribune 26 May 1978:20, cited in Helleiner 2000:95). After much negotiation Ballybane was the site chosen for this project.

By 1981 the project was ready and twenty four Traveller families moved into twenty four small bungalows (each with three bedrooms, and a small cooking/living area). There was no running water or sanitary facilities in any of the bungalows. Instead, residents had to share a toilet block. Almost immediately an unofficial halting site, largely occupied by the extended families of those in the bungalows, grew up beside it (see Figure 1 below). At the same time, as more housing estates were built in the area, Settled residents began protesting the council about the situation.

Significantly, despite denying any essential difference between itinerants and Settled Irish, and explicitly denying that the former constitute anything more than a temporary sub-category of the latter, in order to identify who came under the settlement policy remit, councils had to construct a standardised, bounded, and essentialist construction of ‘itinerant’ - a situation which has continued in subsequent Traveller specific policies. Hence, while, explicitly, it opposed popular ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse, implicitly, the state/council reinforced it, and thereby, most likely, helped render it dominant.

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128 Such houses were referred to in official council documents, and by many of my informants, as ‘tigeens’.

129 Despite periodic protests over the next twenty years, Hillside was not removed until 2004.
A culture of dependence?

Like Ní Shuínéar (1998), who criticised the CI’s (1963:11&62) conceptualisation of itinerants as a ‘problem’ to be solved, many of my informants argued that, by constructing Travellers as an entity ‘in need’ (of special assistance and attention), the CI’s report (and, more generally, state policy on Travellers since the 1960s) has helped produce a hugely negative and enduring image of Travellers in terms of dependency, victimhood, impoverishment, and inferiority. In the following interview extracts, Jason (a local Settled service provider who has worked in targeted and non-targeted projects with the Travellers in Ballybane for over fifteen years) brilliantly conveys how he sees
such discourse having emerged, and what he sees as its negative implications for Travellers.

Jason 15/06/06
J: The worst thing to happen to Travellers was the state making them cases for special treatment simply on the basis of being Travellers. Most Travellers don’t actually need money. They come looking for it simply because they think that they deserve it. And, giving Travellers things in this way just institutionalises the idea that they are charity cases - not only different, but inferior.

Me: Where does this expectation come from?

J: Oh I think it’s stuffed down their throats with the amount of projects that are targeting them. Basically, they’ve being told, since the Itinerant Commission in the 1960s, that they’re a problem group and that they need supports.

Jason 18/09/06
J: Like I’ve said before, the context in which Travellers are discussed in policy is almost always one of impoverishment.

Me: Okay, so how do Travellers engage that?

J: I suppose they try to play the system. Like in the 1960s when social welfare payments and the dole became available to Travellers, most would have migrated into the towns to be entitled to it. So, they walked away from a transient lifestyle for the sake of getting the dole. Now, they would have thought, ‘we’ll buy into this thing because then maybe our kids will get a better education than we did’ or ‘there’ll be better health conditions’. And many even thought, ‘isn’t it mighty, sure we get paid for doing nothing.’ Whereas, you know, they didn’t realise that they had walked away from a lifestyle and allowed themselves to be established; allowed their community to be framed within a disadvantaged and impoverished type of discourse. That’s where the big legacy is at the moment - Travellers can’t get out of that flaming box.

A number of my Traveller informants made similar, though perhaps less eloquent, claims about ‘government handouts’. Indeed, perhaps most significantly, a few argued that Travellers not only play along with this construction of impoverishment, dependency and inferiority, but, in many respects, internalise it. For instance, Maggie (a
middle-aged Traveller woman who has lived in Ballybane for twenty two years [in the unofficial Hillside halting site before moving into a house in a mixed estate], works at a local pre-school, and has three [grownup] children of her own), critiquing the Traveller Visiting Teacher scheme\textsuperscript{130}, argued:

The Visiting Teachers go round seeing how well Traveller children are doing in school and dealing with any problems. But, I think, the mother should go down and sort out any problems. Most mothers don’t because they have someone else there to do it for them and they think that they would do it better. It takes the power away from them. But Traveller mothers are well able to go down there and speak up for their children (interview 04/04/07).

On a wider scale, Michael McDonagh, a Traveller himself, and a Traveller activist, made a similar argument in the following terms:

The system makes people dependent on it, taking pride and independence away with one hand and giving the dole and second-hand clothes with the other. It makes no secret of its mission to ‘help the poor unfortunates’, to ‘rehabilitate’ Travellers; and Travellers, seeing how they are regarded, may internalise this low, negative self-image (2000:42).

In other words, according to this argument, state policy vis-à-vis Travellers not only constructs them as dependent, impoverished, etc., it has, arguably, also helped make this image a reality by creating a ‘culture of dependency’ and a ‘culture of victimhood’ among Travellers.

While state policy is something of an easy target in these terms, interestingly, some of my informants argued that these ‘cultures’ have been maintained and reinforced by the TAOs. For instance, Paul (the coordinator of the Ballybane Traveller Youth Project [TYP]), having just attended the launch of the GTM’s report on the Reality for Travellers in Galway City (2006), argued that ‘the victim mentality they adopted

\textsuperscript{130} ‘The visiting teacher acts as a bridge between Traveller families, schools and other services in relation to the education of Traveller children’ (Department of Education and Skills website, ‘Special Services and Extra Supports,’ accessed 20/09/10).
actually set the Traveller movement back years. There are lots of non- Travellers in the same boat, but you don’t hear them asking for special treatment’ (04/12/06). Later, during an interview, he continued:

> These organisations are taking away a certain amount of onus from Travellers to respond in a responsible, mature way to some of their own problems. They start to think that their problems aren’t their fault, that they can’t help it. And then, Travellers actually become victimised because of this lack of responsibility. It gives the settled community more ammunition to throw (31/01/07).

Significantly, though relatively widespread, these arguments about state and TAO discourse on Travellers having produced a Traveller ‘culture of dependency’ and a Traveller ‘culture of victimhood’ are not necessarily supported by evidence on the ground. In terms of a ‘culture of dependency’, most Travellers in Ballybane, whatever their economic situation, do make full use of the Traveller specific services offered, and also universal services such as social benefits and charitable donations. However, rather than reflecting dependency or an internalised sense of need and inferiority, as I discuss in Section 3.4 below, an alternative possibility is that, at least, some Travellers simply use this image or construction strategically – it is adopted in specific contexts to make extra/easy money or to get special treatment. Indeed, this alternative interpretation is supported by the fact that most of my Traveller informants, rather than expressing a sense of dependency on Settled society, or on the state more specifically, expressed a

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131 Paradoxically, while both Jason and Paul criticise this construction of Travellers as essentially needy, impoverished, dependent, and victimised, the TYP (which they both work for) reinforces, if not co-produces, it at the local level of Ballybane. In and through the TYP, Travellers (or at least Traveller males of a certain age) are targeted as ‘in need’ of its services simply by virtue of being Travellers. When challenged on this issue, Jason admitted ‘we have to play the game to get the funding.’ In other words, as Baumann (1996) argued with respect to minority ‘communities’ in Southall, it appears that people are often forced to play the game according to the format set by state policy.

132 In similar terms, Kenny (1994:186) argues that, while statements and images of victimage ‘are powerful and strategic tools [in campaigns calling for Traveller rights], they do not provide an alternative to models of Travellers currently held by many sedentary people, hostile and friendly; and they clearly do not provide a healthy basis for sense of identity for Travellers.’

133 A classic case of this was an elderly Traveller woman who, though reportedly a rich money lender in Ballybane, frequently appealed to the SVP society for financial help. Indeed, though I also frequently saw her in the city centre begging, she reportedly sold the free coal she received from the state in winter (because of her age) from her back garden.
pride in Travellers’ inherent ability to ‘adapt’, ‘get by’ and ‘survive’ in any circumstances. Further, their ingenuity and independence in this respect was usually contrasted with the relative dependence of the settled ‘community’ (see ‘Traveller Economy’ in Section 3.4). 134

Also contradicting the idea of a Traveller ‘culture of dependency’, it is widely acknowledged locally that there is a wide distribution of wealth within the Traveller ‘community’ (both in Ballybane and in Ireland more generally). While some families clearly do live up (or down) to the label ‘impoverished’, others are reputed to be multi-millionaires. Indeed, it was generally acknowledged among Traveller and non-Traveller informants alike that Ballybane Travellers are not necessarily any more impoverished than the population of Ballybane in general. For instance, James (a Settled informant), discussing the provision of a Traveller specific school bus service in the area, argued,

The Traveller community gets special treatment. For example, my kids were going to school, lashing wet day, and a bus full of Travellers being brought to school, where they’re fed and everything else, passes by. Now, the argument would go that these kids... their parents weren’t feeding them in the morning and so on... But a lot of the Settled kids were the same. So to say that the Traveller community is the only ones that are disadvantaged is just wrong (interview 08/08/06).

Similarly, Maggie (a Traveller), discussing the proposed change in the local Traveller pre-school to a universal service argued - ‘You see there’s Settled families here that have needs too. I’d know lots of Settled kids that have no one to deal with them either. So, we need to take in them kids too’ (interview 04/04/07). Indeed, the fact that it was Galway’s Interagency Working Group on Travellers (a state body [see Section 3.5 below]) that proposed this universalisation suggests that this aspect of popular discourse is being filtered upwards to national state discourse in at least some respects.

134 Though in a different context, Michael Collins (a Traveller and Traveller advocate) argues in this respect that ‘it would be interesting to compare a group of Travellers with a group of settled people living in similar circumstances. I think Travellers might be the ones to show initiative and creativity in finding ways to improve their situation’ (1994:132).
In terms of a Traveller ‘culture of victimhood’, certainly, the Travellers I became familiar with during my fieldwork, whenever the issue came up, claimed that Travellers were the main ‘victims’ of ‘racism’ in Ireland. However, Settled and immigrant informants made similar claims about their ‘communities’ (see Section 5.3). Accordingly, any claims regarding the existence of a ‘culture of victimhood’ must, arguably, be extended to these ‘communities’ also.


In 1981 a Travelling People Review Body [hereafter RB] was established by the central government ‘to review current policies and services for the travelling people and to make recommendations to improve the current situation’ (1983:1).\(^{135}\) In its published report (*Report of the Travelling People Review Body* [RB 1983]) the term ‘itinerants’ is rejected in favour of ‘travellers’, who are referred to as,

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\text{[A]n identifiable group of people, identified both by themselves and by other members of the community (referred to for convenience as the ‘settled community’) as people with their own distinctive life style, traditionally of a nomadic nature but not now habitual wanderers. They have needs, wants and values, which are different in some ways from those of the settled community (1983:6).}
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It also stated that ‘[t]he abandonment of the nomadic way of life does not automatically entail the renunciation of the traveller ethic, nor integration with the settled community’ (*ibid*). Accordingly, it reinforced the dominant popular ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse on Travellers by correlating a reified Traveller ‘lifestyle’ with a separate, essentialised, and largely homogeneous, Traveller ‘community’.

\(^{135}\) Three of the National Council representatives on the Review Body were Travellers (Ní Shuinéar 1998:8)
Settled Traveller – Transient Traveller

Subsequent to the Review Body’s report, the state adapted its settlement policy on ‘travellers’ at the national level. Rather than marking a turning point in state thinking towards the (what would appear more dominant) ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ construction of Travellers, however, the state (as Galway council had been forced to do at a more local level) moved towards the provision of targeted services for Travellers as an interim step to eventual absorption into the general/Settled ‘community’. For instance, while (on the RB’s recommendation) a number of Traveller training centres were opened throughout the country (including one in Galway city) around this time, rather than being organised in terms of Traveller ‘lifestyle’ (with the aim of contributing to this), the state stipulated that they were ‘intended to facilitate integration through the teaching of life skills and preparation for wage-work’ (Helleiner 2000:224). The central tenets and long-term goals of such policies (though dressed up as ‘integration’), therefore, were little changed from the assimilation-based settlement programme of the previous twenty years.

Some movement towards more genuine ‘integration’ does appear to have been made. For instance, a small number of serviced halting sites were provided. However, these were deemed necessary for only a small minority of Travellers (those demanding them). Further, in disaggregating its targeted population in these terms, state policy constructed a division within Traveller identity in terms of: Settled Travellers (those agreeing to live in houses) and Transient Travellers (those demanding trailers in halting sites). While the former were deemed malleable to settlement (at least in the long-term) the latter were not. They were constructed as essentially different.

This distinction (Settled Travellers - Transient Travellers) remains prominent, though largely implicit, in state discourse today, and has also made its way into popular discourse in many contexts. Significantly, the implication in this framework is not just that some Travellers are settled in physical terms, but that this is symptomatic of their possessing less Traveller ‘culture’, and, by extension, a less essentialist Traveller identity. This implication is clearly conveyed by Minster Fahy in the following interview extract:
Minister Fahy 27/10/06
Me: When you say there is a distinct Traveller culture – what is Traveller culture?

F: To me it is the culture of being nomadic. It’s a culture that was there in the past in particular. I would recognise the right of Travellers to travel around when they want to, and I think the genuine Travellers, the traditional Travellers who lived on the side of the road, and for whom that is still a very important part of their culture, one of the difficulties that we now have is that we should have sites that they can use when they are travelling, and we don’t. Of course, the vast majority of Travellers now want to live in permanent accommodation (emphasis added).

Despite its growing dominance, this distinction between Transient and Settled Travellers has attracted a lot of criticism. The GTM, for instance, argues that the increase in the numbers of housed Travellers reflects, not the existence of such a dualism, but the fact that alternative accommodation choices are not usually provided as an option (GTM 2006). More generally, however, criticism centres, not on the distinction per se (which many Travellers themselves often make), but on the moral and cultural implications usually associated with it (i.e., the implication that ‘settled’ is descriptive of a diluted, less genuine identity [Settled] rather than merely a housing situation [settled]). Indeed, the Coordinator of the GTM claimed during interview that the distinction was strategically constructed by the state to aid assimilation:

Coordinator of GTM 29/06/06
I believe that the term ‘Settled Traveller’ is part of the oppression. Now, I know a lot of Travellers use it, but I believe that (well it’s not just my belief actually, it’s Pavee Point’s, it’s a lot of Travellers’) the term ‘Settled Traveller’ was thought up by the state who thought that by putting Settled with Traveller you make the Traveller part look a bit better, more acceptable to people – ‘Ah, sure you’re grand, you’re a Settled Traveller.’ It’s patronising, and it’s all part of assimilation.

In terms of the Traveller population themselves, most of my Traveller informants argued that the term ‘Settled Traveller’ has no meaning in terms of Travellers’ own conceptualisations of Traveller identity. The vast majority claimed that, rather than
“culture”, accommodation type, or lifestyle (including whether one is settled or transient), Traveller identity is based purely on ‘blood’ (biological descent\textsuperscript{136}):

\textbf{Down at the X ‘site’\textsuperscript{137} with Jason 06/02/07}

Mary, a middle-aged Traveller woman, sat in the corner of the kitchen/family room, nursing her young grandchild. When I asked about the changes for Travellers in the last twenty years, she explained that two of her grandparents were not Travellers - one grandfather used to be in the army and married a Traveller woman, and the other grandmother married a Traveller man. I asked her whether they would have become Travellers when they got married, and she argued that ‘the only way that you can become a Traveller is if you are born one. So, if you have one Traveller parent, that’s it, you’re a Traveller for life.’

Listening to this discussion, Enda (Mary’s nineteen year old son), who had been sitting at the kitchen table with me, interrupted asking me whether I think there is such a thing as a ‘Settled Traveller’, I said that I didn’t know, and turned the question on him. He claimed, in a tone that left no room for misinterpretation, that there is not. When I asked him why, he explained that ‘if you are born a Traveller - living in a house will have no affect on that.’ I asked whether he thinks that his grandchildren will still be Travellers. Both he and Mary answered almost simultaneously - in the affirmative. Mary explained ‘Traveller culture - the horses, the scrap, and the side of the road [living] - will have disappeared by that time. It’s happening already. You hardly get anyone speaking Cant anymore.’\textsuperscript{138} ‘But’, she continued, ‘there will always be Travellers because if you’re born a Traveller you’re a Traveller, and that’s that.’

\textsuperscript{136} This context is just one of several where the term ‘blood’ was used by my Traveller informants. The contexts of such usage suggested that the term referred to ‘bloodline’ (i.e., the conceptualisation of ‘descent’ traditionally associated with folk discourse in Western [Euro-American] contexts - that kinship relationships are based on, can be read off from, the natural/biological process of procreation) (Schneider 1968).

\textsuperscript{137} ‘Sites’ is the term used by locals to refer to the three Traveller specific housing schemes [groups of eight to ten houses] which were built to house former residents from Hillside who refused to move into standard mixed accommodation (see Section 3.4).

\textsuperscript{138} Cant is generally regarded as being the Traveller language, though its uniqueness is questioned by some who argue that it is simply a dialect of the Irish Gaelic language. While some of my informants argued that children learn it from infancy, and that, while secret, it is alive and well within the Traveller ‘community’; others, like Mary, argued that it is dying out, and most children do not speak or understand it.
Travelling with Jason 22/01/07
I chatted to Frank [a twenty one year old Traveller male] at the computer in Jason’s office while waiting for him to return. He described how he was born in a trailer in Dublin but, having lived in a house for nearly ten years, wouldn’t move back to the road now even if given the chance. He explained that some Travellers say they would prefer to still live ‘on the road,’ but he ‘doesn’t see the appeal.’ He explained that it is too cold and uncomfortable a life for him. ‘Surely if you don’t actually travel then Travellers will disappear?’ I claimed. He totally rejected this arguing that ‘being a Traveller is something you have in you. You’re born with it, and you can’t get away from it. Once you’re a Traveller, you’re always a Traveller, no matter if you live on the road or not.’

Kathleen 18/01/07
K: I was born up in Ballina lovie. I was born in a house, but I’m married to a Traveller since I was sixteen years. I didn’t know how to go to a house to ask for a thing or do anything like the Travellers. Jim [her husband] use to do it. I couldn’t do it. But I had to get use to it.

Me: So, would you count yourself a Traveller now?

K: Well, sometimes I would, but the ones round here [gestures to the ‘site’ outside] still call me a buffer.

Me: And even though you weren’t born a Traveller, would all your kids count themselves as Travellers?

K: They do. Jim was a Traveller. So, they were born Travellers.

Maggie 04/04/07
When it comes to being a Traveller, I would say you don’t have a choice. You’re born a Traveller. Now, no one can force you to identify with it, but even if you don’t, that doesn’t mean that you are any less a Traveller.

Josie 21/11/06
Me: What do you think of the term Settled- Traveller?

J: Well, my own feeling about it is that there is no Settled Traveller. See, you’re born a Traveller or you’re not… If there was a Traveller that was living in a house all their life, I’d still say they’re still a Traveller.
Although this dominant (descent-based) aspect of self-identity among my Traveller informants denies the congruence between ‘lifestyle’/‘culture’ and ‘community’ inherent in the dominant (state and popular) identity ascriptions, significantly, it is no less ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’. Indeed, by constructing a bounded and essentialised Traveller ‘community’ based on ‘bloodline’ or biological descent, it arguably constitutes ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ in its most traditional (biological) terms. Accordingly, it contributes to the dominance of the ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse surrounding Traveller identity more generally.\textsuperscript{139}

While this ‘Settled Traveller - Transient Traveller’ division remains part of the dominant discourse in most contexts, it is important to emphasise that it by no means overrides, or even, in most contexts, diminishes the importance or the centrality of the ‘Traveller - Settled’ division. This was highlighted by Lisa (a Settled informant who has worked with Traveller children in Ballybane for twenty four years) when I mentioned the problem many Travellers have with the term Settled Traveller during interview.

Lisa 24/04/07
L: Well, if you’re a Traveller, you’re a Traveller, certainly in the eyes of the Settled community. There’s no getting away from that, even if you’ve been settled for many, many years. Like, you know the Travellers living in houses in Bohermore, they must be third generation, and they’re still ‘Travellers’.

Me: And do they identify as Travellers?
L: They’re not going to be allowed to be anything else. They are Travellers and that’s that.\textsuperscript{140}

\textsuperscript{139} Significantly, in terms of suggesting the generalisability of my findings and conclusions in this regard (see Section 1.2), Okely argues that self-identity based on biological descent is also common to many Romani and Gypsy groups throughout Europe. With respect to English Gypsies, for instance, she claims, ‘They use “blood” as a metaphor for ethnic continuity’ (1982:35).

\textsuperscript{140} This argument reflects the issue I mentioned in Section 1.2 with respect to the difficulty Travellers appear to have in permanent ‘passing’.

In 1995 the Report of the Task Force on the Travelling Community (hereafter TF 1995) was published. It updated and replaced the RB’s 1983 report. In this report, both ‘Traveller’ and ‘Settled’ were consistently capitalised, the Traveller situation was redefined ‘in terms of cultural rights as opposed to simply being a poverty issue’ (1995:65), and relations between ‘the Traveller community’ and ‘the Settled community’ were described as ‘intercultural’ – Explicitly, at least, both were portrayed as having distinct yet equally valuable ‘cultures’. In a section on relationships between the Traveller and the Settled communities, for instance, it noted that ‘[t]he Task Force believes that it is imperative that both communities play a role in fostering understanding, consideration and respect for each others’ culture’ (1995:62). Later, in a section on ‘culture’, it stated: ‘It is clear that the Traveller community’s culture is distinct and different. Settled people generally recognise the difference but fail to understand it as a cultural difference. This is a phenomenon characteristic of many societies, where the majority culture sees itself as holding a universal validity or norm in relation to values, meaning and identity’ (1995:71). In its discussion of the Equal Status legislation it recommended specifically that ‘the Equal Status legislation would define Travellers in a manner that acknowledges their distinct culture and identity’ (1995:82).

And, finally, throughout the report, during discussions on accommodation, education and healthcare, the TF argued that the distinct ‘culture and identity’ of the Traveller ‘community’ should be recognised and taken into account in state policy.

‘Culture’ is defined in the report as a ‘package of customs, traditions, symbols, values, phrases, and other forms of communication by which we can belong to a community’ (TF 1995:76). ‘The belonging,’ we are told, ‘is in understanding the meaning of these cultural forms and in sharing values and identity. Culture is the way we learn to think, behave and do things’ (ibid). Corresponding to this conceptualisation, ‘Traveller culture’ is defined as ‘that distinct complex mix of values, traditions, customs and patterns of

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141 The Task Force included representation from the TAOs, though, significantly, not actual Travellers.
behaviour that are shared by the Traveller community and practised in their daily lives. This involves a specific field of communication, meaning and belonging’ (ibid:74). While this definition has much in common with the dominant contemporary anthropological conceptualisation described in Section 1.1 (indeed, at one point ‘culture’ is described as ‘dynamic, complex, changing and not static’ [ibid]), the Task Force went on to reify and essentialise ‘Traveller culture’ by listing its ‘visible or tangible markers’ (‘the cultural stuff’ [Barth 1969]): ‘Traveller nomadism, the importance of the extended family, the Traveller language, and the structure of the Traveller economy’ (1995:76).142 In doing so, the Task Force report arguably proceeded along the ‘racialist’/’ethnicist’ path laid by the RB report (1983). It constructed a distinct Traveller ‘community’ essentially bound together by their possession of a reified ‘Traveller culture’.143

To a large degree, the standardised and largely visible manifestations of Traveller ‘culture’ highlighted in the TF’s report are also those highlighted in both state and popular discourse on Traveller identity (at all levels from the national to the local) today. For instance, they are often reflected in the state’s targeted Traveller services (see below). Similarly, when I questioned informants (whether Traveller or Settled) directly in terms of ‘Traveller culture’ or ‘Traveller identity’ or indirectly in terms of the differences between Travellers and Settled people, they tended to offer a reified and largely standardised list of the cultural manifestations. The following interview extracts illustrate just some examples of this:

142 Significantly, as Ní Shuinéar (1998:15-16) points out, the Task Force was selective in its construction of ‘Traveller culture’ in these terms. While these characteristics (previously earmarked for solution) have been granted ‘culture’ status, ‘other features, notably Travellers’ non-literary and characteristically selective participation in state medical and school provision, remain objectionable and as such are never recognised as deliberate cultural choices, but rather rationalised as a product of Traveller incomprehension/ignorance and majority society’s failure to render them accessible.’ The view taken, she points out, seems to be ‘culture is good, so the bits we don’t like don’t count.’

143 The Task Force did devote a number of sections in its report to Traveller women and Travellers with disabilities. In so doing, it, admittedly, took a small step towards ‘de-racialisation’/’de-ethnicisation’. However, ultimately, as Helleiner argues, ‘the acknowledgement that culture was constructed within wider gendered relations of power and could be dynamic, contested and differentiated by (at least) gender, class, and age was an important insight that was largely absent from the rest of the report’ (2000:238).
Jim (Traveller) 17/06/06
Me: What is Traveller culture?

J: I was talking to a Traveller recently, and you know, the only thing that we had in common was that for both of us the most important things in life are family and money. So I suppose that’s Traveller culture.

Paul (Settled) 24/10/06
Me: When you say Traveller culture – what is that?

P: Well, you have things like the horses and the scrap, but then you also have… this sort of proneness to violence with any sort of excuse, and maybe – unwillingness to become legitimate business people or workers, this sort of hand-out, grab-all, culture.

Josie (Traveller) 21/11/06
Me: Well, what is Traveller culture?

J: Well, I suppose nomadism would be the big one. But then there’s the horses, the scrap, there’s song, there’s poetry, there’s music, there’s the whole way of, I suppose, how we communicate. You know, there’s our values, our customs, our beliefs and religion.

Maggie (Traveler) 04/04/07
M: You don’t need to travel to be a Traveller. You just need to keep your culture.

Me: So, what’s the culture?

M: The culture’s the language and what you do. You know. And that’s what I have. I speak a lot of Cant above in my house. I speak Cant every day, and my kids understand what I’m saying. And, they go and collect scrap every day. That’s their culture you see.

In general, therefore, the list of manifestations included some or all of the following: nomadism; specific areas of employment (particularly scrap collection and horse-trading) and a specific economic mindset; strong emphasis on family; and language. The dominance of such constructions, however, is best revealed by looking at the most predominant in detail.
Nomadism

In the past, the physical act of travelling seems to have been central to Traveller identity as constructed in and through both state and popular discourse. This is evident in the content of early literary coverage (see Section 3.1) and in the definitions of itinerants in the 1963 CI report (see Section 3.2). As settlement of Travellers has increased in physical terms, however, a literal focus on mobility has largely been replaced by a focus on a history of nomadism (see, for example, definition of ‘travellers’ in the RB [1983] report in Section 3.3). Reconstruction in such terms became necessary in state policy when the situation of Travellers on the ground no longer fitted the original definitions of the target group. Indeed, when I interviewed Minister Fahy, ‘history of nomadism’ was one of the main aspects of contemporary ‘Traveller culture’ he highlighted. Explaining this emphasis, he claimed: ‘I have talked to psychologists in recent times who are dealing with young Traveller children, and they have said “one of the amazing things is that, when you ask a young Traveller child, who may be second or third generation housed, to draw something, they’ll still draw the old caravan that was used in days gone by”’ (interview 27/10/06).

At the more local level, while mobility is still quite high among some young Traveller men in Ballybane (who travel intermittently, mainly to England or other parts of the country, for economic reasons), for other Travellers it is limited to the summer holidays (when some families board up their houses and head off to Connemara, England, or to visit extended family in other parts of Ireland for two or three months), and, for others still, it is no different to that of the average Settled person. Reflecting this changed context, as Minister Fahy claimed at the wider level, ‘history of nomadism’ appears to be replacing actual nomadism in constructions of Traveller ‘culture’ in local level discourse. Several local project workers (both Traveller and Settled), for instance, described similar scenarios to Minister Fahy’s psychologists in terms of the Traveller children they work with and the identities they express. In this respect, it appears that it is memories of travelling rather than the actuality of travelling that are being passed
down through the generations. One Traveller informant described this in the following terms:

Josie 21/11/06
J: I think the longing to travel way will always stay with Travellers.

Me: Even for kids who are born in and brought up in houses?

J: Well, with my own kids there’s definitely a longing there. It’s passed down you see. You’re telling your children what it was like when you were travelling, and then the wanting starts in them.

While this adaptation in terms of nomadism (from actual nomadism to a history of nomadism) appears widespread, it is important to point out a significant difference between state discourse and Traveller discourse in this respect. According to state discourse, the decline in nomadism is reflective of a lifestyle choice made by most Travellers to move (and even ‘progress’) towards conventional modern living conditions (see Section 3.3 above). For many Travellers, however, nomadism is regarded as the desired, ideal, if not the natural, state for Travellers. Given the choice, and conditions making it feasible, many claimed they would return to ‘the side of the road’ in the morning. One Traveller claimed, ‘I just can’t cope in the house. I get depressed. It’s like I get claustrophobic not being able to see out all the windows at once’ (Nora, visiting with SVP 12/03/07). In similar terms, Maggie asserted:

I’m just so tired of sitting looking at the walls. See, we love freedom. You could say we’re like the birds. I love being outside, and that was the trailer Nichola. You’d be outside in the morning, you had to wash outside... nearly everything was done outside. That’s going to be with me for the rest of my life. So, I have no interest in my house whatsoever (interview 04/04/07).

Accordingly, many argued that they have been forced to settle. For instance, Josie argued that, ‘with all the legislation on trespass, and there being no halting sites, and boulders and mounds of dirt in places where Travellers use to stop, you can’t move

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144 Significantly, Judith Okely made a similar observation with respect to Gypsies in southwest England in the 1970s. ‘The desire to travel is considered to be an inherited quality,’ she argues (1982:128).
anywhere you want anymore’ (interview 21/11/06), while Eamon argued, ‘I can’t go back to the road now or I’d lose the dole and the medical card. And, sure, I wouldn’t be able anyway because the kids have to go to school’ (interview 19/09/06). Of course, not all Travellers feel this way. Many (particularly the younger generations) argued that they would not go back to ‘the side of the road’ even if they had the chance, and (in line with the tendency to dis-associate Traveller ‘culture’ and Traveller identity [see Section 3.3 above]) implied no ill-effects on their Traveller identity in consequence.

In the face of declining nomadism, the TAOs (arguably as part of their bid to prove Traveller ‘ethnic’ status [see Section 3.5 below]) have constructed the explicitly ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ concept of ‘nomadic mindset’. This concept reclaims nomadism (albeit in a reconstructed, more psychological, form) as a natural or inherent commonality between all Travellers (whether they are aware of it or not). It refers to the belief that mobility and rootlessness constitutes the normal and desirable condition. Michael McDonagh describes it in the following terms:

[F]or Travellers, the physical fact of moving is just one aspect of a nomadic mind-set that permeates every aspect of our lives. Nomadism entails a way of looking at the world, a different way of perceiving things, a different attitude to accommodation, to work and to life in general (1994:95, cited in McVeigh 2007:111).

While my Traveller informants never directly professed the possession of a ‘nomadic mindset’, I did encounter sentiments and attitudes that could be viewed as evidence of its existence. As well as the more direct sentiments of ‘longing’ to take to the road expressed, for example, in Maggie, Nora and Josie’s laments above, there does appear to be a reluctance among Travellers in Ballybane to set down roots. This was particularly evident in the fact that when my Traveller informants grew in terms of wealth, they tended to invest in (and took great pride in displaying) ever bigger and more expensive vehicles rather than property.145 Indeed, on a wider scale, according to the 2006 census,

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145 Though I did not research this in any systematic way, my own experience of living in the Settled ‘community’ in Ireland, and also speaking to Settled informants in Ballybane (many of whom have bought their houses from the council since moving here) suggests that Settled people tend to invest growing
while 89% of Irish Travellers in Ireland lived at the same address one year previous to enumeration (CSO, Census 2006 Vol.5, Table 30:51), and 69% of Travellers residing in private households lived in permanent accommodation (CSO, Census 2006, Principle Demographic Results Table 30:78), only 21% of Traveller households own or are in the process of buying the property they reside in from the local authority (CSO, Census 2006, Vol.5, Table 41:62) compared to 74.7% of households in the state as a whole (CSO, Census 2006, Vol.6, Table 19:49).

With the decline in nomadism the most visible marker of Traveller identity has arguably been lost. However, rather than Travellers becoming unremarkable and unrecognisable within the general population, a series of more subtle, though arguably equally reliable, identity markers are now generally highlighted. As the following series of interview extracts illustrate, these markers range from phenotype to the type of dust bins outside one’s house.

Alice (Settled) 19/02/07
Me: Now that Travellers have moved into houses, is there a difference between Traveller families and settled families?

A: [Laughs] How long have you been up here? You don’t know to look at them? I know to look at them.

Me: Really? How?

A: Because a lot of them are related. They all look like each other. And, it’s also the language that they use - when they open their mouths you know. They have a different accent.

Damien (Settled) 21/10/06
D: Travellers look different. You can tell a Traveller by the way he looks generally, and the way he talks - they have a Traveller accent. 146

wealth in property.

146 It is difficult to describe the accent highlighted by these informants. While it is recognisably Irish, it cannot be associated with any specific county, and, perhaps more interesting, it does not appear to be limited to Irish Travellers in Ireland. When, for example, one of the boys from the TYP brought some English cousins to the club, despite the fact that they were born and brought up in England, they too had this distinct accent.
Me: The way he looks?

D: Physically, like he’s got wiry hair, and sometimes the way they’re dressed.

Franny (Settled) 08/09/06
Me: And, how would you identify someone as a Traveller?

F: Well, their names first of all. And their facial features really - they look very… I suppose if you know a lot of the Travellers, and there are only so many families around Galway, there is a genuine family resemblance. So, you’d know them like.

Josie (Traveller) 21/11/06
If there were a thousand Settled people, and one Traveller, you could identify the Traveller from the thousand. Their language gives it away. You know what I mean - their accent? And the way they dress, their earrings - you know what I mean – just a particular style?

Brendan 23/01/07
Me: Would everyone know who are Travellers and who are Settled?

B: One of the ways to know, without even looking into their houses, is to look at the waste disposal bins. Most of the Traveller families have just three grey bins, the non-recyclable ones, because Travellers don’t recycle - because of the reading and writing thing. Not all Traveller families would be like that now, but you could be guaranteed that most houses with the three grey bins outside are the Traveller families. The vans is the other thing - everyone, from the minute they’re able to drive – has a Hiace van.

Maggie (Traveller) 04/04/07
I had this problem with Ned. I’m going back now about two years. Ned was down at a local garage, and he put Diesel in his van, but put in over and above by a few cents. He gave the lad working there €10 or something, but the man wanted the few cents. Ned didn’t have it, so he said to Ned ‘You’re all the same.’ Now, Ned says to him ‘What do you mean by that?’ ‘Ah you knackers are all the same,’ he said… Anyway, when I came back from work that day, Ned was in the kitchen, and he explained what happened and how embarrassed he was. But then he said to me - ‘Mummy, I don’t even look like a Traveller.’ Oh Nichola, I could have killed him. I found it very hurtful
Further indication of the significance of subtle indicators of Traveller identity in everyday interaction emerged during discussions with Traveller informants about conscious attempts to ‘pass’, ‘hide’ or ‘tone down’ their identity in particular mixed contexts (e.g., when trying to get into pubs or nightclubs or trying to book venues for celebrations). Particular aspects of identity highlighted in these terms included style of dress and surnames. In terms of style of dress, most informants highlighted the association of large earrings with Traveller females and baker boy style caps with Traveller males. In terms of ‘surnames’, many informants claimed that, particularly when trying to book venues for weddings, first holy communion celebrations, etc. if their surname is one popularly associated with Travellers, they usually provide a false one.

Family

Although, as Travellers are drawn further into the modern Capitalist world through settlement, individualism and the nuclear family are necessarily gaining in importance, (particularly in economic terms), for most Travellers, ‘family group’ (extended family [though how far out this extends is changeable and ambiguous]) appears to be the primary basis of identity. This is evident in Ballybane in the fact that most Travellers work with, socialise with, and often marry into extended family.

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147 As well as highlighting the importance of phenotype in Travellers’ own constructions of Traveller identity, this interview extract conveys the kind of ambivalent feelings that Goffman (1963) argues all stigmatised groups tend to have in terms of their own identity (see Section 1.2).

148 Though the term ‘cover’/‘covering’ was not used by my informants, such identity manipulation is reflective of Goffman’s (1963) discussion of ‘passing’ and ‘covering’ among ‘stigmatised groups’ in general (see Section 1.2).

149 Traveller identity association in terms of surname appears to vary by county. Surnames popularly associated with Travellers in Galway include Mangan, Ward, Sweeney, Delany, McDonagh and Barrett.

150 Its importance was explained to me by Lisa (a Settled teacher with twenty four years of experience working with the Travellers in Ballybane) in the following terms: ‘I had this conversation with a Traveller child one day. He said to me “are you a Barrett or a Donavan?”’ So, I said, “well, actually, I’m a Jenkins,”
Significantly, it appears that the importance of extended family to Traveller identity is being incorporated into, and thereby reinforced by, state policy (at least at the level of local government). With respect to the local Council in Galway, for instance, the three ‘sites’ (see footnote 137) in Ballybane were designed around this model of ‘community’. Consequent to the demands of the tenants themselves, each ‘site’ houses one, or a few closely affiliated, extended families. Further, while the Council purport to have no policy regarding the housing of Travellers in mixed estates, many of my non-Traveller informants argued that residential clusters of Travellers have emerged throughout the area because the Council caters to Travellers refusing to accept any housing allocation unless it is sufficiently close to their extended family (or sufficiently far from certain other extended families).

Though some acknowledged their own part in the creation of the ‘sites’, Traveller informants, unsurprisingly, denied any favouritism in terms of Council housing allocation. Indeed, a few, while highlighting the importance of extended family, claimed that housing arrangements organised around extended family can be detrimental to relations therein. As Maggie (who lives in a mixed housing estate) argued in terms of the ‘sites’ – ‘There’s nothing but Travelling people there. All together. They’re too packed in, too closed in. Everybody’s looking into each others’ kitchens. Simple things cause arguments’ (interview 04/04/07). Indeed, Pavee Point has issued a similar warning at the national level:

Authorities have invoked the Traveller value of extended family to validate grouping housing allocations in local authority estates, but the Travellers’ cultural practice of extended family clusters living in close proximity was traditionally twinned with the practice of separating and coming together within the nomadic framework. Living in fixed close quarters often threatens the maintenance of good internal relationships for a people accustomed to freedom and space, and to moving in times of tension (2005a:58).

and he sighed “Ahhh, I think you’re a Barrett”… With Travellers you have to be pinned down that way’ (24/04/07).
Although this family orientated aspect of identity does not appear to be limited to the Traveller ‘community’ in Irish society, the difference with respect to Travellers is that the importance of extended family is not just acknowledged, it is incorporated into ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ constructions thereof. The importance of extended family is constructed as an essential/natural aspect of the Traveller ‘community’, and individual Travellers, by extension, though somewhat tautologically, are constructed as having a natural propensity or tendency to amalgamate into family groups.

Outside of the extended family itself, each extended family group has (usually long-standing) positive or negative (feuding) affiliations with a number of other extended family groups.\textsuperscript{151} Beyond this, again, though often crosscutting it, are spatial associations, firstly, within the city (for instance, in some contexts, there is an identity line constructed between ‘Eastside Travellers’ [where Ballybane is located] and ‘Westside Travellers’), and, secondly, between cities or counties, (for instance, in some contexts ‘Galway Travellers’ are compared and contrasted with ‘Limerick Travellers’,

\textsuperscript{151} This aspect of the Traveller ‘community’ is as widely acknowledged by non-Travellers as it is by Travellers themselves. For instance, Anne, a Settled Irish informant conveyed the situation in the following rather comical terms:

\begin{quote}
Anne 23/03/07
Me: Is there a Traveller community in Ballybane?
A: Oh, absolutely - there’s about four of them [laughs].
Me: What do you mean?
A: Well, the Donavans and the MacDonaghs and Delanys won’t mix. There’d be murder. So that’s two sets of communities. And then, the Delanys won’t mix with the Barretts, so that’s another…
\end{quote}

The situation also appears to correspond with the situation among English Gypsies observed by Judith Okely in the 1970s. Okely asserts, ‘numbers of families tend to form political clusters with a history of association: regular visiting where possible, monopolies of camping land against rival Travellers, shared encampments, economic cooperation and mutual aid. These clusters may join together in disputes and offer assistance, possibly with physical force…’ (1982:172-3).
‘Dublin Travellers’, etc.\footnote{As Nora remarked, ‘people talk about the Travelling community, but there are things that Travellers from Limerick would do that Travellers here in Galway wouldn’t do, and likewise - things that we would do that they wouldn’t’ (Down visiting the Y ‘site’ with SVP 12/03/07).} In terms of self-identity, the Traveller ‘community’ writ large, if mentioned at all, usually came in behind all these alternative identities.\footnote{This is something that the coordinator of the GTM claimed makes the work of TAOs particularly difficult. ‘It is hard to get Travellers to even attend meetings to discuss issues for fear that they will encounter families with which they are feuding, let alone present a united front when calling for their rights’, she argued.}

Of course, despite this ‘family orientated’ aspect of Traveller self-identity, when it comes to most non-Travellers, Travellers are still constructed as first and foremost a homogeneous ‘community’ (albeit a ‘community’ of extended family groups), and are faced with all the negative implications of that. Edward (a middle-aged Traveller informant) describes this paradox very effectively in the following interview extract.

\textbf{Edward 19/09/06}

\textit{Me: Do you think that there is such a thing now as the Travelling ‘community’?}

\textit{E: I’d say it’s whether they’re a Sweeney or a Ward or whatever - that is more important. Now the way I look at it, we should be together as a group, all Travellers, it doesn’t matter what ‘name’ [his term for extended family group]. And if you go back and look at relatives down the line, you’ll see that some of us could be second cousins – Sweeneys, Mangans, and Wards, whoever. But that doesn’t matter, they’ll go out tomorrow morning and try and kill each other. We seem to be lacking in looking at ourselves in this way, though Settled people and the media comes along and classes us all as Travellers. Whenever a Traveller does something, it’s always ‘a member of the Travelling community’. Travellers are all classed together.}

\section*{Traveller economy}

The idea of a ‘Traveller economy’ was prevalent in discourse on Traveller identity up until about the 1950s. At that time, it referred to the traditional occupations (including tinsmith and peddler) Travellers had in rural society. In the 1950s and 1960s, however, modernisation eliminated demand for many of these occupations and, for some forty or
fifty years thereafter, the ‘Traveller economy’ was conceptualised as a thing of the past in the dominant discourse on Travellers (Helleiner 2000).

While Travellers continued to be involved disproportionately in a number of occupations (for example, horse trading and scrap collection [where mainly scrap metal is collected from commercial waste and sold to a merchant]), the conceptualisation of a system of employment integral to the Traveller ‘community’ was only really reconstructed in the 1990s. Initially, this ‘racialised’/“ethnicised” construction was re-produced primarily by the TAOs (as part of their bid for ethnic status [see section 3.5 below]). Increasingly, however, it is being adopted and incorporated into both state and popular discourse, and it is now, accordingly, once again, part of the dominant discourse on Traveller identity.

The GTM, in line with the main national advocacy organisations (the Irish Traveller Movement and Pavee Point), construct ‘the Traveller economy’ in the following terms:

The Traveller economy is characterised by: Self employment…; Income basis,… a focus on income generation rather than job creation or career development; Extended family, the basic economic unit within the Traveller economy; Home base; Flexibility, in moving from one economic activity to another as opportunities for profit emerge; [and] Multi-skills, having a bank of skills to draw upon allows for a degree of flexibility (GTM 2006:43&119).

In this construction, the overall character or structure of the system is emphasised rather than any particular occupations.154 Accordingly, the centrality of the ‘Traveller economy’ to Traveller identity is resurrected - The ‘Traveller economy’ did not disappear in the 1950s. Travellers simply adapted within it by moving into more varied, and, therefore, less visible, roles.

With respect to state (or rather state sponsored) discourse, the Task Force report (1995) incorporated both occupational and structural aspects in its construction of the ‘Traveller

154 Significantly, Okely constructs the Gypsy economy in southeast England in the 1970s in similar terms. She claims, ‘The [Gypsies’] skills and “traditions” in occupations lie not in the content of their occupations, but in their form. Some of the key factors… include the Gypsies’ preference for and successful practice of self employment and occupational flexibility’ (1982:33).
economy’. It asserted, ‘The term Traveller economy refers not only to the range of activities pursued by some Travellers, but also to the particular and distinct manner in which these activities are organised’ (1995:234). More recently, a report produced by the state sponsored High Level Group on Traveller Issues (hereafter HLG) (see Section 3.5 below) asserted: ‘Travellers have had a traditional preference for self-employment and display entrepreneurial skills’ (HLG 2006:9). Finally, at a more local level, a representative from the local state-funded FÁS training centre asserted during our interview, ‘I think that we can all acknowledge and agree that the most successful outlet for Travellers would be self-employment, because of their culture’ (08/08/06).

Despite the construction of the ‘Traveller economy’ as structurally (rather than occupationally) specific in such discourse, the state appears to have difficulty in applying this concept to policy in practical terms. In constructing and implementing Traveller targeted policy, or dealing with Travellers in more general policy, it tends to focus on specific occupations popularly occupied by Travellers (e.g., waste disposal and horse trading). While arguably necessary in terms of the pragmatics of policy implementation, this approach is nevertheless ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’. It reifies the ‘Traveller economy’ and essentialises the Traveller ‘community’ in accordance to this. This, in turn, may encourage, and even pressurise, individual Travellers to conform to this static, homogeneous image, and discourage the flexibility and adaptability highlighted in the more structurally based constructions.

Again, TAOs are not removed from the production and reinforcement of this reified construction of a ‘Traveller economy’. When negotiating with state institutions for Traveller rights and resources, arguably because it is easier and more likely to be effective, they often paint a simple, practical and static picture of what the ‘Traveller economy’ is, and therefore what recognition would involve in policy terms (e.g., the provision of space for storing and processing scrap in, and the provision of stables for keeping horses close to Traveller housing schemes). Such reification is clear in the following extract from an interview I had with a Traveller worker from the GTM:
GTM worker 21/11/06
What we’re pushing for is that certain centres will be opened up for Travellers to make their own stuff, rather than making Settled stuff - To do all the stuff they used to do years ago – the tin-smithing and flower making... Like, there’s a place in Dundalk and they do their own sculptures with copper. There’s Travellers who do tin-smithing, and I remember years and years ago, when the tin-smithing was more common, they would sell their hardware. So, there isn’t enough of this anymore. So, that’s what I really want in Ballybane. And, maybe open up something like a horse stables, because that’s a really big part of Traveller culture – horses.

Despite the strategic reasoning, again, such ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ constructions could arguably pressurise individual Travellers towards conformity, particularly if there are rewards (e.g., entitlements) for doing so.

Finally, with respect to Travellers themselves (on a more independent level), some of my Traveller informants produced constructions of a ‘Traveller economy’ and, by extension, Traveller identity, that were no less reified and essentialist than those produced by other players. Perhaps because it is very popular among the Travellers in Ballybane, scrap collection was the ‘occupation’ usually highlighted in these terms. The following interview and fieldnote extracts convey some examples of this:

Maggie 04/04/07
M: Travellers aren’t really into education. They don’t see the point. Most of us won’t get the kind of jobs you need schooling for, and we don’t really need it for the kinds of work we want to do – like scrap.

My three boys collect scrap. Now the Guards have been on to a lot of Travellers - taking scrap off them, taking their trolleys off them. They came to my house one morning, and my son had scrap, and they wanted to take it. And I told them that they would never take our culture from us, never take my sons culture from him, that it’s in his blood and he will do it.

Jim, my eldest, only went to secondary school for one year, and then started scrapping; and even though Michael is still at school, he does it

155 Many of the young Traveller males in Ballybane collect scrap in ‘trolleys’ – small, custom-made trailers which are attached to the back of push bicycles.
when he’s not at school, and when he’s done with school he’ll go into it as well. See, doing scrap is a family business. Jim teaches Michael all about scrapping and makes sure that he doesn’t get ripped off in his sales. Jim’s trolley was passed on to Michael when he got a van, and it will be passed to Paddy when Michael gets a van.

Now I know definitely, and I’m not just praising my son, Jim could turn his head to anything if he continued in school - he could become anything Nichola. But, he didn’t want to become anything - he wanted to be a scrap collector. It’s in his blood. That’s the way it is with the young Travelling men. That’s what they know and love.

**Down at the X ‘site’ with Jason, 27/04/07**

As we were standing in the street, Frank wandered past with one of the horses. Jason commented on him not being at school. He then recounted a funny encounter he had a few days previously - He was driving past the local primary school and saw four of the young Traveller lads wandering up the road carrying a load of scrap cradled in a make-shift sling. Jason laughed at their audacity considering they should have been inside the school. At this, Mary spoke in their defence. ‘Ah, but they can’t help it. They have to do the scrap. It’s just in their blood,’ she argued.

In both these examples, the emphasis on ‘blood’ (i.e., biologically based descent [see footnote 136]), again, implicates the speaker not only in ‘racialisation’/’ethnicisation’, but ‘racialisation’/’ethnicisation’ in biological terms.

In line with this role in their own ‘racialisation’/’ethnicisation’, Travellers sometimes assert the most direct or explicit pressure towards conformity on the part of individuals. It arguably leaves some individuals feeling forced into complying with an image that does not mean much to them in terms of their conceptualisation of the ‘Traveller economy’ or Traveller identity in general. The following extract from my field notes describes the effects of such pressure on one teenage male Traveller.

**TYP 16/11/06**

After the club tonight Paul and Henry described what had happened when, in an attempt to get to the bottom of his recent disruptive behaviour at the club, they had brought Darren to a local café and asked whether there was anything bothering him at home. After some avoidance of the issue, Darren suddenly exclaimed, ‘when he comes
back, it’s all “horses and scrap”, “horses and scrap”. It’s doing my head in.’ ‘He’ here refers to his father, who has just come out of prison, but who is apparently often away from home for extended periods for other reasons. The reason that this outburst was unusual is because Darren appears on the surface to be a stereotypical ‘Traveller’: he lives in one of the ‘sites’; he featured in the Scraplands documentary on Travellers and scrap collection filmed before my research began; and, at sixteen years of age, he is already quite successful at horse trading.

While these examples demonstrate that the ‘Traveller economy’ is often reified and essentialised in Traveller discourse, the ‘Traveller economy’ actually acted out/lived by Travellers in Ballybane is much closer to that emphasising structural distinctiveness. While a large number of Traveller men (particularly the older generation) are involved in scrap collection and horse trading, with the introduction of permits vis-a-vis scrap collection; the entrance of large scale commercial competitors to the waste disposal market; and laws regarding keeping horses in urban space, many Traveller families have branched out into other areas of economic activity.

Increasing numbers of Travellers are now taking up more mainstream employment opportunities, though the evidence suggests that they tend to ‘Travellerise’ these. For instance, while many of the Travellers in Ballybane have moved into the provision of security services (particularly in the building sector [providing 24 hour surveillance on building sites], but also increasingly in the retail and entertainment sectors), such businesses are largely organised around extended family, and run using, what one informant referred to as a ‘Traveller business style’. To explain, describing his own security business, he argued, ‘we do work all over the country. Now, if I have a problem in any of our sites, I just lift the phone to one of my relatives and they go and sort it out for me. None of us can read or write, but we know business, we have it all in here [points at his head]. We’re moving into camera surveillance now, because that’s where the money is. We go where the money is’ (Ned 06/02/07). In other words, the ‘Traveller business style’ appears to focus on initiative, ingenuity, entrepreneurship, flexibility and adaptability over such things as formal qualifications.
Despite such diversification into the mainstream by increasing numbers of Travellers, the majority are still engaged in less mainstream economic activities. The following economic activities were proposed or acknowledged by both Traveller and non-Traveller informants as fairly typical for Travellers in Ballybane at the time of my fieldwork: ‘buying and selling’ (e.g. cars, horses, exercise equipment and clothing, and electrical goods among the men, and clothes, plants, and bric-a-brac among the women), breeding fighting cocks, gardening, tarmacing, painting, collecting dole and social welfare benefits, and appealing for money and goods (which can be either used or sold on) from various local charities.

Obviously, labelling the last two activities listed - ‘income generating’ - is somewhat controversial. Indeed, what is considered a ‘source of income’ is one area where Traveller and non-Traveller discourse appears to differ. Most non-Traveller informants conceptualised the dole, social welfare payments and charity donations, not as sources of income, but rather as temporary substitutes for income-generating activity. Almost without exception, non-Traveller informants on the dole went to some lengths to explain their situation. They explained how they ended up there, what jobs they had done previously, and what kinds of jobs they were looking for now. Among my Traveller informants, however, there appeared to be a different perspective. When I asked several of my younger informants what they were going to do when they left school, they simply replied that they were going to ‘get the dole’. Similarly, among adult informants, being on the dole did not appear to be seen as short term or even unfortunate. Indeed, not being on the dole was exceptional among my informants.156

Arguably related to this situation, one of the most straightforward and direct responses I got from queries about Travellers and money was ‘for Travellers, life is about making money – any-way, any-how’ (Edward 19/09/06). Other variants of this included: ‘We turn our hand to anything to make money. If you want to know how to make money, just

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156 Of course, one must acknowledge that this situation and perspective is, at least, partly reflective of the fact that, due to discrimination in the employment market, Travellers are unlikely to get mainstream jobs even if they wanted them.
ask a Traveller’ (Josie 16/01/07); ‘Never refuse something you’re getting for nothing. That’s the Traveller motto’ (Mikey 16/01/07); and ‘if there’s money to be made in something, Travellers will know how’ (Maggie 04/04/07). In line with such constructions, the dole, welfare payments and charitable donations are arguably conceptualised as just another way of making money, another source of income.\(^{157}\)

While understandably few Travellers explicitly presented welfare payments and charitable donations in this way (as just another way to make money), this argument is supported by the fact that such sources of money appear to be fully utilised by most Travellers in Ballybane whatever their economic status and level of need. Indeed, I was flabbergasted when; after being in one particular Traveller house on an almost weekly basis delivering charitable donations on behalf of SVP, and having been told in the relatively plain but functional kitchen/family room (that we were always received in on such visits) that the children had to sleep on mattresses on the floor, had no blankets, and barely enough to eat; in the company of Jason, I was invited into the sitting-room and discovered a luxurious room complete with leather suite of furniture and numerous expensive looking knick-knacks. Voicing my surprise to Jason, he revealed that the room was pretty typical of all the Traveller houses (most of which SVP makes similar visits to) in the area. Again, he argued that most Travellers in Ballybane don’t need money. Additional evidence supporting this reading of the situation is that most of the Traveller men I spoke to claimed that they were on ‘the dole’ or ‘the welfare’, even though I witnessed them (and indeed, they often spoke about) doing other forms of work (e.g. scrap, buying and selling, or horse trading) unofficially and often on a fulltime basis. While such exploitation is by no means uncommon among non-Travellers, the

\(^{157}\) Okely paints a somewhat similar picture to this in her portrait of Gypsies in southeast England in the 1970s. ‘The ability to get by with minimum cash expenditure is highly valued and seen as part of a Travellers’ identity… Goods are often obtained, cheap or free, from personal contacts either within or from outside the travelling community,’ she claims (1982:64). Indeed, Helleiner (2000:141) also alludes to a similar situation existing during her fieldwork among Travellers in Galway city in the 1980s. She describes how her Traveller informants presented dole payments ‘as a resource which was immediately utilized once it became available,’ and, similarly, social welfare payments ‘were viewed…as a resource which they would be “fools” not to exploit.’
difference in the case of Travellers is that, based on the attitudes to making money among my informants, such behaviour is ‘just business’.

The emergence of this situation is not surprising considering that, in terms of my earlier discussion on ‘culture of dependency’ (Section 3.2), such payments (whether state or charitable) are essentially being offered to Travellers on a silver platter. However, it does create another perspective on the whole issue of dependency. It questions whether the state’s targeted policies on Travellers, and even charitable institutions’ approaches towards Travellers, through lumping this heterogeneous population together in terms of being ‘in need’, are actually creating dependency, or whether Travellers are incorporating these systems/sources of finance into their own constructions of income generating activity. If the latter, because it demonstrates ingenuity and industriousness, and essentially falls into line with the idea of ‘making money – any-way, any-how’; rather than creating dependency, such policies may actually reinforce or strengthen Traveller ‘culture’ and ‘identity’. Indeed, by actually colluding with the dominant discourse with respect to dependency and impoverishment in this way, the allusion here is one of empowerment rather than subjugation.

Local level ‘de-racialisation’/‘de-ethnicisation’ of Travellers

Suggestions about the heterogeneity of the Traveller ‘community’ did arise among my non- Traveller informants at the local level. The following two examples illustrate just a few examples of this.

Aileen 07/03/07
Of course, Travellers aren’t a homogenous group. This is the other misnomer. There are extremes of severely alcoholic, violent, street living Travellers… and then there’s the Xs [a local Traveller commended by both Travellers and non-Travellers for his economic success] of the world. Their lives are as far apart as you could imagine.
Lisa 24/04/07

There are Traveller families that I wouldn’t mind living next door to, and there’s ones I wouldn’t like to. Put it this way, there’s Travellers I would give the keys of my house to and go off for a fortnight and it wouldn’t worry me a bit, and there’s others, I would keep my hand in my pocket when I be talking to them [laughs]. So, the thing is, just like us, they’re varied.

Even more common than such direct disaggregation were instances of sweeping (usually negative) statements about Travellers accompanied by specific exceptions (usually long-term or close neighbours). Such instances of disaggregation, however, were by no means predominant; and instances of exceptionalism were just that – some Travellers were merely exceptions to the rule – they did not change the rule. In other words, neither of these phenomena appear to threaten the dominant ‘racialising’/‘ethnicising’ discourse on Travellers (outlined throughout this chapter) to any significant degree.


In December 2003, at the request of the Taoiseach, a High Level Group on Traveller issues was established under the aegis of the Cabinet Committee on Social Inclusion. Its remit is to ensure that the relevant statutory agencies involved in providing the full range of services to Travellers, would focus on improving the integrated practical delivery of such services (HLG 2006:14).

More locally, each county was directed to create a similar Interagency Working Group to implement the strategy on the ground.

According to its first report, the ‘Strategic aims and objectives’ of this group are to: Strengthen ‘the culture’ of ‘the Traveller community’; ‘Promote the culture of the Traveller community in schools’; ‘Develop a module on Traveller culture to coincide with the delivery of NCCA Guidelines on Intercultural Education and involve the Traveller Community in the design and delivery of the module’; and ‘Increase the awareness and understanding of the culture of the Traveller community’ (HLG 2006:14). Even these overall titles demonstrate that this report explicitly reifies Traveller
‘culture’, and essentialises it as something possessed by the Traveller ‘community’. Indeed, under the first aim, the ‘appropriate enterprises and training’ specifically recommended for development are: breeding, training and shoeing horses, tinsmith, and copper craft. Hence, in most respects, it is little different from the 1995 Task Force report.

The HLG report has been criticised widely by the TAOs (e.g., Pavee Point 2006). The main bone of contention, besides lack of consultation, has been the fact that, in it, the state has once again denied the ‘ethnic’ status of Travellers. While this matter has been debated for decades, a number of recent events have propelled it into the political forecourt.

**Traveller ‘ethnicity’**

Discourse on the ‘ethnic’ status of Travellers began in the 1960s with the publication of the Commission on Itinerancy’s report (CI 1963). Since then, however, a somewhat heated debate on the issue has developed. On one side of this debate are the main national level TAOs, several leading academics, and the state’s Equality Authority, while, on the other side is the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (hereafter DJELR) (most recently, and explicitly, in its report to the CERD [DJELR 2004, cited in McVeigh 2007]) and the academic Dympna McLoughlin (see McLoughlin 1994). In this section, beginning in 1963, I will outline the development of the debate in policy, legislative and academic discourse.

In 1963 the (state-sponsored) CI report explicitly denied that ‘itinerants’ constituted an ‘ethnic group’ (see Section 3.2 above). However, though dominant throughout the report, the CI contradicts this ‘de-racialised’/‘de-ethnicised’ definition in its conclusion that:

> For both social and economic reasons it is clearly undesirable that a section of the population should be isolated and follow a way of life… which tends to create a closed and separate community which will
become increasingly inferior to the rest of the national population and from which it will become increasingly difficult to escape (1963:104).

In this statement, even though the term ‘ethnicity’ is not used, Travellers are effectively constructed in terms which correlate with those necessary for ‘ethnic’ status according to Barth’s now dominant academic discourse on ‘ethnicity’ (i.e., they are a group which identifies themselves and are identified by others as a distinct people [Barth 1969]) (see Section 1.1).

In the realm of popular discourse at this time, the anti-itinerant/Traveller sentiment precipitated by the state’s first settlement/assimilation policy also suggested essential factions in Irish society (see Section 3.2 above). Further, within this context, the Traveller movement emerged and fought back, not by opposing discourse which marked Travellers as essentially different, but by manipulating and mobilising it for their own cause – Traveller Rights. Hence, even before they had explicitly adopted the term (‘ethnic’), the TAOs called for Traveller rights based on Travellers’ essential differentness from the Settled population (i.e., their ‘ethnic’ status).

Unlike the CI, the (state-sponsored) Review Body sidestepped the issue of Traveller ‘ethnicity’, arguing ‘it is not within the terms of reference of the Review Body to resolve the issues’ (RB 1983:5). However, by referring to Travellers as ‘an identifiable group of people, identified both by themselves and by other members of the community…’ (Section 3.3 above), like the CI, it arguably implied their ‘ethnicity’ according to Barth’s (1969) definition.

It was also in the 1980s that the political and legal debate on Traveller ‘ethnicity’ effectively began. It arose as a central issue in the political debate surrounding the legislature’s ratification of the Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989. In the parliamentary debate preceding ratification, the issue of ‘multiculturalism’ was central. While the majority party (Fianna Fail) argued that, as Ireland is a homogeneous country, there was little need for the Act (which was seen as protection against intolerance and ‘racism’, and accordingly largely dependent on difference), the opposition party (Fine
Gael), and many Independents, argued that the presence of not only a significant number of black people but also Travellers necessitated it (Helleiner 2000).

Ratification was eventually agreed. However, the next issue of contention was the wording. In the government’s original Hatred Bill, ‘hatred’ was defined as constituting ‘[hatred] against any group of persons on account of their colour, and ethnic or national origins, as well as on the grounds of their nationality, race or religion’ (Seanad, Collins, 24 November 1988:855, cited in Helleiner 2000:233). The issue hence became - were ‘Travellers’ (who largely share ‘colour’, ‘race’, ‘religion’, ‘national origins’ and ‘nationality’ with the Irish population in general) protected? Some (including spokespersons for Fine Gael, the Labour Party and the Progressive Democrats as well as a number of Independents [Equality Authority 2006:21]), argued that Travellers were covered by the ‘ethnic origins’ grounds because, for example, they possessed ‘a separate culture, a separate way of life, and a separate language’ (Dail, Colley, 26 April 1989:251, cited in Helleiner 2000:233). Indeed, based on this argument, Deputy Anne Colley proposed that the Bill be amended to include a definition of the term ‘ethnic origins’ as including the Traveller ‘community’ (Equality Authority 2006:22). Unwilling to create any precedent on this issue, and arguing that the issue of whether Travellers in Ireland constituted an ‘ethnic’ group was for the courts to decide, however, the Minister for Justice finally decided to attach explicit protection for Travellers to the Bill - ‘or membership of the travelling community’ was attached to the end (Helleiner 2000:230-3).158

The outcome of this debate left the issue of Traveller ‘ethnicity’ undetermined in political and legal discourse. Though the Minister explicitly voiced his reluctance to set a precedent in that regard, many of those involved in the debate interpreted the outcome as confirming the ‘ethnic’ status of Travellers. Indeed, even Deputy Barrett, who proposed the amendment finally chosen, in responding to Deputy Colley’s concerns stated, ‘The travellers are an ethnic group and are covered under the Bill, but to avoid

158 Of course, as the Equality Authority point out, the amendment meant that the matter of whether Travellers were an ‘ethnic’ group would not come before the courts under this legislation (2006:24).
any possible difficulty we are making specific mention of that group’ (Vol. 389: Col. 277, cited in Equality Authority 2006:25).

When the Equal Status (proxy ‘anti-racism’) legislation (The Employment Equality Act 1998, the Equal Status Act 2000, and the Equality Act 2004) was later debated in the Oireachtas, once again ‘membership of the Traveller community’ was named, and protected, separately to the other eight grounds (gender, marital status, family status, age, race, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief). Rather than progressing to any conclusion on Traveller ‘ethnicity’, therefore, the issue was once again ‘sidestepped’ and ‘left unresolved’ (Helleiner 2000:233). One arguable development during ratification of this legislation, however, was that ‘at Report Stage the Minister brought forward amendments both to capitalise the term “Traveller” throughout the equality legislation and to incorporate the following definition of the Traveller community in the Equal Status legislation:

the community of people who are commonly called Travellers and who are identified (both by themselves and others) as people with a shared history, culture and traditions including, historically, a nomadic way of life on the island of Ireland (Equality Authority 2006:34-35).

The significance of these amendments, according to the Equality Authority, is that this definition (as described by Professor Gerry Whyte) represents ‘the successful culmination of a campaign by Travellers to be recognised as a distinct ethnic, as opposed to an economically deprived, group in Irish society’ (2006:64). Indeed, as Pavee Point (2005b:11) point out, this definition is clearly drawn from the definition of what constitutes an ‘ethnic group’ under British Law (i.e. the definition given in the decision in the Mandla vs. Lee case 1983 [discussed below]) - a context in which Irish Travellers are now recognised as an ‘ethnic’ group. Unfortunately, as my discussion below illustrates, such interpretations were not apparently shared by the DJELR.

For instance: it highlights ‘the need to recognise and take into account the distinct culture and identity of the Traveller community in policy making and service delivery’ (TF 1995:58); in a section on the relationships between the Traveller and the Settled communities, it comments on the ‘minimal contact between [the] communities’ (ibid:61), and, as described in Section 3.4 above, it constructs Traveller ‘culture’ in an essentialised and reified way. In more direct terms, it states, ‘it is important that Equal Status legislation in specifying its protection of ethnic groups would also specifically name the Traveller community as being protected’ (ibid:84).

Though the state sponsored, and acted upon, the 1963, 1983 and 1995 reports on Travellers, it was not until 2004 that it made its first explicit declaration on Traveller ‘ethnicity’. Having finally ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination in 2001, in 2004, the Irish government submitted its first report to the CERD. In this report, the DJELR, for the first time, explicitly claimed that Travellers are not an ‘ethnic’ group:

Ireland [population 24,000] are an indigenous Irish community with a shared history of a nomadic way of life and cultural identity. Some of the bodies representing Travellers claim that members of the community constitute a distinct ethnic group. The exact basis for this claim is unclear [footnote: ‘According to Tovey and Share (2002:470), the claim that Irish Travellers constitute a distinct ethnic group is controversial within academic research’]… The Government’s view is that Travellers do not constitute a distinct group from the population as a whole in terms of race, colour descent or national or ethnic origin (DJELR 2004:90, cited in McVeigh 2007:98-99).

In its response to this report, the CERD specifically commented on this issue, drawing the state’s attention to the principle of ‘self identification’159, and urging it to ‘work more concretely towards recognising the Traveller community as an ‘ethnic’ group (CERD Ireland 2005, cited in McVeigh 2007:99).

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159 According to this principle, if there is dispute about status, then the self identification of the group is primary and the onus is on parties who disagree with the classification to prove otherwise.
Besides the CERD, the TAOs, several academics and even the State’s own Equality Authority have criticised the DJELR on this ‘ethnicity denial’ (McVeigh 2007). In terms of academic and activist critics Robbie McVeigh stands out. McVeigh (2007:96-97&100) points out that the DJELR’s position here contradicts major government initiatives on Traveller Health which present Traveller ‘ethnicity’ as a given; the government’s Citizen Traveller project, which defined its work as supporting Travellers as an ‘ethnic group’; the previous (and current) President of Ireland who routinely spoke (speaks) of Travellers as an ‘ethnic group’; the then-current Taoiseach Bertie Ahern who has referred to Travellers as an ‘ethnic group’; the previous Minister for Justice Mr John O’Donoghue who named Travellers among other ‘ethnic groups’; the National Action Plan Against Racism (2005) which asserts that Travellers are an ‘ethnic group’ that experiences ‘racism’ (see Section 5.2); and, finally, the government’s own Equality Authority which argues that Travellers are an ‘ethnic group’ (Equality Authority 2006 see below). McVeigh also criticises the DJELR ‘ethnicity denial’ on the basis that,

In Britain, the ethnicity of British Gypsies in the context of the Race Relations Act (1976) has been accepted post CRE v. Dutton, [the ethnicity of Irish Travellers has been confirmed by O’Leary & Others v. Allied Domecq (August 2000), and] in Northern Ireland Travellers constitute a “racial group” for the purposes of the Race Relations

160 Officially launched in October 1999, the Citizen Traveller Campaign was a public education and awareness programme aimed at creating a better understanding between the Settled and Traveller ‘communities’ in Ireland. In July 2002 the government terminated the funding for the project.

161 The Coordinator of GTM made a very similar argument during an interview I had with her:

The government says that Travellers are not an ‘ethnic’ group, but if you watch their policy making, they have identified them as different. The equality legislation has Travellers named. Why would they do that if they don’t recognise that they’re distinct? There is the Traveller health strategy, and an education strategy is being developed. There’s an acknowledgment in legislation to recognise the nomadic traditions and to provide for transient sites. Why would you do that if Travellers are just Irish? So, there are huge contradictions. ‘Ethnicity’ is there in everything but official recognition (29/06/06).
(Northern Ireland) Order since they are so defined by that legislation (2007:93).162

It is ‘absurd to suggest that Travellers are an ethnic group in Britain and Northern Ireland and yet somehow lose this quality as soon as they cross the border,’ he argues (2007:101).

As McVeigh highlights, in 2006 the Equality Authority published a paper in which it critically analyses policy, legislative and academic discourse on Traveller identity and ‘ethnicity’ from the 1960s until present, and, having done so, ‘establishes a clear case for the acknowledgement of Traveller ethnicity’ (Equality Authority 2006: Foreword).163 More specifically in terms of the government’s report to the CERD, it challenges the government’s claim of controversy over Traveller ‘ethnicity’ within academic research. Having carried out its own independent analysis of the academic literature, it argues that it is clear that ‘since the 1970’s [sic] academic work on Travellers has increasingly identified Travellers as an ethnic group’ (2006:60). Though it acknowledges McLoughlin (1994) as an exception to this trend, it critically analyses and disputes the evidence presented therein (see below).

In terms of such academic literature, critical engagement with the issue of Traveller ‘ethnicity’ largely began with Patricia McCarthy’s unpublished, but widely cited, Masters Thesis on *Itinerancy and Poverty: a Study in the Sub-culture of Poverty* (1972, cited in Equality Authority 2006). In this thesis, McCarthy, having studied a group of Travellers in Galway, denied that Travellers ‘constitute a separate ethnic group with an entirely separate tradition and culture.’ Instead of ‘ethnicity’, she argued that their itinerant identity could be explained by their poverty (McCarthy, 1972:6, cited in Equality Authority 2006:45). Significantly McCarthy has now ‘reconsidered’ this argument on the basis that, first, not all Travellers are poor (demonstrating the viability

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162In the latter context, he explains, ‘[w]hile the term ‘racial group’ rather than ‘ethnic group’ was employed, this effectively ended equivocation on Traveller ethnicity in Northern Ireland’ (2007:122).
163In its concluding recommendation it states: ‘It is recommended that the Government should now recognise Travellers as an ethnic group and that this recognition should be reflected in all policies, programmes and institutional practices that impact on the Traveller community’ (2006:65).
of the Traveller way of life, despite the serious structural obstacles), and, second, Traveller ‘culture’ is not a sub-culture of Irish society, but rather a ‘culture’ in itself, which has more in common with Gypsies, Travellers and nomads worldwide than it has with settled cultures anywhere (McCarthy 1994:122-123).

Around the same time that McCarthy was carrying out her fieldwork, two American cultural anthropologists, Sharon and George Gmelch, carried out research among a group of Travellers in Dublin and made opposing conclusions to McCarthy’s in terms of ‘ethnicity’ (Gmelch & Gmelch 1976). In their introduction the Gmelchs assert:

This paper examines the process by which itinerant Irish developed a common ethnic identity as Tinkers. At first their identity was based only on their shared nomadic lifestyle. But gradually it was strengthened through their growing physical and social isolation from settled Irish society, and simultaneously through their increased contact, intermarriage and identification with other Itinerants (1976:225).

They explain that ‘Like the sedentary population [Tinkers] are white, English-speaking, Roman Catholic, and indigenous to Ireland. Yet, according to accepted anthropological definition (cf. Narroll, 1964 [see footnote 14], they form a distinct ethnic group within Irish society’ (1976:226). They then take each of the four elements in Narroll’s (1964) framework of ‘ethnicity’ and explain its application to Travellers (1976:226-7).

Though it lay somewhat dormant for over ten years, in 1994, with the publication of the edited volume Irish Travellers: Culture and Ethnicity (McCann et al. 1994), the academic debate on Traveller ‘ethnicity’ was reinvigorated. In this volume, the general consensus is that Travellers constitute an ‘ethnic’ group in Irish society. In particular, Ní Shuínéar (like the Gmelchs nearly twenty years earlier) critically and systematically examines the issue using Narroll’s (1964) (and subsequently Barth’s [1969]) definition of ‘ethnicity’ (see Section 1.1), and provides evidence that Travellers fulfil all the requirements (1994:54-60). In terms of biological self perpetuation, she points out that Travellers typically intra-marry, and group membership is determined by descent. In
terms of *shared fundamental cultural values*, she explains that Traveller values include self-employment, occupational flexibility, priority of social obligations based on kinship, nomadism, and strict segregation of pure and impure. In terms of *overt unity of cultural form*, she argues that Travellers have distinctive versions of a multitude of observable phenomena including accommodation, dress and grooming, speech patterns, religious and other group rituals and artistic expression. In terms of having their *own field of communication and interaction*, she argues that interaction and communication between Travellers and settled people are broadly limited to business or formal settings. Further, she points out that, not only do Travellers have their own language – Gammon or Cant – they also have a distinctive and shared use of English. Finally, in terms of a *membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others, as constituting a category distinguishable from other categories of the same order*, she explains that ‘Travellers have a name for themselves as a group and they know exactly who does and does not belong to it, and why. Non-Travellers also have names for Travellers as a group, and they know exactly to whom they apply and (by criteria which are very different from Travellers own) why’ (1994:59).

The only denial of Traveller ‘ethnicity’ in McCann et al’s edited volume is that by Dympna McLoughlin. She admits that Travellers are a distinct group within Irish society, but argues that they are not an ‘ethnic’ group. She supports this argument; first, by arguing that, while some Travellers argue that they are an ‘ethnic’ group, in fact the National Council for Travelling People is actually split on the issue (1994:79); and, second, by re-examining the criteria for ‘ethnicity’ used by Ní Shuineáir and challenging the latter’s interpretation of them. In the latter regard, though she specifically critiques some issues, in most instances, she simply argues that the characteristics highlighted by Ní Shuineáir are not unique to Travellers and therefore cannot support a claim to ‘ethnicity’.

A number of academics have responded to McLoughlin (1994). For instance, in terms of her argument that the National Council for Travelling People is split on the issue of
Traveller ‘ethnicity’, while McVeigh (2007:120) argues that this is no longer the case, the Equality Authority argues that even if it were,

[This] confuses the issue of political mobilisation around ethnic claims with the arguments about the ethnic status of a group… [A] group’s self ascription of ethnicity has little or nothing to do with whether it describes itself as an ethnic group per se. It is… in recognising or naming themselves as a group… and knowing exactly who does and does not belong to it and why [that is important]. On this criterion Travellers, qua Travellers, would be an ethnic group even if no Traveller or supporter campaigned for official recognition of this fact (2006:58).

As well as this specific critique, both McVeigh (2007) and the Equality Authority (2006) go through each of McLoughlin’s counter-arguments to Ní Shuinear’s case for Traveller ‘ethnicity’ and critically analyse them. Having done so, they make very similar conclusions. McVeigh argues that, while most of McLoughlin’s observations are valid, ‘they do nothing to construct a case against Irish Traveller ethnicity’ (2007:118 [emphasis in original]). Similarly, the Equality Authority points out that ‘[n]o ethnic group could or would claim that all of its cultural values were unique or that all the venom of a society was uniquely reserved for its members,’ but, because such uniqueness is not a requirement for ‘ethnic’ status, McLoughlin’s observations in this respect have little relevance (2006:58).

Robbie McVeigh (2007) has also contributed to the debate on Traveller ‘ethnicity’ in his own terms. Rather than approaching the issue from an academic perspective (as the Gmelchs [1976] and Ní Shuinear [1994] did), however, he approaches it from a legal perspective. He tests the ‘ethnic’ status of Travellers in the context of the Mandla v Lee decision in the British House of Lords. In his definitive analysis of this case, Lord

\[\text{\footnote{\text{Explaining his approach, he argues that, though a symbiotic relationship exists between legalistic and academic definitions, ‘the Mandla v Lee criteria are more exact and more exclusive than other wider and more permissive academic and legal definitions of ethnicity [he describes the Mandla v Lee criteria as the ‘acid test’ for Traveller ethnicity]. The judgement has also been specifically definitive in analysis and discussions on the question of Irish Travellers and ethnicity in both Northern Ireland and Britain’ (McVeigh 2007:94-5). Further, while ‘Mandla v Lee is… a British legal judgement, [and] therefore, has}}\]
Fraser argued: ‘For a group to constitute an ethnic group… it must, in my opinion, regard itself, and be regarded by others, as a distinct community by virtue of certain characteristics.’ Two of these characteristics, he explained, are ‘essential’: ‘(1) a long shared history, of which the group is conscious as distinguishing it from other groups, and the memory of which it keeps alive; (2) a cultural tradition of its own, including family and social customs and manners…’ He also lists five other characteristics which he describes as merely ‘relevant’. As the Gmelchs (1976) and Ní Shuinear (1994) did with respect to the Narroll framework of ‘ethnicity’, McVeigh goes through each of the essential conditions, as well as the additional ‘relevant characteristics’, and provides evidence that Travellers in the Republic of Ireland fulfil them all (McVeigh 2007: Appendix 1). Having done so, he concludes, ‘all the evidence is that Irish Travellers meet the Mandla v Lee criteria when these are applied to them in the Republic of Ireland’ (2007:101).

While the discussion in this section illustrates that the players involved in the debate over Traveller ‘ethnicity’ are many, significantly, those notably largely absent are Travellers themselves. So as not to render the debate illegitimate on these terms, it is important here to distinguish between ‘ethnicism’\textsuperscript{165} or ‘ethno-politics’\textsuperscript{166}, and ‘ethnicity’. While ‘ethnicism’ and ‘ethno-politics’ are essentially about political mobilisation of identity (usually for protections, entitlements and resources), ‘ethnicity’ is (arguably, and in very simplistic terms [see Section 1.1]) about cultural differences which are used to mark one ‘group’ off from another. While Travellers do not tend to become involved in ‘ethnicism’ or ‘ethno-politics’ (in particular they have been largely absent from the official political setting of the debates surrounding ethnic status), this is not to say that they are not party to their own ‘ethnicity’, or indeed that they do not express and even politicise this ‘ethnicity’ in and through their everyday discourse.

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\textsuperscript{165} This term was introduced by Tovey and Share ‘to talk about how groups make claims based on cultural differences’ (2003:471, cited in Equality Authority 2006:59).

\textsuperscript{166} This term was introduced by Rothschild to refer to the political mobilisation of ‘ethnic’ claims (1981:2, cited in Baumann 1996:11).
Indeed, the Traveller discourse I have described and/or included in sections 3.1-3.4 above suggests that Travellers are very much involved in constructing or reinforcing this identity (i.e., based on biological descent and/or possession of particular cultural attributes, they identify themselves as a distinct people who are essentially different to the dominant Settled population).

Another aspect that stands out from my analysis of the debate on Traveller ‘ethnicity’ is that, while, according to Barth’s construction of ‘ethnicity’, the ‘cultural stuff’ is secondary to the divide itself (1969:13-14) (see Section 1.1), in the reality of ‘ethnicism’/‘ethno-politics’ in Ireland, it is the ‘cultural stuff’ that is usually the focus of attention. The ‘cultural stuff’ is central to the Narroll framework employed by the Gmelichs (1976) and Ní Shuinear (1994), and also in the Mandla v Lee criteria used by McVeigh (2007). In each of these frameworks of ‘ethnicity’, the analyst is called upon to highlight and mobilise reified and standardised elements of ‘culture’ as concrete evidence that an ‘ethnic’ boundary exists. In effect, therefore, the equation ‘Traveller culture = Traveller community’ is extended to ‘Traveller culture = Traveller community = ethnic group.’ At the same time, the inherent fluid, dynamic, malleable and contextual nature of Traveller ‘culture’, as well as the elusive or intangible nature of the ‘ethnic’ boundary, are denied or, at least, underplayed.

Closer analysis of this argument reveals that ‘ethnicism’/‘ethno-politics’ may actually help construct, or at least maintain, ‘ethnic’ identity on the ground. For instance, (though paradoxically, considering its explicit denial of Traveller ‘ethnicity’), state legislation and policy targeting and protecting Travellers necessitates identity assertion and ascription in ‘ethnic’ terms. With such economic and political incentives, it is hardly surprising that in such contexts Travellers underplay both heterogeneity within the Traveller ‘community’ and commonality with the Settled Irish ‘community’. Of

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167 O’Connell (1994:111) has highlighted the future implications of this. He points out, ‘[e]thnic groups tend to be biologically self-reproducing. The salient features are transmitted from one generation to the next and children are reared to accept these as normal. This gives the impression that ethnicity is a “natural” and immutable entity.’ In other words, if Travellers are encouraged in and through the realm of ‘ethno-politics’ to ‘self-racialise’/‘self-ethnicise’, these ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ constructions, and the
course, the inherent downside to this is that ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ is Janus-faced. While it can be used to provide the basis for special protections and privileges, because ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ is one of the two essential elements of ‘racism’ (see Section 1.1), it also necessitates such protections in the first place.

The ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ inherent in Traveller ‘ethnicism’/‘ethno-politics’ represents what Spivak (1988) refers to as ‘strategic essentialism’. Spivak used this term in her critique of terms like terms like ‘Third World’, ‘Orient’, ‘Indian’ and ‘subaltern’ in colonial discourse. Such terms, she argues, are usually constructed in essentialist ways, and thereby subjectify those encompassed by them. Though she admits that there are sometimes social or political (‘strategic’) reasons for such ‘essentialism’ (e.g., when speaking as a woman or speaking as an Asian so that the hegemony of patriarchal colonial discourse can be disrupted and questioned, when postcolonial cultures essentialise their pre-colonial past in order to find a usable cultural identity [or, I would suggest, when speaking as a Traveller so that the hegemony of state discourse on Travellers can be disrupted]), that it can help revitalize the sense of personal and cultural worth and value of the dominated, she also warns that, through it, the subjectified may lose control of their own identity, and are often pressurised into assuming the roles and images accorded to them by their controllers (1988:205). Because of this danger, she argues, even when used for positive ends, such ‘essentialism’ must be a short-term strategy. Unfortunately, as I describe above, ‘strategic essentialism’ has been used in Ireland (by academics, the state, and TAOs) since the 1960s, and arguably has resulted the kinds of negative outcomes that Spivak warns of.168

168 terms on which they are based, may be passed down through the generations creating a self-fulfilling prophecy as their socially constructed nature becomes forgotten.

168 Though she does not refer to Spivak’s work, McLoughlin (1994) similarly argues that biological theories of ‘race’ are a dangerous starting point in Travellers search for identity and solidarity (ibid:80). However, while this argument is legitimate in these terms, her use of it to deny Traveller ‘ethnic’ status is not. As McVeigh (2007:119) argues, ‘it is hardly relevant legally or sociologically – every self-identified ethnic group puts itself in this position. Irish Traveller ethnicity either exists or it does not… it is neither supported nor repudiated on the basis of its political implications.’
Having outlined the main standpoints in the debate over Traveller ‘ethnicity’, the question remains – Why is it so important for Travellers to be recognised as an ‘ethnic’ group? One major reason is that, as I discuss in Section 5.2, while the Irish legislature has tailored its Equal Status (proxy ‘anti-racism’) legislation so as to afford Travellers protection, the main instrument governing ‘anti-racism’ at the international level (the International Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination), though it protects ‘ethnic’ groups in general, does not name specific groups from individual states, and therefore offers no protection to Travellers unless the Irish state officially recognises their ‘ethnic’ status. Further, at a less pragmatic level, both the Equality Authority and the main TAOs have pointed out that ‘[t]he recognition of Traveller ethnicity is central to any equality of status or standing for the Traveller community…[and] provides the basis for new relationships of respect, care and solidarity between the Traveller and [S]ettled communities ’ (Equality Authority 2006:5).

**Conclusion**

The construction of Travellers in and through dominant discourse in Ireland has not changed significantly in the last fifty years. Throughout this period, in most general and descriptive contexts, Travellers have been constructed in ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ terms – a homogeneous and bounded Traveller ‘community’ has been constructed on the basis of the possession of a reified Traveller ‘culture’, and, tautologically, Traveller ‘culture’ is regarded as something individuals within the Traveller ‘community’ essentially possess. Despite this ongoing pattern, in this chapter, I have looked at the post-1960s period in a number of stages. Each stage was delineated by the production of a significant state-sponsored report on Travellers. In doing so, I demonstrated the more subtle changes and conflicts that have emerged within and between constructions of Travellers produced in and through state discourse and popular discourse (and, within popular discourse, within and between constructions of Travellers produced in and through Traveller discourse and non-Traveller discourse) at all levels from the national to the local.
Consequent to the publication of the Commission on Itinerancy’s report in 1963, the state implemented its first itinerant/Traveller settlement (assimilation) policy. By claiming that itinerants could be absorbed into the general/Settled ‘community’ via a settled ‘lifestyle’, it implied that they were not essentially different. The Settled population disputed the state’s settlement plans however, and, through the terms of their opposition, produced a ‘racialised’/’ethnicised’ construction of Traveller identity. The fact that the state was forced to re-think its settlement strategy because of such opposition suggests that this ‘racialised’/’ethnicised’ construction was the dominant one.

By 1983, at the time of the Review Body’s report, the state appeared on the surface to have shifted its standpoint towards that inherent in the more dominant popular ‘racialist’/’ethnicist’ discourse. However, below the surface, contradiction thrived. While state policy shifted towards offering some targeted Traveller services, such services were either limited to a few ‘traditional’ or ‘genuine’ Travellers, or else were implemented as interim steps to full assimilation. In doing this, rather than abandoning a ‘non-racialised’/’non-ethnicised’ construction of Travellers, state policy disaggregated Travellers into: Transient Travellers (essentially unassimilatable) and Settled Travellers (assimilatable).

One of the main issues of significance in the Task Force’s (1995) report was its ‘side-stepping’ on the issue of ‘ethnicity’. Indeed, despite the launch of a further report (HLG 2006) since then, this issue is still contentious. Though official state discourse refuses to concur, however, in Section 3.5, I demonstrated that the dominant discourses at all levels from the local to the national, though not always using the term itself, construct Travellers as an ‘ethnic’ group. Accordingly, the ‘racialist’/’ethnicist’ equation - ‘culture=community=ethnic group’ – is completed. Indeed, despite the government’s recent explicit denial of Traveller ‘ethnic’ status, I illustrated that state discourse has had an inherent, and even leading, role to play in producing this construction. As Good (2008:52) argues, albeit in reference to the asylum system, so it appears to be the case with respect to Travellers and ‘ethnicity in Ireland: ‘[t]here is a double essentialisation at work here: cultural activists often essentialise the cultures which they claim to represent,
sometimes as a conscious strategy, and this tendency is encouraged by the “essentialising proclivities” of law itself (Cowan et al. 2001:11).’

At the local level, this chapter has revealed how, rather than simply applying or denying discourse produced at the national level (in the way Baumann [1996] described with respect to Southall [see Section 1.2]), local discourse on Traveller identity in Ireland appears to contribute to the production of national discourse, and perhaps is even central or essential to it. In local discourse in Ballybane (whether produced by Travellers or non-Travellers) the heterogeneity of the Traveller ‘community’ and the dynamic nature of Traveller ‘culture’ are in constant conflict with the more dominant homogeneous, essentialist, and reified constructions thereof. Which version/‘reality’ gains prominence in any particular context is determined, above all, by the incentives involved.

Overall, the players involved in constructing the Traveller ‘community’, at both the local and national levels, are many: the state in all its guises, the general public (Settled and Traveller); TAOs; academics, and European bodies, among others. The emergent picture is one where all players generally produce very similar (i.e., ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’) constructions of Traveller identity, but are applying very different meanings to these constructions, and, moreover, are arguing for very different (even opposed) implications. Most significantly, for instance, the same constructions used for perpetrating ‘racism’ are revealed to be necessary for claiming recourse for such ‘racism’. In such a milieu, however, because each player is recruiting and implicating others to support their respective constructions, determining who is in control, or even most influential, in any particular context, or at any historical moment, is almost impossible.
Chapter 4

The Politics of ‘Immigrant’ Identity

‘Immigration’ and ‘immigrants’ have only really emerged in popular, and even state, discourse to any significant degree in Ireland in the past few decades. During this time however, because of the complexity injected by Ireland’s own history of emigration, and also the relative degree of diversity therein, the construction of the Immigrant ‘community’ in and through the dominant discourses, though no less ‘racialist’/“ethnicist’, is more multilayered and multi-dimensional than the construction of either the Traveller ‘community’ or the Settled Irish ‘community’. For instance, the basis for such ‘racialisation’/“ethnicisation’ varies from skin colour, ‘culture’, and legal status, to much more elusive and general aspects such as ‘non-Irishness’ and ‘foreignness’. Indeed, several of these bases are often combined in complex and ambiguous ways within particular instances of ‘racialisation’/“ethnicisation’.

In this chapter I describe and discuss how discourses at the international, national, city-wide and local levels collide, combine, collude, and often conflict to construct the ‘racialised’/“ethnicised’ Immigrant ‘community’, and the Black/African Immigrant and Eastern European Immigrant ‘communities’ therein. I describe how these constructs are referred to variously as ‘Immigrants’, ‘Non-Nationals’, ‘Refugees’, ‘Asylum Seekers’, ‘Political Immigrants’, ‘Economic Migrants’, ‘Blacks’, ‘Africans’, and ‘Eastern Europeans’. Indeed, revealing even more complexity, I describe how these labels (and even this list is not complete) are often used by different players to refer to or encompass

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169 Because historical records show that Ireland has a relatively long history of immigration, the ‘newness’ of immigration is denied by many academics and ‘anti-racist’ activists. However, the fact that it took a significant turn in the 1990s means some aspect of ‘newness’ is indisputable. ‘During 1990-1994, Ireland was the only country among the member states of the EU-15... with a negative net migration rate. In contrast, between 1995 and 1999, Ireland’s average annual net migration rate was the second highest in the EU-15 (MacEiinri & Walley 2003, cited in Immigrant Council of Ireland 2005:2).

170 I have capitalised all of these terms to highlight their socially constructed nature.
different populations, or, at least, involve different boundaries of inclusion and exclusion.

In terms of structure, I begin by discussing a number of largely state-controlled issues or events which evidence suggests have had a significant role in the construction of these ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ constructs. Taking each in turn, I look at the Aliens Act 1935 (and its successors), the 2004 Citizenship Referendum and the issues and events leading up to this, the National Action Plan against Racism (DJELR 2005), and the recent census (CSO 2006) (which, for the first time, included a question on ethnic and cultural identity). In the second half of the chapter, I then look at the roles of other players (academics, Immigrant Support Organisations [ISOs] and the public in general) involved in the construction (and, in some contexts, the de-construction), of these ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ Immigrant ‘communities’.

4.1: Ireland: From emigrant nursery to immigrant ‘soft touch’

For decades, dating back to the famine in the 1840s, emigration has been a significant feature of Irish life. It has varied in terms of intensity from decade to decade, but has always persisted as a necessary safety valve for a country that was incapable of creating enough economically viable jobs to absorb the natural growth in the labour force (Immigrant Council of Ireland 2005:1).

After over a century scarred by the social, economic and political effects of emigration, the 1990s marked a significant turning point in Ireland’s history. This decade saw Ireland’s economy take a u-turn as, largely led by European funding and international investment, the ‘Celtic Tiger’ was born.171 Between 1994 and 2002, Ireland’s GDP rose,

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171 Popular discourse in Ireland is loath to admit that Ireland’s recent economic success is the result of anything other than the hard work and dedication of ordinary Irish people. The majority of my informants in Ballybane described it as simply the long over-due reward for decades of hard slough and penance. For this reason, many feel immigrants are unjustly reaping the benefits. For instance, Molly argued, ‘my parents and grandparents would have struggled through terrible times in Ireland, but they stayed when others were leaving. But now look at them. It’s the old people who are forgotten, who are left in cold, run-down houses. The government says it hasn’t the money to look after them, but then how do they have the money for all these Non-Nationals. They’re getting houses and things right, left and centre’ (interview
on average, by 8% per annum and the labour market grew by 4.5%. Initially the economy grew on the strength of its own underused labour resources. Consequently, emigration was reduced to an historical low, and the unemployment rate declined from 16% in 1994 to 3.7% in 2001 (Davy Stockbrokers 1999-2003, cited in Kelleher & Kelleher 2004:22). The stores of labour soon grew low however, particularly in the information technology and engineering industries where economic growth was concentrated, and the government was forced for the first time to pursue an active policy of encouraging immigration. This policy worked. In 1996 Ireland reached its migration turning point (popularly referred to as ‘the immigration turn’), changing it from a country of emigration to one of immigration (Kelleher & Kelleher 2004). The trend has continued in this direction since.\(^{172}\)

While Ireland does not impose a system of quotas, and the immigration policies pursued have been described as amongst the most liberal in Europe, rather than maintaining an open door policy, the Irish state has always maintained tight control on immigration in terms of numbers and the ‘type’ of immigrant admitted. This control is asserted, firstly, with regard to access to the landmass that is the Irish Republic (through immigration and asylum laws), and, secondly, with regard to numbers, and more importantly ‘type’, of immigrant admitted to ‘the Irish nation’ (through citizenship laws).

With regard to access to the landmass, Ireland’s immigration policy in terms of economic migrants is very much market driven. It seeks to attract temporary workers\(^ {173}\)

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\(^{172}\)Recent OECD figures (2005) classify Ireland as one of the highest European Union (EU) beneficiaries of immigrants as a proportion of its population, on a par with France and the Netherlands (countries with long histories of immigration and colonial pasts) (Loyal & Allen 2006:221). The 2006 census results reflect this. It showed that non-Irish nationals now comprise 10 per cent of the population (420,000 people), an increase from 5.8 per cent in 2002 (CSO, Census 2006, Vol.4; CSO, Census 2002, Vol.4).

\(^{173}\)Permanence is discouraged through welfare policies and stringent policies on family reunification (Kelleher & Kelleher 2004).
and, even then, it focuses on areas of industry and the economy where there are shortages. As Ireland is a member of the EU, such legalisation differentiates between EU workers and workers from outside the EU. With respect to the former (with the exception of Bulgaria and Romania) it allows open access to its landmass and labour market. Control over numbers in this respect was significantly curtailed in May 2004 when ten new states, most of which were in Central and Eastern Europe, joined the EU.\footnote{Largely due to the popular backlash regarding the economic sustainability of this policy, and also accusations of neglect with respect to Ireland’s ‘own’ and favouritism towards the foreign ‘other’, the state has denied such access to the more recent accession states of Bulgaria and Romania.} With respect to non-EU (and Romanian and Bulgarian) workers, the state issues temporary green cards (for highly skilled workers) or working permits (for lower skilled jobs) to a select number and type (those with specific skills) of immigrant to fill labour deficits in certain sectors. At around the same time as state control was curtailed by EU expansion; the Irish government enacted the \emph{Employment Permits Act 2003} and the \emph{Employment Permits Act 2006}, which reduced the number of non-EU immigrant workers by making obtaining green cards, and particularly work permits, much more difficult.

In terms of state policy and legislation attempting to control the ‘type’ of immigrant worker admitted, Hayward and Howard (2007) argue that during the initial years of its immigration policy, the state’s \emph{Jobs Ireland Campaign} (which used specific targeting methods in its advertising) created an implicit hierarchy with respect to the ‘type’ of immigrant worker targeted. Its primary targets were skilled Irish expatriates (particularly those belonging to the so-called ‘Ryanair generation’ [Irish people who has emigrated during the 1980s and early 1990s]). Below this were members of the Irish diaspora more generally; then qualified non-nationals from Britain, EU member States, East European states (including Russia); and then English speaking states (including India) (2007:51).\footnote{The success of this campaign later inspired the Scottish Nationalist Party who proposed a similar campaign (‘Come Home to Scotland’) to entice Scottish ex-pats home to fill labour shortages.} In terms of motive and meaning, Hayward and Howard argue: ‘The concentration on Irish communities abroad as a resource pool reflects a fundamental belief that members of the Irish diaspora, no matter how far removed in terms of
distance and time, will fit in better to life in Ireland than those with no connection with
the country’ (ibid:53). Indeed, to some degree, they argue, the campaign involved ‘a
qualitative appeal to ethnic consanguinity’ (ibid:57). In line with this argument, and in
terms of the dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’ (see Chapter 1), this campaign
was just one example of state discourse ‘racialising’/‘ethnicising’ ‘the Irish’. It was used
in an attempt to organise (and even limit) immigration in terms of ‘degrees of belonging’
(or, inversely, ‘foreignness’) to, and ‘degrees of compatibility’ (or, inversely, ‘incompatibility’) with some essentialist notion of ‘Irishness’.

Apart from economic immigrants, in accordance with Article 1A[2] of the United
Nations Convention relating to the Status of Refugees (the Geneva Convention) 1951,
the Irish state also admits political migrants (refugees and asylum seekers). While
Ireland has taken in limited numbers of Convention Refugees since the end of the
Second World War, the arrival of independent asylum seekers really only began in the
1990s. With respect to numbers,

In 1992, Ireland received only thirty-nine applications for asylum. By
1996, this figure had risen to 1,179; by 2001, it had risen to 10,325; by
2002, it rose again to 11,364, though by 2003 it had fallen to 7,900
and back down to 4,265 in 2004 (Irish Refugee Council 2004). These
figures were presented as dramatic but, in absolute terms, Ireland
received one of the lowest number of asylum seekers within the EU
(Loyal & Allen 2006:222).

The Irish state has no explicit policy to discourage or reduce numbers of asylum seekers
(as this would be contrary to the Geneva Convention). However, in the past decade a
number of policies have been implemented which have arguably had this intention and
effect. In April 2000, for example, a dispersal policy came into force. Accordingly,

176 Evidently this appeal worked. Arguably consequent to the Jobs Ireland Campaign, but also due to
decreasing opportunities elsewhere, between 1999 and 2004 returning Irish accounted for 42% of total
inward migration (Migrant Rights Centre Ireland & NCCRI, no date).
177 Throughout this chapter, I place ‘the Irish’ and ‘Irishness’ in quotation marks. This is to emphasise its
socially constructed nature. The only reason that I have diverged from the method of emphasise used on
the other socially constructed identities (Travellers and Immigrants) is because ‘the Irish’ and ‘Irishness’
are usually capitalised anyway.
178 Ireland ratified the Convention in 1956, but it was not incorporated into national law until 1996 (under
the Refugee Act).
shortly after arriving, asylum seekers are dispersed to different asylum hostels throughout the country and made subject to ‘direct provision’. Then, in 2004, child benefit was withdrawn from asylum seekers effectively cutting family income by about 40% (Loyal & Allen 2006:223). According to Fanning (2007), these social policies were meant to deter asylum seekers from coming to Ireland in the first place (i.e., they were used as proxy immigration policies). Indeed, in these terms the state is also guilty of implying that asylum seekers coming to Ireland are involved in ‘asylum shopping’ (choosing which country to seek asylum in based on the economic perks therein), and, in turn, of producing a construction of asylum seeker identity as suspect and deviant.

At around the same time as these changes in social policy were implemented, the *Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking) Act 2000* was enacted making it more difficult for asylum seekers to reach Ireland’s shores even if they did so ‘choose’. This Act, firstly, introduced sanctions against those who aided asylum seekers to enter the state, and, secondly encoded a definition of ‘illegal immigrant’ as a ‘non-national who enters or who seeks to enter the state unlawfully’. However, as Fanning (2007:19-20) argues, in enacting this legalisation, the state failed to recognise or acknowledge that ‘many refugees [are] forced to use illegal means in order to flee persecution’, and, therefore, not only demonised, but criminalised, asylum seekers, and those aiding them, on this basis.

4.2: The ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ of non-nationals in state discourse

**The Aliens Act 1935**

Although the state only implemented a coherent immigration policy in the 1990s, immigration first became regulated by *The Aliens Act 1935*. This Act, for the first time in Irish law, encoded in positive terms the entity ‘non-Irish’, or, as referred to in the Act,

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179 Asylum seekers in Ireland are not allowed to work. Instead, under direct provision, they receive three meals a day and €19.10/week/adult (Irish Refugee Council 20th June 2004a&b).
‘Alien’. Though the Act was superseded by the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act* 1956 and then the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act* 1986, the term ‘Alien’ (defined in Section 2 of the 1956 Act as ‘a person who is not an Irish citizen’) was retained. After prolonged criticism in political circles, the term ‘Alien’ was replaced by the term ‘non-national’ (though the definition remained the same) with the enactment of the *Irish Nationality and Citizenship Act* 2001. Since then, Fanning (2007:21) argues that the term ‘non-national’ has been systematically used in state discourse (e.g., ‘by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform in security debates, in reports about crime, human trafficking and illegal immigration, and by the Department of Enterprise and Employment to describe immigrant workers’). In such discourse, Fanning argues, despite the heterogeneity (in terms of nationality, legal status, skin colour, etc.) of those legally encompassed by the term ‘non-national’, it is very frequently used in ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ terms – ‘non-national’ is constructed as ‘Non-National’. Those encompassed therein are constructed as essentially ‘non-Irish’, and actual or assumed behaviours, abilities and values are explained on the basis of this identity (i.e., ‘[s]tatus itself [is] racialised’ [Fanning 2007:22]). Indeed, as I discuss in section 5.4, because such discourse often constructs ‘non-nationals’ within a context of negativity (they are constructed as essentially [and therefore problematically] different, essentially suspect, essentially undesirable, or even essentially criminal or threatening to national security), it constitutes not just ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’ but ‘racism’.

As well as encompassing all ‘non-Irish’, the term ‘Non-National’ is also often used in state discourse in more specific terms - to refer to non-EU immigrants, immigrants with black skin, Africans, or political rather than economic immigrants.\(^{180}\) This narrower conceptualisation is evident, for instance, in the way that some immigration legislation is actually put into operation (and, indeed, can only be put into operation). The *Immigration Act 2004* is a case in point. According to this Act:

\(^{180}\) Having made a similar observation during their research, Garner and Moran (2006:104) argue that it is as though ‘the asylum seeker or refugee is somehow more non-national than others.’ Indeed, MacMaster (2001:201, cited in Brandi 2007) argues that this correlation between immigrants or non-nationals and non-Europeans has been common throughout Europe.
Every non-national shall produce on demand, unless he or she gives a satisfactory explanation of the circumstances which prevent him or her from so doing - (a) a valid passport or other equivalent document... ‘on demand’ means on demand made at any time by any immigration officer or a member of the Garda Siochana (Section 12[1] of the Immigration Act 2004).

The problem with putting this law into operation is - how are immigration officers or members of the Garda Siochana meant to determine who to stop (who is likely to be a non-national) without using ‘racial’ profiling? From using Irish airports on a regular basis myself, but also from speaking to informants about their own experiences crossing Ireland’s borders, it is clear that skin-colour, or somatic difference more generally, is being (and, one must assume, is expected by the legislature to be) used as the primary indicator of non-national identity.

The Citizenship Referendum

Though the two are often intertwined in complex ways, perhaps even more significant to the construction of Immigrant identity than the element of control over admission to the Irish Republic’s landmass (discussed Section 4.1 above) is the control the state maintains with regard to who is admitted to ‘the Irish nation’. This aspect of control is manifested primarily through the construction and implementation of citizenship policies.

Before the 2004 citizenship referendum, Irish citizenship was acquired in three ways: a legislative right by descent (jus sanguinis); a legislative right to apply for naturalisation, and a constitutional right by birth in Ireland (jus soli). It was the latter right that was made subject to referendum in 2004. Prior to this, in accordance with the Irish Nationality and Citizenship Acts, Ireland (the only country in the EU to do so) granted citizenship automatically at the moment of birth to all those born on its territory or on the territory of Northern Ireland (Rostek & Davies 04/07/06:16). Indeed, in 1998, as part of the Good Friday Agreement, this jus soli principle became a constitutional right. This Agreement amended Article 2 of the Constitution to state:
It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish nation. That is also the entitlement of all persons otherwise qualified in accordance with law to be citizens of Ireland (Government of United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland 1998:6).

Unsurprisingly (considering Ireland was a country of emigration rather than immigration), this *jus soli* principle was not discussed with respect to immigration (let alone caused any controversy in this regard) prior to the mid-1980s. In 1987 however, due to the High Court case of *Fajujonu v. Minister of Justice* (1987 IEHC 2), it was brought to the political forefront. In this case the High Court ruled that asylum seekers and other immigrants with ‘Irish born children’ (the label put on children born in Ireland to ‘non-national’ parents) were entitled to ‘Leave to Remain’ based on the child’s right to the ‘company, care and parentage’ of their parents (Fanning 2007). After this judgement, increasing numbers of non-nationals gained Irish citizenship based on their connection to an Irish citizen (i.e., their ‘Irish born child’).

Once this ‘loophole’ in citizenship policy was exposed, the *Oireachtas* (Parliament of Ireland) awaited a chance to challenge and close it. This chance came in 2003 with the *Lobe and Osayande v. Minister of Justice* case (2003 IESC 3). In this case, the Supreme Court ruled that the ‘the common good’ required that restrictions be imposed on citizen children’s right to the ‘company, care and parentage’ of their parents within the state. It defined ‘the common good’ solely in terms of the state’s ability to control immigration and maintain the integrity of the asylum system. While the state had hoped that this ruling would curb the flow of inward migration it did not. Rather than address the misconceptions upon which this hope was based (i.e., that this ‘loophole’ attracted ‘asylum shoppers’), however, it simply claimed that further restriction was necessary. Hence, in 2004 it called for a citizenship referendum to give it more control in determining the citizenship fate of ‘Irish born children’.

This call for a referendum immediately instigated a national debate. Yet, despite being technically about citizenship, the debate centred primarily on immigration, and both
drew from and added to existing discourse on Non-National identity/ies. The players involved included various arms of the state, ISOs, ‘anti-racist’ organisations, academics, the media, and the public in general. Because the referendum was primarily painted as a political or legislative issue, however, the state was arguably granted a status of primacy, legitimacy and authority by the general public that the other players involved were not. Consequently, state representatives largely led the terms of the debate.

In the run up to the referendum, the state launched a poster campaign which explicitly called on people to ‘Vote Yes for Commonsense Citizenship’. It promoted the ‘Yes’ vote as ‘commonsense’ by arguing that the proposed amendment constituted ‘simply’ the closing of a technical or legal loophole, which would allow Ireland to step into line with other EU member states, and protect the overall integrity of Irish, and even European, immigration policy. As such, the referendum was explicitly constructed as a proxy form of immigration control. Of course, the underlying implication therefore was that ‘Irish born children’ and their parents constituted an essential threat to the integrity of the immigration system - without the amendment they were bound to abuse it.

While explicitly constructing the debate surrounding the referendum in ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ terms of Citizen and Non-Citizen or Irish and Non-National, state discourse did not always (or even usually) focus on non-citizens/non-nationals per se. Throughout the campaign, focus was directed at asylum seekers, non-EU nationals, or, even more narrowly, Africans (particularly African mothers). For instance, in a public address calling for reform in Irish nationality law, the Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern stated that birth right citizenship was being ‘rampantly abused’, with 60% of all asylum seekers being pregnant when they made their applications (Rostek & Davies 04/07/06:18). In a speech announcing his intention to seek the referendum, Minister McDowell (Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform) made similar generalising, essentialising and demonising inferences when he referred to the referendum as ‘a measure to remove an incentive for foreign mothers to give birth in Irish hospitals.’ He claimed that the ‘facts and figures’ showed that abuse of this legal and constitutional loophole was severely overburdening Irish maternity services (Beesley 2004, cited in
Moriarty 2006:302). While such claims of abuse were disputed by other players (including the Masters of the maternity hospitals themselves), they served to ‘racialise’/‘ethnicise’ [N]on-[N]ationals (specifically – asylum seekers) as abusers of, and a threat to, not only Irish hospitals, but, by extension, to Irish health and welfare.\textsuperscript{181}

Even more incriminating with respect to ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’, speaking about Minister McDowell, Hennessy (2004, cited in Moriarty 2006:303) reported in The Irish Times:

> ‘In 2003, 787 Nigerian children were born to Nigerian parents in Ireland in Irish hospitals,’ he told Today FM’s Sunday Supplement Programme… He went on: ‘I’m not shifting my ground. I am saying our citizenship law is being abused. There is plenty of evidence of it. Anyone who has two eyes in their head can see it’.

Apart from the obvious ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ involved in the suggestion of the somatic difference of ‘the abusers’ in the line ‘anyone who has two eyes in their head can see it’, perhaps even more telling (in its subtlety) is the reference to these children as ‘Nigerian’ despite the fact that, because it was before the amendment, they were actually Irish citizens (Moriarty 2006). This suggests that, unofficially at least, even prior to the amendment, McDowell (and, arguably, due to his position, the DJELR), at least implicitly, conceptualised nationality (whether Irish or other) in terms of descent rather than (or at least over and above) birth right, residency or material engagement.

In terms of the discourse surrounding the referendum, therefore, a number of ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ boundaries of inclusion and exclusion - some more exclusive than others – were created. Technically, because the proposed changes to the citizenship legislation apply to all non-nationals, discourse supporting the ‘Yes’ vote involved ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ of non-national status in general. However, the fact that

\textsuperscript{181} Moriarty (2006:302) argues that, because of the authority accorded to state discourse, such myths became the backbone of ‘hearsay and urban legends’ among the general public. Indeed, three years after the referendum, though I sought and failed to find any evidence that this was the case, one of my informants still claimed ‘African women are taking up way too much medical time and resources in our hospitals. For every birth, two witnesses need to be present just to insure the hospital against any discrimination claims the woman might make later’ (Gabby 16/07/07).
those highlighted by such discourse were asylum seekers or African (black-skinned) immigrants (particularly African mothers) suggests that ‘racialisation’/’ethnicisation’ in more specific, traditional biological, somatic or skin-colour terms was particularly prevalent.

When the referendum was passed by an overwhelming majority (79% to 21%) on 11\textsuperscript{th} June 2004, the principle of \textit{jus soli} was removed as a constitutional right. The following new wording was put into Article 9 of the Constitution:

\begin{quote}
Notwithstanding any other provision of this Constitution, a person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, who does not have, at the time of the birth of that person, at least one parent who is an Irish citizen or entitled to be an Irish citizen is not entitled to Irish citizenship or nationality, unless provided for by law.
\end{quote}

The \textit{Irish Nationality and Citizenship (Amendment) Act 2004} enacted six months later laid down the provisions in this respect. It confirmed that the children born of non-nationals parents on or after the 1\textsuperscript{st} January 2005 would ‘acquire citizenship by birth only if one parent has been lawfully resident within the state for a period of three years of more.'\footnote{182}

In effect, the constitutional and legislative change brought about by the referendum created a ‘hierarchy of Irishness’ where ancestry or genealogy was rendered and then encoded as a more indisputable, and, by implication, a more essential and natural marker of ‘Irishness’ than residence, birthright, material engagement, social interaction, and even constitutionally granted ‘membership in “the nation”’. As King-O’Riain explains, ‘this gives citizenship priority to third generation Irish-Americans who are possibly far removed with no connections at all with Ireland over “Irish Born Children”...born and raised in Ireland’ (2006:284). While the former, on application, are automatically granted citizenship based on \textit{jus sanguinis}, the latter [due to their non-national parentage] are automatically deemed ‘other’ in the first instance. In other words, by ‘racialising’/’ethnicising’ ‘Irishness’ in biological (i.e., genealogical) terms, the

\footnote{182 Periods spent waiting for the determination of an asylum claim do not count.}
constitutional amendment and new nationality and citizenship legislation ‘racialised’/‘ethnically’ [N]ational as essentially ‘non-Irish’ in dialectically equivalent terms. It is for this reason that Ronit Lentin (2006:194) refers to the referendum and ensuing citizenship legislation a ‘state racialising technology’ or form of governmental ‘bio-power/bio-politics’ (in Foucaultian terms\(^{183}\)). The state, she argues, used these technologies to ‘differentiate between citizens and non-citizens in racial terms’ (Lentin & McVeigh 2006:10), and to ‘maintain [the nation-state’s] homogeneity by “managing” ethnic diversity’ (R. Lentin 2006:194).

The National Action Plan against Racism 2005

Thanks particularly to the Citizenship Referendum, by 2005 immigration had become a hot political topic in Ireland. It was in the midst of such heightened debate, that the DJELR launched its national Anti-Racism Plan - *Planning for Diversity: The National Action Plan against Racism* (NAPR) (DJELR 2005). This set out an ‘intercultural’ framework approach to developing a more inclusive and integrated society and challenging ‘racism’.\(^{184}\)

Beyond the discourse contained within the NAPR document, the launch of the Plan itself impacted on discourses on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity in Ireland. The timing of the launch, for instance, implied direct causation between immigration, multiculturalism, and the need for policy to control this. Indeed, the title (*Planning for Diversity*) supported this implication by referring to diversity in the future, rather than in the past, tense. Beyond Ireland, discourse from other countries at this time added a negative tinge

\(^{183}\)In *The History of Sexuality I* Michel Foucault (1990) argues that when natural life becomes included in mechanisms of state power, politics turn into bio politics... and the nation’s biological life becomes a problem of sovereign power. Through a series of technologies, bio-power creates “docile bodies”, and the population - its welfare, wealth, longevity and health - becomes, according to Foucault’s “governmentality” theory (1991:87-104), a *subject*, but also an *object* in the hands of government’ (R. Lentin 2006:193).

\(^{184}\)“Interculturalism” is presented in the document as a better approach to ‘anti-racism’ than ‘multiculturalism’ because it promotes positive interaction rather than simply an appreciation of cultural difference, and also implies a parity of cultures.
to this implication. In general terms, both ‘multiculturalness’ (the national state of being multicultural) and ‘multiculturalism’ (‘multicultural policy’, or rather the most commonly perceived form thereof - *Difference Multiculturalism* [Turner 1993]) were receiving critical attention in the international arena. In England in particular, the London bombings precipitated a political backlash against both ‘multiculturalness’ (because of implications of societal divisiveness), and ‘multiculturalism’ (because of implications of special treatment). Consequently, while arguably inadvertently, the launch of the NAPR helped construct the image of Ireland (home of a previously monocultural, homogenous and even harmonious national ‘community’) being forced, by immigration and Immigrants, into a tempestuous state of diversity from which ‘the Irish’ would ultimately emerge the losers.

This negative image was *somewhat* challenged by the discourse contained within the NAPR document itself. Therein, Ireland is constructed as always having been multicultural. For instance, ‘Interculturalism’ is defined as being about ‘creating the conditions for interaction, understanding, equality of opportunity and respect… the integration of both recent migrants and existing minorities, including Travellers’ (DJELR 2005:42). Further, as a foundation to the Interculturalist approach, there is a list of a relatively small number of ‘cultures’ that, it is implied, belong to correlating bounded and homogenous ‘communities’: the ‘Traveller community’, the ‘Jewish community’, the ‘Muslim community’, the ‘Asian community’ and the ‘African community’ (*ibid*:40). It is argued that these ‘communities’ of ‘culture’ have always existed in Ireland, continue to exist, and therefore must be respected and protected in and through the Plan.

Unfortunately the content of the Plan appears to have had much less effect on popular discourse than the timing of the launch and the title. The main reason for this is possibly the fact that a lot of people have not read it. While the government ran a poster campaign and distributed short leaflets outlining the Plan at the time of the launch, the vast majority of my informants maintained that they did not receive any such leaflet, or, if they did, admitted that they had not bothered reading it because they did not see it as
relevant to them - they are not ‘racist’ (see Section 5.3). Further, even for those who have read it, the message is mixed. For instance, it is significant that the ‘culture’/‘community’ of the Settled Irish has been left out of the list of ‘cultures’/‘communities’ in Ireland. The implication in this omission is that the Settled Irish simply represent ‘the norm’, ‘the Irish/national “community”’/‘the Irish/national “culture”’. Their presence is apparently so taken-for-granted that explicit reference is deemed unnecessary - this is obviously the ‘culture’/‘community’ with which it is hoped that these ‘recent migrants and existing minorities, including Travellers’ will integrate with. Accordingly, while Ireland is constructed as ‘multicultural’ on the one hand, on the other hand, the national ‘culture’/‘community’ is constructed as separate from the named ‘others’. The implication is that this is the ‘culture’/‘community’ now faced with, and threatened by, increasing levels of diversity.

Rather than existing in isolation, the NAPR was part of a broader move in Irish politics towards the adoption of Interculturalism as a strategy for dealing with increasing levels of immigration/difference. Further, Interculturalism in this more general sphere appears equally ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’. It too constructs a homogenous, bounded and essentialised Irish ‘We’ which it holds up against an equally homogeneous, bounded and essentialised ‘other’ (or series of ‘others’). According to Fanning et al (2007:10), for instance, when questioned on the issue of immigration and integration,

[The leading opposition party Fine Gael] emphasised that [while immigrants] should have the right to be free of discrimination and have their contribution to this country recognised, [they also] have a responsibility ‘to integrate into our community, comply with our laws and respect our cultural traditions’ [emphasis added].

Liz O’Donnell from the Liberal Democrats, while more subtle, ultimately argued along similar lines:

We should encourage a process of mutual respect and adjustment. Encourage newcomers to accept basic Irish values while in turn encouraging Irish people to accept and respect what newcomers bring to Ireland (cited in Fanning et al 2007:11).
According to these arguments, rather than Intercultural policy constituting a progression from assimilation, it can only work if a minimum level of assimilation to ‘our’ ‘community’, ‘cultural traditions’, ‘laws’, and ‘values’ is accepted. With lack of explicitness in Fine Gael’s discourse implying obviousness, one assumes that ‘our’ here refers to ‘Irish’. As with the discourse inscribed within the NAPR more specifically, therefore, such rhetoric implies that there exists some bounded and homogeneous Irish ‘community’ which possesses and is defined by the possession of Irish ‘cultural traditions’ and Irish ‘values’, and, more importantly, that immigrants constitute a threat to these cultural traditions and values, and, ultimately, to this ‘community’.

Of course, not to be idealistic here, when one looks at this situation in pragmatic terms it is hardly surprising. As Joppke (1999:630) argues, ‘even liberal states, which are philosophically indifferent to the cultural preferences of their members, are couched in distinct cultural colours – its official language, holidays or church relations cannot but privilege the ethnic majority population over the... minorities.’ This goes back to the argument that nationalism in the era of nation states is inevitably ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ (i.e., constitutes ‘ethno-nationalism’ [Räthzel 2002:11] (see ‘Modernity on Trial’, Section 1.1).

The 2006 Census

In November 2006 the Irish state carried out a national census. For the first time, this included a question specifically on ‘ethnic or cultural background’ (see figure 2 below). Despite its claim to ‘ethnic and cultural’ classification, the categories provided in this question involve a mixture of ‘racial’, ‘national’, ‘ethnic’, and ‘cultural’ affiliation. Most significantly, however, the primary classification is ‘racial’ – indeed, ‘racial’ in the most traditional terms of skin colour.

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185 This discourse is similar to the Social Cohesion discourse which appears to have emerged as dominant in Britain since the 9/11 attacks in the United States.
**Question 14:** What is your ethnic or cultural background? (Choose one section from A to D and then tick the appropriate box)

A. White
   - Irish
   - Irish Traveller
   - Any other White background

B. Black or Black Irish
   - African
   - Any other Black Background

C. Asian or Asian Irish
   - Chinese
   - Any other Asian Background

D. Other, including mixed background
   - Other (write in description)

**Figure 2:** New ‘ethnicity’ question in national census 2006 (CSO, Census 2006)

The inclusion of an ‘ethnicity’ question, and the form it took, has been widely criticised. Ronit Lentin (2006:191) argues that, like the Citizenship Referendum, the census was just another ‘state racialising technology’ or ‘governmental bio-power’. It was used ‘to exclude (and include) in racially ordered terms, to categorise hierarchically, and to set aside.’ Despite such criticism, however, many people, including many from ‘ethnic’ minorities, regard this question in a positive light – as a form of recognition. They argue that it allows for an ‘ethnic’ conception of ‘Irishness’ to be combined with different ‘races’. For instance, it constructs the identity ‘Black Irish’, thereby negating the universality and normativity of ‘White Irish’ (King-O’Riain 2006). While I see the logic behind this argument, I question the fact that there was no ‘Irish’ option under the ‘Black or Black Irish’ or ‘Asian or Asian Irish’ banners. Instead, the only named category is ‘African’ in the case of the former and ‘Chinese’ in the case of the latter. There were possibly methodological reasons for this (preliminary research suggested that, in terms of numbers, the named ‘groups’ constituted the most populous ones under each banner). However, according to my own research at least, the ‘pan-ethnic’/‘pan-
national’ category of ‘African’ is much more common in terms of identity ascription than in terms of identity assertion (see Section 4.3 and 4.4 below).^{186}

Part of the reasoning behind the inclusion of an ‘ethnicity’ question was to provide the necessary data to extend ‘ethnic’/‘racial’ rights and equality. Accordingly, the categories used were deemed to constitute the most possible bases of discrimination (King-O’Riain 2006). While this benevolent potential must be recognised, by setting the terms of ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ and ‘racism’ in this way, the state is also setting foundations, templates, and perhaps, by extension, limits, for arguing and proving instances of discrimination or claims to rights in future (ibid). Further, in essence, it is encouraging people to ‘self-racialise’/‘self-ethnicise’ for economic and/or political gain (including challenging ‘racism’), without consideration being given to the inadvertent, but often paradoxically negative, outcomes (including, paradoxically, ‘racism’) (see Section 4.4 below).

One vital question that must be asked before any claims can be made with respect to the state’s ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ intentions (and the actual effects) with respect to this census question is whether the categories used were simply a reflection of the dominant discourses on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity evident in society at this time, or whether the state constructed them independently? The answer, while impossible to determine categorically, as I demonstrate in the remainder of this chapter, is most likely to be - a bit of both. On the one hand, there is certainly evidence that these ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ constructs existed in the public imagination before the census (see Sections 4.3 and 4.4 below).^{187} Further, despite the fact that ‘the question was formed... with little or no consultation with the racialised/ethnicised] and with immigrants’ (King-O’Riain 2006:282), while previous formats were rejected after pilot testing in 1999, this format passed the pilot testing stage. This suggests that it was

^{186}Because I had little or no contact with ‘Asian’/‘Chinese’ immigrants (and indeed, compared to ‘Blacks/Africans’ they appear to be present in much smaller numbers) in Galway and Ballybane, I am unable at present to make similar claims vis-a-vis this ‘group’

^{187}Of course, because other state technologies of ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ (immigration policies and policies on citizenship and nationalism) pre-date the census by several decades, this does not exonerate state discourse.
deemed meaningful, or at least acceptable, in terms of self-definition by a representative sample of the resident population. On the other hand, however, the critique that it has received (largely through the medium of the media) suggests that it was certainly not meaningful to all those on whom it has been imposed. Of course, either way, because of its wide distribution, the inclusion of this question in the terms chosen may affect participants’ future identity constructions (whether asserted or ascribed).

4.3: ‘Black men and big cars’ – ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ in popular discourse

Although, again, it is almost impossible to determine categorically whether state discourse on immigration and non-nationals has influenced popular discourse or vice versa, I found that the terms Non-National and Immigrant\(^\text{188}\) (with all their ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ [and even ‘racist’] implications) were also common in popular discourse produced by Irish informants. As in state discourse, in popular discourse such ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ constructs are usually dialectically produced alongside a ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ ‘Irish ”We”’. In effect, Non-Nationals or Immigrants are constructed as essentially different/foreign/external (and therefore threatening) to a static and reified construction of ‘Irishness’ and a homogeneous and essentialist construction of ‘the Irish’. The following extracts from my fieldnotes and interviews provide just some examples of this.

Brendan 23/01/07
We have our culture and we have our values and we shouldn’t have to give them up because there are immigrants living in our country. They should respect our beliefs, and, yes, celebrate their own side, but I think what will happen is that our culture will be gone because we’re being too nice to everyone else, and then the country will have no culture. If you look at England now, you can’t say they have a culture

\(^{188}\) Increasingly in the contemporary era, the term ‘non-national’ is being substituted by ‘immigrant’ or ‘migrant’, which are considered more politically correct terms. This is largely due to recent criticism of the term ‘non-national’ (even within the Dáil itself – by Fianna Fáil TD Pat Carney [Holland 15/05/06, Irish Times article]) on the basis that it is negatively loaded.
it’s so diverse by simply trying to please everyone. Now that’s my own personal view, but a lot of people I have been talking to about it would have similar views.

Molly 07/03/07
Me: How do you feel about immigration and the way that the government is dealing with it?

M: I just think that Ireland is a small place and it will become overrun very easy. Like, this thing that the immigrants want now – taking the [nativity] cribs and crosses out of hospitals at Christmas, I don’t agree with that. Ireland is a Catholic country and if immigrants want to come here they should respect that. I just worry that Ireland won’t be Irish anymore. Even in Supervalue down the road, there are hardly any Irish people working there – they all have foreign accents.  

Interestingly, many of my immigrant informants produced similar ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ identity constructions of ‘the Irish’ and ‘Irishness’, and, by implication, ‘Immigrants’ and ‘foreignness’, to those produced by my Irish informants. The following extract from an interview with Bea (a Nigerian immigrant with Leave to Remain based on having an Irish Born Child), illustrates one instance of this.

Bea 01/11/06
Me: If you get Citizenship, will you regard yourself as Irish then?

B: Well, I will always be a Nigerian. I feel I will always be a Nigerian because, first of all, I am black, I was born in Nigeria, and my parents are Nigerian. So, I think, I will always be a Nigerian, even if I get

189 The protection of Ireland’s ‘Irishness’ (particularly its Catholicism) against Immigrant others is an issue that apparently concerns Irish people generally. In the poll taken as part of the PrimeTime programme The Time of Our Lives (30/05/06) 58% of those polled were against Catholic symbols being removed from public buildings to reflect Ireland’s new multicultural reality (19% were for this; and 23% had no opinion). Indeed, Anthony Cohen (1985:109) explains the commonality of such feelings in the following terms:

[Community] members find their identities as individuals through their occupancy of the community’s social space: if outsiders trespass in that space, then its occupants’ own sense of self is felt to be debased and defaced. This sense is always tenuous when the physical and structural boundaries which previously divided the community from the rest of the world are increasingly blurred. It can therefore easily be depicted as under threat… Thus, one often finds in such communities the prospect of change being regarded ominously, as if change inevitably means loss.
Irish citizenship – I think that will only be on paper. It won’t change my colour or anything. It won’t change my accent [laughs].

Overall, according to this discourse, if a person has black-skin, is non-Catholic or has a foreign accent they are assumed to be Immigrants/’non-Irish’.

Alongside this ‘racialised’/’ethnicised’ construct - Non-National/Immigrant/’non-Irish’ - popular discourse (at least, that produced by non-immigrants) on ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ identity in general, and on immigration and immigrants more specifically, produces another more disaggregated identity framework which receives equal (if not greater) attention. There are a number of versions of this framework, but these overlap significantly and are inter-related. In most general and descriptive contexts this framework consists of two distinct Immigrant ‘communities’. One ‘community’ is generally constructed as ‘White, foreign accented/Eastern European/Migrant Worker’ (hereafter the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’) and the other is generally constructed as ‘Black/African/Non-EU/Refugee/Asylum Seeker/Non-Worker’ (hereafter the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’). At first glance, this framework appears to mirror the ‘economic immigrant – political immigrant’ framework produced in and through state legislative and administrative discourse.

However, when looked at more closely and in context, the popular constructs are constructed in different terms, involve different boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and, most importantly, are more obviously ‘racialised’/’ethnicised’ than those constructed in and through state discourse. These differences suggest that there are other influences (including other state discourse) affecting popular discourse in this regard.

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190 Such discourse broadly differentiates between ‘political migrants’ (which it further divides into asylum seekers and refugees) and ‘economic migrants’ (which it further divides into EU and non-EU migrants). These categories are used primarily to determine different social, political and economic rights and entitlements. The aspects of commonality could be explained using Loyal and Allen’s (2006:217-8) argument that ‘The administrative categories and classifications used by the state play an important role in defining broader discourses of identification and exclusion. Both dominant and marginalised groups can come to define themselves and each other through such classifications… They enter public consciousness as key categories for seeing the social world.’
The popular version of this Immigrant identity framework was constructed most starkly by James who, when I asked how he felt about immigration in Ireland and how the government are currently dealing with it, made the following argument:

Well, we need to discuss Eastern Europeans separately from people from African countries, because they’re two very different things. The Eastern Europeans have the benefit here of having a good work ethic and a good working reputation. They are also white skinned and mainly Catholic. So, they’ve already come over here with a few more benefits than the Africans. The Africans come and they stand out. They’re a different colour. They don’t seem to work. They don’t seem to contribute anything. But they still get all the state handouts going (interview 08/08/06).

Though not always in such stark terms, similar constructions were constructed in and through the discourse on immigration and immigrants produced by most of my informants. In such discourse, informants usually implicated crude symbolic criteria such as skin colour and accent to differentiate between the two Immigrant ‘communities’. For instance, persons with black skin were often described or referred to as ‘Africans’ (or ‘Nigerians’ – the most populous of the African nationalities in Ireland) or ‘refugees/asylum seekers’ (and vice versa). In turn, people with black skin, Africans(/Nigerians), and asylum seekers/refugees were generally constructed as non-workers, and, by extension, arguably because of state policy towards asylum seekers, a drain on state resources (see Section 4.1) or even ‘deviants’, ‘spongers’, or ‘criminals’ (see Section 4.1 above, and Section 5.6). The following interview and fieldnote extracts are just some of the many examples of such discourse produced by my informants:

**Kathleen 18/01/07**

Me: How do feel about immigration?

K: As far as I can see, the refugees get everything. They come over here and get a house, but the Travellers are born and reared here, and when their child gets married they have to wait two or three years to get a house. There’s a black family have just moved in next to Nelly

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191 Even though legal discourse differentiates between asylum seekers and refugees (besides those who were actually asylum seekers of refugees themselves) none of my informants did so.
in Castlepark even though Nelly’s son has been waiting for a house for nearly three years.

Linda 27/10/06
Me: And how do you feel about immigrants coming to Ireland?

L: I don’t know, but you see a lot of the Africans getting more than us like. You see them down there at the welfare office. They come in with cars, and then they’re going in applying for stuff. And they’re waiting outside with buggies, and then going in and asking for cheques for buggies. Do you know what I mean? And they get it. Do you know what I mean?

Lisa 24/04/07
Me: How do you feel about immigration?

L: I suppose the Eastern Europeans - you see all the girls in Dunnes Stores, a lot of them you don’t realise are foreigners until they speak to you, because they look so much like us. But, with the Africans, I suppose people have a thing about people who don’t work, basically speaking.

The mental processes and associations involved in the construction of this Black/African Immigrant ‘community’ were conveyed most effectively by a series of conversations I had with Paul about ‘Black men and big cars’.

Chatting to Paul in office 15/05/06
Paul argued that “the reason that Irish people come across as, and are, racist is because they believe all the myths about immigrants that they read in the papers.” ‘Essentially’, he argued, ‘we should be blaming the government for not doing more to dispel these myths. For example, when people see black people with big cars, they never seem to be working, so, you can understand why they resent them. It’s different with Eastern Europeans, because you always see them working, but it looks like the Africans are just given the cars by the government. Now, of course, me and you know rightly that the government is not going to hand out free cars to anyone, but they are not doing enough to explain this to the public.’ ‘But’, he concluded, ‘on the other hand, you never do see black people working, so where do they get these cars?’

192 That Paul’s description of this dominant perception about ‘Black men and big cars’ is accurate was supported by a letter published in the Galway Advertiser during my fieldwork:
While Paul is doing his best to distance himself from the views he describes, his ultimate question - ‘So where do they get these cars?’ – suggests his own susceptibility and involvement. In reality, one cannot generally know anything about someone’s employment status just by looking at them, and generally the public do not get to observe most people ‘at work’ (whatever the colour of their skin). Consequently, the very tendency to notice and question a black person owning a big car implies the existence of a ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ image of black people. Black men and big cars are highlighted for attention because of the colour of their skin, and, by extension, the assumption that they are ‘non-workers’. A white person with a big car does not warrant the same scepticism. Indeed, the typical assumption is that they must work because of the big car.

That such ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse is not limited to Ballybane or Galway is suggested by Keogh (2000). In her research on attitudes towards asylum seekers and refugees among pupils in their transition year (around 16 years of age), Keogh describes how, ‘because the pupils assume that refugees are poor, but they appear to be wealthy (because some are seen wearing labelled clothes and carrying mobile phones and pagers), they make an assumption that refugees must be abusing the welfare system or be involved in criminal activity here’ (2000:129-130).

Perhaps more worrying than the dominance of these ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ constructs, it appears that the images and meanings involved are being passed on to the younger generation. Many of the teenagers in Ballybane reiterated the same urban myths about Black/African Immigrants as many of my adult informants: that they are being put up in

Dear Editor,

‘What the hell does he think he is doing here?’ That seemed to be the attitude of a garage owner when I entered his showroom lately. In fact on seeing me, unlike any civilised professional sales person who would treat his potential buyer with absolute friendliness and respect regardless of their looks, his first remark was ‘Oh! We have no cheap cars in stock!’ I was stunned and wondered why he thought that whatever value of cars he had in stock was way beyond my purchasing power. Of course at this stage I didn’t need the services of a professor of psychology to interpret to me that his perception of me was based on my looks (Letters to the Editor 19/01/06: 22).
the best hotels in Galway, and are getting free cars, mobile phones and an endless supply of baby buggies. For example, during a discussion group on immigration, one local youth earnestly described how his mother had recently been getting on a bus in town when an African woman, also embarking, was told by the bus driver that the buggy she had with her would not fit. Upon hearing this, the woman simply said that she would leave it behind because the government would give her a new one anyway. The effects of such socialisation are also demonstrated in the following story told to me by Tina (a Nigerian with Leave to Remain based on an ‘Irish born child’):

Tina 13/11/06
I recently did some work experience in Mervue School as part of my course. The kids thought that I was a teacher, and you should have seen the alarm – ‘a black teacher!’ Someone asked me, ‘are you Samuel’s aunty?’ You know, they thought that I couldn’t be a teacher. I must be someone’s aunty that has come to school. I said, ‘No, I’m here to help’ and they couldn’t believe. All the parents got to know, because the children were going home and going ‘there’s a black teacher!’ You know, a black person cannot be a teacher, or a black person cannot be a GP, in their little minds.

The ease at which this series of inferences about people with black skin and Africans are made implies that they are considered natural and self-evident. This is despite the fact that, first, the African population in Ireland is hugely diverse and comprises a broad range of legal categories (Irish citizens, EU nationals, students, refugees, asylum seekers, descendents of historic African immigrants, diplomats, economic immigrants, and people granted Leave to Remain), and, second, refugees are allowed to, and usually do, work (albeit often in less visible positions such as ‘back-of-house’ service providers).

293 The mythical nature of this story is suggested by its commonness. Most informants claimed to know someone who had actually witnessed such a buggy incident (interestingly, the witness was never the speaker themselves). As an astute informant, discussing what she called ‘the famous pushchair at the bus stop myth’, jokingly commented ‘There must be thousands of pushchairs around the streets of Galway… So, I’m going to go round collecting them all and sell them at the market next Saturday!’ [laughs] (Donna 14/01/07).
In terms of the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’, persons with white skin and a foreign accent, were usually described or referred to by informants as ‘Eastern European’ (or ‘Polish’ - the most populous of the Eastern European nationalities in Ireland). In turn, people with white skin and foreign accents or Eastern Europeans, were generally constructed as migrant ‘workers’. The following interview and fieldnote extracts are just some of the many examples of such discourse produced or described by my informants:

**Aileen 07/03/07**
With regards the Eastern Europeans, I think people have this notion that we need them, they’re working, we’re guaranteed they’re not on the dole, and that’s just not there with the Africans. And, even when there is that thing of ‘oh they’re taking our jobs’ or whatever, it’s different. With the anti-African sentiment, it doesn’t really require a reason almost - They’re just too apparently different. You would also imagine that if you go a generation forward, whatever Poles are left, there’ll be a lot more ease of assimilation. They’ll just kind of slot in – they’re white. Okay, they have different names, but they just seem to mix a bit easier.

**Tandi (an economic immigrant with black skin, born in Germany to Nigerian parents) 01/03/07**
People here just generalise. All black is African even though you could be from America… And, all white people with accents are Eastern European. Like, my friend was telling me about two white friends of hers who were speaking Irish and two youths came up to them and told them to go back to their own country, we don’t want you here. They were like - ‘we’re speaking Irish!’ [laughs].

As with the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’, the ease at which this series of inferences about skin colour, accent and working status were made implies that they were considered natural and self-evident. This is despite the fact that, first, there are some black-skinned Eastern Europeans in Ireland, just as there are many white skinned asylum seekers and refugees, and second, many Eastern European immigrants do not have employment (Indeed, the increasing levels of homelessness within this
‘community’ was often highlighted [and criticised] in media discourse during my fieldwork).\(^{194}\)

What is perhaps most significant about this Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’ (as opposed to the ‘economic immigrant’ construct produced by state discourse) is those who are notably excluded – non-nationals/immigrants from the pre-2004 fifteen EU States, and from Australia, New Zealand and North America, all of whom are present as immigrant workers in Ireland in relatively large numbers.\(^{195}\) They are Ireland’s invisible economic immigrants. Accordingly, what is central to the identity of the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’ is not non-Irishness per se, but rather ‘foreignness’. This concept emphasises familiarity, and therefore explains why immigrants from countries traditionally conceptualised as Western or Developed are better received, and usually go un-noticed by processes of ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’.\(^{196}\)

**Othering ‘others’ – Historical ‘characterisation influences’**

According to dominant contemporary academic discourse on ‘racism’ (see Section 1.1), the dominant constructions of both the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’ and the

\(^{194}\) Despite my critique of this ‘worker - non-worker’ aspect of the Immigrant identity framework, the evidence does suggest that unemployment rates are higher among Black/African Immigrants than among Eastern European Immigrants. According to the recent census, 39.5% of those who are in the labour force and who defined their ethnicity as ‘Black or Black Irish’ are unemployed, compared to 8.1% of those who classified themselves as ‘White’, and 11.2% of those who classified themselves as ‘Asian or Asian Irish’ (CSO, Census 2006, Vol.5, Table 8:26). Of course, it could be that [white skinned] Eastern Europeans make up most of the 8.1%, but walking onto almost any building site during the time of my fieldwork and seeing the number of Eastern European workers would suggest otherwise. What marks these identity constructs off as ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’, however, is that, even when there is evidence to the contrary (e.g., when a person with black skin owns a big car), it is generally assumed that they do not work and therefore must have obtained it through state handouts or illegal means. Such assumptions do not exist with respect to ‘white men with big cars’, whether they are immigrants or Irish.

\(^{195}\) According to the recent census, the UK alone provided 27% of the total number of immigrants in the state (CSO, Census 2006, Principle Demographic Results, Table 25:73).

\(^{196}\) Of course, context is key here. While in many (even most) contexts involving immigration or immigrants, immigrants from the UK are regarded as the immigrant ‘community’ ‘racially’/‘ethnically’ closest to ‘the Irish’, in times of political tension (for instance, that brought on by the release of the politically charged movie *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* during my fieldwork) or even during times of sporting tension (for instance, during the World Cup qualifiers which also took place during my fieldwork) there is no immigrant more ‘foreign’, ‘non-Irish’ or ‘other’ than the ‘English Other’.
Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’ described above constitute ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’. Significantly, however, in popular discourse in Ireland, and more specifically in Ballybane, the term ‘race’ (and, by extension, ‘racism’) is associated more readily (though not exclusively) with Black/African Immigrants than with Eastern European Immigrants (see Section 5.3). According to Goldberg’s theory on ‘racism’ (1993:75), such divergence in the conceptualisation of the two ‘communities’ is to be expected considering, first, the different ‘referential history of the groups in question’ and, second, ‘the politics of general group reference at the time in question’ (see Section 1.1).

In terms of the ‘referential history of the groups in question’ Goldberg suggests that how a population is conceptualised today depends on how it has been conceptualised in the past. Similarly, he argues, how ‘race’ and ‘racism’ are conceptualised today depends on how they have been conceptualised in the past. In terms of the former, historically and internationally, he argues, people with black skin (particularly when confronted by people with white skin) have generally been constructed (both by themselves and others), primarily, or at least most explicitly, in ‘race’ terms; their ethno-genesis usually invokes terms of ‘descent’ which, in popular discourse at least, implies ‘blood’ and ‘biological’ connections; their origins are usually naturalised as having emerged from a single point or even source; and, in line with all this, discrimination against them is usually conceptualised in terms of ‘racism’ (Goldberg 1993:75-76). While the scientific basis of many such claims has been refuted, they still appear to significantly affect popular discourse on Black/African Immigrants (and ‘racism’ [see Section 5.3]) in Ireland.

Unlike Africans, and people with black skin, Eastern Europeans, and more broadly white people, historically and internationally, have generally been conceptualised as ‘raceless’ or ‘racially neutral’; and, in line with this, discrimination against them has not tended to be conceptualised in terms of ‘racism’ (Goldberg 1993:76-77).\footnote{At a disaggregated level, of course, a significant exception to this generality was the construction of a} Unsurprisingly,
therefore, in most general and descriptive contexts, Eastern European Immigrants in Ireland are constructed primarily, or at least most explicitly, in ‘ethnic’ rather than ‘racial’ terms. They are differentiated from ‘the Irish’ by cultural barriers embodied in such things as language and accent, rather than by biological barriers embodied in such things as skin colour and phenotype.

While the terms used in the ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ of these two ‘communities’ of Immigrants are historicised in this way, significantly, it appears that the essentialist associations inherent in the ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ of the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’ are also based on historical references. Particularly prominent and effective in this respect is the unique phenomenon of ‘Black baby syndrome’ (White 2002:112). ‘Black baby syndrome’ emerged out of the personification of Africa in the image of a black baby with flies around its infected eyes and a swollen stomach. It was initially constructed in and through Catholic missionary work, which encircled the globe (but which was particularly prevalent on the African continent) throughout the 20th Century. During this time, fundraising efforts (using collection boxes donning the emotive picture) to finance this missionary work took place in almost every parish in Ireland, thus ensuring it became a dominant feature in popular discourse on Africa and Africans. Indeed, particularly during its peak in the 1970s and 1980s (Coogan 2000, cited in MacEinri 2006:258), the image of starving black babies was brought into almost every Irish household (including my own) at dinnertime when children who refused to finish their meal were told that if they did not eat it quickly it would be taken away and sent to the ‘Black babies’ in Africa.

The Catholic missionaries originally at the core of this phenomenon have now largely been superseded by contemporary (Irish and International) development aid organisations and their campaigns. Indeed, not a week went by during my fieldwork when one of the national or local newspapers did not include adverts for such aid

\*Jewish race* resulting in the Holocaust.

198 The fact that Eastern Europeans have a relatively short and not very evocative history in Irish discourse, explains why historicised images or associations have not impacted on contemporary constructions of Eastern European Immigrants in the same way.
campaigns and pleas for donations. While the motives and the specific recipients of such charitable institutions may have changed over the decades, the images used to tug at Irish heart strings have hardly altered at all. Further, such images are rarely countered by more positive ones showing black people as hard-working and successful.

This whole institution has created what White (2002:112) refers to as a ‘legacy of charitable association with Africa’ - an image or perception among people in Ireland that black people/Africans are uneducated, inferior, ‘no more than the collective embodiment of the malnourished child on a parish poster,’ and, most essentially, dependent on the benevolent intervention of white people for survival.²⁹⁹ It is because of this legacy, Aniagolu (1997:49) argues, that Irish people find it difficult to perceive of black people as their equals when they encounter them in Ireland. Indeed, as White (2002:112-113) argues, it is hardly surprising that ‘when remoteness is replaced with proximity accompanied by an assertion of a contrary representation of self... the African immigrant or perceived asylum-seeker becomes not only an object of derision, but the object of suspicion.’

Interestingly, while the manifestation of ‘black baby syndrome’ is obvious in the constructions of Black/African Immigrants produced in and through popular discourse from the local to the national level in Ireland, few of my Irish informants demonstrated awareness of its existence or its effects on their psyche, let alone the causal factors involved in its production. With respect to the ‘victims’ of this syndrome, however, awareness and condemnation is wide-scale. The following interview extracts convey the general feelings of the African immigrants I spoke to on the issue.

Mika (Romanian immigrant married to a Nigerian man) 17/03/07
Me: Do you think that Irish attitudes towards immigrants are different for Europeans than Africans?
M: I think that towards Africans they have a few more insults to throw. They kind of degrade them a bit more, because there’s so many

²⁹⁹ In these terms it mirrors the institution of targeted Traveller policy and its effects discussed in Section 3.2.
of those adds on the TV, you know Concern and Trocaire. Irish people see Africa with those eyes, like children with flies flying around them... It’s a very bad thing. It’s very degrading. Many of the Nigerians are angry because they feel that that’s the way people are seeing them, and it’s not really like that in Nigeria you know.

**Tina 13/11/06**

From what I have been watching on TV - the poverty - as an African, sometimes I wonder, which country do the Irish see you from, because they portray what is not there. And sometimes we complain that NGOs are using it to get funding. To an outsider who has not been to Africa, they do not realise what is there, and they see these things and think ‘ah, look at that, poor things, with their rice and everything.’ And then when they see us here they think, ‘oh, do you see her, she’s so pretty, it’s because she came to Ireland’... When they see countries that are war-ridden, they think what is going on there is going on everywhere. There is poverty in the world, but the way it is being portrayed is totally misleading... I was so surprised when, you know, the Irish man from the oilfield was kidnapped in Nigeria in a nightclub, and someone said to me ‘is there a nightclub in Nigeria?’ I didn’t know what to say, so I just said, ‘I’m not trying to be arrogant, but you see in Nigeria where he was kidnapped, the lifestyle... You know Ireland is a quiet place compared to it.’ And they said, ‘really, how many is there? Is there one nightclub or two?’ I said ‘Oh God. No it’s not like that.’ I said, ‘the capital city of Nigeria was a planned city. There is no town in Ireland as beautiful as that – even the road networks...’ You know, when music comes out in America, it gets to Nigeria before it reaches other European countries.

Perhaps more interesting than any of these observations of ‘black baby syndrome’ however, was the following comment made by Anne (an Irish informant): ‘I’ll never forget looking at these white faces on TV starving after something, and I was so shocked. You know you don’t expect to see things like that - you think that everyone with a white face is the same as you’ (interview 23/03/07). The fact that this media image shocked her, while similar images of black faces are so common as to become unremarkable, reflects the ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ constructs that dominate in her imagination.²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰ Though I have discussed ‘Black baby syndrome’ in this chapter, because it involves the conceptualisation of Black/African Immigrants as, not only all the same and different from whites...
Of course, because ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ is a dialectic process, historicised and contemporary constructions of ‘the Irish’ are also influential in contemporary constructions of Immigrant/Non-National others. Indeed, the fact that the histories of ‘race’ and ‘racism’ vis-à-vis ‘the Irish’ are so multifaceted and complex (see Section 1.2) partly explains the complexity (and often ambivalence) involved in the construction of such others.

‘For much of its history, a large proportion of Irish born people have chosen or have been forced to live outside the geographical confines of the island’ (Tovey & Share 2000:98). This experience of emigration is historicised in popular, educational, media, and even state discourse, and has the potential to ‘thwart the (dominant) process of racialisation[ethnicisation] (vis-à-vis immigrant “others”) which places “them” and “us” irrevocably on distinct sides of a boundary’ (Garner 2004:196). Whether it actually does thwart this process, however, depends on the context. While, in most general and descriptive contexts, dominant discourse constructs both Eastern European Immigrants and Black/African Immigrants as ‘other’, in contexts where Irish emigration is historicised in economic/migrant worker terms, an identity bridge is often built between ‘the Irish’ and the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’; and in contexts where political (particularly forced) aspects of the Irish emigration experience are highlighted, an identity bridge is often built between ‘the Irish’ and the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’.

On the ground, there appear to be more contexts where conditions are created for the construction of identity bridges between ‘the Irish’ and the Eastern European Immigrant
‘community’ than between ‘the Irish’ and the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’.

For instance, an economic/worker based identity bridge has materialised at the national level a number of times over the past few years in and through the solidarity shown by many Irish workers in labour disputes involving exploitation of (largely Eastern European) migrant workers (e.g., during the 2005 and 2006 labour disputes involving Turkish Gama workers and migrant workers employed by Irish Ferries). Although their motives may have been based on self-interest (maintaining labour standards and minimum wage levels), by joining the migrant workers as a common front against employers, the Irish workers involved, at least temporarily, undermined the dominant ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse that sets them necessarily apart. Of course, such unity was contextual. It existed alongside the more dominant ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ othering of such workers described above.

While such dramatic national-level expressions of identity affinity have been relatively few, in popular discourse in Ballybane such affinity appears relatively widespread. While predominant skin-colour (white) and religion (Catholicism) are often used as the basis for such affinity, equally significant is the notion of ‘work ethic’. My informants generally associated the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’, and, by extension, individuals therein, with ‘hard work’ and a good ‘work ethic’, characteristics which were also inherent in the dominant constructions of ‘the Irish’ (whether at home or abroad). In the following interview extracts, for example, Paul and Henry explain the basis for this identity affinity.

Paul 16/11/06
With respect to the Eastern Europeans, I think that Irish people have this grudging respect for hard slog. Traditionally we would really identify with it. Our ancestors went to London, went to America, went to Australia, and Canada, and worked the menial jobs, worked the building sites, worked in the shops - basically, doing exactly the same thing that Eastern European people are doing here now. So, they’re a mirror image of us in the past. Now, I wouldn’t say we give them a massive welcome, but we have a deep respect for the way they work and their work ethic.
It’s no coincidence, you don’t hear too much against the Polish, but them being white Catholics who work hard, you know what I mean… fits the bill quite nicely sort of thing.

While this notion of ‘work ethic’ helps construct a ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ identity bridge between ‘the Irish’ and the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’, conversely, it is often used to create or reinforce a ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ identity boundary between ‘the Irish’ and the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’. Many of my informants argued that Black/African Immigrants come here and simply ‘do not want to work’, preferring to ‘sponge off the state.’ ‘They expect to be handed everything on a platter’, Brendan argued (interview 23/01/07). This situation was often explicitly compared to that of Irish emigrants who escaped to countries like England or America in the past. Again, that ‘the Irish’ did the worst jobs, worked for everything they got, and were never given special treatment was usually claimed during such comparisons (the privilege or special treatment inherent in their whiteness [Roediger 1991] has apparently been lost in history). Indeed, beyond Ballybane, the prevalence of this historicisation of the ‘Irish emigration experience’ at the national level is suggested by the existence and popularity of the band U2’s song - *Hands that built America*. Further, that it is not new is suggested by the following letter from an American-based Irish emigrant that was published in a national newspaper, the *Irish Times*, in 1998:

> We come prepared to work hard and make a go of it. We would not be allowed to claim unemployment benefits or otherwise scrounge off the state […] Taxes in Ireland are appallingly high - they will remain so if we keep subsidising the economically challenged from abroad […] I suggest that many of the recent influx of foreigners have come to Ireland, not for the love of the country either, but because the word is out that we are suckers for a sob story (cited in Garner 2004:160-1).

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203 Few appeared to be aware that asylum seekers are not generally allowed to work, and are forced into direct provision.

204 Donna argued, for instance, ‘Now I know we emigrated ourselves, but it was no easy ticket… When we went to England and Boston we got nothing for free. We worked, and we worked hard. We worked in the mines, we worked in the factories, and we built lives for ourselves’ (14/01/07). Similarly, James argued, ‘When we went places like America, we worked or we starved. We got no handouts. We just made a go of things. And if you look at all the Irish names in big positions in America now, you can see a lot of us made good’ (08/08/06).
Beyond popular discourse, political and state discourse also constructs ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ boundaries between ‘the Irish’ (particularly ‘Irish emigrants’) and the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’ in many contexts. Perhaps the best example of this, though it was not explicitly constructed in these terms, was the Irish political and state support for the illegal Irish (or as they were diplomatically referred to – ‘the undocumented Irish’) in the US who were threatened with deportation in 2005 and 2006 when the *Kennedy/McCain Bill* was brought to the Senate. Senior ministers, including the *Taoiseach*, directly lobbied George W. Bush and his cabinet on the issue. Noel Tracy, Minister for the State with responsibility for emigrants asserted during this time: ‘Our interest in this matter is set against... our great pride in the contribution which Irish People have made, and continue to make, to developments in that country, down through the generations’ (O’Toole, Foreword to Lentin & McVeigh 2006:ii). In similar terms, John Cregan, a Limerick Fianna Fail TD, told the crowd during a demonstration in Washington to support the Bill that: ‘You’re not a security risk, you pay your taxes, you have become good Americans and you helped, through former generations, to build this great country’ (Palmer, *Irish independent* 29/05/06).

While this historicisation of the Irish emigration experience in economic terms creates an identity boundary between ‘the Irish’ ‘community’ and the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’ in most contexts, the historicisation of ‘the Irish’ experience of emigration in terms of the political push factors (e.g., British imperialism), and the phenomenon of ‘anti-Irish racism’ which confronted them in the many countries to which they fled, creates a ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ identity bridge between the two ‘communities’ in some other contexts. These phenomena are historicised in the media, in school curricula, and even in state discourse on the Irish diaspora. Therein, ‘the Irish’ are constructed as ‘victims’, and this encourages solidarity and identification with other ‘groups’ who have been forced to leave their country, or, more generally, who are traditionally conceptualised as ‘victims’ of ‘racism’. One of the best examples of this process in popular discourse in Ballybane occurred in a conversation I had with Molly (a middle-aged Irish woman):
Molly 07/03/07
Me: Why do you think that Irish people have negative attitudes towards African immigrants?

M: Maybe they have had bad experiences with some, or maybe they feel they are being occupied by immigrants - being such a small country. I don’t know, but I feel we should be the first ones to understand, because not long ago there was that thing of ‘No blacks, No Irish, No Dogs’ in England and America.

As with the identity boundaries, the construction of this ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ identity bridge is not restricted to popular discourse at the local level of Ballybane. It is also constructed in and through state discourse at the national level, where it is used to encourage a sense of historical duty or moral duty with respect to ‘welcoming’ or at least ‘tolerating’ immigration and Immigrants. Indeed, in a speech to a Joint session of the Houses of Oireachtas entitled ‘Cherishing the Diaspora’, President Robinson explicitly made such an appeal in these terms. She stated: ‘Our relation with the diaspora beyond our shores is one which can instruct our society in the values of diversity, tolerance and fairmindedness’ (Robinson 1995, cited in Gray 1998:70).

Despite its significance in some contexts, such politically-based identity affinity is limited in scope. It is generally overshadowed by the more negative ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ constructions of the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’. This is largely because other aspects of Ireland’s history of ‘race’ and ‘racism’ constantly compete with the historicisations on which it is based. For instance, as well as being the victims of ‘anti-Irish racism’, the Irish were also implicated in systems of ‘racism’ perpetuated against others, learned from them, and indeed, as Ignatiev (1995) describes, benefited from them. While often analysed in Irish academic discourse (e.g., Garner 2004), this historical role in ‘racialist’ and ‘racist’ institutions is rarely, if ever, acknowledged in state or popular discourse in Ireland. Nevertheless, it is possible that, the ‘racial’ and ‘racist’ ideology deriving from such involvement has been passed down through the generations, and its effects now play a large part in the dominant ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ constructions of the Black/African Immigrant other.
Of course, while each side of this Immigrant identity framework (Black/African Immigrant and Eastern European Immigrant) is ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ in different ways (using different terms, and reifying and essentialising different aspects of identity), it co-exists with the more aggregate framework (‘Non-National/Immigrant – Irish’) described above. In other words, the differences in the processes of ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ of the two different types of Immigrant ‘community’ are often, at least partially, overshadowed by the fact that both types are ultimately constructed as ‘the same’ in terms of being ‘other’ to ‘the Irish’.

4.4: Immigrant identity assertion - Feeding the ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ agenda?

The ‘referential history of the groups in question’ is only one of two characterisation influences highlighted by Goldberg (1993). The other is ‘the politics of general group reference at the time in question’. This brings into the mix the ways in which players such as state institutions, the media, ISOs or immigrants themselves, and their respective (though often inter-connected) contemporary discourses on ‘race’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘racism’, and on particular ‘group’ identities, help produce, reinforce, or challenge the terms in which Immigrants are constructed in and through dominant discourse. I have discussed the impact of state legislation, policy and public discourse throughout this chapter. In turn, because (as I explained in footnote 5) I have left analysis of media discourses to others, here I will concentrate on the role of discourses produced by ISOs and Immigrants themselves.

It is impossible to analyse the ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ of the Immigrant ‘community’ without taking into consideration how people therein self-identify. In Ireland, and more specifically in Galway, Immigrant identity assertion tends to have

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205 Interestingly, Cole’s (1997) description of similar issues surrounding immigration in Sicily in the 1990s is very similar to those I have described here. As I argued in Section 1.2, however, this is somewhat unsurprising considering the commonality between Irish and Sicilian history with respect to issues of ‘colonialism’, ‘emigration’, ‘race’ and ‘racism’.
more layers than identity assignment. While, identity assignment (as described above) tends to construct extensive status based or ‘pan-regional’ identities (Immigrant, Black/African, or Eastern European) which often negate, or at least over-ride, the reality of heterogeneity, those subsumed within these identities, appear to self-identify primarily in terms of narrower ‘national’, ‘ethnic’ or ‘religion’ based identities which challenge the legitimacy of the broader identities.

The limited meaningfulness of the Immigrant ‘community’, for instance, was demonstrated in the post-2004 period when, as the coordinator of the Galway Refugee Support Group explained, increasing numbers of migrants from Eastern Europe, upon discovering that existing ISOs focused primarily on the needs and experiences of asylum seekers and refugees and particularly Africans, set up more inclusive organisations to encompass their identity and needs (interview 01/01/06). Even the more disaggregated identities – Black/African Immigrant and Eastern European Immigrant – appeared to lack meaning for most immigrants in Galway. This was reflected, for instance, by the dissolution of the African Solidarity Group reportedly due to lack of interest, yet the thriving and continuing success of the Nigerian Association set up in its wake (see more on this below).

At a more local level, in Ballybane, individuals tend to associate and socialise mainly with their fellow nationals. For instance, in meetings for the Ballybane Intercultural Food Festival, without prompting, those involved sat in country-of-origin based groups, discussed their involvement (recipes) along national lines, and set up their tables along similar lines on the day. Indeed, in the case of Nigerian immigrants, self identity among my informants tended to include a particularly interesting ‘tribal’ or ‘ethnic’ dimension. Tandi (an economic immigrant with black skin, born in Germany to Nigerian parents) and Bea (a Nigerian immigrant with Leave to Remain) explained this tendency in the following terms:

Tandi 01/03/07
Africa is a continent. There are so many countries in it, and within those countries, there’re so many languages… Sometimes people
speak about ‘Africans’, but I think within that its loads of different communities. Like, I know the South Africans are always together, and the Nigerians tend to stick with themselves... Then, in Nigeria, there’s also tribalism. You actually have some organisations that have meetings for their own tribe. Like, ‘We’re the Igbo community and we do our own thing. We celebrate certain festivals...’ All those things are still going on outside the country.

Bea 01/11/06

The African communities here, especially Nigerians, we are made up of so many ethnic groups. We have the Yoruba, the Igbo, and the Hausa. And, they are all different. The Yoruba people, they are more into partying, mealie making, and things like that. I mean most of the parties going on here in Galway are the Yoruba. And, my own community – the Igbo community - we are not really into parties and dancing and all that. That’s not to say that if we have anything to celebrate that we don’t celebrate it. We do celebrate it, but not the way the Yoruba do, because that’s their culture.

There are a number of reasons discernible or given for the primacy of self-identity along national or tribal lines. Among these, as highlighted by both Tandi and Bea above, is the lack of commonality (common language and/or ‘culture’) within the broader status based or ‘pan-regional’ identity constructions. However, histories of enmity or conflict between countries of origin or different tribal groups also appear to play a significant part. For instance, with regard to tribalism among Nigerian immigrants, Nathaniel explained:

In Nigeria there are so many ethnic groups - about two hundred and fifty. There are three main ones, and most of the social amenities and the political structure are based around them. So, people like me, from the minority groups, we don’t trust them... There’s not much trust in Nigeria among the various ethnic groups. There is too much ethnic divides in Nigeria, and people tend to stick to people from their own group. People rely on their ethnicity more than their nationality (18/01/07).

Finally, many Immigrants appear to construct and deconstruct their identity strategically. They assert particular ‘ethnic’ or ‘national’ identities, at least partly, in an attempt to distance themselves from the undesirable (and even criminalised) associations of alternative identities constructed in and through the dominant discourse. One example of
this emerged from a series of conversations I had with Stanley (a twenty-something year old immigrant from Latvia). Stanley questioned the meaningfulness of the assigned identity Eastern European Immigrant to Latvian immigrants. He argued that, ‘[while] people connect Latvians to Eastern Europe, Latvians ourselves would not. We would say we are Northern European.’ From this and other conversions I had with him, it emerged that the reason Stanley and other Latvian immigrants attempt to distance themselves from the dominant Eastern European identity is because of the negative images sometimes associated with it (e.g., Eastern European Immigrants taking Irish jobs and causing carnage on Irish roads [see Section 5.5]). Of course, while often primary in terms of self-identity, in most contexts such ‘nationality’ or ‘ethnicity’ orientated identity assertions do not override the broader identities ascribed in and through the dominant discourse on immigration and immigrants.

It is important to emphasise that the identities Immigrants assert, whether ‘national’, ‘ethnic’, or ‘tribal’ based, do not necessarily involve a lesser degree of ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ than the identities they are assigned. Indeed, because such identities are often defined, at least partly, in biological or semantic terms, it appears that, in some contexts at least, identity is being ‘racialised’ in the most traditional terms. Bea’s proclamation (quoted in Section 4.3 above) that she will always be Nigerian (even if she has Irish citizenship) because of the colour of her skin, her descent, and her accent, provides a direct example of this, while the following interview extract provides an indirect illustration.

Tandi 01/03/07
T: I think, because of the way the media have portrayed things, people don’t seem to know that not everyone with black skin is a refugee or asylum seeker. Like, I came from Germany. I didn’t come from Africa, and I just came because I wanted my kids to learn English. But, when I meet people, they are like ‘Oh, you speak English!’ People here just generalise. All black is African even though you could be from America, you could be from anywhere, but they see people with black skin and assume they are from Africa.

Me: And then, how would African immigrants identify you?
In this example, Tandi conveys how, despite her own self-identity as partly African and Nigerian and partly German; Africans and Nigerians in Ireland, no less than Irish people, construct her as ‘other’. While dominant discourse ‘racialises’/‘ethnicises’ Tandi’s identity primarily, or most explicitly, in traditionally ‘racialist’ (biological or somatic) terms (you’re black so you’re African and, in turn, don’t speak English), Africans apparently ‘racialise’/‘ethnicise’ it in both ‘biological’ and ‘cultural’ terms (you don’t speak an African language, you’re not religious, you can’t be authentically/fully African [despite your skin colour suggesting you are]). The politics of identity therefore does not simply set Immigrants against ‘the Irish’. Rather, as Song (2003:143) suggests, ‘the assertion of ethnic/[racial] identity is necessarily a negotiated process which engages with the dominant meanings and representations of groups, as found in the wider society, as well as with intra-ethnic debates about the meanings and behaviours which are associated with each group.’

**Immigrant identity assertion and ‘ethno-politics’**

While Immigrant identity assertion tends towards producing more dis-aggregated constructions than the dominant discourse on immigration and immigrants does, there are exceptions to this. There is a significant realm of popular discourse (at all levels from the local to the national) where Immigrants highlight broad status based or ‘pan-regional’ identities over ‘national’, ‘ethnic’ or ‘tribal’ affiliations. These identities often share the same labels as the status based or ‘pan-regional’ constructions ascribed by dominant discourse, but the meanings attached to them are very different. They are usually (though, as I discuss below, not exclusively) constructed for strategic purposes
within the realm of ‘ethno-politics’.\footnote{Song (2003:85) makes a similar observation with respect to immigrant identity construction in the United States. She argues that immigrant self-identity formation generally involves a system of ‘strategic jockeying’ or ‘voluntary mobilisation’. ‘At times it is advantageous to be in an ethnic bloc, and at times it is desirable to mobilise along particular ethnic lines’, she explains.} In this realm, immigrant groups are encouraged to create umbrella organisations to deal more effectively and successfully within the structure of largely state-led funding opportunities and consultation processes. For instance, at the national level, while Stanley argued that most Latvian immigrants do not identify themselves as part of an Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’, in the list of countries covered by its remit, the Eastern European Association of Ireland does include Latvia.

Despite the strategic advantages involved in the construction of such ‘pan-regional’ identities/umbrella organisations, they have proven hugely difficult to sustain in many cases. While this is partly due to the competition for funding from other organisations (including similar umbrella organisations led by non-immigrants for immigrants), it is also, again, a reflection of the lack of commonality and unity within the so-called ‘communities’. Divisions within create difficulties both in terms of representation and agenda setting. In line with this, in most cases, success arguably depends on whether the organisations are built around an already existing and meaningful identity, or whether such an identity is created purely for strategic purposes. Having said this, based on his research on African umbrella organisations in Ireland, Mutwarasibo (2002) argues that, whatever their basis, such organisations can become substitutes for ‘African communities’ - they can provide the support and solidarity that such ‘communities’ would otherwise provide. In this respect, one must not ignore the possible effectiveness of such organisations in eventually creating ‘communities’ where they may not have existed previously.

In the context of Galway, according to the (Ghanaian) coordinator of Galway’s African Women’s Association (interview 16/01/06), one issue her association constantly struggles with, and, indeed, one of the main problems that pan-African umbrella organisations have in general, is that Nigerians tend to dominate, not only in terms of
numbers, but also in terms of assertiveness and, by extension, agenda setting (often to the extent of overriding the interests and needs of other African national or ethnic ‘communities’). As such, she argued, non-Nigerian individuals often feel subsumed by, and therefore fail to embrace the identities constructed through, such organisations. Paradoxically, their inclusion often renders them almost invisible, she argued. Indeed, she claimed that this was the primary reason for the dissolution of the African Solidarity Group in Galway. In response to this situation, she argued, a number of other national groups from under the African umbrella have attempted to set up their own organisations. However, because of lack of numbers, and even differences in ‘cultural’ characteristics (Nigerians she argued tend to be more naturally assertive and gregarious than those from other African nations), few such organisations have achieved any discernible success in terms of visibility and involvement in cross-‘community’ politics and consultation.

Of course, it is important to point out that the impetus for immigrant ‘self-racialisation’/‘self-ethnicisation’, whether at a more or less aggregate level, is not limited to political and economic concerns. Identity assertion is often based purely on emotive beliefs about ‘community’, and shared ‘culture’, experience or interests. For instance, an essentialist conception of common identity was emphasised in terms of ‘black is beautiful’ and also in terms of ‘Mother Africa’ during the Miss Ebony Beauty Pageant held in Galway during my fieldwork. Allusions to ‘racial’ and ‘pan-regional’ identity (Black and African) dominated the event, despite the fact that participants came from many different African nations and competed on this basis. Similar processes are arguably at work (particularly among immigrants from the African nations) in the construction of, or emphasis on, ‘tribal communities’ (discussed above) and ‘religious communities’ (discussed below).

Overall then, while the ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ identities constructed in and through dominant discourse, as discussed in previous sections, tend towards negative implications and meanings, the (often equally ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’) identities constructed by those situated within the Immigrant ‘community’, tend to emphasise
either ‘victimhood’ or positive identity associations. Ultimately however, because, in reality, those situated within the Immigrant ‘community’ are relatively powerless in most contexts, such identity assertions and their associations are unlikely to affect the dominant discourse anytime soon.

**Immigrant identity assertion and ‘religious communities’**

It is impossible to contemplate a discussion of identity construction in Ireland without bringing religion into the mix. Before beginning my fieldwork I expected that the rise in immigration from the 1990s onwards would have precipitated the emergence of wide-reaching and meaningful religious ‘communities’ along the lines of ‘Christian’, ‘Muslim’, ‘Jewish’, etc. In most (though not all) contexts, however, it appears that such constructs have failed to emerge to any significant extent. Instead, what appears to be emerging is a much wider range of religious ‘communities’ under the Christian banner. Further, while the commonality of Christian background can, is expected to, and in some contexts does, create an identity bridge in dominant discourse between Christian immigrant ‘communities’ and ‘the Irish’, in most general and descriptive contexts divisions based on ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ identity remain primary.

According to recent evidence, religious adherence and devotion (active ‘religiosity’, e.g., regular attendance at mass), though not necessarily ‘religious identity’, has fallen significantly among the Irish in the last few decades. Nearly all of my African immigrant informants, however, highlighted religious adherence and devotion as a

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207 This may also be the case for other religions such as Islam and Judaism. However because neither of these religions are represented in large numbers in Galway, and particularly in Ballybane, I was not able to collect much information on them, and therefore have to restrict my analysis to the Christian denominations.

208 Even predominantly Catholic Eastern European immigrants are marked off as ‘different’ by the fact, for example, that they regularly have special masses performed by Polish priests and in the Polish language.

209 While 92% of ‘Irish’ people identified themselves as Catholic in the 2006 census (compared to 50.8% of the ‘non-Irish national’ population) (CSO, Census 2006, Principle Demographic Results, Table 36:86), according to the poll carried out for *Primetime: The Time of Our Lives* (30/05/06), the number of people who say that they go to church at least once a week has fallen below 50% ‘perhaps for the first time in polling history.’ In the 1980s, 56% said that they went to mass once a week, but in 2006 the figure was 35%.
central aspect of their religious identity, and in turn, highlighted their religious identity as one of their primary identities. Bea for instance, claimed ‘I go to church, and that’s how I interact with other people. I don’t belong to any other organizations, like cultural organizations or anything. I just go to Church services, and maybe if there was any meeting that church people have then I go… As I said before, I find company with the African community in the Church’ (interview 01/11/06). Indeed, a number of informants used the divergence in degree of religious adherence and devotion (and the morality they associated with this) to create an identity boundary between ‘Africans’ and ‘the Irish’. Tina’s argument in the following interview extract is example of this:

Before I came here, I thought that Ireland would be really Catholic and holy. I thought I would see Reverend Sisters all along the streets, that priests would be lined up, and that all the Irish people I would meet would be priests or Reverend Sisters. I thought there would be a big Catholic crowd, you know, bells ringing [laughs]. Actually, I think Africans here are more religious than Irish people. I think we go to Church more often and think about living according to God’s ways more. Like, most Africans wouldn’t go out drinking and things (Interview 13/11/06).

Many African immigrants living in or near Ballybane are Catholic and as such attend the local Catholic Church. However, most belong to one of the several Pentecostal Churches in the area. While Pentecostal Churches existed in Ireland prior to the 1990s, most of those in Galway were set up post-1990 by African immigrants, and cater mainly to other Africans and to their specific needs. These Churches, informant members argued, encourage ‘togetherness’ and the construction of ‘community’, or, more specifically,

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210 This was much less common among my Eastern European immigrant informants.
211 The pastors of such Churches were not necessarily or even usually pastors in the country from which they emigrated. As Bea explained,

If I was a part of a Church in Nigeria and really felt strongly about it and liked the way we worshiped in Nigeria, I would try to convince people to come along with me here and start one. Like the church I belong to now – The Fellowship – my pastor wasn’t a pastor when he was in Nigeria, but he was a Christian, and when he came here he felt that, because some of the experiences people were having were nasty and because they would be missing home and things like that, they needed something to put them back together. So, he had the call to start a Church.
‘community’ in African terms (reportedly a closer-knit version than the Irish kind). Informants described their Church in terms of providing friendship, emotional support, and, particularly, familiarity and commonality with respect to ‘lifestyle’ and ‘culture’. Bea, for instance, argued that ‘more than 90% of people who attend our church would be African, and everything is Africanised, the worship - the African music, the beating, the singing... Even the things we pray about, things like deportation, ‘racism’, and citizenship, are because we are Africans’ (interview 01/11/06).

Such ‘Africanisation’ was actually the reason that many of my African immigrant informants gave for choosing to affiliate with the Pentecostal Churches rather than the Catholic Churches (even though a few claimed they were Catholic before coming to Ireland). Indeed, ‘some’, Tina claimed, ‘go to the Catholic Church, and then go to the Pentecostal Church because they want the sense of music and celebration. So they’d mix the two. In Africa, the Catholic Churches are always filled with music, and people can get up and dance and sing. So, because they miss that, they also go to the Pentecostal Churches here’ (13/11/06).

Because of this ‘Africanisation’, despite the fact that not all African immigrants belong to a Pentecostal Church, or indeed to any Church, in constructing notions of ‘Us’, African Pentecostal informants identified Irish non-Pentecostals as their main ‘Other’, rather than non-Pentecostals per se. In other words, the characteristics associated with the African-led Pentecostal Churches in Ireland are based on African experiences and ideas of Pentecostalism, and ‘the Irish’ are conceived as ‘other’ not simply because of their non-Pentecostalism, but because of their non-African Pentecostalism. It is the fact that aspects of Irish ‘culture’ conflict with African Pentecostalism rather than Pentecostalism per se that is highlighted. For example, both a number of Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal African informants denigrated ‘the Irish’ in terms of their ‘pub culture’ (like Tina [above] Nathaniel argued ‘Nigerians drink, but when we socialise with each other, it’s not centred around drink. We appreciate food a lot, maybe more than people here. We eat and drink, but not drinking to that level of being intoxicated…’ (interview 18/01/07). Such informants argued that, while this ‘pub-culture’ is a treasured aspect of
national identity in Ireland, as Africans, and particularly African Pentecostals, they are opposed to the level of drinking involved, and the low morals that they associate it with (and, with it).

Overall then, while one might expect religion to create identity bridges between ‘the Irish’ and certain immigrant ‘communities’ and to create identity barriers between different immigrant ‘communities’, the situation is much more complex than this. Of course, most significantly, religious identity constructs, while often taking precedence in the identity assertion of individual immigrants, exist alongside (and are often subsumed by) the (ascribed and asserted) ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ identity constructs discussed throughout this chapter.

**Conclusion**

Between state discourse and popular discourse at all levels from the local to the national, the construction of the Immigrant ‘community’ and different Immigrant ‘communities’ therein has taken a variety of forms. The first half of this chapter demonstrated that state immigration and citizenship legislation and policy produces a system of selection with respect to who is allowed into both Ireland and ‘the Irish’. This system, in turn, effectively creates a number of constructs. The two most dominant frameworks are: ‘non-national/immigrant - Irish’ and ‘economic immigrant - political immigrant’. The latter framework is situated within the ‘non-national/immigrant’ construct of the former framework.

Both these identity frameworks are used by state institutions for administrative purposes - to determine the social, political, legal and economic rights and entitlements of different immigrants. While they are largely legalistic on the surface, however, when used to structure debates on issues such as immigration policy, citizenship, and rights and equality, the meanings applied have varied greatly and often taken on explicitly ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ (and even ‘racist’) meaning. When reproduced in state discourse
surrounding the 2004 citizenship referendum, the National Action Plan Against Racism and the 2006 census, for example, the meanings attached often involved reification, essentialism, and, at times, even demonisation and criminalisation. In such discourse non-national is reconstructed as Non-National.

In the second half of this chapter, I described how popular discourses on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity in general, and on immigration and immigrants in particular, also produces two immigrant identity frameworks: ‘Immigrant - Irish’ and ‘Black/African Immigrant - Eastern European Immigrant’. Again, the latter framework is situated within the ‘Immigrant’ construct of the former framework. While, at first glance, these frameworks appear to have much in common with, and even mirror, those produced by legislative and administrative state discourses, greater focus on contextual detail reveals that the meanings ascribed to the different constructs, and their boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, often differ in significant ways.

With respect to the ‘Immigrant - Irish’ framework, on the one hand, non-‘Irishness’ or ‘foreignness’ are reified and essentialised so that the Immigrant is conceptualised as not only lacking the propensity to ever be truly ‘Irish’, but also as possessing traits which essentially make them undesirable, suspect, and threatening. With respect to the ‘Black/African Immigrant - Eastern European Immigrant’ framework, on the other hand, in many contexts its construction involves ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’ in its most traditional ‘biological’ terms. Each side is constructed in an inherently essentialist manner, so that skin-colour determines nationality, either of which, in turn, also determines legal/immigrant and worker status.

While both state and popular discourses on the Immigrant ‘community’ highlights otherness in most general and descriptive contexts, I described a number of contexts where alternative (‘de-racialised’/‘de-ethnicised’) constructs are produced which challenge the dominant ones. I described how, in some contexts, identity bridges are constructed between ‘the Irish’ and the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’ (based on common experiences of oppression and victimhood) or ‘the Irish’ and the Eastern
European Immigrant ‘community’ (based on a perception of common ‘work ethics’). These bridges ‘thwart the process of racialisation/ethnicisation’, which places “them” and “us” irrevocably on distinct sides of a boundary’ (Garner 2004:196). I also found, however, that, because such identity bridges are more commonly erected between ‘the Irish’ and the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’ than between ‘the Irish’ and the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’, in most general and descriptive contexts, Black/African Immigrants are constructed as more ‘other’ than Eastern European Immigrants. By looking at the contexts involved, I discovered that this is most likely a result of what Goldberg (1993:75) describes as the ‘referential history of the groups in question’ and ‘the politics of general group reference at the time in question.’

While identity ascription dominates in the construction of the Immigrant ‘community’/‘communities’, I also discussed Immigrant identity assertion. I described how, in some, if not most contexts, those situated within the Immigrant ‘community’ ‘self-racialise’/‘self-ethnicise’ in ‘national’, ‘ethnic’, or even ‘tribal’ terms. Particularly in terms of challenging the relevance of the dominant ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ identity construct – the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’, I also described the construction of an African Pentecostal ‘community’. This ‘community’, I explained, is marked off from other Africans by their Pentecostalism and from ‘the Irish’ (including Irish Pentecostals) by the possession of African ‘culture’. The reasons such self-identity constructs have failed to obtain dominant status in most general and descriptive contexts vary, but include differences in the political power of the producers and also issues of costs and benefits with respect to economic and political return on highlighting these identities over the more aggregated and dominant alternatives.

Finally, overall, I also illustrated that, even though the role of state discourse in the ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ of the Immigrant ‘community’/‘communities’ is hugely important, it is almost impossible to determine whether state ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’ emerges out of, and is enabled by, popular ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’ or vice versa. In reality, it appears that state ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’ is inherently interconnected with ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’ within the nation-state. Accordingly, while the state is a primary
player the production of the dominant ‘racialising’/‘ethnicising’ discourse on Immigrant identity/ies in Ireland, it is certainly not independent.
Chapter 5

‘Racism’

As I described in section 4.3, Ireland’s legacy of ‘racism’ is both complex and contradictory. As a result of this legacy, McVeigh and Lentin (2002:8) describe ‘the Irish’ as being, ‘quintessentially “between two worlds” – both perpetrator and survivor of racism, both thoroughly racist and determinedly anti-racist.’ This argument sounds straightforward enough. Yet, the amount of simplification, generalisation, and glossing over that it entails, particularly since ‘racism’ has no independent ontological status (see Chapter 1), could prove unhelpful in challenging ‘racism’. In this chapter I reveal why.

In the first part of this chapter, I describe and discuss the dominant academic, state, and popular discourses on ‘racism’ separately (though I highlight their interconnections throughout). In the second part, first, I discuss ‘state racism(s)’ and ‘popular racism(s)’ perpetrated against Travellers and Immigrants separately, and, second, I highlight a number of apparent interconnections between the two types. Most significantly, however, I illustrate that the ontology of such ‘racisms’ is dependent on the realm of discourse on ‘racism’ one refers to. While I illustrate that, viewed in terms of academic discourse on ‘racism’; ‘racism’ is rife in Ireland, I temper this argument by switching perspective intermittently, viewing the evidence through the lens of state discourse on ‘racism’ or popular discourse on ‘racism’.

5.1: Academic discourse on ‘racism’\textsuperscript{212}

As described in section 1.1, academic discourse on ‘racism’ is divided in terms of whether ‘racism’ must, at its core, imply biological difference (Miles 1989), or whether

\textsuperscript{212}Because I have already provided a comprehensive description and analysis of the dominant academic discourses on ‘racism’ in Chapter 1, I will largely limit my discussion here to a number of issues which did not arise in that context.
the racialisation of ‘culture’ is sufficient (Goldberg 1993, 1999; Anthias 1995). In Irish academic discourse (e.g., McVeigh & Lentin 2002, Lentin & Lentin 2006, Lentin & McVeigh 2006), Goldberg’s perspective definitely constitutes the dominant one. Here, discrimination against ‘the Irish’, Travellers, and Immigrants are conceptualised as ‘racism’, despite the fact that in many (if not most) cases, the perpetrator and victim are constructed as ‘the same’ in biological terms.

It is generally agreed that, while ‘racism’ inherently involves ‘racialisation’, the two concepts are not equivalent. What exactly renders ‘racialist’ discourse ‘racist’, however, is, again, debated. For some (e.g., Frankenberg 1993) it necessitates an inference of hierarchical ranking and ‘denigration’ based on that, for others (e.g., Goldberg 1993) the inference of hierarchical ranking need only be accompanied by ‘exclusion’ (whether metaphysical or actual), and for others still (e.g., Anthias 1995) it must be accompanied by both ‘inferiorisation’ and ‘exclusion’. Despite such debates, it is difficult to differentiate ‘exclusion’ and ‘denigration’ or ‘inferiorisation’ on the ground, particularly when they exist primarily in ideological terms. ‘Exclusion’, whether implicit in nationalist rhetoric or ‘ethno-politics’, or more explicit in anti-immigration or anti-Traveller discourse, usually necessitates legitimation. In turn, legitimation usually involves some form of acclamation of the ‘Us’ and/or denigration of the ‘Other’ in terms that explain both one’s own special group status (and entitlement based on that status [for example, to citizenship in nationalist rhetoric, or to funding and political recognition in ‘ethno-politics’]) and why ‘others’ are not fit for inclusion therein, or, even, why one’s own group must be protected from such ‘others’. In this respect, Frankenberg’s, Goldberg’s and Anthias’s stances, arguably, differ only in perspective.

**Structural vs. Institutional vs. Everyday**

Dominant academic discourse argues that ‘racism’ is plural and multifaceted (e.g., Anthias 1998; R. Lentin 2000). For instance, it is argued that a distinction must be made between: ‘everyday’, ‘institutional’, and ‘structural’ ‘racism’; and ‘state’ and ‘popular’
‘racism’. There is less agreement, however, about the character of each of these types and the relations between them.

Coined by Essed (1984, cited in Essed 1991:10) ‘everyday racism’, although a contested term, can be defined as, ‘the racism of the grey areas, the ordinary automatic preference for the white [/Irish/Settled], the ordinary automatic assumption that renders the black [/non-Irish/non-Settled] a less attractive prospect.’ Of course, the problem with conceptualising ‘racism’ in these terms is that it becomes almost inevitable. Paradoxically, it naturalises societies in terms of ‘racism’. It implies, firstly, that societies have a ‘culture of racism’ (in terms of preferring their own kind ['race']) and, in turn, this makes individuals therein naturally ‘racist’.

The dominant, though by no means uncontroversial, definition of ‘institutional racism’ is that found in the MacPherson Report. It tentatively defined ‘institutional racism’ as:

[t]he collective failure of an organisation to provide an appropriate and professional service to people because of their colour, culture or ethnic origin. It can be seen or detected in processes, attitudes and behaviour which amount to discrimination through unwitting prejudice, ignorance, thoughtlessness, and racist stereotyping which disadvantages minority ethnic people (MacPherson 1999:3).

Though Essed and MacPherson both imply an inherent link between ‘everyday racism’ and ‘institutional racism’, with the latter essentially conceived as a characteristic or expression of the former, they can be criticised for failing to highlight (in the case of Essed) and even acknowledge (in the case of MacPherson) what some academics argue is the backbone of ‘racism’ – ‘structural racism’. ‘Structural racism’, according to Verlot, can be defined as ‘policy that has negative effects on minorities’ (2002:31). ‘Institutional racism’, accordingly, he argues, is a component of ‘structural racism’ as well as ‘everyday racism’. It ‘refers to the manner in which institutions generate or sustain racism, whether through the daily handling of people (everyday racism) or through the mechanics of the society (structural racism)’ (Verlot 2002:31).

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213 The MacPherson Report presented the findings of the Stephen Lawrence enquiry.
This picture is further complicated by the construction of another ideological structure: ‘state racism - popular racism’. Bourne (2001:19) criticises the Macpherson Report for missing out on the symbiosis of ‘institutional racism’ and ‘state racism’. She argues, ‘it is the state – the legislature, the executive, the judiciary – though its immigration and asylum laws, its administration of public services (such as the police, the prisons, immigration) and its courts and Crown Prosecution Service – that sets the tone and tenor of race relations in society.’ In other words, she argues that, by setting a bad example, ‘state racism’ (whether ‘structural’ or ‘institutional’) is also somewhat culpable for ‘non-state racism’ (whether ‘popular’ or ‘institutional’). Indeed, Sivanandan (2001:3) takes Bourne’s criticism a step further by arguing that: ‘At first glance, British racism would appear to have three faces – state, institutional, and popular – but, in effect, it has one face with three expressions, the face of the state. To put it another way, institutional racism and popular racism are woven into state racism.’ In this respect, as with ‘everyday’, ‘institutional’ and ‘structural’ ‘racism’, ‘state racism’ and ‘popular racism’ cannot be separated in any comprehensive manner.

**The ‘multiplier condition’**

The complexity surrounding the different types of ‘racism’ is increased by the fact that the different ‘types’ manifest themselves in different ways towards different groups of people. In the Irish context, for instance, Ronit Lentin lists the following manifestations: ‘anti-Black racism’, ‘anti-Semitism’, ‘anti-refugee racism’, and ‘anti-Traveller racism’ (R. Lentin 2000:15). Further, ‘racism’ is performed by, directed at, and experienced by, different ‘categories’ in different ways within each ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ group (e.g., different classes, nationalities, genders [R. Lentin 1998a], generations [MacGreil 1996], sexualities, etc.). In social relations, people occupy several positions simultaneously. A person with a working-class identity, or an asylum seeker identity, also has a sexual identity, an ‘ethnic’ identity, a gender identity, etc., and each of these identities may affect, and be affected by, the social power one has in different ‘racist’ contexts. Accordingly, in a context of shifting nexuses of social power, other systems of
inequality and subordination interact with particular ‘racisms’, often with ‘exacerbation effects’ or even ‘multiplier effects’ (Goldberg 1993:91).

While this complex analysis appears caught up in semantics, my reason for dwelling on it reflects my belief in the importance of problem definition to problem solution in this context. The state’s National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPR) 2005 (see Section 5.2 below), for instance, focuses primarily, not on ‘structural’ or ‘state’, and often not even ‘institutional’, ‘racism’, but on ‘popular racism’, and further, on individual prejudice and ignorance as its cause, and, accordingly, ‘Interculturalism’ and ‘education’ as its remedy (DJELR 2005). But, if as the above analysis demonstrates, ‘racism’ is a plural and multi-faceted phenomenon, and if it interacts with other systems of inequality and subordination, then, to be effective, ‘anti-racism’ needs to challenge all types (‘everyday’, ‘institutional’ and ‘structural’, ‘state’, and ‘popular’) and all manifestations (anti-Traveller, anti-Immigrant, and anti-Black) of ‘racism’ in informed and appropriate ways. As I admit at the end of section 1.1, this will not be an easy task (indeed, because of the alleged embeddedness of structural ‘racism’ within the world-system of nation-states, it may not even be pragmatically possible). However, I believe that recognising the problem in this context is a necessary first step in developing a solution.

5.2: State discourse on ‘racism’

Significantly, the Irish state really only began discussing, let alone acknowledging or addressing, the issue of ‘racism’ in Ireland in the late 1980s when, as discussed in section 3.5, they ratified The Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989. This Act legislated against inciting ‘hatred’ on the basis of ‘race’, as well as ‘colour’, ‘ethnic or national origins’, ‘nationality’, ‘religion’, or ‘membership of the Travelling community’. For over a decade it was Ireland’s only (proxy) ‘anti-racism’ legislation. A decade

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214 See Section 1.6 for a discussion of the constructive limitations of my research in this respect.
215 Indeed, initially, at least, the State promoted this Act as being aimed primarily at ‘racists’ using Ireland as a base for spreading their ideas to the rest of Europe, rather than at Irish ‘racists’ (Equality Authority 2006).
later, this Act was followed by a series of Equal Status laws (see Section 3.5) which outlawed ‘discrimination’ on nine bases: gender, marital status, family status, age, ‘race’, disability, sexual orientation, religious belief, and membership of the Traveller community. Finally, in 2005, the DJELR launched the National Action Plan against Racism (NAPR), which explicitly outlined state policy on ‘anti-racism’ (see Section 4.2). In this document ‘racism’ is defined as:

[A] specific form of discrimination and exclusion faced by cultural and ethnic minorities. It is based on the false belief that some ‘races’ are inherently superior to others because of different skin colour, nationality, ethnic or cultural background (2005:38).

The definition of ‘racism’ encoded in the International Convention on the elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD) 1969 is also included:

Any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference, based on race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin, which has the purpose or effect of nullifying or impairing the recognition, enjoyment or exercise, on an equal footing, of human rights and functional freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural or any other field of public life (ICERD 1969, Article 1, cited in DJELR 2005:38).

Finally, it is also noted that:

Racism takes different, sometimes overlapping, forms and impacts on a range of groups in Ireland, including:

- Racism experienced by Travellers.
- Racism experienced by recent immigrants, including labour migrants and refugees and asylum seekers.
- Racism experienced by black and minority ethnic people.

Here, state discourse on ‘racism’ is revealed as inconsistent. While the Irish Traveller Movement has criticised the state on the basis that, though they acknowledge that

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\(^{216}\)While this document constitutes a plan of attack on ‘racism’, it does not enshrine or create any laws in itself. Instead, it refers the reader to the National Equality legislation – which covers all of the groups mentioned in the ‘anti-racism’ Plan - either directly or indirectly.
Travellers suffer discrimination on the basis of social origin, they refuse to acknowledge that this discrimination is ‘racist’ (GTM 2006:57), the evidence outlined here indicates that the situation is even more complex than this criticism implies. The state’s NAPR does list ‘racism experienced by Travellers’ as one recognised form of ‘racism’. However, this document is not legislative, and the proxy national ‘anti-racist’ legislation to which the Plan refers the reader does not refer to ‘discrimination on the basis of membership of the Traveller community’ as ‘racism’. Further, though the NAPR cites the definition of ‘racism’ enshrined in the ICERD (which, since it came into force in Ireland on 28th January 2001, is the main legislative instrument explicitly governing ‘anti-racism’), because it identifies the basis of anti-Traveller ‘racism’ as Traveller ‘culture’ rather than ‘ethnic’ status, and, more broadly, because the state refuses to officially acknowledge Traveller ‘ethnic’ status (see Section 3.5), anti-Traveller discrimination is also not recognised as ‘racism’ through this international legislation.

Another significant aspect of state discourse on ‘racism’ is that, whether one looks to (proxy) ‘anti-racism’ legislation or ‘anti-racism’ policy, ‘racism’ is constructed as something that is external to the state. The implication therein is that ‘racism’ is something that the general public or non-state institutions perpetrate and that the state must police and control. Indeed, Philip Watt (Director of the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Intercultralism [NCCRI]) has criticised the state’s ‘Interculturalist’ approach to ‘anti-racism’ in these terms. ‘Implicit in this approach [he argues] is the perception of the state as a neutral broker in a conflict between different ethnic communities’ (Watt 2006:20). Taking this criticism a step further, Lentin and McVeigh (2006:177-8) argue,

[A]s an ideology of change, multiculturalism needs to be repudiated, not celebrated, nor quietly ignored. Because of their refusal to name and address state racism, these ideologies actually become racist themselves - they function to disguise and protect the operation of

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217 The NCCRI is a partnership body (made up of government departments, agencies and non-government organisations) which advises the government on ‘racism’ and ‘intercultural’ issues, develops the responses to ‘racism’ and undertakes initiatives, research and reports as appropriate. The NCCRI was closed at the end of December 2008, reportedly, as a result of government budget cutbacks.
state racism. From this perspective ‘multiculturalism’ is a racism; ‘interculturalism’ is a racism; ‘good relations’ is a racism.

5.3: Popular discourse on ‘racism’

With respect to popular discourse on ‘racism’ at the national level, Garner (2004) claims that the dominant argument is that, prior to the 1990s, ‘there was no racism because there were no black people.’ According to an Amnesty International Press Release in 2004, however, 56% of people in Ireland believed that ‘racism’ is a serious problem in the country (Amnesty International Press Release 2004:1, cited in Hughes and Quinn 2004:27). According to evidence collected from my informants in Galway, the increase in immigration between these two periods is blamed for bringing or causing such ‘racism’. The logic behind this accusation is that – Pre-1990s there was no talk of a ‘racism’ problem. Since the 1990s immigrants have been coming in ‘floods’. And, since the 1990s, ‘racism’ has become a problem. Therefore, immigrants brought the ‘racism’ problem with them embodied in their essential ‘otherness’, or even caused it through their unreasonable behaviour (see Section 5.5 below).

The importance of colour

Despite the upheaval that has taken place in academic discourse on ‘racism’ (see Section 1.1), and the fact that, even within popular discourse, it is challenged in and by accusations of ‘reverse racism’ (see Section 5.3 below), my research indicates that dominant popular discourse still conceptualises ‘racism’, firstly, as colour-coded, and, secondly, as something that white people do to black people. The following extracts from my interview transcripts and field notes illustrate this.

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218 In reality, there have been black people in Ireland as early as the 9th century. Of course, this is irrelevant when one appreciates that, according to dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’, black people need not be present for anti-black ‘racism’ to occur; and, Travellers were victims of ‘racism’ in Ireland long before the 1990s.

219 This is not to claim that ‘colour’ is necessarily used to explain the terms of such ‘racism’. It may be that ‘blackness’ is merely a signifier of immigrant status and/or ‘cultural’ difference, and it is the latter which
Eastside Ladies Group 13/09/06
Within minutes of the meeting starting, Donna described the argument that had arisen during the recent meeting for the annual Intercultural Festival (to be held in the community resource centre later that month) when she accused the Intercultural Festival organisers of paying too much attention to the Immigrant ‘community’ and not enough to ‘the Irish’ (including Travellers). Having listened to Donna’s description Anne voiced her support claiming, ‘They invite black people so that they have black faces to show that they’re not racist.’

Paul 24/10/06
I was appalled at an incident I witnessed at the Intercultural Festival. There was a young African and a young Traveller in a row at the main door. Now, I’d say the blame was absolutely equal, but the young African boy was brought back into the hall to his family, whereas the young Traveller boy was - swwiissshh – out the door. So, it was perfectly okay to banish a Traveller, not to even investigate what happened, and to let the little African child run right back in. You see, people have a certain fear of being seen as racist, but to show that sort of prejudice against a Traveller seems to be acceptable.

Tina (black Nigerian with Leave to Remain) 13/11/06
Sometimes I feel very upset because, if everyone is claiming that they are facing racism, it tends to water down the actual feeling that people facing it have, you know the actual one. Sometimes the examples people give are just normal discrimination between people who are the same race… Like, sometimes the Polish people complain ‘someone was being racist’, but you discover they are the same race as the other person, and I want to say ‘What is racism? What is race? How is it defined?’… Also, I have read some books that say that racism has existed in Ireland between the settled Irish and the Travellers. ‘But’, I think to myself, ‘why don’t you say discrimination?’ The Travellers have the same physical attributes as Irish people. Maybe they are just trying to get a greater impact for what they face.

Perhaps more significant than these examples, my Traveller informants also usually referred to anti- Traveller behaviour and discourse in terms of ‘discrimination’ rather than ‘racism’. Indeed, although not interpreted in this way, the wider applicability of this observation is supported by a Pavee Point research report on the contemporary treatment

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is the explanatory principle for the actual ‘racism’ (Anthias & Yuval-Davies 1992).
of Travellers. It concluded: ‘participants were acutely aware of racism against them, although they used the more generalised term discrimination’ (2005a:60).220

The importance of intention
Contrary to dominant academic discourse (where ‘outcome’ is largely what matters [Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992:13; Beirne & Jaichand 2006:25; Goldberg 1993:99; Lentin & McVeigh 2006221]) dominant popular discourse on ‘racism’ conceives of ‘racist intention’ as pivotal. This conceptualisation is conveyed most clearly in discourse concerning political correctness and ‘racism’. During my fieldwork, one incident proved central to the bulk of such discourse. The incident involved Seanad Leader Mary O’Rourke, who, during her acceptance speech for a spot on the 2007 Fianna Fail general election ticket, thanked her campaign workers for ‘working like blacks’. The remark led to a national debate on ‘racism’ and ‘political correctness’ which was played out both in the media and in everyday discourse.

The debate centred on whether Senator O’Rourke's remark could be construed as ‘racist’ considering that (as the vast majority of people agreed) there was no ‘racist’ intention. The large majority of my white Irish informants (and, from media discourse, it would appear the majority of the white Irish population more generally), while not necessarily condoning the remark, came out in defence of Senator O’Rourke. They argued that, while the younger generation should not use this phrase, among Senator O’Rourke’s generation it had been used for decades, long before there were any black people to

220 Of course, acknowledgement of this popular Traveller self-conceptualisation does not negate the fact that anti-Traveller discrimination is ‘racism’ in terms of the dominant academic definitions of ‘racism’. According to such discourse, because of the ‘ethnic’ status of Irish Travellers (a status that does not require that Travellers themselves promote or even assert it in explicit terms) (see Section 3.5); anti-Traveller discrimination is ‘racism’ whether Travellers themselves use this term or not.

221 For instance, Lentin and McVeigh (2006:9) argue: ‘The empirical reality of racism can be “measured” broadly in social scientific terms as profound inequalities manifested between different racialised groups - without racism, skin colour or ethnic background would have the same statistical insignificance as a causal agency as blood group or eye colour…Racism becomes real in these measurable outcomes.’
offend. As such, while admittedly politically incorrect, lack of intention deemed it not ‘racist’. The following interview extracts sum up the thinking behind this position.

Paul 16/11/06
…Like, that comment that Mary O’Rourke made, the ‘worked like blacks’ one. Okay, she should have known that it was a bad choice of words, but at one time that was a commonly used term to compliment someone. So, for her, it was just a compliment to her workforce. Now, it was completely inappropriate, and it’s not in daily usage in Ireland now, but, like people looking for her resignation, that’s the sort of stuff that gets people’s back up. Anyone who knows anything about Mary O’Rourke will know that she’s a good politician, and that she’s very inclusive.

Evan 20/11/06
Me: If the person doesn’t even realise the connotations in a term they use, is that still racism?

E: No, if the person doesn’t realise, it wouldn’t be racism. It depends on usage – you can use ‘black’, but the way you use it may mean a different thing. I’m not bothered if someone calls me ‘coloured’, but if a person says ‘you…’ [Facial expression implies a very negative finish], it means altogether a different thing.

The issue of ‘intention’ during the Senator O’Rourke debate was always accompanied with the implication that, by ‘intention’, people meant ‘intention to denigrate’. This was conveyed, for instance, through the repeated highlighting of the fact that the context here had been ‘complimentary’. Had Senator O’Rourke been criticising her workforce using a statement which she was unaware could/would be construed as ‘racist’, she would have been unlikely to have the same support.

On the other side of this debate, critics argued that, while unintentional, her remark was ‘racist’ because intention comes second to perception. The fact that some people perceived it as ‘racist’ made it so. Further, they argued, the level of support she was receiving only showed how far ‘anti-racism’ has yet to come in Ireland. Interestingly,

Because of the offense that it may have caused, however, most people did admit that she was wrong not to apologise.
among the many informants I discussed this issue with, Jane and Henry (both of whom are English) were the only two who openly and categorically condemned O’Rourke’s statement. Indeed, both referred to their Englishness as a reason for their views, which, they implied, were more enlightened.

Junior sports club 12/01/06
We started to chat about Mary O’Rourke’s ‘worked like blacks’ comment, and Jane said that she couldn’t understand how people couldn’t see what was wrong with this. The proper saying, she said, is ‘worked like Trojans’ (as this is an occupation group). To say ‘blacks’ instead of ‘Trojans’ she argued goes back to references about slavery in the American south…

and was tantamount to a celebration of this institution.

Henry Interview 2, 08/11/06
When Mary O’Rourke came out with ‘Work like blacks,’ there was a debate here. There would be no debate [in England]. There is no good way of saying it. It doesn’t matter what her motives were. It doesn’t matter that it used to be used in this country freely, because there weren’t any blacks to be offended. If that happened in England or America there would be no debate. They’d clean out their desk and it would be ‘bye-bye’.

Of course another issue here is whether we should worry about whether various turns of phrase are ‘racist’ or not. As Paul argued, is it not more important that Senator O’Rourke has a good record on immigrant issues? Not according to dominant popular discourse on ‘racism’. Although ISOs (like the Irish Refugee Council) and TAOs (like Pavee Point and the Irish Traveller Movement) frequently publicly accuse the state of ‘institutional’ and/or ‘structural racism’, popular discourse on ‘racism’ in most general and descriptive contexts focuses on non-state ‘institutional racism’ (for example, in employment and service provision) and, particularly, street level ‘racism’ such as ‘racist’ name calling. In fact, immigrant informants’ conceptualisations were even narrower. They focused primarily on non-state ‘institutional racism’ (particularly in access to employment), and tended also to play down street level ‘racism’ as just ignorance, often even failing to mention such experiences until probed (see Section 5.5 below).
‘Ladder of racism’

Popular discourse on ‘racism’ in Ireland is beset with the implications of the existence of a ‘ladder of racism’ (a hierarchy of ‘racist’ victimhood). While the notion of a ‘ladder of race’ was central to ‘scientific racism’, if anything, these two hierarchical structures are inversely related. While the ‘ladder of race’ puts people with white skin at the top and people with black skin at the bottom, in most general and descriptive contexts, the ‘ladder of racism’ places people with black skin at the top and people with white skin at the bottom.

This discursive construction was first brought to my attention by Tina, but, as the following fieldnote and interview extracts illustrate (though not necessarily in the same terms), other informants constructed similar ladders/hierarchies.

**Tina 13/11/06**
T: In the ladder of racism, Africans are at the top.

Me: Do you think so?

T: Yes, it is very obvious, I know for a fact [laughs and points at her face].

**Brendan 23/01/07**
Funny, the racism would be directed more at the African population… I had a discussion in a group on Friday, and it was agreed that the racism is directed more at the African population than at the Eastern European population.

**Lisa 24/04/07**
When all the immigrants came in from Nigeria, people here suddenly decided ‘well Travellers aren’t so bad, because (A) they’re white, (B) they speak English, and (C) they’re kind of our own anyway.’ So, it kind of did the Travellers good when all these immigrants started arriving.

**James 08/08/06**
I would imagine that the white Eastern European person gets less racism than a black person, because a black person kind of sticks out as being different.
The people from Eastern Europe are better received... compared to people from Africa or other people who are not from the EU. There are jobs, like cleaning jobs, that do not really require special skills, but you might go for it, and you won’t get accepted. Eastern Europeans might not even have good English, but employers still accept them more.

While, in the dominant version, the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’ are placed at the top, and the Settled Irish ‘community’ at the bottom of the ‘ladder of racism’, the placing of the Traveller ‘community’ and the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’ is more complex. While the Irish citizenship status of Travellers gives them a significant advantage in terms of belonging, the reputation of Eastern European Immigrants for ‘hard work’ (see Section 4.3) and the reputation of Travellers for ‘laziness’ and ‘deviancy’ (see Section 5.5 below), is often, if not usually, assumed to override the importance of citizenship so that Travellers are placed above Eastern European Immigrants on the ‘ladder’. Indeed, as the following interview extract describes, this logic was used to legitimise the creation of a Traveller-specific apprenticeship programme under the aegis of the High Level Group on Traveller Issues in Galway:

FÁS representative 08/06/06
We heard reports that some Travellers were going to building sites and asking the foreman for a job, but the foreman, knowing immediately, or even if he was suspicious, he was talking to a Traveller, would say, ‘Have you got a SAFEPASS?’ knowing damn well that your man hasn’t. So he would say, ‘well if you haven’t got a SAFEPASS, you can’t work here – sorry,’ whether he had a job or not. Now the problem was, there was a Pole walking in after the guy, he was getting the job, even though he didn’t necessarily have the SAFEPASS. Because they trust the Pole more, and they know that they will work hard and will be there every day. That’s the whole basis of it. They don’t trust Travellers.

In diagrammatic terms therefore, the dominant version of the ‘ladder of racism’ takes on the following form:

223 The SAFEPASS is a form of safety certification (administered by FÁS after a one day course) that you need work legitimately on a building site in Ireland.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Black/African Immigrants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irish Travellers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern European Immigrants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘White Settled Irish’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2:** ‘Ladder of Racism’ according to dominant popular discourse on ‘racism’

While dominant, in some contexts the hierarchical order constructed in this version of the ‘ladder of racism’ is challenged by particular ‘groups’ who (in what can be described as a context of ‘competitive victimhood’, or what Song refers to as ‘racial victimology’ [2003:128]) consciously vie for a place at the top. This scenario is largely consequent to the growing field of ‘ethno-politics’ (see Section 3.5 and Section 4.4). In this context, being higher up the ‘ladder of racism’ (because it increases entitlement/access to resources, public sympathy and recourse to ‘anti-racism’) may actually be more empowering than being lower down.

The most prominent competitors in this game of ‘racial victimology’ are arguably the TAOs. The GTM, for instance, insists that Travellers, not Immigrants, are the main victims of ‘racism’ in Ireland. In its recent baseline report it claims:

The Millward Brown IMS study carried out in 2004 for the KNOW Racism campaign... concluded that ‘Face-to-face with Travellers their [the general public’s] attitudes are often more negative - more instinctive, more deeply ingrained and less subject to correction by liberal sensitivity - there is more public acceptance of negative attitudes to Travellers than to immigrants (2006:56).
Perhaps even more interesting, however, is the increasingly popular accusation of ‘reverse racism’ by people from the Settled Irish ‘community’. There are essentially two variations of this accusation. The first contends that the situation whereby Travellers and Immigrants claim that any negative experience with a Settled person (in the case of Travellers) or Irish national (in the case of Immigrants) is ‘racism’, victimises the Settled Irish ‘community’ in ‘racialist’/’ethnicist’ terms and therefore constitutes ‘racism’. The second argues that the state’s system of targeted funding, the special treatment perceived to be integral to its Intercultural policy, and contemporary societal rules on political correctness, all victimise the Settled Irish ‘community’ in ‘racialist’/’ethnicist’ terms and therefore constitute ‘racism’. In either version, the Settled Irish relocate themselves (at least in some contexts) away from the bottom of the ‘ladder of racism’ and, if not to the top, at least to somewhere in the middle (the exact placement depending on the tenacity of the accusation). The following extracts convey the basis of the first variation of this phenomenon:

16/11/06
Pat Kenny’s Radio 1 show today had a number of speakers on discussing the decay of Dublin’s north inner city. One of the speakers complained that he was in a shop recently when a black woman barged straight up to the till with her purchases - ignoring the queue of people waiting. The man reacted to this by ‘giving her what for’, and telling her to get to the back of the queue and wait her turn. He argued this was the righteous action to take, because, not to have done so would have constituted racism. He explained that to ignore her behaviour would have been to treat her differently than he would treat an Irish person, and that differential would have been based on the colour of her skin. This is, he argued, what happens too often now - people are afraid to say anything to or about immigrants for fear of being branded racist, when, in fact, the opposite is the case.

Brendan 23/01/07
I was called a racist the other day by an African man who had parked in the disabled parking space. I asked him to move his car, and he cursed me, and told me I was a racist. I told him that I wasn’t, that I had asked other people to move off the parking space... See, the

224 In essence, this argument follows the same lines as the more generally recognised anti affirmative action discourse.
problem, and I have spoken to other people involved with non-nationals, is that there is no response, there’s nothing you can do about it. I can be called any name under the sun and I have no recourse, but when I ask someone to do something, if they don’t like it, suddenly I’m racist, and I could be dragged through the courts. So, I’m sick of this situation where black people can cause all sorts of problems and can speak to people however they want, but no one is willing to or allowed to challenge them on it, because they are afraid of being, or are, accused of racism.225

With respect to the second variation, a common argument made by my Settled Irish informants was that, while Settled Irish people often face problems equal to those faced by Travellers or immigrants, these are given lower priority and less legitimacy by the state because of their identity. The following interview extracts represent some examples of this variant.

Brendan 23/01/07
I can’t come along and exclude anyone from our organisation. If we did, we could be taken to court. But, one of my kids couldn’t attend the TYP, because they’re not a Traveller. I couldn’t go to a Nigerian group because I’m not Nigerian. It’s reverse discrimination. The government should be saying ‘No, sorry, we’re not funding that kind of thing anymore. You must open your doors to everyone, regardless of race, creed or whatever’.

Molly 07/03/07
There is this school bus going to Mervue, and I tried to put my son on it, but was told, ‘No, this bus is only for Travellers.’ I thought, ‘What in the name of God. Could we have a bus that says “only for non-Travellers”? ’ I just think that is not fair.226

225 It appears that the feelings at the root of such accusations of ‘reverse racism’, as well as the accusations themselves, are not limited to the Irish context. Gerd Baumann, for instance, describes a similar situation in Southall in the following terms:

The fear of being branded racist keeps many white Southallians from spelling out in public that, in a widely used phrase ‘things have gone too far the other way’: ‘I’m not racist,’ explains a middle-aged, locally born Englishwoman, ‘but there are things that I want to complain about. Except I can’t. Because I would be labelled a racist, and I’m not’ (1996:139).

226 In this respect, again, Baumann describes a similar situation in Southall with respect to targeted funding. He described how, ‘resentment that white Southallians are “left out”, and indeed disadvantaged
The impact of this game of competitive victimhood, even where the dominant ‘ladder of racism’ is accepted, is not a total reversal in the dominant power matrix. However, it does unsettle this matrix in at least some contexts. As Verkuyten argues with respect to his research on minority-majority relations in Rotterdam, so it appears in Ireland - ‘[t]he perspective of (some) ethnic minority groups has become important, and these groups have institutional means to get their interpretations and definitions accepted and diffused’ (2002:137).

While it is possible to argue that some ‘groups’, in some contexts, suffer a disproportionate amount of some types of ‘racism’ compared to others, to argue that this legitimises the ideological construction of a hierarchy of victimhood is erroneous. Not only, as this entire thesis conveys, is there no unanimously agreed definition of ‘racism’, but the whole notion of a ‘hierarchy of “racism”’ is complicated by the murkiness of the impact of ‘racial’ oppression. As Song 2003:130-131) points out, ‘racism’ can manifest itself in physical violence, the nature of representation in the popular media, a group’s average family income, etc., and, ‘[w]hile a group may fare badly according to one indicator it may be relatively privileged according to another.’ Of course, despite this logic, it is popular perception that fuels attitudes, and in this respect this construct is extremely effective.

While I have discussed academic, state, and popular discourse on ‘racism’ separately, in reality, the three are interlinked. With regard to popular discourse, for instance, in its recent baseline report, the GTM (2006) use MacPherson’s definition of ‘institutional racism’ (state discourse), the definition of ‘racism’ constructed for the NPAR (state discourse), and cite the work of several academics who have studied Traveller issues (academic discourse). Further, the public more generally, are, one would hope, influenced by the state’s proxy ‘anti-racism’ laws, if only to the degree that they avoid breaking them. At the other end of the scale, state institutions revolve around individuals, who, due to the effects of socialisation, can never claim to be completely

by public policies thought to practice positive discrimination, is a common theme among Irish and English Southallians’ (1996:138).
neutral and unaffected in their official role as state representatives. In turn, when designing and implementing legislation and policy the state draws on both popular and academic discourse. For instance, the findings from the Know Racism campaign (a combination of both academic and popular discourse)\(^{227}\), and also the NCCRI’s bi-annual publication of reports of ‘racist incidents’\(^{228}\) were used in the design of the state’s NAPR (DJELR 2005:75).

The implication of such discursive interconnection could be significant. The NCCRI, for instance, defines a ‘racist incident’ as: ‘[A]ny incident which is perceived to be racially motivated by: the victim; a member of the Garda Siochana; a person who was present and witnessed the incident; or a person acting on behalf of the victim’ (NCCRI 2002:11). Based on this, in every six month period of record so far, ‘black Africans’ are cited as the main ‘victims’. This could be a reflection of the fact that ‘black Africans’ do face most ‘racism’. However, based on my findings with respect to ‘colour-coding’ in dominant popular discourse on ‘racism’, it is also likely to be, at least partly, a reflection of the fact that many incidents which would be conceptualised as ‘racist’ according to academic discourse on ‘racism’, and even the definition given in the NAPR itself, are not conceptualised as ‘racist’ by those people involved or present. The fact that the state incorporates this information in policy responses therefore means that future ‘anti-racism’ legislation and policy is also likely to reflect this colour-coded conceptualisation.

5.4: State ‘racism’

In the previous chapters I questioned whether the Irish state could be regarded as a ‘racial state’ by assessing the ethnographic evidence against the dominant academic

\(^{227}\) The Know Racism campaign was a two year national ‘anti-racism’ awareness programme funded by the state between 2002 and 2004. A major part of the campaign was a piece of research carried out by Millward Brown (IMS) on national opinions on ‘racism’ and attitudes to minority groups (see DJELR 2005, Appendix 1).

\(^{228}\) In May 2001 the NCCRI established a procedure for reporting ‘racist’ incidents in Ireland, and it produces a web-based report on this every six months.
discourse on ‘racism’. Here, I revisit many of the same laws and policies, but critically assess them for evidence that they are ‘racist’.

**State anti-Traveller ‘racism’**

‘State racism’ (that is, ‘racism’ according to dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’) in relation to Travellers takes the form of both ‘structural racism’ and ‘institutional racism’. With regard to the former, state policy is argued to have a negative effect on Travellers because they are Travellers, while, with regard to the latter, Travellers are argued to have unequal access to and unequal outcomes from state institutions because they are Travellers.

In terms of ‘structural racism’, one issue repeatedly brought to my attention was the fact that the state’s entire public infrastructure is beset by a sedentary mindset, which, in turn, makes it inherently ‘racist’ towards Travellers. As Jason argued, for instance, ‘the state is still not accommodating for Travellers who still want that transient way of life. Like, Travellers applying for welfare allowances have to deal with huge amounts of bureaucracy because they often have no fixed addresses’ (interview 18/09/06). Other informants made similar arguments with respect to the education system (which necessitates keeping children settled in one place at least for the duration of each school term), and the health system (which necessitates registering with one specific practice). Indeed, a study into Traveller health commissioned by the Task Force on the Traveller community concluded that ‘lack of provision for tracing and transferring health records of Travellers who are mobile makes referrals and continuity of care more difficult’ (McCarthy & Department for Health Promotion Studies 1995:140, cited in GTM 2006:81).

‘Structural racism’ is also arguably inherent in the state’s extensive system of targeted funding and service provision with respect to Travellers. As described in section 3.2, through this system Travellers are ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ as impoverished, dependent, and in need of special assistance. In turn, this implies that Travellers are not capable of
getting by without such assistance and thereby constitutes ‘inferiorisation’ or ‘denigration’. Of course, the other side of this ‘positive discrimination’ debate (which, is by no means limited to Ireland) argues that,

States also have a duty to act by taking special measures to promote groups vulnerable to discrimination to a position of substantive equality… provided that such measures do not, as a consequence, lead to the maintenance of separate rights for different racial groups and that they shall not be continued after the objectives for which they were taken have been achieved (Beirne & Jaichand 2006:4).

In this respect, the state is in something of a no-win position, and perhaps understandably appears to be trying all options.

Finally, the GTM (2006) argues that the State is guilty of ‘structural racism’ in terms of both the Housing (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2002 (the Trespass Law) and the Control of Horses Act 1997 (which was introduced in response to the problem of wandering urban horses). The former legislation, Ronit Lentin argues, ‘criminalises Traveller camping on public and private property, gives Gardaí powers to arrest people without warrants, allows property to be confiscated and disposed of and trespassers to be jailed for a month or fined up to €3,000’ (2006:195). Accordingly, the GTM argues, it acts as ‘a major obstacle to the nomadic tradition of Travellers’, and effectively criminalises an inherent part of Traveller ‘culture’ (2006:69). With respect to the latter legislation, the GTM argues, ‘Travellers are unfavourably affected by the Act’ because ‘the government failed to recognise the importance of the role that the horse plays in the Traveller community’ (ibid:26-27).

Dominant academic discourse defines ‘institutional racism’ in terms of ‘racist outcomes’ (e.g., Anthias & Yuval-Davis 1992:13; Goldberg 1993:99). In order to determine the existence of ‘anti-Traveller racism’ within state institutions such as the Health Board and the Education System, therefore, one must look at statistics on Traveller health and education. According to the recent (2006) census, in the area of health and wellbeing, older Travellers (those aged 65 years and over) accounted for just 2.6% of the total
Traveller population compared with 11% for the total population (CSO, Census 2006, Vol.5, Table 29:50). In the area of education, on the other hand, only 30.8% of Travellers aged 15 years and over, whose fulltime education had ceased, were educated beyond primary level compared to an equivalent figure of 80.5% for those who classified themselves as ‘white Irish’, and 81.8% of the total population (CSO, Census 2006, Vol.5, Table 9:27). If ‘institutional racism’ was not involved in either of these contexts, as Lentin and McVeigh argue, Traveller status would have as little statistical significance as a causal agency as blood group or eye colour (2006:9). Of course, these figures could reflect the fact that Traveller ‘culture’ does not value formal education. However, even if this is the case, in turn, this likely reflects the fact that, as argued above, the formal education system is not responsive to Traveller needs, and is beset by a sedentary mindset.

State anti-Immigrant ‘racism’
Accusations of state ‘racism’ in relation to immigrants focus primarily on ‘structural’ rather than institutional ‘racism’. Most likely, this reflects the fact that state institutions are only expected to be configured towards their citizens, and most immigrants are not yet eligible, or do not wish, to apply for citizenship. Accusations of ‘structural racism’ focus on both immigration and citizenship legislation and policy. With respect to the former, as described in section 4.1, immigration legislation and policy is differentially oriented according to whether one is a citizen of an EU country or not. Accordingly, it is argued that the system is being used to control immigration in ‘racist’ ways. While proving ‘racist’ intention on the part of the state here would be difficult (particularly as many of these laws are European in origin), if ‘racism’ is measured in terms of ‘outcome’, then the fact that, according to the 2006 census, 65.7% of ‘non-Irish residents’ in Ireland are from the EU (see CSO, Census 2006, Vol.5, Table 6:24), 71.2% categorise themselves as ‘white’ (see CSO, Census 2006, Vol.5, Table 6:24), and 68.2% identify as ‘Christian’ (see CSO, Census 2006, Principle demographic Results, Table 36:86) implies, at least, the legislature’s complicity in ‘racism’.
State institutions are also implicated in ‘everyday racism(s)’ perpetrated by their workers when implementing immigration legislation and policy. This accusation is inherently tied to the level of discretion and lack of transparency in the operation thereof. The problem that arises here is that, while the dominant academic thinking is that individuals cannot make an institution ‘racist’ (e.g., Beirne & Jaichand 2006), if an institution creates an environment where ‘racism’ is conceived as acceptable, and provides workers therein with the power to activate their own ‘racisms’ in the name of discretion, this can allow systematic personal ‘racism’ to go unnoticed and unchecked, with effects that both mirror and reinforce ‘institutional racism’. I have already discussed one example of this in the arguably inevitable use of ‘racial’ profiling with respect to the operation of Section 12(1) of the Immigration Act 2004 (see Section 4.2). Perhaps the most potent example, however, surrounds An Garda Síochána (as an institution of policing) and ‘the Gardai’ (as individuals). Having carried out a national survey for Amnesty International, Loyal and Mulcahy report, ‘What is alarming is the high proportion of racist incidents (25%) experienced at the hands of the Gardai, the second highest source of racist incidents overall’ (next to discrimination that was experienced on the street from members of the public [57%]) (2001:18-19). They further argue that,

[T]wo thirds of those who have experienced discrimination from the Gardai claim to have experienced it twice or more often. This raises the possibility that allegations of discrimination are not simply the result of an unfortunate, abrasive contact with one prejudiced ‘bad apple’ within the Gardai. The data suggest that these experiences are more often than not the norm, and likely to be continued in the context of other forms of contact with the Gardai. It also raises the question of whether the institutional framework of policing is the central contributing factor to this situation. Components of this institutional framework include the ways in which Gardai are recruited and trained and patrolling policies (Loyal & Mulcahy 2001:33).

229While these statistics reflect poorly on the An Garda Síochána, it is now held up as an example of good practice in acknowledging and identifying ‘institutional racism’. In 2004 it published the Ionann Report, outlining the results of an independent audit of compliance of An Garda’s policies and strategies with international Human Rights standards. While the report highlighted abuse of powers, ill-treatment, institutional racism, and unaccountability, it also marked a significant step forward towards a more open and accountable police service in Ireland (Beirne & Jaichand 2006:64-65).
Such examples convey how ‘structural’, ‘institutional’ and ‘everyday’, and also ‘state’ and ‘popular racism’ are all intertwined and arguably even co-dependent.

**The Citizenship Referendum**

With respect to ‘structural racism’ via citizenship legislation and policy, Fanning (2007:22) argues that:

> [G]oals of promoting equal opportunity within citizenship coexist with the use of citizenship as a mechanism of exclusion. Institutional racisms within citizenship persist but they are augmented by structural racisms fostered by stratified rights and entitlements on the basis of citizenship entitlement. Legal and administrative distinctions between citizens and non-citizens have become a site of racism and ethnic discrimination.

In line with this, the Citizenship Referendum and the subsequent amendment to citizenship legislation is now highlighted by leading Irish academics and ISOs as the most significant example of ‘state racism’ in recent years. Indeed, Lentin and McVeigh (2006:55) argue that, ‘The Citizenship Referendum was a crucial point in turning Ireland from a racial state to a racist state in which citizens are differentiated from non-citizens.’

During the debate surrounding the referendum, Minister McDowell (McDowell *Sunday Independent* 14/03/04) defended the government’s explicit support of the ‘Yes Vote’ against accusations of ‘racism’. He based his defence on the fact that the constitutional and legislative changes involved would ‘apply even-handedly to the children of all non-nationals irrespective of colour, ethnicity or any other criterion on which racism is based.’ While this defence is based on the relatively narrow legislative construction of ‘racism’, as I discussed in section 4.2, in and through the referendum, and the discourse surrounding it, non-nationals/immigrants were ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ in terms of their essential ‘non-Irish’ status; and because the underlying motivation for this ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ was exclusionary, and, in turn, support for such exclusion
was gained through denigrating propaganda; according to the dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’, it was ‘racist’ (indeed, arguably, inevitably so).

The Citizenship Referendum should have been about altering the terms in which ‘the Irish’ were constructed in constitutional and legal terms. And, on paper, it was - the referendum and subsequent legislation involved the re-construction of ‘the Irish’ in ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ terms (of descent). However, because ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ is a dialectic process, the construction/re-construction of ‘the Irish’ in these narrower terms inherently involved the exclusion of those who failed to meet them. Furthermore, state discourse surrounding the referendum focused on the Immigrant ‘community’, particularly the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’, and, more particularly, the ever-present threat of abuse of the immigration system, and the ‘rampant abuse’ of the current citizenship legislation and policy (see Section 4.2). In this respect, the state legitimised the need to exclude particular [I]mmigrants by denigrating them.

It is all well and good for academics (including myself) to gather what we deem solid evidence that state discourse is ‘racist’. The simple fact remains that in the real world, at least in the here and now, the definitions of ‘racism’ upon which we base such accusations do not always match those encoded in ‘anti-racism’ legislation and policy (see Section 5.2 above). Consequently, there is no structure for trial or judgement, let alone condemnation or recourse in these terms. Effectively, (as argued in Chapter 1) ‘racism’ depends on discourse on ‘racism’ for its ontological status, and because, with the exception of the ICERD committee, it is policed mainly by state legislation, the state basically dictates what ‘racism’ is and is not, and therefore what ideologies, practices and institutions need to be, and are, tackled by ‘anti-racist’ policy and legislation. In this respect, as Lentin and Lentin (2006) highlight, there is a paradox at the heart of official approaches to dealing with ‘racism’: on the one hand the state is seen as, and proclaims itself to be, a source of protection against discrimination, but, on the other hand, states across the west actively participate in the practice of ‘racism’. Indeed, they point out that:
The Equality Act (2004) excludes regulation on asylum and immigration, which is also excluded from the European Union ‘race’ Directive (Council Directive 2000/03/EC). In other words, the state insists on its right to discriminate in a racist manner in these areas (2006:177-8).

This realisation conveys why international ‘anti-racism’ legislation such as the ICERD is so important, and why its powers (at present in Ireland individuals cannot bring a case against the state under the ICERD) need to be increased.

5.5: Popular ‘racism’

Popular ‘racist’ discourse in Ireland is usually veiled or disguised, and often involves contradiction, inconsistency and ambivalence. As Lentin and McVeigh (2006:170) argue,

This is the essence of racism without racism - old racial hierarchies are out, new globalised racialised codes are in. Racists tend not to openly declare their hatred of Jews or blacks or Gypsies: rather they have ‘legitimate concerns’ regarding immigrants or asylum seekers or Travellers, and they use ‘common sense’ arguments about the integrity of ‘Irish citizenship’ or ‘the Irish asylum system’ or ‘social cohesion’, as they oppose, ‘sensibly’ of course, any notion of an open door immigration policy.

Despite such veiling, as I illustrate in this section, there is much evidence that popular ‘racism’ (that is, ‘racism’ according to the dominant academic discourses on ‘racism’ [see Chapter 1]) is rampant in Ireland.

Popular anti-Traveller ‘racism’

There is ample evidence that Travellers in Ireland are victims of ‘racism’, or ‘discrimination’ as the same phenomenon is defined by dominant popular discourse on ‘racism’. For instance, Niall Crowley (CEO of the Equality Authority), a guest speaker at the launch of the GTM’s baseline report on ‘The reality for Travellers in Galway
City’, claimed, ‘Travellers are the highest area in our case files for the Equal Status Act 2000 and that reflects very widespread and significant experiences of discrimination in key services such as the provision of accommodation and education, access to public services, and even at the very basic level of access to shops’ (04/12/06).

My research revealed that, as well as being around at both a local and national level for nearly a century (see Helleiner 2000:58&74); popular anti-Traveller ‘racism’ is something that Travellers face right from the cradle. Along with the interview extract I used to introduce this thesis, the following interview and fieldwork extracts (the first two which describe some examples of anti-Traveller ‘racism’ described by informants, and the last which itself constitutes it) help illustrate this:

Lisa 24/04/07
Me: How do you think that the education system is dealing with Travellers at the moment?

L: I think it depends on who you meet. There are teachers who, I know for a fact, do not issue homework to Travelling children... Even though schools will deny this, it still goes on. So, these kids haven’t a hope. And I’d say that the Traveller kids are also let away with more things than they should be. I think if there are rules they should be applied to everyone. You know, like, getting sent home for not having a uniform on. If you’re supposed to be at school at 9 o clock and you don’t ever come until 11, and nobody says anything, you’re not going to bother...

L: Also, when I bring a group of children from my club out, they have to be twice as good in order to be accepted. If one is wild or is cheeky to someone, it’s because they’re a Traveller, not because they’re a cheeky child. But see, when they’re seen as behaving well, they’re not seen as Travellers. It’s only when they’re not behaving that you get ‘look at the poor woman with the crowd of Travellers’.

Walk around Ballybane with the Traveller and Settled Women’s Group 17/04/07
I walked with Maggie and Rose [both Travellers]. As we walked, Maggie said that she had thought of an incident the other day that she had forgot to mention during our interview - when she had said that she hadn’t really any personal experience of discrimination. She
explained that she does her food shopping every Thursday evening in Tesco, and while she is at the shopping centre she always pops into Penny’s (a department store) to look at the clothes. About six months ago, however, she noticed that for three weeks in a row the security guard followed her throughout the shop. She explained that she found this extremely embarrassing and uncomfortable, to the point where she does not even go in anymore. I asked her why she thought he did this, and she claimed that it was because he knew by looking at her that she was a Traveller.

At hearing Maggie tell me this story, Rose told her to tell me about when they went to the hotel in Oranmore on St. Patrick’s Day. Maggie explained that a group of them went out to Oranmore on St. Patrick’s Day, but the hotel they went to refused to serve them. ‘I wouldn’t mind if we were a group of young lads,’ she argued, ‘but we were all in couples.’ When they demanded that the barman give them his name and his reason for not serving them, he refused (you need this information, she explained, to bring a case for discrimination). Finally they got these details, she explained, and then they went to another hotel where they did get served. ‘We are going ahead with the case,’ she argued, ‘because, while this kind of thing has always happened to Travellers, we don’t just let it go anymore - we follow it up.’

Donna 14/01/07

To be honest with you, I’ve had very little problems with Travellers. I could say very little against them… But, the problem is there’re lots of young girls taking up with Traveller boys. Now, neither side wants that. The Travellers don’t want that. They want their children to marry into the families. And, the settled community, don’t want their daughters to marry Travellers… Like, there’re two young girls, I know their mum and the family very well, and they both got in with Travellers, and had kids by Travellers… I’m sure her mother’s heart is absolutely broken. That actually causes more friction than anything else.230

**Popular anti-Immigrant ‘racism’**

According to a 2006 *Sunday Tribune*/Millward Brown IMS poll there is a strong current of anti-immigration sentiment in Ireland. ‘Eighty per cent of respondents (54% strongly and 26% slightly) agreed with the proposal that the government should restrict the

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230 The degree of contradiction here is a classic example of the famous adage ‘I’m not being racist, but…’
number of non-nationals coming into the country’ (cited in Ñ Chonaill 2007:1). While these findings do not indicate ‘racism’ per se, as I illustrate in this section, there is ample evidence that this anti-immigration climate has allowed ‘racism’ against Immigrants to flourish.

As is the case with anti-Traveller ‘racism’, there is evidence to suggest that anti-immigrant ‘racism’ is not new to Ireland. For instance, while the following newspaper editorial appeared almost eighty years ago, as Goldstone (1998) points out, it could just as easily have appeared and made sense to readers yesterday if one were to change the word ‘Jews’ to ‘Nigerians’, ‘Romanians’, ‘asylum seekers’, ['refugees’, ‘immigrants’], etc.

We have coming in on every boat persons of every nationality and every religion and no religion – the greatest being to an alarming extent, the Jews. Now personally, these formerly chosen people may be very pleasant and very nice to meet, and one would not be inclined to object to the advent of a few of that class and creed, but when they come in thousands, as they are every year, and when settling here and displacing natives, it is a matter of public concern and serious importance’ (Tuam Herald reprinted in The Irish Rosary, April 1927, cited in Goldstone 1998:31).

As Goldstone concludes, so it remains ten years later, ‘whilst the targets of opprobrium have changed, the fears [and therefore accusations] remain the same. Fears of engulfment (be it social or sexual), loss of identity – these themes occur and reoccur’ (ibid).

In some contexts, Immigrants are ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ and denigrated whatever their immigration status, skin colour, or country of origin. The basis of such ‘racism’ is usually (at least partially) ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ and demonisation in terms of the threat they pose to the nation’s resources (common complaints include ‘they’ are ‘taking Irish jobs’ and ‘taking all the social housing’) and the national ‘culture’/‘identity’ (see Sections 4.3 and 5.6). In such discourse ‘nationalism’ and ‘racism’ are fused. While, as a relatively affluent country, the fears and insecurities underlying such
‘nationalism’/‘racism’ are misplaced, when one appreciates that threat, insecurity and defensiveness are part of Ireland’s historical construction (Sinha 1998:21-22), and that this ‘history’, in turn, acts as a ‘characterisation influence’ in contemporary constructions of ‘the Irish’ (Goldberg 1993), it is easy to see where it finds its impetus.

For a thorough understanding of anti-Immigrant ‘racism’, the category Immigrant needs to be disaggregated in terms of immigration status, skin colour, country of origin, etc. For instance, despite the fact that the number of economic migrants has exceeded that of asylum seekers every year except 1999 (Garner 2004:49), demonisation in terms of the threat immigrants pose to national resources and national identity has focused largely on the latter. This is largely because, first, the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’ is constructed as relatively close to ‘the Irish’ in terms of having white skin and being mainly Catholic, and, second, in relative terms at least, while Eastern European Immigrants are conceived as being of some benefit to the country in terms of being ‘good workers’, Black/African Immigrants (i.e., those usually perceived as being asylum seekers) are seen as, not only dependent on state handouts (see Section 4.3), but usually as illegitimately so. Such illegitimacy is based on the argument that claims for asylum are often ‘bogus’ - that many ‘asylum seekers’ are really economic migrants in disguise (see Section 5.6 below).

Although, in line with ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ assumptions regarding ‘asylum seekers’ (see Section 4.3), such popular ‘racism’ is directed disproportionately at people with black skin, these terms of denigration indicate that in most general and descriptive contexts (no less than in cases of ‘racism’ against Immigrants with white skin or Travellers) it involves ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ of ‘culture’ or immigrant status, rather than biologism. In other words, as Anthias and Yuval-Davies (1992) argue ‘blackness’ is merely a signifier of immigrant status and/or ‘cultural’ difference. It is the latter which is the explanatory principle for the actual ‘racism’.
‘Explaining’ and ‘explaining away’ popular ‘racism’

In both my own observations, and informants’ descriptions, of popular ‘racism’, when I probed further, in most cases (particularly with respect to anti-Traveller ‘racism’/’discrimination’) informants explained, reinterpreted, legitimised or even excused themselves or others in one of two ways: the ‘bad egg theory of explanation’ or ‘blame-the-victim’ denial. The differences between the two stances are often subtle, lying more in the implications (one explains, the other denies) than in the wording itself.

The ‘bad egg theory’ admits ‘racism’ (or in the case of Travellers - ‘discrimination’), but explains it in terms of the bad behaviour of a few within the denigrated group tarnishing the reputation of the whole. The following interview extracts reveal such thinking.

**Jason 18/09/06**
Me: What do you think are the main reasons for anti Traveller sentiment?

J: Truthfully, a lot of it is fuelled from bad experiences… I think people are so sick and tired of the levels of intimidation and aggression… There’s just so much of that going on… people are just shocked or appalled… Like, one of our lads, he slashed a horse, and I have spent the last six months trying to get through to him - ‘why did you actually do that? Look at the impact, how it adds to the feud you’re involved in, causes the collapse of relationships in your family, all the bad coverage that it got in the press, and how that, then, impacts on the wider community, all just because you pulled the Stanley knife.’

**Francis 19/10/06**
Me: What do you think are the causes of anti-Traveller sentiment?

F: Just the few that start the fights, get drunk, make scenes, break windows, shouting and disrupting community life in general. They create a bad name for all the Travellers.

**Brendan 23/01/07**
Before I came here, I was prejudiced to be honest - because you just saw all the fighting. It’s only when you start to get to know people through the various clubs and things that you think ‘hang on a minute, there’s no difference.’ We had a meeting for a community
development group years ago and a number of Travellers were involved. Now, at some stage a Traveller issue was going to come up, but when it did the Travellers there were saying - ‘we have the same problem yee have. There’s Travellers out there - we don’t want them. They should be bulldozed out of here back to where they came from.’ Suddenly it opened up my whole perspective, and I thought, ‘Travellers are the same as everyone else - they have the same issues and problems as everyone else.’ Working here over the last number of years, there are Travellers that have upset or annoyed me, but there’s been more good than bad.

Perhaps most interestingly, as the following interview extracts suggest, most of my Traveller informants also subscribed to this explanation for anti-Travellerism.

**Travelling with Jason 16/01/07**
We headed down to the X site. One of the men wanted Jason to go to the Clarinbridge Hotel and book a function for his parents wedding anniversary. When I asked him why he wouldn’t go himself, he explained that if he went to make the booking, they would realise that he was a Traveller and wouldn’t give them the room. He argued that ‘with Travellers the problem is that a few bad eggs have ruined the box’ and ‘when one cow gets foot and mouth, the whole herd has to be put down’.

**Edward (Traveller) 19/09/06**
Me: What do you think are the reasons for anti-Traveller feelings?

E: Well, in all fairness, some of us, a small minority, give reason for it – in the way they carry on. But, that’s not the whole population of us.

Such discourse does not excuse ‘racism’. Where the speaker is a Traveller or a Traveller advocate, it is constructed as unfair, but also understandable in a situation where the actions of a few are admittedly unacceptable. Where the speaker perpetrates such ‘racism’, or sympathises with others who do so, it is often admitted, but not condemned point blank. Instead, it is presented as a logical presumption or an honest mistake. As Lisa argued, ‘people have had experiences dealing with the wrong Traveller, and that’s the one that sticks with them’ (Interview 24/04/07). Further, because a lot of ‘Settled Irish – Traveller’, and ‘Irish – Immigrant’, contact is indirect (through the media) rather than actual, and, in turn, media discourse is itself implicated in ‘racist’ representation.
(see Pollak 1999), ‘the bad-eggs’ are often the only ones with whom people have any experience. In some cases, further, informants argued that Travellers, Immigrants, Black/African Immigrants, etc. only have themselves to blame for such ‘racism’, because it is up to them to sort out those giving their ‘community’ a bad name.

Despite attempts at explanation and mitigation of blame, this is still ‘racism’ according to dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’. In such circumstances the individuals involved in the ‘unacceptable behaviour’ are not conceptualised as independent beings, but as Travellers/Immigrants/Blacks/Africans/Eastern Europeans, etc. Their behaviour, in turn, is generalised to the whole, so that all those therein are ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ and denigrated in these terms. Tautologically, the whole becomes constructed in essentialist and naturalised negative terms so that it is seen as predictive of negative behaviour. Actions that do not fit with this picture are seen as exceptional.

The ‘blame-the-victim’ stance is less an explanation than a denial and a call for, or justification of, the re-ascription of the discourse in question from ‘racism’ to ‘a legitimate, logical, or rational reaction to unacceptable behaviour’. Similarly, evidence suggesting ‘institutional racism’ (higher incidence of poverty, lower educational achievement, etc.), is turned back on itself with the argument that such outcomes are the result, not of ‘racism’, but, of the cultural inferiority of the group concerned – their laziness, propensity towards crime and deviance, lack of ambition, reluctance to work hard, etc.231 The following extracts from fieldnote and interview transcripts demonstrate some examples of such justificatory discourse:

Chatting to Paul in Office after ‘Copping-On’ session 15/05/06
Paul told me that he and Aine were chatting about ‘racism’ yesterday, and, in the end, both of them agreed that the Africans often bring it on themselves with all the demands they make. When Aine was in hospital having her baby a few months ago, he argued, there was an

231 Significantly, this kind of discourse does not appear to be limited to Galway, Ireland, or even the contemporary context. In many respects, it mirrors the kind of ‘blame the victim’ discourse found in the United States nearly 50 years ago, and analysed and critiqued by William Ryan (1971). Such discourse, Ryan argued, involved the redefinition of the victim ‘in order to make it possible for us to look at society’s problems and to attribute their causation to the individuals affected’ (1971:10).
African woman in the bed next to hers who had her whole family in with her almost constantly and demanded food for them all. When the woman wanted to use the phone she did not ask for it, but demanded it. If she wasn’t given exactly what she wanted, she claimed that the nurses were being racist, he argued. ‘This is what always happens,’ he claimed.

‘It’s the same with the Eastern Europeans,’ he argued. In this respect, he explained that he had read an article in the paper a few days ago which argued that accusations that Eastern-Europeans are bad drivers and are causing a rise in the number of accidents are racist. ‘However,’ he claimed, ‘I also read a survey on the internet the other day which proved that Polish drivers are the worst drivers. The figures are there. They come over here and they have a culture of drink-driving, which they bring with them.’

Paul 24/10/06
Me: What needs to be done to tackle the negative image of Travellers?

P: The reality is that the Travellers are responsible for a lot of robberies, for buying and selling stolen goods, for cruelty towards horses, for disturbances in pubs… You’re going to have to stop the theft, you’re going to have to stop the motoring offenses, you’re going to have to stop the fighting, and that may mean the eradication of a lot of so-called Traveller culture. Like, the proneness to violence with any excuse, the unwillingness to become legitimate business people, the hostility toward officialdom, and the hand-out, grab-all, culture… You’re actually playing into the hands of racists if you allow Travellers to do those things.

Teresa 24/04/07
Me: What are the main reasons for people being anti-Traveller?

T: Well, there is the perception that they start fights. And, unfortunately, you have to face reality. They do start fights... It’s not acceptable behaviour in society... If there was for no reason for it would be racism, but often it’s not because they’re Travellers that people appear to discriminate against them. Often there’s a good reason. It’s this aggression.

Harry 07/03/07
A lot of the treatment of the Travelling community is bad, but it’s self-inflicted. They are dodgy people. I’m not saying all of them. There is one or two of them that are sweet and very nice. But, you know, when
they come into your shop, you’ve got to watch them. It’s like in South Africa, there’s a saying - What’s the difference between a tourist and a racist?

Me: What?

H: Two weeks!

When it comes to Travellers at least, the state is also implicated in ‘blaming the victim’.

In an unpublished document produced by the DJELR (no date) entitled *Discussion Points on Developing More Effective Programmes in Relation to the Traveller Community* (sent to me by the office of Minister Frank Fahy), for example, it states:

This Department takes a lead role in seeking to ensure that Travellers are treated equally and are afforded the same opportunities as the wider community... A critical barrier to the achievement of parity of esteem is the settled community’s generally biased and disproportionately negative view of Travellers. Attitudes, while difficult to shift, can be influenced by proactively addressing the anti-social behaviour and counter-productive activity which Travellers themselves are involved in. Proposals to address such anti-social behaviour and criminality are included in the High Level Group Report. I see a number of key measures which can be taken to improve the lifestyle of the Travelling community to counteract the negative sentiments felt by the rest of society.

While this document admits that the settled community are ‘biased’, all the suggested remedies focus on Travellers. Particularly interesting in this respect are the parallels with Paul’s argument above, and also with the *1963 CI Report* (see Section 2.2), which states:

The attitude of most of the settled population is largely conditioned by the behaviour pattern which by experience or hearsay has come to be regarded as the norm for itinerants (1963:109).

The normal kindly feeling of the people... will once again predominate when the immediate pressure of the itinerants’ wrongdoing has been relieved or at least substantially reduced (1963:102, 104).
The variety of sources here implies the dominance of this ‘blame-the-victim’ perspective (at least with respect to Travellers). Indeed, there is evidence that many Travellers themselves subscribe to it. In a recent research report, Pavee Point, for instance, asserts:

Many Travellers now blame discrimination from settled people and conflict between settled people and Travellers on Travellers social practices:

Missy, B-Town: “It doesn’t bring a good light on Travellers if we can’t get on and we’re constantly arguing. What will [S]ettled people think: How can we treat them respectfully if they can’t respect each other?” (2005a:46).

Rather than agreeing with such sentiments, Pavee Point argues:

Missy has internalised the racist perceptions of the dominant population. She is critical of Traveller relations and how these in turn affect Traveller-settled relations. She places blame squarely on the Travellers, with no culpability attributed to the settled population. Her concern with what ‘settled people think’ is indicative of the influence that settled people wield over some Travellers (2005a:46).

During probing, informants who subscribed to the ‘blame-the-victim’ stance, often criticised the likes of Pavee point and the GTM for ‘having blinkers on’, or for being ‘wet liberals’, ‘apologists’, or ‘fluffy anti-racists’. Indeed, many argued that such blinkered thinking does more harm than good - It supports a defeatist and victimhood mentality and encourages bitterness, expectations of handouts, special treatment, and ultimately dependency. Indeed, like the speaker on Pat Kenny’s radio show (cited in Section 5.3 above); most argued that by disregarding the unacceptable behaviour of Travellers, immigrants, etc. ‘because’ they are Travellers, immigrants, etc., such discourse actually constitutes ‘racism’. In line with the terms of this opposition, ‘anti-racists’ in Galway (though I suspect this is much more widely applicable) can be divided into two groups – realists and apologists. The former see themselves as less dogmatic and more pragmatic ‘anti-racists’, while they see apologists as subscribing to the popular model of ‘anti-racism’ with its implications of a moral high-ground and its ‘luvvy duvvy’
rhetoric. The former style is fast gaining prominence as the more ‘clued in’ way of thinking and doing ‘anti-racism’.

Of course, while those denying ‘racism’ by ‘blaming-the-victim’ appear to really believe their disclaimers, according to dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’, they are nevertheless being ‘racist’. In effect, the ‘blame-the-victim’ disclaimer is simply a more exposed version of the ‘bad egg’ explanation: the aspect of generalisation from the ‘bad egg’ to the whole ‘community’ is made explicit as the whole is openly pathologised as deviant, or, in other words, ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ and denigrated. In other words, rather than ‘explaining away’ ‘racism’, such discourse both explains ‘racism’ (in terms of a combination of ignorance and prejudice on the part of the perpetrator) and constitutes it.

5.6: State <-> popular ‘racism’

Although, as discussed in Section 5.1 above, with a few exceptions (e.g., Sivananda 2001), academic discourse on ‘racism’ constructs ‘state racism’ and ‘popular racism’ as two separate phenomena, the two are in no respect conceptualised as independent of each other. The dominant argument is that the state (and particularly ‘state racism’) is the driving force behind ‘popular racism’. Lentin and Lentin (2006:2), for instance, argue, ‘[r]acism both past and present is inextricably linked both to the policy instituted by states and to the political climate engendered by government leaders playing the proverbial “race card”’. Later, they argue: ‘For racism to function, it needs a political apparatus. That apparatus is the state, its bureaucracy and its institutions, which, in turn, influence the hearts and minds of the people who live within it’ (2006:14). Interestingly, a number of my informants made similar arguments:

**Evan 20/11/06**

I think politicians should resist from using racist comments. Even when they campaign, politicians should know that they are politicians and the influence they hold because of this. If it comes from the head then the toe will be rotten too.
There are still so many pronouncements and actions from different wings of government that sanction, and even incite, racism in the general public. Like, when Mary O’Rourke said ‘worked like Blacks’ it started a bit of a national debate, and the general consensus was - ‘Ah sure it used to be harmless, now it’s not.’ That was sort of it! If she’d been visited by the Gardai and brought in for questioning, people might have gone - ‘Fuck! – Am I not allowed to say what I want?’ And maybe there would have been a real debate, and gradually people would think - ‘Well, no actually, I can’t.’

**State ↔ popular anti-immigrant ‘racism’**

With regard to anti-immigrant ‘racism’, my research suggests that state legislation and policy, if it does not incite, at least facilitates, popular ‘racism’ in two respects. Firstly, laws and policies which demonise and even criminalise immigrants help construct the terms of denigration within popular ‘racism’, and create an ideological environment in which ‘racism’ appears culturally acceptable. Secondly, by participating in, encouraging, or failing to prevent the scapegoating of immigrants for many of society’s ills, the state provides the public with the motivation, and often the ammunition, to construct ‘racist’ discourses to help explain the world they experience.232

The first of these strands of influence particularly affects discourse on the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’. For instance, the state’s dispersal and direct provision policies, the withdrawal of child benefits in 2004, and the denial of the right to work, imply that asylum seekers are not genuine, are involved ‘asylum shopping’, and are most likely ‘bogus’. Indeed, Bernard McDonagh (Second Secretary at the DJELR) made this implication explicit when he stipulated that giving asylum seekers early access to employment ‘will act as a pull-factor and will encourage future abuses of the asylum system’ (*Irish News* 23/09/98, cited in Cullen 2000:21). Further, the use of ‘safe

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232While theories on scapegoating and ‘racism’ are usually situated in a context of economic downturn and therefore insecurity (e.g. Alt 1998), the applicability to the Irish context can be explained by the fact that the unevenness and suddenness of the economic upturn has created anomie and insecurity (Garner 2004:48).
country’ and ‘safe third countries’ in assessing asylum applications (*Illegal Immigrants [Trafficking] Act 2000*), the often indiscriminate detention of asylum seekers in Garda stations and even prisons, and the fingerprinting of asylum seekers as they enter the country (part of *The Dublin Convention*), all encourage the construction of Immigrants (particularly Black/African Immigrants) as deviant, or even criminal in popular discourse. This argument is supported by the fact that dominant popular discourse on Black/African Immigrants correlates so closely with the implications inherent in such laws and policies (see Section 4.3).

In terms of scapegoating and ‘popular racism’, the central issue is popular perception rather than ‘fact’. This is where the state comes in. Loyal and Allen (2006:222) argue that, in the 1990s, ‘[n]eo-liberal policies meant that there was a marked contrast between the boom in the economy and the low provision of public services.’ Rather than bear the brunt of criticism for this, however, the government arguably used the fact that the 1990s were also marked by a significant increase in immigration to deflect attention to the immigrant other. It upped its political rhetoric on immigration legislation and policy, and, in and through this, implied that it had identified the problem (immigrants were competitors for Irish jobs, were putting pressure on the welfare system and creating social housing shortages), and was dealing with it.\(^{233}\) While maintaining public confidence, therefore, the state helped create the ideological basis upon which ‘popular racism’ has become a tool for people trying to explain their own socio-economic position or problems. While not the only culprit of such scapegoating, the state’s culpability is increased because, essentially it should bare the responsibility for setting the record straight by challenging the accusations and addressing the myths which are rampant in this respect.

Although Loyal and Allen refer here to Ireland in the 1990s, the culpability of the government in the scapegoating of immigrants, or at least its failure to dispel the myths regarding the role of immigration in Ireland’s ills, is still very much evident in Ireland

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\(^{233}\) According to Räthzel (2002:21), in doing this, the Irish state was following a European-wide trend.
today. According to a leaflet produced by the Migrant Rights Centre Ireland and NCCRI during my fieldwork (2006 and 2007) entitled Challenging Myths and Misinformation about Migrant Workers and their Families (no Date),

- Ireland’s unemployment rate is the lowest it has ever been (4.5%) and is one of the lowest in the EU
- ‘FÁS estimates that 500,000 migrant workers will be needed over the next decade’
- ‘Migrant workers tend to pay more in taxes than they receive in benefits. It is estimated that around 200,000 migrant workers provide an annual surplus in income taxes of around half a billion Euro’
- ‘Less than 1% of the country’s migrant workers are dependent on social welfare’; and under a rule called the Habitual Residence Condition (HRC) introduced in 2004, “a person has to pass a test before qualifying for social welfare or benefit, e.g., have a work history in the state, and workers from outside the EU must be resident in Ireland for approximately two years”.

The picture created by this information is one where Ireland not only benefits from immigration but needs it. Yet, state discourse surrounding the Citizenship Referendum, for instance, with its focus on the need for more stringent immigration legislation, implied that immigration had reached detrimental levels. Further, legislation preventing asylum seekers from working, and politicians alluding to ‘asylum shopping’ (see above) and claiming that African mothers are overburdening Irish maternity hospitals (see Section 4.2) imply that immigrants, and particularly asylum seekers, are a threat to the country’s welfare and social service systems.

Which of these constructions of the immigration and immigrant situation in Ireland has been drawn into dominant popular discourse is revealed by the fact that, although, the most recent census shows that non-Irish nationals now comprise 10% of Ireland’s population (CSO, Census 2006, Principal Demographic Results, Table 25), in a survey carried out for the RTE 1 Primetime Programme, The Time of Our Lives (30/05/06), when asked how many immigrants they thought were in Ireland, 40% of people surveyed significantly overestimated the number. Further, that the implications in state
discourse on immigration have been taken up by popular (‘racist’) discourse on Immigrants (particularly Black/African Immigrants) is suggested in James’s statement that ‘foreign people in general are coming in and taking jobs, and people don’t like that’ (Interview 08/08/06); in Brendan’s argument, that, ‘when a non-national comes into this country they’re going straight into houses, [but] our own homeless are still living on the side of the road’ (Interview 23/01/07); in claims such as Niamh’s regarding African women, and medical time and resources in maternity wards (see Section 4.2), and Paul’s with respect to ‘black men and big cars’ (see Section 4.3); and in the ubiquitous ‘buggy at the bus-stop’ myth.

The effectiveness of such scapegoating in producing negative, and even ‘racist’, popular discourse on immigrants, is, at least partly, the result of ‘victimhood’, ‘insecurity’ and ‘defensiveness’ in Irish national identity. As Sinha (1998:21-22) argues, these national traits are historical - ‘the Irish’ emerged in a defensive context and the scars of past oppression still linger [palimpsest style (Jacobson 1998)]. Rather than an innate national consciousness, the state helps instil notions of threat and defence via its discourse. In effect, such discourse creates an ideological environment whereby the production of a ‘racist’ construction of the Immigrant other as a threat by the public in general is not only enabled but encouraged.

Particularly interesting in terms of scapegoating and its effects is the amount of similarity between my observations in contemporary Ireland and Garner’s discussion of how Irish immigrants were scapegoated in Britain in the mid-nineteenth Century. He describes how, ‘[c]ontemporary views posited the Irish as simultaneously a substitute workforce capable of cutting wages and strikebreaking, and inveterately indolent claimants of Poor Law funds’ (2004:118). He concludes, ‘[l]ocal workers would have related the arrival of the Irish with the “degradation” of their living standards in times of bust and constructed the Irish worker as an instrument of forces beyond their control, an agent of capital rather than labour’ (ibid:121-122). This, similarly, is likely to reflect two things. Firstly, it may be another example of how the experience of ‘anti-Irish racism’ has helped structure the way in which Irish people themselves are ‘racist’ (McVeigh &
Lentin 2002). Secondly, it is likely to reflect the similar socio-economic context (in terms of anomie and instability in the economy and the correspondence of this with a perceived influx of immigrants) in England then and Ireland now.

State ↔ popular anti-Traveller ‘racism’

With respect to Travellers, my research suggests that it is the arguably ‘racist’ policy on targeted funding that is most influential as regards popular anti-Traveller ‘racism’. Such policy has the propensity to incite ‘popular racism’ in three respects. Firstly, it creates resentment, which can be then expressed in ‘racist’ ways. Secondly, it produces a picture of Travellers as essentially ‘in need’, ‘dependent’, and therefore implies ‘inferiority’, which, in turn, can be used as the terms of denigration in ‘racist’ discourse. Finally, by enabling and rewarding the construction of Traveller only spaces, it encourages segregation and therefore a lack of knowledge and understanding between Irish Travellers, Settled Irish, and other minority groups. This, in turn, allows the myths which feed ‘popular racism’ (including those produced by this policy itself) to flourish unimpeded. Indeed, as the following interview extract illustrates many of my informants, when questioned on ‘the causes of “racism”’, made this connection:

Damien (youth worker based in Ballybane) 21/10/06
Me: What do you think are the causes of racism?
D: I suppose, people aren’t really exposed to different cultures. When I came here about five years ago, I was so scared. I can remember standing at the entrance to the old Hillside halting site, and I wouldn’t go in, even though I was there with a worker… But, since then, I’ve met some decent Travellers, and it has changed my attitude to them. Before this, I had never met any Travellers and all I heard was negative stuff.

234Travellers are also often scapegoated by the state in a similar way immigrants are. The reason I do not focus on this link here however is because it appears to be much less significant than the link produced by targeted funding. Similarly, while policy on targeted funding also affects popular anti-immigrant ‘racism’, I have not focused on this link because, relatively, the effects are weaker than those I have discussed. In each case, restrictions in terms of space require me to concentrate on those links deemed most significant.
When highlighting the relationship between state discourse (including ‘state racism’) and ‘popular racism’, academic discourse tends to focus on the influence of the former on the latter it largely neglects the possibility that ‘popular racism’ can also affect or influence ‘state racism’. However, as I have argued at several points in this thesis with respect to state and popular ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse, the relationship between state and popular ‘racist’ discourse is two-way. State politicians cannot simply ignore popular discourse emerging from their constituencies. Further, rather than being outside of ‘society’ and ‘culture’, politicians are socialised into the same kinds of thinking as the rest of the public. Indeed, Essed (1991) suggested this in her conceptualisation of ‘everyday racism’, which, she argues, everyone is inherently guilty of, and which is carried into all everyday situations, including policy-making circles (see Section 5.1).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter I have attempted to reveal the complexity involved in ‘racism’. I described how, because ‘racism’ only exists in accordance with particular discourses on ‘racism’, to speak of ‘racism’ per se, or ‘patent racism’ (Lentin & Lentin 2006:11), as many academics do, is misleading. More importantly, it is unhelpful when it comes to tackling this elusive phenomenon.

Taking on board the dominant academic construction of ‘racism’ as ‘racialisation’/“ethnicisation” + denigration and/or exclusion’, I have demonstrated throughout this chapter that ‘racism’ (‘everyday’, ‘institutional’, and ‘structural’, and ‘state’ and ‘popular’) against Travellers and Immigrants is indeed rife in Ireland. However, rather than limiting my analysis to this one conceptualisation of what ‘racism’ is, I have also demonstrated that, once state discourse on ‘racism’ (which essentially completely ignores the possibility of ‘state racism’) and popular discourse on ‘racism’ (which constructs ‘racism’ as, firstly, colour-coded, and, secondly, necessarily involving intention to denigrate) are taken into account, this accusation necessarily becomes much more tentative.
In the second half of the chapter, I demonstrated how, even once its ontological status has been substantiated, further complexity emerges through the inconsistencies, the contradictions, the denials, the legitimisations, and the explanations of ‘racism’ by perpetrators, bystanders, and Irish society in general. In this respect, the infamous line ‘I’m not being racist, but...’ takes on whole new dimensions along the lines of: ‘I may be being racist, but...’ (the ‘bad egg’ explanation) and ‘I’m not being racist, because...’/‘it’s not racist, it’s fact’ (the ‘blame-the-victim’ stance). Further, with increasing numbers of accusations with respect to ‘reverse racism’, I illustrated how the traditional ‘majority = perpetrator : minority = victim’ ideological framework is being turned on its head, as the majority Settled Irish ‘community’ joins in the game of competitive victimhood on a par with Travellers and Immigrants. In particular, I discussed how such accusations throw up questions with respect to dominant academic thinking on ‘power’, which, despite the post-modern critical re-analysis of ‘racism’, appears to have slipped through the net. I demonstrated how the ideological framework ‘perpetrator = powerful : victim = powerless’ is too one dimensional to convey the political reality, where, in this era of ‘ethno-politics’, targeted funding, ‘anti-racism’, and political correctness, ‘power’ can be created in and through accusations of ‘racism’ and victimhood more generally.

Finally, through this chapter I revealed an inherent contradiction in the politics of ‘racism’ in the modern world. As Lentin and McVeigh (2006:170) point out, in Irish society, we live in a world where ‘we are all anti-racist now’. We all turn out heads in disgust and disbelief at neo-Nazi rhetoric, discretely turn our heads at any form of “‘common” racism’, and claim ‘some of our best friends are black’. Yet, I have cited enough instances of ‘state racism’ and ‘popular racism’ (in terms of dominant academic definitions of ‘racism’) to argue that these are not exceptions to the rule. There is evidence that Ireland (the state and society in general) does encompass ‘racism’. Despite this, however, I am reluctant to go to the other extreme and conclude that ‘we are all racists now’. Rather, I feel that, as Katz et al. (1986, cited in Wetherell & Potter 1992:196) argued with respect to white America,
[It is not that the Irish] are essentially and fundamentally racist at heart and have learnt to disguise their prejudice, merely paying ‘lip service’ to equality and fair play in order to fake social desirability; rather... there is a genuine ambivalence here, a genuine conflict of emotions, values and reason.

The fact that there is such a discrepancy among the three discourses on ‘racism’ (academic, state, and popular) with respect to what actually constitutes ‘racism’, let alone what its causes are, means that there is always an alternative perspective to throw back at accusations of ‘racism’. Indeed, even this implies a strategic mindset that does not appear to exist. Such alternative perspectives are not decoys or tactical manoeuvres to get away with ‘racism’. They are often the result of the divergence in the ‘realities’ that the state and society have constructed for themselves. According to these ‘realities’, many of the ‘racisms’ which academic discourse accuses the state or society in general of perpetrating, are simply commonsense responses to the world in which we live.

It is here that ‘anti-racism’ perhaps faces its biggest obstacle – in order to challenge ‘racism’, the different discourses on ‘racism’ must first of all converge. However, as unusual as this may sound considering my own status, I do not believe that this means that the state and general public must simply face the ‘truth’/‘reality’ as conveyed through academic discourse. Indeed, throughout this thesis, I have revealed academia as just another player in the construction of ‘racism’. Of course, we must contribute our expert knowledge to the mix, and indeed, encourage states and the general public towards our informed stance. However, on the other hand, in the short-term at least, in order to actually make a difference in terms of ‘anti-racism’, we must appreciate the pragmatics of modernity, and attempt to work within that. The world-system of nation-states may be inherently ‘racist’ (see Section 1.1). The EU may be a ‘racist’ structure. And, immigration and citizenship laws may be ‘racist’. But while basking in our self allocated superiority in arguing this, we must not delimit our thinking and action to the ultimate deconstruction of the modern world system. While working ‘on’ states, in terms of getting them familiar with, and getting them to appreciate, academic discourse on ‘racism’, we must also work ‘with’ states by showing some appreciation of the
pragmatics of the position they hold and job they do. Essentially, we must present ‘racism’ in all its complexity, and help produce ‘anti-racisms’ that mirror this.
Conclusion

In and through this thesis I aimed to contribute to knowledge on ‘racism’ in general and on ‘working-class’ ‘racism’ in Ballybane, Galway and Ireland in particular. More significantly, however, my mission throughout was to contribute to ‘anti-racism’ – to provide knowledge which can be applied by those attempting ‘anti-racism’ (whether state or non-state actors) to make such processes more effective and successful. In accordance with this, in this conclusion, as well as outlining my research findings and conclusions, I discuss what they mean for ‘anti-racism’ in general and ‘anti-racism’ in Ireland in particular.

I began this thesis by critically reviewing the extensive field of academic discourse on ‘racism’. This analysis constituted both an integral part of, and a necessary prelude to, my research findings and the conclusions I drew from these. I revealed that two equations essentially summarise dominant academic thinking surrounding ‘racism’ in the contemporary era: ‘racism = racialisation/ethnicisation + exclusion/denigration’; and ‘racism = power (the power to exclude/denigrate) + prejudice (prejudice based on racialised/ethnicised identity)’. I then illustrated that, according to these equations, ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’, and even ‘racism’, is inherent in the dominant discourses on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity in Ireland.

Academic discourses on ‘racism’

The central tenet in both these dominant academic equations – ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ (processes which are arguably the same bar the explicit terms and basis of their naturalisation) - emerged out of the realisation that ‘race’ is not a natural category. It is an imagined grouping or social construct. While some academics (e.g., Miles 1989) continue to argue that such imagining or construction must have a biological, or even somatic or phenotypical, basis, others (e.g., Goldberg 1993, 1999) argue that the ‘naturalisation of culture’ alone is enough. Such naturalisation involves the construction
of ‘culture’ as a fixed, enduring and predisposed destiny which wholly determines the behaviour of those encompassed by it, essentially rendering them a ‘community’. Significantly, this kind of imagining is contrary to the dominant academic theories on ‘culture’ and ‘community’. Therein, ‘culture’ is conceptualised as a fluid and more or less consciously constructed complex whole. Indeed, more accurately, it is conceptualised as a process (of meaning making) rather than a real thing (see Kuper 1999:210). Similarly, ‘community’ is conceptualised in constructivist and symbolic terms, and, as such, is seen as diverse and malleable (Cohen 1985:108-109).

The ‘culture’ based conceptualisation of ‘racialisation’ appears to represent the dominant one in academic discourses on ‘racism’. However, in many respects, this shaking up of ‘racism’s’ theoretical foundations created a void of confusion in terms of differentiating between ‘racialisation’ and other processes of identity construction which also involve naturalisation (for instance, the construction of gender and sexual identities). Goldberg (1993, 1999) attempted to reduce the confusion by arguing that what renders a process ‘racialist’ is that the object is constructed in ‘race’ terms. However, because of the tautology involved, and, accordingly, the fact that his conception of ‘race’ lacks an ontological basis, Anthias (1995) argued that he actually adds to the confusion. ‘Racism’ in the contemporary era, she argued, should be limited to situations involving ‘the naturalisation of ethnic groupings’ (a process I have referred to as ‘ethnicisation’). In line with Anthias, as I describe in chapter five, academic discussions of ‘racism’ in the contemporary era, are certainly not limited to situations where the object of denigration and/or exclusion is constructed in explicitly ‘race’ terms. Indeed, even in the International Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination [ICERD]; ‘race’ is named as only one of the possible terms of ‘racism’. Others terms named are ‘colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin’ (Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination [CERD] 1969, Article 1). Academic discourses on ‘racism’, in other words, appear to stretch ‘racism’ beyond Goldberg’s confines.
Of course, an important point to make in terms of Anthias’s ‘ethnic’-based conceptualisation of ‘racism’ is that, according to the now dominant constructivist theory on ‘ethnicity’ (influenced by Barth 1969 & 1994; Anderson 1983; Hobsbawm & Ranger 1983; and Cohen 1985) ‘ethnicity’, no less than ‘race’, is an imagined or mental construct. Further, for a group to constitute an ‘ethnic’ group it need not be constructed in explicitly ‘ethnic’ terms. A foundation of ‘ethnicity’ may be implicated in several processes of identity construction, including ‘nationalism’. In light of this, as Gilroy argues, ‘we increasingly face a racism which avoids being recognised as such because it is able to link “race” with nationhood, patriotism, and nationalism, a racism which has taken a necessary distance from crude ideas of biological inferiority and superiority and now seeks to present an imaginary definition of the nation as a unified cultural community’ (1992:53). Accordingly, even with Anthias’s attempts at particularising ‘racism’ in terms of ‘ethnic’ groupings it remains embedded within a confusing and complex ideological context. Within this context, and as the definition of ‘racism’ encoded in the ICERD implies, the boundaries between ‘racism’, ‘ethnocentrism’, ‘ethnic discrimination’ and ‘nationalism’, have been blurred, confused, and, in many contexts, even erased.

Not deterred by the confusion and complexity, for many academics (including Rattansi [1994] and Goldberg [1999]), the shake-up of the ontological foundations of ‘racism’ marked a welcome end to grand theorising and the beginning of poststructuralist deconstruction and analytical engagement with context. Indeed, it was in the spirit of such poststructuralist deconstruction and analysis that I approached my research and grounded this thesis.

**The dominant discourses on racial and ethnic identity in Ireland**

I structured my research findings in terms of the main configuration of the dominant discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity in contemporary Ireland. Such discourse constructs three separate ‘communities’, each one bounded and internally homogeneous
– the Traveller ‘community’, the Immigrant ‘community’ and the Settled Irish ‘community’.

Within this dominant framework, in many (even most) contexts, I describe how the Immigrant ‘community’ is further deconstructed into two essentialist, homogeneous and bounded ‘communities’ usually ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised along the lines of ‘Black immigrant=African=Refugee=Asylum Seeker=Non-EU=Non-Worker’ and ‘White, foreign accented immigrant=Eastern European=Migrant Worker’. Similarly, I describe how the Traveller ‘community’ is often deconstructed into ‘Settled Travellers’ and ‘Transient Travellers’. In summary, I describe how, while, together, the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’ and the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’, make up the Immigrant ‘community’ writ large, and, accordingly, are essentially ‘other’ to ‘the Irish’ ‘community’, in some contexts, the imagined differences between the two allow social and mental discrimination in terms of one or other being constructed as more or less ‘other’ than its counterpart or even the Immigrant ‘community’ writ large. Similarly, while ‘Settled Travellers’ and ‘Transient Travellers’ together make up the Traveller ‘community’ writ large, and, accordingly, are essentially ‘other’ to the Settled Irish ‘community’, in some contexts, the imagined differences between the two, allow social and mental discrimination in terms of one or other being constructed as more or less ‘other’ than its counterpart or even the Traveller ‘community’ writ large.

Significantly, rather than de-legitimising the integrity of the Immigrant ‘community’ and Traveller ‘community’ constructs, I explain that these disaggregated constructs exist alongside them. Indeed, because they represent alternative configurations of the dominant ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity, they demonstrate its malleability and reinforce its central logic – the reification and naturalisation of ‘culture’ and the essentialisation and homogenisation of ‘community’ based on possession of this.

A central issue here is that, rather than being descriptive of different sections of the population in Ireland, these ‘communities’ are social or mental identity constructions.
Accordingly, the Traveller ‘community’ is not necessarily a good representation of the Traveller population in Ireland (or, indeed, the majority thereof). Similarly, the Immigrant ‘community’ does not correlate with the immigrant population. Indeed, as I explained in section 4.3, while immigrants from the pre-2004 fifteen EU States, and from Australia, New Zealand and North America, are all present as immigrant workers in Ireland in relatively large numbers, they are invisible in terms of the Immigrant ‘community’ construct. At the same time, black Irish nationals are often drawn in by virtue of the ‘otherness’/‘foreignness’ implied in their skin-colour.

In two separate chapters, I focused on the Traveller ‘community’ and the Immigrant ‘community’, in turn. Because the construction of each of these communities involves a dialectic process within which the construction of the Settled Irish or ‘the Irish’ ‘community’ is inherent, my analysis of this ‘community’ emerges within both chapters, (in terms of what the other is not). Within each chapter, I looked at how these ‘communities’ emerged, and the forces that now maintain them in their current form. Most importantly, I illustrated that, according to the dominant academic discourses on ‘racism’, this current form is ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’, and often even ‘racist’. I looked at the dominant terms (whether ‘biological’, ‘racial’, ‘cultural’, ‘ethnic’, ‘national’) in which each ‘community’ is imagined/constructed in different contexts, identified the various players implicated in these constructions, and discussed the incentives involved in what is essentially a game of identity politics.

In the case of the Traveller ‘community’, I described how their essential oneness is based largely on a conceptualisation of common origins and possession of a common ‘culture’. I explained that the exact timing and circumstances in which Travellers originated are disputed, and how, in many cases, different versions explain the contemporary terms of ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’, or, indeed, whether Travellers are now constructed in ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ terms at all. For instance, when the state introduced its first Traveller settlement policy in the 1960s, it maintained that Travellers were the descendants of peasants dispossessed during the famine, and therefore that settlement actually meant returning them to their natural state - Settled. Huge opposition
from within the communities where settlement was proposed, however, reflected a much more essentialist construction of Traveller identity in popular discourse. Within this discourse, even if Traveller origins were situated in the famine, the effects of dispossession on Traveller ‘culture’ and identity were seen as irrevocable. Accordingly, assimilation was deemed impossible.

Today, the state uses this same version of Traveller origins (that they emerged during the *Great Famine*) as one factor legitimising its denial of Traveller ‘ethnic’ status. According to this historicisation, Travellers and settled people in Ireland descended from a single point, and emerged as different only relatively recently. Contemporary differences are accordingly interpreted as cultural adaptations to unfortunate circumstances, not as something essential. The state has further supported its position with respect to Traveller ‘ethnicity’ by drawing on a number of atypical pieces of academic work on Traveller identity (i.e., McCarthy 1972, cited in Equality Authority 2006; and McLoughlin 1994). Based on this supporting evidence, in its first Report to the CERD, it argued that ‘Travellers do not constitute a distinct group from the population as a whole in terms of race, colour descent or national or ethnic origin’ (Government of Ireland 2004:90, cited in McVeigh 2007:98-99).

The TAOs use an alternative version of Traveller origins in their call for state acknowledgement of Traveller ‘ethnic’ status. They construct Travellers as descendants of pre-historic metal working tribes [Pavee Point 2005a:12]) and thereby suggest an essentialness and naturalness that challenges the state’s construction. They also highlight the contradiction in the state’s discourse based on the implication of essential difference (between the Traveller ‘community’ and the Settled ‘community’) in its policies on Traveller health and education. Finally, they draw on the wider body of academic work on Travellers which overwhelmingly supports the claim to Traveller ‘ethnic’ status. Within such work, this claim is legitimised both in terms of the dominant academic
definitions of ‘ethnicity’ (Gmelch and Gmelch 1976; Ní Shuinear 1994) and in terms of the dominant legal definition of ‘ethnicity’ (McVeigh 2007).

More generally, the dominant discursive construction of Travellers in the contemporary era appears little changed since the 1960s. The Traveller ‘community’ is ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ primarily in ‘cultural’ terms. Travellers are seen as forming a ‘community’ by virtue of possessing Traveller ‘culture’, and, tautologically, Traveller ‘culture’ is seen as something Travellers possess by virtue of belonging to the Traveller ‘community’. Traveller ‘culture’, further, is reified in terms of a short and largely static list of visible manifestations: nomadism; the existence of a Traveller economy characterised by a particular business style and particular occupations; and the importance placed on extended family in business, social and marriage relations. While ‘culture’ in these terms is generally seen as something one is born and socialised into rather than something biologically determined, it is no less essentialised or naturalised for this. As essentially social beings, we are seen as wholly determined by our socialisation into a particular ‘culture’.

One thing that emerged as particularly significant about the discursive construction of the Travellers was the effectiveness of such discourse in creating or maintaining the ‘community’ so constructed. After forty years of attempted assimilation, though the vast majority of Travellers are now relatively settled in physical terms, the Irish Traveller ‘community’ and the Settled Irish ‘community’ are no closer together. My research revealed, however, that this is not because of any essence of difference, but rather because of the construction of difference. As one informant pointed out, even when actively attempting to ‘pass’, when living a relatively Settled lifestyle in a relatively Settled area of the city, ‘Travellers are not allowed to be anything else.’ Because of the ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ inherent in the dominant discourse on ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’

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235 In the latter context the definition is drawn from the British and Northern Irish context because there is no definition of ‘ethnicity’ in Irish law.
identity, permanent ‘passing’ is usually simply not possible. Indeed, tautologically, this helps explain the relative stability of the dominant discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity, and, perhaps more importantly, points to the mammoth task that ‘anti-racism’ faces if it attempts to attack the ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ ingredient in ‘racism’.

In the case of the Immigrant ‘community’, I discovered that on the one hand, it is constructed as essentially non-national/non-Irish, or, based on the exclusion of Western immigrants from this construct, foreign, unfamiliar, and, by extension, threatening. On the other hand, this ‘community’ is often deconstructed into the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’ and the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’. While both these ‘communities’ are constructed as ‘other’ in terms of ‘the Irish’, their otherness is conceptualised in different terms.

The Black/African Immigrant ‘community’ is constructed most explicitly in ‘race’ terms. Individuals situated therein have black skin, and ‘cultural’ difference (that is difference in relation to ‘the Irish’, ‘Europeans’, ‘Westerners’, or, more generally, ‘people with white skin’) is assumed to essentially emanate from this, or, at least, is symbolised by it. However, in some contexts, because of historicisations of ‘the Irish’ in terms of ‘forced/political emigration’ and also ‘racist’ victimhood, an identity bridge is constructed between these two constructs.

The Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’ is constructed most explicitly in ‘ethnic’ terms. Their otherness is directly linked to a number of visible manifestations of their ‘culture’ – their foreign language and accent, and their poor driving skills and bad driving habits. Again, however, in some contexts, because of historicisations of ‘the Irish’ as economic emigrants, one aspect of Eastern European Immigrant ‘culture’ is drawn on to create an identity bridge between these two constructs. This aspect is a

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236 The evidence also suggests that this situation is not new. In the Report of the Commission on Itinerancy (1963:103), it states, ‘The attitude of the settled population in so far as itinerants are concerned is not confined to those on the road. It has been brought to the Commission’s attention that some families of itinerant extraction who have managed to settle in different areas are still, often scornfully, known as “tinkers”, even in succeeding generations.’
strong ‘work ethic’. Eastern European Immigrants, while derided in most contexts and in most respects, are exalted in terms of their reputation for hard work, a characteristic which ‘the Irish’ also apply to themselves. Black/African Immigrants, in contrast, are conceptualised as lazy and as spongers (a reputation not helped by the state’s policy denying asylum seekers the right to work, and condemning them to direct provision). Accordingly, their otherness is reinforced in these terms. Of course, paradoxically, in another respect, as I discussed in chapter five, both these Immigrant ‘communities’ are denigrated in these terms – Eastern European Immigrants because of the threat they pose to Irish jobs, and Black African Immigrants because of the threat they pose to the Irish welfare system.

Significantly, while the dominant discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity in Ireland lumps together a diversity of people under the identity banners ‘Immigrant’, ‘Black/African Immigrant’ or ‘Eastern European Immigrant’, those situated within these constructs usually emphasise diversity, albeit often in equally ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ terms. For instance, most of my Immigrant informants constructed themselves, first and foremost, in national terms (that is, in terms of their country of origin). Beyond this, some define themselves in terms of region (north European instead of Eastern European in terms of Latvians) and others in terms of religion (e.g., Catholic or Pentecostal). Finally, in the case of immigrants from Nigeria, rather than ‘national’ terms, identity was constructed primarily in tribal or ‘ethnic’ terms.

This differential between identity assertion and identity ascription can be explained by the fact that those situated within the Immigrant ‘community’/‘communities’ have carried alternative (yet often equally ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’) discourses on ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ identity with them from whatever part of the world they originated. In other words, these differences reflect differences in the way ‘races’ and ‘ethnicities’ are seen. Explaining this in more general terms, Jacobson argues,

The eye that sees is a means of perception conditioned by the tradition in which its possessor has been reared. The American eye sees a certain person as black, for instance, whom Haitian or Brazilian eyes
might see as white. Similarly an earlier generation of Americans saw Celtic, Hebrew, Anglo-Saxon, or Mediterranean physiognomies where today we see only subtly varying shades of a mostly undifferentiated whiteness (1998:9-10).

From my analysis of both the Traveller ‘community’ and the Immigrant ‘community’ I revealed an important connection between the construction of the Settled Irish ‘community’ and the construction of ‘the Irish (national) community’. The essential othering of Travellers (discussed in Chapter 3), for instance, revealed that in nationalist discourse the Settled Irish are constructed as synonymous with ‘the Irish’; Settled Irish ‘culture’ is constructed as synonymous with the national ‘culture’; and, by extension, Settled Irish identity is constructed as synonymous with ‘Irishness’ (a term encompassing both ‘Irish culture’ and ‘Irish identity’ as though the two were synonymous). In other words, while dominant discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity constructs Travellers as both Irish and a minority ‘ethnic’ group, paradoxically, in most general and descriptive contexts there is no trace of Traveller identity in the dominant construction of ‘the Irish’/‘Irishness’.

This exclusivist element in ‘Irishness’ has been revealed most starkly since ‘the immigration turn’ in the 1990s. With this demographic change came ideological change. Having lain dormant for over fifty years (i.e., since Ireland became a Republic 1937), with this new ‘threat’, nationalism suddenly came to the forefront in both state and popular discourse on immigration. Further, this nationalism was narrow and essentialist. It constructed ‘the nation’ in mono-cultural terms (denying Traveller identity and ‘culture’ [let alone that of all the other national cultural minorities] a place therein). In essence it constituted ‘ethno-nationalism’.237

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237 This construction of ‘the Irish’ in such ‘mono-cultural’ terms can only be legitimised and maintained by ignoring aspects of Ireland’s history that reveal its cultural heterogeneity. This history includes: invasion and settlement; pre-1990s immigration (particularly of British people, but also, over the years, of Jewish, Vietnamese and Bosnian refugees); the existence of Travellers; political partition between Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic; and, by extension, division of the pre-Independence construct ‘the Irish’ (Hickman 2007).
With the outcome of the 2004 Citizenship Referendum, and the subsequent change to Ireland’s citizenship legislation, the construction of ‘the Irish’/‘Irishness’ took on even more exclusivist terms. Essentially, it took the differential between ‘blood’ based ‘nationality’ (enshrined within the *jus sanguinis* principle) and ‘soil’ based ‘nationality’ (enshrined within the *jus soli* principle), and demoted the latter (placing on it certain conditions). The implication in this is that ‘ancestry’ (in this context, generally, associated with the biological process of procreation and the sharing of ‘blood’ implicated in this) is considered a more indisputable, and, by implication, a more essential and natural marker of ‘Irishness’ than residence, birthright, material engagement, social interaction, and even constitutionally granted membership in ‘the nation’.

**Dealing with specifics in a world filled with flux**

Even these brief summaries clearly demonstrate that the construction of these three ‘communities’ in and through the dominant discourse on ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ identity involves the naturalisation of group relations. However, because the terms in which the Traveller ‘community’, the Immigrant ‘community/ies’, and the Settled Irish ‘community’ are naturalised are complex, contextually dependent, and often ambiguous, it is virtually impossible to determine whether Goldberg’s (‘racialisation’) version or Anthias’ (‘ethnicisation’) version of such naturalisation more accurately describes the processes of construction in general. Indeed, even in a particular context, or in terms of a particular ‘community’, both versions may be applicable depending on perspective.

With respect to the Settled Irish ‘community’, when confronted actually or ideologically by Irish Travellers it emerges in ‘ethnic’ terms (they are Ireland’s majority ethnic group). In contexts where the dominant other is the Immigrant ‘community’ (as a whole), on the other hand, it is constructed in largely national terms (they are ‘the Irish’). At the more dis-aggregated level, with respect to the Black/African Immigrant ‘community’, ‘racial’, or even more precisely somatic, terms come into play (if only as
symbolic of essential ‘cultural’ difference), and, with respect to the Eastern European Immigrant ‘community’, because, like ‘the Irish’, they are perceived as generally having white skin, ‘ethnic’ terms usually come into play (with particular focus placed on ‘cultural’ differences). Finally, though dominant discourse generally constructs the Traveller ‘community’ in ‘ethnic’ terms (based mainly on essential ‘culture’ differences), when most of my Travellers themselves construct Traveller identity they used terms which have ‘racial’ connotations. For instance, most of my Traveller informants emphasised the importance of ‘blood’ in determining who is and who is not a Traveller. When probed, ‘blood’ emerged as a euphemism for ‘ancestry’, but, in turn, ‘ancestry’ was conceptualised in biological and procreative terms.

Adding even more complexity and ambiguity, the evidence also suggests that, rather than new contexts rendering the terms of identity dominant in the past obsolete, for each of these ‘communities’ there exists a palimpsest of ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ identity (Jacobson 1998). Accordingly, identity ascriptions, perceptions and subjectivities existent in any particular context, even if they change or are replaced, remain below the surface, preserved and ready to be re-highlighted in other contexts should the circumstances deem it politically, socially, economically or emotively advantageous.

While such complexity and ambiguity is not unique to Ireland, the Irish experience of ‘race’ and ‘racism’ has certainly rendered it exceptional. In terms of Irish ‘anti-racism’ this means that the definition of ‘racism’ encoded in ‘anti-racism’ legislation and policy must allow for this degree of fluidity, complexity and ambiguity. As Goldberg (1993:214) argues, ‘resistance to racisms, if it is ultimately to make a difference, must assume any and every form taken on by racist expressions and exclusions in these social relations.’ The problem with this, however, is that, in pragmatic terms, the law is not suited to fluidity, flexibility and ambiguity. It works on precise definitions and certainties. Indeed, it is for this reason that anti- Traveller discrimination is not protected against under the ICERD. Even though the list of bases of ‘racism’ protected under this legislation is relatively extensive, Travellers simply do not fit into any of them. Of course, such pragmatics does not exonerate the state from trying to engage with these
issues. But, at the same time, academics need to constructively engage with this political/legislative reality rather than standing outside of it pointing at its shortcomings.

**The power of the people**

In his depiction of identity politics among various ‘ethnic minority communities’ living in the Southall area of London in the 1980s and 1990s, Baumann (1996) implies that the dominant discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity is produced at the national level and then filtered down to the local level where it is either accepted or denied, and that its ‘chief protagonists’ are state actors and institutions (see Section 1.2). Somewhat contrary to this, in this thesis I revealed that, in Ireland at least, there exists a complex scenario where all the players in identity politics are interdependent in terms of gathering support for, and therefore legitimising, the discourse they produce. In reality, politicians and policy makers, first, are individuals who are socialised into Irish society and Irish ‘culture’, and, second, must acknowledge and act upon popular discourse if they hope to be re-elected as representatives in the future. Indeed, if anything, this level of interdependence is increasing in today’s world where social movements have become more powerful in terms of influencing state discourse; where community consultation has become something of a political buzzword; and where many state institutions now have offices in local neighbourhoods. Accordingly, although, admittedly, state discourse is given a degree of authority in some contexts where discourse on ‘racial’ and ‘ethnic’ identity is produced or maintained, it is almost impossible to ascertain whether the state ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’ (or ‘racism’) is independent and primary, or whether it is merely reflecting, or reflective of, ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’ (or ‘racism’) within the state.238

I highlighted a number of occasions where this chicken and egg scenario existed or exists: in the state’s use of targeted policy in dealing with Travellers (and in the sphere

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238 As well as questioning the independence of the state in producing the dominant ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identities, in and through this thesis, I also questioned the existence of ‘the state’ in any bounded and unified terms. Throughout, I demonstrated that the state is made up of many arms, departments, institutions and individuals, and, therefore, to refer to it in reified terms, let alone to refer to it as ‘racialist’ or ‘racist’ per se, is something of a simplification.
of ‘ethno-politics’ more generally); during the debate leading up to, and in the outcome resulting from, the 2004 Citizenship Referendum; and finally in the format of the newly introduced ethnic and cultural background question in the 2006 Census.

The power of the people (i.e., popular discourse) was evident as far back as the 1960s when the state attempted to implement the first version of its Traveller settlement policy. At that time, while the state argued that Travellers were not essentially different from the rest of the population, and, accordingly, could be assimilated into the Settled ‘community’ simply by adopting a settled lifestyle, the amount and nature of public opposition to this plan suggests that this logic was not shared by the people. The public, it appears, even then, constructed Travellers as essentially/naturally different and therefore unassimilable. And, more significantly, it appears that it was because of opposition by the people that state policy was gradually adapted (at least in limited terms). In Galway, for instance, some Traveller-specific accommodation was provided, and, though it was intended and presented as an interim measure, similar housing projects still exist today, not only in Galway but throughout Ireland. Further, Traveller-specific services and policies have also been applied to the fields of state education, health, and even training and enterprise. Despite still formally denying any essential difference between Travellers and the Settled Irish in the ‘ethnic’ status debate, therefore, state discourse on Traveller identity in most general and descriptive contexts now reflects the ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse on Travellers dominant in popular discourse.

In the realm of ‘ethno-politics’ more generally, there is no denying the state’s influence. In Ireland today, the state’s method of resource distribution, political engagement and even cultural protection is based on ‘community’ identity. This, in turn, has created a situation of strategic jockeying in terms of identity formation. Individuals who may not have identified in particular ‘community’ terms are encouraged to do so (to ‘self-racialise’/‘self-ethnicise’) by the economic and political rewards.
Of course, it is too easy to simply blame the state for the ‘racialism’/’ethnicism’ that appears to be inherent in the field of ‘ethno-politics’. While the economic and political incentives dangled by the state make asserting one’s identity in ‘community’ terms appealing, as Ronit Lentin (2002:232) (citing McVeigh [1998:25 & 1992:41]) argues, ‘Irish racism has its basis in the strength of community in Ireland. This strength developed in a rural setting but has been reworked in an urban environment… [W]ithin the warmth of the community, outsiders have always been perceived as profoundly problematic.’ Similarly, Tovey and Share claim that “[c]ommunity is a popular word in Ireland. We like to think of our society as made up of communities and permeated by a spirit of community. Public discussions assume communities are good and desirable forms of social organisation’ (2000:334). Indeed, they argue, ‘our community is part of our image of Irishness, reflected in literature, media and politics’ (ibid). Admittedly, in the era of ‘ethno-politics’, ‘communities’ may be constructed in more bounded, homogeneous, competitive and exclusivist terms than previously, but it is arguably the fact that the ideological foundations of ‘community’ identity already existed that explains why this model became dominant.

Of course, another issue here is that identity assertion is not just about strategic jockeying. There is an emotive dimension to ‘community’ identity construction that cannot be overlooked. As Song (2003:53) argues, this dimension is usually particularly important for minorities ‘when they may not be accorded a sense of full membership in the wider society.’ For them, an essentialist ‘community’ identity can provide a ‘sense of belonging’ and a ‘sense of security’. In Ireland, however, I found evidence of this dimension, not only among individuals situated within the Immigrant ‘community/ies’ (for instance, in the focus on ‘mother Africa’ during the Miss Ebony pageant) and the Traveller ‘community’ (for instance, in the pride in the vocal tone by one informant when he described his girlfriend as ‘Knacker to the bone’), but also in nationalist discourse in general (particularly since ‘the immigration turn’ when protecting ‘our culture’ has come to the fore in popular discourse). This emotive dimension to ‘racialism’/’ethnicism’, therefore, suggests that the state’s method of resource
distribution, political engagement and even cultural protection may be reflective rather than constructive of ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ within the state.

From the perspective of nationalism (or ‘ethno-nationalism’ as it appears to manifest in the Irish context in most general and descriptive contexts), again, while the state’s role in terms of enacting citizenship legislation suggests its primacy in the ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’, arguably, inherent therein in this era of nation states (see Section 1.1), the limits of its power in this respect were revealed by the Citizenship Referendum. While politicians did take advantage of their access to public forums such as the media to disseminate ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ (and ‘racist’) discourse during the debate leading up to the referendum, the fact that it was required before the state could implement this change to citizenship legislation, in itself, demonstrates the power that the people have in constructing ‘the nation’ and ‘national (and by implication non-national) identity’, not only in ideological, but in actual terms.

Finally, I discussed the power of the people specifically with respect to the newly introduced ‘ethnic and cultural background’ question in the 2006 national census. While I constructed an argument in support of Ronit Lentin’s (2006) categorisation of the census as just another ‘state racialising technology’, I also highlighted the part played by popular discourse in the construction of this question. I noted that many people, including many individuals from ‘ethnic’ minorities, supported the inclusion of this question on the basis that it allowed for an ‘ethnic’ conception of ‘Irishness’ to be combined with different ‘races’. Further, despite the fact that ‘the question was formed... with little or no consultation with the racialised and with immigrants’ (King-O’Riain 2006:282), and it received some public critique, while previous formats were rejected after pilot testing in 1999, this format passed the pilot testing stage. This itself suggests that it was deemed meaningful, or at least acceptable (with respect to self-definition), by a representative sample of the resident population.

These conclusions are important because they demonstrate that effective ‘anti-racism’ must attack ‘racism’ from multiple directions and at multiple levels. The state (in many
of its guises) must be targeted along with civil society. ‘Structural racism’ must be targeted at the same time as ‘everyday racism’ and ‘institutional racism’, and local level ‘racist’ discourse must be targeted at the same time as national level ‘racist’ discourse. Indeed, although somewhat outside the limits of my research, having investigated discrimination and prejudice against ‘ethnic’ minorities in Romania in a more expansive context than I did, Aluas and Matei (1998:106) suggest that not two but three realms of discourse interact to produce ‘racist’ outcomes - international public opinion, the national state, and civil society. While further research would be needed to test the relevance of this argument to the Irish context, it suggests that ‘anti-racism’ may be facing an even bigger battle than I have described here.

**Targeting ‘racism’ using ‘racialised’/‘ethnicised’ terms**

As described above, according to academic discourse on ‘racism’ there are two common processes inherent in all ‘racisms’: ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ and ‘exclusion and/or denigration’. Accordingly, ‘racism’ should be effectively challenged by removing just one of the two necessary elements. In Ireland, *Equal Status* (proxy ‘anti-racism’) legislation (see Section 5.2) and Intercultural policy (see Section 4.2) targets the ‘exclusion and/or denigration’ element. However, in attempting this, it generally uses ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse. In section 4.2, for instance, I described how within the NAPR, in order to demonstrate Ireland’s multicultural character, the Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform (DJELR) lists a number of ‘cultures’ that, it implies, belong to correlating bounded and homogenous ‘communities’. It is such ‘cultures’/‘communities’, it claims, that are to be respected and protected in and through the policy (2005:40).  

As discussed in section 1.1, however, there is an ongoing debate in academia on the merits and disadvantages of such an approach.

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239 By constructing ‘cultures’ and ‘communities’ in this way (as static and already there, and by constructing ‘communities’ in ‘culturalist’ terms), the DJELR is ignoring the fact that (according to contemporary dominant academic thinking) ‘culture’ is not static or essentialist but ‘a set of fluid and shifting discourses and practices’ (R. Lentin 2001:9), and ‘communities’ are malleable mental and
Some (e.g., Anthias 1995, Goldberg 1993) argue that ‘racism’ is best challenged by ‘standing inside the categories of racial Othing’ (Goldberg 1993:230). This approach, proponents argue, can ‘constitute a form of resistance and a means of countering denigrating... discourses, and infusing subordinate groups with some degree of power, self esteem and dignity’ (Song 2003:160). However, even where this approach is recommended, inherent dangers are often admitted and warned against. Goldberg, for instance, while arguing that it is not ‘racial’ discourse that is the core of ‘racism’ but ‘the exclusions it sustains, prompts, promotes, and extends’, admits that, paradoxically, this approach is open to accusations of challenging ‘racism’ with ‘racism’ (1993:211).

In terms of the case against the use of ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse in ‘anti-racism’ it is argued that this involves ‘anticipating racist acts and reifying them in advance along racial lines’ (King-O’dRiain 2006:283). In effect, such discourse, it is argued, could serve to reproduce what it criticises (Gilroy 1992) (see Section 1.1). In the Irish context, this argument runs as follows - by explicitly naming a series of reified and essentialised minority ‘cultural communities’ (as in the NAPR), or, directing protection at ‘communities’ constructed in specific terms (e.g., in terms of ‘race’, ‘ethnic or national origin’, ‘nationality’, ‘colour’, ‘religion’, or ‘membership of Travelling community’ in the case of the Anti-hatred legislation, or in terms of one of the nine grounds in the case of the Equal Status legislation), Ireland’s NAPR and proxy ‘anti-racism’ legalisation encourage, perpetuate, and even necessitate identity assertion in ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ terms among theirs users.

symbolic constructions, not ahistorical, static, bounded and homogeneous (Cohen 1985).

It is in this respect that Gilroy (2000:11) argues that ‘anti-racisms’ need to renounce and denaturalise ‘race’ (see Section 1.1).

Interestingly, Kuper (1999:xiii) points out that a policy similar to the dominant kind of multicultural policy found today in many Western nations (including that inherent in the Irish state’s NAPR) was used to legitimise and implement apartheid in South Africa. He cites Eiselen (an Afrikaner intellectual who, during a lecture in 1929, argued that ‘Not race but culture was the true basis of difference, the sign of destiny. And, cultural differences were to be valued’ (Kuper’s gloss). As such, ‘Eiselen recommended that government policy should be aimed at fostering “higher Bantu culture and not producing black Europeans.” Later, the slogan “separate development” was used. Segregation was the proper course for South Africa, because only segregation would preserve cultural differences.’
Interestingly, the DJELR attempts to avoid the applicability of this criticism to the NAPR by adding the following footnote after its definition of ‘racism’: ‘This Plan rejects the existence of different races but accepts that the term ‘race’ continues to be applied in a legal context at international and national levels’ (2005:38). However, despite this attempt at exoneration, ultimately, by not criticising or actually moving away from such ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse, it is guilty nonetheless.

Another criticism of the use of ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ discourse in ‘anti-racism’ which can be applied to the Irish context is that by bestowing on the ‘cultural communities’ so named the right to respect and protection from ‘racist’ discrimination (in the case of ‘anti-racist’ legislation) and usurpation (in the case of Interculturalism) by ‘others’, it effectively excludes (and even denigrates as ‘racist’) such ‘others’. In other words, it is argued that, paradoxically, such exclusion/denigration in ‘race’/‘ethnic’ terms renders ‘anti-racist’ policy and legislation ‘racist’. In terms of the NAPR, for instance, in naming, and therefore targeting, a number of minority ‘ethnic’/‘racial’ ‘communities’ for protection while completely neglecting the majority Settled Irish ‘community’, it arguably implies that it is from the latter that protection and respect is needed. This constructs a dualist model where the Settled Irish are essentially the ‘perpetrators’ and the named/targeted ‘communities’ are essentially the ‘victims’ of ‘racism’.242 In this respect, Bonnett (2000:131) argues that ‘racism’ becomes divorced from the complex reality of human relations on the ground.

According to this critique, while the Settled Irish may be the main perpetrators of ‘racism’ in Ireland, if ‘anti-racism’ is to reflect the reality of ‘racism’ on the ground, this dualist picture has to be deconstructed and revealed in all this complexity and fluidity.

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242 Again, this critique is not unique to this context. In Britain in the 1980s, for instance, the Burnage Report (published in the aftermath of what was believed to be a ‘racially’ motivated murder of a 13 year old Asian student by another student in a Manchester school) identified the typecasting of white working-class pupils and parents in the schools’ ‘anti-racism’ policies as central to their failure. The report concluded, ‘[I]f white students are all seen as “racist”, simply by virtue of their whiteness, then anti-racism becomes merely a “moral” or “symbolic” exercise’ (MacDonald et al. 1989:347, cited in Bonnett 2000:129). In such a situation, both the white students and their parents are made into the ‘baddies’, and feel inevitably attacked, whether they are in other perspectives committed ‘anti-racists’ or ‘fascists’.
Significantly, this includes acknowledging, and therefore protecting against, the possibility of ‘reverse racism’ (see Section 5.3).

An alternative to Ireland’s current approaches to ‘anti-racism’ would be to challenge the ‘racialisation’/‘ethnicisation’ element of ‘racism’ rather than focusing on the element of exclusion/denigration. One such approach, for instance, would be to simply ignore ‘racial’/‘ethnic’ categories. Indeed, this has been attempted in some countries (e.g., by the ANC in South Africa [Goldberg 1993], and by the French state). However, as King-O’Riain (2006:282-3) argues, ‘employing racial categories may lead to a presupposition of their non-problematic reality… but ignoring them may lead to a denial of crucial aspects of lived experience.’ For instance, there is certainly no evidence that ‘racism’, or even ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’, has disappeared (or even been reduced) from France or South Africa as the result of such policies.

Another approach is not to ignore but to interrogate and challenge ‘racial’/‘ethnic’ categories. This is the kind of approach recommended by Turner (1993:413-419). He refers to it as Critical multiculturalism and describes it as being pitched against biological determinism and every kind of essentialism. ‘Critical multiculturalists,’ he argues, ‘insist... that both culture and identity are made-up, invented, unstable discursive fabrications; [that] every culture is fragmented, internally contested, its boundaries porous’ (cited in Kuper 1999:239). Similarly, Gilroy (1992:50) argues, ‘at a theoretical level “race” needs to be viewed much more contingently, as a precarious discursive construction.’ However, a possible problem with adopting this approach in the Irish context is that it may be too late. It may involve challenging an actuality that, in pragmatic terms, because it is enshrined in so many of our social and political institutions, and ingrained in so much discourse at all levels from the International to the local, it would be almost impossible to undo, at least in the short term.

While all of this leaves us with a very negative prognosis, in a more positive light, as Lentin and McVeigh highlight, ‘the possibilities of resistance [to racism] are developing as quickly as the methodologies of subordination’ (2006:185). Further, in the space of
only twenty years or so the Irish state has gone from not even acknowledging, let alone
discussing or legislating against, ‘racism’, to a situation where it has implemented both
‘anti-racism’ legislation and policy. While its methods are often dubious, the good
intentions do appear to be there, and this leaves the way open for academics to step in
and offer ‘anti-racism’ advice instead of simply critique.

A change in perspective
Had I analysed my research results only in terms of dominant academic discourses on
‘racism’, I could easily have concluded this thesis arguing that Ireland is a ‘racist’ state,
or, at least, that ‘racism’ is endemic therein. In chapter one, I analysed a variety of
academic discourses on ‘racism’ and identified a number of dominant equations. In
chapters three and four, using these dominant equations as an ontological base, I then
illustrated that the dominant discourse on ‘ethnic’ and ‘racial’ identity in Ireland is
‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’. Finally, in chapter five I illustrated that, because in most general
and descriptive contexts implications or intentions of exclusion and/or denigration lie
behind such discourse, it was not only ‘racialist’/‘ethnicist’ but ‘racist’. Indeed,
 extending my vision beyond Ireland, at this stage, I would even have agreed with Garner
(2004) that, in the age of globalisation, capitalism and nation-states, ‘racism’ lies at the
heart of nearly all nations.

The significance of this conclusion in terms of ‘anti-racism’ is obviously huge. Garner,
for instance, points out the following catch 22:

The nation state is our doxa, limiting the spectrum of possibilities
without us being aware of it. It is the ‘natural’ unit, the territory within
which social action is to take place. Moreover, the state itself enacts
an active policy, according to Balibar (1991:93), of ‘producing the
people’. This degree of dominance in terms of organisational
possibilities is particularly damaging when the issue is one of
counteracting social forms justified by appeals to ‘nature’, as is the
case for anti-racism, since the nation state itself is one of these forms
According to this argument, ‘anti-racism’ and ‘nationalism’ in the context of nation states are completely at odds. Indeed, this corresponds with Balibar’s (1991) argument that ‘racism’ and ‘nationalism’ are ‘reciprocal determinates’ (see Section 1.1). Accordingly, to be effective, ‘anti-racism’ must act beyond the perimeters of this naturalised social and political world we inhabit. As Garner concludes, ‘Twin intertwined dominant discourses should be the target of this counter-hegemonic project: the nation state and “race”’ (2004:224).

Of course, at the heart of this conceptualisation of the relationship between ‘nationalism’ and ‘racism’ in the contemporary era is the issue of ‘power’. As Goldberg argues, it is ‘power that enable[s] the articulation of racist expression and exclusion and that promote[s] their persistence’ (1993:228). It is the most powerful ‘community’ that controls the society and the key institutions - media, education, politics; and that makes decisions about who belongs, and whose values, culture and traditions are to be recognised as central and which are to be regarded as marginal (MacEinri 2007:232-3). In accordance with this, therefore, effective ‘anti-racism’ needs to be all about the redistribution of power, and not in any tokenistic sense. Indeed, when ‘racism’ is conceptualised in these terms it becomes apparent that, rather than interrogating the power differentials inherent in ‘racism’, paradoxically, Ireland’s Intercultural approach to ‘anti-racism’ quite comfortably co-exists with ‘racism’ (Anthias & Lloyd 2002:15). Of course, Ireland also has some proxy ‘anti-racist’ (i.e., Equality) legislation, and, as my analysis of ‘power’ in this thesis demonstrates, there is definitely an element of empowerment in being able to say – you’re not allowed to do that because the law protects me. However, because this empowerment is so context dependent and limited, rather than reversing the power matrix it merely disperses power in a limited number of contexts.

Instead of concluding my research in these terms (having ingested all that academics had to say on the issue of ‘racism’ and ‘anti-racism’), however, in chapter five I resituated all this evidence of ‘racism’ from the context of academic discourse on ‘racism’ to the context of state discourse on ‘racism’ and popular discourse on ‘racism’. While, in some
respects, this caused all the arguments I had constructed, and the conclusions I had come
to, up until then to implode, in another respect it revealed an issue that became the heart
of my thesis – racism is always ‘racism’. Different discourses on ‘racism’ give ‘racism’
an ontological status, and though most discourses on ‘racism’ interconnect in some
respects, they also often diverge in significant ways.

As described in chapter one, subsequent to the discrediting of scientific ‘race theory’, the
ontological grounding of ‘race’, and therefore ‘racism’, underwent something of a
shakeup. It could have been, and, arguably, should have been, that, with the discrediting
of scientific ‘race theory’, the concept of ‘racism’ was retained in academic discourse on
‘racism’ to represent instances of discrimination based on a misguided appeal to it. But,
this did not happen. Instead, academia essentially reconstructed the term so that it
represented ‘the naturalisation of group relations in ethnic or racial terms’.

As though oblivious to this ‘shakeup’, in popular discourse, both ‘race’ and ‘racism’ are
still conceptualised in relatively definite terms. For instance, according to the dominant
popular discourses on ‘racism’ in Ireland, ‘race’ is about skin colour and phenotypical
difference more generally, and, by extension ‘racism’ is something that occurs between
people with different skin colours. Indeed, it is usually conceptualised as something that
white people do to black people. Accordingly, ‘racism’ is not seen as the best way of
describing discrimination against Travellers, Immigrants in general, or Immigrant
‘communities’ associated with having white skin in particular. Of course, one particular
element of ‘the Irish’s’ historical and even contemporary experience abroad challenges
this colour-coded conceptualisation of ‘racism’ – the phenomenon of ‘anti-Irish racism’.
Discrimination against ‘the Irish’ abroad is usually referred to in Ireland as ‘racism’.
However, in most general and descriptive contexts, this contradiction is not
acknowledged, is swept under the carpet, or is compartmentalised as referring to a
different issue in a different space and/or time.

Another significant tenet in dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’ is that ‘racism’
need not be intentional. Indeed, many (e.g., Lentin & McVeigh 2006) argue that
‘racism’ is best detected by looking for ‘racist’ outcomes. In chapter five, however, I reveal that, according to the dominant popular discourses on ‘racism’, ‘racism’ must not only be intentional, it must also be unreasonable. In cases where exclusionary or denigrating discourse can be ‘explained’ by the unreasonable actions of the victim’s ‘community’; even if the discourse also constructs this community in ‘racial’ or ‘ethnic’ terms, it is not conceptualised as ‘racism’. Indeed, even where ‘racism’ is admitted, it is often, at least partially, excused on the basis that people understandably hold these opinions about the Immigrant ‘community’ or the Traveller ‘community’ because the unacceptable behaviour of a few (‘bad eggs’) within that ‘community’ is tainting the image people have of the whole. The blame in such cases is usually transferred to the ‘bad eggs’ or even to the victim ‘community’ writ large (for not sorting these ‘bad eggs’ out themselves).

Rather than popular discourse on ‘racism’ simply de-limiting the definition of ‘racism’, in one particular respect it expanded it. According to dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’, because in most general and descriptive contexts (in the Western world at least) they do not have the power to effect change in terms of exclusion or denigration, neither minority ‘ethnic’ groups nor black people can be ‘racist’. Among my informants, however, accusations of ‘reverse racism’ (i.e., ‘anti majority racism’) were common. While such accusations do not necessarily deny the importance of power in the perpetration of ‘racism’, they essentially interrogate, and, in effect, destabilise assumptions regarding the distribution of power inherent in dominant academic theories on ‘racism’. In effect, they suggest that the power matrix in society is shifted in some contexts so that ‘whiteness’ (or ['ethnic'] majority status) does not exclusively represent powerlessness and ‘blackness’ (or ['ethnic'] minority status) powerlessness. Of course, one should not overemphasise the conflict between popular and academic discourse in this respect. In accordance with the ‘colour-coded’ aspect of popular discourse on ‘racism’, in most contexts ‘racism’ it is still seen as something white people do to black people (see Section 5.3).
In terms of state discourse on ‘racism’, there is a significant degree of inconsistency in terms of what exactly ‘racism’ is. Ireland has only proxy ‘anti-racism’ legislation, which it began ratifying in the late 1980s. The Prohibition of Incitement to Hatred Act 1989 protects individuals against incitement to hatred based on ‘race’, ‘colour’, ‘ethnic or national origins’, ‘nationality’, ‘religion’ or ‘membership of the Travelling community’. Significantly, therefore it differentiates ‘race’ from both the terms in which it was traditionally constructed (skin-colour) and the terms in which dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’ today suggests it is usually constructed (i.e., ‘ethnic’ terms). In most respects, however, it covers all the bases of ‘racial’ discourse according to dominant academic discourse. The Equality Acts, again name ‘race’ in their list of grounds protected from discrimination. Significantly, however, they leave out ‘ethnicity’, though whether this is because ‘race’ is assumed to encompass it is left unclear. Finally, the NAPR (DJELR 2005) represents the state’s most formal and explicit discourse on ‘racism’. Somewhat confusingly, however, it includes two separate definitions of ‘racism’, one which appears to limit ‘racism’ to discrimination in ‘race’ terms, and another (that encoded in the ICERD 1969) which does not.

Other than this lack of consistency in the precise ontological basis of ‘racism’, the most significant issue to emerge from my analysis of state discourse on ‘racism’ is that the notion of ‘state racism’ or ‘structural racism’, which is central to academic discourse on ‘racism’, appears to have been simply erased or denied as a possibility. Both the proxy ‘anti-racism’ legislation and the NAPR imply that ‘racism’ is something that the general public or non-state institutions perpetrate and that the state must police and control. Further, related to this, rather than something inherently connected to the distribution of power within Ireland (something in which the state is deeply implicated), ‘racism’ is conceptualised, largely, as something perpetrated due to ignorance resulting from lack of exposure to otherness. Accordingly, the state’s Interculturalist approach to ‘anti-racism’ is based on the idea that more interaction between ‘communities’ will help build better ‘community’ relations, and that greater familiarity between the ‘communities’, in turn, will help dispel the myths upon which it is believed ‘racism’ is largely based.
A large proportion of chapter five was given over to illustrating that, in accordance to the dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’ Ireland is not only a ‘racial’ state and ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’ is not only endemic in Ireland (as I demonstrated in the previous two chapters), it is also arguably a ‘racist’ state, and ‘racism’ is arguably endemic in Ireland. I illustrated this by revisiting many of the instances of ‘racialism’/‘ethnicism’ described in the previous chapters and revealing the inherent exclusion and/or denigration therein. In this respect, I discussed ‘state racism’ and ‘popular racism’ separately, and then highlighted inherent connections between them. However, at the same time as ‘proving’ the existence of such ‘racism’, paradoxically, I allowed state discourse on ‘racism’ and popular discourse on ‘racism’ to convince me that Ireland is not a ‘racist’ state, and ‘racism’ is certainly not endemic therein.

Many academics would critique my naivety in this respect. In After Optimism? Ireland, Racism and Globalisation Lentin and McVeigh argue:

It is senseless to restrict the use of the term racism to those that self-identify as ‘racist’. Using this broader definition, many of the organisations and individuals mentioned are actively racist. Their interventions are more subtly coded than they used to be - they tend not to say ‘we are racist’, but they rail against multiculturalism, against immigration, against asylum seekers, against ‘ethnics’. This is the basis on which they self-organise. More importantly, however, the term racism begins to incorporate the many people who believe that they are and/or claim to be ‘anti-racist’ (2006:170).

A similar critique is presented by Wetherell and Potter (1992:71) in terms of what they refer to as ‘sanitary coding’ – ‘the “disguise” of racism, [or more] precisely the operation of racist discourse without the category race..., without biological categorisation and the more familiar paraphernalia of “advanced” and “primitive”, “negative” and “positive”, “superior” and “inferior” distinctions.’

In essence, I agree with these arguments. It is certainly senseless to simply ignore ‘racism’ that is not admitted in these terms. However, my research suggests that perhaps this idea of ‘subtle coding’ and ‘sanitary coding’ accuses state institutions, politicians
and the general public in Ireland of a degree of manipulation and intention that is over-estimative. Certainly, there are many cases where the evidence suggests that state discourse or popular discourse on immigration, Traveller, or citizenship issues in particular contexts does involve active or intentional ‘coding’ in a bid to ‘get away with “racism”’ or avoid ‘anti-racist’ critique or reprisal. However, the evidence from this thesis suggests that in the majority of cases where such ‘coding’ ‘appears’ to exist (that is, where ‘racism’ according to dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’ is occurring but does not appear to be perceived in these terms by the perpetrator or most witnesses) it is because there is a genuine conflict in terms of what ‘racism’ is. For instance, in popular discourse, the dominant definition of ‘racism’ as something intentional and colour coded, coupled with the genuine belief in the logic and integrity of ‘blame the victim’ explanations, often leave people completely bewildered by accusations of ‘racism’.

I certainly do not believe that the ‘bad egg’ theory excuses or legitimises ‘racism’ or that ‘blaming the victim’ explains away ‘racism’. However, the evidence from this thesis illustrates that when discussing issues of ‘racism’ and conversely ‘anti-racism’, academics, state actors, and non-state actors, though not necessarily at odds, are often, if not usually, simply talking about different things, talking at tangents as they say. More importantly, the effects of this are significant in terms of ‘anti-racism’. For instance, most of my informants from within the settled Irish ‘community’ used their innocence of ‘racism’ (as constructed in and through dominant popular discourse on ‘racism’) to explain their lack of interest in the state’s NAPR, and to explain why they did not even bother to read the leaflets that were sent as part of the campaign surrounding its launch. This issue obviously must, therefore, be acknowledged and addressed if ‘anti-racism’ is to be effective.

Of course, in light of the degree of complexity and conflict between the three realms of discourse on ‘racism’ I analysed, the possibilities in terms of addressing this problem are limited. One possibility would be to bring all the discourses on ‘racism’ together so that everyone agrees on what ‘racism’ is and therefore what ‘anti-racism’ is targeting. The
difficulty with this, of course, is that because there is lack of agreement even within each of these three realms of discourse, achieving any level of agreement, or even creating a forum in which to attempt this, would be almost impossible in pragmatic terms. Alternatively, ‘anti-racists’ could acknowledge and accept this reality of discursive complexity and conflict and adjust accordingly. This would mean delimiting ‘anti-racism’s’ target to the aspects of discourse on ‘racism’ that overlap. Of course this need not mean simply ignoring all the aspects of ‘racism’ identified in and through dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’ but not recognised as ‘racism’ by popular and/or state discourse on ‘racism’. At least some of these phenomena (e.g., ‘ethnic’ discrimination) could be (and, indeed, in Ireland at present are) targeted by alterative systems of contestation (e.g., equality legislation in general). However, significantly, this would mean that the current distribution of ‘power’ would not come under attack, and as this is the linchpin according to dominant academic discourse on ‘racism’, it essentially means that ‘anti-racism’ would be limited to challenging the effects of the problem rather than the problem itself.

While this perhaps leaves us at something of an impasse, on a more positive note, while a complete revolution in the realm of discourse on ‘racism’ is unlikely, as anthropologists, we have the training and expertise to identify areas of divergence and conflict between discourses on ‘racism’ which might explain why certain aspects of ‘anti-racism’ are not working. Accordingly, using this information, bit by bit, steps could be taken to bring the different positions together so that all the players involved in ‘anti-racism’ are at least fighting a similar battle. Accordingly, academics involved in researching issues of ‘race’, ‘racialisation’ ‘racism’, etc., should neither lose hope, nor give up what we do. Indeed, there is significant evidence that academic discourse is sourced and implemented in both state and popular discourse, which implies our power to affect, and therefore to change, the world we research. While this is often seen as a big negative in terms of anthropological research, when our research is ‘racism’ this could prove hugely positive.
As academics we need to realise that ‘racism’ is not simply what we say it is, end of story. When we identify ‘race’ and ‘racism’ as social and mental constructs, perhaps we are too quick to leave ourselves out of these constructive processes. We are not simply neutral observers gathering up *emic* discourses on ‘racial’/‘ethnic’ identity and ‘racism’. We too are players in the politics of identity. As knowledge producers, the social sciences have not only ‘done much at various watershed moments to create, authorise, legitimate, and license the figures of racial otherness, the fabrication of racial selves and social subjects’ (Goldberg 1993:208), we have also helped authorise and legitimate the ontological terms of ‘race’ and ‘racism’. From a relativist standpoint, however, while we tend to exalt our knowledge and theories on such issues, the definitions and conceptualisations of ‘racism’ constructed in and through academic discourses on ‘racism’ today cannot necessarily be deemed more legitimate than those produced in and through state or popular discourses on ‘racism’. Accordingly, our recommendations in terms of ‘anti-racism’ must be mindful of this.

As an ‘anti-racist’, I realise that my conclusions could be seen as simply playing into the hands of ‘racists’. Mac an Ghaill (1999:8), however, argues that, ‘The [true] test for anti-racist policies is not their theoretical rigour, internal consistency or comprehensiveness, but rather an instrumentalist concern with whether they work’. He is right. In terms of contributing something to ‘anti-racism’ in pragmatic terms this means that social scientists need to take a more comprehensive, reflexive and relativist perspective. We need to acknowledge other discourses on ‘racism’ and the impact these may have in terms of whether particular ‘anti-racisms’ will work. To take just one example (albeit an extreme one), we can argue until we are blue in the face that the international structure of nation-states is inherently ‘racist’ (see Section 1.1). However, we need to appreciate that, not only are there many critics of this notion in academia, more importantly, in state discourse on ‘racism’ and popular discourse on ‘racism’ this accusation is simply deemed preposterous and discounted accordingly. This does not mean that academics should not point out the problems with the kind of exclusionary ‘nationalism’ that has come to dominate in the age of nation-states. However, we must reconsider the impact
(in terms of its effectiveness) of challenging this exclusivist version of ‘nationalism’ under the remit of ‘anti-racism’. Ultimately, as I concluded in the previous chapter, we must work ‘on’, but also ‘with’ the state and civil society, if we are to rise out of our armchairs, enter the real world, and have real impact.
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