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Identities in Diaspora: Social, National and Political Identities of the Irish and Northern Irish in England

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Abstract

The current research aimed to assess the social, national, and political identities of members of the Irish and Northern Irish diaspora in England. Drawing upon research on Social Identity Theory, it was hypothesised that there would be significant differences between the social, national, and political identities of members of the Irish and Northern Irish diaspora, and also that there would be significant differences between the social, national, and political identities of members of the Catholic and Protestant Northern Irish diaspora. Two hundred and fifty one members of the Irish and Northern Irish diaspora in England rated themselves on a number of ethnic identity items. It was determined that there are significant differences between the social, national, and political identities of the Irish and Northern Irish diasporic groups, and that there are significant differences between the social, national, and political identities of the Northern Irish Catholic and Protestant diasporic groups. Results are discussed with reference to Social Identity Theory, the development and maintenance of diasporic identities and the conflict in Northern Ireland.

KEY WORDS: Diaspora, Northern Ireland, Social Identity

Introduction

The past 150 years have witnessed the greatest mass migration in world history, and with demographic flows of people now becoming more the norm than the exception it has been suggested that it is counterproductive to assume that one can only understand or identify with a place when one is in it (Radhakrishnan, 2003). Diasporic subjects are characterised by a hybridity and heterogeneity which are defined by a "traversal of the boundaries demarcating nation and diaspora" (Braziel & Mannur, 2003, p. 5). The entire issue of migration, the place of migrants in society, and migrant identity is, within a multitude of disciplines, a global consideration incorporating issues of multiculturalism, hybridity, and multi-ethnicity. As a direct result of this, the notion of place based ethnicity is being questioned (Mac Einri, 2000). Diasporic subjects experience multiple identities where hybrid national identities are located alongside other identity categories (Braziel & Mannur, 2003, p. 5). Diasporic identities are simultaneously local and global; constituting networks of transnational identifications which encompass imagined and encountered communities (Brah, 1996).

Research on transnational and diasporic identities suggests that identities are dependent upon local senses of belonging as well as upon maintained attachments with place (McDowell, 2003). As Stern (1995) suggests, identification with ones own nation is inevitable because individuals have "primordial attachments to their nations, cemented in ties such as ethnicity, language, race, culture, religion, community, and kinship" (p.217). This focus upon local identities results in a reconsideration of attachments by both the indigenous and migrant populations. As a consequence, although diasporic communities are transformed by their host societies, so too are the host societies changed and challenged by the diaspora (McDowell, 2003; Brah, 1996). As a result of this, Massey (1991) suggests the conception of a global sense of local place.

Although mass migratory movements have been unprecedented in recent times, the late 20th century saw this process coming to an end in most Western nations. In Ireland alone does it persist with 19th century intensity and in Ireland alone, in 1988, did the number of people leaving the state come close to the number being born. While mass migration of the 19th century from Ireland was mainly to America, that of the 20th century was largely to Britain (Walter, 2004). Given the number of Irish migrants choosing Britain as their host nation, this population provides an ideal case for investigation.

With regard to diasporic groups, there is a dilemma faced by the groups between adaptation to a new society and, often, a new culture, and the desired preservation of their original and established identity (Boekestijn, 1988). Boekestijn (1988) suggests that this dilemma will intensify depending upon the difference between the culture of origin and the host culture, with the dilemma becoming more intense as the difference between the cultures expands, and continues that the desire faced by diasporic groups to be accepted and to assimilate into the host culture is counteracted by their parallel desire to maintain their sense of identity and to maintain the established links with their homeland.

In terms of the Irish in Britain, these immigrants represent a unique and often misunderstood diasporic group. As a result of Ireland's close proximity to Britain, and as a result of the similar culture, Irish migrants to Britain, historically, were not perceived as sufficiently different to warrant affording them the status of 'foreign', although because of subtle differences in language and tradition, neither were they allowed to be considered British subjects (McDowell, 2003). The Irish in Britain have, by turns, been represented as stupid, unreliable, and feckless, or as emotional romantics (e.g. Walter, 2001) and as Paul (1997, p.xiii) suggests, although the Irish in England "passed an unwritten test of racial acceptability", this did not preclude the negative stereotyping of ethnic characteristics.

Although there is a paucity of research focusing on the attitudes and experiences of the Irish and Northern Irish in England, recent years have seen a burgeoning interest in the attitudes and experiences of these groups in their homeland. As such, there is a wealth of information pertaining to the social, national, and political identities of these populations in Ireland and Northern Ireland.

Waddell and Cairns (1986) have suggested that in the case of Northern Ireland, Social Identity Theory (Tajfel, 1972a), with its ability to encompass multi-disciplinary theoretical contributions in its analysis of social problems, is intrinsically valuable in terms of understanding both the conflict and society in general.

Developed initially by Tajfel (1972a) and then refined and redeveloped by Tajfel and Turner (1979) and Turner (1982), Social Identity Theory (SIT) suggests that any social category to which an individual belongs will provide that individual with a definition of themselves based on the defining characteristics of their chosen category. Each individual holds membership to a varying number of these social categories and membership to each group corresponds to a social identity within the individual. This social identity has the ability to describe and prescribe the individuals characteristics as a member of that category or group (Hogg, 1996a). For example, a social identity can dictate how the individual should think, feel, and behave for any given identity. The result of this is that when a particular social identity becomes salient, all members behave in a way that becomes stereotypical of that in-group (the group to which one belongs) and perceptions of the out-group (the rival group, or the group to which one does not belong) also become stereotypical. This in- and out-group stereotyping can lead to interactions between the groups develop competitive and discriminatory qualities (e.g. Tajfel, 1972a; Tajfel & Turner; 1979).

In addition to the descriptive and prescriptive qualities of SIT, Tajfel (1972a) suggests an evaluative dimension where social identities promote the evaluation of the social group

and of the members of that group and result in comparisons between that group and its members and other groups and their members. This evaluation leads to group members developing techniques that will help them achieve (and then maintain) in-group and out-group comparisons that favour the in-group. This, in turn, serves to enhance both group and individual self-esteem, which promotes a positive sense of identity (Hogg & Abrams, 1988).

Tajfel (1972a) explained SIT in terms of two fundamental socio-cognitive processes: categorisation and self-enhancement. Categorisation defines group boundaries and produces stereotypical and normative perceptions of the group. Self-enhancement theory ensures that the stereotypes produced in the categorisation favour the in-group in order that the basic human need of seeing oneself from a favourable viewpoint when compared with relevant others is fulfilled. This evaluatively positive self-concept is achieved by comparing the in- and out-groups on dimension characteristics that favour the in-group (Hogg & Abrams, 1988). SIT is, therefore, highly dynamic and associates the immediate social context with identity salience and self-esteem (Hogg, Terry & White, 1995).

Early work by Cairns (1982) has suggested that social identity and categorisation are highly important features in Northern Irish society, where society is divided along a series of identities: Irish Catholics and British Protestants. These identity dimensions observe the two communities divided along political, national and religious identities which results in an unsurprising complexity of social identity. When considering social identity and the social realities of communities, Reicher and Hopkins (2001) suggest the nation as the "predominant form of social categorisation" (p.50) with Anderson (1983, p.15) suggesting this nation as an "imagined political community". Given these suggestions, and the multifaceted nature of identities in Northern Ireland, it is unsurprising that social identity in Northern Ireland, with its complex mix of national, political and religious identities, has been the focus of much research.

Waddell and Cairns (1986) determined that Northern Irish Protestants have a more complex social identity than their Catholic counterparts and that while there may be evidence of minor fluctuations in terms of identity strength, the two groups in Northern Ireland remain divided on every occasion because "the importance of social identity in Northern Ireland will mitigate any overall or large scale tendency to cross the ethnic divide" (Waddell & Cairns, 1986, p.29). One possible explanation for this relative fluency of Protestant social identities is proposed by Ferguson (1990), who suggested that although Protestants in Northern Ireland would once have identified themselves as Irish, Republican violence forced the Protestant community into a position where they were fearful of identifying themselves as Irish. Ferguson (1990) continues that this reaction against Republican violence, coupled with a desire to illustrate allegiance to Britain, has led to an increase in British identifications and a decline not only in Irish but also in Ulster identifications. This reluctance to identify with Ulster may also be due, in part, to the similarly violent actions of Loyalist paramilitary organisations (Moxon-Browne, 1983). Moxon-Brown further suggests that this Ulster identity label implies not only an identification with Northern Ireland and its political legitimacy, but also with the "anti-British" connotations in such usages as Ulster Defence Association and Ulster Volunteer Force, for example (Trew, 1994). Other research has indicated that 'Northern Irish' has been a useful identity label in Northern Ireland, where Catholics can interpret this as referring to the whole of the North of Ireland, while the Protestants may interpret this as deriving from 'Northern Ireland'; a component of the United Kingdom (Trew, 1994).

Crisp, Hewstone, and Cairns (2001) have suggested that because identities in Northern Ireland are much more complicated than the Catholic-Protestant dichotomy would suggest, it is possible that individuals in Northern Ireland may hold more than one salient identity at any given time. This research by Crisp et al. found evidence to support the

suggestion that, in Northern Ireland, inter-group affiliations are considerably more complex than this dichotomy allows, but that religion is the presiding basis for social categorisation in Northern Ireland (see also Ferguson & Gordon, 2007).

In terms of the identity salience and identity selections of the Irish and Northern Irish in Britain, Hickman (2000) has suggested that a sense of positive Irish identity in Britain is lacking, in part due to insufficient support from institutions such as the Catholic Church. Harding and Balarajan (1996a) have supported Hickman's statement by suggesting that the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland made it difficult for Irish people to develop a positive sense of identity in Britain. Ryan (1990) and Greenslade (1994) indicate, however, that the lack of a positive sense of Irish identity is due to Ireland's history of colonisation and the emotional conflict which comes with settling in the land of the coloniser.

Greenslade (1997) has indicated that there is an invisibility of the Irish community in host nations in terms of diasporic research and the current study aimed to address this issue and assess the social, national, and political identities of the Irish and Northern Irish in England, and to provide an understanding of these identities in a diasporic setting. As such, it was hypothesised that: i) There will be significant differences between the social, national, and political identities of members of the Northern Irish diaspora and the diaspora from the Republic of Ireland, and ii) There will be significant differences between the social, national, and political identities of members of the Catholic and Protestant Northern Irish diasporic group.

<div align="center">Method</div>

*Sample*

An opportunity sample of 251 members of the Irish and Northern Irish diaspora was selected from a variety of locations throughout England. Data collection took place over a period of

17 months. During his time, potential participants were contacted using a variety of methods including face-to-face recruitment at cultural clubs and community organisations, postal surveys, snowball sampling of members of the general population, and online via an Irish and Northern Irish diaspora web service. A total of 2053 members of the Irish and Northern Irish diaspora were contacted. Of these, 251 participants completed and returned questionnaires that were included in the analysis.

Of the 251 participants, 179 were members of the Northern Irish diaspora. These respondents ranged in age from 18-52 yrs ($M$=21.85, $SD$=5.08). Of these, 57 were male (age range 18-52yrs, $M$=21.79, $SD$=5.52), and 122 were female (age range of 18-42yrs, $M$=21.88, $SD$=4.88) while 124 were Catholic (43 male and 81 female) and 48 were Protestant (12 male and 36 female). Of the 251 participants, 54 were members of the diaspora from the Republic of Ireland. These respondents had an age range of 17-56 yrs ($M$=23.70, $SD$=9.13). Of these, 16 were male with an age range of 17-56 yrs ($M$=26.13, $SD$=11.34) and 38 were female with an age range of 17-47yrs ($M$=22.68, $SD$=7.98). 48 of these respondents were Catholic (15 male and 33 female) and 1 respondent was Protestant (female).

*Instrument*

Respondents answered questions relating to background and demographic information, including questions relating to age, gender, church affiliation, and citizenship (e.g. Of which country do you hold citizenship?). Respondents were also asked to rate themselves on a number of ethnic identity items. These items built on research on National and Sectarian identities by various researchers (e.g. Cairns, 1989; Gallagher 1989; Moxon-Browne 1983; Rose 1971; Trew 1983; Waddell & Cairns 1986; Binks & Ferguson, 2002; Roe, Lenius & Bennett, 2002). Participants responded to items measuring social, national and political identities, such as, "I think of myself as Irish / British / Northern Irish" and "I think of myself

as Loyalist / Republican". Respondents rated on a scale of 0-100 the degree to which they agreed with the declaration that they held each identity on a typical day where they lived. The 13 social, national, and political identity items have a Cronbach's Coefficient Alpha of .80 for the current sample.

## Results

Descriptive statistics presenting the mean (standard deviation) levels of identification for social, national, and political identities of the various diasporic samples are illustrated in Table 1.

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The social, national, and political identities of the diasporic groups were analysed using a Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA)[1]. This analysis indicated that the social, national, and political identity differences between the diasporic groups from Northern and the Republic of Ireland were significant (Wilks' $\lambda$ .694, $F= 9.12$, $p<0.001$, partial $\eta^2 =.306$).

Further investigation revealed that there are significant between group effects for British identity ($F (1, 216) = 18.75$, $p<0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = .080$), Irish identity ($F (1, 216) = 61.02$, $p<0.01$, partial $\eta^2 = .077$), Northern Irish identity ($F (1, 216) = 61.02$, $p<0.001$, partial $\eta^2 =.220$), European identity ($F (1, 216) = 6.94$, $p<0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = .031$), Unionist identification ($F (1, 216) = 6.01$, $p<0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = .027$), and Republican identification ($F (1, 216) = 5.79$, $p<0.05$, partial $\eta^2 = .026$).

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[1] Although there were discrepancies in terms of the sizes of the groups being compared, Levene's Tests were non-significant (p>0.05) therefore supporting the use of the parametric MANOVA analysis.

Further analysis indicated that there are significant differences between the Northern Irish Catholic and Protestant diasporic groups (Wilks' $\lambda$ .362, F = 36.99, p<0.01, partial $\eta^2$ = .638).

More extensive investigation revealed that there are significant between group effects for the following identities: British ($F$ (1, 219) = 188.32, $p$<0.001, partial $\eta^2$ = .462), Irish ($F$ (1, 219) = 205.30, $p$<0.001, partial $\eta^2$ = .484), Northern Irish ($F$ (1, 219) = 19.54, $p$<0.001, partial $\eta^2$ = .082), Ulsterman/woman ($F$ (1, 219) = 26.79, $p$<0.001, partial $\eta^2$ = .109), European ($F$ (1, 219) = 10.53, $p$<0.001, partial $\eta^2$ = .046), Nationalist ($F$ (1, 219) = 57.26, $p$<0.001, partial $\eta^2$ = .207), Unionist ($F$ (1, 219) = 95.19, $p$<0.001, partial $\eta^2$ = .303), Republican ($F$ (1, 219) = 32.21, $p$<0.001, partial $\eta^2$ = .128), Loyalist ($F$ (1, 219) = 43.37, $p$<0.001, partial $\eta^2$ = .162).

Although when explored the effect sizes of these identity comparisons vary, the size of the effect for the overall analyses were considerable, indicating that real and perceptible differences exist between the identities of those individuals from Northern and the Republic of Ireland, and − more manifestly − between those Catholic and Protestant individuals from Northern Ireland.

## Discussion

The results of the present study support the hypothesis that there will be a significant difference between the social, national, and political identities of members of the Northern Irish diaspora and members of the Republic of Ireland diaspora. This finding in the current study indicates support for Stern's (1995) suggestion that identity is bound together with nationality, and that continued identification with ones nation is an inevitable result of the "primordial attachments" that individuals have to these nations, which are "cemented in ties such as ethnicity, language, race, culture, religion, community, and kinship" (p.217), and

McDowell's (2003) suggestion that diasporic identities are dependent upon maintained attachments with place.

However, this analysis concluded that the effect size for this difference was statistically small, which would appear to indicate that although the two groups display differences in terms of their social, national, and political identities, these differences, although statistically significant, are not great in absolute terms. This may be because both groups are members of the diaspora in England, they are receiving the same impact upon their identities and both groups are striving to achieve the same sense of distinction from their English counterparts rather than from each other. The largest effect was in terms of Northern Irish identity, which saw the Republic of Ireland diaspora identifying themselves as Northern Irish 14.1% of the time, and the Northern Irish diaspora identifying themselves as Northern Irish 63.1% of the time. Given the geographical realities of the sites of emigration, this difference is unsurprising. The members of the Republic of Ireland diaspora who identified themselves as Northern Irish likely did so because this identity has the potential to refer to areas of the north of the island of Ireland (Trew, 1994), and therefore incorporates areas such as Donegal which, although geographically in the north, remains a part of the Republic of Ireland.

The results of the present study also support the hypothesis that there will be a significant difference between the social, national, and political identities of members of the Northern Irish Catholic and Protestant diasporic groups.

This finding lends support to the suggestion made by Waddell and Cairns (1986) that Catholics and Protestants remain divided in terms of their social, national, and political identities on every occasion. Further, it would appear that although this statement by Waddell and Cairns was made in regard to Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, the current study demonstrates a similar importance of social identity in the Northern Irish diaspora and

the importance of social identity in Northern Ireland, with this identity mitigating "any overall or large scale tendency to cross the ethnic divide" (Waddell & Cairns, 1986, p.29). In terms of the diaspora, Catholics identified themselves as predominantly Irish, and identified to a lesser extent with the Northern Irish, European, Nationalist and Republican identity categories, while the Protestants identified themselves as predominantly Northern Irish and British, with the Ulsterman/woman, Irish, European, and Unionist categories being selected less often as identity choices.

These identity selections lend support to Waddell and Cairns' (1986) suggestion that although Catholics in Northern Ireland never feel British, Protestants do, on occasion, feel Irish, suggesting a more complex sense of social identity for Protestants than for Catholics. Catholic respondents indicated that they felt British only 10% of the time, while their Protestant counterparts indicated that they felt Irish 31% of the time[2]. In the current study, the largest effect sizes were seen for the differences between the British and Irish identities, which would indicate that Waddell and Cairns' (1986) suggestion that Northern Irish society is structured around "two competing ethnopolitical social identities, Irish and British, which are underpinned, to a large extent, by Catholic and Protestant religions respectively" (p.25-6) holds true for members of the diaspora in England.

It is also apparent that members of the diaspora appear to have highly complex identities, recognising many relevant identities simultaneously. Indeed, although levels of identification with certain identities are lower in members of the diaspora than they are in a Northern Irish population (e.g. Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey (NILT), 2002), levels of identification with other identity choices are higher, indicating that the Northern Irish diaspora members in England are less clear in terms of the identity groups to which they belong. This finding lends support to the suggestions made by Hickman (2000) that a positive

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[2] In terms of the association between Catholic-ness and Irishness, and Protestant-ness and Britishness, a correlation was carried out. This analysis determined that there is a significant positive correlation between religious and national identities ($r$ .328, p<0.05 and $r$ .422, p<0.001 respectively).

sense of identity is lacking in this diasporic group in England, and that Kelleher and Hillier's (1996) suggestion that although in other countries (e.g. the USA) these migrants may assimilate into society with ease, this is not the case in the UK. As a result of this, it may be said that the current findings lend support to Kelleher and Hillier's (1996) suggestion that although individuals may appear to assimilate well in England, they often fail to develop a secure sense of identity.

Further, as Protestants in the current study identified themselves as feeling Irish almost one third of the time, it would appear that Ferguson's (1990) suggestion that Protestants in Northern Ireland are fearful of identifying themselves as Irish because of the associations that this identity has with Republican violence does not hold true for members of the diaspora in England. Indeed, Catholic respondents in the current study accepted the Republican identity label and freely acknowledged that they identify themselves as Republican approximately 40% of the time. Protestant respondents similarly accepted the Loyalist identity, albeit to a lesser extent (admitting to identifying with this identity approximately 20% of the time).

In terms of the acceptance of these Loyalist and Republican identities, it is suggested that as members of the diaspora, rather than as inhabitants of Northern Ireland, the respondents in the current study felt more able to accept these identities without the burden of adhering to the politics of identity choice. Further, it may be that recent advances in the Northern Ireland Peace Process, the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons, the paramilitary pledges to pursue a peaceful solution to the problems in Northern Ireland, and geographical distance from the province have made these individuals more open to accepting these identities as legitimate.

SIT suggests that when an identity is threatened, increased levels of identification within the in-group can arise (Branscombe, Schmitt & Harvey, 1999). If the research relating

to members of the Irish and Northern Irish in England (Hickman, 2000; Hickman & Walter, 1997; Harding & Balarajan, 1996a; Ryan, 1990; Greenslade, 1994) is correct and members of this diasporic group in England have found it difficult to develop a positive sense of identity because of either insufficient support from the Catholic Church (Hickman, 2000), Ireland's history of colonisation (Ryan, 1990; Greenslade, 1994), anti-Irish racism (Hickman & Walter, 1997) , or the 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland (Harding & Balarajan, 1996a) then it is possible that this diasporic community in England have felt their sense of Irishness threatened and have therefore reacted in the way that SIT would suggest, and have increased their willingness to contribute to the group cause, in this case the promotion of a positive identity, and increase their self-esteem as a result of this (Stern, 1995).

In addition to this, Trew (1994) has suggested that identities of the Northern Irish people may change in line with their social context, whereby people from Northern Ireland may identify themselves as Irish when visiting Britain. It is suggested that this is the case in the current study. The explanation offered for this is that if social identities are useful in providing distinctiveness (Brewer 1991), and if Northern Irish diaspora members hail from a place which is at once British and Irish (Trew, 1994), then whilst in England the need for differentiation will determine that their sense of Irishness comes to the fore in a way that is qualitatively and quantitatively different from in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, although social identities also fulfil a need for acceptance, the high prevalence of Irish cultural clubs and community organisations in England (Ullah 1990), coupled with the commemorative practices such as St. Patrick's Day celebrations, ensure that this need for acceptance is fostered amongst the diaspora members in England (Halbwachs, 1980; Billig, 1995; Cornin & Adair, 2002; Gilzean & McAuley, 2003).

In addition to this, where the Northern Irish identity was more attractive to Protestant diaspora members (76.2%, in contrast to 44.8% for Catholic diaspora respondents), the NILT

Survey (2002) indicated that for those respondents living in Northern Ireland it was the Catholic cohort which found the Northern Irish identity more acceptable (25.3%, as opposed to the 12.6% reported by Protestants in Northern Ireland), although it is true to say that Northern Irish diaspora members, on the whole, found this Northern Irish identity label more appropriate than those individuals living in Northern Ireland.

It is possible that diaspora members see this identity as being a geographical reality rather than a political ideology and as being accurately descriptive of the area of Ireland from which they originate. In this way, it is suggested that the diaspora members are using this identity as a way of indicating that they are more than 'just Irish', they are keen to possess an identity which is specifically and explicitly derived from the place they call home.

However, it is important to acknowledge that although members of the Catholic diaspora were willing to choose the Northern Irish identity label, the difference between this identity selection for Catholics and Protestants remains significant, albeit with a small effect size, and therefore it is necessary to acknowledge that the Northern Irish identity labels falls someway short of meeting the identity requirements of Catholic diaspora members. Brewer (1991) suggests that the need for differentiation and distinctiveness, as suggested by the Optimal Distinctiveness Model, overrides the possibility of a common identity and that the Irish and British identity labels serve to maintain the need for distinctiveness in a way that affords both Catholic and Protestant diaspora members a positive sense of identity. The current findings support Brewer's suggestion.

Further, it is suggested that Northern Irish identity is being used by members of the diaspora to reinforce the distinction between what it means to be Catholic or Protestant in Northern Ireland, with members of the Protestant diaspora keen to assert this identity whilst mindful of the political undertones of identifying oneself as 'Northern Irish'. It is suggested that for these diaspora members, the Northern Irish identity is not only the geographical

reality of their heritage, but a direct and meaningful contrast to the 'Irish' identity label. In this way it is possible that the selection of this Northern Irish identity label is able to reinforce the Catholic / Protestant and North / South divide simultaneously.

However, care should be taken not to dismiss this, albeit lesser, acceptance of the Northern Irish identity by Catholic diaspora members, and therefore it is possible that Moxon-Browne (1991) and Trew's (1994) suggestions hold true for members of the Northern Irish diaspora and that the Northern Irish identity label may be attractive to both Catholics and Protestants: simultaneously referring to the whole of the North of Ireland and the province of Northern Ireland.

In addition to this, when the identity choices of the diasporic samples are compared with those selections made by the Northern Irish sample in the 2002 NILT Survey, it can be seen that the diasporic groups are more likely to accept the Ulster identity than their indigenous Northern Irish counterparts. Again, it is suggested that this Ulster identity represents a geographical reality to the current participants, whereby they are able to indicate in a more specific and descriptive way the area of Ireland from which they originate. It would seem that this identity, in common with the Northern Irish identity, is able to offer diasporic groups a way of indicating that they are more than Irish, more than Northern Irish, that they have specific identities which are directly related to the area of Ireland / Northern Ireland from which they or their family emigrated, and that are more relevant to them than the Irish or Northern Irish labels which may be given to them by members of their host society. However, as Northern Irish Protestant diaspora members accepted this identity label on a significantly greater scale than their Catholic counterparts, it is unlikely that the political connotation of the identity is unnoticed and as a result of this, this identity is more acceptable to the Northern Irish Protestant diasporic community than the Catholic diasporic community.

In terms of European identity, members of the Northern Irish diaspora saw this identity as being highly relevant in contrast with the findings of the 2002 NILT Northern Irish sample, with much higher levels of identification with Europe for Catholic diaspora members than for Catholics in Northern Ireland (41.7% and 0.4% respectively) and higher levels of identification with Europe for Protestant diaspora members than for Protestants in Northern Ireland (21.9% and 0.3% respectively). In terms of identity acceptance, these differences in identification with Europe are large and it may be that SIT and related theories can, again, offer an explanation for this.

Brewer's (1991) Optimal Distinctiveness Model suggests that social identities fulfil both the need for acceptance and the need for differentiation. In terms of the respondents from Northern Ireland, it could be suggested that, given Brewer's (1991) assertions regarding social identities meeting the need for differentiation, the presence of an inclusive identity (e.g. European) in Northern Ireland, which has the ability to encompass both British Protestant and Irish Catholic identities, may be perceived as a threat to both groups whereby the degree of similarity between the two groups that would be indicated by the selection of this identity may lead to both groups feeling that their identities are threatened. This perceived threat, as suggested by Stern (1995) may result in more concerted efforts to identify with the original British / Irish identity in order to make formal the identity differences between the groups.

It is also possible, however, that these large increases in identification with Europe in the diasporic sample can be explained in terms of migration. It is suggested that the act of migration, or the reality of being a migrant in England, has led to a more focused realisation of the meaning of being European. These migrants emigrated from another European country and, as such, have likely been exposed to the migration experiences of other non-European migrants. This may have resulted in a heightened awareness of the fact that they were intra-

European migrants, and this, in turn, may have strengthened this identity. Indeed, Brettell and Hollifield (2000) suggest that migration effects cultural change and affects ethnic identity, and if this is the case then it is reasonable to assume that the act of migration may result in an increased identification with the continent that, even after migration, remains their home.

In terms of the identities that are accepted by Catholic and Protestant members of the Irish diaspora, it would appear that the suggestions of Crisp, Hewstone and Cairns (2001), Reicher and Hopkins (2001) and Ferguson and Gordon (2007), are supported in the current study and that identities are more complex than the Catholic-Protestant dichotomy would suggest. Indeed, the findings of the current research indicate that members of both the Catholic and Protestant diasporic groups hold more than one salient identity at a time. Further, the findings of the current research offer support to Crisp et al.'s suggestion that although identities in Northern Ireland are complex, religion is the presiding basis for social categorisation in Northern Ireland. This would appear to be the case for members of the diaspora, with a definite cleavage between the identity choices for Catholics and Protestants. In addition to this, it would appear from the social identity selections of the Northern Irish Catholic and Protestant diasporic groups that these groups actually hold more complex identities than their counterparts in Northern Ireland, possibly because, as previously suggested, some of the political ideologies which correspond with certain identities in Northern Ireland are not strictly relevant in the diasporic setting, and therefore these groups are free to select any identity which resonates with them.

However, the identity differences in the current diasporic sample, with the clear division between Protestants as British and Catholics as Irish, lend support to the suggestion that the depth of the identity chasm in Northern Irish society is so well established that members of the diaspora in England appear to maintain this gulf. Social identity theory would suggested that because social identities are evaluative, in-group and out-group distinctions

need to be maintained in order to develop a positive evaluative bias (Hogg & Abrams, 1988) which favours the in-group and, as such, if the in-group / out-group distinction is removed, so too is one of the connections with the homeland that Boekestijn (1988) indicates as being so important in terms of migrant groups.

With regard to the differences between the Northern Irish Catholic and Protestant diasporic groups in the current study, although it is true to say that the diasporic groups in England are more willing than their counterparts in Northern Ireland to accept identities which may counter the societal divide (such as Northern Irish and European) (Trew, 1994), the selection of highly polarised identities such as Irish and British by members of the Catholic and Protestant diaspora requires attention.

Research by Stern (1995) has suggested that social and national identities are likely to increase when there is the presence of threat or conflict. In particular what Stern suggests is that if the group is under threat or involved in a conflict, the willingness of the individual to contribute to and identify with the group will increase and, in turn, self-esteem will be increased. In the case of the current research, although the diasporic groups in England are not under threat, and are not experiencing direct conflict, the history of Northern Ireland dictates that the Catholic and Protestant groups in the province have spent the last four decades in a situation where threat and conflict was experienced on regular basis and this resulted in strengthened senses of identity in the province (e.g. Waddell & Cairns, 1986). It is reasonable to suggest that if identities in the homeland are threatened and consequently strengthened as a result of that threat, then identities in the diaspora may mimic those in Northern Ireland and become stronger and more divided as the conflict continued. Indeed, as Lavie and Swedenburg (1996) suggest, the term 'diaspora' indicates an established and permanent association between identities and specific places, and there is no reason to believe

that this should fail to be the case for members of the Irish diaspora, who seemingly remain loyal to their identity groups even upon leaving Northern Ireland.

Another suggested reason for this group loyalty in members of the diaspora lends support to the suggestions (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Ellemers, Wilke & von Knippenberg, 1993; Ellemers, von Knippenberg, de Vries, & Wilke, 1988) that identity change is determined by the permeability of group boundaries. In terms of the current research findings, if members of the Catholic and Protestant diasporic groups maintain the identities that are present in Northern Ireland, and if, as researchers (e.g. Waddell and Cairns, 1986; Moxon-Browne 1991; Cairns, Lewis, Mumcu & Waddell, 1998) suggest, these identities are underpinned by the Catholic and Protestant religions, then identity change would be almost impossible as it would require a shift in the fundamental religious beliefs of the individuals. Indeed, analysis showed that there are significant associations between Irishness and Catholicism and between Britishness and Protestantism, indicating that for many of the respondents, identifying oneself as Irish was tantamount to identifying themselves as Catholic, and similarly for Protestant respondents, this identity is seen as synonymous with Britishness.

In terms of the limitations of the current study, although the measure of social, national, and political identities used in this study was useful in terms of gauging the salience of specific identities and in terms of assessing the complexities of identities, research in the area of social identity has indicated that identity labels often have multiple meanings (Fu, Lee, Chiu & Hong, 1999) and individuals may ascribe alternative meanings to their social identities when the importance of the notions of inclusiveness and distinctiveness vary in line with the social context (Brewer, 1999). Further research by Gallagher (1989; 1993) suggests that although a label may give name to an identity, it does nothing to indicate the significance of that identity or the meaning that is assigned to that label. Further, as Condor (2006)

suggests, individuals' accounts of their identity are "necessarily chronically tensed" and if future research is to engage in a more temporal unravelling of these identity issues then a narrative approach, which heeds Tajfel's (1966, p.79) concern for "those abstract and symbolic aspects of human imagination" may be better placed to attend to the "complex and often dilemmatic aspects of respondents' accounts" (Condor, 2006, p.667).

The current study employed a quantitative design which allowed some exploratory comparisons with research that has been previously carried out in Northern Ireland. Although this was not the direct aim of the current study, it was felt that the ability to compare current findings with that of previous research might afford a more comprehensive understanding of this diasporic group.

However, given the suggestions made by Brewer (1999), Condor (2006), Fu et al. (1999), Gallagher (1989, 1993) and Tajfel (1966), it is suggested that future research should build on the findings of the current study and take a more qualitative approach to researching the identities of this diasporic group, ideally determining the meanings behind the identity labels for members of the Irish and Northern Irish diaspora. This would allow for a more detailed and intricate look at the meaning of identity in diaspora and would also allow for a more inclusive sample in terms of the ages of participants. The current study had a relatively young sample and a qualitative study would allow for a more detailed exploration of identity in all age groups.  In this way, a more comprehensive story should unfold regarding diasporic identities, the impact that a host nation has on these identities, and additional theories may be offered.

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