Who Do We Think We Are? Immigration and the Discursive Construction of National Identity in an Irish Daily Mainstream Newspaper, 1996-2004

Brian Conway

Department of Sociology, National University of Ireland, Maynooth
(Brian.Conway@nuim.ie)

Abstract
This paper examines how Irish national identity has been constructed in recent press discourse against a background of demographic, social and economic change brought about by immigration. Using the *Irish Times* as our source of data, we analysed opinion and editorial pieces from 1996-2004. One would expect, given Ireland's own emigration experience, its history of participation in imperial projects, and its treatment of indigenous minorities, that it would adopt an exclusive ethnic response to the presence of the migrant. We find, however, that two key cultural resources – the historical duty argument and the myth of Saint Patrick – are mobilised in press discourse to make sense of immigration and that these local narratives are employed to motivate inclusive political and social action in response to this global phenomenon. This counterintuitive finding is explained in terms of a global cultural argument that emphasizes the critical influence of international image in shaping how national societies construct their collective identity.

Keywords: Immigration; Ireland; national identity; globalisation; print media; narrative; symbolic capital

Introduction

One of the central planks of the European political and economic project has been the flow of people, goods and services across national borders (Sassen 1999). This transnational movement of capital and labour has brought about major social, cultural and political changes. Some European countries have a long history of immigration and adaptation to these changes but others are much more recent recipients of migrants in search of a new life and new employment opportunity and have had to scramble to deal with sudden demographic transformation

(Joppke 1999; Freeman/Jupp 1992). One such country with a very recent history of immigration is Ireland (Garner 2004; Fanning 2002; Faughnan & Woods 2000; Cullen 2000; Lentin 2001; Gibbons 2002; Lentin/McVeigh 2002).

Looking at how Irish national identity, as manifested in one national daily mainstream newspaper, has been constructed in recent press discourse against this background of demographic change, is the focus of the present paper. Like other advanced European nations, Ireland has drawn upon certain cultural resources such as myths, symbols and narratives, to construct its collective identity in the face of rapid and unexpected social and demographic change. These cultural resources are activated in debates about what it means to be Irish in newspapers, television, radio, and national parliament. In some of these public fora, sentiments about the positive effect of migration have been articulated but negative comment focusing on such things as the apparent drain on the national resources caused by migration and fears about heightened labour market competition for Irish nationals has also been expressed (Lentin 2001; Garner 2004; Lentin/McVeigh 2002).

This paper focuses on what kinds of cultural resources are mobilized in press discourse and how they are mobilized. These cultural resources are employed to construct a sense of national identity. As other scholars have pointed out (Triandafyllidou 1999; Smith 2001; Erjavec 2003), the concept of national identity implies both commonness/consensus and difference/conflict. It denotes commonness to the extent that people share such things as a common language, history, and territory. It suggests difference, or a sense of otherness, to the extent that these same attributes operate to distinguish one nation from another. Migrants are easily inserted into this 'Other' identity category because they tend to be perceived as a threat to the homogeneity of society. Whether, in fact, this is the case in the Irish experience specifically, as indexed by newspaper press discourse, is what this paper attempts to open up to empirical and theoretical analysis.

This paper takes the following structure. First, I provide a brief comment on the concept of national identity as understood by social science scholars. Second, I examine the terms of Irish national identity discourses prior to the migratory experience in the mid 1990s. Following this, I describe the data and methods employed in this paper. I then present and interpret the findings in the light of the history of racialisation in the Irish experience and theories about the relationship between nation-states and worldwide cultural norms.

What is National Identity?

National identity is a slippery and highly contested concept. Spillman and Faeges, in their review of the literature on this construct, comment that there is no shortage of definitions of 'the nation', a fact which often does more to confuse than to clarify the sociological study of this phenomenon (Spillman/Faeges 2003).

Notwithstanding these problems, I want to suggest that it is useful to think of the nation, a term of social organization, as

> the continuous reproduction and reinterpretation of the pattern of values, symbols, memories, myths and traditions that compose the distinctive heritage of nations, and the identifications of individuals with that pattern and heritage and with its cultural elements (Smith 2001, p. 18).

Clearly, then, national identity has to do with boundary creation and maintenance. It has to do with creating a national 'we' and the criteria that underlie this construction. But this concept of the nation as territorially bound implies that ethno-national distinctions are co-terminous with politically drawn boundaries (Triandafyllidou 1999; Triandafyllidou 1998). In the context of international flows of capital and labour we know now that this is increasingly not the case. Often ethno-national boundaries problematise socially constructed political borders and challenge the assumption that they neatly overlap. When this happens more energy has to be invested in the task of constructing the national 'we'. Two scenarios present themselves in this context. One possibility is that the cultural construction of the national narrative is recalibrated to incorporate the newcomer, a process that involves critical re-thinking around what it means to be this nationality or that nationality. Alternatively, an attempt can be made to write migrant newcomers out of the national narrative. This process involves drawing symbolic and moral boundaries between natives and newcomers by appealing to such things as land, religion, memory, or what is sometimes termed 'blood and soil nationalism', that crucially set these groups apart from one another. Importantly, then, the concept of national identity embodies both universal and particular dimensions (Yadgar 2002), a tension which has been played out in the Irish experience, as we shall see when we examine the changing terms of Irish collective identity.

It is hypothesised in this paper that the inflow of migrants to a society leads to a foregrounding in press discourse of the differences between natives and newcomers. Put another way, one would expect the second scenario outlined above in which an attempt is made to exclude migrants from the imagined community of the nation. The key reason why one would predict the ability of the Irish to be hostile towards the Other, and to support the argument that one could expect an emphasis in the print media on the difference between newcomers and natives has to do with the history of racialisation in the Irish experience (see Garner 2004; Fanning 2002; Lentin/McVeigh 2002). Four aspects of the story of Irish history point to this. Firstly, societal perceptions of Ireland's own indigenous and internal Other, that is, Travellers (Garner 2004, p. 62) suggest that the Irish are no strangers to perceiving people perceived as 'different' but 'White', whether in terms of language, culture or history, (even people who are ethnically Irish) in a hostile way (Garner 2004, p.29; see also MacGréil 1996; Lentin/McVeigh 2002). There is a long history in Irish society of marginalizing and excluding Travellers

from full civic participation. Public policies related to housing, health and education tend to privilege the settled community's understanding of normalcy in relation to property owning, community and lifestyle (Mac Laughlin 1995; Garner 2004; Conway 2004; Fanning 2002; Lentin/McVeigh 2002).

Second, the Irish emigration experience in the United States after the Great Famine provides some evidence of the Irish ability to be racist. A number of scholars have shown that racism, far from being something that came to Ireland, may well have been brought with the Irish when they emigrated to the major urban centers of North America (Lentin/McVeigh 2002). In cultural terms, the Irish were not considered White on arrival in the New World. Rather, they became White over time. The Irish did this by drawing on an ideology of racial superiority that delineated them from African-Americans with whom they were direct competitors in the labour market (Ignatiev 1995).

Thirdly, other indigenous ethnic minorities such as Jews have a history of ill-treatment especially during World War II (Keogh 1998). Consider, for instance, that during the 1940s, a number of cases of discrimination against Jews living in Dublin were well-documented. Antisemitic sentiments were expressed in graffiti and media publications, and in unlikely quarters too, such as among some Catholic clergy (Keogh 1998; Lentin/McVeigh 2002). At a state level, Ireland's refugee policy during this time was less generous than it might have been. Legal difficulties were cited as a reason for delaying or denying refugee status to needy Jews from countries such as France and Hungry. While Ireland did take in large numbers of child refugees, a great deal more children could have been allowed enter the state but for a certain lack of urgency or interest on the part of the government of the day. Taken together, the official government response to the plight of Jews during World War II 'remained reactive than proactive' (Keogh 1998, p. 191).

Beyond this, while Irish people were among the foot-soldiers in the American and British colonial projects (Lentin/McVeigh 2002; Kiberd 2005; Rolston/Shannon 2002) and while they encountered 'the Other' through missionary activity in Africa (Lentin/McVeigh 2002; Kiberd 2005; Rolston/Shannon 2002), Ireland was never itself a major colonial power as America or Britain were. Without such an imperial history, Ireland would not likely to be seen by migrants as a society with whom they could easily or readily identify with as migrants from Latin America, say, could identify with post-colonial Spain (Triandafyllidou 2000).

Sociologist Ronit Lentin has recently put forward a psychoanalytic-like argument that Ireland's own traumatic historical experience of post-Famine emigration, rather than tending to elicit empathetic feelings for migrants, is activated at a vernacular level by the presence of migrants in contemporary Ireland and gets in the way of adopting a more humane response (Lentin 2001). According to Lentin, 'interrogating the Irish "we" cannot evade interrogating the painful past of

emigration, a wound still festering because it was never tended…and which, I would suggest, is returning to haunt the Irish people through the presence of the immigrant "other" (Lentin 2001, p. 4). In this view, the experience of mass out-migration in the mid-nineteenth century represents a deep, and as yet unresolved, body blow to Irish society that inhibits its capacity to adopt a welcoming attitude to the stranger.

For these reasons, one would predict that the experience of immigration would likely result in the foregrounding in print media discourse of exclusionary understandings of Irish identity and an emphasis on the difference between natives and newcomers and how the presence of migrants in Irish society threatens the homogeneity of the nation. The empirical evidence, however, suggests that this has not happened or at least not to the extent that one would expect it to.

How can this counterintuitive finding emphasizing the relationship between the past and the present be understood? I want to suggest that the inclusive rhetorical and discursive strategies reflect Ireland's concern with its image and standing in the world. This line of argument emphasizing the global dramaturgical dimension of the discursive construction of national identity is associated with cultural sociologists such as Meyer, Boli, Thomas & Ramirize (1997) and McNeely (1995). Puzzled by the apparent structural similarities between nation-states with disparate histories and cultural traditions, they argue that, 'worldwide models define and legitimate agendas for local action, shaping structures and policies of nation-states and other national and local actors in virtually all the domains of rationalized social life- business, politics, education, medicine, science, even the family and religion' (Meyer/Boli/ Thomas/Ramirez 1997, p. 145) to create a remarkable one-world or what they choose to call a 'world society'. As we shall see, this theoretical perspective offers a fruitful way of making sense of press discourse in Ireland around the issue of immigration. But before doing this, we need to develop a sense of what 'Irishness' looked like prior to the migration experience, a topic to which I now turn.

Mapping Irish Identity over Time

The focus of this research is looking at change in Irish national identity as a result of migration. To cast light on this, it is necessary to have some sense of what national identity was like prior to the migratory experience and whether this collective identity was constructed in terms of an ethnic or a civic conception of nationhood. An ethnic conception of identity is one that emphasizes things such as a shared language, history and memory while a civic conception of identity constructs identity in terms of shared legal and political codes (Triandafyllidou 1999). In Ireland, culture (loosely defined in terms of religion, sport and language) has been the major conduit through which national identity has come to be defined. An important point to make at the outset is that the terms of Irish

collective identity have vacillated between the universal and particular dimensions of identity. Around the foundation of the state and prior to it as well, the specificity of Irishness came to the fore whereas in more recent times, with attempts to embrace non-territorial definitions of national identity, a more inclusivist understanding of identity has been put forward.

Historically, Irish national identity, from its establishment as an independent state in 1921, has been cast in terms of a shared language, history, religion, culture and territory(Kee 1972; Kane 1997; Davis 2003; Lee 1988; White 1996). The Irish Free State was based on religiously-inspired pastoral ideals set against the 'polluting' effects of materialism, urbanization and industrialization and above all, modernization (Miller 1990), an ideology that to a large extent structured the policies and programmes of the early state. One important articulator of this early sense of national identity emphasizing, or more accurately, idealizing an ethnic 'Irish Ireland' was President Eamon De Valera. In a celebrated 'Dream' speech to the nation, St. Patrick's Day, 1943, he outlined his future vision for the good life in a way that identified Irishness with land, religion and language. For DeValera, Ireland would be a society that put a high value on agriculture, valorized strong intergenerational relations, and looked inward rather than outward for its own growth and development. This vision held considerable sway in Ireland throughout the 1950s but even by this time challenges to it were manifesting themselves within the country's political and cultural elite that inherited DeValera's legacy (Lee 1989).

The 1960s heralded important changes in Ireland's relationship to the outside world though Irishness continued to be defined in ethnic terms. Through the leadership of modernizing politicians such as Sean Lemass, the old policy of self-sufficiency was abandoned in favor of opening up the economy to foreign-owned multinational companies through an agenda of export-driven industrial development (White, 1996). Furthermore, the advent of television in the 1960s exposed people to Anglo-Saxon liberal values, lifestyles and influences that challenged the hegemony of traditional sources of values most notably the Catholic Church (Inglis 1998; Fahey 1992). The 1970s and 80s were periods of economic decline in Ireland and unemployment and emigration levels soared as the country seemed unable, despite the nationalist project, to provide for its own people (O'Toole 1994). The 1990s, when the economic boom immortalized in the Celtic Tiger took off, saw a discernible shift in Irish identity though one still rooted in ethnicity. The marketing and theming of Ireland as a global spectacle, evidenced in such things as Riverdance, the ubiquitous Irish pub and the celebration of Irish music and literature, and the commodification of consumer goods as Irish, all pointed to the reinvention of and engagement with Irishness, sometimes as a receptacle of certain ideological codes (Negra 2006; Fagan 2002). Efforts by the then Irish President, Mary Robinson, to include the global Irish diaspora as part of the national 'we', represented an important reconfiguration of the spatial boundaries of Irishness.

Overall then, discourse or more simply *talk* about Irish national identity following the establishment of the Irish Free State in 1921 privileged an ethnic conception of national identity over a civic conception. This is indicated by the frequent references in public discourse and rhetoric by politicians and other public actors to ethnic elements of collective identity identified by Smith (1991) such as language, history, collective memory and religion that distinguish the Irish from other ethnic groups. For the most part, however, Travellers, Jews and Protestants were excluded from understandings of nationhood and citizenship (Garner 2004). The hegemonic construction of citizenship was defined, then, in terms of a Catholic, settled person's worldview that privileged certain notions about property-owning, community and kinship.

Data and Methods

To explore changes in elements of national identity in the print media, I chose to examine the *Irish Times* (IT) newspaper. I chose to examine this newspaper because it is a national daily broadsheet newspaper and, it could be argued, represents the newspaper of authority and prominence resorted to by scholars, and political and economic elites, on important issues of the day (see Dillon 1993; Mac an Ghaill/Hanafin/Conway 2004; Devereux/Haynes 2000). In short, the IT can be usefully thought of as a 'newspaper of record' (Mulcahy 1995, p. 454). I chose to focus on opinion and editorial articles because it is more likely that they will contain a more explicit elaboration of views and attitudes about migrants than would likely be found in basic news reports. As Yadgar reminds us, editorial and opinion pieces 'are those that touch upon the interpretative issues in the most direct, conscious and explicit way' (Yadgar 2002, p. 60).

The IT newspaper was founded in 1859 as a Protestant newspaper (Brady 2005). It represents, according to Dillon, 'an essentially liberal and secular perspective on current affairs and events' (Dillon 1993, p. 110). While it is not identified with any specific political party or ideology, its readership consists mainly of white, urban, middle-class people. The IT has a daily circulation of 116,009 (Adminstration Yearbook and Diary 2005, p. 291). A main daily edition is sold in Ireland but an international edition is also sold in European countries such as England, Spain and Belgium and the paper often features in the foreign newspapers section of libraries and newsagents in the Anglo-American world.

It is worth noting that a number of media scholars have pointed to the role of the media in perpetuating a dominant ideology or set of ideologies (Haynes/Devereux/Breen 2004; Devereux 2003; Erjavec 2003). This line of argument, positing the media as a hegemonic force, has come under criticism for the lack of attention it pays to the agency of media audiences or consumers. Nonetheless, this dominant ideology argument continues to hold considerable sway as a theoretical position within media studies.

But ideology enters not just into the ownership and control of the media but also the production process. Media professionals such as journalists or column writers also embody certain ideologies that tend to privilege the views of powerful groups in society and to marginalize subaltern groups such as migrants and Travellers. Bearing these arguments in mind, we should be cautious, then, about making strong claims that 'the nation' or 'public opinion' can be straightforwardly read off from media texts like opinion pieces sometimes seen as the mouthpiece of cultural elites. It is more useful, I think, to consider the press as an important canvas, though not the only one, which shapes and is shaped by public opinion (de Nie 2004; Erjavec 2003).

The time period under study is 1996-2004, a period that itself was marked by major social and cultural changes in Ireland. I chose this period because of the availability of internet online archives for the IT extending over this timeframe and because it was at this time that the number of asylum seekers and refugees coming to Ireland began to increase significantly. I used the search terms 'refugee', 'asylum seeker', and 'migration' to identify opinion and feature articles, letters to the editor, editorials and pieces from the Irishman's Diary section of the paper. Importantly, the IT online archive allows users to search topics by section of the paper and by year, making it a user-friendly and readily accessible data source for scholars. The time period covered here encompasses important political events bearing upon immigration including the 2004 citizenship referendum[1] and the enactment of the Refugee Act 1996, the Immigration Act 1999 and the Illegal Immigration (Trafficking) Act 2000.

Using these search terms, 528 articles were initially identified. From the total 528 articles published I identified 136 articles as pertinent to this study broken down as follows: migration (n=17), asylum seeker (n=58) and refugee (n=61). I feel reasonably assured to have picked up most if not all opinion articles having to do with immigration in the specified time period. In terms of the temporal trajectory[2] of the data, I found that 2000 yielded the highest number of articles (29% of the total). Surprisingly, very few articles were yielded in and around the 2004 citizenship referendum campaign.

In reading and re-reading the full-text articles, I paid particular attention to whether they mentioned or elaborated upon one or more of the following key themes identified as important by prior research on the construction of collective identity in press discourse in the context of immigration (Triandafyllidou 1999;

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[1] In this referendum, the Irish people were asked to amend the Irish constitution to extend citizenship rights to non-national parents of Irish-born children. The amendment was rejected in a popular vote by an almost 4 to 1 margin. This represented, it could be argued, an important landmark in the creation of a racialised state in Ireland.

[2] The concept of temporal trajectory comes from the work of Mac an Ghaill, Hanafin & Conway (2004).

Pickering 2001; Spaan/ Van Naerssen/Kohl 2002; Erjavec 2003; Mehan 1997)[3]: (1) history/collective memory/language/religion/territory (2) national heroes and, (3) relationships to other nations.

The key method of analysis employed here is discourse analysis. This can be understood as the examination of language and how it is used to constitute the social world. In this view, talk/language/discourse is not taken at face value but rather is viewed as a site of political claim-making and ideological work validating dominant power relations (de Nie 2004; Devereux 2003; Mulcahy 1995). Hence the role of the print media, which is critically implicated in the construction of the imagined community of the nation (Anderson 1983), is to mediate, interpret and create our collective reality drawing on a repertoire of culturally available myths, narratives and traditions (Yadgar 2002; Mulcahy 1995; Swidler 1986).

Methodologically, the analysis in this paper is restricted to a single national mainstream newspaper. It is quite conceivable that had other newspapers, particularly the non-broadsheet tabloid press or local newspaper sources, been included within the ambit of the study that somewhat different, perhaps contradictory, findings would have emerged. Time and resource constraints, however, did not allow the inclusion of these other media outlets. Haynes, Breen and Devereux found a number of press framings of migration in their important study of media constructions of asylum seekers in Ireland (Haynes/Breen/Devereux 2005). Most of these frames are negative with respect to asylum seekers and most of the headlines and illustrative quotes provided as evidence of otherising discourses come from the Irish tabloid press. Only a handful came from the two broadsheet papers – the *Irish Times* and *Irish News* – included in their analysis. Importantly, their analysis was confined to one sub-set of the migrant population – asylum seekers. They conclude lamenting the 'biased, ignorant and racist tone of much of the Irish print media discourse' (Haynes/Breen/ Devereux 2005, p. 129) and speculating that 'there appears to be a collective amnesia about the experience of Irish emigrants to England, the US and further afield, who often experience racism at various levels' (Haynes/Breen/Devereux 2005, p. 130).

But, as I hope to show, it is not so much that this emigration experience is being disavowed in opinion and editorial pieces in the newspapers we examined but that it is explicitly claimed as a rationale for exhorting a positive political response to migrants. In the interests of clarity, I present the analysis of the newspaper data under two headings: (1) the historical duty argument and, (2) the myth of Saint Patrick, and then attempt to suggest an explanation for the use of historical symbolism in the discursive construction of national identity. I select a number of quotes from newspaper articles as illustrative of the two cultural reference points found within the articles reviewed. 14% of the articles reviewed contained references to the historical duty argument and slightly less than 1% made

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[3] van Dijk's (1991) pioneering work is a point of departure for many of these studies.

reference to the myth of Saint Patrick. Although 1% is a small percentage, one would not expect this cultural reference point to be invoked frequently outside of the month of March of each year. Indeed, all of the references to St. Patrick were confined to the month of March. I think it is noteworthy that the myth of Saint Patrick was explicitly linked with the immigration debate.

The Historical Duty Argument

A key and recurring argument put forward in press constructions of migration was the historical duty argument (Garner 2004, p. 161), a normative argument positing Ireland's own past experience as a crucial mediator of its contemporary response to immigration: 'Irish people have been (and still are) immigrants elsewhere. Therefore today they should empathise, and treat others in that position with respect and welcome' (Garner 2004, p. 159). Proponents of this position that mobilises collective memories of past Irish emigration and is linked to feelings of solidarity come mainly from civil society organizations. Closely allied with this way of thinking is a Christian duty argument, which also finds expression in the data examined here, drawing on biblical notions about welcoming the stranger as one's own, an argument forcefully advanced by Sister Stanislaus Kennedy, a well-known religious campaigner on social justice issues:

> 'No room at the inn'. Ever since those chilling words in the Gospel account of the First Christmas, Christians have associated Christmas with the idea of welcoming those who have no place to lay their heads, exiles in their homeland and other lands. In Ireland we have a tradition of the candle in the window as a sign to the stranger that there is a welcome to be had at any house where it burns, and most of us with homes still light that Christmas candle. But I think we have forgotten its significance. Since 1996 over 300,000 people have migrated to Ireland, the majority from EU countries; many are returned emigrants, and the others are people of many nationalities, cultures, religions, colour and economic status (Opinion article, IT, December 23, 2002).

Lentin's traumatic memory argument has currency among cultural and literary critics such as Luke Gibbons and John Waters (Haslam 1999) but the data analysed in this paper points to the need to rethink the impact of past cultural trauma on contemporary social attitudes and behavior. Rather than constructing Ireland as a 'damaged child' (Haslam 1999) scarred by its troubling past and unable to liquidate it, the analysis in this paper suggests that lessons can be learned from the past to improve conditions in the present. Put another way, I want to argue that the past may be more enabling than disabling, and that the newspaper data here does not support the emphasis on the troubling and debilitating weight of memory in contemporary Ireland. So it is not that the past should be forgotten but rather that the past can be *used* or *mobilised* in more or less inclusivist ways. A few examples I have chosen to highlight reflect this historical duty argument:

> They (asylum seekers/refugees) should be encouraged to contribute in a full and positive way to this society. Our own history of emigration demands such a response (Editorial, IT, July 8, 1998).

> Having lived for so long with the problem of emigration, we now need to devise a policy to deal with immigration. The Government has singularly failed to do so (Opinion article, IT, December 14, 1999).

> It cannot be easily forgotten that Irish emigrants were welcomed on many shores for many generations in our history. We have a special obligation to show the world a lead (Editorial, IT, March 28, 2000).

> It seems we are terrified of being ripped off. We can't bear the thought that people might be coming here to take advantage of us – never mind that we have a long history of economic emigration ourselves (Opinion article, IT, March 29, 2000).

> With two centuries of experience behind us, every family in Ireland understands the process of migration: the pressures to leave; the factors that affect where migrants go; the vicissitudes that migrants face; and finally, why many people – our returning emigrants or 'homing pigeons' – ultimately return here to live. Given that we know so much about our own experience of emigration, it is surprising how many myths have developed around the reverse process, as foreigners come to live in Ireland (Opinion article, IT, September 3, 2002).

> One would think that our history of emigration would make us kind to those who come to live with us either temporarily or in a more long-term way; sadly, the ICI report is replete with examples showing little of such fellow-feeling exists (Opinion article, IT, October 10, 2003).

It should be pointed out that the historical duty argument advanced in these opinion pieces is problematic to the extent that it represents a lumping argument that views all emigrants in the past and all migrants to Ireland in contemporary times as homogenous groups devoid of internal variation and, crucially, overlooks the structural impediments to migration (Garner 2004). Moreover, it glosses over the differing motivations and outcomes – political, economic and social – of different immigrant groups in different times and places (Kennedy 1996). It seems to suggest that only if attitudes shifted migrants could readily participate as full members of their host societies without going beyond this and paying attention to the institutional forces and influences that get in the way of this integration process. Another surprising feature of this argument is how temporally truncated[4] it seems to be because its sense of historical time only extends back to the mid-

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[4] The concept of temporal truncation comes from the work of Conway (2001).

nineteenth century. If we go further back in time, say to the Norman invasion of Ireland eight centuries ago, there is ample evidence of the Irish capacity to welcome the stranger but this is not invoked at all (Kiberd 2005; Rolston/Shannon 2002).

The Myth of Saint Patrick

Beyond the historical duty argument, a common rhetorical device that was employed, especially during the month of March, was the myth of St. Patrick. Again, a few examples illustrate this, beginning first with the comments of Noel Ahern, a member of parliament, in which he mobilizes the collective memory of Ireland's national hero and patron saint St. Patrick to understand the current circumstances of migrants:

> Coming (a media report that asylum seekers are paying up to 5000 to traffickers to gain entry into Ireland) at the end of the festival of St. Patrick, it brought it home that the exploitation which Patrick knew as a boy at the hands of unscrupulous traders and criminals has not faded with time. The last days remind us that exile and deprivation are at the heart of the Irish experience. I believe this heritage is a key part of why we must move forward with a balanced, just and humane approach to the asylum issue in modern Ireland (Opinion article, IT, March 21, 2000).

Other noteworthy examples of the myth of St. Patrick activated in immigration debates include the following:

> St. Patrick can be a more inclusive symbol of identity. Such a recognition of diversity applies both in the politics of immigration/emigration and in that of national reconciliation (Editorial, IT, 17 March 1998).

> What ought therefore to make St. Patrick an appropriate patron for the Irish everywhere is that he lived through the experience of being a slave, a captive, a stranger, a barbarian who didn't speak the language, and the butt of other people's righteous condemnation' (Opinion article, IT, March 20, 1998).

> No tradition can pass on without alternatives, without the possibility of borrowing, rejecting and reinterpreting. And that is constantly being done. The fact that St. Patrick and St. Patrick's Day already belong to millions of people who aren't Irish makes them the most inclusive of Irish symbols, and augurs well for St. Patrick's continued relevance to a changing Irish society (Opinion article, IT, March 17, 2000).

> Today is an occasion for joy and for pride in our Irishness. In celebrating St. Patrick, however, we should reflect on the Christian message he brought to

this island and treat migrant workers and asylum seekers with the generosity and compassion so often shown to Irish people abroad. Newcomers have the capacity to enrich our society, both culturally and economically. We are becoming a multi-cultural society. It is a development we should embrace on this St. Patrick's Day (Editorial, IT, March 17, 2003).

Thus, St. Patrick, the embodiment of the nation, is frequently invoked as a symbol of inclusiveness and the humanization of migrants. But this line of reasoning in which St. Patrick is constructed as a symbol of inclusivity underpinning an integrated Ireland is, I want to argue, problematic, or at the very least, glosses over the extent to which the national saint is a free floating signifier. While March 17 has a long history as a day of ethno-national celebration, St. Patrick's capacity to stand for inclusion is by no means uncontested. At certain times and in certain places, he is a symbol of inclusion but debates around St. Patrick's Day in North America, Northern Ireland and in the Republic of Ireland in recent times suggest that the patron saint is as much a symbol of polarity as he is one of pluralism (Cronin/Adair 2002; Rolston 2003). Consider, for instance, the contested nature of St. Patrick's Day celebrations in Northern Ireland and the semiotic struggle over whether the saint belongs to one or other of this society's two divided communities. Catholics claim St. Patrick as the bringer of Christianity to Ireland, credit him with banishing snakes from Ireland's shores, and associate him with celebrating what it means to be Irish, while Protestants tend to read something different into him. Protestants tend to take the view that he spent most of his life and work in the northern part of the island. They point out that he is buried in Northern Ireland and that he may well have not even ventured into southern Irish society (Rolston 2003). This contestation points to the indeterminacy and semiotic openness of St. Patrick's symbolic meaning in place of the fixed, unchanging notion of him articulated in the press discourse examined here. Stated differently, St. Patrick can be seen as an empty shell onto which different people, depending on their socio-political viewpoints, can impute or hang a range of, sometimes contradictory, readings, meanings and interpretations.

Historical Symbolism and National Identity

In this paper I have tried to argue that two key narratives are taken up in the national newspaper examined here to mediate the experience of immigration and, in many cases, to counter anti-immigrant discourses. At one level, one could view this counter-discourse calling for a benign response to immigrants, through appeals about seeing the self in the other, as a reaction against the ill-treatment of immigrants in different domains of social life in Ireland. But I want to go a step further by positing that this corrective inclusionary discourse is crucially linked to how Ireland wants to position itself on the world stage. It's simply not 'cool' or 'nice' anymore for nation-states, especially small nations like Ireland, to be perceived by other more powerful nations, as hostile to immigration, a normalized experience for countries with first-world credentials (see Kennedy 1996). In line with world-polity theory put forward by Meyer, Boli, Thomas and Ramirez (1997),

I contend that national societies are not bounded entities but are crucially shaped, in terms of their economic, political and social norms and structures, by transnational organisations such as the United Nations. By adhering to the values and institutions promoted by these bodies, nation-states acquire cultural capital. In this context, the print media offers an important canvas on which nation-state's can discursively announce their identity and conformity to world-polity models of social action. This, in my view, helps to explain the inclusive nature of the print media discourse examined here.

In what sense, then, can the historical duty argument and the world position argument be linked? I want to argue that the link can be understood in a straightforward and relatively simple way. Because Ireland wants to be seen as modern and progressive in the eyes of other nations, it wants to present itself as a society that, rather than being captive to its past traumatic historical experiences, on the contrary, is a society that has learned positive political lessons from them. By positioning its relationship to the past in this way, historical memory becomes an enabling rather than a disabling lens through which to understand the present (Eagleton 2005).

Conclusion

This paper has sought to examine media constructions of migration in the *Irish Times* newspaper over a eight-year time period in an attempt to reveal what this might suggest about how and why Irish identity has been framed the way it has against a backdrop of demographic change. I have argued that while Ireland's history of racialisation would predict that it would likely adopt an exclusive understanding of its national collective identity, the data examined here suggests that, the print media as a crucial actor in shaping our collective sense of the world around us, mobilises two key inclusive cultural narratives to mediate the experience of immigration. Why this has happened, it seems to me, can be accounted for in terms of the global cultural argument that I have put forward in this paper, emphasizing Ireland's concern about its world position.

Finally, this paper points to the fact that while migration is now a truly *global* phenomenon the experience of it is very much grounded in terms of specific *national* histories, narratives and myths. Migrant receiving societies, like Ireland, tend to interpret new and unsettling demographic experiences in terms of familiar and well-known cultural stories and these can be mobilized in inclusive or exclusive ways depending on the weight a given society attaches to how it stands beyond its own territorially-bound shores and the extent to which it endorses cultural scripts constructed at an international level.

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