

**BEYOND INTEGRATION: *AN INQUIRY INTO THE LIVED  
EXPERIENCES OF IMMIGRANTS IN IRELAND***

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# CHAPTER ONE

## WHAT THIS INQUIRY IS ABOUT

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The process of supporting immigrants to become bona fide members of host societies remains a challenge for many Countries, a situation which continues to be problematic and complex for both old and new immigration Countries as evidenced by the 2005 civil unrest in Paris, the Cronulla riot in 2005 and the Oldham riot in 2001. In recent years, with increased inward migration, Ireland seemed to have joined the host of Countries faced with the task of how to integrate newcomers while the newcomers themselves grapple with acquiring a place in the Society. Both groups appear to have located the solution in the social concept called integration. As a result, we have host countries like Ireland working on the premise that if immigrants who have legal residency status can just integrate then everything will be fine. While immigrants who according to Penninx (2010) are joint partners in the integration process have barely had their views sought or included in formulation of strategy or policy. He maintained that the two groups; the hosts and the newcomers are ‘unequal partners’ and that their interaction ‘determines the ultimate outcome of the integration process’ where the host community is the deciding factor (p. 3). This thesis is an attempt to get more understanding of the integration process as immigrants see it by exploring their lived experience and giving voice to their perspectives.

Many of Ireland’s attempts to address the integration of immigrants have been influenced by the international debate. Following the adoption of the Common Basic Principles on Integration (appx 5), the European Commission, stated that ‘developing clear goals, indicators and evaluation mechanisms are necessary to adjust policy, evaluate progress on integration and to make exchange of information more effective’ (European Commission, 2005). The Integration Centre in 2010 partnered with the ESRI to produce Ireland's first immigrant integration monitor by measuring migrant integration in four life domains – employment, education, social inclusion and active citizenship ([www.integrationcentre.ie](http://www.integrationcentre.ie)). The inference here is that an immigrant who is able to effectively function in these four life domains will be ‘deemed’ to be integrated.

However, I believe that functioning effectively in these areas is not sufficient to feel integrated. Thus I am interested in exploring the internal and external experience of integration by immigrants.

## **1.1 RESEARCH QUESTION**

This study seeks to explore the lived experiences of Immigrants in Ireland who can effectively function in the four life domains under which integration progress is measured - Employment, Education, social inclusion (housing, language to interact with the host society) and active citizenship. I wish to investigate if achieving these core indicators is sufficient for immigrants to feel integrated.

The aim of the study is to explore:

- a. The lived experiences of Immigrants in Ireland who can effectively function in the four life domains under which Integration is monitored.
- b. The ways in which these lived experiences impacts on their sense of integration.
- c. How the insights gained from this group can contribute to the body of knowledge and therefore influence the work of Adult Educators and Guidance Practitioners who function in the role of supporting immigrants in the integration process.

## 1.2 REASON FOR CHOICE OF RESEARCH STUDY

We are not indifferent to what we study. (Esterberg, 2002, p. 11)

As an immigrant actively engaged in the integration process I wonder if integration is as simple as getting employment, housing, health, Citizenship. Do immigrants become integrated after acquiring these positions? When and how do immigrants become integrated, when and what makes them feel integrated and what factors influenced the integration process? Apart from Government definitions and what meaning do immigrants ascribe to integration and how do they construct the concept? The answers I believe are with the immigrants as such, I suggest that it is time for Ireland as a nation to begin to dialogue with the immigrants its partners in the integration process in meaningful ways. Not just as research informants but by allowing them contribute to, define and speak about what makes integration work for them.

As a first generation immigrant who has been resident in Ireland for over nine years, I consider myself actively engaged in the integration process and accepted by the indigenous Irish community. I however question this acceptance in my private musings, was I accepted because I am human or was I accepted because I look like 'you' (you being the dominant population) maybe not in looks as I am dark skinned (though many immigrants have tried to artificially lighten their skin colour). I mean look like you in speech, dressing, and mannerisms. If it is because I look like you, then the big question is what parts of me have been chipped away to fit into that image. Can people be encouraged to name this 'chipping away', does it exist inside the integration process or is this just me?

The fact is I have a good life in Ireland, in fact, a very good life where I am well respected and valued by people from my ethnic group and from the host community. Yet there is a nigging feeling inside creating a paradox of questions. Why did I need to change to fit in, did I need to change, what are these changes are they bad changes really. How did I know to change, what informed my change, an endless barrage of questions?

I presently work as an Adult Guidance Counsellor with EPIC, an organisation that supports immigrants who are resident in Ireland to find employment or education as a means to encourage their integration in Ireland. In 2010, we had participants from over 68 different nationalities many of whose ultimate goal is to get employment. In light of my personal ponderings, I wonder - if I am going through this thinking process, what about my clients, are they thinking the same? For instance when we send clients for courses to improve their English, change their curriculum vitae to match the Irish standard, when we teach them to shake hands and make eye contact when they attend interviews just how exactly do the changes we demand impact on them personally? In the process of supporting clients and moving them on, what quality of life are we moving them to and what is the price of giving up a familiar way of being?

Like Maslow (1943) and his approach in the study of motivation, I wanted to investigate these aspects of integration by exploring the experiences of immigrants who already function effectively in the four life domains. The reasoning behind this for me was to generate data that was as free as possible from being clouded by the struggle to function in those domains such as in seeking employment or language to communicate.

### **1.3 RESEARCH HOPE**

I hope that the findings of this inquiry might be impactful in three main areas, on an individual level, my practice as an Adult Guidance Counsellor and Educator and also contribute to the body of knowledge. On an individual level, it will be an opportunity for the participants and I to reflectively consider our experience of integration in Ireland. I hope to gain more insight about the integration process and by so doing understand more about my process thereby become more aware of the different aspects of myself and how to live with them. This knowledge is important because it might help me to be able to engage more fully in the Irish community. I hope that the knowledge gained will provide useful insights to other immigrants and also influence the way the host community receives 'strangers' like myself who can go from being temporary visitors to long term residents.

Secondly I hope it will influence my practice as an Adult Guidance Counsellor and Educator in my direct work with clients who are all immigrants and also inform our organizational practice. I anticipate that the increase in knowledge can influence our training and client-practitioner interaction and relationship.

Lastly, I envisage that the insights gained will contribute to the body of knowledge by informing more in depth research and policy on integration and inspire a more collaborative process of knowledge generation in Adult Education and Guidance and Counselling.

#### **1.4 MY RESEARCHER SELF**

I hold the dual position of an insider and outsider in relation to this study. My insider status comes from identifying with the participants as a first generation immigrant in Ireland the same as all the participants. Some would suggest this insider position is an advantage for focus groups (Ester Madriz 1998, cited in Esterberg, 20002). She claimed that ‘sharing important similarities’, leads to rapport, which ‘enhances the likelihood of a successful focus group session’ (p. 111)

My outsider status comes from me taking on the role of researcher, in other words, my researcher self is an outsider to the participants. To add to the richness of the data generation process, I have maintained a narrative telling the story of my journey through the study

In approaching the research question which explored the lived experience of immigrants in Ireland who are functioning effectively in the four life domains through which the integration process is measured, I am aware as a researcher I bring a philosophical perspective to this inquiry which influences the design, research question, strategy, method, choice of data source, data collection and analyses. In fact Silverman (2001) claimed that it shapes the relationship one sees between theory and data.

I believe that two individuals can see exactly the same thing and yet describe it differently based on how they construct/ make meaning of it. This view according to

Jackson and Sorensen (2007) is borne from the constructivist philosophy, where the social world is not seen as a given: it is not something 'out there' that exists independent of the thoughts and ideas of the people involved in it. 'The social and political world is not part of nature (p.165) rather, social theory emphasizes the social construction of reality. People who have this view as the way the world operates are called constructivists a position which I take. Jackson and Sorensen encapsulate the desired outcome which I have for integration and that is 'change becomes possible in a big way because people and states can start thinking about each other in new ways and thus create new norms that may be radically different from old ones' (p. 162).

## **1.5 SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

This inquiry is an exploration of the lived experiences of five immigrants who are effectively functioning in the four life domains in Ireland under which the integration process is monitored. In this chapter, I outline my reason for carrying out this study. I also set out the research question and research hope and define my philosophical stance and dual positioning as insider and outsider. The chapter ends with a description of all the chapters.

In Chapter two, I consider previous work on integration focusing on the Irish context, the complexity of the process and challenges in adopting a definition. I argue that the role of the host community is more of a decider for the outcome of contact with new cultures. I pose a constant question: if to be, is to be like?

In Chapter three I describe how I carried out the research through a small group interview where five immigrants had a conversation about two fictionalised stories (Jane and Paul's stories) which I wrote in order to start a conversation. I also discuss the ideas which influenced my choices. I tell the story of how the study progressed and what changes were adopted.

In Chapter four, I present the research findings in three main themes and subthemes Acceptance, Positioning and Multiple identities are the emergent themes. I critically

analyse the findings through the theoretical perspective of Maslow's theory of motivation, Social Identity and positioning as a conversational phenomenon.

In Chapter five, I conclude that the complexities involved in the integration process are in-depth. I engage with Freire's pedagogy focusing on the oppressive aspects of integration, using my experience as supporting evidence where my voice finds a release and speaks for me. I summarise the conclusions of the study and contribute to available knowledge on working with immigrants based on the insight gained.

## **1.6 LIMITATIONS OF THIS INQUIRY**

This study explored the lived experiences of immigrants who can and are actively functioning in the life domains through which integration is measured. I am however aware that there are other immigrants who cannot effectively function in these life domains described and that their experiences and accounts might be different and also important for a more complete picture of integration. However, it is beyond the scope of this study investigate those experiences.

The second limitation is that I am aware of the number of first generation youths and children who might have a different integration experience, this research is also not able to cover that scope at this time. So it is limited to the experiences of adults of working age.



# CHAPTER TWO

## MY RESEARCH JOURNEY

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

In deciding on a research method and paradigm, most researchers are faced with a range of alternatives. The two broad paradigms presently available are the qualitative and quantitative which have their roots in twentieth century philosophical thinking. These paradigms have been pitched against each other such that their usage is presented as an either or, though some recommend a combination of both especially when trying to achieve triangulation. This study like most research was no exception in having to choose from the available array of research methods associated with the paradigms as I grappled with understanding my research position and how best to generate new knowledge.

In approaching the research question which focused on exploring the lived experiences of Immigrants in Ireland who are effectively functioning in the four life domains under which integration progress is measured - Employment, Education, social inclusion (housing, language to interact with the host society) and active citizenship. The specific question I am faced with is how I as a researcher select a suitable paradigm and corresponding methodology.

Qualitative and quantitative paradigms have some basic assumptions and understanding of which Silverman (2001), states is one way through which direction can be obtained for designing a research study. Quantitative research views reality as something that can be measured objectively using a questionnaire or an instrument. It also holds that the researcher remain separate from the research. The main assumption is that one uses a deductive form of logic and concepts, variables and hypothesis are chosen before the study and remain fixed. In other words, 'the research is context free' Creswell (1994, p. 7). The qualitative research on the other hand sees reality as that which is constructed by individuals in the research situation. It involves the views held by the researcher, the researched and the readers of the research. It operates on the assumption that it encourages the researcher to interact with the informants and inductive logic is used.

Silverman (2001) recommends the use of qualitative methods if people's 'life history or everyday life' is being explored (p. 25).

### *Grounded Theory Methodology*

In this study, I employ the grounded theory methodology which was first presented by Glaser and Strauss (1967). They simply described it as 'the discovery of theory from data' (p. 1). In grounded theory, researchers 'begin by examining the social world and, in that process develop a theory consistent with what you are seeing' Esterberg (2002, p. 7). According to Bryman and Burgess (1999), the emphasis of grounded theory is on theory development, they however stress that researchers can aim at various levels of theory when using it. Due to the scope of this study I cannot claim to be developing theory, rather, I will proffer suggestions of theory from the studies for further development.

## **2.1 THE QUALITATIVE RESEARCHER**

As a qualitative researcher, there are a few qualities that enhance the quality of a research. Many (Silverman, 2001; Esterberg, 2002) write that the researcher's value cannot be left out of the conversation. Creswell (1994) recommends that the qualitative researcher needs to report faithfully the various realities, rely on the voices and interpretations of informants, 'interact with those being researched and try to '...minimise the distance between them' (p. 6). This is later echoed by May where she said

Particular ideas of neutrality such as the maintenance of objectivity through positioning the researcher as nothing but a passive instrument of data collection are now exposed as falsehood that seeks to mask the realities of the research process. The Knower (researcher) is now implicated in the construction of the known (the dynamics and content of society and social relations) (2002, p. 2)

Though there are many ways of carrying out qualitative research, Mason (2002) argues that it requires the use of active 'thinking and doing' skills (p. 5). Meaning

that the researcher has to ask themselves questions about their research, deliberate on and resolve them. For Mason, it is a critical yet creative way of thinking and doing. This self-questioning activity is what Mason described as reflexive acts which she said might be a very hard process and she highly recommended it for qualitative research and defines it as

Thinking critically about what you are doing, why, confronting and often challenging your own assumptions, and recognizing the extent to which your thoughts, actions and decisions shape how you research and what you see. (Mason, 2002, p. 5)

## **2.2 INSIGHT FROM QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWING**

‘Human reality is multifaceted’ Esterberg (2002, p. 11)

In preparation for the interview group, I found the following insights very useful. Ratner stated that interviews elicit a verbal context that illuminates the social meaning that the interviewee is expressing as such cultural psychologist use interviews to identify which social meaning an individual has adopted. The fact that interviewees can be directly asked to explain his/her meaning provides opportunities for a study like this that hopes to explore the internal experience involved in immigrants integration process, Ratner (2002). He claims that

Interviews can be used to ascertain both social as well as individual meanings, penetrating beneath immediate superficial responses to comprehend true motives, perceptions, attitudes, emotions and personality traits.

(Ratner 1977a, cited in Ratner 2002, p. 146)

He goes further to sound a note of caution that answers from interviewees can have different meanings depending on if they are giving a social or individual meaning makes interviews advantageous over questionnaires as it allows one to address inconsistencies. One of qualitative questionnaire notorious problems according to Ratner (2002) is that of order effect which changes in responses to the same question when they are asked in different orders. He claims it is due to the fact that individuals respond to questions on the basis of their frames of reference. He also mentioned some

vital aspects to consider especially in analysing conversations because interviews as he argues can capture complexities and multifacetedness where the same situation can be both positive and negative at the same time, especially when considered in retrospect (p. 149-150).

Until I read the work of Ratner, I assumed that every immigrant would be able to speak and explore issues on integration. He however stressed that knowledge is very much a function of one's social activities that most people are unaware of many social influences in their behaviour and psychology. He argued that social ignorance is not due to lack of intelligence but because 'social influences are difficult to perceive' (p. 152). As a result, I will listen for the participant's feelings, frame of reference, thoughts and hopefully as Ratner (2002) encouraged, 'identify cultural aspects embodied within the participant's statements' (p. 168).

### **2.3 STORIES OF MY RESEARCH JOURNEY**

In this inquiry, I intend to carry the reader along by telling the story of how I moved from a research topic to the group interview, not just focusing on what happened but my thought and how I arrived at the decisions. Silverman (2000) particularly encouraged presenting the methodology chapter as 'the natural history' of the research. He maintained that by asking 'your reader to engage with your thinking in process they are in a far better position to assess the degree to which you were self-critical' (2000, p. 236).

#### *ESCAPING FROM ME*

In the early part of conducting this study, I had a holiday planned to my home Country, Nigeria and my supervisor encouraged me to be open to bring back data to use as part of my research. I wasn't sure how that would happen or what form it would take but I choose to stay open. I became more observant about how I was feeling about things issues that impacted on my integration process in Ireland, journaling regularly to track

my feelings, thoughts and observation. Going to Nigeria and thinking about integration highlighted for me my experience, it gave me different freedom to experience both spaces [Ireland and Nigeria] afresh.

I was simply happy to escape from the responsibility of being 'me' in Ireland as I was really exhausted and I just wanted to go and rest, have fun and be myself. When I got to Nigeria, I had to present a certain image. I was not allowed to be broke (without money), I was expected to be wise, smart, speak well ('spree-spree English' using foreign phonetics) and look nice always with stylish clothes on. My kids were expected to speak with a foreign (English) accent and to not like Nigeria food and they were all surprised that my children were comfortable with Nigerian food. 'Labels' I won't spend money on in Ireland I had to buy them because I had to portray the appearance that I was comfortable abroad if not I won't have met their expectation. This is an extract of the cultural narrative of what living abroad means to us in Nigeria and it also gives me a good basis to compare life here and there, 'me' and 'them'.

Then came Christmas which was really great, the freedom to celebrate it in a way that had meaning for me and I didn't need to down play it or look at it as another 'bank holiday' I was able to celebrate in the way of my faith and that was freeing in itself.

### *DIFFERENT WITH A DIFFERENCE*

Santa Clause was a place of difference for me in Nigeria. We normally have a Christmas tree as would most middle class families some 30 years ago in Nigeria so it was not a strange phenomenon as many Europeans will tend to think when they consider Africa and Christmas. During the visit, my family saw a difference in the way my kids actually believed in Santa being a real phenomenon. In Nigeria, all the kids 'know' Santa is the dressed up neighbour from whom they can get presents but my kids left carrots and a thank you note for Santa and they left out socks with a real hope that they will be filled (and of course they were filled, carrots eaten and letters to Santa were posted!).

My sister was really amazed and I became to them the foreigner so even in Nigeria, I was different again but in a very different way, I was accepted, I was valued, admired and appreciated. I began to compare my integration back home, the lack of the need to integrate in Nigeria as against what I experience in Ireland and my kids who are Irish citizens by birth who see Ireland as home and Nigeria as a holiday. I began to question if in 15 years times will Ireland still be talking about integrating immigrants and this time the second generation immigrants. Will they need to get involved in the struggle that I have an African name but I am Irish? Penninx (2010) argued that ‘the real litmus test for the success or failure of policies in this field, is the position of the migrant’s children’ (p. 5). It was indeed a worrying thought that increased the importance of the inquiry for me. It was no longer just about me completing a thesis, I really wanted to understand this process for myself, my children and the future generations.

#### *SECOND START TO MY RESEARCH- EDNA’S DEATH*

...!!! My sequence stopped as my elder sister Edna died in very tragic circumstances, this signalled the end of my holiday and the beginning of a new phase in my life, a process of self-evaluation and reflection. Edna’s death was my first contact with real loss. During my training in Counselling, to try and feel empathy with people who experience loss, the closest I could go was when my fiance of three years broke up with me or when my long hair which I had nurtured since I was born was cut at the age of six, it was a huge loss for me but never like this, un...uh, ...never like this, this was deep, it was painful, it was quick, unexpected and it was shocking. It brought me in contact with my own mortality and how life can change instantly, I never envisaged this kind of pain.

In the middle of this pain and loss, I had to come back to my research and all I could think about was loss and for the first time, I saw the loss mirrored in my own life here in Ireland, loss of my culture, of who I am because I am different now than I was 10 years ago. ...I am different, most of it good ...in fact very good. I have more freedom to express my more radical sides, but parts of my culture, my music, my faith, traditional

clothes, food, way of life and even values have all been so slowly suppressed that it is almost completely eroded and I rarely display them publicly.

### *NOW I AM KNOWN, NOW I AM SEEN*

I could not travel back to Nigeria to be with my family to complete the process for burial rites for my sister as part of the ritual for the grieving process for us in Nigeria. I decided to organise a service of songs here for her. I came up with the song list, the order of service, and the verses to be read by different people and then I went up and spoke about her and my faith. It was the first time that all aspects of me were together in the same place all equally. My friends, family, colleagues from work, my Africaness (represented by the Nigerian way of saying goodbye to a loved one) and my faith all in a public space at the same time in Ireland, though I was sad and in tears, I also felt whole. The difference was that I didn't feel the need to censor what I said to sound acceptable, I really didn't care but even 'they' (Indigenous Irish present at the event) also were receptive and did not appear to judge me.

On returning to my research ...when I began to thaw, I wanted to change my topic and look at living with loss as an immigrant. It proved too much at that time it meant that I had to interview other immigrants about how they coped with loss being so far away from their home country and immediate family. My loss was still too close, too raw and too deep. Reflecting on integration with my frame of reference being in loss, I began to see the loss involved with my integration process and though I knew it, I was not conscious of it and this experience brought it to the surface and allowed me to look beyond the familiar and to focus on my inner Self.

## **2.4 EXPOSED AT GROUP SUPERVISION EXPERIENCE**

At the group supervision, I presented my research proposal to the group and I talked about what it has taken me to be integrated in Ireland, first it appeared very hard for the group to comprehend as what I was describing appeared not to correspond with my appearance and their perception of me. It highlighted that I have a well formed public

image which I started calling my 'Integrated persona', where I have been able to completely keep from public view my inner world. This increased the questions I had, is this integrated persona a common place for immigrants, what it is like and how do they manage it. The direct questions from the group about my integration experience made me feel vulnerable and exposed as it brought me in touch with the softer side of myself which I usually don't show. The questions needed me to look inside not my nice outward portrayal of integration to be able to give a true answer. To have to say at least to myself that I don't know how integrated I am in Ireland was really challenging. I could not find the voice to say that or to own my anger about integration, inequality, injustice, or what I later describe in chapter five as the dehumanisation of my race.

I don't think I would have been prepared to explore my process to that level three years ago when I first started college with the new group. Time together made the group feel safe and I was confident that my colleagues knew me already and that the conversation wasn't going to change their impression of me. The fact however that I worried about it made me conscious of putting the prospective participants through any uncomfortable feeling, especially if they have not reflected on or voiced these thoughts aloud or to another. It felt like a coming out experience.

## **2.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

A number of ethical issues arose from group supervision that changed the course of the research.

1. How to create an emotionally safe place for the participants;
2. How to focus the inquiry as May (2002) said that the research should be focused and put in context. I needed to be able to explore the inner dynamics involved in the integration process and not just scratch the surface or go over again already explored issues;
3. How as researcher I can be ethical and at the same time open about my bias as I realised that I was very involved in the research both as the researcher and as a research subject, though according to Etherington (2006), 'just by being there we influence the research that is being created' (p. 77). The dilemma then was



on how to balance being both an insider and an outsider to this study and influence the research in an open and clear way without distorting the results with my personal involvement;

4. How do I maintain and protect myself from over exposure of sides of myself that I am not used to displaying being a naturally private person;
5. How to get an informed idea of the level of understanding members of ethnic minorities have about integration without imputing my passion or awareness to the group.

Other consideration which I had in conducting this study included ensuring I had the voluntary participation of the research subjects. Ensuring I got informed consent in that participants were informed of the research topic and questions; who will have access to the information, the procedure for the research, what I hope to do with it and any risks that might be involved with the research. Such as the information they provide being documented in the thesis which will be accessible to others, and the possibility of materials being published in future. Participant's identities were differentiated and protected by using pseudonyms. It was also important to make sure that the participants were safe and are not exposed to any risks as a result of the research particularly from emotional stress from explored issues. Most importantly, make sure I do not put my own interpretation on participant's words. Watch out for issues on reflexivity and how that influences the research result. Make sure the power is shared and balanced between the participants, this was addressed through the selection criteria where all the participants were almost at the same level so no one was at a disadvantage to the other.

## **2.6 THE USE OF FICTIONAL STORIES AS RESEARCH METHOD; *PAUL AND JANE'S STORIES***

The dilemma at this point was on how to proceed with the study and how best to produce data. My supervisor encouraged me to look at cultural ways of having conversations, which led to me employ one of my pastimes, writing. Rinehart (1998) argue that 'Stories when well written allow the reader to be immersed into the

immediacy and vividness of others life stories and to inhabit viscerally their world'. Others (Frank, 2000; Sparkes, 2002) suggest that using stories to represent research can resist premature closure on understanding, conveying complexity and ambiguity make space for alternative interpretations. I then decided to write two stories from different gender perspectives. The challenge was on how factual to make the stories, should I use a fictional autobiography (too personally exposing), or fiction of real stories. I decided on a middle place to use extracts from my personal experience and contact with others from my community. The hope was that it be evocative and would allow the participants the safety to explore their own stories.

### *MAKING THE FAMILIAR STRANGE*

The writing of stories Frank (2000) claim can be especially useful for social scientists trying to come to grips with relatively uncharted terrain and it is seen as a process that allows one think about data in new, unpredictable ways. Many agree (Sparkes, 2002; Knowles & Coles, 2008) that there are two main types of fictional stories being written by social scientists, ethnographic fiction (also called creative nonfiction) and creative fiction. They differ in that ethnographic fiction draws on research data and is based on real events and real people, here the factual evidence is shaped and dramatized using fictional techniques. It uses scenes to 'show rather than tell, it builds interest through character development and uses plots to create dramatic tension and it includes authorial presence to heighten analytic possibilities' Sparkes (2000, p. 5). Creative fiction on the other hand he states allows the narrative imagination to go unrestrained.

According to Sikes and Potts (2008) truths about educational issues and concerns can be told consciously and explicitly through fictional devices. They went on to suggest that fictional stories can make public those experiences and perceptions that other methodological approaches and research techniques are unable to reveal. Clough however cautioned that the narrative is useful only to the extent that it opens up (to its audience) a deeper view of life in a familiar context as it can make the familiar strange and the strange familiar. I believe that as immigrants, we are so familiar with our story and our lived

experience of integrating two cultures that we take parts of it for granted and do not reflect enough on our experiences. I hope that Paul and Jane's stories which I wrote will make the participants experiences of integration strange without losing track of the familiar in a way that we can have new lenses to view the familiar.

## **2.7 CONDUCTING THE GROUP CONVERSATION**

Most qualitative research operates from the perspective that knowledge is situated and contextual and therefore the job of the interview is that the relevant contexts are brought into focus so that situated knowledge can be produced.

(Mason, 2002, p. 62)

### *GROUP INTERVIEW*

Krueger and Casey (2000) suggest that 'the purpose of focus group is to collect qualitative data from a focused discussion' (p. 10). One of 'the advantages of small group interviews is that they allow for the collection of relatively large amount of data in short periods of time' Esterberg (2002, p. 109). She adds that they are useful when you want to know about people's opinions and how people arrive at decisions rather than people's actual behaviour. This particular attribute endeared small group interview to me as in this inquiry I wanted to explore the participant's perspective on the integration process based on their lived experience. She maintained that when small groups work well, they can be an extraordinarily rich source of data as focus group members build on one another's ideas and opinions.

### *SAMPLE CHOSEN FOR DATA COLLECTION*

Rubin and Earl (2009) suggest that the focus group participants be chosen based on 'purposive sampling' meaning their 'relevancy to the topic being discussed' (p. 221). Cohen et al. (2007) described it as a research process where the participants are asked to contribute due to their in depth knowledge of the subject of study (p. 115). The

participants were deliberately selected based on them effectively functioning in the four life domains under which integration is measured. (Please refer to appx 4 for selection criteria and participant's characteristics appx 5). I was mindful of the importance of gender balance hence six individuals (three males and three females) were invited to participate in the study. One of the male Medical Doctors at the last minute was on call and had to cancel so I worked with five participants.

### *SETTING THE MOOD*

Two creative nonfictional stories Paul and Jane's stories were emailed to all participants one week before the group convened to have a conversation. I realised that the participant did not really know each other and that they didn't have a relationship, yet I was conscious of the time constraint (two hours) but most importantly, I was conscious of the sensitive nature of issues that could be uncovered during the session based on my own group experience and feeling vulnerable. I felt it was important to try and eliminate any awkwardness and help them form as a group very quickly as if left unhandled, it might limit the flow in the conversation. Esterberg (2002) mentioned the importance to 'find a group that will feel comfortable interacting with others and who will express their opinions freely' (p. 110).

Beginning of a group is usually anxiety provoking and members enter a group feeling isolated and vulnerable looking for commonality, Ryan (2008). She maintained that the core dilemma for a new group can be how to get close to others but not too close, 'how to stay separate and not too separate, how much to reveal and how much to withhold' (p. 2). With my understanding of group work, I decided to combine the introduction of the participants with an ice breaker and also incorporate the research method of the narrative by asking the participants to tell a story about another participant. Some were given spouses, children, qualifications, religion, it was fun and we all shared something 'a laugh', then I felt the group was ready to work together.

## *WORKING WITH THE GROUP*

### *ROLE OF FACILITATOR*

I was the facilitator so I was listening attentively and taking notes, that was challenge number one because as I hear and then I decide what to be noted down or what to let go. I particularly noted pockets of stories, emotions behind the stories, intensity in words, I was particularly drawn to change or difference either with others, in attitude, in time, I noted such occurrences. I basically trusted my gut instinct for anything that made me stop and look up Speedy (2008) particularly talks about 'small stories' people tell to make sense of their lives. This decision making about what to keep made me aware of the power imbalance between researcher and informant and how hugely subjective qualitative research can be, a view many hold (Silverman, 2001; Creswell 1994, Esterberg, 2002).

### *INSIDER/OUTSIDER*

I thought I was an insider (a fellow immigrant) going to the focus group, but when the conversation started, the group treated me as an outsider, they worked among themselves (which I actually encouraged them do, to talk to each other). On further reflection, I think I set myself up as an outsider the minute I took up the role of facilitator, a position which was further reinforced as I was standing while they remained sitting.

The dilemma was how involved I should be in the conversation. However, the conversation was really robust and rich and I decided to trust the process and trust that this was what I got as I am not going to cover all the areas involved but that this will be my own small contribution to the knowledge on the topic. I decided really to allow it be about the participant and what emerged as important to them. It was amazing to see that even the process of conducting the focus group with all immigrants like me mirrored the dilemma of looking into a group from the outside, uncertain if to join in, when to join, how to join in. if I joined in would I speak as researcher or as a fellow immigrant.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

For the purpose of this research, I considered that a qualitative approach would provide the most complete and comprehensive insight and in-depth understanding of the subjective world of individual participant. The aspect of the social world which I wanted of investigate demanded my flexibility and openness to see what emerges at the group conversation rather than hazard a guess at theory. I therefore I employed the grounded theory approach using stories as the method to create a conversation starting point for the five participants who were purposively selected. The chapter is reflexively presented as the story of my research journey.

# CHAPTER THREE

## INTEGRATION IN IRELAND TODAY

### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

‘Immigration without integration is a recipe for disaster’ Penninx (2010, p. 1)

The value of Integration to any diverse society cannot be overstated and though Ireland is referred to as a new immigration country, integration is not a new phenomenon. There is existing literature and theoretical perspectives that underpin the process of integration of immigrants in society. This section sets out to review such materials in the Irish context. The approach I take views the person as a whole unit whose experience is impacted upon by various interrelated disciplines such as Sociology, Psychology and Education. A view recommended by Ryan and Walsh (2004) who emphasise the importance for researchers and practitioners to understand discourse, emotional and psychological responses and how they are variously played out in different situations (p. 153).

This study takes a grounded theory approach and as such the literature review will be in two sections. In this chapter, I discuss what is known about integration. I engage with the national debate by critically reflecting on the various integration policies, definitions and their implications for immigrants. The second section of the literature review will be based on the emergent themes from the findings and how my theoretical perspectives have changed. I employ the inductive approach to this inquiry as I intend to first investigate the social world and in this case the integration of immigrants. Based on the emergent data generated from the participant’s expressed perspective and information on how they make decisions and choices in their integration process, consistent with the grounded theory approach, I will proffer my new understanding from theory in chapter four. As Silverman (2001) said all too clearly ‘without theory there is nothing to research’ (p. 3).

### 3.1 FROM IMMIGRATION TO INTEGRATION

Since 1999, the question of integration was reported to have become an urgent concern of many EU Governments (NESC, 2006). According to the council, ‘the integration of migrants is one of the main factors determining the overall success or failure of migration (p. xiii). Ireland seemed to agree with this European urgency by the various initiatives it took to promote multiculturalism such that terms like diversity and intercultural became common place as evidenced in the Government document Migration Nation (2008). In recent years, there has been a slow dislocation of Integration from the place of prominence it had a situation blamed on the economic difficulties. However, the NESC (2006) report claimed that for integration to be successful, it ‘requires widespread societal commitment’ which they argued cannot be compelled’ (p. 185). I believe that unless integration is again placed in the government’s agenda, it seems like Ireland will have to wait a long time for that multicultural society.

Integration on its own is a keenly contested concept Baubock (1994). It is open to various conflicting interpretations and it is sometimes used interchangeable with or to contrast assimilation and multiculturalism. Though the NESC (2006) opening comment claims that ‘Immigration is a new experience for Ireland’ (p. xi), Mac Einrí (2007) maintains that ‘Ireland is no longer a country where immigration can be regarded as a short-term or transient issue but the country has definitely joined the European mainstream as a society where a population of mixed ethnic backgrounds is the norm’ (p. 215). Penninx (2010) agrees with this by writing that such framing has immediate consequences for the kind of integration policies Ireland adopts. He argues that because integration policies operate from a framework of nation state premise, migration across borders is seen as an anomaly resulting in policies being primarily defensive and control centred instead of pro-active. A fact evidenced by the 2004 referendum which was a response to the 23 January 2003 decision where the Supreme Court upheld the ruling holding that the Irish citizen child of non- citizens could be deported with their parents unless the non-citizen parent agreed to be deported without their child (Human Right Commission, 2003). A ruling which appears to disregard the rights of the child as the power of the judicial system was used to override the Irish State value of protecting the family unit. It appears the Irish policy used that singular opportunity to control first the



number of Non EEA migrants in the state and secondly, it changed how people became Irish citizens.

‘Fortress Europe’ as Fanning (2009, p. 273) referred to it until recently concentrated on who gained entry into countries. He observed that as a consequence of increased migration, the debate has shifted noticeably in many European societies from where he claimed ‘Ireland’s response to asylum seekers was to make immigration into a security problem rather than a social policy challenge’ (p. 273). In Ireland, a government document *Integration: A Two-Way Process* stated that ‘unless Irish society recognises that the effect of increased immigration to this country is diversity which must be accommodated, integration will not happen’ (1999, p. 9). In 2001, it was declared that ‘integration policy is still at a relatively early stage of development in Ireland’ Whelan, (2001, p.71) and by 2007, there was positive change as MacEinrí (2007) observed that ‘the focus had shifted towards the topic of integration and what happened to people once they are in Ireland’ (p. 215).

In present day recession Ireland, integration seems to have shifted again this time to the back burners. A search of the two main Irish political parties 2011 manifestos turned up nothing on integration while Labour had references to old immigration documents. Also, the failure of the new Government to yet again appoint a specific Minister for Integration speaks volumes. First it has funding implications for the promotion of integration strategy for Ireland and it also implies that integration will become a secondary assignment for the new minister under whom the portfolio stands. Government bodies which gave integration issues State prominence raising awareness, policing equality and advancing the cause of a better integrated society have all seen consistent funding cuts. The NCCRI which was set up in 1998 as a response to address issues of racism was phased out in 2010, while the equality authority established in 2000 saw a 43% funding cut and on-going decentralisation from 2008 ([www.equalityauthority.ie](http://www.equalityauthority.ie)). Such national developments present messages that seem to indicate that integration is no longer a problem. However, older immigration countries still have to keep working on integration as shown the MIPEX reports.

### 3.2 INTEGRATION AND IRELAND TODAY

The meaning of integration can vary between countries, alter over time, and is frequently based on the interests, values, assumptions and perspectives of specific groups involved in the migration process (Favell 1998; Castles *et al* 2002: 112). In an Irish context the following definition was adopted:

Integration is the ability to participate to the extent that a person needs and wishes in all the major components of society, without having to relinquish his or her own cultural identity. (Integration a Two way Process, 1999, p. 9)

This seems to infer that the ‘unable’ immigrant is the culprit for non-participation without taking into consideration external factors that might make participation difficult if not impossible. Yet the discourse on integration states that ‘integration is a two way process’ indicating two main actors; the host community and their expectations and the newcomers and their subjectivity. Many agree with this definition (DJELR 2005 p. 38; Feldman, *et. al* 2008; Fanning, Munck and Ní Mhurchú, 2008, p. 3), yet this two way status appears silent in many adopted definitions such that one does not get a sense of the responsibility of the receiving society. This misrepresentation appears not to be a conceptual problem but is indicative of the challenge in adopting a definition that can capture the complexity of what integration as a process truly involves; two actors as joint contributors. Another definition proffered in the document *Integration of Migrants* states that ‘Integration is understood as the process of inclusion of immigrants in the institutions and relationships of the host society (Eurofound, 2006, p. 1) still leaves a lot to individual interpretation.

Empirical studies show that there are asymmetric power relations between migrants and the host society that often result in the onus for integration being placed solely on migrants (Getting on: from migration to integration, 2008, p. 11-12). Feldman *et. al* (2008) in their research observed that various discussions of integration presents the host society as consisting of a set of shared and static core values into which migrants are meant to integrate. I believe that unless Ireland moves beyond such thinking that the immigrant should integrate into the society we run the risk of renaming an old system by turning integration into modernised assimilation, a situation where to be becomes to be like members of the host society. Though integration is said to be a two way process,

it functions as one that is controlled by the government, driven by its power and operating only to its agenda.

### **3.3 DEVELOPING A MULTICULTURAL SOCIETY THAT WORKS**

One of the end results of the integration of immigrants is the development of a multicultural society. Lentin (2001) however claims that the ideology of multiculturalism has been presented in the Irish context as a national response to increased diversity. She argues that its development was not as eradication, but rather as an accommodation of the persistence of inequalities despite the rhetoric of integration, assimilation and equality'. I believe that if integration works well, Ireland will have a truly multicultural society not in name only but indeed. The challenge for many societies today according to Touraine a French Sociologist, includes the 'increase in identity based groupings and associations' Touraine, (2000, p. 20) and the categorisation of people based on difference.

Touraine (2000) suggests a Universalist principle as the remedy for a multicultural society which he described as 'one that allows socially and culturally different individuals and groups to communicate with one another, one that does not define one conception of social organisation and personal life to be both normal and better than others, is based on respect for the freedom of all individuals and is 'not reducible to pure tolerance' (p. 167). In as much as there is no such thing as cultural isolation, he asserts that 'we must actively resist cultural colonisation and the imposition of one dominant way of life in the whole world' (p. 168) a position which appears to be becoming increasingly more difficult with increased globalisation. When cultures are defined by their particularism it leads to homogeneous societies and he states clearly that 'we cannot accept a social rationalisation that results in those who deviate from the dominant model being treated as inferiors' (p. 169). One of the key slogans for multiculturalism is 'celebrating difference' for Touraine, the presence of difference is a challenge as he noted that 'difference is always associated with inequality' (p. 171).

### **3.4 GUIDANCE COUNSELLING IN THE INTEGRATION PROCESS**

I work as an adult Guidance Counsellor in an organization set up by the Department of Justice to support immigrants who are legally resident in Ireland to find employment or further training. This description of my role sounds simple and straight forward, but in the course of my work with immigrants and as an immigrant myself, I realize that there are underlying issues which impacts on people's availability to engage with the guidance process. Such issues can include the very basic fact of relocating which on the surface appears as simply moving to another part of the world. In actual fact, it involves a combination of these, leaving a set pattern of life, leaving all that was familiar and going towards the unknown, family, friends, school mates, work life and much more and it can be both exciting and scary at the same time. Ali and Graham, (1996) identify leaving home as one of the many life events that can cause people to reappraise their values, self-concepts and relationships to others. In other words, becoming an immigrant is more than simple getting on an airplane, it involves changes which can very easily bring people to the brink of a major transition as many even have traumatic journeys.

Turning points in life like these Ali and Graham, (1996) say 'requires individuals to make a transition from one state of being, thinking or doing to another' (p. 33). This kind of disequilibrium is an example of what Mezirow (1991) in his transformative learning theory referred to as a disorienting dilemma. When it is due specifically to cultural change and contact with others, Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, (2001) referred to it as culture shock. They described it as 'the difficulty people experience which can range from mild discomfort to severe debilitating anxiety when adjusting to a new culture that differs markedly from their own' (p. 16). Though individuals vary in their capacity to cope with change and adapt to new sets of circumstances and relationships most people need time to work through the process of accepting change and moving on to the next stage.

One of the significant changes that immigrants have to make in a new country is employment or career change as many have to leave their old jobs behind in their original country of residence. According to the 2005 census ([www.cso.ie](http://www.cso.ie)), one in every

ten persons in Ireland is an immigrant, we can infer that a large number of that population will be facing various changes which can range from a simple job change to a total career redirection. This begins to have implication for Guidance practitioners as one of the parameters to monitor integration as recommended by the EU is the employment status of immigrants. With the present emphasis on employability, job activation programmes and national goals for education as we have witnessed in Ireland, I believe that career guidance has to remain a vital part of the government's economic recovery strategy and that the role of guidance counsellors cannot be overstated in the successful transition of immigrants into the Irish society.

### **3.5 THE NEED FOR CULTURALLY SENSITIVE GUIDANCE COUNSELLING**

Though the primary goal of career and vocational counsellors is to help people make informed choices about their education and career options, Camenson, (2008) says it also 'involves helping people acquire the knowledge, skills, and experience necessary for them to identify options, explore alternatives, and succeed in society' (p. 103). I believe that unless the underlying issues which affect people's lives are either addressed or listened to Guidance Counsellors and Adult Educators might not be able to do constructive work with them. A view which many agree with; Ali and Graham, (1996) recommended the 'whole person approach' (p. 5). Brown and Brooks (1991) who previously suggested the 'whole people' career counselling approach also insists on taking other roles into consideration (p. 4); and Super as far back as 1984 said '...planning for one role while not considering the others often creates rather than resolves problem' (p. 4).

Gothard, (2001) makes two recommendations that will help practitioners be more effective, first that their world view needs to be taken into account as their frame of reference will always influence how they work with clients and secondly, they should work as 'reflective practitioner' because professional- client relationship is central to the work, (p. 8). The career development theories from which practitioners operate I believe will also influence their effectiveness but it seems as the people who require career counselling continuously change in Ireland, many of these theories still reflect white,

middle, class perspective. Super's work, which has stimulated the practice of career programmes has been criticised as it operates on the premise of the life stages which assumes a smooth progression through establishment to maintenance before decline in later years. It represents a contradictory ideology with the happenings in recent years such as mass redundancy, unemployment, retraining and the fluidity in mobility among migrants, it predicates the need for culturally sensitive theories and practice. Super (1990) in response to his critics, developed another model of career development which he called a segmental model, where both psychological and societal factors are represented giving eminence to the interaction of the individual and society Gothard, (2001. p 18). This theory however still doesn't give credit to the influences of culture which many agree is central to our identity (McAdams, 1997; Burke, 2001). Though the training of Guidance Counsellors emphasises listening to clients, I believe that for clients from ethnic minorities, practitioners need to be culturally sensitive to their presenting issues and how they experience the Counsellors support.

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, I discussed how the increased diversity witnessed in Ireland impacts on the debate and discourse on integration and the idea of being Irish in a changing society. I argued that the terminology used in relation to immigrants can make the integration process oppressive and exclusive and that while immigrant's participation is important in its success, the host society has more of a deciding factor in the outcome. I pose a question through the review 'does integration mean to be like'.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### MAKING SENSE OF GENERATED DATA USING EXISTING THEORY

If we are ever to redress artificial social inequalities, we need to know how they are formed. Crain, 2000, (p. 373).

#### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

The complexities involved in the integration process was something I thought I knew and understood as an immigrant going through the process. After this inquiry, I realise that a lot of that knowledge was cognitive and the experiential knowledge I have, I didn't have the words or the voice to describe them, neither did I have the theoretic understanding to enhance my critical consciousness. This study set out to explore if individuals who are able to function effectively in the four life domains through which the integration of immigrants is measured is sufficient for them to become integrated in Ireland. It generated data through a group conversation by five immigrants on two creative nonfictional stories (Paul and Jane's stories). In this chapter, I employ various theoretic frameworks to analyse the emergent themes to give a coherent analysis of some of the complexities uncovered as I examined the lived experiences of these individuals.

#### 4.1.0 CATEGORISING THE DATA

Data analysis which according to Esterberg (2000) 'is the process of making meaning' (p. 152) was very slow and time consuming. It involved me becoming very intimate with the data as I engaged in a rigorous process of reading and rereading of notes combined with listening to the recorded conversation. At first I began to separate out comments that were of interest or that made me stop and listen again. From this came my first tentative categories based on specific words of the participants such as 'home' 'disconnect'. Esterberg (2000) described this kind of method as the 'open coding process' (p. 158). As I continued to engage with the data, I began to see recurring themes and patterns which helped me focus these extracts of conversation into broad

categories. This way of processing data Esterberg (2000) described as focused coding where she said ‘you focus on those key themes you identified during the open coding’ (p. 161). After two weeks of just getting to know the data there were a few ideas floating in my head from participants comments such as ‘they want to locate you’ and I began thinking position, ‘when I say I am Irish’ I thought belonging or possibly identity. I then went away with those forming ideas to look for materials that will give me theoretic insights into those recurring themes. After engaging with theorist, I had my ‘Eureka’ moment in the bathroom when suddenly I saw that the 12 themes I came up with actually all had three common threads running through them. Since I had experienced so many of what David McCormack our tutor on creative writing called ‘candy floss’ moments (where one minute the idea seemed well formed and you sit down to write it down and it’s all gone), I decided to abandon my shower and take the notes immediately. ...Phew, sounds easy but it was a lot of mental sitting with and holding knowledge inside. I guess it explains why Denzin (1989) said that ‘data analysis is a creative process and not a mechanical one’ (cited in Esterberg, 2000, p. 152).

#### **4.1.1 PRESENTATION AND SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

In the presentation of the findings, I set out the participants questions which best encapsulated the three themes which emerged as the main headings below with each supported by sub themes. I present the finding surrounded by the theoretic framework that gives insight into each theme. Then I analyse the data based on my understanding and interpretation of how the data and theory match. It is important to state at this point that these findings are based on my subjective understanding. This process of bringing a theoretic understanding to the findings is important as in the Grounded Theory approach, it allows me to proffer suggestions that can advance or even challenge available theory. Each theme then concludes with a brief discussion. The main themes which emerged were

- a) *‘Where is my Home’- Conditional and Unconditional Acceptance*
- b) *‘Where are you originally from’- Positioning*
- c) *‘Who am I’- Multiple Identities*



### *PRACTITIONER GROUP CONVERSATION*

I was apprehensive about using stories as it was a relatively new method of conducting research for me. So I decided to have a dry run with my colleagues at work to test the effectiveness of the method of using narrative stories. The result greatly increased my confidence in the approach as it appeared to have the exact effect I wanted which was to get windows into the participant's internal experiences and thoughts. The practitioner group responded to the narrative stories first by analysing the actors in the stories and relating it to similar instances from their work with clients; they also made connections with their own experiences of being different in countries with different cultures from Ireland; after which they evaluated our organizations service in view of this new insight gained after the conversation. While my knowledge has been enriched by the conversation, due to the scope of this research, I will keep the data generated here for future possibilities within our organisation.

### *PARTICIPANTS GROUP CONVERSATION*

The participants group consisted of five immigrants who had a conversation over two nonfictional stories I wrote (please refer to section 2.13 for a full description of how the conversation was conducted). The group didn't spend time talking about the stories, rather they quickly focused on the ways they have experienced themselves as they negotiated different aspects of their lives in Ireland. They mentioned that Economic and Social Integration had been well documented and is easy to measure unlike psychological integration which they believed had not been explored.

#### Indicative statements by participants

... The point is we know all that and when I look at the story of the people, I say Psychological integration... ...but psychologically do I feel Irish, that's the question, and maybe that is what we need to discuss without going into all the academic discourses. (James)

Let me break that down, am I accepted, do I feel accepted, the meaningfulness of the life of living in Ireland and being part of the Irish society, does it make meaning to my life, does it add any value, how do I feel about it. (Juliet)

Immediately, the participants take on being the experts of their own integration process.

## FIRST EMERGENT THEME

### 4.2.0 'WHERE IS MY HOME'- CONDITIONAL / UNCONDITIONAL ACCEPTANCE

Home can mean a number of things for humans, it can be a place, family, nation or even a feeling as some say 'home is where the heart is' ([www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/home](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/home)) while animals and plants have their own habitat where they can survive. The participant's first question was on home, a very basic element that many take for granted. They searched for a 'place' of belonging and unconditional acceptance whether physical or psychological, it appeared motivated by their experience of being conditionally accepted.

One of the theories propounded on the need for belonging is Maslow's theory of motivation which says that human beings have needs and desires which influence human behaviour. I use Maslow's theoretic framework as background knowledge to gain insight into the data generated at the group conversation.

### 4.2.1 MASLOW AND HIS THEORY OF MOTIVATION

'What a man *can* be, he *must* be' Maslow (1943, p. 383).

Abraham H. Maslow (1908–1970) was an American Psychologist who founded humanistic psychology and created the popular Maslow's hierarchy of needs. His argument is that while people aim to meet basic needs, they seek to meet successively higher needs in the form of a hierarchy. Unlike previous advancement in human psychology such as the Freudian Psychology which was based on studies of people with psychological problems, Maslow's approach examined the lives and experiences of the healthiest people he could find. He saw 'the height of human development as self-actualisation' Crain (2000, p. 365). According to this theory, there are five kinds of needs arranged in a hierarchical order such that the fulfilment of lower needs propels the organism on to the next level. At the bottom of the pyramid is the physiological or basic

need such as food and water, then security and stability or safety need. These two steps Maslow (1943) claimed are important to the survival of the person physically but once the individual has basic nutrition and shelter this theory claims they look to accomplish more.

The third level, Love and Belonging need Maslow (1943) maintained is psychological, and that it arises once the physical needs are taken care of their physical needs. This is the stage he claimed where people are ready to share themselves with others. There are a range of avenues through which this need can be demonstrated such as sharing one's self on a national level by becoming citizens of the same nation, career, relationships, college, place of worship or even in small community groups. This view is supported by Gilroy (2000) who writes that 'the concept of Identity has come to supply something of an anchor amid the turbulent waters of globalisation' (p. 107) where he claimed that sharing an identity means supposedly to be united on the most basic levels which could be national, racial, ethnic, regional or local.

The fourth step according to Maslow (1943) occurs 'when the person feels comfortable with what they have accomplished' such as success and status, then they have reached what he referred to as the Esteem level. According to this theory, the importance of this need cannot be overstated as it is one that impacts on the self, one's sense of self and self-concepts. Crain (2000) who agrees with this view adds that this need for the esteem of others is quite common in society. I orientated this theme to Maslow's theory for the way he describes the esteem needs and how a desire for it causes people to try and fit in because when immigrants and integration are mentioned, there is an unspoken consensus that the immigrant is supposed to fit in.

At the fifth and highest level is self-actualization which according to Maslow's theory is said to 'occur when 'the individual has reached a state of harmony and understanding' it refers to the 'actualisation of one's potentials, capacities and talents'. Compared to most people he found self-actualisers maintain a certain independence from their society and they are less moulded and flattened by cultural pressures Maslow, (1971, p. 207 – 208). He adds that 'they are less conforming people who are primarily motivated by their own inner growth, the development of their potentials and their mission in life' (Maslow, 1954, p. 223-228 cited in Crain, 2000, p. 366). In other words, they are more self-

focused and individualists reaching for their individual goals rather than collective goals.

Maslow went further to acknowledge the importance of freedom such as the freedom to speak and to justice. He claimed that the denial of freedom needs is like the denial of basic needs and can have devastating effect on people, in fact he asserts that such a person can be called a 'sick man'(1943, p. 394). Freire (1996) described this denial of freedom of speech as the culture of silence in his pedagogy, something which many immigrants are all too familiar with. I am persuaded that many people under-estimate the impact that an oppressive integration process can have on immigrants, if their voice, opinions and needs are not heard or are suppressed.

#### **4.2.2 RELATING THEORY TO FINDINGS**

I engaged with Maslow's theory of motivation because from my examination of the data generated there were extracts, and small stories of perspectives from the conversation that were indicative of what some of the participants were prepared to do to belong and gain esteem in Ireland. Such comments I interpreted as indicative of their engagement with others in the society which Maslow described as being driven by one of the psychological needs of love and belonging or esteem needs. Below I outline and discuss based on the evidence from this study the need for love and belonging and esteem needs expressed by the participants or conversely the perceived lack of acceptance of the participants from the host community.

##### *Individual Contribution in the Society*

Though as Penninx (2010) claims that the receiving society is more decisive for the outcome of the interaction between immigrants and the host community, the participants statements indicated they took responsibility for the outcome of such interactions. Their conversation indicated their perception that the favourable outcome of such contact is dependent on their economic contribution and active participation in the common good of Ireland. According to the participant's statements, it appears to

serve multiple purposes including succeeding and gaining esteem and acceptance, becoming a part of the society and also as a way for them to show their gratitude for the opportunities they had in the country. It seemed that depending on how much the participants wanted that favourable outcome for their interaction with the host community, the more they appeared to adjust themselves to 'fit' the society.

The bottom line about integration is that you will succeed more if you integrate ...make the effort to be a part of the system. '...the onus unfortunately is on the migrant, you have to be smiley, you have to be outgoing, you have to be bubbly, you have to be smart. (Amanthi)

Why don't we make more efforts to integrate (Amanthi, Juliet and Marika)

Amanthi indicated two types of adjustments to 'fit' in and gain esteem (see emphasis) one was the portrayal of an extrovert personality and the second was on portraying a level of smartness which could be either in education or simply being knowledgeable. I also observed a heightened sense of this responsibility in all the female participants. As one might begin to wonder why such adjustments or changes are being made or connecting with my personal earlier musings, who demands those changes. Crain (2000) offers his standpoint based on Maslow's theory that 'the desire for self-respect, self-esteem and for the esteem of others can affect the way people interact with others and in the society' such that 'those who are strongly motivated' by this need 'are afraid to entertain any thought that others might disprove of and as such, they try to fit into their society and do whatever brings prestige within it' (p. 365). In other words, as Amanthi believed in her text 'you will succeed' is indicative that she believes such characteristics earn her esteem in the society, Maslow lends a strong argument for why people strive to attain the esteem needs. He said that the benefit attached to the satisfaction of these psychological needs can lead to the feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world.

One possible tension I see in the application of this theory to the participant's scenario in this study is that their desire for recognition and esteem based on their contribution might end up being an uphill task as they appear to want to try and control what is not within their power; which is another's opinion. The recourse I see available to the participants then is to either try and earn the acceptance and esteem of members of the

host community as they seem to be doing or the host community can decide to accept them.

This feelings associated with wanting to fit in experienced by the participants seemed to change over time from the feeling of gratitude.

The initial years were different, I learnt English because of that, I wanted to integrate and become part of the Irish society, ...now I have moved from there ...sigh. (James)

The same way there are benefits to having these psychological needs met, there are also repercussions for having them denied according to Maslow (1943) they can range from mild to severe consequences for the individual. He mentioned that the 'thwarting of these needs produces feelings of inferiority, weakness and helplessness which in turn give rise to either basic discouragement or else compensatory or neurotic trends' (p. 382).

It appears as if their ability to function effectively within the society which is identified by indicators such as being able to get employment or speak the language of the host community seems only to meet the basic needs of these individuals. There appears not to be a sense of belonging.

### *RELUCTANCE TO GIVE-UP CORE PARTS OF THEMSELVES*

This having to change to fit in for the participants on one hand appeared okay especially as they reported having to give up parts of their previous lives and themselves which included family, cultural identity, careers and prestige from their previous life before immigrating. It however became problematic when the participants perceived they had to give up certain things that define them, core parts they felt will be asking for too much if they have to lose it or hide it to belong. Amanthi who would have been stoned in her home country for being in a same sex relationship mentions her gratitude to Ireland and I see it as indicative that in the minds of these participants, there are certain things that they will be reluctant to give up to fit in. and though her sexuality is accepted, Juliet quickly interjects as if to say, we all have things as well and it indicated that they are not necessarily accepted. in essence what I understand is that as immigrants, if they have to give up core parts of themselves to fit in, it will present as a stressful situation for them.

It's one of the things I feel grateful to Ireland for accepting my sexuality.  
(Amanthi)

For you it's that but we all have peculiar situations that we want accepted.  
(Juliet)

Drawing from the practitioner focus group, Siobhan who is Irish visited an Arab state for a few months and she articulates so clearly what the participants were saying from her own experience of the changes she had to make.

I adopted the gendered role and position of women, I had to 'pretend' to be subservient so as not to annoy people, ...I could never say I am this subservient person, I can act it but I will never become it.  
(Siobhan)

Another Employment Officer at our organisation who introduced her client's experience corroborates this feeling described by the participants.

I am not an actor'. (A client experienced what he had to do to prepare for and present himself as suitable for the job as unnatural).  
(Misha)

Another potential tension is again on how one negotiates it when two conflicting core identities are involved as in extreme cases like Siobhan's. These types of instances can play out easily when the immigrant and the host community have core self-defining identities which are conflicting with each other. Many define integration as not having to relinquish one's own cultural identity (*integration a two way process*, 1999). Ward, Bochner, and Furnham's definition states that 'groups maintain their respective core cultural identities' (2001, p. 30). The implication under Maslow's concept is that people with a higher love and belonging or esteem need will be more prepared to adapt and fit in conforming to be accepted.

When core identities are involved, the negotiation I believe seems more than the need for esteem, I believe it involves the survival needs for those kinds of changes to happen. Posing the question to myself, will I change a core part of myself just to be accepted or will I change to get a better job and as such be able to pay my bills. I believe I will choose to adapt for my survival needs but not for esteem needs. I believe that changes that involve core identities have to have implications for one's personal survival before

they can happen and not just simple for the psychological needs of being accepted. Another possible position is the one influenced by power imbalance and the feeling of powerlessness associated with oppression where people 'submit to and identify with a person or group that has power' Freire, (1996). In other words, the less powerful one gives way as the experiences of these participants seem to indicate.

Some core identities and particularisms that these participants experienced as being problematic included their skin colour, intonation, race and culture due to where they are from. The participants questioned the sense of pride, acceptance and welcome the Irish community has for the US President Barrack Obama and yet according to the group, the Irish show no respect or acceptance for the next dark skinned person whom they see daily. A thread that runs through the participants comments in this inquiry.

What is it about Obama that makes him acceptable and not us? If he were to come to Ireland in a disguise and drive a taxi in the night, then he will get a true picture of Ireland and the way the Irish treat immigrants. (Amanthi)

The participants implied racism and racialised treatment of immigrant's especially dark skinned people. They however didn't use the 'R' or 'Race' word at this time but there was increased tension in the room and a slightly fraught atmosphere which passed away as everyone laughed at the idea of Barrack Obama driving a taxi in Dublin. That tension made me wonder if the participants had been silenced as Freire (1996) states that the oppressed cannot openly voice their thoughts or if like my experience at the group they cannot own their feelings publicly. I didn't however interject and I decided to reflect on what emerged.

### *Search for Home*

The participants questioned their acceptance in Ireland as they strongly held the view that they were accepted because of their contributions and participation. I got the sense from their next few statements that they wanted unconditional acceptance which they located in a place they referred to as 'home' that appeared to have different individual



and social meanings depending on the individual. For some it was a physical place where they belonged and were accepted unconditionally.

...Who am I then? When I hear that I am not an Irish person after all these years, ...I make my effort to make it [Ireland] my home but *people* don't see it as my home, so I have to go and find my home. (James)

Ireland is the only place I have built all the things I have, friendships, family, relationships, but most especially, it is the one place where my sexuality is *accepted*'. (Amanthi)

This search for home the participants expressed appears linked to the opinion of others about themselves (see emphasis). It is again indicative of the two psychological needs described by Maslow being held simultaneously rather than hierarchically, first is the need to share identity with the dominant group in other words, the need for belonging and secondly the need for the esteem of others.

For other participants 'home' was more than a physical place but an environment that allowed individual growth.

It is more about identity and who we become rather than a place that we hold onto as home, more of a place where I am able to develop. (Marika)

To interject here, this account by Marika on the same issue typifies the complexities and multifacetedness that can be captured at interviews as Ratner (2002) cautioned.

I am disconnected from my home country and my profession, so this [Ireland] is home for me now as I cannot connect back there [Poland]'. (Marika)

It is not about a place. (Marika)

'I am struggling to make it [Ireland] home. (Marika)

It also indicative of how confusing the internal process and decision making can be and the possibility of holding multiple positions regarding the same issue. Ratner's claim proves true that individuals 'respond to questions on the basis of their frames of reference' thereby affecting their response. In addition to this is the potential that 'the same situation can be positive and negative at the same time', especially when considered in retrospect (Ratner, 2002, p. 149-150). This level of internal confusion

expressed by Marika is not in my opinion pointing to an integrated state rather a confusion and uncertainty both of which are not indicative of feeling integrated.

One of the factors according to the participants that sway immigrants to see Ireland as a place to call home over their home countries is the presence of more gender equality in the Irish culture for women than in countries from outside the EEA. So in this way, Ireland appears to meet a basic need in such people for security and safety, like Amanthi feeling safer to be of a different sexual orientation in Ireland than she would be in her home country where she could be stoned to death.

For my wife, home is here [Ireland] and when I think of going back, for her I am crazy. (James)

So maybe equality makes it more home for people, at least a woman here does have a choice. (Amanthi)

### **4.2.3 DISCUSSION ON ACCEPTANCE**

Acceptance is not love. You love a person because he or she has lovable traits, but you accept everybody just because they're alive and human.

(Albert Ellis)

'Human beings according to Leary (2001) are 'an exceptionally social species with a strong need to belong and an even stronger aversion to being rejected' (P. 3). He claimed that we want those individuals who we spend time with to accept us at least on some minimal level. In essence, the needs expressed by the participants are not unique to immigrants but a human need. However the difficulty with acceptance is that contrary to the participant's belief, it is dependent on the other choosing to accept the person seeking to belong or be accepted.

The participants seemed to displayed ambivalence which ensued from their belief that the more intensified their efforts to contribute and participate in the society, the more they will be accepted. However, the partial or perceived lack of acceptance from members of the host community in spite of their effort served as the source of their dissatisfaction as they believed they were only accepted because of their contribution or

not accepted in spite of their efforts. To the participants understood it to mean a conditional acceptance to which they responded with another psychological need; a longing and search for a 'home' where there was no threat hanging over their heads, where they don't have to put on an act to be accepted. Maslow's theory put it succinctly where he claimed that 'thwarting of these psychological needs produces feelings of inferiority, weakness and helplessness which in turn give rise to either basic discouragement or else compensatory or neurotic trends' Maslow (1943, p. 382). These repercussions sound extreme but it seems as if a lot of focus has been on the hierarchal nature of Maslow's theory such that the serious consequences of the denial of the psychological needs are greatly overlooked.

These participants experience indicates that having the ability to function in the society seems not enough help them feel like valuable members of the society. Having a job and speaking the language and even having health insurance or one's own house as most of the participants appears no to be make them feel integrated in Ireland. Grateful maybe, tolerated, maybe, pressured to excel maybe but I don't yet see the signs of integrated person. The need for love and belonging expressed by the participants is indicative that either the participants need affirmation and acceptance from the host community which many (Maslow, 1943; Leary, 2001) argue are normal human desires that everyone has to varying degrees or that the host community is withholding acceptance from the participant.

#### **4.2.4 POSSIBLE IMPACT OF THIS THEME**

- The ability to function effectively does not preclude the need for acceptance
- Pressure on the participants to perform and be a certain way to be accepted which appeared to be quite stressful.
- The belief by the participants that their acceptance in Ireland is proportional to the way they will be accepted has possible implications for Education and Guidance Counsellors as one of the ways the participants chose to avoid rejection is by being 'smart'. This might indicate a pressure to accomplish academically and so I believe proper guidance session is imperative so that

immigrants who have the same ideology as the participants in this study will be supported to training course that they really need not just for the sake of appearing smart or earning esteem.

- Possible pressure to change personality to become gregarious and sociable to be accepted.
- It highlights a need for love and belonging in the participants.
- Acceptance from the host community which was necessary for the feeling of esteem and belonging for the participants was absent.

## **THEME TWO**

### **4.3.0 'WHERE ARE YOU ORIGINALLY FROM'- POSITIONING**

The participants were asked a question by members of the indigenous Irish community that seemed to cause some of them a lot of tension. That question 'where are you originally from' is what I have used to represent the second theme. Though the term positioning did not directly come up at the group conversation, there were however many indicative statements as I will show later that directed my search for literature toward the concept. Positioning which is an academic construct also gave me a lot of insight with which to analyse the data generated and as such I use it in this study as a conversational phenomenon as encouraged by Davies and Harre (1990). (I also introduced social identity for more understanding, theory is available under theme three).

### **4.3.1 THE CONCEPT OF POSITIONING**

Various theorists have propounded their views and concepts of how people view the world, Davis and Harre (1990) move away from the concept of role and put forward a theory of how positioning influences peoples world. They suggest that for one to interpret the world from the perspective of who we take ourselves to be, 'we have to first learn the categories which include some people and exclude others' such as male/female; 'we have to take part in the various discursive practices through which meanings are allocated to those categories' such as the story lines that explains what they are 'the self has to be positioned in terms of the categories and story lines' and this can be done imaginatively as if one belongs in one category and not in the other; one also has to recognise oneself as having the characteristics that locate one as a member of some divergent categories and not of others (p. 44-45).

## *POSITIONING AND ITS DYNAMICS*

Positioning is ‘the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines’ Davies and Harre (1990, p. 48). They state that though the conversation is seen as the starting point for them it is ‘more than just an analyst tool but with its value more as a real conversational phenomenon’ (p. 50). Freire (1996) said this in a different way when he wrote that ‘the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible (p. 68). Davis and Harre, argue that to speak or act from a position people have to bring to the particular situation their history as subjective beings such that the effect is dependent on the source.

Interactive positioning is said to occur if what one person says positions another and reflexive positioning if one positions oneself. When a speaker assigns parts and characters in an episode described, both to themselves and to others including those taking part in the conversation they make available a subject position which the other speaker in the normal course of events would take up. In this way, the person can be said to 'have been positioned' by another speaker either explicitly or implicitly. Davis and Harre (1990) claim that people get positioned by the parts of the conversation they orient themselves towards (p. 45). So first the conversation, then the conversant positions people by what they have said such that people have the opportunity to either take up the position or not implying there is a choice which they stressed can sometimes be taken away by power imbalance.

When a conversant takes away the option of choice, Davis and Harre (1990) claim that the responses can include the other either not contributing as an attempt to resist or they may conform because they do not define themselves as having choice, but feel angry or oppressed or affronted or some combination of these, (p. 46). Many immigrants in the integration process are ‘accused’ of non-participation or as in the case of Guidance counsellors who are seeing increasing numbers of clients being sent in from State Agencies or even clients and students can sit through classes and guidance session and one can sometimes very erroneously categorise them as unengaged or even as resistant clients without considering such underlying factors.

In analysing this theme, I use the source of the positioning to categorise the generated data into different groups.

## REFLEXIVE POSITIONING- where the individual positions themselves

### *Motivation for Coming to Ireland*

The integration question must always include the motivation of why people came here [Ireland], the expectation, the starting point makes a difference. (Pablo)

The motivation for leaving one's home country logically will usually be towards a better condition, this group were not different in that going from a place with low level of spoken English to a country where even the youngest child on the street can speak English presents a potential position of deficiency or lack for the participants to take up. Immigrating seems to come from a deficiency motivation, in other words, from a place of lack. It could be in Language for those who come to learn English as in Pablo's case, economic resources such as migrant workers searching for better paying jobs or those in search of fun as in Marika's situation or the asylum seekers in search of safety who fears for his/her live as in the case of James and Juliet.

The participants mentioned that their expectations of Ireland are intrinsically linked to the reason they came here in the first place. In Pablo's story, he arrived in Ireland from Argentina a country which he said had experienced enormous diversity in culture and he also had Italian citizenship which he said gave him the same leverage as being an Irish citizen. For these reasons, he said he experienced aspects of Ireland differently from some of the other participants. In agreement with this view, the other participants gave their stories of how they came to be in Ireland.

I came through the asylum process and that was complete exclusion in experience.  
(Juliet)

...then your story will be totally different than mine, I came after college to have fun and I did and I was accepted.  
(Marika)

I came only for six months to learn English and I didn't have any problems really, I did have some legal problems because my visa expired but I went back to Argentina, and within three months I was back with my Italian passport. (Pablo)

As a consequence of the stories the participants hold about themselves, this deficiency motivation positioned them first as ‘outsiders’, then as ‘having less’ than members of the host population in specific issues such as language and skills. Davies and Harre (1990) stated that people are positioned by the part of the conversation they orient themselves towards. A position which at the beginning of their stay in Ireland, these participants appeared willing to take as it fitted with their view of what they had.

The life the participants had before immigrating to Ireland seemed to also influence the way they engage and even position themselves. Those from within the EU already had a plan and could engage with the society immediately because they had legal status while for those from outside the EU the process was much slower due to time spent regularising their residency status in Ireland.

### *Self-Acceptance and Self Confidence*

The participants felt that they have to accept themselves first and that self-confidence positively influences the way they integrate and how they are affected by the society or what people say.

...many immigrants come to Ireland ...and Sri Lanka was colonized and so because of the colonisation, there are still a lot of Sri Lankan people who feel that we are not good enough as white skinned people, and there are a lot of other African countries who feel like that. So we need to first accept ourselves and realise that just because we are different skin colour doesn't mean that we are less.  
(Amanthi)

Difference based on race according to Burke (2006) is one way that groups use to distance themselves from others. When group members identify with their group prototype through self-categorization, the challenge arises then as they also are open to the stereotypes the in-group has of their group. The potential for danger comes when out-group members internalise the image others hold of their race such that they see themselves as that lesser person. As a consequence the voice changes from an external voice to an internal one, from another's voice to one's own voice. For the participants, they believed that irrespective of the belief of others they must accept themselves as they are as equals to others and not less. The implication of this is that depending on the



way they see themselves and how much self-acceptance they have, the potential arises to position one's self as inferior to the dominant population. It can be in skin colour difference, a situation which I believe will be very difficult to address but for something with less emotional stress is client's view of their level of spoke English.

One of the participants felt that when people [indigenous Irish] got close and knew him, he was accepted because they saw him different from other people like himself from his ethnic community. The interpretation or meaning given to such actions is that they are seen not to fit the stereotype that indigenous person holds of others from the individuals original minority group 'the invisible or nameless immigrants'. Even if James doesn't feel like 'that black person' the derogatory way he perceived the black person he was being differentiate from he definitely has an internal image of them and I believe that many incidences happen that remind one of that image even when it is not directed at the individual.

People who didn't know me didn't accept me, they looked at me as that black person who couldn't speak English, but when they got to know me I was accepted.  
(James)

...the first year, I almost lost complete confidence and I almost couldn't speak, I had the same English level as I have now, but I knew I was here to stay and I felt really scared and a lot of barriers I felt as though people were looking at me as different.  
(Juliet)

This is a sore point again, the participants hint at racism and stereotyping by the dominant population without being too explicit. The bone of contention according to their accounts comes when the esteem others hold of them contradicts the way they esteem or see themselves, (see emphasis above), almost objectifying the person because of his/her race. Another position expressed occurs when they get esteemed at the level of the negative internalised image from others, an event which can cause great distress. In both instances, the immigrant positions him/herself based on their internalised belief. Again it seems that the ability to function effectively does not appear to immunise them against the pain and hurt associated with negative stereotyping and racism from the host community.

*INTERACTIVE POSITIONING* - This occurs as a result of being positioned by others

### *Being seen as Competition*

One of the participants who came to Ireland as an asylum seeker expressed finding it difficult moving away from his home country as he had a good life there but he had to leave because of the risk to his personal safety. He reported feeling accepted and getting assistance when he was a 'lowly' asylum seeker. He perceived that his personal achievement became a threat to members of the host community because the indigenous Irish according to James account saw his presence as depriving them of an opportunity to be in the position he's in or having what he has.

When I was an asylum seeker, they want to help me give me things but when I became ok, they didn't want to know me..., there are so many Irish people who feel they can be where you are and then they don't accept you. (James)

Social identity explains what happens between and within groups, Burke (2006) claims it is why groups compete to be both different and better. James experience is indicative that this asylum seeker identity was accepted as that suited the identity and esteem needs of the dominant population as the 'benefactor' while he fitted the out-group stereotype as the 'lowly, grateful, asylum seeker'. Based on this participant's account and his perception, it seems that as long as he appeared to stay in that stereotyped role or social identity, he was accepted on some level, but as soon as his perception of himself (see emphasis above) and consequently his positioning changed he reported experiencing conflict and rejection from some members of the indigenous population.

### *The annoying question - 'Where are you originally from'*

This question proved to be another sore point for some of the participants who mentioned being asked by members of the host population about where they are originally from. They mentioned that when they replied Ireland, the members of the host community appeared not to be satisfied and probed further asking 'where is your real home' or 'where are you originally from'. It seemed to be perceived as a doubled edged question that generated opposing views as on the surface, some felt it was making

conversation while others felt it had an undertone which provoked a reaction of anger and hurt leaving some of the participants feeling unaccepted and longing for a 'home'.

The participants originally from outside the EEA who the group described as being more obviously different from the white norms of Irishness because of their darker skin colour seemed to express stronger reactions. They saw the question as racist, judgemental and discriminatory hence the reaction,

...because there is racism that is why we treat it with suspicion..., why do they have to say where are you originally from. (Amanthi)

Groups according to Burke (2006), struggle to be distinct from each other. I however believe this is not just for the sake of being different, rather it is to keep others out. This question caused what Davies and Harre (1990) described as interactive positioning for the participants. Whether implicitly or explicitly, the question presents to the participant's especially those originally from outside the EEA a position outside the group they want to belong to as Irish and so when members of the indigenous Irish community ask the question it is perceived as implying *you are not one of us* so where are you originally from. It's the 'them' and 'us'.

This was one area where there was difference in the group as I observed that the participants originally from within the EU didn't have the same reaction as the others. One participant saw the question as an Irish culture.

I don't feel that way about the question because I know I have a right to be here, when I walk into a pub with an Irish friend, people ask both of us where we are from. (Makita)

Some participants felt that members of the host community didn't mind them being in Ireland but they [Irish] wanted it on their own terms and for them [immigrants] to remain lowly and not as part of the society. They mentioned experiencing this by direct comments, looks and attitude in open or shared spaces.

The people want to situate you, they want to put you in your place. (James)

Original Irish still look at you as if you are nothing and not part of them, then that hurts, ...the treatment you get on the street sends you a message that 'this is not your home' they want you to respect 'their' country. (James)

This type of racially induced rejection they experienced is what is described as racism. It caused the participant hurt and distress, it describes a subtle form but the damage is deep all the same. The image people hold for one can be sometimes very difficult to live out of as some of them positions one. The challenge again comes when the level the stereotype places them is lower than the way the participants see themselves. They described their perception of the treatment they got with phrases such as ‘this is not your country’ and ‘you are not allowed to grow up’, ‘you are kicked out’ which one of the participants summarised

It’s as if they are saying you are going too far, too big for your shoes.  
(Amanthi)

Some others expressed different views, one participant believed that self-presentation and efforts makes you get treated differently in a better way, though she didn’t disagree with the experiences described.

Personal value and the way I comport myself and try to engage with the people, I don’t get treated as if I don’t belong.  
(Juliet)

The underlying indication is that the participant seems to have an image of what she thinks is acceptable, an image which she might have to conform to at all times to escape rejection. It might involve a change in her way of being to fit in or to avoid the rejection of the host community. It’s like Jane in the story who prevents her kids from jumping around in McDonalds to avoid being disrespected she has to make the kids comport themselves stifling their youthfulness just to conform. The danger lies in not knowing how much personal change is enough to be accepted. based on their perception, they felt there seemed to be a ‘bracket’ the host community have set for immigrants where they are expected to stay. It includes the level of the national wealth and resources they are allowed to have.

It appears there is a bar, a stereotype that people measure you against it.  
(Amanthi)

The same people who were at first accepting where shocked that I bought a house, how did you buy a house! [Reported comments from members of the host community]...  
(James)

## *Backdoor Closed*

So maybe at this stage like me you are wondering why the participants still stay in Ireland if they feel this bad. Well I was bold and asked the question. The main reason proffered by the group was the limited mobility attached to the residency status of the participants from outside the EEA while those from within the EEA didn't express a need to hold onto Ireland as home in this particular context.

We have to be aware of the backdoor being completely closed or open affects the response ... because Europe is a gated community, they have no other alternatives and so they [immigrants from outside the EEA] have to make Ireland home. (James)

It's not about a place and I can leave here and make this life somewhere else if I have to. (Makita)

In other words, Ireland for those from outside the EEA is positioned as a 'better' place than their home countries in terms of opportunities as such, the willingness to endure hardship and tolerate difficult negative treatment is driven by the deficiency motivation. It was however more than that as some had acquired Irish citizenship and as such had equal mobility within the EU.

## *Irish Ties*

The presence of ties such as family, spouses, relationships that are tied to the country seemed to serve as anchors for the participants to Ireland. They mentioned that they cannot just pack up and leave as there are other lives to consider as well. Attachments they didn't have to take into consideration previously when they made the initial move to Ireland. Some now have children, or have developed love relationships in their stay in Ireland. Economic considerations and their achievements also served as ties for them to Ireland, such as career, property and prestige.

'Everything I hold dear is here. (Amanthi)

## 4.2.2 THEORETIC REFLECTION ON THEME TWO- POSITIONING

The position the host community ascribed to the participants appears to make the process of integration more problematic for them. It starts with the categorisation of the participants by their particularisms such as skin colour, place of birth, intonation and various other attributes by which societies define themselves. Those who don't fit this descriptions are given the position of the Other or the Outsider for example those from within the EEA or outside the EEA, those originally from Ireland or those who acquired Irish citizenship. This differentiation based on particularism appears to problematize the integration process and it occurs when immigrants are judged to be different from what the host community sounds and looks like, the way the host community has defined themselves to be or what Burke (2006) termed the in-group prototype.

The challenge for the participants in this study arises for those who aligned themselves more closely with the Irish identity but find themselves meeting with constant barriers from the host community that functions essentially to keep them out.

### *Potential implications of the Finding*

- Racism is still alive in Ireland but the type expressed by the participants appear subtle and difficult to report. It is expressed in shared spaces through looks, attitude or ignoring the other. It appears even difficult to address without the cooperation of members of the host community.
- The mixed message the participants experience can be confusing as on one hand, the government demands that they have to be economically viable and not be dependent on the states resources while on the other hand, the members of the indigenous community rejects them if they became too 'successful'. The question I pose as a Guidance Counsellor is how will this experienced confusion impact on immigrants who have the same experience as those mentioned by this group. Will they be more reluctant to advance in their economic value or will they be tempted to sabotage themselves if the reward for not being 'successful' is the same or even higher than that of being 'successful'. A dilemma which

might arise and be more prominent in people with a higher love and belonging needs.

- The implication for Guidance Practitioners and Educators is that the personal growth and development and the critical consciousness of these participants which practitioners encourage and develop appears to be challenging to members of the dominant population.
- It has implications for Education research as it indicates a systemic process that appears to suppress the growth of all the research participants.
- This theme also indicates that there are still challenges that makes the participants of this inquiry not feel integrated in spite of being able to function effectively in the society.

## **THEME THREE**

### **4.3.0 'WHO AM I'- MULTIPLE IDENTITIES**

How does an African Man who has lived in Ireland for 14 years and is now an Irish citizen described himself and how does he manage both identities? This third theme which is placed in a question 'who am I' captured the participants struggle to come to grips with their various Social identities. For this theme, I will draw from the theoretic framework of Social identity to interpret the generated data.

### **4.3.1 SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY**

Social identity is 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group' Tajfel, (1981, p. 122). This theory was first developed at the start of the 1970s in Britain by Henri Tajfel who did not believe that the large-scale social phenomena being experienced could be satisfactorily explained in terms of personality or interpersonal interactions. Instead, similar to political theorists like Karl Marx, he believed that 'social forces configured individual action' (p. 112). This theory which was motivated by his personal experience as a Polish immigrant attempts to give a social psychological analysis of the role of self-conception in group membership, group processes, and intergroup relations. Two important dynamics which social identity emphasises is what happens between and within groups which according to Burke (2006) explains 'why groups compete to be both different and better and why they struggle over status, prestige, and distinctiveness' Burke, P. (2006, p 122). From the challenges expressed by the participants in this study, I am convinced that one of the reasons why integration policies and practices are problematic is because of the dynamics in the interactions between the host community as a group and the new comers to the society. Thus I believe if those who work with immigrants and policy makes are able to better



understand the groups one might be able to develop policies and strategies to facilitate better interacts between them.

Social identity according to Burke (2006) answers the questions 'who we are' and 'who I am' (p. 126). It is viewed as socially constructed and culturally variable categories that are accepted by individuals as descriptive of themselves or their group. There are Individual level identities which describes identifications of the self as a certain kind of person using broad categories to describe 'who I am' and collective level 'we's are identifications of the self with a group as a whole using broad social categories to describe 'who we are'. These categories Burke writes can be sociodemographic characteristics such as gender and race; it can be group or organizational membership, social type of person and in some cases personality or character traits. 'Actors' understanding and experience of their social identity, the social world and their place in it Burke (2006) says is discursively constructed. In other words, the way people experience gender, race, class, their personal-social identity can only be expressed and understood through the categories available to them in discourse.

### *Travails of Social Identity*

Stereotyping both of self and others and the depersonalization which can happen are some of what I consider the travails or difficulties involved in the formation of a social identity. For example, socialized perception of out-group members according to Burke (2006) is more commonly called stereotyping. This is when one views 'them' that is out-group members as being similar to one another and all having out-group attributes. However, for one to categorise people as out-group, then they will have to categorise themselves as in-group and this Burke again referred to as self-stereotyping.

## *Self-Categorization using Nation State*

For many centuries, people have identified themselves with where they are from using the concept of nation such that being Irish meant being Catholic, Gaelic, rural and White, the often taken-for-granted traditional signs of Irish identity. Hutchinson and Smith, (1994) argue that while nation as a concept has proved difficult to define, scholars have recognised its power or indeed pre-eminence as a form of collective identity over class, gender or race. The participants first experienced themselves as changing then they began to question their identity and how living in Ireland impacts on it. They mentioned feeling caught in-between nationalities where they were neither completely their birth nationality nor the new Irish one. There was a difference in the group as I observed that those from outside the EEA aligned themselves closer to the Irish Nation.

Do you feel Irish, do Irish people consider you as Irish as they are in an equal way, ...when myself I say that I am Irish and they say I am not an Irish and then who am I then, ...I just feel myself, never fully Irish, never fully Congolese, just myself. (James)

My six year old is Irish, ...I am here for the long haul, ...It [change] can only come from us the supposed new Irish. (Juliet)

‘This is something that is very close to my heart and ever since I got Irish citizenship, I have been trying to create awareness that what it means to be Irish has changed as they think if you don’t look Irish or you don’t sound Irish then you can’t be Irish. The host community cannot just see us as workers, this is our life, this is our home. (Amanthi)

What happens that makes all three participants from outside the EEA identify with Ireland over their home countries. Though they seem to experience rejection from the group, their initial desire is to be members of the dominant population which under social identity concept are called the in-group. Burke (2006) stressed that within a given group there is usually substantial agreement on in-group and out-group prototypes meaning ‘we agree that we are like this and they are like that’. So first for these participants to call themselves Irish, they are saying they agree with the prototypes of what being Irish is. Burke (2006) goes further to say that to agree to be a part of the

prototype or group categorisation, one will have to first undergo a self-categorization which he referred to as a depersonalization process.

This process Burke asserts produces conformity to in-group norms because it assimilates self to the in-group prototype. This conformity he cautions ‘is not surface behavioural compliance but a deeper process whereby people’s behaviour is transformed to correspond to the appropriate self-defining group prototype’ (Burke, 2006, p. 124). What Burke highlights is that for people to align with one group and not the other is not just a matter of saying ‘I am Irish’, he argues there is an internal process a commitment to the in-group prototype. One feature of group life is that if people identify strongly with a group whose norms prescribe certain actions, then they are more likely to do those things than if they did not identify strongly or the norm did not prescribe behaviour (Terry and Hogg 1996 cited in Burke, 2006, p 140).

What I can infer from this is that the stronger the identification the participants have to the national identity of Ireland as the group they want to belong to the stronger the conformity they will have to the group norms. If we consider the participant from outside the EEA first the label ‘Non EU’ already offers the participants the position of ‘outsider’ a position from which they appear to want to distance themselves to a new identity wavering between the Irish and their original identity but aligning more to the Irish one. The participants from within the EEA on the other hand didn’t ask for the Irish nationality, neither did they seek to be addressed as Irish, though they seemed to hold multiple views about this.

...I don’t want it [Irish Citizenship] if not I will have to give up my Polish one.  
(Marika)

At the same time, she said

My roots, my family is there but I don’t feel Polish anymore. It shaped me but I feel Ireland has shaped me as well.  
(Marika)

Marika appeared at first to not be aligned to Ireland but going over the conversation extracts, one can see at various times as above when she identified with Ireland and other times when she barely identified with Poland. What I begin to see is that there are changes as well but that because culturally Marika who is a Polish citizen is not so far

from the Ireland, the changes appear not to be so pronounced unlike the participants from out the EEA where the culture, dress code, diet, skin colour is really different. So in essence, it appeared as if the distance of the participant's home countries and culture to the host community affects the level of individual change needed to belong in the new society.

#### **4.3.2 THEORETIC UNDERSTANDING OF THE CONCEPT OF CULTURAL CONTACT**

The concept of integration in my understanding is a process that involves immigrants and members of the host community living together in ways where both parties are able to function effectively and unhindered. Leary (2001) claims that because human beings are social they end up having to communicate with the people in their new country. This process of interacting with others in a new culture Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, (2001) referred to the process as cultural contact. They define it as 'the meeting of individuals and groups who differ in their culture, attitude or linguistic background' (p. 4) and they regard it as a major stressful life event that involves change. They add that it can affect both cognitive and behavioural response resulting in psychological and sociological outcomes (p. 6-7). Their model of integration presents four possible outcomes for immigrants in a new culture as shown below:

1. Passing- where the individual rejects their original culture and adapts to the new one
2. Militant nationalist/chauvinists- where they reject the influences as alien and retreat back into their culture of origin
3. Marginal syndrome - where they vacillate between both cultures not feeling at home in either
4. Mediating persons - where they are able to synthesize their various cultural identities which is the equivalent of integration. Here the person acquires a genuine bicultural or multicultural personality (p. 31).

This model describes some who reject either their own or the new culture or they accept the new one. The question I ask is how do immigrants negotiate this, what factors contribute towards them aligning either towards their own culture or the new one and how do immigrants become mediating persons which is the same as becoming an integrated person. The data generated indicated two of the four possible options being exhibited by the participants in their expression of feeling disconnected both from their home countries and Ireland. They were strongly aware of a change in their identity and Pablo starts off with a native adage

Who changed the river or the man? (Pablo)

The participants were very conscious of the changes in themselves, their views, professional life and circumstances. Pablo's native adage captured the question of where the change is located, in the man or the environment, in other words, this change is it internal or an external change that happens due to immigration and contact with others. Some described it as change while another participant referred to it as loss

When you leave your home and come to a different country you are different,  
never the same. (Pablo)

Once you go out you have lost, loss of identity. (James)

Four out of the five participants directly expressed feeling disconnected from their home countries and Ireland while two of the participants mentioned feeling disconnected from their previous professions, though all the participants are presently employed in sectors different from their careers in their home countries. A fact which I believe has implications for Guidance Counsellors as that means these participant's all had a change in career. The risk is that they might just be placed into any course or assisted into any career without proper guidance.

This thesis set out to explore how integrated immigrants are after they have been able to effectively function in the four life domains under which integration is measured. I believe this concept of cultural contact gives practical proof of where they are in the integration process as indicated from their lived experience. They all expressed feeling

disconnected both with their home countries and in Ireland. When asked when the disconnection started the participants response implied racism from the attitude they experienced.

I started feeling disconnected from the attitude I got on the street [Ireland].  
(Amanthi)

...I usually run in the opposite directions when I see people who are from the same place as me [Sri Lanka].  
(Amanthi)

There was not a single country I felt I belonged to. (Amanthi)

I noticed a difference between my mother and I and I felt that she changed.  
(James)

I just feel myself, never fully Irish, never fully Congolese, just myself.  
(James)

I can't go back there [Nigeria] again to stay, I feel I don't belong there, even my profession, I am disconnected with it, I feel I am on a different path. (Juliet)

I struggle in Poland to be myself and I struggle in Ireland to be myself.  
(Marika)

### *The pendulum experience*

I placed these extracts from the participant's conversation to emphasis the feelings in people who Ireland will consider to be either integrated based on the integration measuring indicators or at least are going toward integration. The three participants from outside the EEA all appear first to gravitate towards Ireland and the Irish identity (see theme two to get full picture), identifying themselves as Irish. This Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, (2001) describe as Passing, where they claim that the immigrant rejects their original culture and adapt to the new one. This is evidenced above (see emphasis). There appears to be a progression where their attempts to integrate and be a part of the system is rejected and they search for a home [see theme one]. This rejection leads them to approach their previous culture and they realise they cannot fit back there anymore as

they appear to have changed. This leads to further confusion and the rejection from the host community still stays with them where they move to Marginal Syndrome which according to Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, (2001) is where they vacillate between both cultures not feeling at home in either.

The sample for this study was a small one five participants, but they were purposively selected meaning that they were goal getters who had accomplished things in their years in Ireland. The story is sad if this is what integration results in. when we say people are marginalised the word does not show the layers of pain and hurt that is hidden beneath it. Their plight doesn't end there as Burke (2006) proposed a third group which is on the boundary between both groups. He described them as more disliked and more strongly rejected and if they are more in-group than out-group members they are treated as black sheep (Marques and Páez 1994 cited in Burke 2006, p. 126). In other words they are rejected even by those from their own home countries.

Ward, Bochner and Furnham proffer a definition of integration, they say

Integration refers to the accommodation that comes about when different groups maintain their respective core cultural identities while at the same time merging into a superordinate group in other equally important respects. (2001, p. 30)

Unlike many other definitions this places responsibility on both groups, it doesn't qualify one as static, better or more powerful than the other. A challenge still arises as with the participants in this study if both groups keep their core identities how then do they merge, because it appears merging involves some chipping away of parts of people.

I believe that if Ireland wants to have immigrants who are integrated, the nation needs provide a safe, nurturing environment that facilitates healthy contact between its citizens and immigrants that will encourage them to gravitate towards becoming mediating or integrated persons.

The natural assumption about integrating immigrants is that integration is a new challenge in their new countries, but as Makita and Amanthi's stories indicate there were issues integrating in their home countries as well.

### **4.3.3 DISCUSSION ON MULTIPLE IDENTITIES**

The main challenge expressed by the participants is their having to simultaneously hold and act out multiple roles and positions that carry conflicting expectations. For example being an African and an Irish man at the same time. Or seeing one's self as an in-group member but still having out-group characteristic such as skin colour, accent, mannerisms and diet. This disconnection is described as an internal feeling towards both countries to which they were affiliated leading them to search for 'home'. An idea which presents them with double rejection as their home country considers them foreigners even to the extreme of being seen as defectors as in Marika's story (probably a residue language from the communist era) and their new country Ireland doesn't accept them the way they want to be accepted.

### **4.4 Conclusion**

The findings was indicative of various stages involved in the integration process, the early years characterised by the participant's gratitude and wanting to contribute. Their motivation for coming to Ireland acknowledged that the country had something they wanted (fun, safety, employment e.t.c), thus positioning Ireland as the benefactor and the immigrants as the receiver, beneficiary. All the participants experienced a change in their positioning and self-concept which progressed due to them accomplishing and developing a sense of themselves in the society. Though all the participants expressed experiencing disquiet /dissatisfaction when they perceive they had not been accepted as equal, the participants from outside the EEA expressed a stronger reaction than those from within the EU. Four at of the five participants expressed characteristics of the marginal syndrome.



# CHAPTER FIVE

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.0 CONCLUSIONS

It is easy to look integrated but much more difficult to feel integrated

The findings indicate there is an internal and an external representation of integration and depending on what one is looking for it will influence the policies, measurement criteria and even the kind of data generated in research. The focus of this research from the onset was to understand the internal reality of integration by exploring the lives of the experts, the immigrants themselves. The main findings of this study showed that though the ability to function effectively provided a spring board for the participants to make some advancement in their individual process of integrating in Ireland, it however proved insufficient in itself to bring the participants to become fully integrated persons.

In the first annual report on the integration monitor in Ireland (2010), some of the limitations of the report included the fact that groups were combined such that smaller groups like those from outside the EU became hidden. Also, due to the statistical nature of the data the report states they had very little sense of the lived experiences of the immigrants whose statistical data was used. In light of the findings of this current study, these limitations appear to have great implication as the experiences of such groups will not be included. Throughout this study, I observed some marked difference in some of the themes between the participants from within the EEA and those from outside the EEA. Secondly, from the themes that emerged I believe it will be difficult to capture that kind of data outside of participants lived experience. Though I acknowledge the report as a National step in the right direction as it means Ireland's integration progress can be compared with other countries, it however seems to leave itself open for criticism.

## **5.1 UNDERSTANDING THE FINDINGS USING MASLOW'S THEORY OF MOTIVATION**

Based on the analysis of the data generated during this inquiry, I observed that the integration process of the participants appeared driven by a deficiency motivation which according to Maslow is one that is need or lack driven. The findings indicate that the ability to function effectively in the four life domains by the participants is vital as it appeared to precipitate a change in the participant's sense of themselves as was indicated by their desire to participate in the community. They actively sought to have their psychological needs of belonging and esteem meet. This is in agreement with Maslow's theory where he claimed that once the basic needs are met and people begin to feel settled they become ready to engage with others leading to the psychological needs of love and belonging and esteem needs. In other words, their self-esteem increased and they looked to others for confirmation that they have the same esteem of them.

There was however significant differences observed when the lived experience of the participants was compared with other aspects of Maslow's theory. First their experience appeared not to be hierarchical neither did it seem to be one need at a time, rather it appeared flatter and interchanging where the participants all seemed to occupy multiple positions simultaneously. Secondly, Maslow claims that the attainment of safety and security needs was about food and shelter and physical safety. I would suggest that because of the influences of culture and race there can be various meanings ascribable to those needs. This would most likely differ from person to person such that what constitutes a safety risk to one person will be normal for another. This exploration of the participants lived experience indicates that in spite of being able to function effectively in the society they were still exposed to a constant threat to their safety and security needs which for some was real and for others it was a perceived threat. A threat which I observed was more pronounced from the participant's accounts for those from outside the EEA. In other words, the fact that these participants had good jobs, medical insurance, language of the host community and were Irish or EU citizens, their safety and security needs were still threatened.

Thirdly, I would like to propose the possibility that the order of the psychological needs of Love and Belonging and Esteem needs can alternate with each other or even be held

simultaneously rather than as Maslow described one need before the other. The participants in this study seemed both steps as they appeared to be trying to fit in to meet their belonging needs and they gave more of themselves by active participation and contribution to meet their esteem needs.

## **5.2 IMPLICATIONS OF INTEGRATION AS EXPERIENCED BY THE PARTICIPANTS**

### *Lack of acceptance*

The findings of this inquiry indicate that the participants felt unaccepted as themselves by the host community such that they had to adjust and change. Their efforts to belong to the in-group due to constant rejection led to a search for a place called home as they remained as out-group. The consequence of this type of positioning of keeping the participants as outsider has the potential to foster the development of inferiority feeling. Such feelings can arise when it gets reemphasised to them that ‘you are different’ and the unfortunate thing according to Touraine (2000) is that difference is equated with inequality as something that is not acceptable. This continuous ‘them’ and ‘us’ divide I believe is the perfect breeding ground for racism, the practice of inequality, and the development of inferiority feeling in the participants as it can lead to private musings of ‘why can’t I be one of you’ ‘what is wrong with me’. The result is that the current model of integration which is being measured seems to be one where the suppression of individual growth seems woven into the fibres of the society. It presents the participants a choice of either self-assimilation to be accepted or develop a coping mechanism to deal with rejection. Either of which I believe is highly detrimental to the integration process.

As a result of this, I would suggest that for the participants to be better integrated, Ireland would need to be able to provide an integration nurturing environment where as Maslow (1943) claimed people can have the satisfaction of their psychological needs

which he said leads to feelings of self-confidence, worth, strength, capability and adequacy of being useful and necessary in the world. An environment that fosters the development of the mediating person which is the equivalent of integration; a process which can occur through self-actualisation.

### *Depersonalisation*

Self-categorisation according to Burke (2006) leads to self-assimilation, a process which he referred to as depersonalisation process which is 'viewing yourself as a category representative rather than a unique individual' (p. 119). I believe this is one of the reasons why when a lot of the integration models is mentioned, the idea of assimilation always comes up. On first consideration of the generated data, it appeared as if Ireland was indirectly trying to assimilate the participants. When I saw some of the direct and implied changes the conversation uncovered, especially in those from outside the EEA, it appeared as if there was something about the model of integration in Ireland that is indirectly assimilating immigrants. This depersonalisation however seems to happen to the indigenous citizens (who self-categorise) from when they are born in a continuous process such that it doesn't come across as change as people grow into it.

Based on this new perspective of society wide self-assimilation by identifying with the dominant group prototype, it seems that the participants were having an experience of Ireland the same way indigenous citizens do from birth. McAdams, sheds light on this as he states that "the life story is jointly authored by the person and his or her defining culture or cultures" (1997, p.64). A practical example that helps me understand this idea is like a Muslim woman who feels she cannot go out without a head covering, she was not born with one she got assimilated by her culture. Just the same way there is no African in me that makes me African outside of the one I have learnt from being within my culture. Many people say African's can dance then my son who is of African descent by both parents (but an Irish citizen by birth and has lived all his life in Ireland) definitely is not African if that is what it takes because he can't dance the way 'we' Africans can dance he just jumps around (hopefully he'll be old enough to forgive me

by the time he reads this). For the participant's especially those from outside the EEA, their self-assimilation to Irish identity appeared to me more pronounced because they had to come a longer cultural distance to be able to categorise themselves as Irish. I also observed that the participants from outside the EEA had more pronounced reactions during the cultural contact with members of the host community. This observation is however consistent with Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) who state that the further away from the host country the person is from the more stressful the outcome of the contact.

According to Burke (2006) this process of identification makes the individual 'conform' to the in-group prototype. For them to do this, they have to somehow reject their own which was evidenced by four of the participants who explicitly expressed not belonging to their home countries to the point of not seeing it as home. This is what again Burke described as self-stereotyping which can result in self-assimilation. Some might argue that individual belonging and esteem needs drive their choice of self-assimilation, I am however of the opinion that the lack of acceptance from the host community plays more of a determining role. It logically seemed to follow that the harder and stricter the membership criteria the 'harder' the immigrants have to work to belong. I don't therefore agree that it is as simple as locating the problem in the individual immigrant through claims of the need for belonging and acceptance but that the host country controls and in very salient ways intensifies this need by keeping them as outsiders which the participants perceived in the question 'where are you originally from'. The result is the development of what Freire (1996) claimed that in itself is an oppression 'when to be is to be like' (p.33). Thus I strongly recommend that integration cannot be fully explored without an understanding and review of how the host culture accepts new members into their group.

### *Participants Changing Identity*

In group contexts, Burke (2006) states that people attend to information about the context-specific group norm and the most immediate and best source of this information is identity-consistent behaviour of core group members which once established, is

internalized as the context-specific in-group prototype to which people conform through self-categorization (p. 140). One of the options available then to immigrants in getting an understanding of what it means to be 'Irish' under the lenses of social identity formation is that newcomers to Ireland will look at the core members of the Irish society and see how they are, what they wear in the cold, how they speak and even how they attend job interviews and write curriculum vitae. The question again is 'does being integrated equates to becoming like'. The underlying issue in my view which makes this kind of changing identity problematic I suggest is due to the change not being self-induced but is based on external influences where one is compelled howbeit in very subtle ways.

I would suggest that this depersonalisation process presents a unique challenge to society as many conform to the collective identity and according to Maslow (1943), for one to be self-actualized then one cannot be 'flattened by culture' and has to be more individualistic. It appears that society for both immigrants and citizens is raising people who will be challenged in their attempt to attain unto self-actualisation.

### **5.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF INSIGHTS TO ADULT EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING**

#### *THE AFRICAN ME WITH CULTURALLY SENSITIVE HEARING*

I suggest this insight I got from my understanding of positioning as I reflected on Makita's earlier statement<sup>1</sup> possible contribution to the development of intercultural studies and also for Guidance practitioners working with immigrants. In understanding how positioning operates, if an African were to walk into an Irish pub with a white Irish friend and someone were to shout 'go back to your country' the Irish person will not for a second react to the statement on her own behalf but she might get offended for her African friend. Who on the other hand will have to choose how to react to the racist ranter, but react she must (either internally or externally). Since she is not originally Irish but of African descent she will hear the comment in a way that the White Irish person doesn't. First the Irish person cannot be deported or threatened with deportation

and she is securely attached in her Irishness while as an immigrant, she can have her love and belong, esteem, security and even safety needs threatened by such a simple comment. Such racist rant even when one is now an Irish citizen it can still arouse the internalised image of negative stereotypes.

### *Education and how adult immigrants learn about integration*

As a person of African descent living in Ireland for nine years I can truly say I didn't have a need for the word 'integration' until I came to Ireland. Till this present time, I have not heard of any structure in Ireland that teaches immigrants and citizens about integration, what it is, what we have to do and even what an integrated person is like. Yet from my subjective experience, I have formed an idea of what an integrated person is like. The question then is how do immigrants learn what integration is? Merriam, Caffarella, and Baumgartner (2006) suggest that for people from Non Western world learning is for some people different from the way the western world learn and that for different cultures, 'learning is lifelong, informal and can be embedded in everyday life' (p. 238) as knowledge is transferred from the collective to the individual. For some it could be holistic including the spiritual; cognitive and formal like the western world where curriculum and certification play a big part; or community education of people where the 'evaluation of the effectiveness of an application' (p. 238) is where the learning comes from. Based on the work of behavioural psychology it is claimed that people learn not just from the consequences of their own responses but also from the observation of other people's behaviour and its consequences for them, Gothard, (2001. P. 23). In other words, they learn from the consequences of others actions how they should be.

I do not argue for a structured way of learning about integration as its effectiveness for the integration process has not been proven. Rather I argue that immigrants on relocation have their own interpretation and system of making meaning of what integration and the integrated person is like. A process which can happen either formally or informally and that because of individual subjectivity and the constraint of culture, class, race and gender, people will learn and understand about the concept of

integration and how it applies to them in very different ways. According to Mezirow's (1991) work on adults meaning making process, I can infer that the meaning immigrants attribute to integration will be based on their past experience which will depend on individual subjectivity. Ryan defined subjectivity as 'the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relations to the world' (Weedon, 1997, p. 32 cited in Ryan and Walsh, 2004, p.142).

Another possible way that immigrants hear and learn about integration will be from the discourse on integration (refer to section on integration). Ryan states that discourse is more than just words or text and drawing from Foucault's work, she says it is 'an historically, socially and institutionally specific structure of statements, categories and beliefs, habits and practices' (p. 143) used to filter and interpret experience. In essence, the discourses available at a certain historical moment construct the ways that people can think or talk about, or respond to phenomena. It invites us to be human in certain ways or to respond to others in certain ways producing certain assumptions and subject positions from which people speak and act.

Foucault in his work was able to link macro conceptions of society and social change and according to Ryan, he believed 'knowledge and discourse to be political and material products that represent a privileged way of seeing things, reflected in power, position and tradition' (2004, p. 144). He claimed underlying power relations shape a discursive practice since discourses represent political interests and are constantly vying for power and status (Weedon, 1997: 40, cited in Ryan 2004, p. 144). A practical example for immigrants will be the wording of the 2005 IBC<sup>5</sup> residency status granted by the state to over 10,000 immigrants in Ireland had a phrase that said the resident permit will be renewed further if they can prove they are 'economically viable'. As a result, the immigrants from outside the EU who fall into this category of stamp 4 residency have to supply proof that they have been in employment or further training. This kind of national discourse displays the power dynamics where one group can grant resident permit, and the other group who are to conform for their continued stay in the country.



## 5.4 FINDING MY VOICE THROUGH FREIRE'S PEDAGOGY

True generosity lies in 'striving so that those hands whether of individuals or entire people need be extended less and less in supplication' so that more and more they become human hands which work and working transform the world F.  
(Freire, 1996, p. 27)

Paulo Freire (1921 – 1997) was a Brazilian Educator and influential theorist of critical pedagogy. He described his pedagogy which has been used as a philosophy in education as the 'pedagogy of people engaged in the fight for their own liberation' Freire (1996, p. 35). The question I pose from Freire quote as I engage with his work is 'how can we make the hands of immigrants who are trying to make Ireland their new home less stretched out in need'.

### *Integration or Oppression*

The finding of this study shows that four of the five participants who spoke about their lived experience in Ireland, indicated they experienced themselves as mediating persons which Ward, Bochner, & Furnham, (2001) described as immigrants who vacillate between both cultures not feeling at home in either. Freire (1973) wrote that integration with one's context as distinguished from adaptation is a distinctly human activity. He described it as being able to adapt one's self to reality plus the critical capacity to make choices and to transform reality. So according to Freire, the main quality that makes integration work is the combination of choice and being able to transform reality. Based on my earlier argument which stated that the society provided two possible positions for the participants in this study, self-assimilate and be accepted or develop a coping mechanism to deal with rejection. Either of which positions does not foster the development of the integrated person but an adapted person Freire (1976). I will like to suggest that these participants experience indicate they have become conformed rather than integrated individuals. He described the adapted person as one who is an object and adaptation attests at its best is a representation of a weak form of self-defence.

I take this position because reflected in the participants stories I see Jane and Paul's stories and worse still I see the story of my lived experience. The pressure to be, the

pressure to do, pressure to become, a place where one is not accepted as one's self but one has to put on an 'act' to be accepted. Nikolai Nikolaivich cited in Freire (1976) said that 'gregariousness is always the refuge for mediocrities' (p. 6). Do I then assign such a label to myself, no way, I have too much self-respect to assign that label to myself. Will I assign it to Amanthi one of the participants from Sri Lanka, no way as I see a strong resourceful person. However like Jane's story, we resort to being 'sociable' being gregarious to fit in. These for me are the signs of adaptation and conformity that society (made of people) demands of us as immigrants for upward mobility in the workplace or successful integration. Such that being sociable becomes what one does not who one is. To the extent one has to make personal changes according to Freire we have become objects not of our own making but a society that demands 'conform or you die'. Ha! I hear your shock and even I feel my shock but as I said at the start I am finding my voice where voice is not just about what I say but as Collins (1990) said 'the voice I now seek is both individual and collective, personal and political, one reflecting the unique biography with the larger meaning of my historical times' (Collins, 1990, cited in Smith, 1994, p. 25).

Why do I see this adaptation as a form of death, because as Maslow (1943) stated, humans will do what they need to meet their basic needs. From my experience of living in Ireland and the participant's experiences, we all seem to be using one form of adaptation technique or the other to be able to survive in the system. As one conducting this inquiry with the Social Constructivist stance, the question I ask is what is System as we are accustomed to saying? I believe people make up the system, people make the rule not the system. We have the integration system we have today because of the way people have made it.

The NESC (2006) report claimed that

...it is beyond the capacity of government to make integration happen; it cannot compel integration nor can it legislate for it. It will happen because people, long-term resident and newcomer alike, consider it essential to ensure a worthwhile and cohesive future. (NESC 2006, p. 187)

I would suggest that rather than look at the system which is made up of and controlled by individuals, we all need to be active participants in the societal change. I am convinced that based on the experiences of these participants that a whole system overhaul is needed for Ireland to develop an integration system that works and raises subjects as against objects.

## *Can I be different and equal?*

Oppression involves holding people in a position of dependency Freire (1996, p. 31). I argue that what greater level of dependency can one have when you see a full grown man kept by a system for eight years waiting for his request for asylum to be heard. In Freire's view, the interests of the oppressors lie in 'changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them'. I suggest that unless integration stops focusing on making the immigrants 'fit in' by being better participants but concentrate on promoting a conducive environment for participation then integration will continue to be a challenge.

Oppression or living in an oppressive environment changes another human life, affecting how one sees himself, who he wants to become and even what he aspires to. Freire (1996) puts it this way,

At a point in their existential experience, the oppressed feel an irresistible attraction towards the oppressors and their way of life. Sharing this life becomes an overpowering aspiration and in their alienation, the oppressed want at any cost to resemble the oppressors and to imitate them to follow them. (p. 44)

The oppressed according to Freire is characterised by their internalization of the image of the oppressor; their desire to use the oppressor as a role model; self-depreciation where they internalize the opinion the oppressors hold of them '...they hear it so much they become convinced of their own unfitness. Freire (1996, p. 45).

Freire argues that as long as their [oppressed] ambiguity persists 'the oppressed are reluctant to resist and totally lack confidence in themselves' (Freire, 1996, p. 46). He argued that the oppressed continue to live in the duality in which to be is to be like, and to be like is to be like the oppressor, their contribution to their liberation is impossible.

## *Dangers of an Oppressive System*

Like Maslow (1943), Freire acknowledges the dangers of thwarting people's desire. He maintained that

...When their effort to act responsibly is frustrated, when they find themselves unable to use their faculties, people suffer. 'This suffering due to their impotence is rooted in the very fact the human equilibrium has been disturbed'. It causes people anguish and it also causes them to reject their impotence by attempting ... one way is to submit to and identify with a person or group having power. By this symbolic participation in another person's life [men have] the illusion of acting, when in reality [they] only submit to and become a part of those who act.

(Freire, 1996, p. 59)

Freire (1996) cautions against the dependency of the oppressed on the oppressor which can lead to total emotional dependency or even necrophilic behaviour which is the destruction of life of both themselves and others oppressed like themselves (p. 47). James's account of his experience depicts this from his perception of members of the indigenous population who he said were on some level accepting of him as an asylum seeker as it meant they could be benevolent and help him so long as he was the dependent. Freire recounted an interview with a peasant highlight the dangers of internalising such image where he said that the peasant is a dependent, 'he can't say what he wants, he lets off steam with his family and doesn't let off steam with the boss because he thinks the boss is a superior being' (p. 47).

When I commenced this inquiry, I didn't have my voice, I could not own my anger or my emotion as I wrote in the methodology chapter. My sister Edna [God rest her soul] set me free. Her death made me re-evaluate life and the meaning I make of it. It made me able to overcome false pride that protected the self from embarrassment, a kind of adaptation which Freire (1973) described as a weak form of self-defence.

Mezirow (1991) describes this kind of life event as a disorienting dilemma and the change as a transformative learning experience. Claxton (1999) encourages resilience is important in the ability to tolerate one's own emotions rather than reject it. Mezirow and Claxton argue that such feelings are to be embraced rather than disowned. They claim that the more we take responsibility for these feelings, the more productive will be the learning that takes place.

## *Breaking the Cycle of Oppression*

No reality transforms itself. (Freire, 1996, quotes Karl Max p. 35)

Freire argued that oppressors are anaesthetized to the consequences of their actions and that the oppressors think that they are just and correct to take such action, (Freire, 1993, p. 73). In as much as I believe that having a new country, food and roof over the heads of immigrants and for some who excel, having prestige, I am also in agreement with Freire's that life affirming humanization does not lie simply in having more to eat. For the oppressed to regain their humanity Freire says it can be done by means of praxis 'which is the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it' (p. 60). This according to Freire is a radical requirement.

### **5.5 REFLEXIVITY AND MY PERSONAL JOURNEY**

This inquiry for me has been a transformative learning experience as it changed me. I have been both teacher and student, researcher and researched, author and reader. Lincoln and Guba believe this process can happen through conducting a research when the researcher is reflexive. They described it as a conscious experiencing of the self as both enquirer and respondent, as teacher and learner, as one coming to know the self within the process of researching itself' (2000, p. 183).

My understanding of myself came first from the literature and theoretic perspectives I engaged with served as a form of radical education with transformative power. It sharpened my critical consciousness, developed my researcher identity and self but most of all it exposed me to understanding integration and the complexities involved and how it applies to my own experience. The narrative method also has served me in rewriting my narrative about my integration experience. It offered me an opportunity to question some of the assumptions which were in the stories I told and believed about myself. The result is that my integration in Ireland has shifted to not just me integrating in the society but that me integrating within myself such that I am now a more integrated person within myself and I am in the process of integrating in Ireland.

My sister Edna' death was a wake-up call for me to see there was more to life, it made me take responsibility and ownership for my feelings. Being in touch with the pain of her loss freed me up to be able to handle other pains and loss. It freed me like some of the participants who were able to voice their hurts and pain.

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

The findings indicate there is an internal and an external representation of integration. The focus of this research from the onset was to understand the internal reality of integration by exploring the lives of the only possible experts, the immigrants themselves. The main findings of this study showed that though the ability to function effectively within the society provided a spring board for the participants to make some advancement in their individual process of integrating in Ireland, it however proved insufficient in itself to bring the participants to become fully integrated persons. The two main issues which the participant's experienced which seemed to mar their integration process was; the lack of acceptance from the host community; and managing their evolving and changing identities.

It highlights the complexity of the process of integration as this inquiry has attempted to show. This complexity appears to impact on both the migrants and for the host community. As a result of the associated complexities, I foresee an increase in the demand for culturally sensitive service in employability programmes that will demand practitioners to be both reflective and aware of the discourse from a broad range of disciplines.

Some significant and unexpected finding of the study is that contrary to the assumption that integration is a new problem for immigrants, some of the participants showed otherwise as they also expressed not feeling integrated in their home countries. Also, all the participants had changed their career sector since coming to Ireland and had also all completed third level education both in their home countries and in Ireland. This is significant as it begins to suggest that the life people had before relocation impacts on their personal goal to accomplish. It might also indicate those who are functioning

effectively in society might not be because the society has good supports in place but it might indicate it is due to the immigrant's personal efforts.

Concerning the issue of the immigrants changing identity, I feel it is a possible area where future studies could be directed. As Gothard (2001) states, the issues of 'who we are' and 'who we become' lies at the heart of Career Guidance. I believe that because identity cannot be devoid of cultural influences, I am convinced that it is important to begin to develop more understanding in the area of how culture influences one's career choice.

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## **Pauls Story - My Integrated Persona**

**By Ebum Akpoveta**

Hey! Paul ...no ...no, its Nnamdi ...Shut up Paul, no you keep quite Nnamdi, you can't control me, I belong here as well. This sounds like madness but I contend with these silently, squabbling voices every day. Confused? then welcome to my world, come with me as I give you a sneak preview of what it is like being me.

### **Rude Awakening,**

...Ummmm, big stretch, waiting for the sound that lets me know its wake up time, the Cock will soon make that crowing sound that wakes the whole City. I wonder how they know to make that sound just about 6am, maybe they have their own internal alarm clock. Maybe the trees have a sound that they understand or the worms in the ground makes a squeaky sound that only animals can understand. All I know is that at 6 am the cock crows and I drag myself out of bed. Oh wait what's that sound, where is it coming from..., grrrh, grrrh..., grrrh..., oh no! I it's that alarm clock.

In my waking hours for a few brief moments I was Nnamdi, but I am Paul now. The Cock is not here to crow and no you call them male Chicken. ...Whatever, but oh how I miss that sound that reminds me of my home country, the buzz of the start of Lagos life. Alas, it's a different buzz today, I have to be Daddy now and get the kids ready for school. Even that is a new challenge for me. Oh how I miss Africa, I would have gotten up this morning and being the man of the house, age was a great way to get things done for you. I always looked forward to getting older to the point where people would wait on me after all, I did my time but moving to Ireland has robbed me of my reward. Coming of age has not been all I anticipated, this was not how I thought I will be at the good age of 45.

My dreams have been completely shattered and there is no one who understands how I feel. I used to watch my Mum wake up early, run around the house to prepare the bath for my Dad first thing in the morning, then before he comes out of the bath, his breakfast is made and he doesn't just get a few slices of bread straight from the fridge, he gets a well prepared balanced diet, I mean real organic food, not over processed tined food. Oh... but that is the missed opportunity for Nnamdi, you see why I enter my

waking hours, the time in-between sleep and wakefulness, not fully conscious, where I still hold on to the dream, you see why at that time why I prefer to be Nnamdi. But that is not to be as duty calls, reality knocks.

Grrrh... , grrrh... , Wake up, wake up..., I open first the left eye, then the right one and yes, it's a rude awakening for me it's not 6am as I hoped, its 7am and its snowvember and I am most definitely not in Africa, this is Dublin. Slowly, I drag myself out of bed then the morning rush begins. Chore, upon chore, this is not me, this was not the plan.

### **Daddy moments**

Wakey- wakey, this time its Paul talking, I know them differently, his speaks with a singsong voice that is less authoritative, he even tries to make his African accent less pronounced. He annoys me sometimes because I feel he has no spine, always, yes Sir, no Sir, yes Mam, thank you Mam. He is so weak, even his children talk back at him. Just look at him, the way he is cooing at children like a 'woman, 'where is his masculinity, common, where is his manly pride. ...uummm, the truth be told, I admire him sometimes though because he seems to have better relationships with people but I tell you it is really difficult keeping up with Paul and Nnamdi, two people in the same body, same life different desire, same person different cultures, same colour different drives, same mouth different sounds.

*...I am his survival kit*

### **Paul in charge at work**

Nnamdi is the boss at home but at work and in public spaces that's where I come out and I am in control. That's the only way we can survive, I have to keep Nnamdi hidden and suppressed. Do you know how hard it is to keep such a powerful character quite. I almost feel sorry for him sometimes as he is so misunderstood. He used to have so many problems at work with people it was unreal, anything he did was easily misunderstood and he felt so picked on he was constantly frustrated and angry. I know Nnamdi doesn't like me very much but I am his survival kit if you can so label me. I am the one that helps him keep his sanity. Everything ticks him off if you know what I mean. His typical day used to start like this (until I came that is...ha...ha...ha...).

*Nnamdi ... Good morning Sharon,*

*Sharon.... greeted with silence and the continuous tapping away of the computer*

*Nnamdi ... Hiiii... Sharonnn...*

*Sharon ... oh! Hi Nadi*

What are you talking about Paul, you see why I think you are a wimp, you allow people treat you like a doormat. Imagine saying good morning to a girl that I am older than by over 15 years in fact 16 years to be precise, I walk into the office she can't even say good morning to me first after all I am older than her and even bigger than her. I mean in African I am used to being addressed with respect at work and at home, I mean, okay even if she used the westernised form of greeting and said hello even that was absent. Then I try to be friendly and lead by example and even say good morning to her first and to be completely ignored, completely unacceptable. Even when she answers she calls me 'Nadi', what is that, 'whose name is she destroying in that way'...absolutely no respect for me, nothing at all.

I guess that's why Paul succeeds where I fail, I can't take it at all. I completely see red but Paul, he actually just stands in front of Sharon and says 'hello Sharon' in that false voice that everyone seems to understand at work, look at the way she is smiling in answer to him, honestly, I can't understand it. At first I felt that him standing in front of her she cannot pretend she didn't see him but she looks up at him and actually smiles, so what is it that he has that I don't have why is he succeeding at places where it has not turned out well for me, after all we are the same one body. I can't laugh as loud as I feel, or bring the kind of lunch I want to work after all, people eat different types of 'leaves' as 'vegetables' what would it be like if I give in to myself and take 'beans' and 'garri' to work. Don't laugh at me, Paul is already constraining me and refusing me to me myself so you don't laugh at me as well. Look at Paul, he is so changed I don't even recognise him sometimes and you know the irony of it all, he is me.

Help, these people will turn me mad, two people in the one body, who am I really, who is the real me.

---

*...he is so changed I don't even recognise him sometimes,*

*... you know the irony of it all, he is me.*





wants to see me, no one even wants to be with me. I just want to be free, free to be, free to do or even not to do.

Why did the world change in my time, you know when my Dad came home, my mum was so lucky if he raised his head from the newspaper or from the sports on television, but today before I open my mouth to speak in my own house, Paul is there speaking for me, so that what I really want to say I end up not saying it and I find myself sugar coating my words. Common help me here because this is too much even in my own house. Now I have to say all the right things for my wife to feel loving towards me. In those days women feel loving as a duty now Paul is in control, he brings her breakfast in bed and even offers her tea on cold days, he massages her back when she comes back from work, it's really unbelievable how far he will go. Did I say I will not allow Paul in my bed, he has taken control of my life, my whole life.

---

*...I am a normal man living in two worlds.*

---

### **Sleep time**

This is the only time I am free to be me, only in my thoughts. If I want to belong, if I want to be accepted, if I want people to like me here in Ireland, I have to be Paul. But what about my masculinity, what about my pride. Coming to Ireland has changed my whole life, I have to reevaluate my wants and needs. A constant struggle trying to find my identity ...my true identity, what is true anymore I don't know. There is Paul constantly taking over, there is Nnamdi a constant unhappy grouch. You know what, I don't really want answers from you, I don't even want a solution from you, I just want you to hear me out, I want you to listen to me and understand what I am feeling, what I am going through.

You'll never know the struggle I go through and face as you see me each day, at first, all I wanted was to be able to pay the bills and take care of my family, but it all seemed to have changed and I want more. Sometimes I am able to forget and enjoy being me ...ah, but that is another days story ...the turmoil in my head as I lie awake at night trying to sleep. Grappling with unfulfilled dreams and desires, it's so freeing to escape into sleep my own private haven.

In case you are thinking it, I am not mad, I don't need medication, I don't need a label put on me. For emphasis sake, I repeat it to wipe the image off your mind, I am not mad, it's not split or multiple personalities, it's not even borderline or schizophrenia, no I am a normal man living in two worlds, ...this is you.

## **Torn in Two, Jane's Story**

**By Ebum Akpoveta:**

*'You see me in parts so you know me in parts'*

---

Snippets of my life, the life I have become, how I became torn, stretched, pulled on every side, washed up and really worn out like a piece of cloth, but of course you say I can't be torn, I look so together, I have it all, ...well you asked and that is how it feels.

### **Me as a table cloth**

If I were to be a cloth, I would describe myself as a beautiful dish towel, very fluffy, strong in lovely green and white floral colours matching the kitchen decor able to absorb all the water off the dishes. Though on some days, I would double as a table cloth wiping the surface dirt, spilled milk, drinks and soup off the table and on other days a hand towel. I seem to be able to polish things and absorb everything I come in contact with, because I am the only one of my kind, I don't get washed with the other clothes, I am separated out washed thoroughly and left on my own to dry. I would look at the other clothes in the washing machine all frolicking together, mixing and have a really jolly free time but not me because I don't belong there. I have to be kept from germs but it is such a lonely life for me, oh..., but then, I am not a dishcloth, I am me.

### **Me in the past**

Looking out the window, I am entranced by the pattern of the rain drops and its patter on the roof slate as it drowns out the thoughts in my head. I reconnect with another time of heavy rain in the African rain forest. I remember the solemn promise as if it was yesterday, so exciting and full of hope. *'One day I will travel abroad, to the Whiteman's land'*, to the place where dreams are made and the impossible becomes possible. I will fly this nest one day and follow my dreams and passions. I will have access to all kinds of designer labels and boots and make up. I will earn and be able to provide for my family, I will be the one they will come and pick up from the airport and the whole family will run around me welcoming me home when I come to visit for Christmas. I will even send them foreign exchange that they will convert to their local currency and they will be overjoyed as it multiplies. Oh I can't wait for that day when I will have a great job, work in the Whiteman's land speak 'spree spree' English. ....Jane, Jane, oh sorry, I was lost in thoughts and you know what I am here now in the Whiteman's land

and all I feel like is a dishcloth. ...oh, but I have to forget because that is the past dream but the past is always with me, it is my present and it is mixed with my future.

### **The exchange: one me for another**

I wanted to get away so fast because I was not allowed to be myself. I had to appear weak, I had to pretend to not be smart because it was not okay to be so smart or to be so ambitious. My dream should be to raise a family but I wanted more and to be that way was to be a 'bad woman' not good wife material. Let me tell you about the 'good wife', because I see her all around me and I am torn.

She is that woman who wakes up every day at 6am, tidies the house, prepares the kids lunch bags, gets them ready for school and then makes breakfast for the partner who gets to stay in bed till 7:30am because he is not really good with house work stuff. She drops the kids off in school and then heads off to work, she is really great, honestly and she is like a superwoman. She is working full time from 9 to 5 and she rushes all over the place as every minute counts. Then she attends college courses and trainings to keep her competitive edge and continue to grow. Slow down, slow down, I hear those words in my head, my body says slow down but I have to turn a deaf ear because the time is almost gone, I need to catch up, I lost so much time and I am almost having to start again. Oh what I would give to be able to be carefree, to have the liberty to listen to my body. Ha!!!, I can almost yearn you thinking that I am driven but of course I am driven, if you were me won't you be driven too, ...oh, but that's not Me, ..or is it...

### **The perfect me**

This is the most successful me, yet the most challenged, its where I cannot afford to make mistakes, not in what I do not in how I look, not a hair out of place, not a word out of tune. I have to push me to be that perfect image. Now this poses for me one of the greatest dilemmas of my life. I love the Me that is perfect but by God it is so tiring. Look at it with me though, why am I like that, why must I always get it right, well if you really want to know not because you are just inquisitive but because you really care then come and have a peak at what I see when I look at others like me who are not perfect.

Look at that lady down the road who has been in Ireland 10 years and her English sounds so bad, look at how they treat her badly when she goes for interview, you can almost see the boredom on the face of the interviewer. What about at the shop, on the bus and even in various offices when she goes to make enquiries. She has to say the

word three times then the person on the other side repeats it with the 'proper' pronunciation, common, look at that, it is so belittling.

You want to see more reasons why I have to be perfect, what about the sales man who comes to your own house and asks to see the owner of the house because he has looked at you and decided you can only be the cleaning lady, or the client, work Colleague or even Manager who comes to your office and speaks over your head almost as if you are not there, ...non-existent, that is hard. One that really makes me laugh though is when 'they' see a nice looking car but that admiration quickly changes to a look of utter disbelief as 'you' go to open the car, then the look changes to anger as if you don't deserve to own a car like that, you know that look that questions as if you crawled out of a hole, ...no words, very silent. The worse is when you start justifying in yourself why you have that car or whatever it is you have, that internal dialogue with self. What about when you stop your kids from being children and running around and just having good childish fun just because you are trying to avoid the nasty looks that that you have seen directed at other immigrant children but such 'noise' is smiled on with patience for children from the dominant community. The list is endless and yes sweetheart, I have to look perfect and okay all the time to command respect, but it is a trying space ...oh, but sorry that's not me.

### **The working me**

I have to be one step ahead all the time, if someone comes in and they speak my language, I refuse to speak it with them I insist on English, and why won't I, can you imagine the look you get as if you are 'making noise'. The judgement is crazy, you have to sound gay all the time and even that is not enough because then people look at you as if you are not okay, then you decide to maintain your space and not over interact and even that they complain that you don't socialise. No one considers whether you worked for it or you earned it, no way, you should be grateful to be there, end of. Uncertainty is the one word that can describe it again yes and the dishcloth.

### **Me: the good partner again**

I come home to my own space where I should be allowed freedom to be even that is brutally taken away. I dare not be tired because apparently, my body does not belong to me and I have to be present to my partner even if I don't want to. Did I say torn, yes,

completely torn. The most hilarious one is in trying to keep up appearances to hold on to the image or rather to protect another's image at your own expense. This is where I am not the good woman but the 'bad', but you know the good woman because I see her every day, maybe you are even one of them, you know the one where you pretend he did something for you that you did for yourself. It doesn't have to be that way, I am somebody ...but who am I.

Oh, I know a few who have yielded to that inner voice and refused to run around making sure everyone is okay, serving and cooking till her knuckles get black, those who called the Guards to take their partners out of the house because he has been very violent to them. Oh but there is so much payback especially from your own, the names you get called are unbelievable, so many say behind your back that you have come abroad and that has turned your head and you have forgotten your values. The worse is the inner turmoil where you begin to question yourself 'why do I feel abused after all it was okay back home, ...this is not a strange thing, ...what is it about me that is not willing to accept it anymore, ...when did that happen, ...what can I call it. I feel different, tired but very unwilling to just sit down and accept.

### **Me that wants to keep my distance**

The worse part (and as I say that I realise that every part seems to be the worse part), anyway, the worst part is that I don't want to be like them, I am so happy not to be like them, it feels really good not to sound like them, look like them or behave like them. Who is this them we talk about here, who are they ...look again, 'Them are Me' because so many times I am them to 'Others'. Can you begin to imagine what it is like to not want to be like yourself, its like running away from your shadow, how sad and how tiring is that. Torn, of course, no wonder I am so torn, all these different parts of me ...oh, but it's not m...

Participant's Conversation National Economic Social Council [NESC], (2006a)

Pseudonym	Home Country	No of years in Ireland	Present nationality	Employment Status (full time)	Housing
Amanthi	Sri Lanka	11	Irish Citizen	Entrepreneur	House owner
James	Congo	13	Irish Citizen	Project Manager	House owner
Marika	Polish	5	EU citizen	Recruitment Professional	good rented accommodation
Pablo	Argentina	10	Italian citizenship	Sales Manager (Business)	House owner
Juliet	Nigeria	8	Eligible for Irish citizenship	Community Development Worker	Long term housing