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**EXPLORING THE ACCULTURATION EXPERIENCES OF
AFRICAN ADOLESCENT REFUGEES AND ASYLUM SEEKERS
IN IRELAND USING INTERPRETATIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL
ANALYSIS**

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Thesis submitted to the National University of Ireland, Galway in fulfilment of the
requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy (Psychology)

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Abstract

When individuals and groups come into continuous, first-hand contact a process of psychological and cultural change known as acculturation is thought to take place. It is particularly important to understand experiences of acculturation during adolescence, as this is a time when a sense of self in relation to society becomes salient. Dominant modes of inquiry in acculturation research have been critiqued due to the lack of attention given to the subjective meaning of the acculturation experience. In this idiographic, qualitative thesis I addresses these criticisms by presenting an account of acculturation grounded in a synthesis of qualitative literature on adolescent acculturation and four empirical studies of the acculturation experiences of adolescent refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland.

In Study 1 I explore the experiences of 10 acculturating adolescent refugees living in Ireland using a cross-sectional IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis) design. The findings of the study point to the utility of Identity Process Theory (IPT) in terms of understanding adolescent acculturation experiences. In Study 2 I again utilise a cross-sectional IPA design. In this study I explore the acculturation experiences of six acculturating adolescent asylum-seekers in Ireland. Given the limited access to resources inherent in being an asylum-seeker in Ireland, this study explores whether the asylum-seeking context can be conducive to Positive Youth Development (PYD).

In Study 3 I adopt a longitudinal IPA design to trace the changing perceptions of a single adolescent refugee over time as he copes with the asylum-seeking process in Ireland. Study 4 adopts a longitudinal IPA design where a second interview with a subset of the participants from Study 1 is incorporated, conducted a year after the initial interview. I trace consistencies and changes in the themes derived for each participant by analysing the interviews through the lens of the Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) model of development.

The findings demonstrate the value of inductive research in exploring acculturation, particularly using the IPA methodology. They challenge accepted assumptions regarding how individuals acculturate and highlight the contextualised nature of the acculturation experience. The findings also address previous assumptions about issues such as free choice of acculturation strategy on the part of acculturating individuals. Overall, the findings illustrate the importance of examining acculturation in context, particularly the policy context which can afford or deny acculturating adolescents particular opportunities.

Publications & Conference Presentations

Publications

Kennedy, L. A., & MacNeela, P. (in press). Adolescent acculturation experiences: A meta-ethnography of qualitative research. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*.

Conference Presentations

Kennedy, L. A., & MacNeela, P. (2011, April). *Rethinking Acculturation Research with Asylum Seeking and Refugee Adolescents*. Poster presented at the bi-annual meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development, Montreal, Canada.

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Kennedy, L. A., & MacNeela, P. (2011, August). *An interpretative phenomenological analysis of the psychological impact of acculturation on adolescent asylum-seekers in Ireland*. Oral presentation at Kongress & Kultur 2011: The 15th European Conference in Developmental Psychology, Bergen, Norway.

Kennedy, L. A., & MacNeela, P. (2012, August). *Feeling Irish, Being Different: Acculturation Experiences of African Adolescents in Ireland*. Oral presentation at the 13th biennial conference of the European Association for Research on Adolescence, Spetses, Greece.

Kennedy, L.A., & MacNeela, P. (2013, September). *Coming of Age between Two Cultures: The Experiences of African Adolescent Refugees in Ireland*. Oral presentation at the 16th European Conference on Developmental Psychology, Lausanne, Switzerland.

List of Acronyms

CMA	Concordance Model of Acculturation
CSO	Central Statistics Office
DCU	Dublin City University
DIT	Dublin Institute of Technology
DJELR	Department of Justice Equality and Law Reform
DMA	Dialogical Model of Acculturation
DP	Direct Provision
DSFA	Department of Social and Family Affairs
EEA	European Economic Area
FLAC	Free Legal Aid Centre
HIQA	Health Information and Quality Authority
HSE	Health Service Executive
IAM	Interactive Acculturation Model
IBC	Irish-Born Child/Children
IPA	Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis
IPT	Identity Process Theory
LQR	Longitudinal Qualitative Research
NCI	National College of Ireland
ORAC	Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner
PPCT	Person Process Context Time
PTSD	Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
PYD	Positive Youth Development
RAT	Refugee Appeals Tribunal
RIA	Reception and Integration Agency
SCSA	Separated Children Seeking Asylum
SCEP	Separated Children in Europe Project
SIT	Social Identity Theory
UAM	Unaccompanied Minors
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

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Chapter 1: Thesis Overview

*O, kindly, generous Irish land,
So leal and fair and loving!
No wonder the wandering Celt should think
And dream of you in his roving.
The alien home may have gems and gold,
Shadows may never have gloomed it;
But the heart will sigh for the absent land
Where the love-light first illumed it*
- John Locke

Over the past two decades the demographic profile of Ireland has undergone dramatic changes. Since its' inception Ireland was traditionally a country of net emigration. However, from the mid-1990s onward it became a country of net immigration. Even though this trend is again reversing 10% of the population currently resident in Ireland was born outside of the State according to the latest national census (CSO, 2012). This means that understanding what happens when individuals of different cultural backgrounds come into continuous, first hand contact is important. In these circumstances a process known as "acculturation" is thought to take place (Berry & Sam, 2010). This process is thought to be more salient to individuals from a minority cultural group interacting with members of the majority group (Berry, 2011).

This thesis is about how the process of acculturation is experienced by a specific group of adolescent immigrants who moved to Ireland from African countries, predominantly Nigeria. It explores how they make sense of their experiences through providing a contextualised interpretation of their accounts which draws on theories of identity and development not typically referenced in studies of acculturation. In addition, this thesis explores the suitability of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as a method to study the experience of acculturation. It explores the use of the method with a moderately large group of participants, a small group of participants and a single participant. It also considers the utility of adopting cross-sectional IPA designs and longitudinal IPA designs.

Underpinning this investigation into the experience of acculturation are psychological, philosophical and phenomenological theories including concepts relating to social psychology (theories of identity), developmental psychology (theories of adolescence and positive youth development), theories of knowledge construction and theories of the life world. By adopting an ecological perspective this research draws attention to how individuals actively engage with their context as they acculturate. In

doing so, it will also examine the policy context of 21st century Ireland as a venue for immigration, acculturation and asylum-seeking.

The goal of this thesis is to explore qualitatively the experiences of adolescent immigrants from African countries living in Ireland as the children of refugees and/or as asylum-seekers. The thesis is comprised of eleven chapters. This introductory chapter briefly outlines the background and rationale to the research, and then describes the thesis layout.

Background Rationale to the Study

International migration is increasingly common and has an impact not only on the individuals who migrate, but also on the societies of settlement. This means that an understanding of what happens when people migrate is important not only for migrating individuals, but for those with whom they interact, the society in which they settle, policy-makers, practitioners and politicians. Increasing global migration means that members of different cultural groups are increasingly coming into contact with one another. When individuals from different cultures come into continuous, first-hand contact with each other they are thought to undergo psychological and cultural changes in a process known as acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2010). This process is thought to be particularly salient for the members of less dominant groups involved in the intercultural interaction (Berry, 2006). For adolescents who migrate, this process may be of particular salience because adolescence is traditionally thought of as a time when individuals negotiate their role in society (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1980; Stuart & Ward, 2011). Questions of who they are relative to other individuals and groups come to the fore. Addressing these issues may be complicated by the process of moving to another country as adolescents must position themselves relative to both their culture of birth and also the culture in which they live.

The unprecedented immigration to Ireland during the 1990s and early 2000s saw many different groups enter Ireland, which altered the previously relatively homogenous population. Since 2002, when the first measure of nationality was included in the Irish Census data collected, the percentage of individuals born in an African country and living in Ireland has been increasing; from 0.7% in 2002, to 1% in 2006, to 1.2% in 2011. Immigrants from Nigeria make up the largest proportion of Africans living in Ireland and Nigeria has consistently been in the top five national groups represented in the Irish population since 2002 (CSO, 2003, 2007, 2012). The majority of

asylum-applications over the past decade have also come from Nigerian individuals (ORAC, 2011). As Ireland does not have a long history with immigration it makes for an interesting context to study the phenomenon of acculturation.

Dominant research methods in adolescent acculturation research are quantitative and stem from a universalist perspective (Chirkov, 2009). However, in recent years such approaches have received criticism and calls for the greater adoption of qualitative methods have been made (Chirkov, 2009; Cresswell, 2009). This thesis opens with a critique of the current state of acculturation research. It illustrates what quantitative research adds to our understanding of acculturation and where its limitations lie. It suggests how qualitative research can meet some of the shortcomings of the dominant quantitative approach.

The thesis also explores the advantages of applying different perspectives to the study of adolescent acculturation. For example, the dominant approach to understanding both adolescent development and adolescent acculturation has been argued to come from a deficit perspective. This perspective proposes that adolescence and/or the process of acculturation represent risk factors for negative outcomes. Adaptation from this perspective is seen as the absence of negative outcomes rather than the display of positive attributes. In response to this perspective on adolescent development the positive youth development (PYD) movement has been gaining ground, however acculturation research among adolescents continues to come mainly from a deficit perspective. Other theories investigated in this thesis include Identity Process Theory (IPT) (Breakwell, 1986) and the Person Process Context Time (PPCT) model of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

Migrant youth face many issues. They must engage with normative developmental tasks, they must learn a new culture; they must reconcile conflicting values of the new culture with their heritage culture. They may do this in a context where they occupy a lower social status than before; they may face discrimination based on their race, their religion, their ethnicity. Most research on how immigrant adolescents adapt to life in a new country in the field of acculturation psychology has considered their cultural orientation to be a dominant factor in how they subsequently adapt (e.g., Berry, 1997). However, this represents only one element of their sense of self, and it is not necessarily the most salient for all acculturating adolescents. Therefore, in this research I determined to take an approach which would allow the primary concerns of the acculturating adolescents to come to the fore.

The primary aims of this thesis were to:

- Explore the process of acculturation from the perspective of adolescent refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland.
- Ascertain if and how existing models of acculturation reflect the experiences described by these adolescents
- Illustrate how ecological models of development, theories of positive youth development and Identity Process Theory could be used to further illuminate our understanding of adolescent acculturation
- Discover whether adolescents can reconcile conflicting aspects of Irish culture and their heritage culture and, if so, how they do so
- Contribute to the field of adolescent acculturation research conceptually through the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and to explore the usefulness of this methodological approach when studying acculturation experiences
- Identify recommendations for policy and practice, particularly in terms of supporting acculturating adolescents who are refugees and/or in the asylum-seeking process

These aims lead to particular research questions. In summary, the research questions were:

1. What is the process of acculturation *like* for adolescent immigrants, specifically those in Ireland who came as asylum-seekers or through the process of family reunification?
2. How do their experiences correspond with dominant models of acculturation?
3. How do these experiences change over time?
4. What is the impact of the asylum-seeking process on the process of acculturation?
5. What are the policy implications, if any, of these experiences?
6. What can theories other than dominant acculturation theories offer to the study of adolescent acculturation (e.g. theories of Positive Youth Development, bio-ecological theories of development, Identity Process Theory)?

Thesis layout

Chapter 2 begins with a brief review of the dominant theories which are drawn upon in psychology to understand the adaptation of immigrant adolescents. The aim of this chapter is to provide a theoretical context. It focuses on the concept of “acculturation” which underpins much research in the area of intercultural contact. The history and development of the concept is traced, current debates are outlined and potential ways to further our understanding of the process of acculturation are suggested. The chapter outlines debates relating to the definition of acculturation, conceptualisation and epistemological bases of studies of acculturation. Areas of contention relating specifically to studies of adolescent acculturation are also described. To conclude the chapter I describe the theoretically-focused research questions that I address in this thesis.

Chapter 3 describes the Irish immigration context with a particular emphasis on African immigrants, the asylum-seeking process and what it means to be a refugee in Ireland. The chapter outlines how the changed immigration context of the last two decades has resulted in the implementation of immigration policies which have a social, psychological and financial impact on both refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland. Additionally, research relating to the prevalence of racism and discrimination in Ireland is explored. To conclude the chapter I describe the contextually-focused research questions that I address in this thesis.

Chapter 4 presents the results of an interpretative synthesis of available qualitative research on adolescent acculturation. Using the process of meta-ethnography (Noblit & Hare, 1988), this chapter presents a synthesis of published qualitative research on the acculturation of adolescent international migrants. It outlines the potential for qualitative methods to further the understanding of acculturation. It notes limitations in the existing qualitative research in the area and offers suggestions on how these may be addressed.

Chapter 5 builds on chapters 2, 3 and 4 by suggesting how existing theories of development, identity and inter-group relations could be further incorporated in the study of acculturation to address current debates and deepen and broaden our understanding of the acculturation process. The potential benefits of adapting ecological models of development, particularly that proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 2009), to the study of adolescent acculturation are outlined. Arguments in favour of utilising novel identity theories, namely Identity Process Theory (IPT, Breakwell, 1988), above

those traditionally drawn upon in studies of acculturation are developed. Positive Youth Development (PYD) is suggested as an additional perspective on acculturation which stands in contrast to the dominant deficit-led approach to the study of migrant youth. I conclude the chapter by outlining the contribution this thesis makes to the field of adolescent acculturation research by recapitulating the study objectives and research questions addressed by the thesis.

Chapter 6 describes the research approach taken in this study. It begins by arguing for the use of qualitative approaches in the study of adolescent acculturation. It then discusses the rationale for the qualitative method chosen in this thesis (IPA) and outlines the process of conducting the research. Information is provided regarding the selection of participants, ethical issues, data collection, transcription, analysis and quality appraisal.

Chapter 7 presents the findings of the first empirical study. This cross-sectional IPA study explores the adaptation experiences of 10 acculturating adolescent refugees living in Ireland. The findings of the study are explored in terms of existing theories of acculturation and the more novel IPT approach, which is argued to offer helpful insights to the understanding of acculturation.

Chapter 8 presents the findings of the second empirical study. This cross-sectional IPA study explores the acculturation experiences of six acculturating adolescent asylum-seekers in Ireland. Given the limited access to resources inherent in being an asylum-seeker in Ireland, this study explores whether the asylum-seeking context can be conducive to PYD.

Chapter 9 presents the findings of the third empirical study. This longitudinal study involved following a single asylum-seeking participant from the second study across three interviews. It traces his changing perceptions of the self over time as his negotiation of the asylum-seeking process in Ireland evolves and relates these to theories of stress and coping.

Chapter 10 presents the findings of the fourth empirical study. This longitudinal IPA study incorporates a second interview with a subset of the participants from the first study conducted a year after the initial interview. It traces consistencies and changes in the themes derived for each participant through analysis of the interviews and time 1 and time 2 through the lens of the PPCT model of development.

Chapter 11 ties together the findings of the meta-ethnography and empirical studies with the aim of describing the theoretical and practical implications. It discusses

relationships between the themes identified and the dominant models used in acculturation psychology as well as the more novel theories which I have introduced. I also suggest how the qualitative methods used to collect and analyse the data influenced the findings generated. I offer reflections on how this is relevant in the pursuit of a greater understanding of adolescent acculturation. I note the limitations of the study and propose future directions for research with acculturating adolescents.

Chapter 2: Theoretical Issues in the study of Acculturation

Whenever a theory appears to you as the only possible one, take this as a sign that you have neither understood the theory nor the problem which it was intended to solve
- Karl Popper (1972)

In this chapter I trace the evolution of definitions of acculturation and the accompanying models which have been used to describe the concept. I show that while there has been a longstanding interest in the area of intercultural contact, it is only since the 1980s that acculturation theories and models have become more complex. Based on my critique of available models, I argue that there is a continuing need to refine our understanding of acculturation and to explore new ways of investigating the process. I begin by making the case for the study of acculturation among adolescent international migrants before highlighting the main areas of contention in acculturation research. I do this by considering of how definitions of acculturation have evolved to include a focus on individuals and psychological aspects. I then discuss problematic role of culture in acculturation research and offer a critical discussion of the dominant models of acculturation in the literature.

Why study the acculturation of adolescent immigrants?

Understanding the experiences of adolescent international migrants is important both nationally and globally. One adolescent out of every ten resident in Ireland was born outside the country when the most recent census was conducted in 2011 (CSO, 2012). Additionally, fifteen per cent of all international migrants are under the age of 20, with the majority of these aged between 10 and 19 years of age in developed countries (UN Population Facts, 2010). Moving to a new country raises the prospect of interacting with members of another culture, which induces cultural and psychological changes in a process termed 'acculturation' (Sam & Berry, 2003). Such changes affect both those migrating to a new country as well as those native to the country. This thesis is concerned with the changes experienced by adolescent migrants who have migrated to a new country, rather than those experienced by adolescents engaged in intercultural contact in their native land. Further, classic psychological theories of adolescence describe it as a time when issues of identity come to the fore as adolescents negotiate their place in society and question their values (Erikson, 1968). Therefore, acculturation issues may be particularly salient at this life-stage.

Acculturation is a process geared toward adaptation (Sam & Oppendal, 2003). Successful adaptation in young people is conceptualised in terms of whether they meet

the expectations and standards for achievement and behaviour related to developmental tasks that parents, teachers, peers and society set for them, and that they usually also come to internalise (Masten, Burt, & Coatsworth, 2006; McCormick, Kuo, & Masten, 2011). However, acculturating immigrant youth must navigate at least two cultures and so a perspective focused on a set of developmental tasks defined only by the members and institutions of the dominant culture is problematic (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012). Additionally, it has been suggested that comparing the behaviour and achievement of immigrant youth to that of non-immigrant peers could lead to the conclusion that immigrant youth are somehow inferior due to genetic, behavioural, or cultural deficiencies (Motti-Stefanidi, Asendorpf & Masten, 2012). This deficit approach is argued to be inappropriate and it has been put forward that the adaptation of minority children needs to be examined in its own right as opposed to in comparison with the mainstream standard (Garcia-Coll, Akerman, & Cicchetti, 2000; McLoyd, 2006; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012).

One account of acculturation among youth describes a disruptive, inherently stressful experience associated with higher engagement in risky behaviours including violence, substance abuse and sexual risk taking (Smokowski, David-Ferdon & Bacallao, 2009; Unger et al., 2002). A competing account describes a more positive process, foregrounding the development of coping skills and an increasing ability to function in diverse settings. For example, compared to US-born peers of Mexican descent, Mexican immigrants to the United States report a lower prevalence of mental health disorders and substance abuse (Ortega, Rosenheck, Alegria & Desai, 2000; Robins & Regier, 1991). Beiser, Hou, Hyman, and Tousignant (2002) found fewer emotional and behavioural problems among immigrant children in Canada compared with White national peers, despite poorer economic conditions. Such findings, referred to as the *immigrant paradox* (Hayes-Bautista 2004; Garcia-Coll 2005), have prompted researchers to question how acculturation can lead to diverse outcomes. However, our understanding of the immigrant paradox is hampered by issues relating to the definition of terms such as ‘first generation immigrant’, which has been applied to adolescent immigrants, as well as to the children of immigrants, who have also been referred to as ‘second generation immigrants’ (Rumbaut, 2004). This is problematic as research suggests that the experiences of ‘later generation’ migrants can be quite distinct from those of individuals who actually migrate themselves (Rumbaut, 2004). Further, the

findings could relate more to the characteristics of those who choose to emigrate rather than the process of acculturation.

In addition to categorising acculturating individuals in terms of generational status, researchers have classified them according to voluntariness (whether intercultural contact has been sought out or has been enforced as is the case with refugees), migration (whether individuals have migrated or not) and permanence (whether individuals intend to remain permanently or for a temporary period) (Berry, Poortinga, Bruegelmans, Chasiotis, & Sam, 2011). Even these distinctions are not sufficiently clear (Berry et al., 2011), for example adolescents may migrate as a result of parental wishes rather than their own volition. Further, they may not know, or have control over, whether the move will be permanent or temporary.

What is Acculturation?

Despite its long history in psychology (Rudmin, 2003), defining and measuring acculturation remains contentious (Sam, 2006). On-going debates have questioned the conceptual and psychometric foundations of acculturation research (Boski, 2008; Chirkov, 2009; Weinreich, 2009). The resulting ambiguity hampers our understanding of acculturation among adolescent members of immigrant communities as they negotiate personal and social identity. This has led to recent recommendations to broaden the approaches taken in the study of acculturation beyond survey-based, quantitative research (Chirkov, 2009; Cresswell, 2009; Waldram, 2009).

The definitions of acculturation most frequently drawn upon have their roots in the following definition originally offered by anthropologists Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936):

Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups (p. 149)

The definition characterises acculturation as a group-level phenomenon. Important in this original definition, and later revisions of it, is the idea that acculturation affects *both* groups in contact, that is, the direction of the changes can go both ways. In 1954, the Social Science Research Council (1954) expanded on this conceptualisation of acculturation through adding a psychological dimension to the process:

Acculturative change may be the consequence of direct transmission; it may be derived from non-cultural causes; it may be ecological or demographic modifications induced by an impinging culture; it may be delayed, as with internal adjustments following upon the acceptance of alien traits or patterns; or it may be a reactive adaptation of traditional modes of life. Its dynamics can be seen as the selective adaptation of value systems, the processes of integration and differentiation, the generation of developmental sequences, and the operation of role determinants and personality factors. (p. 974)

This expanded and more process-oriented view of acculturation incorporates value systems, developmental sequences, roles and personality features as dynamics which contribute to how people adjust following contact with others. Significantly, this definition of acculturation provides for choice in the acculturation process with selective changes from one cultural orientation to another. It also advances the previous definition by specifying which changes occur following intercultural contact and which aspects of culture may be more resistant to change (e.g., internal changes). This definition also draws attention to the multiple changes (e.g., ecological or demographic modifications) which acculturating individuals must negotiate. Not only are they dealing with a new culture, but the ecology in which they must do this has changed.

In 1967 Graves formally introduced the concept of ‘psychological acculturation’ which shifted the focus to the individual rather than groups. Specifically, he turned attention towards the “psychological beliefs and values which the minority group member develops” following intercultural contact (Graves, 1967, pg. 347). Important elaborations on the idea of psychological acculturation were introduced by Szapocznik et al. (1978) who characterised psychological acculturation as comprising behaviours in addition to values, and by Keefe and Padilla (1987) who included cultural awareness and ethnic loyalty as important components of psychological acculturation beliefs.

Contemporary definitions of acculturation rooted in the definitions described above characterise it as both a group and an individual phenomenon; for example Sam and Berry (2010) define acculturation as: “the process of cultural and psychological change that results following meeting between cultures” (pg. 472). Nevertheless, defining acculturation remains somewhat contentious. Weinreich (2009) has suggested abandoning the term entirely in favour of the term ‘enculturation’, which he argues is not accompanied by the relative reduction of the significance of heritage culture implied

by ‘acculturation’, he further suggests that the agentic qualities of *enculturation* conceptualise the continuing incorporation of cultural elements of any available ethnicity, mainstream or otherwise, that are significant to the individual. Rudmin (2009), in contrast, prefers to retain the term but to alter the definition to second culture acquisition, with an accompanying research focus on cultural learning processes which he argues better suits the understanding of acculturation as an individual-level process.

Renaming the concept does not address the underlying issue of how to conceptualise it. The definition offered by Sam and Berry (2010, described above) represents the most widely accepted contemporary definition of acculturation. It is broad enough to encompass the focus of the thesis on subjective experience. Further, it highlights three important issues inherent in the experience of acculturation; it involves intercultural contact, both groups can influence each other, and change follows the intercultural interactions (Sam, 2006). This definition is detailed enough to provide a basis for investigation. Yet issues remain. For example, the definition refers to only two cultures in contact which are distinct and can ‘meet’ in some a-cultural context. In an increasingly globalised society multiple cultures interact, both face-to-face or through computer mediated communication and other media. These interactions are nested in political and cultural contexts, within which each culture and individual has a different status. Discovering how individuals experience this situated intercultural contact, and the associated changes, is therefore essential to understanding acculturation.

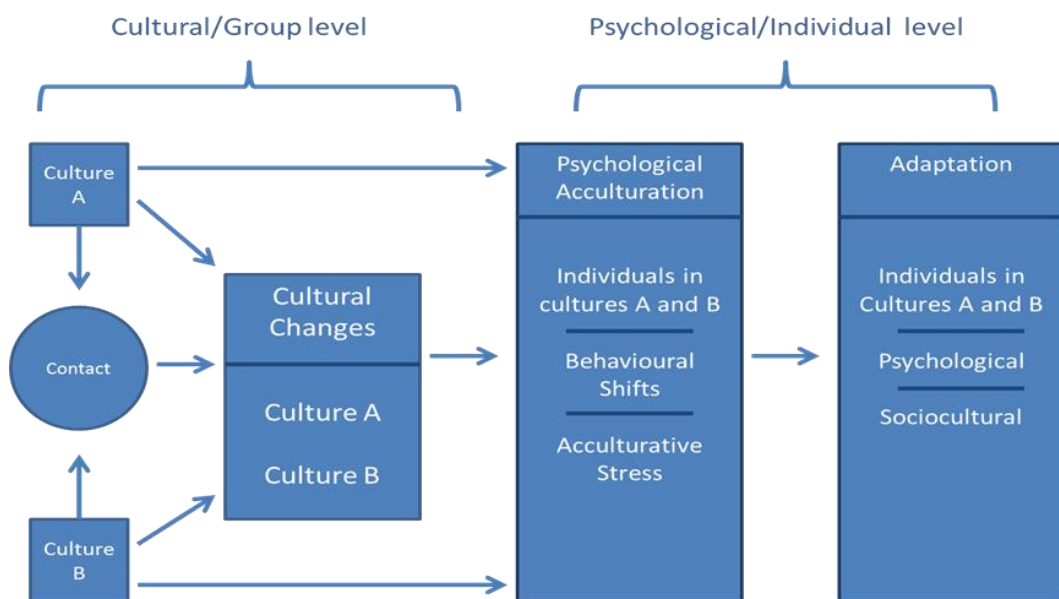


Figure 2.1 A framework for conceptualising and studying acculturation, adapted from Berry (2003)

Using this definition of acculturation as a basis, Berry (2003) has proposed a framework which illustrates how individual- and group-level factors come together in the process of acculturation. This representation of the acculturation process also highlights some problematic issues regarding how it is conceptualised in research. Is it possible for 'Culture A' and 'Culture B' to be two distinct entities which can come together in an a-cultural contact zone? Is there an end point to acculturation as indicated by the left-to-right progress of the framework? Is the person a passive entity in this process who is impacted by group-level changes, or do they have agency in this process? These issues are explored in the remainder of this chapter as I discuss the role of 'culture' in acculturation research, evaluate existing models of acculturation and describe some of the acculturation research that has taken place with adolescent migrants to date.

What is the role of culture in acculturation?

Implicit in the word *acculturation* is a concern with the notion of culture. However, psychological acculturation research has struggled to appropriately address the issue of culture. This has long been an issue (Olmedo, 1979). Authors of the majority of articles reviewed in a critical exploration of the acculturation literature by Chirkov (2009) relied on inadequate measures of culture such as ethnicity or language spoken. In 88% (n=35) of the articles reviewed culture was equated with ethnicity, nationality or both, in a further 5% (2) of articles culture was operationalized through language in addition to ethnicity and/or nationality, and in 5% of the articles culture was not defined or operationalized at all. There has been increasing concern among researchers in the field that adequate consideration of culture is absent in psychological studies of acculturation (Triandis, 1997, Chirkov, 2009).

In psychology, definitions of culture incorporate learned beliefs and behaviours that are shared among groups and include thoughts, communication styles, ways of interacting, views of roles and relationships, values, practices, and customs (Vaughn, 2010). The two primary approaches that combine culture and psychology are 'cultural psychology' and 'cross-cultural psychology'. Cross-cultural psychology was initially based on an absolutist orientation whereby cultural phenomena are considered to be essentially the same across cultures and variation in human behaviour was thought to be determined by biological factors rather than cultural differences. Research from this perspective assumes that psychological phenomena share the same meanings across cultures and so can be compared without problem; 'honest' in one culture has the same

meaning as ‘honest’ in any other culture. An absolutist orientation assumes that there is a true human nature which can emerge once any nuisance variables (including cultural norms and expectations, ideologies) are sufficiently controlled for. The approach consequently favours laboratory studies that minimise contextual influences (Adamopoulos & Lonner, 1994). So, for example, in a study on ‘intimacy’ researchers from an absolutist orientation will try to identify the ‘ingredients’ of intimacy (perhaps mutually-rewarding self-disclosure). They would then investigate the causes and consequences of intimacy on different people. Rather than focusing on who is doing the disclosing, and to whom, and in what context, the focus is on identifying psychological processes which apply to all people in all contexts.

More contemporary cross-cultural psychology has moved away from the absolutist orientation and approaches culture from what is described as a ‘universalist’ orientation (Segall, Lonner & Berry, 1998). From a universalist perspective culture influences the development and display of underlying universal human characteristics common to all members of the species. Sam and Berry (2010), for example, contend that acculturation, like any other human behaviour, has shared psychological processes which are shaped by cultural factors. Berry (2009) advocates approaching culture from the perspective that it is both concrete, involving socially shared concrete features (artefacts and institutions) and abstract, in that it involves representations of these concrete aspects and symbols (Berry et al., 2011). In terms of the ‘intimacy’ research example above, a researcher from a universalist perspective would conceptualise the issue of intimacy as being common to all cultures, but also recognises that the particular forms of exchange which exemplify it may vary from culture to culture. These researchers assume that all human beings will develop the concept of intimacy under certain conditions; their goal is to specify these conditions (Adamopoulos & Lonner, 1994).

In contrast to absolutist and universalist perspectives, the relativist perspective proposes that people should be understood relative to their socio-cultural context and from their own perspective. Human behavioural differences are thought to result from cultural differences and so research should aim to study behaviour within the culture it is embedded and with reference to specific cultural nuances (Vaughn, 2010). One belief shared by psychologists adopting this perspective is that the worlds of culture and the world of self are not mutually exclusive ‘variables’. Rather, they believe that our understandings of self/other relationships are closely mediated, structured, and

organised through our participation in everyday socio-cultural practices and the social relations that are embedded within these practices (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). According to this point of view subjects and objects, or in the case of the acculturation research, human beings and socio-cultural environments cannot be analytically disjoined into independent and dependent variables as they constitute each other (Shweder & Sullivan, 1993). Such a perspective lends itself to interpretative qualitative research focused on meaning-making rather than quantitative research focused on determining the effects of predefined variables. This perspective is related to Geertz' (1973) proposition that cultures exist "in the minds of the people" and has been termed 'Cultural Psychology' (Shweder & Sullivan, 1993). The emergence of cultural psychology followed a shift in cultural anthropology (Berry et al., 2011) from culture as external context to internal experiences and from a focus on overt behaviours to the construction of meaning (Bruner, 1990). To take again the example of 'intimacy' as a topic of research; a researcher from a relativist perspective would emphasise how people construct and give meaning to the psychological experience of intimacy in their own cultural and historical context.

In this thesis I adopt a moderate-relativist position. In line with Markus and Kitayama's (1991) proposition that "people in different cultures have strikingly different construals of the self, of others, and of the interdependence of the two" (p. 224) and that "these construals can influence, and in many cases determine, the very nature of individual experience, including cognition, emotion, and motivation" (p. 224) I endeavoured to investigate the individual experience of acculturating individuals by exploring how they thought, felt and made sense of their experiences. Therefore, my position is relativist in that I do not believe that an individual can be divorced from their culture; that is I believe that culture and psyche are co-constituted and that investigating culture involves investigating internal experience and sense-making. My position is moderate in that I believe there is a real world beyond people's discourse which people engage with and make sense of.

Conceptualising Acculturation

Historically, acculturation has been characterized as a linear process whereby behaviours derived from the heritage culture are replaced with behaviours from the host culture over time and where an existing ethnic identity is shed as new one is acquired (Gordon, 1964, for example). This conceptualization of acculturation will here be

referred to as a unidimensional model of acculturation. This model of acculturation can be considered to be assimilationist as greater acculturation is characterized by greater assimilation into the mainstream culture. Acculturation, according to this view, is a unidirectional and unidimensional construct as illustrated in Figure 2.2.

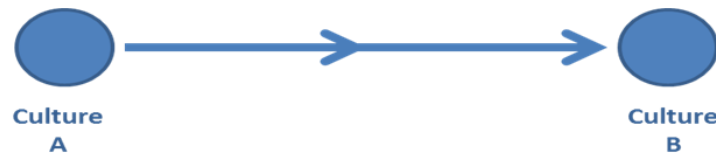


Figure 2.2 Unidimensional model of acculturation

In line with this model, demographic variables such as generational status, age at immigration, or years lived in a new country are frequently used as proxy measures of acculturation. Other single-index measures used have included language spoken at home and neighbourhood ethnic composition. For example, in research with adolescent participants Liu et al. (2009) and Plunkett and Bama-Gomez (2003) used generational status and language spoken at home as proxy measures of acculturation. The underlying assumption was that adolescents who spoke English at home and were born in the US were more acculturated to the US than adolescents who spoke their native language at home and/or were born outside the US. Similarly, Gordon-Larsena, Harrisa, Ward & Popkina (2003) operationalised acculturation as language spoken at home and proportion of foreign born neighbours. The extent to which these measures reflect the construct in question is debatable. Unger, Gallaher, Shakib, Ritt-Olson, Palmer & Johnson (2002) argue that language use is not a reliable measure of acculturation among adolescents. An adolescent's use of English or another language in the home might be dictated by the wishes of the parents rather than by the adolescent's level of acculturation, conversely, adolescents might be forced to speak only English at school if all instruction is through English. Therefore, they argue that especially among adolescents, acculturation measures should include domains other than language usage.

Critics further argue that the unidimensional approach to acculturation oversimplifies the process by ignoring the possibility of individuals identifying with both cultures and by not allowing for the possibility that an individual could identify more with their heritage culture, rather than the host culture, over time (Ryder, Alden & Paulhus, 2000). A unidimensional approach to acculturation implies that 'acculturation'

is an outcome rather than an on-going process and being “more acculturated” means becoming more like members of the host-culture.

Alternatively acculturation can be conceptualized as a process whereby the acquisition of new behaviours derived from the host culture does not necessarily require the abandonment of behaviours derived from the heritage culture. This will be referred to here as a bidimensional model of acculturation (Berry, 1997, 2006, for example). This bidimensional model of acculturation assumes that individuals are capable of identifying with multiple cultures to varying degrees and that individuals differ in the extent to which culturally based values, attitudes, and behaviours impact self-identity.

Berry (1994, 1997) has proposed a model of ‘acculturation strategies’ which has been evolving since 1974. This model is based on the assumption that how individuals acculturate is dependent on how they deal with the issues of ‘cultural maintenance’ (i.e., is it of value to maintain my heritage culture?) and contact participation (i.e., is it of value to have contact with and participate in the new society?). The concept of acculturation strategies thereby describes the ways groups and individuals seek to acculturate. Heritage-culture maintenance and host-culture participation are cast as independent dimensions which intersect to give four acculturation strategies - assimilation (adopting the host culture and rejecting the heritage culture), integration (retaining both cultures), separation (retaining only the heritage culture) and marginalization (rejecting both cultures) (see *Figure 2.3*).

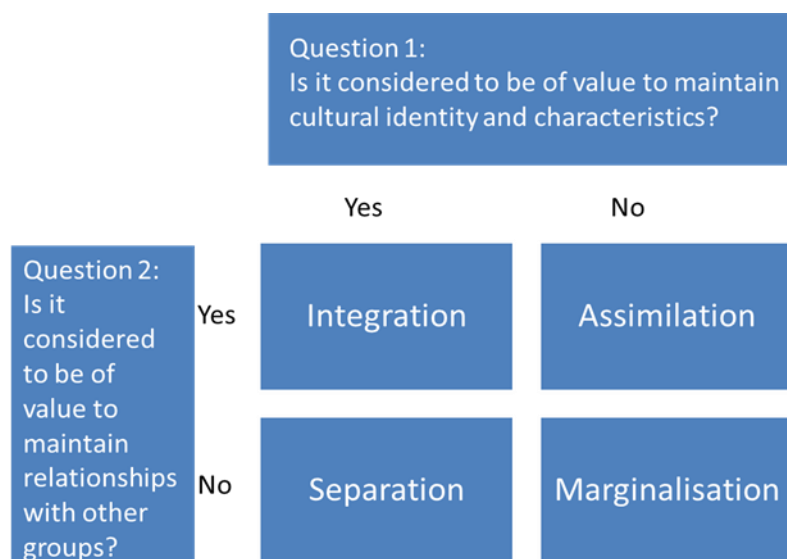


Figure 2.3 Acculturation strategies, adapted from Berry (1997)

It has been noted that the issue of cultural maintenance is quite distinct from the question of contact participation. Ward & Kennedy (1994) suggested replacing the contact dimension (the extent to which an individual wishes to have contact with members of the majority group) with a dimension measuring the extent to which ethnic minority members consider it to be of value to adopt the culture of the dominant group. This was argued to be a better match with the culture maintenance dimension as Berry's (1989) culture maintenance dimension assessed 'attitudes' whereas the contact dimension measured a behavioural intention concerning contact with the host society (Sayegh & Lasry, 1993). This suggestion has been widely adopted (e.g., Bourhis et al., 1997; Farver, Narang, & Bhadha, 2002; Hwang & Ting, 2008; Nguyen, Messé, & Stollak, 1999). There are indications that this distinction is important. For example, Snauwaert, Soenens, Vanbeselaere, and Boen (2003) compared the contact conceptualisation with the adoption conceptualisation of acculturation in a sample of Turkish minority members in Belgium. The participants found it more important to have contact with Belgian majority members than to adopt the Belgian culture. This suggests that minority members who want contact with the majority do not necessarily want to adopt the dominant culture. As a result the classification of acculturating individuals as 'integrating' or 'separating' may vary depending on which conceptualisation is used. This complicates attempts to comparing findings across studies. Nevertheless, Berry's (1997) model has become the most widely adopted bidimensional model of acculturation.

This model of acculturation represents the 'four-fold paradigm' of acculturation as four acculturation strategies are proposed. While this model of acculturation has some advantages over unidimensional models (Nguyen, Messé & Stollak, 1999; Ryder et al., 2000) the extent to which it is applicable may depend on the extent to which participation in the mainstream culture is compatible with participation in the heritage culture. For example, Birman, Tirckett and Buchanan (2005) found that the more adolescents from the former Soviet Union who had resettled in Chicago identified with the mainstream culture the less they identified with their heritage culture, indicating that in this instance acculturation was indeed a more unidimensional process. Costigan and Su (2004) compared bidimensional and unidimensional models of acculturation in Chinese Canadian mothers, fathers and children. A bidimensional model of acculturation was supported for fathers and children, but for mothers ethnic- and host-cultural domains were modestly negatively correlated. These examples do not

necessarily imply that bidimensional models are wrong. However, they suggest that there are situations where the relationships between cultural orientations are not orthogonal, as implied by bidimensional models.

There are also problematic issues relating to Berry's (1989) naming of acculturation strategies. Berry refers to the integration, assimilation, separation, and marginalisation as acculturation 'attitudes' as well as 'strategies' (e.g., Berry et al., 1987; Berry et al., 1989). A wide variety of additional terms have been utilised including: alternatives, feelings, goals, identities, modes, options, orientations, outcomes, paths, policies, preferences, statuses, and styles (Berry, 1988, 1992, 1994, 1997; Berry et al., 1989; Berry, Poortinga, Segall, & Dasen, 1992; Hutnik, 1991; Ward, 2008; Williams & Berry, 1998; and see Rudmin & Ahmadzadeh, 2001). These terms conceptually refer to a wide variety of different behaviours, states and cognitions, and the different connotations of these terms will require them to be operationalised in different ways. This makes comparing across studies of acculturation problematic as illustrated in the research conducted by Snauwaert et al. (2003). In their studies, one dimension of the acculturation 'orientations' was operationalised in three different ways: (i) as contact (i.e., participation in intercultural activities), (ii) as adoption of the culture of the dominant society, or (iii) as identification with the dominant society. These alternate phrasings affected the acculturation strategy preferences identified.

Additionally, some of these terms ('strategies' and 'options' for example) suggest that acculturating individuals can freely choose how they engage with the acculturation process, yet it is accepted that this is not always the case (Berry, 1974; Sam & Berry, 2010). Majority groups have greater influence and power in comparison to minority groups (Geschke, Mummendey, Kessler, & Funke, 2010). The majority group is larger and has usually been present in the host country for a longer period of time. A country's policies, therefore, are more reflective of and influenced by the majority culture than minority cultures. The acculturation strategy adopted is consequently influenced by the attitudes members of the larger society hold in relation to particular immigrants and/or the kinds of settlement policies the larger society has toward acculturating immigrant groups (Sam & Berry, 2006). It is therefore important be cognisant of this power imbalance when discussing acculturation processes. Throughout this thesis I try to refer to acculturation using terms which reflect the participants perceived ability to pursue their preferred course of action.

The relationship between the attitudes of the wider society to acculturation, and acculturating groups is of theoretical importance. Berry (2005) has illustrated this in a model which illustrates that in order for ‘integration’ to be possible for minority groups or their individual members a mutual accommodation is required whereby both groups accept of the right of all groups to live as culturally different peoples. This requires non-dominant groups to adopt basic values of the larger society, while at the same time the dominant group must be prepared to adapt national institutions (such as education and health) to better meet the needs of all the groups now living together in a plural society (Berry, 2005; illustrated in *Figure 2.4*).

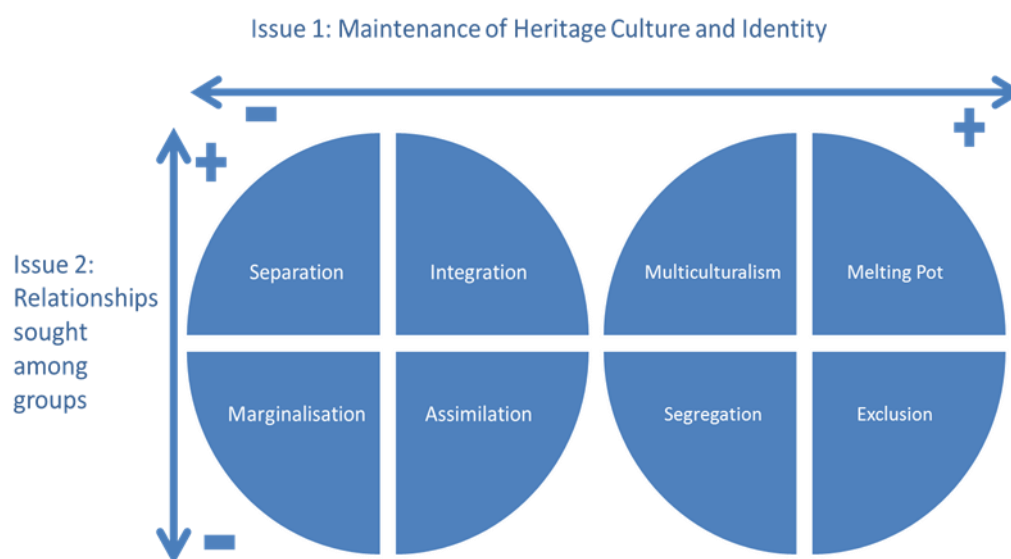


Figure 2.4 The role of the larger society, adapted from Berry and Sam (2006)

Two further acculturation models developed by Bourhis et al. (1997) and Piontkowski, Rohmann and Florack (2002) take the broader context of acculturation into account by integrating the acculturation preferences of both minority and majority members into one model. The Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) (Bourhis et al., 1997) incorporates the acculturation attitudes of minority members within the host society, the manner in which majority members would like minority members to acculturate, and the resulting relational consequences. This model adopted the suggestion of Ward and Kennedy’s (1994) to replace Berry’s (1989) ‘contact’ dimension with a dimension representing adoption of the dominant culture to better complement the culture maintenance dimension. The particular combination of the acculturation attitudes held by minority and majority members is said to generate either

consensual, problematic, or conflictual outcomes for the relations between the two groups.

Bourhis et al. (1997) noted that while the IAM investigates the *actual* acculturation attitudes of minority and majority groups, it does not describe the subjective *perceptions* of the other group's acculturation attitudes. Piontkowski et al. (2002) developed the concordance model of acculturation (CMA) which includes perceived acculturation attitudes. In support of the model, Piontkowski et al. (2002) found evidence among German majority members that the different levels of concordance between perceived acculturation attitudes of Polish and Italian minority members and their preferred acculturation were related to perceptions of threat in the predicted directions.

In addition to the broader context in which acculturation takes place, researchers are increasingly investigating the variability of acculturation across life domains. Models of acculturation which allow for variability in acculturation strategy across various life domains (i.e. school, work, home) are referred to here as domain specific models of acculturation. These models suggest that the acculturation strategy adopted depends on the context in question. For example, an immigrant adolescent may adopt an integration strategy at school, but may prefer separation at home. This is important as the contexts in which acculturation occurs are often left out of consideration in the study of acculturation leading to (or resulting from) the implicit assumption that the acculturation strategy adopted has cross-situational and cross-temporal consistency. Domain specific models aim to examine domain differences in acculturation. These models are based on the assumption that an individual's preference for adaptation and cultural maintenance may vary across life domains (Keefe & Padilla, 1987; Kim et al., 2001). Members of minority ethnic groups can move between their heritage culture and the culture of the dominant society by adapting their attitudes and behaviours in response to the cultural context. This process is also known as cultural frame switching (e.g., Hong, Morris, Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000; Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2007).

The models of domain specificity that have been proposed in the literature differ in their levels of abstraction (i.e., the breadth of the domain). Derived from Rosch's (1978) categorization model, three levels of abstraction of domain specificity were distinguished by Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver (2003). They suggest that the first, superordinate level is constituted by two broad domains: the public (functional, utilitarian) and the private (social-emotional, value-related) domain. According to their

findings Turkish–Dutch reported to prefer adaptation to Dutch culture more in the public domain than in the private domain, while cultural maintenance is important in both domains. Similarly, Phalet, Lotringen, and Entzinger (2000) found that Dutch migrant youth preferred cultural maintenance in the private domain (at home) and valued Dutch culture in the public domain (outside of the home). The second, ordinate level of domain specificity is formed by specific life domains (e.g., education and language, which belong to the public domain, and child-rearing and marriage, which belong to the private domain). The subordinate level refers to specific situations; an individual's preference for adaptation and maintenance may vary across specific situations. A number of researchers have shown that the salience of cultural orientation varies as a function of specific situations (e.g., Clement & Noels, 1992; Taylor & Lambert, 1996). Sodowsky and Carey (1988) described certain dual characteristics of first generation Asian Indians in the USA, who preferred Indian food and dress at home, and American food and dress elsewhere.

Unidimensional and bidimensional models of acculturation seem to imply that cultures are static entities, and that individuals can engage with particular cultures to varying extents. Arends-Tóth and van de Vijver (2004) argue that there is another way to conceptualize dimensionality, they call this a fusion model. In this model, as opposed to each culture remaining intact and an individual choosing between them, an acculturating individual mixes both cultures in a new integrated culture which may either contain a mix of the two cultures (combining the best of both worlds) or may contain unique aspects that are atypical of either culture (Coleman, 1995; Padilla, 1995; Roosens, 1989). According to this view cultural contact results in hybridization, a concept which undermines the notion of cultures as internally homogenous and externally distinct (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). This approach to acculturation indicates a step toward the integration of new approaches, more sensitive to the specificities and complexities of experiential contexts. This reflects calls from Bhatia and Ram (2004) to conceive of international migrants as active agents in transforming social networks, cultural practices and rituals, both in the country of destination and origin. Seeing migrants as 'citizens of the world', who inhabit multiple homes, roles, identities and languages, challenges the traditional notions of acculturation and adaptation (Bhatia & Ram, 2004).

Hermans and Dimaggio (2007) argue that in a globalising world society, individuals and groups are no longer located in one particular culture, homogeneous in

itself and contrastingly set against other cultures, but are increasingly living on the interfaces of multiple cultures. This leads not only to increasing contact between different cultural groups but also to an increasing contact between cultures *within* an individual. For an adolescent this process may result in such novel and multiple identities as a Muslim teenager educated in a Nigerian school system but now studying in Ireland who plays in on Gaelic football team and afterward prays in a mosque, before meeting his friends in a pub. They propose that intercultural contact can lead to the formation of a multiplicity of cultural positions or voices that come together in the self of a single individual. Such voices are proposed to become engaged in mutual negotiations, agreements, disagreements, tensions, and conflicts (e.g., “As a Nigerian Muslim teenager I’m used to seeing drinking alcohol as inappropriate, but when I go out with my team-mates it is expected”). In this example different cultural voices are involved a dialogical relationship, producing positive or negative meanings in fields of uncertainty. In other words, the inter-cultural contact is not just a reality outside the individual but is rather incorporated as a constituent of a ‘dialogical self in action’ (Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007). Therefore, rather than conceptualising immigrants as moving in a linear trajectory from ‘culture A’ to ‘culture B’ Hermans and Kempen (1998) encourage researchers to think of acculturation issues as ‘mixing and moving’ (p. 1117).

Hermans and his colleagues have presented an account of the ‘dialogical self’ (Hermans, Kempen, & van Loon, 1992; Hermans & Kempen, 1993; Hermans, Rijk, & Kempen, 1993). The view of ‘the self’ relates to James’ (1890) distinction between the ‘I’ and ‘Me’, but draws also on Bakhtin’s (1973) theory of the polyphonic novel. James (1890) makes a distinction between two aspects of self, the self as subject, or the “I,” and the self as object, or the “Me.” The ‘me’ is described as coming in three types: the “material me”, the “social me”, and the “spiritual me”. The “material me” incorporates not only the body, but the clothes applied to it, immediate family members (“Our father and mother, our wife and babes, are bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh. When they die, a part of our very selves is gone. If they do anything wrong, it is our shame. If they are insulted, our anger flashes forth as readily as if we stood in their place” p. 292), and the home (“its scenes are part of our life” p.292). The “social me” incorporates the regard of others (“a man has as many social selves as there are individuals who recognize him” p. 294). James recognised that we interact with many different people and groups of people, and we can actively choose how we display ourselves to each of

these. The “spiritual me” refers to one’s defining characteristics (“his psychic faculties or dispositions” p. 295). In the dialogical self, each ‘me’ in James becomes a character in the polyphonic novel of self, and each has a speaking voice to represent its point-of-view *vis-à-vis* other characters. These propositions require conceiving of acculturating adolescents not as separate from their culture or from others in their social world, but as conceiving as their relationships with others as part of their “self”. Changing contexts mean that different aspects of the self, or different voices within the self, gain prominence as:

the personal voices of other individuals or the collective voices of groups enter the self-space and form positions that agree or disagree with or unite or oppose each other. Along these lines, real, remembered, or imagined voices of friends, allies, strangers, or enemies can become transient or more stabilized positions in the self-space that can open or close itself to the globalizing environment.
(Hermans & Dimaggio, 2007, p. 36)

Building on these ideas Bhatia (2002) suggested that a dialogical model of acculturation (DMA) could help to explain how immigrants from third world countries could negotiate their cultural identities as citizens of First World countries while retaining a strong identification with the culture of their home country and overcome the psychological complexities, contradictions and cultural specificities involved in these experiences. This model draws upon the philosophical assumptions of social constructionism and represents a dynamic, flexible and holistic approach to viewing acculturation in an ethnic minority group or individual (Bhatia, 2002). Bhatia’s (2002) model conceptualises the process of acculturation as one which comprises multiple negotiations and renegotiations of identity, often involving political and historical practices associated with and shaped by the cultures of the immigrants’ homeland and host society (Bhatia, 2002). DMA suggests that acculturation and identity are both dynamic within ethnic minority individuals, creating multiple presentations of themselves depending on the individuals and situations encountered (Phinney, 1996).

The ABCs (Ds and Es?) of Acculturation

Ward, Bochner and Furnham (2001) identified three major theoretical approaches to the study of intercultural contact and change. Termed the ABC’s of

acculturation, the stress and coping framework, the cultural learning approach and the social identification perspective were taken to highlight the respective importance of Affect, Behaviour and Cognition in the process of acculturation (illustrated in *Figure 2.5*). The affective perspective highlights the emotional aspects of acculturation. The approach corresponds to the acculturative stress component of *Figure 2.5*. According to this perspective acculturation can be likened to a set of major life events that pose challenges to the acculturating individual. Drawing on Lazarus and Folkman's stress and coping framework (1984), Berry (2006; Berry et al., 1987) proposed the acculturative stress model. The central proposition being that when challenges are experienced during acculturation that are appraised as problematic, acculturative stress results. Within this perspective the acculturation strategies outlined previously can be thought of as coping mechanisms.

Behavioural perspectives on acculturation are influenced by Argyle's (1969) work on social skills and interpersonal behaviour. Individuals are expected to learn or acquire the culture-specific behavioural skills (e.g language) that are necessary for them to negotiate their new milieu. This perspective represents a culture learning approach, with acculturation seen as a learning process (Chen & Isa, 2003; Ward et al., 2001; Ward & Kennedy, 1999).

Cognitive perspectives on acculturation draw on theory and research on social identity and social cognition and emphasise the cognitive aspects relating to acculturation. This perspective is concerned with how people perceive and think about themselves and others in the face of inter-cultural encounters. According to this perspective cognitive aspects generally refer to how people process information about their own group (in-group) and about other groups (out-groups). The social identity theory (SIT) of Tajfel and Turner (1979) has influenced this perspective.

SIT was intentionally developed with a focus on 'that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from one's knowledge of one's membership in a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership' (Tajfel, 1981, p. 255). While this indicates that group membership does not constitute the *only* basis for self-definition or identity construction there remains within the SIT literature the implicit assumption that social group membership constitutes the chief basis for self-definition. Therefore, SIT is limited when it comes to understanding acculturation as its primary focus is on intergroup relations. Therefore it neglects the other aspects of identity potentially salient for acculturating individuals.

Research addressing how individuals can integrate both their heritage and the host culture identities. Two ways of achieving this have been put forward: 'Blended' ways of being bicultural (where an individual feels that they have a cohesive identity made up of elements from both cultures), or 'Alternating' ways of being bicultural (where an individual feels that they have an identity that switches between two cultural frames). Research by Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997 and Smith, Stewart & Winter, 2004 for exceptions represents some of the limited work which has focused on these particular ways of feeling bicultural.

According to an 'Alternation' model of biculturalism an individual can identify with two different cultures and can alter their behaviour in different cultural contexts in response to cultural cues (LaFromboise et al., 1993). According to a 'Blended' model of biculturalism an individual can maintain a positive identity as a member of his or her culture of origin and simultaneously develop a positive identity by participating in the majority culture. For Phinney, blended individuals see themselves more clearly as part of a combined culture (Phinney & Devich-Navarro, 1997).

In addition to these perspectives, developmental perspectives are increasingly being incorporated into research on acculturation, and this is also advocated in this thesis. Acculturating adolescents are at a life stage where the formation of an integrated identity or sense of self is seen as the central developmental task (Erikson, 1980). Contemporary developmental models recognize the importance of culture in human development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lerner 1986, 2002). Yet, they are based on the assumption that adolescents are influenced by a single culture, and do not include specific information on the effects of culture on development (Sam & Oppedal, 2003). In this thesis I advocate for expanding on the 'ABC's of acculturation' as described by Ward (2001), and incorporate the D's (developmental considerations) and E's (ecological considerations), thus I introduce the 'ABCDE's of Acculturation'.

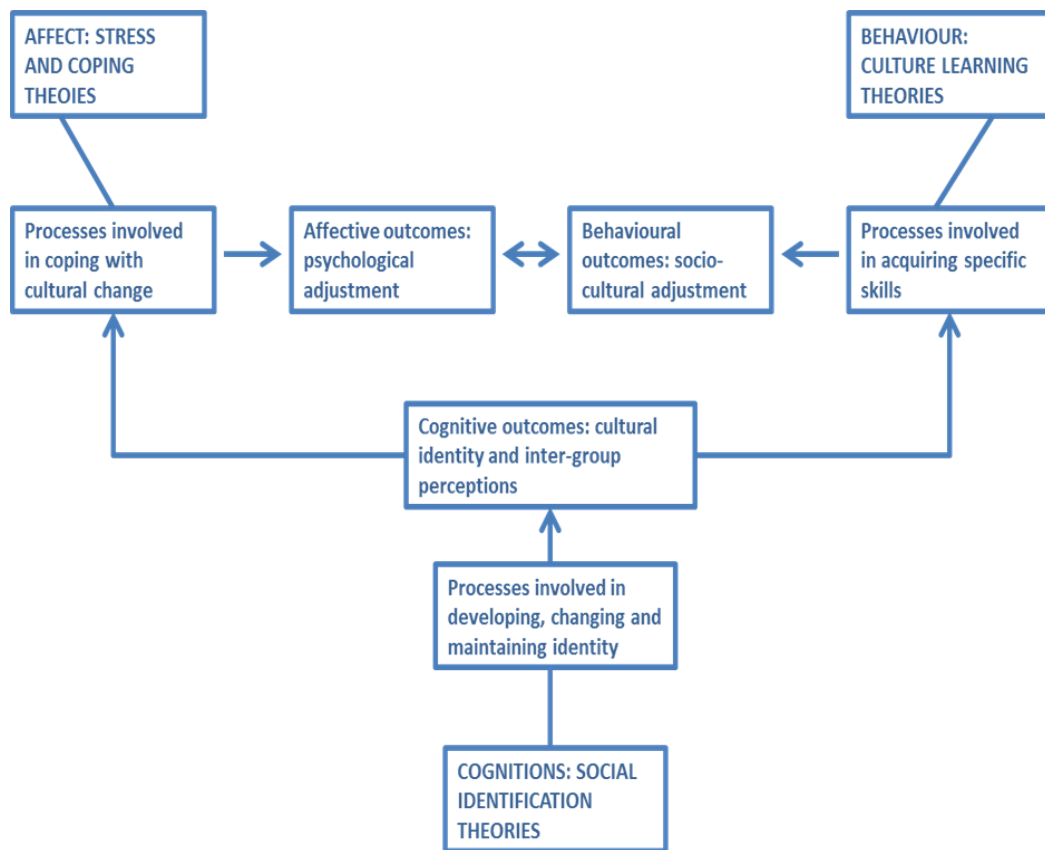


Figure 2.5 The ABC model of culture contact, adapted from Ward, Bochner & Furnham (2001)

During adolescence individuals advance cognitively, developing skills that allow them to form a more complete understanding of themselves and their relationships with others (Selman et al., 1992). They use these new skills to renegotiate their parental relationships and cultivate their relationships with peers and other nonfamily members. Thus, they learn about beliefs and values differing from those with which they were raised (Hamilton & Darling, 1989). This is challenging as adolescents simultaneously need independence from their parents and increasing amounts of nurturing and guidance (Allen, Aber & Leadbeater, 1990). Acculturating immigrant adolescents may encounter additional challenges as must meet the expectations of two or more cultures. Camino (1994) identifies the dual “liminalities” that exist for immigrant and refugee youth. As young people they negotiate the tasks of childhood, adolescence and adulthood. As immigrants they navigate between the identity of their heritage culture and the host culture.

Cognitive developments during adolescence make adolescents more sensitive to feedback from the social environment, emphasising the need to consider the impact of their ecology. Minority youth may become aware that they are targets of prejudice and

discrimination. This discovery is thought to further complicate efforts to reconcile two potentially oppositional cultures (Garcia-Coll & Magnuson, 1997; James, 1997).

In addition to the issues surrounding the conceptualisation of acculturation, research on acculturation in adolescence is generally problem-focused. There is limited knowledge about positive aspects of acculturation, for example personal and situational factors associated with resilience and cognitive flexibility (Güngör, 2011).

Methodological approaches in the study of acculturation

I have outlined some of the methodological issues relating to unidimensional conceptualisations of acculturation (e.g. the use of proxy measures and the problem of assuming that acculturation is a unidirectional process resulting in assimilation). Most contemporary research on acculturation is underpinned by the bidimensional model of acculturation. This simplifies measurement of acculturation into clear-cut typologies that can be applied across different groups, and to any number of domains or practices that interest the researcher. This simplicity is associated with a number of limitations which raise questions regarding the suitability of this model to the experiences of adolescent migrants.

This bidimensional conceptualisation has been used in studies of acculturation with a variety of ethnic groups in different countries (see Table 2.1 for a range of representative studies of adolescent acculturation). Scales measuring acculturation have used various types of questions on a number of domains (van de Vijver & Phaet, 2004). Two-question formats tend to present statements pertaining to each culture on the domains being investigated (as in Kasic, 2002; Sabatier & Berry, 2008). In a further example, Ghuman's (2003) acculturation scale measured attitudes on items relating to adolescents' own culture as well as Western European culture, such as religion (we should attend our places of worship, we should learn something about Christianity). Items were rated on a 5-point scale ('Strongly Agree', 'Agree', 'Not sure/Don't know', 'Disagree', 'Strongly Disagree').

One-question formats require a forced-choice between the host culture, the ethnic culture, both cultures, or neither culture. This was not used in the examples presented in Table 2.1, however, in a study based on Iranians residing in Norway, Rudmin and Ahmadzadeh (2001) gave participants five forced-choice questions (among others), in one such question he asked respondents to choose which food they would prefer: a) Iranian, b) Norwegian, c) both, d) from 'whole world'.

The scale by Berry, Kim, Power, Young and Bujaki's (1989) appears twice in Table 2.1. Questions have four responses which map onto the four acculturation orientations in five domains (marriage, cultural traditions, language, social activities, and friends). 'Language use', for example, items are: It is more important to me to be fluent in [national language] than in [ethnic language] (Assimilation), it is more important to me to be fluent in [ethnic language] than in [national language] (Separation), it is important to me to be fluent in both [national language] and [ethnic language] (Integration), it is not important to me to be fluent either in [national language] or [ethnic language] (Marginalisation). Items are rated on a 5-point scale ranging from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree.

Berry, Phinney, Sam and Vedder's (2006) International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth (ICSEY) also used this scale. This study investigated 32 immigrant groups (N=5366 immigrant youth, aged 13-18) in 13 societies of settlement. Even though these participants were described as 'immigrant youth' 65.3% of them were 'second generation' immigrants. The study also involved immigrant parents (N=2302) and national youth (N=2631) and national parent (N=863). Using 8 additional intercultural variables (ethnic and national peer contact, ethnic and national cultural identity, ethnic language proficiency, national language proficiency, language use, ethnic and national peer contacts, family obligations and adolescent rights) cluster analysis yielded four acculturation profiles: integration, ethnic, national, and diffuse.

Table 2.1 *Examples of Studies of Adolescent Acculturation*

Author (Year)	Participants	Host Country	Measure of acculturation	Outcomes measured	Findings
Virta, Sam & Westin, 2004	Turkish	Norway and Sweden	Berry et al. (1989)	Psychological adaptation (self-esteem, life satisfaction, mental health problems)	Turkish adolescents in Norway had poorer psychological adaptation (lower self-esteem and more mental health problems) than Turkish adolescents in Sweden when differences in SES and country of birth were controlled for. Turkish identity and integration predicted good psychological adaptation; poor adaptation was related to perceived discrimination and marginalization.
Sam, 2000	Chilean, Turkish, Vietnamese and Pakistani	Norway	Berry et al. (1989)	Mental health, life satisfaction, self-esteem,	Separation had a positive effect on life satisfaction Marginalisation contributed to self-esteem Integration contributed to mental health
Dona & Berry, 1994	Central American refugees	Canada	2 scales (1 Canadian culture, 1 Latin culture) on 19 topics identified through literature and community members	Psychological Stress	Integration was the preferred strategy, individuals in the integration category reported less acculturative stress than those in the separation or assimilation categories
Kosic, 2002	Croatians, Polish	Italy	(Kosic, 1998, cited in Kosic 2002) 26 items on 5-point Likert scale measuring the extent to which they felt part of the Italian or the home culture and group	Sociocultural and psychological adaptation	Integrated immigrants did not differ in the levels of sociocultural and psychological adaptation from the assimilated immigrants Separation was associated with the lowest sociocultural and psychological adaptation Marginalization was also associated with low sociocultural and psychological adaptation.
Sabatier & Berry, 2008	Algerian, Antillean, Moroccan, Portuguese Vietnamese Greek, Haitian, Italian, Vietnamese	France Canada	Two scales were constructed: national acculturation (8 items) ethnic acculturation (15 items)	Self-esteem, academic performance and deviance	Youth who preferred integration had higher self-esteem scores than those who were marginalised; youth preferring assimilation and separation fell in between. This pattern was stronger in Canada than France.

In the integration profile (36.4%) both the integration and marginalisation orientations were found to load on to the same factor. This was related to higher SES and lower ethnic neighbourhood density, and was lower in the male group. In the separation profile (22.5 %) (oriented to heritage) separation, ethnic identity and family obligations loaded on the same factor. It was related to a higher ethnic composition of neighbourhood and lower socioeconomic status (SES). In the assimilation profile (18.7%) national identity scores and assimilation loaded onto the same factor. This was found to be related to higher SES and gender with males scoring higher. In the marginalisation profile (22.4%) ethnic language proficiency and contact with ethnic peers loaded onto the same factor (positively) as national language proficiency and contact with national peers (negatively).

Factor analysis of five adaptation variables revealed two distinct forms of adaptation: psychological and sociocultural. There were substantial relationships between how youth acculturated and how well they adapted: those with an integration profile had the best psychological and sociocultural adaptation outcomes, while those with a diffuse profile had the worst; in between, those with an ethnic profile had moderately good psychological adaptation but poorer sociocultural adaptation, while those with a national profile had moderately poor psychological adaptation, and slightly negative sociocultural adaptation.

These findings are in line with the extant body of research which indicates that most adolescents appear to desire integration (Coatsworth & Maldonado-Molina, 2005; Neto, 2002; Giang & Wittig, 2006) and this appears to be associated with the best outcomes for adolescents in terms of psychological and socio-cultural adaptation. However, uncertainty over what ‘integration’ looks like in practice coupled with the fact that it is not always possible or even necessarily desirable means it is difficult to promote this as the ‘best’ acculturation strategy (Ward & Kus, 2012).

Table 2.1 also illustrates that psychological adjustment and sociocultural adjustment are two common outcomes investigated in the acculturation literature (as noted by Schwartz et al., 2010). Psychological adjustment refers to psychological and emotional well-being (measured in terms of concepts such as life satisfaction, positive affect, and self-esteem), whereas sociocultural adjustment refers to behavioural competence (Ward & Kennedy, 1994) (measured in terms of academic achievement, and social skills). Nguyen and Benet-Martinez (2013) identified a third adjustment domain relating to health. Health-related adjustment includes low levels of somatic

symptoms (e.g., headaches, back pains) as well as high levels of physical activity and healthy eating.

Cross-sectional, correlational methodologies dominate the landscape of acculturation research (see Brown & Zagefka, 2011). All the examples in Table 2.1 represent such studies. This research is limited because the direction of a process cannot be inferred. Such research may indicate a relationship between integration and adaptation but it cannot show that integration *causes* better adaptation. Experimental work on acculturation to compliment this correlational research could address this problem. However, practical and ethical issues make such research problematic. The manipulation of an individual's acculturation attitudes in order to investigate how they impact on adaptation is not a realistic option. However, experimental methods could be used to investigate out how particular acculturation attitudes can be predicted. There is very limited experimental research that has investigated this, despite the large amount of research that indicates its desirability in terms of adaptation (see Brown & Zagefka, 2011). This limited work (Kosic, Kruglanski, Pierro, & Mannetti, 2004; Zagefka et al., 2012) did not distinguish between public and private domains. This is an important omission because research has indicated that an individual's acculturation preference can change depending on the life domain in question (e.g., Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2003, 2004, 2007).

Longitudinal research represents a less problematic way to investigate the relationship between acculturation attitudes and outcomes. For example, in a review of acculturation research, Brown & Zagefka (2011) described how longitudinal work can generate stronger evidence to suggest a causal relationship between a particular acculturation attitude and an outcome. As acculturation is a process that is likely to change over time rather than being static it means that longitudinal research designs are particularly relevant. A migrant who has recently arrived in their host country may have made fewer behavioural changes compared to a migrant who has been living in the host country for many years. Some longitudinal acculturation research has been conducted (e.g., Zagefka, Brown, & González, 2009), however this work has neglected to investigate domain specificity. Further, longitudinal acculturation research is less common because it is time and resource intensive (Berry et al., 2011).

Given that most acculturation research has been correlational, this means that the majority of the work has employed quantitative rather than qualitative methodologies. Qualitative acculturation studies have the potential to offer

complementary insights into acculturation and adaptation through qualitative research methods such as in-depth interviews and observation (Chen & Isa, 2003). Several researchers have outlined the potential benefits of adopting more qualitative methodologies in the study of acculturation (Chirkov, 2009; Donà & Berry, 1994; Strang & Ager, 2010). The advantage of qualitative research designs are that they give the participants the opportunity to discuss and describe their thoughts and experiences without being limited to pre-determined answers. Further, longitudinal qualitative research may also be preferable to quantitative methods in the study of social change, as occurs in acculturation, as quantitative methods:

...are unable to access the fluid and often highly situation-specific experiences, understandings and perceptions that mediate the ways in which people deal with and respond to social change. In contrast, qualitative studies are able to provide such a deep and detailed treatment. They are highly sensitive to contextual issues, and can illuminate important micro-social processes, such as the ways in which people subjectively negotiate the changes that occur in their lives at times of personal life transition (e.g. the transition to motherhood or fatherhood). They make it possible to investigate how people's everyday attitudes and actions are embedded in patterns of socio-cultural change, such as those that question previously taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs about social roles (e.g. about the gender division of parental roles). As a result of their characteristic sensitivity to context, qualitative investigations are also able to combine a concern for micro-and macro-social processes. (Henwood and Lang 2003: 49)

A further area of methodological concern relates to the issue of how to characterise ethnicity, race and culture in research. Ethnicity has traditionally been conceived of in terms of group membership based on historical origins, language, and customs (Alba, 1985, 1990); race, on the other hand, was characterised as being biologically based. Contemporary views on both race and ethnicity now emphasize the socially constructed nature of these categories. Evidence suggests that there are more physiological differences *within* racial groups than between them, and different societies have produced different racial categories (Omi & Winant, 1993). In countries with a

long history of immigration the boundaries around ethnicity and ethnic groups are not distinct. This has led to explorations of the social construction of what these concepts mean to people, rather than on accepting any inherent, a priori definitions. Given the problematic nature of incorporating ethnicity and race into research, Davis, Nakayama and Martin (2000) suggested that investigations of ethnicity should be grounded in history and in the wider social conditions and contexts of the research setting as well as being based on the lived experiences of those being studied.

Implications for this thesis

Despite contention regarding definition of the term acculturation I will use the definition which stems from the original Redfield, Linton and Herskovits (1936) and has been expanded upon by Berry and colleagues to incorporate a focus on individuals as well as groups (Berry and Sam, 2010). This definition is broad in scope, acknowledging that acculturation involves changes at the individual level as well as group-level changes, and allows for individual differences in how people acculturate. This definition is also suited to this thesis given the emphasis of this research is on the individual experience and interpretation of the cultural and psychological changes that they undergo.

Following on from the debates on the unidimensional and bidimensional approaches to acculturation research I consider acculturation to be more complex than is proposed by either of these standpoints. This relates to the approach to culture taken in this thesis. Incorporating the notion of “culture” into acculturation research has been problematic. For the purposes of this research I will take a moderately relativist approach. This approach recognises that there is a concrete world beyond people’s conceptions of it, but how they think about it and interact with it is integral to experience of it and within it. In terms of culture this means that people are not necessarily separable from culture, and the idea of static culture which exists independent of an individual’s engagement with it is dismissed.

This research does not assume that acculturation has a defined end-point. Rather I adopt a process-oriented approach where the focus is on understanding how immigrants are constantly negotiating their multiple and potentially conflicting histories and subject positions (Bhatia & Ram, 2001). Hermans (2001) has suggested that this requires a shift from a focus on developmental end states (like integration or cultural

competence) towards a more process-oriented notion of acculturation that can account for situated, negotiated and often contested developmental trajectories.

Commonly, the aspects thought to change during acculturation are thought of in affective, behavioural and cognitive terms. As this study relates specifically to the acculturation of adolescents I feel it is necessary to maintain sensitivity to their particular life stage. This requires including an additional focus on developmental and ecological changes involved in the process of acculturation, extending the view of acculturation beyond the ABC's of acculturation to include the D and E's of acculturation. Therefore I advocate the use of longitudinal designs in the study of adolescent acculturation.

Theoretically-focused research questions

This discussion has pointed to several areas of contention in the field of acculturation research. The present research addresses the following questions in relation to these areas of contention:

- How do the experiences of African adolescent immigrants in Ireland correspond with dominant models of acculturation used in the literature?
- Can other existing theories help to interpret these experiences?
- Which of these theories are most illuminating in interpreting the findings?

Chapter 3: An Evaluation of the Irish Immigration Context for African Refugees and Asylum-Seekers

To cheapen the lives of any group of men cheapens the lives of all men
- William Pickens (1881 – 1954)

This chapter evaluates contemporary policy and practice responses to refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland, with a particular emphasis on their potential impact on adolescents. In the previous chapter I discussed the prominent models of acculturation drawn upon in acculturation research with adolescent participants. In this discussion I referred to Berry's (1997) model of acculturation and framework for the study of acculturation. These are described as being rooted in an ecological perspective (Berry et al., 2011). Therefore, the context is thought to play an important role in the acculturation experiences of individuals. Indeed, Berry (1997, 2003) has described that how individuals acculturate reflects not only their preference of acculturation strategy, but the immigration policies of particular countries. Similarly, other perspectives on acculturation such as the IAM (Bourhis et al., 1997) and the CMA (Piontkowski et al., 2002) suggest that the attitudes of majority group members toward the acculturating minority group impact on acculturation experiences. However, research that has been inspired by these models continues to focus on the individual's 'choice' of acculturation strategy rather than considering the impact of the society of settlement on the acculturation strategy adopted.

The problem inherent in assuming that the individual has control over their own acculturation trajectory is emphasised when one considers the issue of the immigration policies in place and the associated concept of 'institutional racism' which describes:

How minorities suffer from discrimination when racism within society becomes reflected in organisations and institutions. The discriminations experienced by minorities may be unintentional but they are often profound. They emanate from the inability or unwillingness of organisations and institutions to take into account the diversity of society in providing services. Minorities face discrimination as the square pegs rejected by the round holes of policies and practices oriented towards dominant understandings of community needs. (Fanning, Veale & O'Connor, 2001, p. 28)

Institutional racism became a major issue of concern in the UK in 1999 following the murder of a Black British teenager, Stephen Lawrence and the subsequent publishing of a damning report into the circumstances surrounding his murder. The report indicated that the official inquiry found evidence of institutional racism throughout the London police force. It argued that all key agencies in society, including education, had a duty to identify and combat racism (including unintended and indirectly discriminatory actions) (Gillborn, 2006).

This issue is particularly important for asylum-seeking adolescents in Ireland who are denied access to further education on the same basis as Irish adolescents once they pass the age of 18. However, the issue of institutional racism does not only arise when they reach the age of 18. For example, in the UK in 2003 the Home Secretary publicly articulated his fears that ‘Asylum seekers are swamping some British schools’ (BBC News 2003, cited in Gillborn, 2006). This claim was escalated by the popular press when they covered the 2003 report by the official schools inspectorate for England. The chief inspector was quoted as saying that only around 3 per cent of schools in England have more than one in ten asylum seeker pupils, but this detail was lost amid the incendiary headlines which described a “crisis” and the “threat” of asylum-seeking pupils (Gillborn, 2006). O’Boyle and Fanning (2009) noted similar alarmist media reports in Ireland referring to ghettos and white flight which did not reflect the real situation. Fanning (2012) describes further evidence for institutional racism in Ireland, including the over-representation of Africans in the prison system, high levels of under-reporting of racist incidents in Ireland and the high mortality rate among Travellers.

In this chapter, I explore how policy responses to Ireland’s relatively recent history of large-scale immigration and asylum-seeking have contributed to exclusionary practices, and to the racialisation of asylum-seeking in Ireland. To set the scene, I firstly describe the processes of asylum-seeking and family re-unification in Ireland. Following this, I explore the policy responses to increased numbers of asylum-seekers in the mid-to-late 1990s and early 2000s and argue that many of these changes were purposefully geared toward the exclusion of asylum-seekers from Irish society. Next, I investigate societal attitudes towards immigrants, asylum-seekers and refugees in Ireland and reflect on how these mirror political debates and media characterisations of refugees and asylum-seekers. I then argue that the impact of this policy context on

asylum-seeking and refugee young people in Ireland is likely to be detrimental in terms of their development and acculturation.

Asylum-seekers, refugees and seeking asylum in Ireland

An asylum seeker is an individual who seeks to be recognised as a refugee in accordance with the terms of the 1951 Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the related 1967 Protocol, which provides the foundation for the international system of protection of refugees. Under Irish law a refugee is:

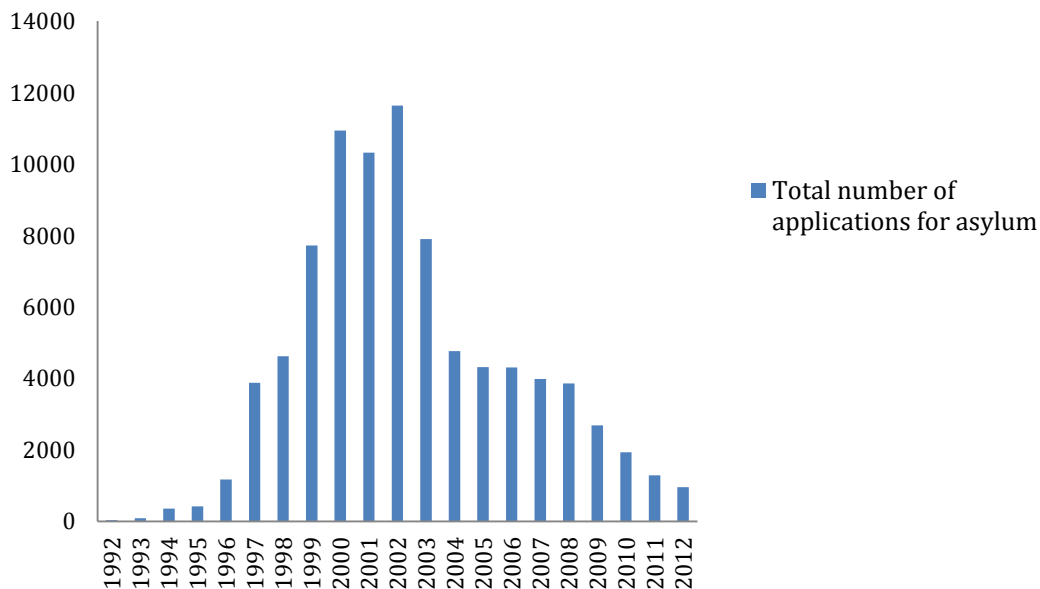
a person who, owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his or her nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his or her former habitual residence, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (Section 2 of the Refugee Act 1996, as amended)

The process of seeking asylum in Ireland begins at the point of entry or at the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC) when the individual makes an application for asylum (Section 8, Refugee Act 1996). Once an application has been made, the asylum-seeker is referred to the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA). Individuals who seek asylum in Ireland are housed in 'Direct Provision' while their application is processed. Direct Provision is a scheme whereby asylum seekers are provided with accommodation on a full board basis. In Ireland asylum-seekers are not entitled to seek employment while their application is being processed. This is because only Ireland and Denmark of the EU's 27 members states have availed of the 'Reception Directive' opt out clause to avoid bestowing certain rights on asylum seekers, such as seeking employment after a period of one year while awaiting a decision on their status. However, in Denmark asylum-seekers can be granted the right to work after a year in the asylum-seeking process, this is not the case in Ireland. Ireland and Lithuania are the only EEA countries that do not afford asylum-seekers the right to work (Migration Watch UK, 2013).

Ireland's recent history with 'large-scale' asylum-seeking:

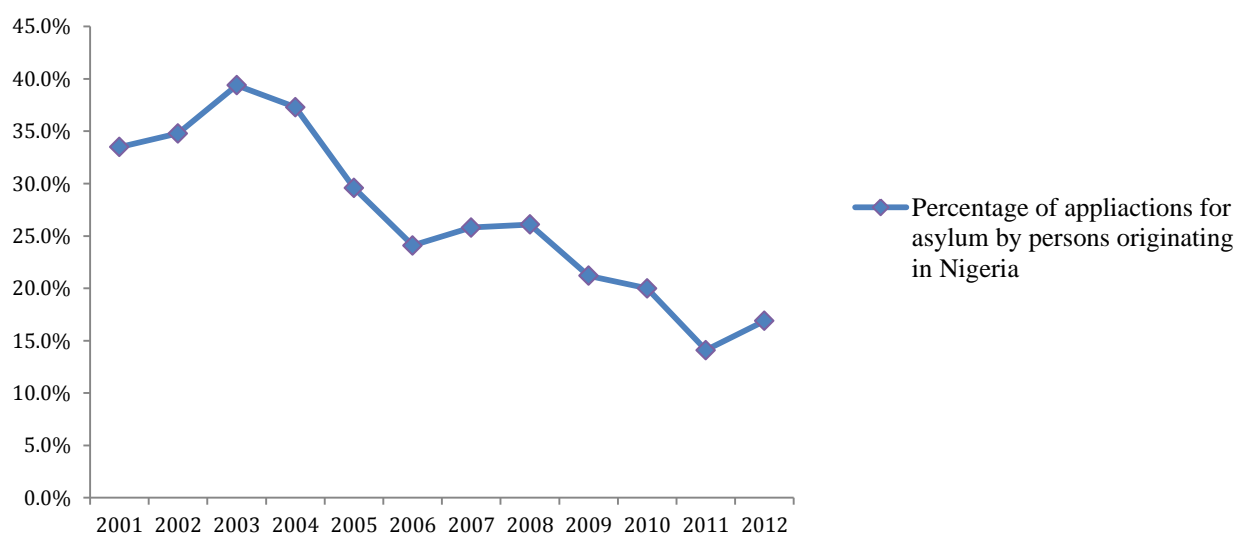
The 1990s marked a turning point for Ireland in terms of the numbers of applications for asylum. In 1992 there were 39 applications for asylum in Ireland; by 2002 the figure peaked at 11,634 representing a staggering 29731% increase in just ten years. While media reports characterised Ireland as being 'swamped by asylum-seekers' during this time, the numbers actually reflected a small proportion of the overall numbers of immigrants to Ireland in the late 1990s (Fanning, 2012). For example, in 1997 the 4,000 asylum-seekers that arrived in Ireland represented only 9% of the overall immigration that year (Faughnan, 1999). The number of applications for asylum peaked in 2002 and has been declining ever since. In 2012 nine hundred and fifty-six applications for asylum were lodged (see *Figure 3.1*).

Figure 3.1 Applications for asylum in Ireland by year



Nigeria has consistently been one of the countries where most asylum-seekers have come from (ORAC Annual Reports, 2001 – 2012). However, while it has been the best represented country among applications for asylum in Ireland every year since 2001, the proportion of individuals from Nigeria seeking asylum in Ireland has been falling relative to other countries (see *Figure 3.2*).

Figure 3.2 Percentage of applications for asylum by persons originating in Nigeria as a proportion of all applications for asylum based on data from ORAC annual reports



The most recent statistics suggested that 26% of residents of all direct provision centres in Ireland were Nigerian (RIA Monthly statistics February, 2013). Many asylum-seekers have also come from other African countries including the democratic republic of Congo (8.5%) and Ghana (5.3%). Table 3.1 illustrates the top five countries of origin between the years 2006 and 2012.

Table 3.1 *Top Five Countries of Origin of Asylum-Seekers in Ireland 2006-2012*

Rank	2012	2011	2010	2009	2008	2007	2006
1	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria	Nigeria
2	Pakistan	Pakistan	China	Pakistan	Iraq	Iraq	Sudan
3	Democratic Republic of Congo	China	Pakistan	China	China	China	Romania
4	Zimbabwe	Democratic Republic of Congo	Democratic Republic of Congo	Democratic Republic of Congo	Pakistan	Pakistan	Iraq
5	Albania	Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Zimbabwe	Georgia	Georgia	Georgia

Note. Based on data from the ORAC annual reports 2006 to 2012

Unaccompanied minors

Annually, hundreds of young people arrive into Ireland by themselves and are formally or informally reunited with family members already in Ireland who are already seeking-asylum or may have refugee status (Joyce & Quinn, 2009). However, some young people arrive in Ireland and seek asylum without family or guardians, these are

known as unaccompanied minors (UAM), also sometimes referred to as Separated Children Seeking Asylum (SCSA). An unaccompanied minor is defined as:

A third country national or stateless person below the age of eighteen, who arrives on the territory of the Member States unaccompanied by an adult responsible for them whether by law or custom, and for as long as they are not effectively taken into the care of such a person, or a minor who is left unaccompanied after they have entered the territory of the Member States (Council Directive 2001/55/EC).

Unaccompanied minors often do not know why they have been sent to Ireland and the motivation behind their migration is actually sometimes that of a parent or guardian rather than their own (Joyce & Quinn, 2011).

The accommodation of unaccompanied minors in Ireland is the responsibility of the Health Service Executive (HSE). In 2009 Barnardos criticised the treatment of unaccompanied minors in Ireland because, unlike other children in the care of the HSE, separated children were placed in privately contracted hostels that were unregistered and profit-making and subsequently not governed by the National Standards for Children's Residential Centres (2001) nor inspected by the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). Staff members were not necessarily appropriately trained and there was no dedicated social worker assigned to each child. In 2009, the Ryan Implementation Plan recommended that the HSE end the use of these separately run hostels for separated children seeking asylum and instead implement an 'equity of care' policy by accommodating them in mainstream care, on par with other children in the care system. The majority of separated children coming into the care of the HSE are now placed in foster care or supported lodgings after an initial assessment (Barnardos, 2011). The number of separated children referred to the HSE's Team for Separated Children Seeking Asylum (TSCSA) has declined from 1085 in 2001 separated children seeking asylum in Ireland, this figure had dropped to 71 by 2012 (NíRaghallaigh, 2013).

The most comprehensive data sources on UAMs are referrals to the HSE Dublin Social Work Team for Separated Children and Data on asylum applications from ORAC. Based on these sources Table 3.2 describes the numbers of applications made by unaccompanied minors as a percentage of all applications for asylum made in Ireland

during the timeframe that the adolescents who participated in the research presented in this thesis first came to Ireland.

Table 3.2 *Applications for asylum made by Unaccompanied Minors in Ireland 2002-2008*

	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Applications made by UAMs	288	271	128	131	131	94	98
Applications by UAMs as % of total	2.5	3.4	2.7	3.0	3.0	2.4	2.5

Note. These data refer to minors that are deemed to be unaccompanied at the time of their application for asylum, it is not possible to disaggregate minors who are subsequently reunited with family and may possibly be added to their parent or guardian's application for asylum. Table is based on data reported by Joyce and Quinn (2009) p. 12.

Aging-Out

Once unaccompanied minors reach 18 years of age they are referred to as having 'aged-out'. 'Aged-out' minors are transferred from HSE accommodation to RIA direct provision accommodation. Those deemed by the HSE as continuing to be vulnerable can remain within its care, but only at the discretion of the HSE. Up to 2009, 'aged-out' minors transferred to RIA had been accommodated in specified RIA centres *in* Dublin, provided they did not have children of their own (Joyce & Quinn, 2011). That policy changed in January 2009. Since that time 'aged-out' minors have been dispersed to specified RIA accommodation centres *outside* Dublin.

Aged-out minor asylum applicants are now housed in one of five direct provision centres in Cork, Limerick, Sligo, Galway or Athlone. It was claimed that those centres had established close working relationships not only with the HSE, but with voluntary and NGO groups through the long standing dispersal policy and therefore had the resources and supports needed to accommodate aged-out minors. However, concerns have been raised over the suitability of direct provision centres due to the vulnerability of these 'aged-out' young adults and the lack of family support available to them (Joyce & Quinn, 2011). According to the RIA Annual Report 2009, the revised policy was described as successful "for the most part" (pg. 39). It is unclear from the report what form of evaluation was used, other than a reference to 'information sessions with local service providers' and a mention that the policy was reviewed in December 2009. The rationale behind the policy change agreed between RIA and the HSE was framed in terms of protection and fairness. According to the RIA 2009 Annual Report this policy change:

- Relieves the pressure in the Dublin area on bed space and, more importantly, on community services. Dublin's health, education, therapeutic and welfare services have long waiting times for first appointments and interventions.
- Reduces the negative influences - crime, drug abuse “and so on” (p.39)- that the “bright lights, big city” (p. 39) environment in Dublin can have on aged-out minors who have limited financial means and who have no family support.
- Provides a standardised and equitable approach to all asylum seekers over the age of 18 availing of RIA accommodation, thus ensuring fairness.

In practice, however, it means that ‘aged-out’ minors are moved to accommodation in a new location with limited social ties and limited choice in the matter, making this a potentially stressful time for adolescents. The timing also coincides with the completion of the adolescent’s secondary school education. As they are now recognised as adults in the asylum-seeking system, they are no longer entitled to state-subsidised education. While their Irish peers are now free to pursue further education or employment, the aged-out asylum-seekers are essentially denied both. High fees for international students preclude further education, while legally asylum-seekers are not allowed to engage in paid work.

Age is therefore an important determining factor in how asylum-seekers are treated in Ireland. An unaccompanied minor’s age is assessed by social work teams when they enter State care using a social work assessment tool. ORAC also assesses the age of an unaccompanied minor applying for asylum in a specific interview for assessing age. Officers receive specific training for this purpose. In cases where an individual’s age is disputed, there exists the right to a review of the age assessment by a more senior officer in ORAC. In these cases the Refugee Legal Service advises clients to seek independent opinions (e.g., a doctor, social worker, documents from the country of origin) to support their claim. Doctors in Ireland tend to be reluctant to make such assessments as the margin of error is so large (Joyce & Quinn, 2011). The Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2009) has stated that age assessments are conducted with regard to the Separated Children in Europe Programme (SCEP) Statement of Good Practice (2004) when dealing with cases of unaccompanied minors. The SCEP is a joint initiative of the International Save the Children Alliance and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. However, non-governmental child rights organisations have claimed that the Department of Justice, Equality and Law

Reform does not conform to the SCEP Statement of Good Practice which calls for independent professionals with appropriate expertise to conduct such an assessment (Joyce & Quinn, 2011). Social workers and ORAC have expressed concern about the potential for adults to be housed alongside children in hostel accommodation.

Family reunification

The final act of the conference that adopted the 1951 Geneva Convention included a recommendation in relation to the principle of family unity. In Irish law, the principle that a refugee is entitled to be reunited with his or her family is enshrined in the Refugee Act, 1996. This means that, under Irish law, individuals who have been granted refugee status can be reunited with immediate family members through the process of family reunification. The Act defines “member of the family” for this purpose as:

- The spouse of the refugee, in cases where the refugee is married (providing that the marriage is subsisting on the date of the application).
- The parents of a refugee, provided he or she is, on the date of the application for family reunification, under 18 years of age and is not married.
- The child of a refugee, who on the date of the application is under 18 years of age and is not married.

According to ORAC annual reports the number of applications for family reunification has ranged from 206 applications (in 2012) to 483 applications (in 2006). This indicates that a substantial number of individuals came to Ireland through the process of family re-unification to establish themselves with family members already living in Ireland. However, a breakdown is not provided of which family members (spouses, children, parents) are referred to in these applications. However, it is likely that there are considerable numbers of adolescent immigrants from African countries living in Ireland who have come to Ireland as either asylum-seekers or through family reunification. It is estimated that the majority of the approximately 5,300 separated children who arrived in Ireland between 1998 and 2008 have been reunited with family members already living in Ireland (Barnardos, 2009). Further, the pathways for Africans to come to live in Ireland are limited and the population of Africans living in Ireland today is increasing, this further suggests that many have come either as asylum-seekers

or through the process of family reunification. Since 2002 the percentage of individuals born in an African country and living in Ireland has been increasing; from 0.7% in 2002, to 1% in 2006, to 1.2% in 2011 (CSO, 2003, 2007, 2012). Africans also make up a sizable proportion of the adolescent population in Ireland, for example, there were 49,915 non-Irish national students and pupils aged 15 years and over resident in Ireland in 2011 (CSO, 2012). Of these, Nigerians made up the fourth largest non-Irish group (2860), behind UK nationals (8,277 persons), Poles (4,586), and Chinese (3,533).

Family members of refugees who are granted residence permits in the State are issued with 'Stamp 4' residence permits and, in accordance with the provisions of section 18(3)(a) of the Refugee Act 1996, are entitled to the same rights and privileges in the State as the refugee, for such period as the refugee is entitled to remain in the State. The residence permit is generally issued for a period of one-year (and in some cases, shorter periods), renewable thereafter on fulfilment of conditions. The rights conferred are effectively the same as those provided to Irish citizens in terms of access to employment, education and other social benefits/services. Adolescents who came to Ireland via a process of family reunification are therefore in an arguably better position than those who came as unaccompanied minors seeking asylum.

Policy Changes Following Unprecedented Inward Migration

As a country of traditionally net emigration, until the early 1990s Ireland did not have any specific legislation in asylum or immigration (Barcroft, 1995; Messina, 2009). In 1956 Ireland became a signatory of the Geneva Convention; however it was not incorporated into domestic law until the Refugee Act 1996 (Fanning, 2012). In the meantime, refugee matters were dealt with under the Aliens Act (1935) and, to a lesser extent, the Nationality and Citizenship Act (1935) (Fanning, 2012). Given the small numbers of refugees prior to the mid-1990s, the legal incorporation of the Convention was not prioritised, and obligations arising from the Geneva Convention were implemented at an administrative, rather than legislative, level (Fanning, 2000).

The Von Arnmin letter (1985), so-named after the UNHCR representative in London, formalised administrative procedures for granting asylum with the Minister for Justice accepting a ten-point procedure for determining asylum claims in line with the Geneva Convention (Fanning, 2002). Asylum applications were to be examined by immigration officers, usually members of the Gardaí, but the UNHCR was involved in consultation and making representations on the cases (Fanning, 2000). The Von Armin

letter did not provide for an appeals procedure, for deportation procedures, or welfare matters. Refugee and asylum matters continued to be dealt with largely under the Aliens Act, which granted the Ministry for Justice strong executive powers, including the deportation or detention of asylum-seekers, even in contravention of the agreed procedures.

The Refugee Act was the first Irish law on asylum and was introduced in 1996. This followed the attempted introduction of legislation in 1993, which failed due to the resignation of the then government. The Refugee Act (1996) has been described as a relatively progressive piece of legislation as it drew on international best practice and incorporated several aspects of the Geneva Convention provisions, including the definition of ‘refugee’ which in the Act included membership of a trade union, persecution on the grounds of gender and sexual orientation, and the principle of non-refoulment (Fanning, 2012). Under the Refugee Act, 1996 two independent statutory offices were established in November 2000 to consider applications/appeals for refugee status and to make recommendations to the Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform on whether such status should be granted. These two offices are the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner (ORAC), which considers applications for a declaration as a refugee at first instance and the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT) which considers applications for a declaration at appeal stage. The statutory functions of the Refugee Applications Commissioner are set out in the Refugee Act, 1996 as amended by the Immigration Act, 1999, the Illegal Immigrants (Trafficking) Act, 2000, the Immigration Act, 2003 and the Immigration Act, 2004.

An asylum-seeker is referred to the Reception and Integration Agency (RIA) once he or she has made an application for asylum. The RIA was formed on 2 April 2001 under the supervision of an officer of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform. Up until 2007 it was tasked with managing the provision of shelter and support to asylum seekers. It was responsible for three areas: coordination of provision of services to asylum seekers and refugees; coordination of the implementation of integration policy for all refugees and persons who were granted leave to remain; and responding to crisis situations which resulted in relatively large numbers of refugees arriving in Ireland within a short period of time.

These responsibilities of RIA were modified following the establishment of the Office of the Minister for Integration in 2007, which assumed the ‘integration’ aspect of RIA’s former remit. RIA is now primarily concerned with ‘reception’. Its current role,

according to the Department of Justice (defined in Chapter 4.34 of the Freedom of Information Section 15 Reference Book, 2008), includes taking responsibility for the planning and co-ordination of provision of services to asylum seekers, accommodating asylum seekers through the 'Direct Provision' system and assisting in the voluntary repatriation of destitute nationals from the twelve States which joined the EU in May 2004 and January 2007. The 'Direct Provision' system was introduced by the government as a pilot scheme in November 1999. It was administered and coordinated by the Directorate for Asylum Support Services, a body set up under the auspices of the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (FLAC, 2009).

Following a 41% increase in the number of individuals applying for asylum between the years 1999 and 2000, and the ensuing high demand for accommodation in Dublin, the government implemented a policy of Dispersal in conjunction with the policy of Direct Provision. This involved obtaining accommodation across the various Health Board areas to ensure a more equal distribution of asylum-seekers across the country. While Direct Provision and Dispersal were initially implemented as a pilot project, they became official government policy in April 2000 (the Supplementary Welfare Allowance Circulars 04/00 and 05/00 that enabled this are discussed below). Profit-making enterprises tender for direct provision contracts with the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform to provide accommodation and meals to residents of Direct Provision hostels. The policy of Direct Provision and Dispersal was deemed by FLAC (2003) to be discriminatory and their 2003 report called for the policy to be abandoned; a 2009 FLAC report again asserted that the scheme fails to comply with the constitutional rights to fair procedures and due process guaranteed to everybody in Ireland:

Direct provision and dispersal has resulted in the social exclusion and deprivation of individuals seeking asylum, another form of protection or humanitarian leave to remain. The impoverished and isolated situation in which direct provision residents find themselves is not in line with the government's own initiatives to avoid social exclusion and to eliminate consistent poverty, in particular child poverty. People living in direct provision are unable to support themselves due to the low levels of social welfare support they receive and the prohibition on work during the time while his/her application is being processed, which usually far exceeds

the six month period which the government originally intended (FLAC, 2009, p. 135)

Prior to the introduction of the policy of Direct Provision and Dispersal, individuals seeking asylum or another form of protection were entitled to access 'Supplementary Welfare Allowance' in the same manner as other persons who have no income and require this assistance. However, following its instatement as official government policy, the Department of Social and Family Affairs issued Supplementary Welfare Allowance Circulars 04/00 and 05/00. These circulars were intended to provide guidance to the relevant staff regarding the implementation of direct provision and dispersal. Supplementary Welfare Allowance Circular 04/00 outlined how newly arrived asylum seekers would be initially housed in a 'reception centre' before being moved to Direct Provision accommodation in another part of the country. The cost of accommodating someone in Direct Provision was then calculated and the resulting sum was deducted from the basic standard Supplementary Welfare Allowance. The remainder, described as a residual income maintenance payment to cover personal requisites (DSFA 2000a), was set at IR£15 (which now equates to €19.10) per week for an adult and IR£7.50 (or €9.60) for a child. This allowance has not increased since 2001. Rent supplement was only to be given in exceptional circumstances. Supplementary Welfare Allowance Circular 05/00 gave direction on what to do in the case of an individual refusing direct provision without "clear and apparent justification" (DSFA, 2000b). In this instance, the individual could only be granted the residual direct provision allowance (i.e., €19.10).

The politics behind the policy changes

During the period 1990s and 2000s Ireland was led by a series of coalition governments. The coalition government between the labour party, Fine Gael and the Democratic Left was elected in 1992. The next two governments (elected in 1997 and 2002) were led by Fianna Fáil with the Progressive Democrats party as the junior partner. The Green Party joined this coalition government following the 2007 election. The present government formed after the 2011 election and represents a coalition between Fine Gael and the Labour party. Fianna Fáil, the main government party for a large portion of Irish history, and Fine Gael, the main opposition party during the 1990s and 2000s, can both arguably be described as centre right to centre left parties, with few differences in terms of economic and social beliefs, and pro-European orientation

(Messina, 2009; Mair, 1986). The Labour party has traditionally represented the interests of those with lower socio-economic status and its political orientation is centre-left (Messina, 2009). The Progressive democrats were a centre-right party with strong associations with business interest and neo-liberal policies (Mair & Weeks, 2005). Below I illustrate how these successive governments have arguably advocated the exclusion of asylum seekers from participation in Irish society.

Nora Owen, the Fine Gael Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform, opposed including a right to work for asylum-seekers in the Irish Refugee Act (1996) because she felt it was not appropriate to enable them to establish themselves in Irish society until such time as the State had determined that they had the right to stay:

It must be borne in mind that asylum-seekers are allowed to remain in the State pending determination of their applications.. I do not consider it appropriate to allow people with temporary permission to remain in the State, to work and put down roots. (1996, Dail Debates, col. 835, 28th February, 1996, cited in Fanning, 2012)

The succeeding Minister for Justice, Fianna Fáil TD John O'Donoghue, described asylum-seekers as illegal immigrants and exploiters of the Irish welfare system in a speech made to the Irish Business and Employers Confederation in 1999 (Fanning, 2012). Later that year he announced that the existing welfare entitlements were to be replaced by the 'Direct Provision' system, which limited the support they could receive, and as mentioned above this allowance has not changed since it was introduced.

The accession to the office of Minister for Justice, Equality and Law reform by Progressive Democrat Michael McDowell after the 2002 General Election is also noteworthy. McDowell had served as Attorney General in the Fianna Fáil-Progressive Democrat coalition government that had assumed power in 1997. In radio interviews prior to the election, Minister McDowell had referred to asylum and immigration as serious problems, and in July 2002 he implemented 'Operation Hyphen', entailing a series of raids on people thought to be non-Irish-nationals who had overstayed their visas and/or exhausted appeals against deportation (Hickman, 2007).

He also challenged the 'Fajujonu ruling' in two cases heard in the Supreme Court in January 2003 on behalf of the State. The 'Fajujonu ruling' relates to the rights of children born in Ireland. Prior to the 2004 Citizenship Act a child born in Ireland

acquired Irish nationality through *jus soli* (right of the soil). In December 1989, the Supreme Court's 'Fajujonu' Ruling had established a precedent for non-nationals to obtain the right of residence through having children born in Ireland reference. The Supreme Court judges agreed that children are entitled to the 'company and protection' of their family (as set out in Articles 41 and 42 of the 1937 Constitution). This occurred at a time when Ireland was still a country of net emigration. By 1998, however, the number of immigrants had begun to outnumber that of emigrants. The 1998 Good Friday/Belfast Agreement led to a series of constitutional adjustments, both north and south of the border. In exchange for the Irish government formally relinquishing designs a constitutional claim on the whole territory of the island of Ireland, nationalists obtained a geographical extension of the compass of Irish nationality, as anyone born in Ireland is offered 'membership of the nation'. The subsequent Citizenship Act 2001 thus granted Irish nationality directly to anyone born in Northern Ireland who wished to claim citizenship in the north, who had hitherto only been able to claim nationality through a grandparent born before 1922.

Minister McDowell challenged the 'Fajujonu ruling' in the cases of three asylum-seekers (a Nigerian and a Czech couple) who had challenged their deportation on the grounds of having children born in Ireland. By a 5–2 decision, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Minister. The Fajujonu precedent was nullified. At the time of the court's decision, around 10,000 people had successfully lodged claims on the basis of having what the Department refers to as 'Irish-born children', or IBC, and a further 7,000–10,000 had claims in the system. The 'IBC route' was pursued by many obliged to wait years to have their claim processed, and people were even advised unofficially to do so by some Department officials during the period 1998–2002 (Garner, 2007).

The outcome of the Supreme Court's decision in 2003 was that all claims to remain in Ireland due to 'IBC' now had to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. In March 2004, the Minister announced that a referendum would be held on the issue of amending the Citizenship Act 2001. McDowell proposed the introduction of a 3-year residence qualification for non-national parents before their child was entitled to citizenship. The referendum was held on 11 June 2004 and the proposed amendment received an 80% backing of the voters on a 62% turnout, and was enshrined in the Citizenship Act 2004—coming into force on 1 January 2005. As a result, the right to Irish nationality is no longer automatic for some children born in the Republic.

The only people directly affected by the new constitutional amendment are those who attempt to claim residence rights through having an IBC—who is distinguishable from an Irish child solely through her/his parents' nationality. Since other EEA nationals enjoy the right to residence and employment in Ireland anyway, applying for residence through this route would essentially only be of use to asylum-seekers and labour migrants from developing world nations. This essentially racialised the issue of asylum-seeking in Ireland. The long-term residence and employment rights acquired give rise to an entitlement to some social welfare benefits and an increased possibility of international mobility. In short, these represent major improvements in life chances for people fleeing repressive regimes and/or dire economic conditions.

The current state of affairs for asylum-seekers in Ireland

Overall, between only 4 and 10 per cent of asylum-seekers have been granted refugee status, and in recent years this proportion is even lower (Moreo & Lentin, 2010). For those who are not granted refugee status on their first application, they are entitled to appeal by making an application to the Refugee Appeals Tribunal (RAT). The appeal is conducted through written correspondence or by way of full oral hearing. If the recommendation by the RAT is positive then the Minister must grant refugee status. If, at this stage, refugee status is refused, the applicant may apply to the Minister for Subsidiary Protection or Leave to Remain. In 2011, only 5% of the asylum applications determined either by the Office of the Refugee Applications Commissioner or the Refugee Appeals Tribunal were successful in comparison to the average rate of 11.6% across other European Countries (Conlan, Waters & Berg, 2012). As described previously the Irish State, through policies and political discourse, has problematized asylum-seekers, despite the 1951 Geneva Convention entitlement for individuals to legally seek asylum in another jurisdiction (Fanning, 2012; Moreo & Lentin, 2010). The greatest proportion of those currently residing in Direct Provision is Nigerian (13.7%). Including these, 74.9% of the residents are from African countries (RIA Monthly Statistics November, 2013). According to these statistics published the average length of time that residents had been in the asylum-process was 52 months (4 years and 4 months).

Unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Ireland

The treatment of unaccompanied minors has been described as inconsistent (NíRaghalligh, 2013). In Ireland, the majority of separated children have been in Dublin, but a small number were also cared for by HSE services in other parts of the country, predominantly Cork. Separated young people who arrived in Cork were cared for under Section 5 of the Child Care Act 1991, as homeless teenagers, and were cared for in a range of placement types, including foster care and supported lodgings (Mintern & Dorney, 2006). Most separated young people in Dublin, by contrast, have been cared for under Section 4 of the Act, dealing with voluntary care. A small number of unaccompanied minors in Dublin and in other parts of the country were brought into care under Section 18, which deals with 'Care Orders'. The HSE have been criticised by advocacy groups for not applying for Care Orders in relation to each separated child and have questioned the ability of social workers to act *in loco parentis* where a Care Order is not in place (Irish Refugee Council et al., 2011). Data gathering and information sharing have also been shown to be negatively affected by the inconsistency in approach amongst different areas (Joyce & Quinn, 2011).

Until recently, UAMs were primarily accommodated in hostels. These hostels were not registered children's residential homes, nor were they staffed by qualified social care staff. Rather, they were usually staffed by one security person, as well as some additional ancillary staff (e.g. cleaners or kitchen staff; NíRaghalligh, 2013). HSE project workers were assigned to hostels and visited them on a regular basis. Initially, some of these hostels catered for up to seventy young people, with males and females living in the same premises. The young people shared rooms (sometimes with up to 12 other individuals). When they were first established, the hostels operated on a self-catering basis, with the young people cooking for themselves. Later improvements were made, and smaller, single-sex hostels were utilised where meals were provided. Rooms were shared with fewer peers and sometimes individuals even had rooms to themselves (NíRaghalligh, 2013).

The last hostel for UAMs was closed in December 2010. HSE documents suggest that the process of closing the hostels had begun prior to the publication of the Ryan Report Implementation Plan (OMCYA, 2009) but a decision was made to fast-track the process in light of this report (McHugh, 2009). During the transition period in which hostels were being closed and foster placements were being sought, Crosscare (a registered charity providing a range of services to vulnerable groups including young

people and homeless people) was engaged by the HSE to provide 24-hour support to the young people in the hostels. This set the scene for the possibility of care provision for UAMs which was on a par with that provided for Irish children.

Unlike adults, adolescent asylum-seekers are entitled to attend school as education in Ireland is compulsory from age 6 to 16 or until students have completed three years of second level (post-primary) education, under the Education (Welfare) Act, 2000. The education of children resident in RIA accommodation is mainstreamed, meaning they are provided in a like manner to the 'indigenous' Irish population (RIA Annual Report, 2009). The children of asylum-seekers resident in centres are linked with local schools. Unlike 'indigenous' school-going children, children of asylum seekers face uncertainty regarding where they will attend school as they can be dispersed from the Reception centre in Dublin (to where they are sent upon arrival in the State for a few weeks) to a centre elsewhere in the State at any point in school year. In Ireland, Smyth and Whyte (2005) found that enrolment in schools facilitated the formation of friendships for the asylum-seeking youth in their study. However they also found that aspects of the asylum-seeking process interfered with students achieving their academic potential despite a strong desire to achieve academically. This indicates a difficulty in integrating their values and ambitions with their context.

International research suggests that UAMs are a vulnerable group likely to be suffering psychological and emotional problems (Bean et al., 2007; Sourander, 1998). (Abunimah & Blower, 2010). There has been very little exploration of how these young people cope (exceptions include NíRaghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010, Goodman, 2004, and Chase, 2010). Research in an Irish context suggests that unaccompanied minors used various coping strategies in their efforts to deal with their circumstances, these strategies depended on what the individuals perceived as most appropriate to their circumstances. For example, maintaining continuity was noted as being important to unaccompanied minors in a study conducted in Ireland by NíRaghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010), whereby participants tried to maintain their religious faith in their new context, they also actively tried to adapt to life in Ireland by modifying how they dressed and spoke. Further coping strategies noted included looking on the positive aspects of their situations, looking for distractions, and acting independently. One less adaptive coping mechanism identified was the tendency of individuals not to trust others due to their past experiences and precarious position in Ireland (NíRaghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010).

UAMs continue to be a vulnerable group upon aging-out. Concerns have been raised over the suitability of direct provision centres due to their vulnerability and the lack of family support available to them (Joyce & Quinn, 2011). Joyce and Quinn (2011) have further argued that regardless of where an aged-out minor is accommodated there exists a lack of tracking or follow-up within the HSE, and an associated lack of resources available to social workers to follow-up on cases and to provide information on the situation for unaccompanied minors beyond the age of 18 years. Gibbons (2007) situates this lack of resources for follow-up in terms of the wider issue of minors in care moving from “one care area to another without proper reference onwards or communication to those who should be responsible” (p. 178).

The potential impact of seeking asylum in Ireland on adaptation and acculturation

The asylum-seeking process in Ireland presents children and adolescents with a number of challenges relating to adaptation and acculturation. Children growing up in direct provision are argued to occupy frequently contradictory and ambiguous positions reflecting the uncertainties and ambiguities surrounding them as immigrants (part yet not part of Irish society), as children (child/not adult) and as asylum-seekers (separated from mainstream society in dispersal centres) (White, 2012). Their lives can be characterised by poverty and social exclusion resulting from the restrictions associated with the asylum process in Ireland (Arnold, 2012; Fanning & Veale, 2004). Arnold (2012) has questioned whether the conditions that young people live with in direct provision amount to child abuse and describes direct provision as: “an example of a government policy which has not only bred discrimination, social exclusion, enforced poverty and neglect, but has placed children at a real risk” (p. 7). Further, direct provision has been described as a violation of asylum-seekers rights to adequate housing and undermines human dignity (Breen, 2008). High levels of dependency and boredom have been suggested as a cause of family and relationship difficulties and mental health problems in accommodation centres (FLAC, 2003). Vanderhurst (2007) conducted an anthropological study based in a Galway direct provision centre and found little evidence of feelings of community or a common identity among the residents of there.

In terms of the impact of asylum-seeking on identity development, classic identity theorists, such as Erikson (1968) and Marcia (1980), have acknowledged the role of interactions between the individual and the wider context, as have more recent

theorists of child development (Bronfenbrenner, 2002; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Lerner & Castellino, 2002). Erikson (1968) proposed that identity development involved the interplay between the individual, society and historical context. Building on these ideas, Marcia (1980) focused on the development of commitments during the identity formation process and proposed the 'identity status model' whereby individuals are characterised by their levels of identity exploration and commitment to values. These theorists considered adolescence to be a critical time for the development of identity because it is at this time "that physical development, cognitive skills and social expectations coincide to enable young persons to sort through and synthesise their childhood identifications in order to construct a viable pathway toward their adulthood" (Marcia, 1980, p. 110). Identity development involves finding one's place in society (Erikson, 1968); however an asylum-seekers place in society is inherently ambiguous. Ethnic identity development involves attempting to understand the meaning of one's ethnicity in the larger setting (Phinney, 1996), as many asylum-seeker are from similar ethnic backgrounds this means their ethnicity in Ireland may be associated with separation from the mainstream society and fewer rights than other citizens.

The most effective acculturation strategy is argued to be integration which involves balancing participating in the daily life of the host society while maintaining a connection to the culture of origin (Berry et al., 2006). Participation in Irish daily life is frustrated for asylum-seekers by a lack of choice regarding where to live, the denial of a right to work and the prospect of not being able to continue in education past the age of 18. For asylum-seekers who are in Ireland without parents this is further complicated by the severing of established ties once they 'age-out' in the system and are again uprooted and moved to a new location where they must begin the process of establishing themselves anew.

Ireland as a context for acculturation

The fact that Ireland has a recent history with respect to immigration and a complicated history with respect to asylum-seekers and refugees makes it a particularly interesting context in which to investigate the process of acculturation. This is especially so when we take into account not only the policy context as described above, but also the prevailing attitudes towards asylum-seekers and refugees from African countries. For example, the Eurobarometer survey conducted in 2011 found that 8 out of 10 Europeans agree that Member States should offer protection and asylum to those in

need and that rules for admitting asylum seekers should be the same across the EU (European Commission, 2012). In the same survey 67% of Europeans felt that it is important to be able to travel within the EU without internal border controls. Yet, 65% of Irish respondents felt that the presence of immigrants in Ireland made it more difficult to get jobs.

Black Africans may have particular difficulty adapting to life in Ireland and integrating with the White Irish majority group due to experiences of racism and discrimination. Therefore there is good reason to believe that their identity will be placed in a threatened position. For example, in early July 2013 the Immigration Council of Ireland issued preliminary research findings which indicated that, of 50 'serious racist incidents' reported to the organisation over a 10-week period, 42% of cases were reported by African individuals. The racist incidents included discrimination, verbal harassment and property damage. McGinnity et al. (2006) conducted a large scale nationally representative study of immigrants' subjective experiences of racism and discrimination in Ireland. All respondents were non-EU adult migrants, and represented a broad range of nationalities from North and South/Central Africa, from Asia and from Eastern Europe. The authors found that Black South/Central Africans experienced the most discrimination of all the groups studied – at work, in public places, in shops/restaurants and in contact with Irish institutions, even after controlling for differences in education, length of stay and gender.

These research findings suggest that the overall experience of discrimination in Ireland may be strongly related to race and national origin. However, levels of reported discrimination on the grounds of ethnic/national origin tend to be lower in Ireland than in the other EU member states and indicators from the European Social Survey suggest that the indigenous population in Ireland is reasonably open to, and tolerant of, immigrants. However, this may also reflect unwillingness on the part of victims to report racist incidents. Further, over time comparisons using the Eurobarometer indicate that, in recent years, Irish attitudes have converged to the EU average in terms of the perceived limits to cultural and ethnic diversity (Hughes et al., 2008). Interestingly, in terms of the present study, the Eurobarometer data indicate particularly positive attitudes to migrants held by young people in Ireland, which may limit the extent to which the acculturating adolescents in the present study experience identity threat.

In relation to children and young people, more research in the Irish context has been conducted with primary school children compared to adolescents. Gash and

Murphy-Lejeune (2004) found that Irish primary school students are likely to be prejudiced about others whom they see as being different from them, especially when the individuals in question are not well known. Devine (2005) found incidences of bullying at school to vary to a large extent with regard to minority groups and the consistency of such incidences. A longitudinal study of second-level students indicated that newcomer students are more likely to have experienced bullying than their Irish counterparts (Smyth et al., 2009) and that newcomer students can be subject to name-calling in general, and racist name calling in particular (Devine, Kenny & McNeela, 2008).

A large-scale Irish study of 10-18 year olds has replicated these findings by indicating a higher incidence of being bullied among immigrant than Irish students (Molcho et al., 2008). Devine et al. (2004) found that “being good at sport, sharing similar humour, not being favoured by teachers (teacher’s pet) and sharing common interests” (p. 199) were likely to determine inclusion or exclusion for newcomer students. Furthermore, the study found that the majority of native Irish children had limited understanding of what racism meant, with perceptions of difference being firmly embedded in cultural stereotypes about what it means to be ‘Irish’ (Devine & Kelly, 2006). The study noted that newcomer students’ experiences of inclusion and exclusion were dependent upon their ability to find common ground with others and to negotiate their entry into relatively exclusive friendship groups.

These findings echo findings the UK and Scotland. For example, a Scottish study by Caulfield et al. (2005) found that nearly all of the children who participated in the research had either experienced or witnessed racist behaviour in secondary school. The racist behaviour was predominantly verbal in nature, but it occasionally took the form of physical bullying and gang fights. Only a minority of newcomer students answered such behaviour with aggression, the majority tried to ignore racism, offered explanations about difference or used humour. Research carried out in the UK has similarly found that a significant minority of newcomer pupils in mainly white schools reported race-related name-calling or verbal abuse either while at school or while travelling to and from school (Cline et al., 2002). Acculturation in an Irish context may therefore be complicated for adolescent immigrants who are also members of visible minority groups, such as the Black African adolescent participants in the research presented in this thesis.

With respect to the research presented in this thesis the Irish context, particularly the policy context, leads me to ask the question: Does the asylum-seeking process in Ireland allow for adaptive adolescent acculturation? The policy and practice issues outlined in this chapter in conjunction with the potential for experiencing racism may affect the acculturation process negatively. Through limiting asylum-seeker rights, the asylum-seeking process may prevent asylum-seekers from being able to integrate their cultural background with Irish society. A lengthy wait for the processing of applications may hinder the ethnic identity development of adolescent asylum-seekers. The dispersal of unaccompanied asylum-seekers to accommodation in a new location once they have “aged-out” in the asylum process may sever important ties.

Implications for this thesis

Adolescents within the asylum-seeking process have more limited rights than those who came to Ireland through the process of family reunification to live with parents who had already attained refugee status. Adolescents who have ‘aged-out’ during the asylum-seeking process have even fewer rights as they are no longer under the care of the HSE, are no longer entitled to avail of free education and are not entitled to work. ‘Aged-out’ asylum seekers and adolescents who come to Ireland through a process of family reunification can reasonably be expected to have very different experiences as they acculturate due to the different contexts they encounter.

In some ways asylum-seekers and adolescents who came to Ireland through the process of family reunification face many of the same issues as they engage with the process of acculturation. They must meet normative tasks of adolescent development. They must reconcile the values they developed in their heritage culture with the values of the host (Irish) society. They may face discrimination based on race, religion or ethnicity. However, the context of their acculturation experiences is quite different. Adolescents who come to Ireland through a process of family reunification come to meet family members already in the country. These family members may be a resource when it comes to navigating the process of acculturation, and they may also be a source of conflict. These adolescents can access education and employment on the same basis as other Irish citizens, yet they may still face social and institutional discrimination. The adolescents who come as unaccompanied minors do not have the support of their families as they learn to negotiate life in a new country, as they enter adulthood and as

they make important life choices. They are also denied the right to access employment and cannot access education on the same basis as other Irish citizens.

Contextually-focused research-questions

The policy, practice and social contextual factors outlined in this chapter lead to particular research questions to be addressed throughout this thesis:

- What is the process of acculturation *like* for adolescent immigrants in Ireland who came from African countries, as unaccompanied minors or as children of refugees?
- How is it different for asylum-seeking adolescents and adolescents who are the children of refugees?
- What are the policy implications, if any, of these experiences?

Chapter 4: Adolescent Acculturation Experiences – A Meta-Ethnography of Qualitative Research

Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much
- Helen Keller

The objective of this chapter is to explore and synthesise the qualitative research relating to adolescent acculturation. The study presented here was completed based on the literature reviews in the previous chapters which highlighted the need to pay closer attention to the subjective experiences of acculturating individuals, and the contexts in which they acculturate. Methodological innovation has meant that the value of qualitative research is being increasingly recognised (Mulrow, Langhorne, & Grimshaw, 1997), yet the methodology for including it has proved methodologically difficult to integrate qualitative research in evidence synthesis (Kelly, Stewart, Morgan et al., 2009). Meta-ethnography represents a method for synthesising qualitative research by systematically reviewing the evidence reporting the needs and experiences of acculturating adolescents. The findings of this meta-ethnography are currently in press with the International Journal of Intercultural Relations.

Why conduct a meta-ethnography of research on adolescent acculturation?

Proponents of a ‘critical psychology of acculturation’ (e.g. Chirkov, 2009) have called for more widespread use of qualitative methods to understand the process of acculturation from an interpretative paradigm. Interpretivism aims to understand subjective meanings, in contrast to the dominant positivist orientation, which has sought to identify universal laws governing the process of acculturation (Berry, 2009; Howitt, 2010). With the field proceeding along these lines, researchers need to establish how best to synthesize the uniquely contextual body of research that is emerging from qualitative findings on youth acculturation. The term meta-synthesis has been applied to the synthesis of qualitative research, with the goal of interpretation distinguishing it from quantitative meta-analysis where the objective is the aggregation of findings (Finfgeld, 2003).

Meta-syntheses of qualitative studies have proved useful in fields such as health psychology where qualitative research has proliferated in recent years (Shaw, 2011). Three complementary, overlapping purposes of meta-synthesis have been described, namely theory building, theory explication, and descriptive (Finfgeld, 2003). The focus

of this study is explication, working within the concept of acculturation to represent the experience of immigrant adolescents.

Various methods of synthesising qualitative research have been proposed; most reflect either an integrative or interpretative approach to synthesis. Meta-ethnography (Noblit & Hare, 1988) represents an interpretative approach and has emerged as an important strategy for collating and interpreting findings across studies, for identifying methodological trends and quality issues, and to target future research priorities (Atkins et al., 2008). As the name suggests, meta-ethnography was devised as a means to synthesise ethnographies. However, it has since successfully been applied to a variety of qualitative studies and its strength lies in its attempt to retain the interpretative properties and contextual embeddedness of primary data (Campbell et al., 2003). This is particularly relevant for studies of adolescent migrant acculturation, given that a change in international and local contexts results in the need to acculturate.

Meta-ethnography extends existing knowledge by deriving original interpretations from the process of synthesizing different empirical studies (Dixon-Woods, Agarwall, Jones, Young, & Sutton, 2005), and a body of supporting literature has emerged on the use of the method (e.g., Atkins et al., 2008; Britten et al., 2002). Drawing on these resources, we adopt a meta-ethnographic, interpretive design with the aim of synthesizing existing qualitative research on how first generation immigrant adolescents experience acculturation.

Current issues in acculturation research

Research on acculturation psychology has been critiqued in detail, most notably in a special edition of the *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* (Chirkov, 2009). Much of this critique focuses on Berry's frequently-cited model of acculturation and on research inspired by it (Berry, 1997, 2003). Berry has responded in journal articles and other writings on cross-cultural psychology (Berry, 2009; Berry et al., 2011; van de Vijver, Chasiotis, & Breugelmans, 2011). These debates about conceptualizing and assessing acculturation frame the context and need for a research synthesis.

Early models of acculturation (e.g. Gordon, 1964) described a unidimensional process, whereby individuals relinquished the attitudes, values and beliefs associated with their heritage culture as they adopted those of the host culture (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000). This perspective continues to exert an influence with survey studies frequently utilising proxy measures of acculturation status, such as generational status or years lived in the new country (e.g., Liu, Probst, Harun, Bennett, & Torres, 2009).

The assumption being that host culture identification increases monotonically with the duration of time spent there. However, evidence suggests that identification with one culture may be independent from identification with a second culture (Ryder et al., 2000).

Bi- or multi-dimensional models of acculturation accommodate identification with multiple cultures. Berry's (1997) model is the most widely cited of these and offers an account of human behavior in which individuals engage in a process of adaptation to ecological, cultural, and biological conditions (Berry et al., 2011). An individual's orientation toward the host and heritage cultures are seen as independent dimensions, whose intersection results in four possible acculturation strategies – assimilation (adopting the host culture, rejecting the heritage culture), integration (orienting toward both cultures), separation (retaining only the heritage culture), and marginalization (rejecting both cultures). Integration has been associated with the most positive psychological and socio-cultural adaptation (Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Berry (1997, 2003) has also presented a conceptual framework that describes in detail the process underlying acculturative change. Drawing on a stress and coping paradigm (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), it suggests how political, economic, and social structures affect acculturating individuals as they adapt to ongoing intercultural contact.

The advantages of Berry's model and framework over unidimensional perspectives on acculturation have been widely acknowledged (Ward, 2008). However, Ward and Kus (2012) have noted that while Berry's model has developed from being focused on acculturation "attitudes" to include identity and behaviors, researchers are not always clear about whether they are investigating attitudes or other psychological attributes. It has also been suggested that the model assumes an unproblematic relationship between the cultures in contact (Rudmin, 2009; Weinreich, 2009). Sam and Berry (2010) reject this claim, asserting the importance of value and norm compatibility between cultural communities that come in contact.

The model has been argued to imply consistency in the acculturation strategy adopted across situations and over time (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2004). The emergence of domain-specific and contextual acculturation theories has drawn attention to the possibility for preferences in acculturation strategy to vary across life domains (Van de Vijver & Pahlet, 2004). Evidence suggests that cultural orientation varies contingent on social context (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2003; Lechuga, 2008;

Nagata, 1994). Thus, a youth may prefer to integrate in the school setting, while maintaining separation from the host culture when with same-culture peers or at home.

Given that Berry's (1997, 2003) model stems from an eco-cultural perspective (Berry et al., 2011) social and interpersonal context ought to figure prominently in associated research. However, the use of nomothetic, aggregating methodologies has not permitted sufficient investigation of context. Nomothetic studies of adolescent acculturation have typically used quantitative rating scales to classify participants according to the acculturation strategies identified by Berry (e.g. Berry et al., 2006). The use of concepts and measures that are applicable cross-culturally is useful for identifying the incidence and correlates of different acculturation strategies. Yet overreliance on these methods has meant that limited attention has been applied to individual-level descriptions of engaging with the process (Collie, Kindon, Liu & Podsiadlowski, 2010).

The developmental nature of the acculturation experience is receiving increasing attention (Motti-Stefanidi, Berry, Chrysoschoou, Sam, & Phinney, 2012; Sam & Oppedal, 2003). Several contemporary developmental science theories recognize the importance of culture (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lerner & Castellino 2002), yet they deal with a single culture rather than interactions between multiple cultures (Sam & Oppedal, 2003). Thus, there is scope for further integration of traditional acculturation models with more novel, domain-based perspectives, and ecological theories of youth development.

Two main points arise from the critique made of the field of adolescent acculturation research. It is difficult to identify clear conclusions or make direct comparisons across studies. Secondly, the underdevelopment of an emic perspective, as a balance to etic, deductive approaches, and the potential scope for incorporating developmental perspectives points to the need to contextualize and modify acculturation theories. Qualitative studies typically offer unique, setting-specific interpretations making it difficult to readily detect patterns across qualitative studies. A meta-ethnography of qualitative studies can address this issue by identifying trends and proposing future research directions.

The present study

Qualitative research is an important means to support inductive and contextual perspectives on the acculturation process (Chirkov, 2009). This meta-ethnography helps to integrate and critically analyze the existing body of qualitative research on the

acculturation of immigrants aged from 10-20. This will add depth to our understanding of acculturation. The goal of the synthesis is to identify patterns and inconsistencies in the findings of published qualitative studies, and to use the findings to assess the relevance of traditional and novel theories directly concerning acculturation or more generally relevant to the concept.

Method

We used a meta-ethnographic research design (Noblit & Hare, 1988) to synthesize the findings reported in qualitative studies on the acculturation of adolescents published in peer-reviewed journals. Meta-ethnography offers a systematic approach to synthesizing findings from different empirical studies (Dixon-Woods et al., 2005). Unlike more generically-applicable methods for synthesizing qualitative data, such as cross-case analysis (Miles & Hberman, 1994), content analysis, or grounded theory, meta-ethnography has been specifically developed to synthesize findings across separate studies. The process of meta-ethnography comprises seven over-lapping phases, beginning with identifying a focal area of interest, in this case how acculturating migrant youth adapt to life in a new country.

Identifying and Appraising the Review Articles

Phase two involves identifying studies relevant to the focal area of interest. To this end we conducted a comprehensive literature search (Atkins et al., 2008). The literature search for relevant articles was conducted in November 2012. Searches of EBSCO and PsycINFO databases were carried out using the following search terms in the abstract and keywords of the article: [Acculturation] and [qualitative OR qualitative research OR interpretative OR participatory OR action OR phenomenological OR phenomenology OR thematic analysis OR grounded theory OR discourse OR narrative]. The search yielded 487 potentially relevant papers from EBSCO databases and 713 papers from PsycInfo databases (see *Figure 4.1*).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied that required studies to have been published in the English language in peer-reviewed journals, to include adolescents between the ages of 10 and 20 as primary participants, and the use of qualitative research methods. Studies were excluded if they were opinion papers or literature reviews, used exclusively quantitative methods or focused on experiences of participants other than immigrant adolescents (such as parents, teachers or social

workers). Closer examination was then applied to the studies identified within these parameters, resulting in exclusion if a study involved participants who were children of international migrants rather than having themselves migrated.

Some of the studies included mixed samples (i.e., not exclusively immigrant adolescents), tending to include one or more of the following groups; parents, teachers, social workers, and both first and second generation migrants. Considering our focus on immigrant adolescents, such studies were included if they clearly represented the experiences of adolescent migrants distinct from other participants. For example, Carranza's (2007) study was excluded as the findings on immigrant adolescent participants were not clearly distinguished from those derived from adolescent participants who had not migrated. By contrast, the study by Mendez et al. (2012) included first and second generation immigrants as well, but was included in the meta-ethnography because a clear distinction was made between these groups of participants. Five of the studies included following the literature search presented findings from mixed samples (Bacallo & Smokowski, 2007, 2009; Mendez et al., 2012; Stuart et al., 2010; Yeh, Kim, Pituc & Aitkins, 2008).

As part of the assessment process, we evaluated the rigor and transparency of the qualitative research methodologies employed, to ensure that the studies were of an acceptable quality. There are a number of frameworks available for this purpose. We adopted Finfgeld's (2003) quality assessment criteria as they are sufficiently flexible to accommodate studies that differ in qualitative approach and methods. These criteria suggest that studies should use widely accepted qualitative methods to gather and analyze data, and offer findings grounded in raw data. For our purposes we prioritized participant quotes as demonstrating grounding in raw data, but also considered reference to field notes and research diaries as useful. The inclusion of only published, peer-reviewed papers ensured an additional process of quality assessment. Two studies were rejected at this stage. A paper by Yeh et al. (2003) was excluded as it did not include participant quotes or reference field notes. The second paper was rejected because it did not offer any details on how the data were gathered or analyzed (Weedon, 2012).

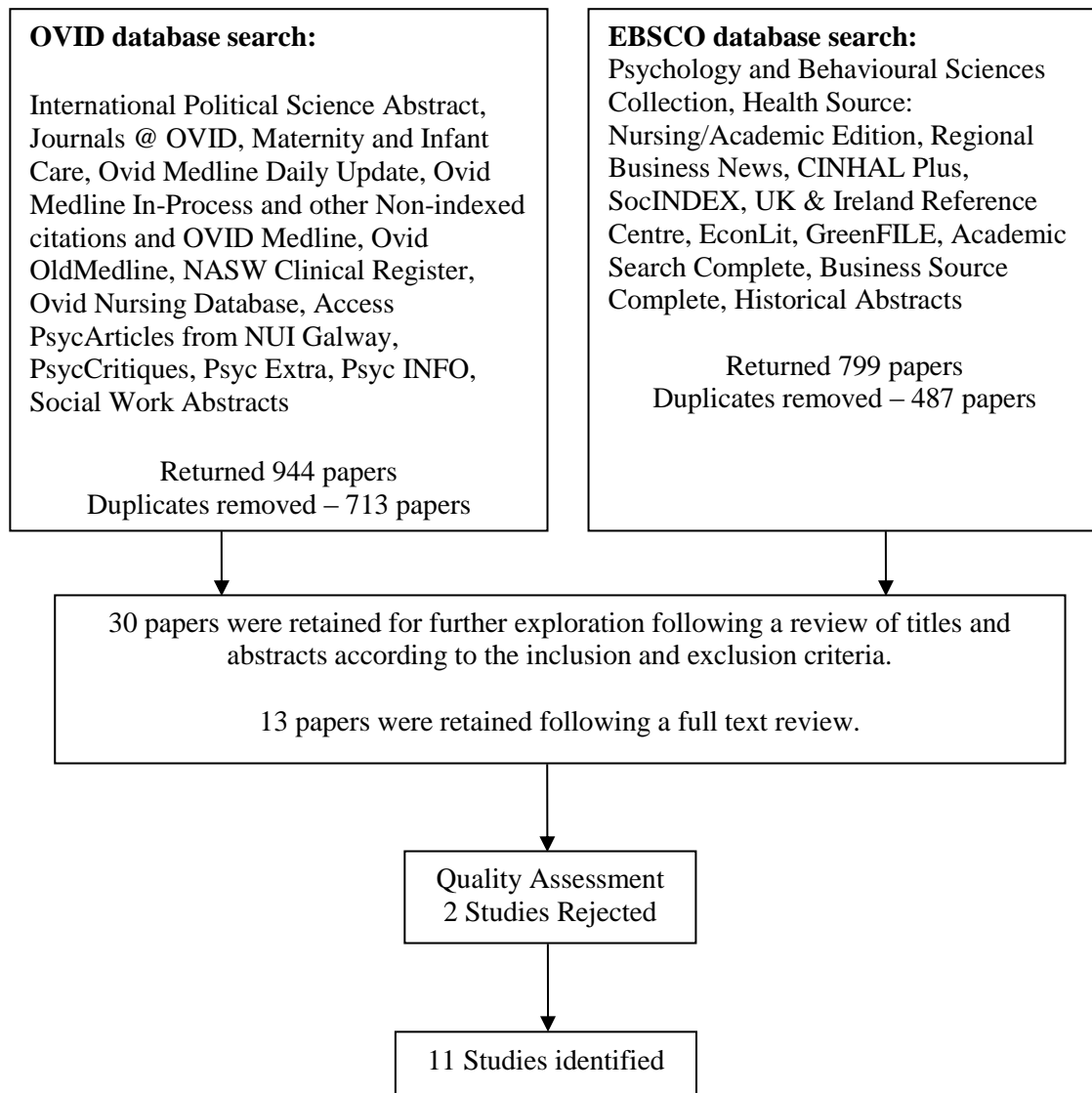


Figure 4.1 Search strategy used to identify relevant studies

Analysis

The literature search and critical evaluation phase of the meta-ethnography resulted in 11 separate articles. These represent ten separate empirical investigations, as two studies reported on different aspects of the same set of interviews (Bacallo & Smokowski, 2007, 2009). Phase three of the meta-ethnographic process begins the process of analyzing and comparing findings to identify underlying patterns. It commenced with a focused reading of the 11 articles based on the research question. Details of the study and participants were tabulated, including the country of birth, length of time in the new country, and country of settlement. These details provided the context for the interpretation and explanation of each study (see Table 4.1). The themes

presented in each paper by the original authors were then identified and studied to explore the concepts used to convey the findings presented in the original studies.

The studies included the experiences of 141 adolescents (77 female, 60 male, 4 unknown) ranging in age from 10 to 20 years. They had been living in the country of settlement from a minimum of one month to a maximum of 15 years. The United States was over-represented as a receiving country, with a particular emphasis on Mexican immigrant youth (see Table 4.1). The foci and research questions of the studies varied but all concerned the experiences of acculturating adolescents. Three studies included relatively specific research enquiries. Bacallao and Smokowski (2007) focused on adolescents' experiences within their families, Mendez et al. (2012) on the experience of bullying at school, and Stuart et al. (2010) examined agreement and disagreement within migrant families. The remaining eight studies considered multiple life domains. The study by Ellis et al. (2010) also reported findings from a questionnaire study, but for the purposes of this meta-ethnography we focused only on the findings of their qualitative inquiry.

Phase four of the meta-ethnographic process involves determining how the study findings are related to one another. We juxtaposed the identified themes and concepts used in each study with each other to explore relationships between the study findings. The life domains of school, family, and peers were the focus of most of the studies. Some studies focused on one or two domains exclusively (see Table 4.2). We also agreed that the participants in the included studies made sense of their current experiences through reference to their past experiences in the birth country and with respect to their desired futures. These preliminary relationships between the studies were sufficiently broad to allow us to explore both similarities and divergence between studies. All the quotes relevant to each theme were identified and pooled in order to characterize underlying patterns and classify quotes into sub-groupings. Once we reached a consensus on these emerging relationships, labels and sub-themes were represented as headings in a conceptual grid (Britten et al., 2002).

Table 4.1 *Details of Papers Included in the Meta-Ethnography*

Author/year	Adolescent Participants	Time in new country	Area of Origin/Settlement	Methodology	Methods Used
Stuart et al. (2010)	20 (9f, 7m, 4 not stated) Aged 12-18	Mean not stated Range 1-10 years	Asia, Middle East, Africa / New Zealand	Content Analysis Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)	Semi-structured interviews
Mendez et al. (2012)	6 (4f, 2m) Aged 14-19	Mean 2.5 years, Range 1-3 years	Mexico / Washington, MA USA	Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)	Semi-structured interviews
Bacallao & Smokowski (2007/2009)	12 (7f, 5m) Aged 12-17	Mean 4 years, Range 1 month-10 years	Mexico / North Carolina, USA	Grounded Theory Methods (Charmaz, 2000)	Semi-structured interviews
Ellis et al. (2010)	14 (7f, 7m) Aged 16-19	Mean 5.4 years, Range 1-14 years	Somalia / Boston, MA; Portland, ME; and Lewiston, ME USA	Content Analysis	Semi-structured interviews
Williams et al. (2002)	17 (8f, 9m) Aged 13-19	Mean < 1 year, Range 1 month-5 years	Mexico / Midwest, USA	Interpretative methodology	Focus-groups and one-to-one interviews
Skuzza (2007)	6 (6f) Aged 18-19	Mean not stated Range 3-11 years	Mexico / Minnesota, USA	Phenomenology	Semi-structured interviews
Lee & Koro-Ljungberg (2007)	9 (6f, 3m) Aged 11-13	Mean not stated Range 9-21 months	South Korea / South-Eastern USA	Phenomenology	Semi-structured interviews
Goldblatt & Rosenblum (2007)	13 (5m, 8f) Aged 14-17	Mean 10.23 Range 4-15 years	Ethiopia / Israel	Phenomenological method (Spinelli, 1989)	Semi-structured interviews
Li (2009)	12 (6m, 6f) Aged 13-19	Mean 4.73 Range 0.5-9 years	China / Vancouver, Canada	Cross-case synthesis (Yin, 2003), multiple-case narrative research (Shkedi, 2005)	Semi-structured one-to-one interviews
Yeh et al. (2008)	32 (16f, 16m) Aged 16-20	Mean 11.32 months Range not stated	Mainland China / North East USA	Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)	Focus-group interviews

This marked the beginning of phase five of the meta-ethnographic process, in which the findings are refined by examining the degree to which the findings from different studies can be ‘translated’ into each other (Noblit & Hare, 1988). Two meta-ethnographic strategies are used to facilitate this process. Reciprocal translation involves critical comparison of the data at the level both of raw data and the concepts used in the original studies, to identify how each study contributes to the emerging consensus of findings. Refutational translation is a separate strategy, to identify and consider conflicting or dissonant findings between studies. The distinctive contribution each study made was summarized to map its relationship to the emergent themes (see Table 4.2).

Phase six of the meta-ethnography involves synthesizing the translations identified in phase five into a thematic account, taking account of the convergence and divergence identified through reciprocal and refutational translation. This phase culminates with the depiction of a line-of-argument, a narrative representation of the phenomenon that underlies different themes. A line-of-argument brings together similarities and differences between studies, allowing us to offer an interpretation concerning the process of acculturation beyond the level of individual studies or themes. This article represents the final phase of the meta-ethnographic process, which involves communicating the findings of the synthesis process.

Table 4.2 *Meta-Ethnographic Themes*

	<i>Finding a place at School</i>		<i>Negotiating the Family Context</i>		<i>Negotiating Group Boundaries in Peer Relationships</i>		<i>Making Sense in Terms of the Past and the Future</i>
	<i>Conflicting perceptions</i>	<i>Feeling Excluded</i>	<i>Changed Roles within the family</i>	<i>Changed Function of the family</i>	<i>Maintaining Group Boundaries</i>	<i>Social and Cultural Capital</i>	
Ellis et al. (2010)	-	-	-	-	Group boundaries were more difficult to break for females who wore traditional clothes	Adolescents lacked cultural capital on multiple levels; skin colour, religion, dress and culture	Some adolescents maintained a connection to the heritage culture by maintaining cultural norms (e.g. style of dress)
Stuart et al. (2010)	Adolescents felt education was important to their parents and themselves for a better future. No discussion of school experiences	-	Adolescents sought more autonomy from parents and kept secrets as parents intruded on their privacy	Felt parents became over-protective and did not trust them yet family were perceived as a source of support	-	Parents prevented their adolescents from adhering to more westernised norms such as dating	A connection to the heritage culture helped to maintain solidarity in family and community Present circumstances induced a greater appreciation of the heritage culture
Lee & Koro-Ljunberg (2007)	Adolescents felt they were not treated fairly by authority figures Increased language competence increased image as academic achievers	Adolescents felt singled out by teachers and were eager to be involved with other students, yet felt isolated	-	-	Grouped together with other Korean students for support and wanted to be recognised as Korean not Chinese Tension with other minority groups	Fluency in host language increased status among peers Visible difference precluded acceptance by 'popular crowd'	Adolescents had a lower status compared to their status in their birth-country Language competence increased over time and this improved self-image

- A blank cell indicates that the study did not contribute to the relevant theme

Table 4.2 continues

	<i>Finding a place at School</i>		<i>Negotiating the Family Context</i>		<i>Negotiating Group Boundaries in Peer Relationships</i>		<i>Making Sense in Terms of the Past and the Future</i>
	<i>Conflicting perceptions</i>	<i>Feeling Excluded</i>	<i>Changed Roles within the family</i>	<i>Changed Function of the family</i>	<i>Maintaining Group Boundaries</i>	<i>Social and Cultural Capital</i>	
Mendez et al. (2012)	-	Lack of host language was a barrier to full participation, other students were relied upon to interpret for teachers	-	-	Teased by second-generation Mexican-American immigrant peers and felt like outsiders among them	Limited host language skills were a source of embarrassment	-
Skuzza (2007)	Adolescents felt they must start all over again in a new school with previous strengths no longer apparent	Lack of language fluency prevented participation in class and promoted feelings of isolation, particularly when students were ESL class	Served as culture broker for immediate and extended family members	Family functioned to support adolescents	Lack of language competence resulted in feelings of isolation	Stigmatized, mocked over Spanish language	Adolescents felt better over time with increased competencies
			Parents were seen as confining and having gendered expectations	Acculturation seen as a team effort	Adolescents aligned themselves with other Mexican peers against threatening groups		Missed lifestyle in Mexico
Bacallao & Smokowski (2007)	-	-	Mothers assumed a higher status in the family as some fathers were absent for extended periods	Family was import but there was less time to spend with parents		-	Adolescents felt connected to their heritage culture and mourned the loss of lifestyle, family and friends
			Adolescents served as culture brokers, helping family to adapt	Adolescents became more independent and questioned rules more but saw family as a support			The new culture was evaluated in terms of heritage culture, but adolescents recognised greater opportunities in US for their futures

- A blank cell indicates that the study did not contribute to the relevant theme

	<i>Finding a place at School</i>		<i>Negotiating the Family Context</i>		<i>Negotiating Group Boundaries in Peer Relationships</i>		<i>Making Sense in Terms of the Past and the Future</i>
	<i>Conflicting perceptions</i>	<i>Feeling Excluded</i>	<i>Changed Roles within the family</i>	<i>Changed Function of the family</i>	<i>Maintaining Group Boundaries</i>	<i>Social and Cultural Capital</i>	
Bacallao & Smokowski (2009)	Adolescents felt teachers had lower expectations of them Adolescents felt discriminated against yet some mentors emerged	Separation into special class for host-language learners made adolescents feel excluded	Adolescents were separated from extended kin Adolescents became more independent and parents became stricter	Parents gave less support for school because they did not know the system 'Familism' continued to be perceived as important	Latino peer groups seen as easier to join	Bilingualism was valued; English was spoken with American friends, Spanish with Hispanic friends Stereotypes of Mexicans used to tease adolescents	Continued importance of heritage culture in life Adolescents grieved the loss of family in Mexico
Williams et al. (2002)	Wanted to use education to improve future prospects but felt they did not receive proper instruction because teachers looked down on Mexican students	Adolescents felt isolated in the host-language learner class	Parents expected adolescents to adopt traditional gender roles	Adolescents felt they had greater demands in the new country and less support	Adolescents felt unable to talk to the American girls at school and felt more comfortable with other immigrants.	Visible difference and lack of money distinguished adolescents from other students, including those with a Mexican heritage	Adolescents felt they were treated better in Mexico where people were less materialistic and where teachers prepared them for their desired futures
Glodblatt & Rosenblum (2007)	Adolescents had a good initial impression of teachers but teachers were seen as too lax School seen as a way to succeed	Feeling alone at school despite support services	Parents lost authority, older siblings assumed authority in family Males had more traditional gender roles expectations	Parents did not understand the lives of adolescents in Israel Parents had traditional values	Adolescents took on some bad habits of Israeli youth Adolescents felt safe in a class with other Ethiopians	Felt that native adolescents were less respectful and had more bad habits	Life in Ethiopia depicted as ideal Adolescents wanted to succeed to make up for parents sacrifice and their hopes for the future mixed Ethiopian and Israeli values

	<i>Finding a place at School</i>		<i>Negotiating the Family Context</i>		<i>Negotiating Group Boundaries in Peer Relationships</i>		<i>Making Sense in Terms of the Past and the Future</i>
	<i>Conflicting perceptions</i>	<i>Feeling Excluded</i>	<i>Changed Roles within the family</i>	<i>Changed Function of the family</i>	<i>Maintaining Group Boundaries</i>	<i>Social and Cultural Capital</i>	
Li (2009)	Adolescents came to embrace liberal teaching style however they felt the school curriculum did not reflect their needs.	Adolescents were initially separated into language learner classes	Adolescents wanted to become more Westernised and questioned their parent's strict attitudes but parents resisted	Parents were seen as authoritative and school-focused Adolescents felt academically supported by parents	Chinese students seen as protection and support	Adolescents had conflicting lifestyles and interests to heritage culture peers, making it difficult to form lasting friendships	Feeling that little had changed in terms of parental pressure Adolescents came to embrace a new teaching style over time
Yeh et al. (2008)	Adolescents sacrificed academic ambitions to help family succeed Language barrier made students reluctant to express themselves	Need for counselling services in school Help from teachers to adjust was appreciated	Adolescents had an increased responsibility in family and served as cultural brokers	Adolescents become estranged from parents And tried to protect parents from their problems	Chinese Friends served as a language support and aided interactions in English, however adolescents experienced racism and felt invisible outside of school	Lack of interactions with non-Chinese students made learning English more difficult but adolescents felt supported by church and community organisations	Adolescents felt frustrated at not being able to ask how to accomplish a simple task in their new country (like posting a parcel) which would have been easy in their old country

- A blank cell indicates that the study did not contribute to the relevant theme

Findings

Four themes were identified, which offer a perspective on adolescent acculturation by reflecting how acculturating adolescents adapted to and evaluated their changing family, school, and peer-group contexts. The ‘line-of-argument’ we propose depicts the adolescents’ acculturation as a process of sense-making across the domains that comprise their phenomenological world, whereby present experience is interpreted with reference to past experiences, cultural identities, and future hopes. In reporting the findings the original terminology used by the authors of included studies is maintained when referring to the participant groups. For example, Williams, Alvarez and Hauck (2002) referred to the participants in their study as ‘Latinas’ rather than ‘Latin Americans’ or ‘Hispanic’.

Negotiating the changing family context

The first theme concerns the impact of migration on the family. All participants had migrated with family members to the new country. Eight of the eleven studies described issues concerning the family and most of these focused on the relationship of the adolescent with their parents. Goldblatt and Rosenblum (2007) were unique in that they drew particular attention to the relationships participants had with siblings, while several studies referred to the role extended family can play in the acculturation process.

The first common feature concerned the changing role of the adolescent within the family. The move to a new country fundamentally changed this role, as adolescents found themselves part of the effort of the family as a whole to negotiate the transition to a new country. The second common feature related to the changing function the family had for the adolescent. Parents remained an important force in the adolescents’ lives, but were perceived to have limited capacity to help their children negotiate the host culture.

Changed role within the family. Adolescents had greater cultural capital relative to their parents due to a better command of the host-language and immersion in the host society through school. Their language capacity enabled a brokering role on behalf of parents, implicating the adolescents in the family's capacity to adapt to life in the new country. As Manuel, a male adolescent participant in Bacallao and Smokowski’s (2007) study noted: “My parents’ didn’t really have to adapt because of us [pointed to himself]. We are there as their mediator between the two cultures, and when they need something, they’ll say, “Can you help us out?”” (p. 63-64). Similarly, Goldblatt and

Rosenblum (2007) described older siblings gaining status in the family due to their greater familiarity negotiating the host culture.

Yet the adolescent participants appeared to be under greater demands in their new country while having less family support available to them. A participant in the study by Skuza (2007) described how she felt obliged to help translate for her uncles when they were purchasing a car. This made her responsible for negotiating a large financial transaction on behalf of extended family: “I was learning English and they were doing this to me. And inside me I am like ahhhhhhhhh! And my uncles, I felt an obligation to do it” (p. 454). Role shifts were not restricted to adolescents. This Latino male describes his mother’s transition to the head of the household, a form of change within the family that he had to accommodate: “She was like the head of the family, and somehow, even though my dad’s with us now, that’s never been restored. She’s still the head of this family” (Manuel; Bacallao & Smokowski, 2007, p. 56).

Changed function of the family. In addition to a shift in their role within the family, the supportive function of the family system appeared to change, and adolescents were less able to rely on parents for practical support. Financial obligations resulted in parents spending greater amounts of time outside the home and less time to spend with their children: “I think my communication with my parents has become less after we moved to the U.S. My father was a doctor in China, and compared to now he had more leisure time, so we talked a lot” (Student; Yeh et al., 2008, p.41). This indicates how societal context, such as parental participation in a work-driven culture, had a tangible impact on adolescents even if they were not exposed to it directly.

The perceived lack of availability of parental insight undermined intimacy: “I talk to my parents about family matters but I can’t discuss my feelings or talk about school. They didn’t study here, so they won’t know what I’m talking about. They also have old-fashioned opinions” (Mira; Goldblatt & Rosenblum, 2007, p.594). Value conflicts were apparent even in Li’s (2009) study, where the parents retained their status within the family. Attention was drawn in this study to the concept of “filial responsibility” that is important in the Chinese culture. This distancing and questioning of parental authority was intertwined with the desire for freedom and independence:

The basic Chinese family structure is you listen to what your parents tell you. Sometimes I feel that all they do is to instruct me on what to do with my life and expect me to follow every one of their orders (Cherry; Li, 2009, p.490).

Incompatibility between parental values, personal goals, and wider societal values created tensions for the participants to resolve. Williams, Alvarez and Hauck (2002) noted that Hispanic families were perceived as positioning women in the traditional role as wives and mothers, but the adolescent Latinas interviewed in their study had clear educational and career goals.

Despite conflicts and role re-negotiation evident between parents and adolescents, the adolescents identified the supportive role played by the family: “They’re supportive, they’re kind and helpful, and I love them heaps, and they also love me” (adolescent participant; Stuart et al., 2010). Additionally, most studies referred to a sense of indebtedness to parents or a perceived need to help the family succeed: “My parents invest in me and give me money ... so how can I let them down and not study?” (Avush; Goldblatt & Rosenblum, 2007, p.597). The family network, and parents in particular, represented a strong link to the heritage culture, often expressing traditional attitudes that were potentially incompatible with host culture expectations for personal independence.

Finding a place at school

School experiences were addressed by most studies, featuring prominently in the studies by Mendez et al. (2012), Lee & Koro-Ljungberg (2007), and Williams et al. (2002). Overall, school presented numerous challenges for the adolescents, who tried to reconcile their ideas of what a school should be, based on experiences in their heritage cultures, with direct experiences at school in the new culture. School presented a context where they interacted first-hand with members of the host culture, and in this context issues relating to language competence, cultural capital, and stigmatization came to the fore. While adolescents may have been perceived as cultural brokers by parents, in many cases they felt culturally marginalized in the school setting.

Conflicting perceptions. Across the studies, adolescents valued education and deemed to be school important. They appeared to share this perception with parents: “For them it’s very important that I learn, so that later on in life I will be independent. It’s important for me as well” (adolescent participant; Stuart et al., 2010, p.120). Support received at school was acknowledged, such as the emergence of helpful mentors. One student in Yeh et al.’s (2008) study noted: “I really found that difficulties are affecting me. Even my school teachers know this. So they tried to help me out, for instance helping me find a job, which made me feel warm and love in school” (page

42). Similarly, a student in Bacallao and Smokowski's (2009) study reported being mentored by the school principal.

However, entry into the new school system challenged personal expectations and beliefs about academic study. Initial engagement with these challenges elicited primarily negative feelings. Past experiences of school differed considerably from the academic experience in the host country. For example, the Ethiopian adolescents in Goldblatt and Rosenblum's (2007) study were accustomed to a traditional, authoritarian model of teaching in their heritage culture, which was invoked to evaluate the Israeli educational model: "Tough teachers are the best. But here, most of the teachers let you cheat them and miss class for unjustifiable reasons" (Ganty; p.596). Disillusioned with the new school system, these students absented themselves emotionally and mentally. Similarly, Latina participants (Williams et al., 2002) felt that their teachers were not interested or committed: "It is like they do not prepare for their classes. They just give us the words and make us repeat them. I think they come in and just give us the words that come to mind" (Elena; p.575). The level of dissatisfaction at school reported in these studies reflected the helplessness felt by the adolescents at being stereotyped by their teachers: "They feel sorry for us and they try to give us extra time to do things, or not even do them. I don't like that. We are not stupid. They have really low expectations of us" (female adolescent; Bacallao & Smokowski, 2009, p.437).

Feeling excluded. The school environment was a social as well as an educational context domain for acculturating youth, a potential venue for interaction with members of the host society. All the studies included participants who had moved to a country where the host language was not their native language. Therefore acquiring fluency was a major influence on the capacity for social engagement. Impaired language fluency was a source of embarrassment that deterred immigrant students from taking part in the classroom environment: "I don't like to express myself. One reason is that I'm afraid that people might laugh at me after I say something. I think it is hard to express my ideas" (student; Yeh et al., 2008, p. 39). This lack of competence was frustrating: "I was giving up. I was feeling like – that's it, I am not going to do this anymore. Because I didn't understanding anything" (p. 453, participant; Skuza, 2007). Frustration was compounded by reflections on lost status in the heritage country, with this male student contrasting his lower status with what life was like in his birth country: "At the beginning of the semester, I hated to go to school. I felt defeated. I was

a captain and the popular athlete in my country (Youn; Lee & Koro-Ljunberg, 2007, p. 107).

The Chinese participants in Li's (2009) study initially felt isolated in the English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom. They described overcoming this sense of alienation as fluency in English was acquired. They came to embrace the value placed on creativity and independent thinking in Canadian schools: "I got a chance to think about an answer which is truly generated in my mind instead of conforming to a preset answer. I think my system of thinking has been gradually changing from answer-oriented to idea-oriented" (Audrey; Li, 2009, p. 492). This example of adjusting positively to the school system contrasted with on-going disappointment in environments where teachers seemed disinterested (Goldblatt & Rosenblum, 2007; Williams et al., 2002). It is notable that Chinese immigrants are sometimes considered a "model minority" (Lee, 1996) and so may elicit higher expectations from teachers. Additionally, the Canadian immigration policies meant that the families of the adolescent immigrants had a strong educational background, whereas immigrant Hispanics in the US and Ethiopian immigrants to Israel were in a relatively marginalized social position.

Negotiating group boundaries in peer relationships

Across the studies, adolescents described a distance between themselves and their host-culture peers. This was attributed to conflicting values and inequitable access to social capital, maintained by the motivation to preserve a strong in-group identity and inter-group boundaries. However, the reference group varied depending on duration in the heritage country and competence in the host language, which was a key factor in the permeability of group boundaries.

Maintaining group boundaries. Friendships with the peers who shared the same ethnic background and had a similar migration history were characterized as a safety net and defense against bullies. Several studies reported an active decision to associate with members of the same ethnic group for protection: "We always stay together as a group so other people do not dare bully us. We don't fight with each other, and we don't provoke other groups. If other people provoke us, we will fight back as a strong group" (Mike; Li, 2009, p. 494). Being in a group conferred a sense of protection: "We grouped together and avoided facing them [bullies]" (Youn; p. 106, Lee & Koro-Ljungberg, 2007). The understanding shared with other members of their ethnic group was a source of comfort and support: "They tell me that I shouldn't feel sad. I'm not the only one

who has suffered. It helps” (Reyna; Bacallao & Smokowski, 2009, p. 444). Thus, in-group solidarity and belongingness provided a socially meaningful anchor for personal identity.

Although counter to the dominant trend, there were also examples of acceptance from host culture peers. A Mexican adolescent female noted: “American friends have supported me by taking me into their group and learning from them, and explaining to me how to do things here, and why they behave the way they do, things like that” (Eva; Bacallao & Smokowski, 2009, p. 447). More commonly, conflicting values and interests made it less appealing to interact with members of other groups: “I wanted to make White friends, but there is a distance, I cannot get close to them . . . The biggest problem is we have different lifestyle” (Dale; Li, 2009, p.494).

Alongside this representation of homogeneity by ethnicity, within-group distinctions were noted in ethnic group identity. Sub-identifications were described based on host culture competence and length of time in the new country. The Latinas in Williams et al.’s (2002) study felt that more Americanized Mexicans (‘Chicanos’) pretended not to speak Spanish: “You would think with many Mexicans in this area, they would speak to us, but they don’t. They act like they don’t speak Spanish or are embarrassed about speaking Spanish” (Raquel; Williams et al., 2002, p.575). Li (2009) described a similar classification based on adoption of cultural values. The Chinese students were divided into subgroups including the “Banana” group (“Yellow face with White mind”, a label describing westernized Chinese), CBC group (Canadian-born Chinese), FOB group (‘Fresh off the boat’, a label for recent immigrants). Within-group distinctions were especially prominent in Mendez’s (2012) study of Mexican immigrant students bullied by Mexican American students. The immigrant adolescents felt that the Mexican-American students perceived themselves as superior, because they had greater cultural capital and integration in mainstream U.S. culture:

I think because they were raised here, they consider themselves from here more than from Mexico so they think they’re better. There’s people that were born here and raised here that are Mexican that are discriminating us, they are discriminating everyone who doesn’t know English (Elena; Mendez et al., 2012, p. 18).

Social and cultural capital imposes distance between groups. As in the school domain, a lack of host language competence initially precluded integration with host

culture peers, prompting perceptions of isolation and feelings of embarrassment. The difficult and slow process of acquiring host language fluency maintained inter-group distances. However, language acquisition was attainable, indicating a process whereby the adolescents could envisage or had become able to interact fluently with members of the host society.

By comparison, other points of difference might remain insurmountable. Cultural stereotypes created distance between groups: “We hardly have any American friends because they’ll say, ‘you’re Mexican, and you’re invading our territory’” (Teresa, Bacallao & Smokowski, 2009, p. 446). Multiple barriers to interacting with other groups were described across different studies. The most notable stigmatizing factors were race, ethnicity, and incompatible beliefs, as described by one 16 year-old female Somali adolescent in the study by Ellis et al. (2010):

We’re black first of all, that’s definitely a barrier, then comes the religion, we’re Muslim. That’s another one, and then comes the fact that our culture is so different. So it’s three things that we have to think about and those three things in those different categories, it’s basically minorities (p. 571).

Limited access to financial resources was a further expression of perceived inequity. The Latinas in Williams et al.’s (2002) study lacked the financial resources to conform to the appearance and dress norms of host culture peers, and this was perceived as bringing them a negative distinctiveness: “They look at us as if we are so different from them because we cannot afford to dress like them” (Adriana, p. 577). In this context, it was difficult and unappealing to bridge the cultural gap, and enforced separation arising from non-permeable host culture boundaries.

Positioning the Self in terms of the Past and the Future

Adjustment to life in the new culture was informed by past experiences in the heritage country, as well as current experiences and hopes for the future. The evaluation of experiences across a temporal dimension (then, now, and the future) permeated the preceding themes. This can be seen in comparisons made of the host school system with memories of school in the country of origin, unfavorable comparisons of social status in the past and in the host culture now, and the motivation to work hard at school to secure a positive future. Perceptions of the family also drew on these temporal comparisons. There was a contrast between the time parents once had for the family and time pressure later due to the need to earn money in the host culture, and between their omniscience

when the adolescents were younger, contrasting with reliance on the adolescents as cultural brokers.

The following quote illustrates how changes in the family dynamic can be evaluated in terms of past experiences: “At weekends, we don’t sit and talk with the family. Everyone eats when they feel like it. It was different in Ethiopia. We would sit together, do things together . . . I feel bad about the way things have changed since our immigration. A family should stick together” (Mira; Goldblatt & Rosenblum, 2007, p. 594). A similar change was noted by students in Yeh et al.’s (2008) study: “I think after I came here [U.S.], the relationship between my parents and me have been more and more estranged. There is almost no overlap of our time. Not even the time for eating. They work, and we study” (student, p. 41). In these examples we see how the adolescents construct their current experiences with their families in terms of their experiences in the heritage culture, with current experiences of separation comparing unfavorably.

While recollections and evaluations of the heritage culture influenced the evaluations made of the present, recollections were reciprocally influenced by the present. The latter is illustrated by re-interpreting heritage culture experiences in light of current circumstances. Here a participant in Stuart et al.’s (2010) study attributes value to the heritage culture partly because of the challenges encountered in the host culture: “I have a much bigger appreciation of our heritage culture through the obstacles I’ve encountered here, so I try my hardest to keep in touch with home in terms of language and culture and customs.”

Although less evident, future hopes served as an important frame of reference, within which participants understood their current experiences. This example from Williams et al. (2007) conveys the frustration arising from receiving inadequate help at school to prepare for a desired future as a University student, with Elena's idealized perception of school in Mexico a reference point to interpret the present as future hopes slip away.

When I was in Mexico, they took us to the university and told us about what programs were offered and explained all about how to apply. Here, they do not do that. They take you to see the [State U.] campus. We drove around and looked at the grass. And they bring you back” (Elena; p. 574).

Synthesizing the Findings

The final level of synthesis in the meta-ethnography is the development of a line-of-argument (Noblit & Hare, 1988), a narrative that integrates the findings. Our findings showed that acculturative change took place for adolescents through an ongoing process of negotiating identity and belonging across different life domains - at school, among peers, and in the family. Interactions with host culture contexts led to significant change in each domain.

Adolescents had an increased status within the family arising from greater responsibility in the role of culture broker. This was a potentially enhancing change, but one that was a significant responsibility and which was not sought out. The loss of closeness with parents increased the sense of movement or distancing from the heritage culture. It resulted from the lack of parental capacity to negotiate host culture institutions and their requirement to respond to economic pressures when allocating their time. These structural factors were by no means overwhelming. Family remained a critical point of identification, grounding the adolescents in heritage culture expectations. Compared with the role of cultural broker that was assumed in the family context, the adolescents characterized school as a domain in which feelings of difference and rejection by host culture peers were commonplace. Some of the challenges and boundaries to achieving integration could be overcome with time, such as adjustment to the novel model of education, enhanced language fluency, and no longer being in enforced separation through separate language classes. Social challenges and stereotypes were more intractable. Inter-group boundaries with host culture peers proved relatively impermeable.

Stronger affiliation with same-culture peers helped address alienation from host culture peers. Nevertheless, adolescents described a range of within-group distinctions, based on length of time in the host culture, such as negative evaluations held by some second-generation immigrants. Limited combinations of host-heritage intercultural contact were identified. The examples that were identified were generally of relatively disadvantageous and demoralizing societal contexts. Negative attitudes by both host culture teachers and peers presented a particularly strong challenge to the ability of the adolescents to choose their preferred strategy of acculturation.

Across their experience of change in different life domains, the adolescents engaged in active sense-making, utilizing their knowledge, evaluations, and future expectations to interpret and appraise their experiences. The interpretations offered of

experiences within the family, school, and peer-groups drew on past experiences, thereby grounding evaluations in knowledge derived from a heritage culture perspective. Sense-making extended to using expectations for the future to make sense of and evaluate the present. In some cases, a hopeful vision of the future put present challenges in context. However, where the structural and attitudinal environment was perceived as limiting future options, this resulted in an unresolved frustration and evaluation of the present.

Discussion

The key contribution made by a meta-ethnographic synthesis is to devise a novel interpretation of research relevant to a particular topic (Noblit & Hare, 1988), thereby making an independent contribution to a specialized field of empirical research. Our contribution to qualitative research on the acculturation of migrant adolescents took the form of a domain-based, temporally-oriented interpretation. The social context of intercultural contact during a time of developmental transition toward independence makes this a distinctive experience of adaptation and adjustment.

This study has demonstrated that qualitative research papers on acculturation can be successfully synthesised using the meta-ethnography. Our findings provided novel insights. First, they showed, through the processes of reciprocal and refutational translation, that there is a patterning of responses to acculturation that is common to international migrant adolescents from different countries across different socio-cultural contexts. Second, by employing a line of argument approach, they indicated that the acculturation experience also varies according to reciprocal interactions with the immediate and the wider socio-cultural context. These findings suggest that while commonalities exist in the ways in which migrant adolescents experience acculturation, there are some elements associated with greater difficulties in engaging with the process. How the adolescents make sense of and cope with these problematic elements was explored. The systematic method of comparison and the processes of reciprocal and refutational translation produced these new understandings. This shows that the meta-ethnographic method results in a greater degree of insight and conceptual development than is likely to be achieved in, for example, a narrative literature review.

The translatability of findings in the studies included in the meta-ethnography supports the framework proposed by Berry (1997, 2003), including the representation of acculturative change as a process of coping with stressors. In the adolescent context, coping strategies varied according to the domain concerned. In the family domain, this

involved adolescents moving to a more central role to support familial-level adaptation. Coping at school involved drawing on beliefs about the value of education to assimilate an unfamiliar educational culture at the same time as contending with impermeable host culture peer boundaries by bolstering allegiances with same-culture peers. The concept of adolescents adopting one predominant form of acculturation strategy was not borne out in the meta-ethnography. For instance, the host-heritage peer context was more consistent with an acculturation strategy of separation but integration featured more strongly in accounts of positive academic experiences.

Notwithstanding the utility of Berry's framework, Rudmin's (2009) critique of the stress and coping analogy describes the risk of stigmatization. While less evident than the process of accommodating challenges, the meta-ethnography described the pursuit of personal growth, which can be contextualized to adolescence using Lerner's (2004) theory of positive youth development (PYD). This is an original use of Lerner's theory, as PYD is not usually applied specifically to immigrant adolescents (e.g., Lerner et al., 2005).

Lerner's theory comprises the 'five Cs', indicators of thriving and successful developmental adjustment which can be considered in light of the meta-ethnography. Heritage culture values, socialized through the family, provided a strong grounding for the construct of personal character; even if parental values were explicitly questioned in some studies (see Table 4.2). The acculturating adolescents achieved connection with others through secure bonds with family and heritage culture peers. Perceptions of personal competence, which in PYD refers to positive self-appraisals in particular domains, were reflected in self-efficacy concerning engagement with Western educational pedagogy and in the role of cultural broker on behalf of the family. The two remaining Cs in PYD were less evidenced. Confidence refers to achieving a state of positive self-esteem, which was not a particular focus of included studies, indeed threatened self-esteem was described when environmental obstacles were seen as difficult to overcome (e.g., Williams et al., 2002). However, some adolescents did describe feeling more confident in their new schools over time (e.g., Li, 2009). Finally, caring, which is concerned with other-oriented empathy, was not a central feature in the studies, beyond mutual support among same-culture peers.

A second major criticism of the stress and coping framework (Berry, 1997) is that it focuses attention toward intrapersonal adaptation (Rudmin, 2009), leaving the impact of prevailing structural and systemic conditions less examined. From a PYD

perspective, thriving is predicated on having access to developmental assets (Benson & Scales, 2009), in many cases made available through formal youth support programs (Catalano et al., 2002). The main assets described in the meta-ethnography were the family, same-culture peers, and school. Each of these was also undermined by issues such as reduced parental authority, stigmatizing sub-group identifications within the immigrant community, and the challenges the educational system could pose apart from its potential as a structural support.

Finally, although Berry's (1997) model is described as an eco-cultural theory, there has been relatively limited contextualization of adolescent acculturation. The potential relevance of an ecologically-grounded perspective can be considered using the Person-Process-Context-Time (PPCT) model (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). The PPCT model is becoming increasingly cited in the acculturation literature (Sam & Horenczyk, 2011), and is particularly relevant to the domain-specific acculturative change that the meta-ethnography highlighted. Applying a PPCT representation, the immediate social environments with which adolescents interact with are referred to as microsystems, corresponding with the interactive, dynamic nature of the domains that we identified. The inter-relation of microsystems at the level of the mesosystem is illustrated by enhanced identification with same-culture peers, at the same time as rejection by host culture peers was experienced at school. The exosystem refers to environments with which the individual does not interact with directly, but which influence their experiences indirectly. For example, parents frequently had to spend long hours at work in order to meet financial demands (Yeh et al., 2008), which impacted on the closeness reported by their adolescent children.

The PPCT situates micro- and mesosystems within a broader macrosystem, relevant here through structural conditions and cultural values of the host and heritage cultures. Across the included studies the adolescents immigrated to countries that were more affluent and had less traditional cultural values. The negative school experiences described in Williams et al.'s (2002) study may be interpreted with regard to their status as Latinas in the U.S., a position characterized by structural inequality and a history of cultural conflict (Gándara & Contreras, 2009). By contrast, positive academic stereotypes of Asian Americans (Lee, 1996) could account for positive teacher expectations of the Chinese adolescents in Li's (2009) study. The chronosystem set out in PPCT acknowledges the socio-historical location of individuals in this regard (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). On a personal level, the expectations and values

internalized in the past from the heritage culture were resources for making sense of current experience (Goldblatt & Rosenblum, 2007).

Implications

Berry's (1997) eco-cultural theory is a useful framework to account for the experience of first-generation immigrant adolescents, yet this meta-ethnography demonstrates the need for future research to take account of stressors specific to each life domain (Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2004). Moreover, to address the concentration to date on a deficit-oriented perspective, there is a strong argument for expanding the approach used to incorporate growth-oriented (Lerner & Castellino, 2002) and ecological perspectives (Benson & Scales, 2009; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Although research that has used Berry's conceptual framework has to date relied on nomothetic, universal theories of acculturation, it is sufficiently inclusive to account for the active, interpretive, and contextual experience portrayed in the meta-ethnography.

Meta-ethnography enables research methodology in the field to be appraised, as an opportunity for suggesting future research priorities. The review of studies suggests a need to broaden the range of data collection strategies used to study adolescent acculturation, given the overreliance on conventional individual, semi-structured interviews. Longitudinal research designs were not utilized, despite acculturation being conceptualized as a process of change over time (Berry, 1997). It would be of interest to study adjustment to a new culture as it unfolds, rather than in retrospect.

This meta-ethnography has highlighted how particular socio-cultural environments can impede adolescents' attempts to engage positively with the process of acculturation. This highlights the role of policy (particularly in the context of education) in the adaptation of adolescent immigrants. The findings are also relevant to practitioners working with immigrant youth in that they highlight some common issues for acculturating adolescents while emphasizing the need to be cognizant of how they are making sense of, evaluating and responding their changed contexts and roles, particularly with respect to their new responsibilities within the family.

Limitations

The transferability of the findings is limited by the relatively small set of cultural combinations that have been studied. In particular the greatest attention has been paid to migrants from Latin American countries to the United States. Despite a restricted range

of inter-cultural combinations, the studies encompassed experiences of Hispanic youth in the U.S., Ethiopian Jews in Israel, East Asians in North America, and Chinese adolescents in Canada. The number of studies synthesized is typical of other meta-ethnographies (Garside, Britten & Stein, 2008; Noblit & Hare, 1988). Future research should expand the range of contexts studied, with researchers encouraged to coordinate their efforts, studying comparable research questions across different host countries or among more than one heritage culture group within the same country. Another limitation in the meta-ethnography is that certain life domains have not received similar attention to those of family, peers, and school, such as citizenship and community.

We might have expanded on the range of cultural combinations studied by including “ethnic identity” in the search strategy, which refers to a sense of self in relation to culture (Phinney, 1990). Ethnic identity is frequently the focus of studies looking at how individuals react to intercultural contact, yet many authors note that the term has different connotations to “acculturation”, in focusing on a subjective sense of belonging to one particular ethnic group or culture (Arends-Toth & van de Vijver, 2004). Given that we wanted to investigate theories of acculturative change we did not wish to include studies that did not specifically use the term.

Conclusion

This study shows that meta-ethnography is both possible and advantageous in relation to qualitative studies of adolescent acculturation. Set against the dominance of a universalist, stress and coping framework for understanding acculturation (Berry, 1997; 2003), qualitative studies of first generation adolescent immigrants provide a contextualized account of interacting experiential domains. This account complements existing theory in highlighting the role of stress and coping, personal growth, and the ecological contexts in which acculturation occurs. Drawing on developmental science and ecological theory we offer suggestions on how to ground Berry’s framework by positioning adolescents as active participants across varied but inter-connected domains relevant to a successful lifespan transition.

The following chapters will begin to take this further by suggesting new directions for the study of adolescent acculturation, examining the experiences of acculturating adolescent immigrants in context. The chapters will pay close attention to the experiences of specific groups adolescent immigrants (adolescent asylum-seekers from African countries living in Ireland and adolescents who moved from African

countries to join their parents in Ireland through a process of family reunification) and chart the experiences of a subset of these participants over time.

Chapter 5: New Directions for Acculturation Research

Maybe we have to break everything to make something better out of ourselves
- Chuck Palahniuk, *Fight Club* (1996)

In the preceding chapters I have outlined the research questions addressed in this thesis, and situated these within current theoretical debates on acculturation and the Irish acculturation context. I have also synthesised current published qualitative research on the acculturation of adolescent immigrants. These efforts have led me to suggest that there is need for research which investigates the acculturation experiences of adolescent asylum-seekers and refugees in Ireland. At a theoretical level this would contribute to understandings of what engaging with the process of acculturation is actually like for adolescent immigrants. At a practical level it will provide an examination of the impact of Irish policy and practice on acculturating adolescent refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland. This chapter builds on the preceding chapters by suggesting how existing theories of development, identity and inter-group relations could be further incorporated in the study of acculturation to address current debates on how to conceptualise and measure acculturation thereby deepening and broadening our understanding of the acculturation process.

In previous chapters I identified gaps in the theoretical perspectives applied to date. In this chapter I outline the theories that I utilise in this thesis to investigate how these gaps can be best addressed. I respond to the need for a developmental perspective in the study of adolescent acculturation by outlining the potential benefits of adopting an ecological model of development, specifically that proposed and elaborated upon by Bronfenbrenner (1979; 2009). I address the need to focus on elements of identity beyond group (e.g. ethnic) identity by presenting arguments in favour of utilising novel identity theories, namely Identity Process Theory (Breakwell, 1988), above those traditionally drawn upon in studies of acculturation. I address the need to move beyond deficit constructs in the study of adolescent acculturation by suggesting Positive Youth Development (PYD) as a further useful perspective on acculturation which stands in contrast to the dominant deficit-led approach to the study of migrant youth. I conclude this chapter by outlining the contribution this thesis seeks to make to the field of adolescent acculturation research by recapitulating the study objectives and research questions addressed by the thesis.

Development and Adolescent Acculturation

Successful development is conceptualised in terms of meeting culturally defined developmental tasks (Masten et al., 2006). Immigrant adolescents must figure out how to meet the tasks of two, sometimes competing, cultures. Yet, models of acculturation tend to lack a developmental component (Sam & Oppedal, 2003). This omission is particularly salient when trying to consider the acculturation of adolescents, who are at a key developmental life-stage in terms of deciding who they are in relation to the society in which they are embedded (Erikson, 1968; Marcia, 1986). In the meta-ethnography presented in Chapter 4 I suggested how an ecological developmental perspective (the PPCT model of Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) could be used as a framework to understand adolescent acculturation.

The concept of development has been defined variously in the literature; however, a common feature of all definitions is that they indicate a systematic and organized process involving enduring, successive changes that take place throughout an individual's life (Lerner & Castellino, 2002). Change is also a central aspect in definitions of acculturation, as outlined in Chapter 2; it is therefore a common issue for both acculturation and development. From an evolutionary point of view, developmental changes are proposed to make an individual more adaptive in his or her eco-system. This echoes the role of change in acculturation theories, where change is thought to occur to help an individual adapt to a new environment and cultural context. Thus, acculturation and development are both thought to serve adaptive functions.

Development is common to all individuals, whether they are engaged in intercultural contact or not. It involves biological and maturational changes, and the learning of culturally sanctioned behaviours through the interactions that take place in the social environment (Berry, 2011; Berry et al., 1992). Human development can be guided and directed by different people (parents, teachers, peers) as well as social and ideological institutions. However, these alone cannot determine precisely how individuals deal with, make sense of and internalize their experiences (Valsiner, 2000). Yet, both developmental and acculturation theories fail to address how this process of meaning making happens for adolescents who are growing up in a multi-cultural setting. This means that there is a deficit in knowledge regarding how they reconcile differing, sometimes opposing or mutually exclusive, cultural expectations within their environment.

Modern developmental theories tend to draw attention to the important role of culture in the development of children and adolescents. For example, it is depicted in the outermost circles of the ecological model proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1979, 1995; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) and the developmental contextualism of Lerner (1986, 2002). Both the developmental contextualism of Lerner (1986, 2002) and the ecological developmental models of Bronfenbrenner (1979, Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) integrate knowledge from biological and social psychological theories, and are founded on the idea of continuous, reciprocal, and dynamic interactions between the organism and the contexts in which it is embedded. The "context" is seen as a comprehensive backdrop comprised initially of the developing young person and his or her parents, family and extended family. The context also includes settings (physical, social), and everyday life events that take place, as well as changes in these variables over time.

A vital principle of these theories is the recognition of the reciprocal and mutual influences that these environmental and social systems exert on each other. As well as the environment influencing the course of an individual's development, the individual him or herself can impact on the context and influence their own developmental trajectory. Due to the changing relations between the individuals and the context, developmental changes may follow a variety of possible trajectories (Dodds, Valsiner & Lawrence, 1997). However, these theories lack more specific information about the ways in which development is affected by culture. This is problematic for studies of acculturation. Further, they are typically predicated on an assumption that only one culture influences the context, which is not the case for acculturating adolescents, and in an increasingly globalised world it is arguably not true for the majority of adolescents in any society. These models depict a single culture on the periphery, rather than incorporating multiple cultures that directly influence behaviours and social interactions. See *Figure 5.1* for an example of how Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model of development shows the 'Macrosystem', which incorporates notions of culture, as the outermost system. This does little to indicate how culture, intercultural contact and acculturation can be accommodated by these theories (Sam & Oppedal, 2003). Where theories of development fail to delineate the effect of culture, acculturation theories and models do little to specify the role of human development.

I suggested in Chapter 4 that the PPCT model of development could prove useful in helping to understand adolescent acculturation. Other acculturation researchers (e.g. Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2013) have also identified it as a potentially useful model.

However, it has yet to be articulated precisely how the PPCT model can be incorporated into studies of acculturation. The PPCT model of development represents the ‘mature form’ of Bronfenbrenner’s (1977, 1979, 1988, 1994, 1995, 1999) theorising on human development. His focus shifted over the years from being predominantly concerned with the role of the context, to focusing on the role the individual plays in his or her own development (Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield & Karnik, 2009). It was in the 1990s that proximal processes were described as being the key drivers of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, 1995, 1999; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). From this time onwards Bronfenbrenner discussed the Process–Person–Context–Time model (PPCT for short), and this has become the essence of his theory (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006; Bronfenbrenner, 2005). However, researchers have struggled to incorporate the mature form of the theory into their studies of human development. For example, Tudge et al. (2009) assessed the extent to which the mature form of Bronfenbrenner’s theory, the PPCT model, was accurately represented in research drawing from it. They identified 25 papers published between 2001 and 2008 which claimed to be based on the mature form of the theory, however only four of these were found to have adequately incorporated the theory, and only two accommodated the notion of time through a longitudinal design. The studies identified tended to focus on children rather than adolescents, and used experimental or survey-based designs. Therefore, there is scope to explore the PPCT model qualitatively and among adolescents.

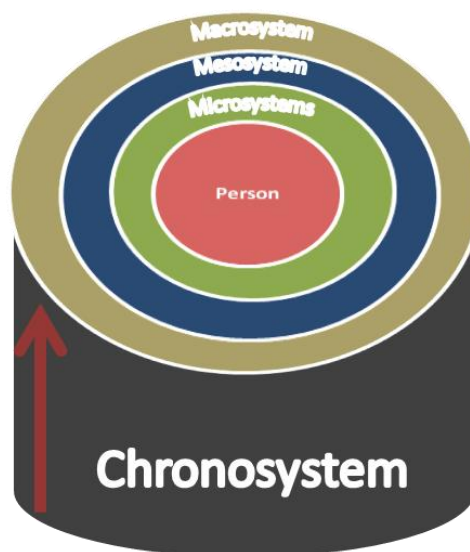


Figure 5.1 The PPCT Model of development, adapted from Bronfenbrenner & Morris (2006)

Positive Youth Development and Adolescent Acculturation

In Chapter 1 I argued that much acculturation research with adolescents has been conducted from a deficit perspective (Güngör, 2011). This indicates a need to broaden the perspective acculturation research takes to ensure that the focus is not simply on potential negative outcomes, but extended to potential positive outcomes. Further, Sam and Oppedal (2003) have argued that the omission of a developmental perspective in studies of adolescent acculturation leads to the false assumption that negative outcomes for immigrant or minority youth result from acculturation rather than being the effect of regular developmental processes. By the same token poor outcomes for adolescents who have *not* migrated are assumed to result from developmental issues rather than intercultural contact. The limits of such assumptions are highlighted by debates surrounding the immigrant paradox, that is, the counter-intuitive finding that immigrant adolescents perform better on indices of wellbeing and achievement than their native-born peers (Hayes-Bautista 2004). This suggests that a positive youth development perspective may be beneficial in informing studies on adolescent acculturation.

The deficit perspective taken in studies of acculturating adolescents reflects the state of affairs in research with adolescents in general. Since the founding of the scientific study of adolescent development (Hall, 1904), the predominant conceptual frame for the study of this age period has been one of ‘storm and stress’ or as an ontogenetic time of normative developmental disturbance (Freud, 1969). The positive youth development (PYD) perspective has developed in response to these criticisms and as a challenge to the view that adolescent positive development is reflected in the absence of negative or undesirable behaviours (Benson, 2003) rather than the presence of positive ones. A youth seen to be manifesting behaviour indicative of positive development tends to be depicted as someone *not* taking drugs or using alcohol, *not* engaging in unsafe sex, and *not* participating in crime or violence. Such descriptions stem from the assumption that children are “broken” or in danger of becoming broken (Benson, 2003), and thus are regarded as “problems to be managed” (Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003).

For acculturating adolescents, the issue of being seen as at risk of becoming broken is compounded by additional potential challenges. For example, asylum-seeking youth and youth who came to Ireland through the process of family reunification face many challenges including relative poverty, racism, culture clashes, and difficulty

accessing education. These experiences could challenge their capacity to engage successfully with typical developmental tasks such as the task of identity development and undermine their chances at achieving positive youth development. Indeed, it is generally recognised that migrant youth face greater social and psychological challenges than native-born peers. Immigrant and minority youth can feel caught between the standards of the larger society and the traditions of their culture of origin (Bee & Boyd, 2012). This is proposed to induce acculturative stress – psychological distress resulting from conflict between the minority and the host culture (Phinney, Ong & Madden, 2000). However some researchers have critiqued the focus of acculturation research on deficit concepts such as stress (Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2009), echoing the critiques of psychological research on adolescence in general.

To illustrate the preponderance of research coming from a deficit perspective, I conducted a search in the EBSCO Academic Search Complete and the Behavioural and Psychological Collection using the terms ‘acculturation’ and ‘adolescence’ for peer-reviewed articles published in journals between 2003 and 2013. This returned 195 relevant results. The main topics covered by these papers included *inter alia*: mental health service use, distress, stress, internalising symptoms and/or depression (36 papers); conduct problems (including violence and delinquency – 28 papers); issues surrounding sexual health/risk behaviours (including adolescent pregnancy – 19 papers); eating disorders, disordered eating, body image, physical activity and obesity (18 papers); substance use (16 papers); alcohol use (11 papers); tobacco use (10 papers); family conflict (11 papers), and suicidal ideation or attempts at suicide (10 papers). Some of these studies addressed more than one topic. Although a cursory overview, this gives an idea as to the predominance of deficit concepts in the study of acculturation among adolescents. Concepts such as self-esteem and academic achievement were topics in only a small number of papers (5 papers on each topic).

During the development of PYD perspectives, the deficit view of youth as ‘problems to be managed’ was argued to divorce the study of young people from the study of health and positive development (Lerner et al., 2002). In contrast, according to the positive youth development approach young people are viewed as resources to be developed. This approach emphasizes the strengths present within all young people and involves concepts such as developmental assets (Benson, 2003), positive youth development (Benson, 1990), civic engagement (e.g., Flanagan & Faison, 2001; Flanagan & Sherrod, 1998; Youniss, McClellan, & Yates, 1999), well-being (Bornstein

et al., 2003), and thriving (Scales, Benson, Leffert, & Blyth, 2000). Such concepts regard every young person as having the potential for successful, healthy development and assume that all youth possess the capacity for positive development. Healthy development involves positive changes in the relation between a developing person—who is committed and able to contribute (i.e., to function, to effectively act) positively (in culturally defined ways) to self, family, and community—and a community supporting the development of such citizens. This issue of *culturally defined ways* becomes particularly salient for immigrant youth who must negotiate the expectations of at least two cultures in order to determine how to behave in a given situation.

To move away from a deficit perspective on development, the PYD perspective has identified five positive outcomes for youth. These outcomes are referred to as the “Five Cs” of positive youth development: competence, character, connections, confidence, and contribution (also termed “caring” or “compassion” in other formulations) (Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2011). *Competence* includes knowledge and skills that enable a person to function more effectively to understand and act on the environment. Competence enables a person to accomplish what he or she intends, provided external circumstances are favourable, or to adapt to circumstances to achieve as much as possible. *Character* makes a person intend to do what is just, right, and good. *Connections* refer to social relations, especially with adults, but also with peers and with younger children. *Confidence* is the self-assuredness a person needs to act effectively. It enables a person to demonstrate and build competence and character in challenging situations. *Contribution* means that a person uses these other attributes not only for self-motivated purposes but also to give to others.

The identification of these desirable outcomes has prompted researchers to investigate means to attain them. Taking a positive youth development approach, Peter Benson and his colleagues at Search Institute in Minneapolis have identified 40 developmental assets that make it possible for young people to thrive (Benson et al., 1997). These Developmental assets are experiences, values, skills, and opportunities that young people need to develop to their full potential. These assets are divided into two proposed sets of assets: *external* – those traits that communities, schools, and families provide. These exist in the settings young people inhabit and the people with whom they interact, including family support, safety, adult role models, and creative activities; and *internal* – those traits that are intrinsic to the individual such as school engagement, honesty, interpersonal competence, and sense of purpose. Findings

indicate that the fewer assets a young person experiences, the more likely it is that he will engage in negative behaviours such as alcohol use and violence. Similarly, the more assets a young person has, the more likely he is to succeed in school and make healthy behaviour choices. But as previously illustrated, rather than focusing on the assets available to immigrant youth, acculturation research has tended to focus on deficit concepts (Güngör, 2011).

While PYD has the potential to offer a useful perspective on acculturation by drawing attention to the potential benefits of the experience, and shifting attention to how acculturating adolescents could be encouraged to thrive, it has some limitations. Much of the research to date has been quantitative, and focused on looking at the correlates between particular developmental assets and outcomes, particularly in the context of positive youth development programs in the USA (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak & Hawkins, 2002; Gavin, Catalano, David-Ferdon, Gloppen & Markham, 2010). There has been less adolescent-centred research focused on how adolescents engage with and relate to the assets within the environment and themselves, and how they use them in order to thrive. This is seen as a drawback of the extant body of research as qualitative methods would allow researchers to ask deeper questions that address the nature and meaning of PYD within the lived experiences of youth (Barcelona & Quinn, 2011).

Identity Process Theory and Adolescent Acculturation

Berry (1997) argues that when individuals and groups acculturate, they are faced with the questions “Who am I? To which group do I belong?” and such questions form the basis of SIT (Tajfel & Turner 1979, 1986). Tajfel and Turner (1986) argued that belonging to a group secures a sense of well-being and that people have the tendency to categorise themselves and others aiding identification with certain groups and above others. People compare the group they belong to with others and there is a tendency to have a favourable bias toward seeing positive qualities of the in-group, thereby enhancing self-image.

In the Chapter 2 I drew attention to some problematic issues in using cognitive approaches based on social identity theory and theories of ethnic identity in order to understand adolescent acculturation. With regard to meeting the task of exploring all the “cultural and psychological changes” that accompany acculturation (according to the definition), SIT and ethnic identity approaches are limited as their focus is restricted to

cultural orientations, identification and participation. The dialogical approach to acculturation (discussed in Chapter 2) challenged this narrow focus by drawing attention that many other ‘voices’ beyond these could be important to acculturating individuals. In the following section I outline the potential for Identity Process Theory (IPT, Breakwell, 1986) to overcome these issues and describe its potential utility as a means to understand adolescent acculturation.

IPT was developed to create a coherent understanding of identity formation across the life-span, bringing together established theories, and focusing specifically on the psychological and social processes involved in identity development (Breakwell, 1986). Breakwell proposes that these processes become particularly salient when identity is challenged in some way, such as by the experience of a significant life event or contact with social phenomena (discrimination, racism, sexism) that causes individuals to question their self-concept. IPT founded on the idea that identity is a dynamic product of the interaction between, on one hand, an individual’s memory, consciousness and biology and on the other the physical and societal structures which constitute the social context (Breakwell, 1986). This is reflective of both the PPCT model of development and the PYD approach to development outlined previously. IPT has important advantages in terms of studying acculturation as it gives a central role to context and the effect of contextual changes on identity processes.

In IPT, the structure of identity is described along two planes: the content dimension and the value dimension (Breakwell, 2010). The content dimension consists of the characteristics which define identity: the properties which, taken as a constellation mark the individual as unique. It comprises those characteristics previously considered the domain of social identity (group memberships, roles, social category labels, etc.) and of personal identity (values, attitudes, cognitive style, etc.). The distinction between social and personal identity is not used in IPT because seen across the biography, social identity is seen to become personal identity: the dichotomy is purely a temporal artefact (Breakwell, 2001).

The content dimension of identity is organised in terms of (i) the degree of centrality, (ii) the hierarchical arrangements of elements and (iii) the relative salience of components. The organisation is not, however, static; rather it is responsive to changes in inputs and demands from the social context besides purposive reconstruction initiated by the individual. This is very important in understanding the experiences of acculturating adolescent migrants as they have experienced a drastic change in social

context. For example, the participants who took part in the research presented in this thesis moved from a context in which they were in the racial majority to a country where, as Black youths, they were in a minority.

Each element in the content dimension has a positive or negative value/affect appended to it; taken together these values constitute the value or affective dimension of identity. The value/affective dimension of identity is constantly subject to revision: the value of each element is open to reappraisal as a consequence of changes in social value systems and modifications in the individual's position in relation to such social value systems.

The identity structure is proposed to be determined by two types of process: assimilation-accommodation and evaluation. Assimilation-accommodation is described as basically a memory system (Breakwell, 1993). It absorbs new elements (personal, such as values, attitudes, or style, and social, such as group memberships or interpersonal networks) and adjusts the existing structure to locate them. The second process, evaluation, involves evaluating the identity elements. Both identity processes can be described as information-processing systems which are characterised in terms of a series of rules for drawing inferences from new data, and that these are biased towards self-interest rather than accuracy.

These processes are guided by a number of principles which dictate desirable end-states for the structure of identity and determine the changes that will be made in it. Breakwell (1986, 1992) identified four identity principles, which guide these two universal processes. These are: continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem and self-efficacy. Extending IPT, Vignoles, Regalia, Manzi, Golledge & Scabini (2006) proposed two additional identity 'motives': belonging and meaning. Jaspal and Cinnirella (2010a) have since introduced the psychological coherence principle, leading to seven potentially relevant identity principles:

- a) The self-esteem principle – the individual will seek to achieve and maintain self-esteem. The desire for self-esteem is a basic tenet of every theory of identity. It has been shown to induce selective perception of information, channel value formation and modify attribution processes (Vignoles, Chryssochoou, & Breakwell, 2002).
- b) The continuity principle – the individual will seek what Erikson (1980) described as “persistent sameness with oneself”. Continuity should not be equated with consistency: continuity can be associated with growth and change

which require inconsistencies between past and present conceptions of the self just as long as these changes are congruent with the development of the same identity. Therefore, it can be argued that that what is sought is subjective rather than objective consistency.

- c) The distinctiveness principle – the individual will strive to optimise distinctiveness from other people; pinpointing unique elements of identity. However, while people want to be somewhat different, this only holds true to a certain point.
- d) The efficacy principle – the individual will try to maintain an identity structure which is characterised by competence and control (what Albert Bandura, 1989, calls self-efficacy). The absence of efficacy is associated with feelings of futility, alienation, and helplessness.
- e) The belonging principle – the individual will endeavour to ‘maintain or enhance feelings of closeness to, or acceptance by, other people, whether in one-to-one relationships or within in-groups’ (Vignoles et al., 2006, p. 310). Belonging has been proposed to be a ‘fundamental human motivation’ (Baumeister & Leary, 1995, p. 497), and as such the belonging principle has been implicated in a number of theories of identity construction (Brewer, 1991; Leary & Baumeister, 2000; Snyder & Fromkin, 1980).
- f) The meaning principle – the individual will seek purpose and significance in one’s existence (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). The meaning principle motivates individuals to develop explanatory theories for life events. This compliments research which indicates that the search for meaning can function as a means of coping with major life events (Golsworthy & Coyle, 1999).
- g) The psychological coherence principle – the individual will strive to perceive compatibility and coherence between their (interconnected) self-aspects. Like the other principles, psychological coherence guides the assimilation-accommodation and evaluation of identity contents.

According to IPT, identity is threatened when the assimilation-accommodation and evaluation processes can no longer comply with the motivational principles. IPT makes a distinction between the occupancy of a ‘threatening position’ and the actual subjective experience of identity threat. Movement into a social category with negative social representations, which carry the potential to violate the identity principles, could

be regarded as movement into a threatening position. For instance, negative representations of Asylum-seekers may render membership in this identity category threatening for identity, since it may be socially stigmatised or regarded as incompatible with Irishness (Jacobson, 1997; Vadher & Barrett, 2009). However, Breakwell (1986, p. 49) makes the observation that ‘situations, which in objective terms might be deemed threatening, may sometimes fail to be identified as such subjectively’. Accordingly, the actual subjective experience of identity threat arises from the subjective perception that one or more salient identity principles are jeopardised.

Threats are aversive; upon experiencing threat individuals are thought to seek to re-institute the principled operation of identity processes. For a threat to evoke action, it must be consciously recognised. If coping strategies are effective, occupying a threatening position may lose its power to threaten. In her original book Breakwell (1986) explored how unemployment or sexually atypical employment could lead to the experience of identity threat. These examples highlight how the threat is determined by the social representations of the potential threat, and an individual recognising the threat. For the purposes of the research presented in this thesis I wish to explore whether acculturation poses a conscious threat to the adolescents, and if so, how they cope with this threat. I aim to consider both the positive responses to threat that are evidenced as well as maladaptive responses. Contemporary IPT research looks at how individuals reconcile potentially conflicting identity statuses, for example being a British Muslim homosexual male (Cinnirella & Jaspal, 2012).

Any activity in thought or deed which has as its goal the removal or modification of a threat to identity is regarded as a coping strategy. Coping strategies can be engaged in at a number of different levels; the intra-psychic, interpersonal, and intergroup. The nature of these coping strategies is outlined in Breakwell (1986). Essentially, the choice of coping strategy is determined by an interaction between the type of threat involved, the salient parameters of the social context, the prior identity structure and the cognitive and emotional capacities of the individual. There is now a body of empirical research which illustrates the variety of coping strategies used in response to identity threats (e.g. Devine-Wright & Lyons, 1997; Ethier & Deaux, 1994).

In terms of the present research it cannot be assumed that geographical migration will inevitably threaten identity. It will do so only if it results in the individual moving into a social context so different from their original that the structural and procedural bases for continuity, distinctiveness, self-esteem, self-efficacy, belonging,

meaning or psychological coherence become unstable or, in the extreme, disappear. Where this happens, threat will be experienced and identity changes are likely. As the participants are forced migrants (asylum-seekers and the children of refugees), and they have moved to a very different culture, their identities are likely to be in a threatened position. Echoing ecological models of development, the IPT approach to identity conceives of the individual as immersed in a social matrix, the ecology of everyday life that is enacted in friendships, families and communities (Breakwell, 1986, 1992). Migrating as a refugee or asylum-seeker changes an individual's position in the social matrix.

The position of threat has often been confounded with its experience (Breakwell, 1986). How the position of threat is actually experienced as such, has rarely been addressed. It is important therefore to understand subjective dimensions of threat, including how people differentiate between different sources of threat, in order to provide a better understanding of the full range of adaptive responses.

Given that the present research looks at the experiences of adolescent refugees and asylum-seekers it might be expected that threat would be more evident as their migration was forced. The distinction between voluntary and forced migration has long been drawn upon to explain differences in the impact of migration both upon the migrants and upon the host-community (Stonequist, 1935). Forced migration is often related to a previous traumatic experience induced by a catastrophic change in the immediate physical or social environment of the migrant, no prior decision to move, and through the lack of choice, no real control over life events. Many migrants forced to leave their homeland suffer severe PTSD, which includes anxiety, depression, and difficulty in adaptation (see Berry, 2006 for review). However, there is a growing literature of refugee adaptation which shows that they are capable of a successful long-term adaptation (e.g. Beiser, 2006). There is therefore a tension between the deficit point of view and a more positive perspective. In the research presented in this thesis I explore the balance of these perspectives with the participant groups.

Summary of the issues presented in the thesis so far

Ireland makes for an interesting context in which to study acculturation due to its recent history with immigration. Black asylum-seekers from Africa represent a significant deviation from the White Irish majority group due to the limited rights they are afforded and their identifiable difference due to their skin colour. Given that the

context is thought to play an important role in both acculturation and adolescent development I propose that the Irish context provides a unique set of challenges for the participants to negotiate as they adjust to their new lives. However, there are theoretical and methodological issues which hamper out understanding of acculturation among adolescents. Ecological models of development, positive youth development and Identity Process Theory perspectives are promoted as offering additional and useful insights into the process of adolescent acculturation.

Given the issues laid out thus far, the aims of this thesis are to:

- Explore the process of acculturation from the perspective of adolescent refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland.
- Ascertain if and how existing models of acculturation (particularly the Berry's 1997 dominant model of acculturation) reflect the experiences described by these adolescents
- Illustrate how ecological models of development, theories of positive youth development and Identity Process Theory could be used to further illuminate out understanding of adolescent acculturation
- Discover whether adolescents can reconcile conflicting aspects of Irish culture and their heritage culture and how they do so
- Identify recommendations for policy and practice, particularly in terms of supporting acculturating adolescents who are refugees and/or in the asylum-seeking process
- Contribute to the field of adolescent acculturation research conceptually through the use of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), and to explore the usefulness of this methodological approach when studying acculturation experiences

These aims lead to the following research questions:

1. What is the process of acculturation *like* for African adolescent immigrants in Ireland, who came either through the process of family reunification or as unaccompanied minors?
2. How do their experiences correspond with dominant models of acculturation?
3. How do these experiences change over time?

4. What is the impact of the asylum-seeking process on the process of acculturation?
5. What are the policy implications, if any, of these experiences?
6. What can theories other than dominant acculturation theories offer to the study of adolescent acculturation (e.g. theories of Positive Youth Development, bio-ecological theories of development, Identity Process Theory)?

Chapter 6: Methodology and Methods Used

We have to remember that what we observe is not nature herself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning
- Werner Heisenberg (1958)

In this chapter I describe, and offer the rationale for, the research methodology adopted in the empirical studies presented in this thesis. I offer a sequential outline of the choices made in terms of the methods used to recruit participants, gather data, and analyse this data. Further, I outline the pertinent ethical and quality considerations, and limitations of the study.

The main purpose of this thesis is to explore experiences of acculturation and adaptation to life in a new country with a sample of African immigrant adolescents in Ireland. Due to the lack of emic perspectives in studies of adolescent acculturation I sought to explore the perspectives of acculturating adolescents themselves. This required a methodology that allowed for a link between how individuals experienced the world and how they described these experiences. Further, there was need to reconcile the methodology adopted with both the perspective on culture I had adopted as well as the ecological perspective I advocated.

The remaining chapters of this thesis are comprised of four empirical research studies designed to address the questions outlined in the preceding chapters. In each of these studies I adopted Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) as the research methodology, and used semi-structured interviews to gather data. Study 1 and Study 2 use cross-sectional designs with participants who came to Ireland through the process of family reunification and as asylum-seekers respectively. Study 3 and Study 4 use longitudinal designs that follow a subset of the participants from Study 1 and Study 2. Sample sizes in studies using IPA have varied (Brocki & Wearden, 2006), the studies included represent examples of IPA studies with a single participant (Study 4), a small number of participants (Study 2 and Study 3), and a relatively large number of participants (Study 1). The fact that this thesis uses IPA in a variety of ways (cross-sectionally, longitudinally, with various numbers of participants) allows the suitability of the methodology to be explored in terms of its use with adolescent participants and for studying acculturation. While each study can be considered a standalone study, with a unique contribution to knowledge, the final chapter of this thesis draws together the themes and observations and relates them to a broader statement about the personal experience of acculturation.

Why employ a qualitative approach in a study of adolescent acculturation?

The introductory chapters outlined a number of issues relating to the current state of affairs regarding research on adolescent acculturation. This section describes potential ways to address these issues and outlines how the research presented in this thesis aimed to address these issues.

Models of acculturation devised for adults have been used in research with adolescents (Sam & Oppedal, 2003). It is suggested, therefore, that our knowledge of acculturation in young people is based on concepts developed to describe and explain the phenomenon in an adult, rather than an adolescent, context. Chirkov (2009) indicates that where the views of acculturating people have been sought, there has been an overreliance on quantitative approaches. This suggests that existing research can be complemented and enriched by qualitative research, which explores, describes and interprets the personal and social experiences of individuals (Smith & Osborn, 2008). This type of research aims to learn how people make sense of their experiences, rather than focusing on outsiders' views of what people do (Howitt, 2010). The goal is to understand a relatively small number of participants' own experiences in depth, rather than testing a preconceived hypothesis on a large sample (Smith, 2008). While it is difficult to define precisely what qualitative research is (Howitt, 2010), Denzin and Lincoln (2000) offer five major defining characteristics which complimented the aims of the present study:

- *Concern with the richness of description:* Qualitative researchers value data rich in its descriptive attributes. Data collection methods which obtain detailed, descriptive data are favoured. This contrasts with the more restricted and structured information typically gathered from research participants involved in studies of acculturation where survey-based research dominates and quantitative data collection methods are utilised, such as simple rating scales or multiple-choice questionnaires.
- *Capturing the individual's perspective:* Qualitative methods emphasise the perspective of the individual and their individuality. The use of rich data-gathering methods (such as the in-depth interviews used in the research presented in this thesis) encourages this emphasis on the individual perspective. In contrast, quantitative researchers tend to focus on comparisons of people on an abstract dimension.

- *The rejection of positivism and the use of post-modern perspectives:* Qualitative researchers tend to reject positivist approaches (those based on a conventional view of what science is – or scientism). Both qualitative and quantitative researchers both rely on gathering empirical evidence which is an important aspect of positivism. However, in qualitative research relatively few researchers believe that the purpose of research is to create generalizable knowledge and so are less likely to make generalisations (Howitt, 2010). So, while the main aim of much research in the field of acculturation psychology has been to construct a universal model of acculturation, qualitative research can provide a complimentary emic perspective through incorporation of the views of acculturating individuals.
- *Adherence to the postmodern sensibility:* The methods adopted by qualitative researchers are more likely to get them close to the real-life experiences of people (in-depth interviews or focus groups, for example) than quantitative researchers who accept a larger degree of artificiality such as that engendered in laboratory studies or through the use of surveys. Verisimilitude appears of greater concern to qualitative researchers, who engage in extensive fieldwork. To this end I not only engaged in extensive fieldwork, but I interviewed participants in contexts familiar to them.
- *Examination of the constraints of everyday life:* Qualitative researchers are more likely to be concerned with the daily lives of research participants than are quantitative researchers who typically present more limited details of their research participants. Significant detail is given on each participant in this research.

Given the critiques outlined in previous chapters relating to the field of acculturation psychology, and the potential of qualitative research to offer solutions to these issues I decided that a qualitative approach was suitable for the present study.

Phenomenological approaches

In line with the goal of seeking to describe the process of acculturation from the perspective of acculturating adolescents, phenomenology seeks ‘to study experience and how the world appears to people’ (Langdrige, 2007, p. 5). The concern with subjective experiences and meanings is an appropriate paradigm for an exploration of the lived experiences and meanings of acculturation from the perspectives of acculturating

adolescents. Phenomenological methods facilitate this aim by developing in depth experiential understandings of acculturation and intercultural contact in order to understand different ways individuals make sense of phenomena (Rudmin, 2010; Skuza, 2007). Skuza (2007) in particular has advocated for phenomenological methods to be used in the study of acculturation as a response to the lack of studies attempting to find meaning in how acculturation is lived, arguing that more often than not acculturation is understood as a construct removed from human experience.

There have been two key phases in the development of phenomenology: transcendental, and existential. Transcendental phenomenology is associated with Husserl (1927) and has heavily influenced descriptive phenomenological approaches (i.e. Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003). Husserl conceived of science as a ‘second-order’ knowledge system which cannot exist in isolation of the ‘first-order’, taken for granted, personal experiences (known as the ‘life-world’) of individuals. For Husserl, “Phenomena [of experience] are the building blocks of human science and the basis for all knowledge. Any phenomenon represents a suitable starting point for an investigation”, (Moustakas, p. 26). Husserl (1927) used the term ‘intentionality’ to explain the way in which consciousness is always consciousness *of* something (e.g. an object, a memory) and consequently bound to the real world.

The aim of transcendental phenomenology is to get at the core ‘essence’ of an experience. The term transcendental refers to the need to ‘transcend’ everyday assumptions in order to identify the essential core structures of experience. In order to meet this aim researchers must ‘bracket’ prior assumptions and engage with the universal essence of phenomena as they present themselves to consciousness. The process of ‘bracketing’ involves stepping out of the ‘natural attitude’ and taking on a ‘phenomenological attitude’ whereby researchers reflexively analyse their perceptions of objects.

In contrast, existential phenomenology argues that bracketing and transcending everyday assumptions can never be fully achieved as our observations are always made from our own perspective. Therefore, the focus should be on understanding ‘existence’ as it is lived (i.e. Heidegger, 1962; Merleau-Ponty, 1962). This is of particular interest in the area of acculturation research as intercultural contact can raise fundamental questions which alter a person’s sense of self. One example is the way that intercultural contact can have important implications for the way in which individuals conceive of their role in society. Merleau-Ponty (1962) stressed the importance of context in

understanding experience and focused on the way in which experiences are always ‘embodied’. Merleau-Ponty’s work highlighted individuals as ‘body-subjects’ whereby the body should not be seen as an object in the world but as a means of communicating with the world and proposed that while we can observe others and feel empathy towards them we can never entirely understand or share their experience as it is dependent on their own embodied position within the world (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009). This is important in terms of acculturation research when we consider how Bhatia (2008) has argued for recognising the impact of race in experiences of acculturation.

Existential phenomenology has also highlighted the importance of an individual’s life history and development in making sense of their experiences (Heidegger, 1962; Sartre 1956/1943). Sartre (1956/1943) saw the self not as a pre-existing entity which can be discovered through research but as an ever changing project. For example, after the 9/11 terrorist attacks in New York, Muslim immigrants in the United States had to renegotiate their identities and their sense of self in relation to the society in which they live (Sirin & Fine, 2007; Tindongan, 2011). Inter-cultural contact may have a particular impact on an adolescent’s sense of self when considered within their life history and developmental context, as adolescence is considered a time in the lifespan when questions of identity and place in society become salient (Marcia, 1986).

Heidegger’s (1962) concept of ‘Dasein’ (there-being) describes the situated, contextualised quality of our existence and proposes that individuals are inseparable from the world (‘being-in-the-world’). ‘Dasein’ is associated with a number of key features which are fundamental to human existence (Langdridge, 2007). The first is our experience of time (‘temporality’). Time is a fundamental part of our existence and our understandings of the present are informed by our past experiences and our expectations of the future. Langdridge (2007) explains this in terms of our constant attempts at ‘selving’, whereby we are continually trying to make sense of ourselves and others. This attempt at ‘selving’ is limited by the way in which our ‘being-in-the-world’ is situated in an already existing world of objects, language and culture (our ‘facticity’). Our efforts to create ourselves are limited by physical, psychological and social factors. This is particularly relevant when considering the acculturation experiences of asylum-seekers in Ireland who have more limited rights and entitlements than Irish citizens or those with refugee status.

Given our inexorable link to the world around us, Heidegger (1962) argued that our search for meaning in our lives is inherently social. We are intricately linked with the lives of others; our ‘being-in-the-world’ is really ‘being-in-the-world-with-others’. This is particularly relevant to acculturating adolescents as when adolescents define themselves they do so in terms of their relationships with others (e.g. parents, peers, teachers). This evokes the belongingness principle discussed in relation to IPT.

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis represents one methodology which has been inspired by phenomenological theorising, particularly existential phenomenological approaches. Smith et al. (2009) discuss the contribution of four major phenomenological philosophers to IPA: Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre (described previously). Husserl’s work highlights the importance of focusing on experience and the individual’s personal understandings of this experience. Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Sartre developed this further, emphasising that individuals exist in a ‘lived world’ rather than in isolation. An individual’s involvement in the lived world therefore influences their perspective on their lives and experiences. This is an important aspect of IPA as researchers have come to appreciate the complex sense-making processes of their participants and also relates to the ‘interpretative’ aspect of IPA. IPA has been informed by the concepts and debates from two additional key areas of the philosophy of knowledge: hermeneutics and idiography (Smith et al., 2009). This section briefly outlines the connection of these philosophies to IPA. For a more detailed discussion see Smith et al. (2009).

Hermeneutics, the theory of interpretation, has been influential in the development of IPA, in particular the works of hermeneutic theorists Schleiermacher, Heidegger and Gadamer (Smith et al., 2009). Within hermeneutics the complexity of the relationship between the interpreter and the interpreted is acknowledged. Access to another person’s experience is seen as being dependent on, and complicated by, the researcher’s own conceptions. IPA therefore emphasises the importance of an awareness of a researcher’s own bias and preconceptions and maintaining a spirit of openness (Smith et al., 2009). Smith and Osborn (2008) discuss the double hermeneutic involved in IPA research, whereby the researcher is trying to make sense of the participant trying to make sense of their world. The production of an interpretative account is recognised to be a function of the relationship between a researcher and

participant, constructed and shaped by their encounter (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). As a researcher's own views, assumptions and beliefs will influence an interpretation of a participant's account, IPA stresses the importance of reflexivity to aid transparency. I detail how I addressed issues of reflexivity later in this chapter. Finally, the production of an interpretative account is seen as iterative, based on the concept of the hermeneutic circle. During the process of analysis, one moves back and forth through a range of different ways of looking at the data, whereby to understand any given part, one looks at the whole, and to understand the whole one needs to look at the parts.

The final major influence upon IPA is idiography. In contrast to traditional nomothetic approaches which focus on the generalisability of findings, an idiographic approach is concerned with the particular (Smith et al., 2009). IPA is particularly well suited to the idiographic approach as it enables fine-grained and contextual analyses of the phenomenon under investigation. This is reflected in the writing up of single case-studies which represent in-depth examinations of the lived experiences of one individual (as in Bramley & Eatough's 2005 study of a female participant living with Parkinson's disease, or de Visser & Smith's 2006 exploration of the health-related behaviours of a 19-year old man). More frequently, however, IPA studies present findings derived from multiple cases which focus on both convergence and divergence of experiences within the sample of participants (Smith, 2011a). The aim of IPA is to get an insider perspective by exploring in detail how participants make sense of their personal and social world. IPA views individuals as experts on their own experiences who can offer researchers an understanding of their thoughts, commitments and feelings through telling their own stories, in their own words, in as much detail as possible (Reid, Flowers & Larkin, 2005). Its idiographic focus means that the participant as opposed to the 'discourse' or 'narrative', is the unit of analysis (Dickson, Knussen & Flowers, 2007).

IPA and the current study

IPA has been found to be a valuable tool in researching many areas relevant to clinical, health, and social psychology (Brocki & Wearden, 2006; Reid et al., 2005). Having originated in health psychology, it is unsurprising that the majority of studies deal with health-related issues, such as the experience of having an illness or caring for someone with an illness (Smith, 2011a). In health psychology, IPA facilitates the description and understanding of individuals' accounts of the processes by which they

make sense of their illness experiences (Brocki & Wearden, 2006), thus contributing to increasingly recognised biopsychosocial perspectives (Reid et al., 2005). In line with the biopsychosocial approach, IPA allows human experiences to be explored within a cultural context, highlighting contextual factors within an individual's life that directly or indirectly may play a part in the meaning making process (Shaw, 2001). This means that an IPA approach is compatible with the ecological perspective advocated in this thesis.

IPA has begun to be used to inform our understanding of social psychological phenomena. For example, and of particular relevance to this thesis, Timotijevic and Breakwell (2000) used IPA to explore the experience of identity threat among a group of 24 primarily adult refugees, ranging in age from 17 to 50 years, from former-Yugoslavia living in the UK. This study had a relatively large number of participants in terms of IPA studies, resulting in a large volume of data. Being led by the concept of 'identity threat' (described in Chapter 5), allowed the researchers to identify and present the most salient cognitive and emotional aspects of the participants experiences within the findings. Chryssochoou (2000) used IPA to attempt to understand how people give meaning to the social categories they belong to in the context of superordinate group formation (e.g. Greek or French and European). This study again had a large number of participants, 37, ranging in age from 28 to 50. While the analysis revealed four major themes, only the two relevant to the research focus were presented in detail in the paper (how people describe the importance of European integration and how they see the relationship of their national group with the European one). This study again illustrated the importance of the relationship between the researcher and the data that is gathered, how it is analysed and how it is selectively presented.

IPA helps to provide new and differing perspectives on a phenomenon by learning from those who are experiencing it (Shaw, 2001). The idiographic nature of IPA therefore fits with the objective of this research; to investigate in detail the lived experiences of acculturation of a small group of adolescents, rather than generalising notions for larger populations (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Indeed, Smith (2004) suggests that this type of analysis can enable learning about important generic themes in addition to each participant's individual story. The opportunity to investigate phenomena from a new perspective fits well within the current 'Children First' (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2011) policy agenda of taking a 'child-centred perspective' and listening to the views of children and young adults.

In the context of the research presented in this thesis, IPA is appealing because it gains access unstudied aspects of a given phenomenon. For example, a parallel can be drawn between the aims of this research, and research conducted by Eatough, Smith and Shaw (2008) into the experience of women, anger and aggression. While the authors noted that the study of indirect aggression had emphasised measuring different amounts of different types of aggressive behaviour, there had been little attention paid to why indirect aggression was used, what meanings the behaviour had, and in what contexts it was likely to occur. Similarly, in acculturation research the emphasis has been on identifying the correlates of ‘acculturation strategies’ while the experience of acculturation has been neglected, resulting in little knowledge of what the lived experience of acculturation may be like for adolescents, and whether it resembles the supposed acculturation strategies. IPA has the advantage of being able to take into account people’s perceptions of the social context, as in studies of non-drinking (Conroy & de Visser, 2013), and has a history of studying peoples experiences of life transitions, changing contexts, identity issues (Smith et al., 2009; Smith, 1994).

Limitations of IPA

Although within IPA the importance of the researcher’s perspective is recognised, the lack of guidelines on how to incorporate this reflexivity into the research process has been criticised, as has the lack of discussion on how researcher conceptions influence analysis. Willig (2001) suggests, therefore, that findings invoke a sense of discovery rather than construction.

Shaw (2010) has written a helpful article outlining how reflexivity can be embedded into IPA research, and how this process is an on-going endeavour in any research project. Drawing on Woolgar’s (1988) continuum of reflexivity, ranging from benign introspection to radical constitutive reflexivity she argues that “reflection” represents the more positivist goal of accuracy when reporting participants’ accounts of reality, whereas truly reflexive research requires the researcher to conduct an explicit evaluation of the self. This self-evaluation, she argues, is imperative when it comes to addressing the complications arising from both the inter-personal nature of research. The detailed account offered by Shaw is admittedly beyond the scope of a regular published empirical research article. However, her article illustrates how qualitative experiential research not only benefits from, but demands reflexivity. Like Finally (2002), Shaw (2010) offers the suggestion of including a section where authors state

their position in relation to the research question. Importantly, however, she includes the caveat that such statements become redundant if the authors do not later return to the implications of their position in the results or discussion sections of the report. I adopted Shaw's (2010) approach to reflexivity by maintaining a reflective journal throughout the research process, and by returning to it regularly to explore how my position was changing and influencing the analysis being conducted and the findings I presented.

The role of language can be problematic in IPA. Social constructionists argue that language constructs rather than describes reality. It could be said therefore that an interview transcript tells us more about the way in which an individual talks about a particular experience, within a particular context, than about the experience itself (Willig, 2001). IPA acknowledges the role of social constructionism and the fact that pure experience is never accessible to researchers. While it recognises the action-orientated nature of language it also challenges the narrow view of people only as discursive agents (Eatough & Smith, 2006). For example, in IPA it is recognised that there is a chain of connection between embodied experiences, talk about those experiences and a participants making sense of, and emotional reaction to, those experiences (Smith, 2011a). However, the ability of participants to communicate the rich texture of experience successfully is questionable. Individuals may struggle to use language in a way that accurately conveys the subtleties and nuances of their experience (Willig, 2001). Smith & Osborn (2008) accept that people often struggle to express what they are thinking and feeling yet argue their emotional state should be interpreted by a researcher, by analysing what they say and by asking critical questions about what is not said. For example, in Eatough et al's (2008) study of female aggression, one participant spoke of doing "stupid things" (p. 1783) to vent feelings of aggression covertly (such as putting slugs in her partners food). The authors suggest that this phrase indicated the complexity of the participant's behaviours and emotions, whereby her actions gave her power in a context where she felt powerless.

Chamberlain (2011) has recently argued that the increased codification and legitimisation of IPA has resulted in uncritical and unreflective adoption of the method with regard to its value or need in specific research projects. Related to this uneasiness surrounding the codification of IPA is the worry that this leads to the production of what the method suggests should be produced (overarching themes and subthemes) rather than higher level or 'strong' interpretation, by implying that the analysis is finished when the higher-order themes are categorised and described from the data. In addition,

the process is critiqued for being strikingly similar to grounded theory analysis and is argued to frequently produce similar results (Chamberlain, 2011), with the associated loss of phenomenology along the way. Chamberlain further argues that this emphasis on themes could have the effect of producing an analysis indistinguishable from a thematic analysis (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006). Responding to this, Smith (2011b) asserts that boldness is required on the part of researchers in the presentation of their analysis and findings, and that the guidelines are not intended to be prescriptive, rather researchers are encouraged to use them flexibly and adapt them to their research.

While Chamberlain (2011) raises valid points relating to the importance of fidelity to the philosophical underpinnings of IPA, these issues are tackled in numerous published articles on the methodology. For example, Smith & Osborn (2008) argue that IPA is an approach rather than a rigid method, allowing flexibility to meet the needs of the researcher and affordances of the context. Further, there are a number of theoretical papers that demonstrate how higher levels of interpretation might be achieved (e.g. Smith, 2004), along with a number of examples of good-quality published empirical IPA that demonstrate a depth of analysis with a good level of interpretation (e.g. Chapman et al., 2007; Dickson et al., 2008; Eatough & Smith, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2008).

IPA as opposed to other qualitative methodologies

In deciding on this study's methodology, grounded theory was ruled out, despite similarities with IPA. It has been suggested that grounded theory is best suited to address sociological research questions, as it focuses on theory construction and social processes that account for phenomena. IPA, on the other hand, adopts a more psychological approach focused on gaining a detailed understanding of the quality and texture of individual experiences (Willig, 2001). Discourse Analysis was also deemed inappropriate due to its singular focus on the role of language in the construction of social reality (Willig, 2008). Its goal of understanding how people use language to create and enact identities and activities contrasts with focusing on the detailed understanding of a particular lived experience (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

IPA shares some common ground with Foucauldian discourse analysis, which examines how the people's worlds are discursively constructed and how these are implicated in the experiences of the individual (Howitt, 2010; Willig et al., 2007). However, IPA gives a central place to experience while acknowledging the multiple

influences on it; its historical and cultural situatedness including language and social norms and practices. For example, it recognizes that an interview is a localized interaction that tells us about how a person talks about a particular experience. However, IPA claims that this contingent contextual analysis is only a partial account of what is happening. IPA posits an on-going significance and degree of stability between accounts, thoughts, and actions, as well as across interactions (Willig et al., 2007).

Narrative analysis is concerned with the narratives people construct to bring order and meaning to an ever changing world (Murray, 2008). Although it has a strong intellectual connection with IPA (Smith et al., 2009), it was also regarded as unsuitable as its application to psychological studies is relatively new. IPA has a proven track record in psychology. It also offered greater availability of expert supervision, training and workshops, and overall was evaluated as the most appropriate methodology to address the research questions.

Furthermore, IPA is particularly useful for investigating complexity, process or novelty (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Thompson, Kent & Smith (2002) advocate the need for further research using IPA to explore *process* rather than adjustment *outcome*, fitting with this study's aim to explore the process of acculturation and adjustment. An additional benefit to a novice researcher is the clear guidelines provided regarding its application (Smith & Osborn, 2008).

Methods Used

The remainder of this chapter outlines the process of conducting the four empirical research studies. I describe the processes of seeking ethical approval, selecting and recruiting of participants, interviewing participants and analysing the interviews. In view of the potentially sensitive nature of the interviews, I discuss the measures taken to ensure participant welfare was protected at all parts of the research process, including during the interview and beyond. The chapter also describes characteristics of the participants in each study.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval was sought in February 2010 from the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee and granted in March 2010, following minor revisions. My Graduate Research Committee passed the proposed protocol in April 2010.

The main ethical issues in this project related to the vulnerability of the adolescent participants. I ensured that all participants fully understood the purpose of the research and what was involved before taking part. Each participant also received an information letter explaining in writing what participation entailed (see Appendix A), the parents of participants below the age of 18 also received an information letter (see Appendix B). Participants and parents of participants under the age of 18 were asked to sign a consent form if they agreed to take part (See Appendix C and Appendix D). The Information sheets for the study were constructed in conjunction with gate keepers and members of the African community in Ireland in order to ensure they were clear and comprehensible. I was in on-going contact with my supervisor in order to raise any concerns about the wellbeing of the participants. Further issues relating to participant welfare are addressed later.

Recruiting Participants

In line with the principles of IPA this study used purposive sampling to generate a relatively homogenous group of participants. A purposive, homogenous sample is used to ensure the research question is meaningful for the participants and allows for detailed examination of the psychological variability within the group through analysis of convergence and divergence between participants (Smith et al., 2009). The participants are thought to represent a particular perspective than a particular population. For the purposes of Study 1 and Study 2 I aimed initially to recruit adolescents aged between 13-18 who lived with their parents and were either in the asylum-seeking process or had refugee status. Upon further investigation it was more common to find adolescents who had come to Ireland through a process of family reunification to live with parents who had been granted refugee status, rather than adolescents who themselves had been granted refugee status. Therefore, the focus of Study 1 was restricted to adolescents living with parents who had refugee status in Ireland.

With regard to Study 2 it appeared that the number of adolescents in the asylum-seeking process who live with their parents was relatively small compared to the number of adolescents who arrive in Ireland as unaccompanied minors. The focus of Study 2 was therefore restricted to those who had come to Ireland without parents and were still in the asylum-seeking process. As asylum-seekers under the age of 18 were mainly accommodated in Dublin, I decided to focus on adolescents who had ‘aged-out’

in the asylum process and had been ‘dispersed’ to direct provision centres in Galway according to recent policy changes.

The extent to which homogeneity of participants in IPA research is achievable or desirable varies from study to study, depending on practical issues (including how to contact participants and interpretative issues including considerations of how much variation is acceptable in a particular study of a phenomenon) (Smith et al., 2009). For the purposes of Study 1 I sought to interview adolescents between the ages of 12 and 19 who had moved to Ireland from an African country. The wide age range allowed for exploration of potential age-related factors which may impact the experience of acculturation. With the age range being so wide, I sought greater homogeneity in the country of origin and so all participants but one came to Ireland from Nigeria. Half the participants had spent more than half their lives in Ireland, while half had spent less than half their lives in Ireland, thus allowing for consideration of the effect of length of time spent in Ireland. In Study 2 the participants were more homogenous in terms of age, but there was greater diversity in terms of country of origin. These participants were more difficult to contact, given their status as asylum-seekers and therefore a ‘hard to reach population’.

Initially I considered attempting to recruit participants for all studies through local schools. This idea was abandoned due to concerns that a) participants might feel compelled to take part as it was introduced to them through school, b) participants might not feel comfortable giving honest answers about their school experiences, c) participation in the study is based to a large extent on the race of the participant and if there were already issues of racism at school participation in the study may highlight their “otherness”. Also, schools may have felt it was an evaluation of their performance in relation to managing ethnically diverse classrooms. It was therefore decided that approaching participants through community groups and venues such as churches was a preferable option.

I made contact with several community groups including the Support Project for Adolescent and Refugee Kids (SPARK), the Galway Refugee Support Group (GRSG), Integrating Ireland and Zebra World. In order to become a ‘familiar face’ to participants I volunteered my time to assist on a summer camp and a cooking group by SPARK and I also attended local churches attended by African immigrants in Galway city. At this stage key gate keepers became apparent, of particular note are the co-ordinator of SPARK activities at the time, an individual from Integrating Ireland, and those who

worked with the Galway Refugee Support Group (GRSG), Zebra World, as well as a young adult Nigerian immigrant who introduced me at local churches, which I attended regularly prior to and throughout the data collection phases of my research. In order to familiarize myself with life in the Asylum-seeking hostels I also volunteered at a 'homework club' assisting primary school children with their homework in a local asylum-seeking hostel. Further, I met parents of adolescent African immigrants in their homes and interviewed them to get an idea of what family life might be like for them, and what their parents may expect from them. I have not noted the names of specific individuals or churches in order to help to maintain the anonymity of participants.

Becoming a 'familiar face' to potential participants helped to build a rapport prior to approaching them to take part in the study. This familiarity served as an attempt to create a relaxed and comfortable context for the subsequent interviews. This can be referred to as attempting to achieve symmetry between the researcher and participant (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

Once I had spent time attending activities organized by SPARK and at the churches I introduced my study to potential participants. I asked Sinead to introduce the research study at the SPARK summer camp and for the study to be announced along with other general announcements at the churches I attended. At this stage information sheets were given to interested potential participants and those who wished to participate were given consent forms and asked to sign them when they felt they understood what was involved in taking part in the study. For individuals under the age of 18 parental information sheets and consent forms were also supplied.

The consent form was signed by participants and by parents or guardians, where appropriate (i.e., where the participants were under the age of 18), and possible venues were suggested for the interviews to take place. Interviews took place either in an interview room at the Gaf, or in specially designated rooms in the churches during the church services (which can last for up to 3 or 4 hours). At this stage it is timely to consider my own impact on the interviews, the data gathered and the subsequent findings generated. This process represents an attempt to demonstrate reflexivity (described previously) in my research.

Reflexive statement

I was cognisant of the fact that how the participants saw me would affect the information they shared with me in the interview context (Richards & Emslie, 2000).

Similarly, I was aware that my own perceptions of the participants would affect how I interacted with them, how I phrased questions, and how I managed the interview. Being reflexive requires critical awareness of how the participants may perceive me as a researcher, and how I, as a researcher, perceive them. In this section, I outline issues that were pertinent to the researcher-participant interaction, and I describe some of my own background and identity where relevant.

The social standing of the researcher and participants in relation to each other is considered a key factor of influence in the generation of data. This is frequently conceptualised as whether the researcher is an ‘insider’ (a member of the community being researched) or an ‘outsider’ (someone not sharing the same social position or identity of the participants). As a 24 year-old, White Irish post-graduate student when data collection commenced I was undoubtedly an outsider. I was a member of the White Irish majority group. The majority of the participants I interviewed were male, I was a female. The participants were adolescents and I was almost a decade older than many of them. I had emigrated at a young age (6 months) to Germany with my family, and we returned to live in Ireland when I was four years old. My experience of international migration occurred in a very different context to that of the participants in my study, yet it gave me an added interest in their experiences.

Gender, race and ethnicity were arguably the most marked indicators of difference. Differences in the ways males and females are socialised can influence how they articulate themselves, express emotions, and relate to the opposite sex. In one of the few empirical attempts to compare same- and cross-gender interviewing, Padfield & Proctor (1996) discovered the influence of gender depends on how gender roles are negotiated in the interview situation via the researcher’s behaviour and participants’ own biases. That is, a woman will not necessarily prefer to talk to another woman, or vice versa.

As a PhD student with limited experience of qualitative interviewing, I was approaching this project as a novice. This translated into an overall tentativeness, which combined with my short stature, gender, and status as an ‘outsider’ in the contexts in which the interviews took place, meant that rather than necessarily holding the power in interview situations – something generally considered to be weighted in the researcher’s favour (Eide & Kahn, 2008), I felt at times disempowered. This was not entirely negative, as it provided a degree of useful contextual information by which to interpret participants’ accounts.

A literature has emerged offering accounts of the difficulties negotiating dual professional roles in the research setting, for example being both an ‘off-duty’ midwife (Carolan, 2003) or nurse (Eide & Kahn, 2008) and a researcher, with the different goals and professional boundaries this entails. As a non-clinical researcher I was in some ways free of this kind of role-conflict. However, I did have to acknowledge that the participants viewed me as an ‘adult’ to whom certain topics may have been considered off limits (sexuality or risk behaviours for example). I also had to recognise that I had a duty of care to the participants, and if I learned that they were at risk of abuse or neglect I would be compelled to follow this up. An additional competing demand in the interviews was concern for participants’ emotional well-being. Richards & Emslie (2000) noted that being “the girl from the university” as opposed to a GP carrying out research influenced the content of interviews, and seemed to afford more freedom to participants to be critical of health services, a topic pertinent to participants’ stories in this project. As simply ‘a girl from the university’, my own lack of experience in immigrant communities in Ireland may have been to further advantage, as participants were forced to explain particular experiences in great detail to me (such as their attendance at church). Whereas they may not have gone into such depth if speaking to an ‘insider’, as there could be a presumption of mutual understanding in that case (as per Hamberg & Johansson, 1999). I have included some extracts from the reflexive diary that I kept throughout the research progress where I describe interactions with the participants and my thoughts having met some parents of African adolescent immigrants and other members of the African community in Ireland (see Appendix G).

Design

Study 1 and Study 2 are cross-sectional IPA studies with participants interviewed at one point in time. Study 3 and Study 4 utilise a longitudinal with each participant being interviewed at least twice (the participant in Study 4 was interviewed three times), with a year between the first and second interview. The participants in Study 3 and Study 4 represented a subset of the participants from Study 1 and Study 2.

Study 1 design

Study 1 represents a cross-sectional IPA study which sought to investigate the acculturation experiences of African adolescents who had come to Ireland through the process of family reunification. 10 adolescents participated in interviews for Study 1 (see Table 6.1). They ranged in age from 13 to 18 years and had spent between 2 and 11

years living in Ireland. All participants were attending secondary school, college or were involved in another course of study. All participants came to Ireland through the process of family re-unification. All participants except for Anna were born in Nigeria. Anna was born in the Congo. Interviews ranged in length from 25 to 75 minutes.

Table 6.1 *Participant Details for Study 1*

<i>Anonymised Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Time in Ireland</i>	<i>Interview Venue</i>
Juba	Female	13	2 years	Church Interview Room
Mark	Male	16	3 years	Church Interview Room
Anna	Female	14	5 years	Youth Club
James	Male	17	5 years	Youth Club
Johnny	Male	18	5 years	Youth Club
Toben	Male	15	7 years	Church Interview Room
JP	Male	18	9 years	Church Interview Room
Adam	Male	16	11 years	Church Interview Room
Diola	Female	17	11 years	Church Interview Room
Danielle	Female	16	11 years	Church Interview Room

Study 2 design.

Study 2 represents a cross-sectional IPA study which sought to explore the acculturation experiences of late-adolescent asylum-seekers from African countries in Ireland. Six participants were interviewed. They ranged in age from 17 to 19 and had been living in Ireland for between one and a half and 6 years. All had come to Ireland as unaccompanied minors. Abass, Ajoba, Jaoa and Tim had lived in Dublin initially until they aged-out and were relocated. Martha and Togar were ‘age-disputed’ youth and I took their word on their age. All participants were interviewed in the local youth club. See Table 6.2 for participant characteristics.

Table 6.2 *Participant Details for Study 2*

<i>Anonymised Name</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Country of Origin</i>	<i>Time in Ireland</i>
Martha	Female	17	Sierra Leone	1 year 7 months
Togar	Male	18	Liberia	2 years
Jaoa	Male	19	Angola	2 years 8 months
Ajoba	Female	19	Ghana	4 years
Tim	Male	19	Ghana	4 years
Abass	Male	18	Nigeria	6 years

Study 3 design.

Educational anthropologist Harry F. Wolcott commented that “in depth, rather than breadth, we realise the value of qualitative research” (Wolcott, 1994, p. 184). With this in mind, and in contrast to the preceding two studies, the third empirical study presented in the thesis presents a longitudinal and richly detailed hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of interview data from a single participant from Study 2, Togar. The decision to focus on one individual reflects the real-world contexts of the research project in that participants who had participated in initial interviews had either moved away or were reluctant to be formally interviewed again. The participants did informally meet with me and discussed their progress and feelings. Their reluctance to participate further in the study might have reflected their increasing frustration with the lack of progress in their asylum applications. Indeed, three of the male participants mentioned to me that nothing had really changed for them and they did not like to think about that. Ajoba had given birth to a baby in the year between the interviews and had relocated to another part of the country. Martha had also moved away; Abass and Jaoa told me that they planned to move as soon as it was possible for them to do so.

The choice to present a single case study also stemmed from a desire to demonstrate the value of idiographic single person case studies within the psychological study of acculturation. De Visser and Smith (2006) describe the potential for case studies to be enlightening when they consider cases that deepen our understanding of social and psychological phenomena. In their case they explored the experiences of a young man who did not endorse hegemonic masculinity and its associated health-related social behaviour. There is not, they argued, a need to ensure that the cases studied are representative of all members of the population of interest. Equally, Togar represents a potentially enlightening case in that, despite the frustrations of the asylum-seeking process, he remained willing to reflect on his experiences within it and discuss them with me. He also represented a young man who eschewed many of the typical behaviours (binge drinking, smoking) common among young males in Ireland.

Study 4 design.

The final empirical study represents a longitudinal IPA study which followed-up with three of the participants from Study 1 a year after the initial interview, in order to investigate changes in their acculturation experiences over time. The second set of interviews with these participants was chosen for further analysis as in the year between the first and second interview two of these participants had moved away from home to

college and the remaining participant had re-evaluated his life goals. These participants therefore represent striking incidents of the kinds of identity negotiations which take place during the on-going acculturation process. See Table 6.3 for participant characteristics.

Table 6.3 *Participant Details for Study 4*

Name	Age (t1)	Education (t1)	Education (t2)
Diola	17	Leaving Certificate	First Year University
Mark	16	Fifth Year	Leaving Certificate
James	17	Diploma Course	First Year College

Data collection

Data collection for Study 1 and Study 2

This research aimed to explore and interrogate the lived experience of acculturation. As detailed previously IPA constitutes a psychological methodology which is used to aims to describe and interpret lived experiences. IPA is best suited to data collection methods which “invite participants to offer a rich, detailed, first-person account of their experiences” (Smith et al., 2009, p.56), and as such semi-structured, one-to-one interviews have been the preferred means for collecting such data. Other methods, such as focus groups, diaries and electronic e-mail dialogue have also been used. Schweitzer and Steel (2008) propose that the IPA methodology has particular salience in relation to refugee studies for several reasons including the openness to human experience in general as well as the unique features of such experience which may be outside the experience of the researcher, and the privileging of indigenous knowledge and experience through seeing the participant as expert.

I developed semi-structured interview schedules for each of the empirical studies in this thesis which translated the broad research concerns into more specific issues. The semi-structured interview schedule consisted of open-ended questions designed to guide participants towards consideration of life since moving to Ireland. It allowed flexibility to encompass individual accounts of experiences and other issues significant to them. Whilst the interview schedule was designed to prompt participants to discuss particular key areas, it was neither not intended to be prescriptive nor or to supplant the areas of interest to the participant (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). Therefore interviews were seen as co-determined through the interaction between the

researcher and participant (Smith et al., 1999). Therefore, the course of each interview differed according to the individual participant. For example, in Anna's interview we talked at length about her experiences at school, while in Johnny's interview more time was given to his extra-curricular activities. See Appendix E and Appendix F for the interview schedules used in Study 1 and Study 2.

The interview schedules were designed in two stages. The first stage involved designing a topic guide to identify key aspects of the participants' experiences based on literature and research evidence pertaining to acculturation and ethnic identity. From this specific questions could be developed. For the purposes of this research, the topic guide concerned gathering data on the participants' experiences at home, in school, among peers and in wider social situations as well as seeking to understand their conceptions of what it means to be Irish and what it means to be from their country of birth.

The second stage involved designing the interview schedule to maximize the chances of seeing different aspects of the participants' experiences. An interview schedule facilitates comfortable interactions with participants with the goal of enabling them to provide a detailed account of the experience under investigation (Smith et al., 2009). Designing an interview schedule allows the researcher to sequence the interview appropriately, to phrase questions suitably and sensitively, and to anticipate potentially sensitive issues prior to the interview.

The schedule consisted of main questions designed to cover the major aspects of the research questions. Questions were designed in line with recommendations by Smith et al. (2009), thus the following types of questions were asked during interviews: descriptive, narrative, structural, contrasting, comparative, evaluative, and circular. Examples of each question type, which were often used as prompts, are given in *Figure 6.1*.

Probes and prompts were devised to encourage participants to elaborate on answers and to further reflect on their experiences. Having refined the framework of the interview schedule, I consulted with members of the African community in Ireland to ensure that I had not included any culturally insensitive questions, including one parent of an African adolescent in Ireland. Following transcription of the first interview (with Anna) I consulted with my supervisor and refined the schedule. For example, initially there were questions concerning how Anna related to the refugee label, however this question was abandoned as she did not identify with it at all, and having come to Ireland

through a process of family re-unification she was not herself technically a refugee. I kept a reflective diary where I noted impressions of the interviews and any other potentially important information to aid subsequent contextualization and development of my analysis (see Appendix G).

<p>Descriptive: Has how you think and feel about yourself changed since coming to Ireland?</p> <p>Narrative: Tell me about an average day at school?</p> <p>Structural: What is a refugee?</p> <p>Contrasting: What are the similarities and differences between Nigerian Refugee teenagers and Irish teenagers?</p> <p>Comparative: What is life like for teenagers in Nigeria compared to teenagers in Ireland?</p> <p>Evaluative: How are you getting on at school?</p> <p>Circular: What do you think your teachers think of your school work?</p>

Figure 6.1 Examples of the types of questions used in interviews with participants

Data collection for Study 3

Togar was interviewed three times, with a year's interlude between interviews one and two and a number of weeks between interviews two and three. A case-study allows for the elaboration of the life-world of the participant and allows for a more in-depth focus on how the identified themes resonate in a participant's life. In this case there is a longitudinal component whereby changes in his world view are tracked and elaborated upon. Issues relating to longitudinal qualitative research are explored further below.

Data collection for Study 4

The data collection for Study 4 took place one year following the collection of data for Study 1. This involved re-interviewing a number of the participants of Study 1. A similar flexible, semi-structured interview schedule was used with the participants, however some additional questions were included. For example, as well as being asked how they think they have changed since moving to Ireland, participants were asked to comment on how they think they have changed in the year since the last interview. Questions specific to each participant were also asked based on comments made in the initial interview. For example, Diola had been a Leaving Certificate student at the time of the first interview, so I inquired into how she had found the Leaving Certificate examinations.

The participants who had been interviewed in their church were again interviewed in their church. An alternate venue was arranged for participants who had been interviewed in the local youth café, as this had changed premises in the intervening

year. Therefore a room was made available on campus to conduct these interviews or one was sourced in the new youth café depending on the wishes of the participant. Three of these interviews were selected for inclusion in Study 4. Two of these represented striking examples of contextual change (Diola and James had moved away from the family home to attend college) while one represented a personal re-evaluation of goals (Mark chose to prioritise school over sport). These interviews represented examples of theoretically important changes relevant to the PPCT model of development (Chapter 5) and so I decided to conduct the analysis for Study 4 with particular reference to this theory of development.

Participant Welfare

I recognized that there was a risk that taking part may be potentially distressing to participants. This was addressed by informing the participants about what taking part would involve and the topics that would be covered, so that potential participants could make informed decisions about taking part. I decided not to ask them directly about any traumatic experiences they may have had in the past to minimise the potential for distress, however the participants were free to discuss anything they wanted to. Participants were made aware that they could ask for a break at any time, and had the right not to answer particular questions if they did not want to. Participants were shown how to stop the digital recorder and therefore were empowered to cease the interview at any time. Togar stopped the recorder to pause the interview while he went to the bathroom. However, in my interview with James he asked me to pause the recorder, to ask me whether he was allowed to mention sex. Being asked pause the audio recording threw me. I had consciously tried to ensure James felt empowered as a research participant by showing him how the audio recorder functioned and asking him to press record when he was ready to commence the interview. I initially felt that I had failed in making James feel in control of the interview and comfortable within the interview. I felt that by pressing “pause” I was assuming the role of authority figure and perpetuating the imbalance between us.

When James asked if he could mention “sex” I assured him that he could talk about anything he felt comfortable discussing. Yet, the prospect of “sex” as a topic made me feel vulnerable and brought my gender and age to the fore. Following the interview I reflected further on this interaction. I began to see James’ discomfort as relating also to “going on the record” with his opinions. Once “on the record” James would relinquish control. I felt acutely that there would always remain a particular

power imbalance between us because “*his* interview” became “*my* interview”. I had recorded it, I would analyse it and I would write up the research based on it.

Participants were also informed that it was their right to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason for doing so. Once they had agreed to be interviewed, no participants withdrew. Those participants who declined to be re-interviewed still gave their consent for me to use their initial interviews in my research. Throughout the interviews I monitored the participants for signs of distress and reminded them that they did not need to answer particular questions if they didn’t want to. During my interview with Mark we touched on his experiences in his birth country, but he requested that we not discuss the topic any further, and so we moved on to other topics.

A debriefing period followed each of the interviews, in which I checked with each participant how they had found being interviewed. Participants were provided with contact details for the researcher, the researcher’s supervisor and the National University of Ireland, Galway, in the event they wanted more information or wished to complain about the research.

As a longitudinal, single-participant study, study 3 involved particular ethical considerations. Togar, the participant, participated in three interviews over the course of two years. This required the negotiation of informed consent to be an ongoing process, as Togar’s engagement with the process evolved and his personal circumstances changed. The issue of consent was re-visited at the beginning of each interview, and I reminded Togar that he was under no obligation to continue to participate in the study. I felt that this was particularly important due to the change in study design from a focus on a group of participants, to focusing in depth on the experiences of a single participant. I discussed this change in focus with Togar and asked him whether he had any concerns regarding his continued to participation. He indicated that he was happy to continue to participate, provided that his anonymity be maintained. In line with his wishes I ensured that any details reported in this thesis could not be traced back to him.

Transcription and analysis

In line with the principles of IPA, the interviews were transcribed verbatim. As the focus of analysis is on the content of the participant’s account it does not require a particularly detailed transcription of the prosodic aspects of the recordings (Smith et al.,

2009), therefore all words spoken by those present were recorded, spelt conventionally and notes were made of non-verbal utterances and notable pauses.

In the extracts presented an asterisks (*) indicates an action by the participant (e.g. **laughs**), square brackets encasing three full stops [...] Indicate some text has been omitted, square brackets containing text [example] indicated text I have added to clarify the meaning of the quote or to remove identifying information.

In keeping with the idiographic nature of IPA each interview was analysed in its own right. Six key stages were involved in analysing the data using IPA (as outlined in Smith et al., 2009):

- 1) Transcripts were analysed sequentially, according to when the interviews were conducted and transcribed. The first transcript was read and re-read to elicit initial reflections, responses and feelings.
- 2) Initial reflections, responses and feelings were documented in the right-hand margins (see *Figure 6.2* for an example) and included descriptive notes describing the content of participants account (in bold for illustrative purposes), linguistic comments describing language use (in italics) and conceptual comments (underlined) which take an interrogative form.
- 3) Working largely from the initial reflections, this stage of the analysis involved focusing on what is crucial at a particular point in the text while remaining cognizant of what came before and what is to follow. Emerging themes reflected both the original words and thoughts of the participants and my interpretations of these. They are noted in the left-hand margins. See *Figure 6.3* for example, and Appendix H for an extended example.
- 4) Identifying connections across themes: This involved clustering emergent themes with shared meaning together through the processes of: **abstraction** (putting like with like and developing a new name for the cluster), **subsumption** (an emergent theme helps to bring together other themes), **polarization** (oppositional relationships between emergent themes), **contextualization** (look at the temporal, cultural and narrative elements in the text), **numeration** (frequency a theme is supported), **function** (what is the function of a particular account? Does it position the narrator a certain way?). These clusters of emergent themes were documented in a table relating to each participant (See Appendix I for an example). Sub-themes which form the clusters were supported

by direct quotations from the transcripts. At this stage, the more peripheral sub-themes were discarded.

<p>I: Yeah. And what is different do you think about the Congolese people than Irish people?</p> <p>Anna: First of all, the social life, you know the way people here, they just kind of live in the house, most of the time they are at home and everything just happens inside and outside you just see people walking and the doors are closed. In my country it's not like that. You can never see doors closed during the day times, people are always outside, they do everything outside, they live in the community and so it was always, when you wake up in the morning the first thing you do is go out. So home is just, a place where you can hide things, you know, for a bit of privacy and sleep during the night for protection, but you don't really need it during the day because you stay outside most of the day.... Social life, it's very loud and here it's quiet, and so it's really different here.</p>	<p>Question – contrast Congolese and Irish people</p> <p>Social life: In Ireland ‘they live in the house’, insular life, <u>lack of community spirit?</u></p> <p><i>Uses “they” rather than “we”, <u>does not feel one of the Irish people?</u></i></p> <p>Disconnected from outside world. <u>Doors are closed, isolating image.</u></p> <p><i>“you see people” – watching rather than participating, removed</i></p> <p>Contrasts with life in her country, life is lived outside, community spirit evident. People live in the community, not in the house. Time: from morning outside</p> <p>All day is spent in the community among other people, from morning to night.</p> <p><i>Home now described as a place to hide things, privacy and sleep. Home is not needed during the day as life is lived among people, not indoors.</i></p> <p><i>Social life as loud in Congo versus ‘quiet’ in Ireland.</i></p> <p>Repetition of ‘different’</p>
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Figure 6.2 Sample of first stage of analysis

Insular social life in Ireland	I: Yeah. And what is different do you think about the Congolese people than Irish people?
Lack of community and isolation in Ireland	Anna: First of all, the social life, you know the way people here, they just kind of live in the house, most of the time they are at home and everything just happens inside and outside you just see people walking and the doors are closed. In my country it's not like that. You can never see doors closed during the day times, people are always outside, they do everything outside, they live in the community and so it was always, when you wake up in the morning the first thing you do is go out. So home is just, a place where you can hide things, you know, for a bit of privacy and sleep during the night for protection, but you don't really need it during the day because you stay outside most of the day.... Social life, it's very loud and here it's quiet, and so it's really different here.
Continued identification with The Congo	
Community engagement and inclusion	
Active living in the Congo	
Divergent meanings of "home"	
Home is privacy and protection in Congo	
Communal living – privacy not necessary in day	
Social life is vibrant and loud in Congo	
Social life is quiet in Ireland	
Stark contrast between Ireland and Congo	

Figure 6.3 Developing emergent themes

- 5) Moving to the next case: The preceding steps were repeated for each interview until all interviews had been analysed. As the interviews for Study 1 and Study 2 were conducted largely concurrently, the analysis phase also ran concurrently. In keeping with IPA's idiographic commitment, attempts were made not to allow earlier cases to influence analysis of the later ones by grounding the analysis in the data. Systematically following these steps allowed for new themes to emerge within the analysis of each interview.

- 6) Looking for patterns across cases: Finally the clusters were integrated across participants according to the study they were participating in (Study 1 or Study 2). Master themes were formed which reflected participants' experiences of acculturation. As this is a particularly 'creative' phase of the analysis it involved a reconfiguring and relabeling of themes identified for the participants as the analysis shifted to a more theoretical level (Smith et al, 2009) (See Appendix I for an example of how the super-ordinate themes generated for Johnny in Study 1 related to the master themes). At this stage each interview transcript was entered into NVivo Version 10 (Version 9 when the study commenced) in order to aid in the clustering of master themes. This computer program allows for themes to be labelled and for emergent themes to be easily clustered together using "nodes". Refer to Appendix J and Appendix K for information on the frequency with which each participant contributed to the overall themes. Refer to Appendices L and M for information of how frequently each theme was represented in the data. Refer to Appendices N and O for visual representations of the frequency of each theme in the data.

IPA demands that the analysis is firmly rooted in the data collected, therefore Smith (2004), suggests that the initial analysis should be approached with empathy, and later considered with critical reflection. Smith (2004) warns against approaching the analysis from any pre-ordained theoretical positions which could influence the interpretation of the transcript.

The nature of IPA enquiry necessitates the researcher to generate a *description* and an interpretation of participant accounts. Larkin and colleagues (2006) suggested the descriptive level aims to provide a logical, participant-centred, and psychologically informed description of 'what' the participant's experience was like. However, to leave the analysis of a text at this level "undermines the potential of IPA to properly explore, understand and communicate the experiences and viewpoints offered by its participants" (p.103, Larkin et al., 2006). Thus, some themes describe what the participant is saying, but further interpretation is included where possible. This second level of analysis places the social, cultural and theoretical context around the description to provide "critical and conceptual commentary upon the participant's personal sense-making activities" (Larkin et al., 2006, p.104). This level of interpretation involves

examining the participant's use of social comparison, metaphor, shifts in temporal descriptions within the text and also utilizes psychological concepts (Smith, 2004).

As part of this analysis process I met regularly with my supervisor to discuss the emerging themes and to ensure that they reflected the content of the interviews. This involved going through each individual transcript and indicating instances where the themes identified were reflected in the words of the participants. As an additional check, two colleagues agreed to read two transcripts each and to indicate whether they agreed that themes I had identified were reflected in the participant transcripts. This exercise was not to check whether they would independently identify the same themes in the transcripts, but to ensure that the themes I had constructed through my engagement with the text could be traced to the content of the transcripts, and my interpretations made sense.

Longitudinal research using IPA

Study 3 and Study 4 each had a longitudinal component. Flowers (2009) has described some of the issues which merit consideration when collecting qualitative data at multiple points in time. Multiple points of data collection were core to the central research question (in that the topic of acculturation is concerned with change over time). The concomitant 'recall period', although potentially identical to time one (e.g. all previous experience), is also specifically, and probably implicitly, primed to be about the differences in experience between interviews. For the purposes of these two studies analysis of each participant's first interview had been conducted before going on to the second interview. It is acknowledged that the participants may have also been going through a process of reflection and rehearsal of things they want to say since the first interview, perhaps especially in light of some expectations of what the next interview would be like. The disadvantages of this approach may be that the content of the subsequent interviews became more and more interviewer-led (less grounded or 'bottom-up' and more top-down or deductive). There was however an opportunity to take elements of the first analysis back to the participants who were re-interviewed in order to develop or reject my previous interpretations. Taking an individual analysis back to a participant can be understood within the framework of establishing/demonstrating analytic rigour or credibility as a member check.

The advantages associated with the analysis of preliminary interviews structuring subsequent interviews is that it can be understood as maximising depth and

opportunity for probing (in terms of the research design as well as within each interview). Equally it maximises the opportunity for trust and rapport to be established between interviewer and participant and fosters repeated opportunities for disclosure to occur, however, the disadvantages include the complexity of research design and ensuing problems with writing. Articulating, for example, how the differing interviews, and different analytic stages, relate to a single narrative within a final written account was challenging. Equally, for studies which are presented as grounded, or as participant-led, epistemological problems arise as the study arguably becomes increasingly analyst-focussed. As the research process unfolds the interaction may become more broadly 'interpretative', or 'discursive', as social dynamics and 'response bias' potentially amplify or reify analyst's interpretations (Flowers 2008).

Smith et al. (2009) describe longitudinal IPA designs as one of the "bolder" options (p. 52). Such designs have been used to study the transition to motherhood (e.g., Millward, 2006; Smith, 1994, 1999) and women's experience of brain injury (Howes, Benton & Edwards, 2005). Within these studies, repeated interviews with the participants facilitated a deep exploration of a temporal process (e.g., pregnancy, the return or not to work, and the recovery of physical and psychological function over time). While these studies utilised IPA, once-off interviews are considered to be the standard approach to data gathering within IPA (Coyle, 2007) and longitudinal IPA studies are relatively rare in the corpus of IPA research.

Longitudinal qualitative research (LQR) is a relatively recent development and has yet to be fully articulated as a coherent methodology (Neale & Flowerdew, 2003). A very limited number of academic text books deal with the topic in any real detail (see Saldaña, 2003, for an exception). LQR described a range of primarily in-depth interview-based studies which involve returning to interviewees to measure and explore changes which occur over time and the processes associated with these changes (Farrall, 2006; Holland, Thomson & Henderson, 2006). However, there is currently no definition of how long studies should last nor how long the time intervals between interviews ought to be (Saldaña, 2003). Rather, researchers should be guided by the nature of their studies (Farrall, 2006). Frequently, qualitative studies are limited to 'contextualised snapshots of processes and peoples' (Farrall, 2006, p. 10). However, a LQR approach can help researchers to explore how and why respondents feelings and thoughts about an issue change over time, as well as allowing them to investigate the role of multiple factors in complex systems. Therefore, a longitudinal qualitative approach fits the aim

to explore the complex process of acculturation, as acculturation is a complex phenomenon which necessarily takes place over time.

Ensuring quality

Qualitative research must be evaluated in relation to criteria appropriate to it rather than according to criteria for validity and reliability as applied to quantitative research. Smith et al. (2009) focus on the criteria outlined by Yardley (2000), who presents four broad principles for assessing the quality of qualitative research: *sensitivity to context* demonstrated through sensitivity to the social milieu, the extant literature and the material obtained from the participants, *commitment and rigor* in the degree of attentiveness to the participant during data collection and dedication to in-depth analysis, *transparency and coherence* demonstrated through clearly describing the stages of research and presenting a coherent, logical line of argument and *impact and importance* demonstrated through telling the reader something interesting, important or useful. As I carried out this research and wrote this thesis I was guided by these criteria as follows:

- a) *openness about the researcher's personal position*: related to the phenomenon researched, the methods and the writing style chosen (Yardley 2000) and adopting “an open discovering way of being” with the “capacity to be surprised and sensitive to the unpredicted and unexpected” (Finlay 2011, p. 78; Dahlberg et al., 2008, p. 98). To this end I spent time prior to commencing the research reflecting on my own position in relation to the research and I kept a reflexive diary throughout to record my impressions and track changes in my position as the research progressed (See Appendix G).
- b) *sensitivity to context*: related to close acquaintance with the language the research is taking place in, the socio-cultural milieu in which the study was situated, the existing literature on the topic and the material obtained from the participants. However, “in IPA the relevant substantive literature is used to help orient the study”, while the findings are related to relevant literature in the discussion, which “often includes a dialogue with literature which was not referenced in the introduction to the study” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 181). I have offered a detailed account of the Irish acculturation context that the adolescent participants in this study faced and outlined some theories that may elucidate their experiences;

- c) *commitment and rigour* is evidenced by the degree of engagement demonstrated and to the thoroughness of the study, in terms of the appropriateness of the sample to the question in hand and the completeness of the analysis undertaken;
- d) *transparency and coherence*: Yardley (2000) referred to how clearly the stages of the research process were outlined in the write-up of the study. The coherence of the study also requires attempting to maintain a fit between the research carried out and the underlying philosophical assumptions of the approach being followed;
- e) *reflexivity and vividness of description* (Finlay 2011, p. 79-80): throughout the whole thesis the attempt was made to retain the use of vivid, lively language and to avoid the unnecessary terminology, to keep a critical (and embodied) self-awareness of my own (inter-) subjectivity, assumptions and interests. A reflexive diary was also maintained (See Appendix G);
- f) *impact and importance*: Yardley (2000) argues that however well a piece of research is conducted, a key test of its validity is whether it actually tells us anything useful or important or makes any difference in terms of both theory and social change or practice. This study has theoretical, methodological and policy implications.

In addition to these more general guidelines for qualitative research, Smith (2011) has offered more specific guidelines for evaluating studies using IPA. An IPA study should:

- Clearly subscribe to the theoretical principles of IPA: it should therefore be phenomenological, hermeneutic and idiographic
- Be sufficiently transparent so that a reader can see what was done
- Offer a coherent, plausible and interesting analysis
- Indicate sufficient sampling from participants to show density of evidence for each theme (studies with N1-3 should present extracts from every participant for each theme; N4-8 should present extracts from at least three participants for each theme; and N - 8+ should present extracts from at least three participants for each theme and indicate a measure of prevalence or present extracts from half the sample for each theme).

If studies meet these criteria they are judged sufficiently trustworthy to accept for publication and include in a systematic review. A good IPA study also:

- well focused; offering an in-depth analysis of a specific topic
- with strong data and interpretations
- engaging and particularly enlightening for readers

Chapter summary

In this chapter I have outlined why I adopted IPA for the studies in this thesis. I have illustrated how the research subscribes to the philosophical underpinnings of IPA. The discussion of methods used offers transparency and allows the reader to clearly see what was done. The remaining chapters offer the analysis and implications of this analysis, with sufficient participant extracts and interpretation to illustrate the derived themes in an engaging manner.

Chapter 7: Study 1 – Acculturation Experiences Adolescent Children of African Refugees in Ireland

This chapter represents the first empirical study presented in this thesis. In it, I explore the acculturation experiences of ten adolescents who moved to Ireland from African countries through the process of family reunification. In doing so, I address five of the seven research questions presented at the end of Chapter 5:

- What is the process of acculturation *like* for adolescent immigrants in Ireland?
- How do their experiences correspond with dominant models of acculturation used in the literature?
- What can theories other than dominant acculturation theories offer to the study of adolescent acculturation (in this case I draw on Identity Process Theory)?
- What are the policy implications, if any, of these experiences?
- What do participants' reported experiences tell us about adolescent refugee and asylum-seekers conceptions of what it means to be an immigrant in contemporary Ireland?

Research qualitatively exploring the lived acculturation experiences of adolescent international migrants is limited, as illustrated by the small number of studies identified in the meta-ethnography presented in Chapter 4. This, coupled with calls from researchers in the field of acculturation research for the use of more qualitative methods in the study of acculturation (Chirkov, 2009; Ward, 2013), and the critique offered in Chapter 2 of the dominant quantitative survey-based methods used in studies of adolescent acculturation, provides the rationale for addressing the first research question using a qualitative approach focused on lived experiences.

The critique of dominant perspectives on and models of acculturation (Chapter 2) supports the need to address the second question by critically engaging with the findings in terms of the existing models in use. Given the social and political context described in Chapter 3, the need to be attuned to the context and to identify policy recommendations is emphasised here. Finally, given that I noted a number of potential directions for acculturation research in Chapter 5, this chapter presents the opportunity to explore the value of these additional perspectives on acculturation.

Method

This study used a cross-sectional IPA approach, with a relatively large group of ten participants. The methodology was described in detail in Chapter 6 and only the aspects pertaining to the present study will be summarised here.

Participants

The participants represent a reasonably homogenous, purposive sample (Smith & Osborn, 2003). All participants came to Ireland through the process of family reunification. All participants except for Anna were born in Nigeria. Anna was born in the Congo. All participants were Black Africans, and teenagers, living in the same small city in Ireland. They were in full time education at the time of the interviews, either attending secondary school or college. Names have been changed to protect anonymity. Participant characteristics are detailed in Table 7.1.

A relatively wide age-range was included which allowed for some exploration of potential developmental differences in the experience of acculturation as a 13 year-old can reasonably be expected to have considerably different experiences to an 18 year-old. Also, half of the participants had spent almost half their lives or more in Ireland, while half had not. This allowed for some exploration of the relationship between length of residence in Ireland and the experience of acculturation.

Procedure

An interview schedule was devised through consultation with relevant literature, gate-keepers and my supervisor (see Appendix E). Interviews were conducted in locations familiar to the participants (youth club or church). Interviewing the participants in contexts familiar to them meant that I was interviewing them in contexts where I was in the minority (as an adult in the youth café and as a white Irish woman in the churches attended primarily by Black Africans). Verbatim transcripts of the semi-structured interviews served as the raw data for the study. Interviews lasted between 25 (Juba, at 13 she was the youngest participant and the participant who had been in Ireland the shortest duration) and 70 (James, at 17 he was the third oldest participant) minutes, the average length of interview was approximately 40 minutes, with just over six and a half hours of interview data collected in total for this study.

Table 7.1 *Study 1 Participant Characteristics*

Pseudonym	Age	Time in Ireland	Age at arrival	Interview Venue
Juba (f)	13	2 years	11	Church Interview Room
Anna (f)	14	5 years	9	Youth Club
Toben (m)	15	7 years	8	Church Interview Room
Adam (m)	16	11 years	5	Church Interview Room
Mark	16	3 years	13	Church Interview Room
Danielle	16	11 years	5	Church Interview Room
Diola (f)	17	11 years	6	Church Interview Room
James (m)	17	5 years	12	Youth Club
Johnny (m)	18	5 year	13	Youth Club
JP (m)	18	9 years	9	Church Interview Room

The data were analysed using IPA (described in Chapter 6). The themes presented reflect IPA's commitment to 'give voice' to the concerns of participants and to 'make sense' of these claims and concerns from a psychological perspective (Larkin, Watts & Clifton, 2006). The themes generated are rooted in the participants' accounts, rather than purposefully importing concepts from the literature. I acknowledge that prior reading influenced the themes identified, in line with IPA I do not see 'bracketing' as viable.

Participant quotes are presented from at least half of the participants in each theme, and an idea of prevalence is indicated as per the criteria suggested by Smith (2011) for IPA studies with more than 8 participants. The findings are presented in the manner most typical of IPA studies (Smith et al., 2009), with the interpretative account presented first, without reference to the extant literature, followed by a discussion where the findings are placed in the wider context and put into dialogue with existing theories (affective, behavioural and cognitive approaches to acculturation, ethnic identity, IPT).

Findings

In this section I present the two super-ordinate themes derived through the analysis process which help to illuminate the experience of acculturation. The themes and associated sub-themes reflect the participants' sense of belonging in Ireland, their perception of being both different and similar to Irish peers and how they manage differences and resolve conflict resulting from incongruent cultural expectations. Refer

to Table 7.2 for the names of the themes and associated subthemes, and examples of characteristic participant quotes.

Table 7.2 *Themes, subthemes and characteristic examples*

Theme	Subthemes	Characteristic examples
Belonging	Having a place in Ireland	If they're going anywhere they always ring me, they're always trying to get me out (Adam) They all came to me like trying to make friends (Johnny) My former football club I was loved by everyone because I actually was part of them (JP) <i>I don't have anybody to be calling and hanging around with (Anna) *</i>
	Not belonging in the birth country	I would just go there for a holiday [...] and come back again (Mark) I think I know more about Ireland than I know about Nigeria (Diola) Every day, every single time there's people dying [...] and stuff because they just killing people (James) <i>I get homesick like most of the days (Anna) *</i>
	A contested sense of Irishness	I feel a bit Irish. Some of my friends said it, that I've transformed into an Irish person (Adam) No, [I'm not part of the Irish community] because of my colour (Juba) I kind of feel Irish being here and studying here and stuff, but I still don't lose who I am (Danielle) I'm a bit Irish, but I'm not exactly Irish (Toben)
Being Different	Overt Differences	Some of the Irish people are kind of racist [...] the girls are to you like 'go back to your country' (Juba) Then he started calling me stuff, calling me like "black gorilla" (Danielle) That was the first time I heard someone call me nigger, like "nigger go back to your country" (Diola) If you're like just the only black person in the midst of white, it goes either way, like, either they will all hate you or they will all love you (James)
	Being different from White Irish peers	With my Nigerian friends we kind of talk like, more Nigerian slang (Adam) With my Nigerian friends I can like speak a different type of English (Toben) Most of them do drinking like you know but I am not allowed to drink so I don't do drinking (Johnny) When you're with your black friends [...] it's more like home. Like more deep (James)
	Familial expectations	Nigerian families are much stricter, it's very strict (J.P) Most Nigerian parents would actually sell everything they have to send their kids to school (Diola) The destiny is like mostly in your hands but like if it was more of an African, Nigerian, it's more like more in your parents hands (James) When I come in my house here like its still like so much like the same as back in Nigeria (Johnny)
	Negotiating cultural institutions	I know all the younger people around my age through the church (Adam) School is actually something that I really, really think it's a positive thing for me in Ireland (Anna) If you didn't do something you were supposed to you would get a beating (Danielle) Teachers don't beat? I was so happy! (Mark)

Note. *represents an instance of divergence from the dominant trend

Belonging

All participants were engaged in achieving and/or maintaining a sense of belonging and this emerged as a key phenomenological concern for them. Belonging in this case involved identifying places or social groups where they felt they had a place. Participants highlighted their sense of belonging in Ireland by distancing themselves

from their country of birth. Their ability to incorporate the Irish national identity label to their sense of self required complex negotiations that were impacted upon by the opinions of relevant others.

Having a place

All participants felt they had a place in Ireland where they could ‘fit in’ and which offered a sense of continuing place and belonging in Ireland. This sense of place differed across participants, with Anna and Juba (two of the youngest participants who had been in Ireland a relatively short amount of time) experiencing a lesser sense of having a place. Establishment of this sense of place was based on familiarity and a sense of being accepted and valued. This contributed to the participants’ overall sense of belongingness. ‘Place’ therefore refers both to physical surroundings and a symbolic sense of place. For most participants this was satisfied by feeling like they had a place as valued and on-going members of their peer group. Diola, for example, had lived in Ireland for eleven years and described her class in school, composed of both Irish and immigrant students, as “*a real little family*” due to their shared history together. The metaphor conveys a sense of reciprocity and inherent belonging. Similarly Adam, who had also lived in Ireland for eleven years, felt a close bond to his Irish friends and envisaged remaining an integral part of his peer group into the future: “*All my Irish friends, we’ve already kind of like made plans that, like, we’re going to the same college [...] We’ll all like, try and stick together*”. Using the word “*we*” Adam situated himself with his “*Irish friends*” which, on one level, positions him within a group he could otherwise be seen as distinct from, yet through using the term “*Irish friends*” he simultaneously maintains the distinction. This could be taken as a nuanced form of integration, whereby the difference is acknowledged yet it is not seen as posing a threat to his sense of belonging in the group, thereby indicating that ethnicity is not the primary, or even a relevant, basis for group membership.

The sense of an enduring bond with peers in Ireland reflects a wider sense of belonging predicated on a sense of familiarity and history in the country. For example, JP, who was eighteen years of age and had spent more than half his life in Ireland, described all the important aspects of his life as being tied to Ireland: “*I’ve grown up here, so most of the stuff I know is from here, I’m going to school here, made friends here, so this is my home now*”. The “*home*” metaphor here echoes Diola’s use of the “*family*” metaphor by evoking a sense of inherent belonging. The word “*now*” is suggestive of a certain amount of fluidity associated with the concept of “*home*”. This

malleable construction of “home” is echoed in Danielle’s account when she describes Ireland as her “second home”. Similarly Mark, who was sixteen and had lived in Ireland for only three years, illustrated his sense of belonging by describing the connection he feels to a particular part of Galway: “*whenever I am there I just feel at home like. Like I’m free! Like my coach is, he even, he says he wants to adopt me!*” (Mark). Although the desire of Mark’s coach to adopt him is certainly a joke, it is indicative of how valued he is and how at home he feels.

The sense of Ireland as “home” was not shared by all the participants. This could be related to the length of time in Ireland and the contrast between life in Ireland versus life in the birth country. Migrating to Ireland involved moving to a new and different environment. James, a relatively recent immigrant of four years, described coming to Ireland as being like to moving to an “alien planet”, but over time he felt that Ireland had begun to feel “*a little bit like I was at home*”. Anna, who had lived in Ireland for five years, also experienced moving to Ireland as entering a new world: “*then to move from one side of the world in just like a minute and like everything kind of changes and it’s really hard. It’s really, really hard.*” Living in Ireland was a struggle for Anna and she continued to view the Congo as “home”: “*It’s hard, because like I’m not from here and you can’t like, most of my family is back at home and, it’s kind of like, I miss it*”. Anna’s sense of family and familiarity remained rooted in her birth country. In contrast Diola, who had lived in Ireland for 11 years, had become confident negotiating her locality and illustrates her feeling of connection through a contrasting experience she had during a recent visit to Nigeria: “*If you ask me for a street I can tell you point blank, this is where it is. But in Nigeria, I just, I didn’t even understand the way the people were talking and everything*”. Through an active contrast between her experiences in Ireland and Nigeria Diola illustrates her sense of having a place in Ireland. Her familiarity with her locality in Ireland emphasises how alien she now feels in her birth country, where she describes her experience as “*absolutely weird*”.

Not belonging in the country of birth

All participants described feeling a lack of belongingness related to their country of birth. Even Anna, who felt the least sense of belonging in Ireland, felt that she no longer had a place in the Congo. The participants’ lack of belonging in the country of birth was experienced through feeling reluctant to return, through imagining a comparatively negative life there, expectations of corruption and violence, and through feeling that their birth country is not important to their sense of self.

Reflecting the participants' reasons for coming to Ireland (as the children of refugees) most participants reported feeling unsafe and physically threatened in their birth country. For example, Toben envisages his birth country as a dangerous, unpredictable place where he is constantly under threat: *"I'm kind of scared of Nigeria, because I've heard all the stuff that goes on there, they kidnap you, or just kill people randomly."* Similarly James describes it as an unsafe place to be: *"If you're sleeping, you're never safe, you never know if someone is going to break in"*. This sense of threatened security reflects the lack of a secure sense of belonging related to the country of birth.

Since coming to Ireland Adam's identity has developed to include aspects, such as that of "a gamer" that would not have been possible had he stayed in Nigeria; had he remained there he would *"probably always be doing chores and I wouldn't be a gamer, I wouldn't be playing games all the time. On the play station"* (Adam). Similarly, James has developed aspects to his identity which he feels are incompatible with life in Nigeria. Returning to Nigeria would mean changing how he presents himself in order to fit in and maintain personal safety:

If I go there with the ear-ring, pierced my left ear, maybe they suspect something. The next thing I know they just rob my stuff, take my shit and everything.

James wishes to express himself through having a pierced ear. In Nigeria this would draw unwanted, possibly dangerous, attention. He would be seen as an outsider. This imagined lack of acceptance and the fear of its consequences underscore his lack of belonging in his birth country.

Participants wanted to be proud of where they came from, yet found this difficult at times. James described feeling embarrassed by news reports from Nigeria and feels like the country routinely lets him down:

I'm proud to be Nigerian, but sometimes I'm like, "Oh my God! Why? Why? Why? What's wrong with this country, like?" You know, when like bad stuff happens and it connects to Nigeria? Like you know, when there was a bombing, did you hear about it on the news? October 1st, the Independence Day, yah? There were loads of people standing on the platform and there was a bomb there in the place and it killed loads of people. It was just really, disaster like. I felt really bad, oh my God, why do

you guys do this man? Like sometimes your country just disappoints you, but sometimes you've got to be proud of where you're from, like you know. No matter what, no matter whatever happens I'm still a Nigerian.

In the above extract James could be seen as being distressed by the news report on several levels – he is sad for the individuals affected by the attack, but he is also embarrassed by this attack reported on the news as he feels it reflects negatively on him. All participants felt that remembering where they came from was important. However, maintaining a sense of pride was difficult when there were media reports relating to terrorist attacks or other negative events: “*News about Nigeria is not that great. But I'm still proud of it*” (Mark).

JP had been in Ireland for 11 years, and while he felt it was important to remember his background he described Nigeria as “*just a country I was born in*”. Having spent most of his life in Ireland he felt he “*wouldn't really know*” what being Nigerian means to him. In this context he feels being Nigerian means “*nothing*” to him. Like JP, Diola does not feel that being Nigerian is important to her self-concept. When asked about what being Nigerian meant to her, she said: “*it's just my colour, it's not the person that I am*”. For her being Nigerian is related to her skin colour, a physical attribute rather than an internal sense of identity.

While Anna felt a lack of connection to Ireland, she too was reluctant to return to her birth country:

I wouldn't want to go back. And it's like, that's a big problem because like I haven't been there for a long time now, it's like nearly five years and like so much has changed and it's like when you think about it, my friends, I lost contact for five years, they have moved houses, and my grandmother has died and everything has changed, it's kind of like scary to go back, and just wondering if things will ever be the same again, you know, if you go back

In the above extract Anna recognises that her bases for belonging in the Congo (family and friends) no longer exist as they once did, thus preventing Anna from feeling a continued sense of belonging in the Congo. While the other participants can contrast their perceived lack of belonging in their birth country with the place they feel in Ireland, Anna is more limited in that she only feels a sense of belonging related to her role as a student in Ireland.

The passage of time appeared to affect identification with the birth country. Over time the participants have become more familiar with Ireland, and things had changed in their birth country during their absence. However, fear and reluctance to return in the long term was reported by all participants regardless of how long they had been in Ireland.

Feeling a contested sense of 'Irishness'

While participants felt that they had a place in Ireland, this did not necessarily mean that they felt Irish, or identified as Irish. Participants had a complex relationship with the Irish national identity. Restrictions posed by the immigration process and differences between them and the white Irish majority complicated their ability to claim an Irish national identity and highlighted the need of their Irishness to be sanctioned by the majority group.

Some participants described moving between being Irish and Nigerian, while others felt that being Irish was impossible for them. Nevertheless, all participants reporting feeling at least somewhat Irish when asked to describe whether they felt Irish. Their sense of "Irishness" was reported on a spectrum ranging from "100% Irish" (Diola) to "a bit Irish" (Toben). However, even those participants who felt entirely Irish, like Diola ("*Irish to the last*") and JP ("*I'm basically Irish*"), acknowledged that their ability to claim an Irish identity was subject to the opinions of others and to Irish immigration regulations. For example, Anna described feeling that she would always be seen as "*the foreign one*" (Anna) because she was Black. Participants' "Irishness" was contested on several grounds, including their skin colour, accent and immigration status.

Irish immigration regulations prevented participants feeling entirely Irish, with access to an Irish passport representing the final hurdle in becoming officially 'Irish', as articulated by Diola: "*I feel Irish. I've got a Nigerian part in me, but I have to say, I'm practically Irish now. I'm just waiting for the red passport and I'll be Irish.*" Diola describes herself as an Irish person with a "*Nigerian part in me*". However, she does not yet have "*the red passport*" which represents a symbol of Irishness that would legitimise her felt sense of Irishness.

While Diola described herself as an Irish person with a Nigerian "*part*", Toben felt he was a Nigerian person who is a "*bit Irish*". This sense of fragmentation ("*bit*" Toben, "*part*" Diola) was also reflected in Danielle's friend's summation of her: "*My friend Sarah said that I'm too white to be black and also too black to be white. I'm sort of in-between*". Danielle positively evaluated this in-between position: "*I don't want to*

be like, what's it called? Stuck. Just because I'm like Nigerian. Be stuck just hanging around with Nigerian people. I want to like branch out and stuff". Being in-between gave her the freedom to move between social groups, however her skin colour rendered full membership of the Irish community problematic: *"you're not black black, but you're not white"*. Diola feels that her friends have *"forgotten I'm black"*, thus highlighting both the role of skin-colour and the role of the views of others to her sense of belonging.

Toben could not reconcile being black with Irishness: *"I have a friend that's been there for like 15 years and he's like exactly, he sounds Irish, but he doesn't look Irish"*. Here we see that in Toben's experience it is not enough to sound Irish as skin colour prevents one from being able to claim legitimate Irishness. Anna also sees dark skin colour as something which precludes her acceptance as being Irish - *"I'm not Irish and everybody will always know that by looking at me, I mean, I'm black"*. For Anna being black is also not compatible with being Irish. Despite this she still feels a part of the Irish community through being immersed in it: *"I get involved in things like in school and things like that, it's an Irish school and everywhere I go is Irish"*. For Mark being Irish is equated with consuming alcohol: *"You have to drink if you are Irish"*. Since he does not, this complicates his access to an Irish identity. However, but he feels able to mix aspects of a Nigerian and an Irish identity depending on the context: *"I try to be more Irish and I don't, not too much that I don't lose being a Nigerian as well so like, I try, I try to be both. I be Irish when I have to be Irish."* This highlights his ability to alternate between being more Irish and more Nigerian depending on the given contextual demands.

Johnny has found a way to incorporate his skin colour into an Irish identity: *"I tell everybody I'm an Irish black, you know; I don't tell I'm from Nigeria."* Here Johnny constructs a category that allows Irishness to include him. However he does not use this category exclusively. He identifies as Nigerian among other Nigerian people because feels that they would mis-identify him as Irish due to his accent: *"Most of them tell me I speak Irish like Irish, you know"*. Johnny actively highlights particular identifications as he moves between contexts, thus highlighting the permeability and flexibility of group boundaries. JP also has no difficulty in reconciling his skin colour with Irishness, frequently using the word "we" to refer to himself as an Irish person: *"We Irish, we don't respect enough!"* Having been in Ireland for only two years Juba remained uncertain of her place in the Irish community at the time of the interview and had not

yet negotiated her sense of an Irish identity. When asked about her membership of the Irish community she says she does not feel a part of it “*because of my colour*”. However, she also reported feeling that being Black did not preclude her from being Irish, indicating that she was still in the process of negotiating her place in Ireland.

The participants described various ways of relating to the Irish identity label, being able to incorporate both Irish and Nigerian ‘bits’, moving between being more Irish or more Nigerian depending on the context, both being mutually exclusive while still being able to inform behaviour and attitudes. The participants did not endorse only one of these points of view, but moved between them depending on the topic under discussion. In general, those who had been in Ireland the longest (Diola and JP) identified the most with the Irish identity label, while those who had been in Ireland the least amount of time felt least able to call themselves Irish (Juba), but this was not a hard and fast rule.

Being Different

This theme explores how the participants felt they differed from ‘typical Irish teenagers’. They felt they differed in four main ways: overt differences included their accents and skin colour; they socialized differently; they had different roles within the family and felt they had a different relationship to cultural institutions.

Overt differences

The adolescents stood out in social situations where they were surrounded by predominantly White people, leading to attention being drawn towards them. Experiencing unwanted attention was an uncomfortable and disempowering experience and undermined feelings of self-efficacy. Among the female participants in particular this was associated with feelings of self-consciousness. “*It can be really scary and you can feel left out, you know like, everybody kind of like staring at you, they’re looking at you*” (Anna). The scrutiny was alienating and reflected the feelings of self-consciousness reported by the other female participants. Referring to experiences with classmates at school, Juba says:

They see me, they give me that look, or even when I’m in class they look at you if you don’t know something. If you ask the teacher they laugh. That, and that and they make fun of me because of my accent

Being subject to the critical gaze of her Irish classmates makes Juba feel that she is being judged unfavourably. These feelings appeared to decrease over time, with female participants who had been in Ireland longer relating incidents which occurred earlier in their time in Ireland. Danielle described feeling stared at when she first came to Ireland: *“I used to get a lot of stares from like people. And I was kind of like “have you never seen a black person before?””*. Similarly, Diola, who had been in Ireland for 11 years, describes feeling self-conscious in primary school when she was the subject of teasing based on her physical appearance:

It was horrible and I was teased a lot ‘cause apparently black people have bigger lips than white people, so some girls used to make fun of me and be like **makes a face** “that’s what your lips look like”, and I was like, really? And I used to be so self-conscious of how I looked and I used to keep my head down and refuse to talk

Diola’s autonomy and sense of self-efficacy were undermined leading her to withdraw. Diola had lived in Ireland for an extended period of time (11 years) and goes on to describe that the girls who used to tease her in primary school have gone on to become her friends. The boys also felt that their skin colour made them the focus of unwanted attention, but did not report the same feelings of self-consciousness associated with this.

Reactions to unwanted attention varied across the participants. Mark, Danielle, Juba, Diola, and Johnny described feeling frustrated and wanting to fight back when faced with racist comments. However, the participants felt the need to suppress this desire as the consequences and social sanctions of fighting back were too great:

I really, really got angry, also I wanted to fight cause they won’t stop doing that and I went to meet the vice Principal and they helped me to notify that if I fight I’m going to get kicked out of school there and I forgot about it (Juba)

He just hit me! So, I was asking, “what that was for?” Like then the guy was going on talking saying “black bastard” so I got really pissed off like so I didn’t know what to do like! I had to hold myself. I tried to like control my anger hold myself and then like the Principal came (Johnny)

The above two extracts show how particular individuals become important in coaching the participants in how to react to racism, in these cases it was their school principals. In

the following extract Mark's soccer coach helps him to deal with discrimination on the soccer pitch by maintaining his integrity and letting his talent shine through:

My coach kept talking to me and he was like "you have to show what - show your talent even if the referee is being partial you have to [...] tell them by putting the ball in the back of the net!" So I started thinking as well, and I started seeing, like, losing my temper as being very stupid. Because, like, you were right before and then you lose your temper and then you, you become wrong. (Mark)

Another strategy relied upon by the participants was to minimize the effect of such experiences. Minimization took the form of describing such incidents as an unavoidable part of life or by delegitimizing the abuser. For example, JP describes being discriminated against while playing football as "*all part of the game*". Toben says "*I don't really care*" when he describes being called a "*nigger*" by "*some child or whatever*". The description of the source of the racist comment serves to patronise him and discredit his opinion. Similarly Adam says that racist comments directed towards him in town, have come from drunken "*hobos*", those on the fringes of mainstream society whose opinions he does not value.

Unlike other participants in the study, Adam relates how it was other Nigerian people who made him feel discriminated against for socializing with white people, indicating more rigid intergroup barriers than described previously by Johnny: "*they kind of make fun for me for that. Why am I sticking with the white people? Am I trying to be white or stuff?*" This experience highlights the fact that the participants could feel pressure from multiple groups to conform to sometimes conflicting norms.

While visible difference was largely experienced as threatening, some participants also identified positive aspects of being overtly different. In addition to sometimes making her feel more self-conscious, Anna noted that her visible difference could also give her a particular status in a group of otherwise white people:

When they see you it's like you have the advantage over everybody else, 'cause they're looking at you, they know you're from somewhere else and you have like different ideas and they're kind of waiting to hear what you have to say

James feels his dark skin colour allows him to play with his identity: *“I’m black and I can do other personalities, I can just lie, like I could say I’m from South Africa and they would believe me”*. Playing on Irish people’s ignorance of Africa he can claim to be from another country, thus giving him the upper hand. As opposed to feeling his skin colour gives him an advantage over other people Toben describes it as a source of fun among his friends:

I have friends that are Irish and we call ourselves names and we don’t mind.
They call me black, I call them white, they call me ‘Coco-Pops’, I call them
‘Rice Krispies’, we just use it as fun (Toben)

The adolescents experienced unwanted attention which included racial abuse and aggression. Among female participants this was associated with feelings of self-consciousness. While such experiences could have threatened participants’ sense of belonging, most minimized the impact of such experiences, while some found benefits related to being different.

Being different from White Irish peers

The participants described two main differences between themselves and their Irish peers. They differed in terms of their engagement in health-risk behaviours, and in how they related to others. Across all participants there was a perception that the vast majority of Irish teenagers engaged in regular and excessive alcohol consumption: *“90% of the Irish boys, my friends that I know, drink”* (Mark). Nevertheless, all participants reported being non-drinkers and non-smokers at the time of the interviews. Thus their views on drinking were incompatible with a large proportion of their peers. Anna and JP described having previously experimented with alcohol, but had bad experiences and had not consumed alcohol since.

Anna’s experimentation with alcohol was driven by curiosity: *“I was kind of curious because it was there and I’d never had alcohol before, so it wasn’t really my intention to get drunk”*. She did not find the experience of being drunk pleasurable. This distinguishes her from her peers, the majority of whom she feels enjoy engaging in regular alcohol consumption:

They sit down and they talk about what they did during the weekend and the only thing they’re talking about is getting drunk and being out there [...] I just hear about it but I never really went out with anybody in the night to get

drunk (Anna)

In this extract we see Anna as a person removed from her peer group. She is not a part of their weekend drinking and therefore experiences it only vicariously: “*I just hear about it*”. The other participants also describe feeling that such behaviours are wrong but, in contrast, they do not feel excluded from their peer group. Johnny’s perceived notion of an ‘Irish’ party is not compatible with what he thinks a party should involve:

Most Irish persons going to a party, all they do, like, is go drinking for their party, that’s all they do. Go drinking. I don’t know how they call that a party [...] we African people don’t do drinking, like you know. Just party, you know, play music, dance.

Identifying as an African in this situation legitimises his decision not to drink as he sees drinking as incompatible with being an African. A positive non-drinking African identity allows Johnny to create a positive distinction among his friends.

Like Johnny, James feels his ethnicity supports his decision not to drink. He contrasts White and Black parties in terms of different emphases. White parties, he feels, are all about drinking while Black parties are characterised as more fun and lively:

When you’re like in a black party it’s just more dancing, it’s just more dancing around and stuff, like most people just go crazy. Just dancing crazy! It’s like that everywhere you go, if you’re in Nigeria, in America, in the United States, black, they’re just, it’s something in black blood

In this example James draws a connection between all black people, regardless of where they were born, through their “*black blood*”. His “*black blood*” positively distinguished him from his white friends through the association with fun. Black parties are seen as more exciting and lively where “*people just go crazy*” rather than White parties where everyone is “*just drinking and stuff*”. In this context being Black is an identity marker beyond his identity as a Nigerian which he can be proud of.

Diola also perceives a contrast between Irish constructions of socialising and her own. Her position as a non-drinker distinguishes her from some of her Irish friends: “*they think I’m a party pooper to some extent*”. Like other participants, Diola notes that differences between herself and her Irish peers are not limited to behaviours but extend to a sense of shared understanding that she has with her Nigerian friends: “*We get each*

other more". A Nigerian identity helps Diola understand why miscommunications occur between her and her Irish friends:

We seem to know when we are messing about cause we may say it in a serious way but we know when we are teasing each other and we know when we are proper serious about something so.

Despite a lack of overt clues she knows when she is being teased or when her Nigerian friends are being serious. Such shared understandings and the potential for misunderstandings with Irish peers affirm the "*weird sense of bond*" she feels with Nigerian friends. This "*weird sense of bond*" reflects what other participants see as a deeper relationship that can be achieved with other people of a similar background: "*But when you're with your black friends it's like, it's more like home. Like more deep, yeah.*" (James). Similarly, Adam also feels a bond that is difficult to articulate with peers from his birth country, describing having "*a different type of laugh*" with his Nigerian friends compared to his Irish friends. This bond was affirmed through the ability to speak Pidgin English with friends from their home country: "*we use more of a Nigerian slang English, like it's called broken English*" (Adam). Similarly Toben describes speaking "*a different type of English*" with his Nigerian friends and his Irish friends: "*When I'm speaking with my Nigerian friends I don't have to say it fully, I say it kind of half. But they already know, because they understand*".

Familial expectations

Participants constructed their experiences within the family in remarkably similar terms. All agreed that their experiences within the family differed to those of White Irish teenagers. All participants felt that their parents were strict with clear expectations of them and how they should live their lives. This offered structure and certainty, but on the other hand it imposed values they did not necessarily share and restricted them in ways they felt their Irish peers were not restricted. Upon reflection the participants judged their parents' style of parenting as more effective and appropriate than the Irish style of parenting.

There was notable consistency in participants perceptions of what their parents expect from them:

It's actually just go to school, no boyfriend! (Diola)

If he's the oldest in the family at the age of 20 he's expected to have a job, to provide for his younger kids, like the younger brothers and sisters [...]
Nigerian girls are expected to be extremely smart [...] when she gets to the age of like 24 she's expected to be married. (JP)

You have to be respectful [...] mostly what they would say like you know is don't get some girl pregnant. (Johnny)

My dad is kind of like "just don't get pregnant" [...] I guess he just wants me to get an education, and like get like the career I want. (Danielle)

Parental expectations reflect traditional gender roles and a focus on academic achievement and the pursuit of a high-status career. In comparison Irish parents were consistently seen as more lenient, with Irish peers being extended more freedom while also being over-indulged. Participants envied the freedom afforded their Irish peers, yet they saw their parents style of parenting as being what is required to succeed in the world:

In Nigeria you don't always get what you want, but here I see loads of parents like you know pamper their child [...] I don't think that's living best interest is it like you know, like you have to like treat them the way they should grow (Johnny)

They're spoilt. They're really, really spoilt. They have their mummies to wait on them hand and foot [...] from a young age we are thought to fend for ourselves so that, and I think it does us, it does a lot of good for us (Diola)

This "*tough love*" (Diola) style of parenting was evaluated positively across participants, whereby they saw it as something which will benefit them in the long run. The frequently drawn-upon image of the over-indulgent Irish parent cast Irish peers as infantile and incapable of fending for themselves: "their parents is like, they are caressing their hands" (James).

While the overindulgence of Irish adolescents was described as being extreme, participants did desire a more laid back approach from their parents. Irish parents sometimes compared favourably to their own parents. For most participants there was a tension between the way of life imposed on them by their parents and the way they see their Irish peers living:

They're always like "you have to stay at home and help my Mom" sometimes my Mom's not even at home! She's always at work, so like, stay home with my little brother, that type of thing. But I'm always outside, so my mom and my Dad's always complaining because I'm never at home. And then, with my, like all my Irish friends, whenever they go home like I just hear "oh we went outside and we did all that" but then I'd be at home and I'd kind of feel awkward because I wouldn't have been outside and they would be like, they're always asking me why don't I ever come out? (Adam)

I can't reply texts or calls after eight o'clock, which is horrible. And I can't go out anymore after eight o'clock, I think nine thirty would be fine, or nine, or, what's the other one again? Oh yeah, I can't go on the computer after eight o'clock, Jesus and... they're just strict anyways (Toben)

The above extracts illustrate the conflict participants experience in relation to parental expectations and the desire to live more like their Irish peers. Adam finds it difficult to please either his parents or his peers, with his parents chastising him for being out too much, and his peers complaining that he does not come out enough. Toben is exasperated by the amount of rules he feels he must follow. Below James describes what it is like to argue against his parents plans for his future:

"What if I got a good job and I have money do I have to go to college?"
"Yes, you have to go to college!" But I think sometimes they just want their name, like, PhD, they just want to be like "My kid went to college!" You have to go to college because you are made to. (James)

In this extract James exemplifies a common feeling among participants, that academic achievement is desired among parents as it reflects well on them, equally academic failure reflects negatively on them: "*Your family don't want you to shame them*" (Diola).

While the participants saw the benefits of an authoritarian parenting style there was conflict between their wishes and their parents' expectations. The participants looked for a middle ground which incorporated their values but also afforded them more freedom.

Engaging with cultural institutions

The school is an Irish institution where the participants interacted directly with native Irish people. All participants also attended church regularly, except for Anna.

The churches attended by these participants were composed primarily of immigrants to Ireland, predominantly from Nigeria but also other African countries. These two cultural institutions allowed the adolescents to immerse themselves among people of Irish and African cultures and understanding their experiences in these contexts helps us to understand their overall acculturation experiences.

In terms of school, most students reported positive experiences with their teachers. The Irish teaching style was preferred over the more authoritarian teaching style of the participants' birth countries, which involved corporal punishment. However, there was a feeling that the Irish system was too lax and that teachers should be able to command more respect. As in their relationships with their parents, we see the participants attempt to construct a middle ground between what they perceive to be Irish values and values derived from their country of birth in relation to the importance of education and how to behave at school.

All participants felt that their experiences in Irish schools compared favourably to experiences in schools in their birth countries. The Irish school experience was associated with feeling that they had a voice, were valued and that teachers were willing to cater to their educational and emotional needs. Teachers were described as approachable, friendly and fun: "*the teachers are nice as well. Yeah, kind of like your friends*" (Mark). They felt listened to and encouraged by teachers who made time for them, rather than forced to keep in line by authoritarian teachers:

In Nigeria ... if you do something wrong the teachers will give you punishment and after that they beat you. They do all sorts of things like. But here it's not like that. (Juba)

If you don't know something the teacher [in Nigeria] goes you're slowing her down, or him down and takes you outside and puts you in a lower level, which is bad. But in Ireland the teachers like explain to you after class, like I've done that to my teacher once and she explained to me what I need to do. (Toben)

I love all my teachers, they're really nice teachers. We're very close because they tend to think that I'm, I don't know, 'a character' really (Anna)

The above extracts describe Irish schools as a place where these adolescents have a voice. Rather than a relationship of dominance and submission the participants feel that

teachers in Ireland take individual students needs into account. However, the participants also felt that the teachers were not necessarily strict enough, and therefore did not get the respect that was due to them from other students:

There was a day like you know teacher was talking to one Irish lad yea and like the guy replied “fuck you” like you know, so like when they say “fuck you” like I was surprised of that because I know that that definitely cannot happen back in [Nigeria]. (Johnny)

While the participants embrace the more lenient style of education in Ireland, they also seek a balance between respect for authority and freedom. Diola claims to prefer the “mean ones” as they are fulfilling their role as educator properly:

I prefer them to be really strict towards you and you understand what they’re saying and you know you’re going to pass their class (Diola)

School presents the adolescents with an opportunity to experiment with a more “Irish” way of behaving. Immersed in the new cultural context and away from the parental influence brothers James and Johnny described not being very good students. Below, JP describes his developmental trajectory as a student where he adopted more Irish student ways, before reflecting on his aspirations under the guidance and threat of his parents and then receiving social recognition for his accomplishments:

For the first 2 or 3 years I was the worst kid any teacher could ever have! I was terrible cause I thought alright I’m going to take, cause the Irish kids are doing it why not? I’ll do it as well and I’ll get away with it. But then my parents kind of sat me down and told me this is it, if I do anything else I’m going to be in trouble and I kind of just sat by myself kind of thought about it. ‘Cause I wasn’t getting the result I wanted. My results were terrible. I used to fail most of my subjects but when I sat down and I actually [copped on] I actually started doing well. Studying went well. Everything was well. Teachers were happy, like one of the teachers that got me suspended in first year he gave me the best, he gave me award in my last year (JP)

While the participants felt positive about their experiences at school in Ireland, they also questioned the low level of respect they perceived as given to the teachers in comparison with their previous experiences in their birth country.

The church was a significant symbol of the Nigerian and African community in Ireland. When asked about whether there was a Nigerian community in Ireland Toben said: *“I think the biggest one is the church here, because that’s where nearly we all meet.”* This reflects the general consensus of the other participants. While there were divergent views regarding the role of religion in their lives most participants did regularly attend church, except for Anna. The participants attended Pentecostal services rather than Catholic services, and these services were described as more engaging and lively: *“with the Catholic church, they are not that loud at all in the Catholic church. No drums or anything. And like, we drum in the church, we make lots of noise”* (Mark).

Church attendance was primarily driven by parents (*“my Mom goes to church and we’ve got to tag along”* James). While there was a sense among the participants that they were obligated to go, they balanced this by suggesting that attending church was the right thing to do, and it offered them continuity as it is something they had done since early childhood:

You have to come to church on Sunday, that’s like very important, like, if your parents are like very religious it’s very important, you have to come. And they get really mad if you don’t want to. But, you have to come. It’s good. (Mark)

Attending church offered the participants and their parents a place to meet and socialise with other African immigrants in Ireland: *“I wouldn’t know most of the [African] people that I know now without the church (Adam)”*, *“there are loads of people there and I know like loads of them (James)”*, *“we come together as one to worship together and praise God together (Juba)”*, *“most of their [my parents] friends are in there as well and care about it, about church (Johnny)”*. Church therefore appeared to represent a uniting force for the African community in Ireland, it was a venue where African immigrants could meet and pass on shared values to the younger generation. The participants also felt that the relationship of African immigrants to their church distinguished them from typical Irish young people:

I’ve been brought up by it so [...] I kind of know the background, [...] most Irish parents don’t know on Sundays what do they do. On Saturdays they get drunk on Saturdays go home and sleep. Sunday is a day of rest for them sleep or whatever. But I was brought up as going to church on Sunday is a

church day, so you go to church you pray to God do everything and you go home. But like Irish teenagers if they weren't taught like if you don't know something you can't do it. So if they were taught when they were younger then they'd probably be practicing now. (JP)

Experiences of church in the birth country were also described positively by other participants, most notably Anna, who had disengaged entirely with church in Ireland.

It's like, the church, when you go to church every Sunday it's like everybody they kind of like dress up really fancy and everybody goes to church, and the choir is like really brilliant, and everybody sings and it goes on for like an, for two hours or so and then like after church everybody just sits down, like hang around the church and talk to each other and things like that but here it's like it's only like for an hour and the choir is not so good and just like not that many people and just, I just don't find it interesting. (Anna)

In the above extract Anna compares her previous experiences of church in the Congo with her experiences of Irish Catholic church services. The sense of occasion and community she described in the Congo are lacking in the Irish church services. What is interesting about the above extract is that Anna uses the present tense when speaking about her past experiences in the Congo, indicating that she still identifies with those experiences. Her engagement with the church services in the Congo contrast with her lack of engagement in Ireland. While the Irish church services do not appeal to Anna, neither do the African churches in Ireland, as they do not compare with her experience of community in the Congo.

The school was seen as positive in recognising the adolescents and giving them a voice. However, the ability of the teachers to command the respect of the students and the Irish students' attitudes to education were questioned and evaluated negatively when compared to the birth country. The church functioned as a primary meeting point for African communities in Galway, and as such served as a context where cultural values were transmitted. While the participants were largely uncertain about the role of church in their lives, generally describing it as something they attend in deference to their parents' wishes, the recognised the social benefits of attending and meeting others of a similar cultural background.

Discussion

The main aim of this study was to explore what acculturation was like for a particular group of African adolescent immigrants living in Ireland. Using a cross-sectional IPA design I investigated the accounts of 10 adolescents from African countries who came to Ireland through the process of family reunification. These accounts were interrogated to offer an interpretation of what acculturation was like for these participants a point in time in their lives. The findings suggested that the main areas of concern for these participants related to maintaining a sense of belonging in Ireland while also negotiating differences between themselves and their Irish peers and their parents expectations of them. These negotiations differed according to the contexts in which they occurred, be it among peers, in the family, at school, in the church or in other public and private spaces.

Summary of findings

All the participants had a venue where they felt a sense of belonging, for most it was among peers (both Irish and immigrant), for Anna it was at school and for Juba it was among other immigrant peers at school and in her running club. All participants felt that they no longer belonged in their country of birth; it was described as unsafe and their current identities were seen as incompatible with a comfortable life there. They no longer knew people there and they were more familiar with their new localities in Ireland. While they felt they did not feel they belong in their birth-country, and they felt they belonged in Ireland, this did not mean that they felt Irish. Participants had a complex relationship with the Irish national identity label, and their ability to claim it was subject to the sanctioning of the White Irish majority group.

The participants were different to their Irish peers in several respects. They were overtly different due to being Black in a country where the majority of people are White. The values they encountered regarding drinking and smoking differed to those they held. How they related to their Irish friends often differed to how they related to peers from their birth countries. They felt that what their parents expected of them differed to what the parents of their Irish peers expected. Their experiences of school in the birth country contrasted with their experiences in Irish schools. Irish church services also contrasted with the church services they attended. Nevertheless, encountering differences with the White Irish majority did not necessarily equate to poor adaptation

or the experience of distress on the part of the African adolescents. In fact, they appeared to negotiate these differences successfully.

Comparing the findings to dominant models of acculturation

A secondary aim of this study was to examine how the experiences reported by these adolescents compare to dominant models of acculturation. In some respects these findings sit well with existing models of acculturation, yet they also problematize particular aspects of these models of acculturation. In line with unidimensional approaches (described in Chapter 2) there appeared to be a general tendency for participants who had been in Ireland longer to feel more able to adopt the Irish identity label, and for the female participants to feel less like they stood out in social situations. However, this pattern was not consistent across all participants. Further, even when participants felt a lesser sense of belonging in Ireland, this was not related to a greater sense of belonging in their birth country.

As described in Chapter 2, Berry's (1997) concept of acculturation strategies (or orientations) has been a main focus of much acculturation research. Acculturation strategies are based on the assumption that the way in which individuals acculturate depends on how they simultaneously deal with the issue of heritage culture maintenance and how important they regard having contact with and participating in the new society. In keeping with this perspective, and in contrast to unidimensional perspectives on acculturation, the participants in this study appeared to desire contact with and participation in the new society, while also valuing their heritage culture. However, the role of heritage culture values changed depending on the context. For example, heritage culture values were drawn upon to help to explain and negotiate differences between themselves and their Irish peers in terms of health-risk behaviours, familial relationships, respect of teachers in school, but did not feature when participants described their sense of belonging in Ireland or their lack of belonging in the birth country. This lends support to a more contextual approach to research on adolescent acculturation.

The fact that these adolescents managed to maintain a sense of belonging while also recognising, and accepting, differences between themselves and the White Irish majority group may mean that the participants felt able to alternate between being Irish and being Nigerian depending on their context. This reflects more nuanced perspectives on 'integration'. For example, the model of cultural frame switching (Hong, Morris,

Chiu, & Benet-Martínez, 2000) suggests that bicultural individuals can cognitively shift between orientations based on relevant cues in the environment. Phinney and Devich-Navarro (1997) similarly suggested a type of bicultural identity which they labelled “alternating biculturalism” (p. 16) whereby individuals shift between dual identities based on what they consider to be appropriate in a given social setting. In line with this, Stuart and Ward (2011) found that some Muslim adolescents in their study alternated between cultural orientations depending on contextual demands. The participants in this study were able to maintain a sense of belonging with their peers while not engaging in certain normative behaviours. This could represent the ‘blending orientation’ also described by Stuart and Ward (2011), or cultural hybridisation (Hermans & Kempen, 1998, Bhatia & Ram, 2004) whereby adolescents pick and choose the elements of each cultural orientation to adopt.

Cognitive perspectives on acculturation (see Chapter 2) draw on theorising from social identity theory (SIT, Tajfel & Turner, 1986) which is largely concerned with why and how individuals identify with and behave as part of social groups. When applied to acculturation SIT is typically concerned with how groups and individuals define themselves in relation to their own ethnic group (ethnic identity) on the one hand and on the larger society within which their acculturation is taking place (national identity) on the other (Berry et al., 2012; Phinney, 1990). The present findings call into question how applicable this approach is to acculturating adolescents. It is a reductionist approach in that it assumes that the group identities most salient to acculturating adolescents are related to ethnicity and nationality. However, the sense of belonging reported by the adolescents was not necessarily tied to ethnicity. Rather, the participants’ sense of belonging was tied instead to a variety of contexts and groups where they felt valued and had an on-going role, such as in peer groups or at school. The participants’ sense of belonging was based on familiarity, feeling valued and accepted, and perceiving a continued sense of place in the system or environment associated with this sense of belonging. Acculturation research should recognise that there are multiple groups that adolescents may identify with, and the fact that they are acculturating does not mean that their ethnic group is necessarily the most salient to them.

The role of the majority group was emphasised in the findings relating to the adolescents relationship to the Irish national identity label. Berry’s model of acculturation has been criticised for largely ignoring the role of the majority group (see

Chapter 2). Indeed, Berry, Phinney, Sam & Vedder (2006) have stated “we seek to avoid the extra baggage that often accompanies terms such as mainstream, majority, dominant, minority, non-dominant and host society” (p.11). This statement grounds this bidimensional acculturation perspective as being focused on how immigrants *acculturate themselves* (Ngo, 2008), rather than on the reciprocal relationship that exists between them and their contexts. In contrast, Bourhis et al’s (1997) Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) emphasises the interaction between the dominant culture and immigrants, and so gives some insight into why the adolescents in this study may have felt unable to adopt the Irish identity label. However, context was important not only in terms of the macro-context, but the immediate contexts with which participants engaged.

It was in particular interactions and contexts that differences became apparent and required negotiation (e.g. when Irish peers valued drinking, when parents were strict, when teachers were disrespected in the classroom). In these instances, ethnicity, race and nationality became useful heuristic devices to help the participants make sense of difference. For example, none of the participants drank alcohol. Their ethnicity and cultural background became useful heuristic devices to explain why they did not drink while many of their Irish peers did. Further, typical familial tensions were explained in terms of different approaches to parenting by Irish parents compared to African parents. The importance of specific, immediate contexts calls to mind the domain specificity described by Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver (2003).

According to Berry’s (1997) framework, acculturation is a stress and coping phenomenon. These findings fit with this representation. As participants encountered differences between themselves and the White Irish majority group they had to find ways to negotiate these, that is, they had to find a way to cope. For example, when faced with racism they tended to minimise its impact or when faced with their parents’ strict parenting practices they tended to compare them favourably to perceived Irish parenting norms, despite perhaps feeling frustrated. However, this stress and coping approach is limited in that it does not specify why one particular ways of engaging with the acculturation process would lead to better outcomes. Further, focusing research attention on the potential for stress would ignore how successfully these adolescents were at navigating the process of acculturation.

Exploring the potential of other perspectives to interpret the findings

I suggest here that IPT (described in greater detail in Chapter 5) provides an insight into why ‘belonging’ and ‘being different’ were important aspects of the lived experiences of these adolescents. In using IPT to understand the experience of acculturation ‘acculturation strategies’ could be thought of as methods individuals use to alleviate threats to identity posed by migration. According to IPT, changes in the external context (e.g. migrating to a new country) may threaten identity if the related processes of assimilation/accommodation are unable to meet guiding principles of identity (Breakwell, 1986). Belonging and distinctiveness are suggested to be two of these guiding principles (see Chapter 5) and reflect the two issues identified as salient to the acculturating adolescent participants in this study.

Given that studies of adolescent acculturation tend to focus on ethnic and national group identification and membership, they are limited in suggesting other identity elements factors that may be associated with good outcomes for acculturating individuals. In the present study, the participants’ sense of belonging was rooted in contexts where they felt valued and saw a continued role for themselves including friendship groups, sports clubs or at school. In relation to the body of literature concerning acculturation these findings are important because they point to a mechanism by which particular acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997) could lead to better outcomes.

It is interesting to note that in the present study the participants’ sense of belonging was not necessarily tied to their ethnicity, nationality or culture. This suggests that either the difference in ethnicity between themselves and their white Irish peers, teachers and other relevant individuals did not threaten their sense of belonging or that other social identities gained increased salience (as an adolescent, team-mate, student) to compensate for this difference. So, while ethnicity helped adolescents to evaluate differences between themselves and their White Irish peers, and the development of a sense of ethnic identity may indeed be important to acculturating adolescents, ethnicity should not be considered to be the single or main issue of concern for them. For example, their sense of not belonging in their country of birth was based on a lack of familiarity and connections there and a sense that it is unsafe there, rather than their ethnic identification.

IPT also helps to explain why ethnicity appeared more important when participants were negotiating difference. IPT posits that as individuals move between

contexts different elements of identity become salient. So, in a context where the values an individual associates with their cultural background are in conflict with the norms in the given context (e.g. drinking norms) a sense of cultural or ethnic identity could be thought to become salient, as appears to be the case for the adolescents in this study. Equally, the experience of racism may have brought their race to the fore.

Being different to the White Irish majority and, particularly to their native, same-age peers, could be interpreted as putting the “belonging” identity principle in a threatening position. This poses particular questions for other principles of identity, particularly the “distinctiveness” principle. The distinctiveness principle suggests that people value being unique, different from others (Breakwell, 1986). When the participants’ sense of belonging was threatened by value-conflicts, they may have coped by increasing the value of the distinctiveness principle. However, for this to be effective the distinctiveness must be positively evaluated. The central question for these adolescents is whether points of distinction are positive, if not some form of coping strategy must be enacted. Participants received unwanted attention due to being visibly different. This unwanted attention was generally negatively evaluated. Through minimising the impact of racist remarks (for example) it could be interpreted that participants were re-construing the implications of these in order to eliminate their power to threaten their sense of belonging, and to avoid too much distinctiveness. A similar interpretation could be given for participants who found benefits to being visibly different. In terms of being different to Irish peers in a behavioural sense (e.g. alcohol consumption), the participants appeared to cope using ‘negativism’ (Breakwell, 1986). This involves acting against the requirements or pressures of an external source (e.g. peer-pressure). In this way participants could maintain positive distinctiveness. Migration in itself did not necessarily threaten identity, rather identity was threatened in particular contexts and in particular interactions within these contexts.

Policy implications of the findings

The findings of this study suggest new directions for policy regarding the integration of refugee adolescents as it points to ways that ‘belonging’ can be fostered and suggests why differences should be celebrated. This may be important as studies indicate that post migration stress can have a great and lasting negative impact on the adaptation of adolescent refugees (Salehi, 2010). The overall positive relationships that most participants reported having with their teachers and classmates could be seen as a positive reflection of the attempts to create a welcoming atmosphere for so-called

“newcomer” students in the Irish education system, reflected in the guidelines for intercultural education in the post-primary school published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA, 2006). However, the fact that experiences of racism and discrimination from classmates were also relatively common suggests that there may be a way to go before all students “respect and celebrate diversity” (NCCA, 2006).

Ireland as a context for acculturation

Racism was a common experience reported by these acculturating adolescents. Their tendency to minimise the impact of racism reflects previous research findings which suggest that minority group members may minimise their experiences of racism (Colic-Peisker, 2005; Kirkwood, 2012; Verkuyten, 2005). For example, in his interviews with refugees, Kirkwood’s (2012) participants were hesitant to make accusations of racism. They emphasised the ambiguity of the situations, for example by claiming that other people, but not themselves, could consider a given event as being racist. Kirkwood also noticed that many minority members attributed the causes of racism to ignorance or a perception of an unfair distribution of resources. He drew attention to the fact that there is an interesting parallel between majority members avoiding being seen as explicitly racist or discriminatory on the one hand, and minority members being hesitant about making accusations of discrimination on the other hand.

The experience of being visibly different to the White majority group draws to attention the necessarily embodied experience of acculturation for these participants. Embodiment has been a feature of health psychology literature because awareness of the body and its limitations become apparent due to the experience of illness or injury: “Once the body malfunctions, it is no longer an aspect of the self that can be taken for granted” (Johnson & Fledderjohann, 2012, p. 884). Similarly, for the participants in this study, their bodies gained a new significance as, upon moving to Ireland, their skin colour could no longer be taken for granted as it became a mark of differentiation, drawing unwanted attention and sometimes abuse.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are described in Chapter 11, which provides a discussion of the entirety of the research presented in this thesis.

Conclusion

The themes identified in this study indicated that the adolescent participants engaged with the process of acculturation by negotiating their sense of place in Ireland while also making sense of the differences between themselves and other Irish adolescents. The findings diverged from the models traditionally used to understand adolescent acculturation by indicating that a sense of belonging was not necessarily rooted in a sense of ethnic group or national group identification. Identity Process Theory (IPT, Breakwell, 1986) can inform our understanding of adolescent acculturating and showed how the process of migrating to Ireland placed these adolescents' identities in a potentially threatening position. The move to Ireland had an impact on not only their relationship to Ireland and their country of birth, but on their sense of self as a student, an adolescent, a son or daughter. Through building a sense of belonging in Ireland, and through cultivating a sense of positive distinctiveness the participants managed potential threats to their identity. Overall, the findings suggest that the participants were successfully adjusting to life in Ireland, despite some struggles in particular life domains. This study showed how an individual can actively engage with their context to affect the course of their acculturation, and also how the context is an integral part of the process of acculturation through determining or restricting the acculturation opportunities available to individuals.

Chapter 8: Study 2 – Acculturation Experiences of African Adolescent Asylum-Seekers in Ireland

In this chapter I investigate the acculturation experiences of a group of young, aged-out asylum-seeking youth in Ireland. Adolescent asylum-seekers in Ireland live in a very different context to adolescents who come through the process of family reunification. This is particularly true for adolescent asylum-seekers who come as unaccompanied minors and ‘age-out’ during the asylum-seeking process (as described in Chapter 3). Adolescents who have aged-out are seen as adults in the asylum-process and dispersed to adult Direct Provision (DP) hostels around the country. This is proposed to be a protective factor for the adolescents, but there is no research to support this policy claim. In fact, the DP system has been argued to violate asylum seekers’ rights to an adequate standard of living, in particular their right to adequate housing, food and health (Breen, 2008). Breen (2008) has also argued that such limitations are discriminatory and that they undermine the fundamental principles of equality and human dignity. Adult asylum-seekers in Ireland have been identified as a high-risk group for psychological distress (Ryan, Benson & Dooley, 2008). Therefore this chapter aims to investigate the acculturation experiences of aged-out asylum-seeking youth with a view to determining whether they are conducive to positive developmental outcomes.

In Chapter 2 I described how both the immediate and the broader contexts have important implications for how people engage with the acculturation process. Given the different contexts with which asylum-seeking young people must engage (e.g. life in direct provision centres) and their place in society (not having a secure future in Ireland), it stands to reason that how they engage with the process of acculturation may be distinct from how the adolescents in the previous chapter engaged with the process (see Chapter 3).

In Chapter 5 I made some suggestions on how the acculturation research should proceed given the limitations of acculturation research with adolescents noted in Chapter 2, the Irish immigration context described in Chapter 3, and the future directions suggested by the meta-ethnography in Chapter 4. Key among these suggestions was to investigate how acculturation could be associated with Positive Youth Development (PYD). This is particularly important to establish in the context of asylum-seeking youth who encounter multiple risk factors for poor developmental outcomes (e.g. relative poverty, limited autonomy, limited social support network, racism, discrimination).

The PYD perspective (described in Chapter 5) assumes that all young people have strengths. It seeks to identify the individual attributes of youth and the resources for healthy growth present in their social ecologies (schools, families, faith initiations, community groups) which can combine to lead to thriving (i.e., wellbeing and health) among adolescents and young adults (Lerner, Phelps, Forman & Bowers, 2009). PYD has been conceptualized in numerous ways, and several theoretical frameworks have been posited over the past few decades (Lerner et al. 2009). A recent review of PYD frameworks indicates that the ‘Five Cs’ Model of PYD is the most empirically supported framework to date (Heck & Subramaniam, 2009).

The model posits that positive development occurs if the strengths of youth are aligned with positive, growth-promoting resources in the ecology of youth (termed developmental assets; Benson et al., 2006). The positive development that results from this alignment are operationalized by the ‘Five Cs’: Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, and Caring. These ‘Five Cs’ have been derived from the experiences of practitioners and reviews of the adolescent development literature (Eccles & Gootman, 2002; Lerner 2004; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003) and are linked to the positive outcomes of youth development programs (e.g., Bowers et al. 2010; Roth & Brooks-Gunn, 2003). When an adolescent manifests these Five Cs over time, he or she is proposed to be more likely to be on a life trajectory marked by mutually beneficial person-context relations that contribute to self, family, community, and civil society (i.e., Contribution or ‘the sixth C’; Lerner, 2004).

Lerner, Lerner, Bowers & Lewin-Bizan (2012) note that the study of immigrant youth has not been a central focus of past research from a PYD perspective. However, they suggest that “more purposeful attention to immigrant youth by scholars using a PYD perspective could significantly extend the usefulness of the PYD approach to youth development and could enhance the understanding of the strengths and productivity of adolescent immigrants” (p. 308).

It is important to understand where the developmental assets available to asylum-seeking youth lie and where these can be further developed. Benson and colleagues’ research has demonstrated three powerful roles of developmental assets: protection, enhancement, and resiliency (Benson, 2007; Lerner et al., 2005). The protective role refers to the finding that the more assets youth have, the less likely they are to engage in high-risk behaviours such as alcohol, tobacco, and drug use. Youth high in developmental assets are also less likely to be depressed or suicidal, and less

likely to demonstrate antisocial behaviours, violence, and school problems. The enhancement role is indicated by findings which suggest that youth with more developmental assets are also more likely to be successful in school, show leadership, volunteer to help others, show care and concern for others, and show optimism regarding their future happiness and success. The resilience role refers to the finding that youth high in developmental assets demonstrate more resilience in difficult situations.

The participants in the present study were aged between 18 and 19 years at the time of data collection. At this age they could be considered ‘emerging adults’ (Arnett, 2010). ‘Emerging adulthood’ is a term used to describe a life stage proposed to occur between adolescence and adulthood. The nature of the transition from adolescence to adulthood has changed over the past several decades. There has been a delay in the adoption of adult roles and responsibilities such as joining the workforce full-time or committing to long term relationships as compared to previous generations (Arnett, 2000, 2010). In western countries, like Ireland, this time is considered an extended period of identity exploration concerning romantic relationships, work, and world views (Arnett, 2006; Arnett & Jensen, 2002). There is also significant variability in the life circumstances of individuals and in how young people engage in multiple contextual and social role changes (Schulenberg et al. 2004), with many alternating between dependent and independent roles (Cohen et al. 2003). However, traditional routes to adulthood, including starting a career or getting married and having children, are still common (Bynner, 2005).

Aims

This study seeks to explore the process of acculturation from the perspective of adolescent asylum-seekers in Ireland and to ascertain if and how existing acculturation models reflect these experiences. Based on these findings I query whether the adolescents’ acculturation experiences were compatible with PYD by exploring their perceived access to external and internal developmental assets within the discussion section. I offer recommendations for policy and practice in terms of supporting positive youth development among acculturating, asylum-seeking adolescents.

These aims are addressed through the following specific research questions:

- What is the process of acculturation *like* for these African adolescent asylum-seekers in Ireland?

- How do their experiences correspond with dominant models of acculturation?
- Do the participants have access to the internal and external assets required for PYD?
- What is the impact of the asylum-seeking process on the processes of acculturation and positive youth development?
- What are the policy implications, if any, of these experiences?

Method

The methods used are described in greater detail in Chapter 6, only the aspects pertinent to the present study are outlined here. Six participants were interviewed for this study (see Table 8.1). These participants were all asylum-seeking youth who had come to Ireland as unaccompanied minors and were living in Direct Provision accommodation centres in Galway. They ranged in age from 17 to 19 and had spent between one and a half and 6 years living in Ireland. Abass, Ajoba, Jaoa and Tim lived in Dublin initially before ‘aging-out’ and being relocated. Martha and Togar were ‘age-disputed’ youth (described in Chapter 2) and had been treated as adults since arriving in Ireland. I took their word on their age. All participants were interviewed in their local youth club. Interviews were transcribed and analysed as described in Chapter 6. These participants were typically in Ireland for a shorter time than the participants in Study 1, and they were closer to each other in age. In this respect they formed a more homogenous group. However there was greater variety in terms of the birth country.

Table 8.1 *Study 2 Participant Characteristics*

<i>Name</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Country of Origin</i>	<i>Time in Ireland</i>	<i>Age at arrival</i>
Martha	17	Sierra Leone	1 year 7 months	15
Togar	18	Liberia	2 years	16
Jaoa	19	Angola	2 years 8 months	16
Ajoba	19	Ghana	4 years	15
Tim	19	Ghana	4 years	15
Abass	18	Nigeria	6 years	12

Findings

Three super-ordinate themes were derived. The themes and associated sub themes reflect the participants’ experiences in the asylum-seeking process, their social interactions outside the asylum-seeking context and their perceptions of Ireland relative

to their perceptions of their birth countries. The super ordinate themes and associated subthemes with illustrative quotes are outlined in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2 *Themes, subthemes and characteristic examples*

Theme	Subtheme	Characteristic example
Life in the asylum-seeking process	Not a normal life	I couldn't go to college because of the school fees (Abass) While we are not going to school [we are] living different from the people who are not in the asylum-seeking process (Jaoa) The way I live my life is different from how other people live their life (Martha)
	Like a prison	There are some certain boundaries you can't [cross] (Abass) It's a small room, you know, no privacy (Togar) You are blocked up like. You are blocked from [...] things like education (Tim)
	Coping	I just want to move on with my life and achieve stuff (Abass) I had a chance of going to school, a chance of learning English, to learn another language (Jaoa) It's not big. But we manage (Martha)
	Distance and racism	It's like coming close to them is a problem (Ajoba) Everybody just keeps to themselves (Togar) From like their body language you don't even want to talk to them you, don't want to do anything with them (Tim)
	Strategies to get along with Irish	At least I've got to know some of the people, the way they behave and things like that (Ajoba) Ireland is take me sometimes to know what is, what they are doing here and what are they not doing, but now I am ok with it (Martha) As you grow in here you kind of know how to do things, and know how to control your temper (Tim)
Making connections	People who have been a help	They understand any time I have problems with topics they do give me private lessons (Abass) I have a nice teacher who understand me (Martha) The co-ordinator was very helpful (Togar)
	Change in self	I'm used to Ireland already (Abass) I have developed a lot, I feel that I've learned a lot (Ajoba) If my parents one day saw me [...] they're going to get confused! (Jaoa)
Making sense of it all	Continuity in self	That's how we're brought up back home, don't let any day be a waste [Togar] That's how I was raised up. I go to church [Ajoba] I find all of them easy [...] because I am that kind of people (Jaoa)
	Evaluating contrasts	It's totally different from here, the living out there, the child seems to be the bread winner to help the family going to work and bringing the money back home (Abass) I was scarred by a teacher so, but if it was here for example a teacher wouldn't lay his hands on you (Tim) Coming, learning the language, coping with the culture, like this kind of sport, like in Ireland, I've never known this! I've never played Gaelic in my life! (Jaoa)

Life in the asylum-seeking process

Participants described predominantly negative experiences within the asylum-seeking process. They could not live like other people in Ireland. There were limited opportunities available to them. They compared their lives as asylum-seekers to life in captivity, using metaphors of prison. The participants felt that they lacked autonomy and control over decisions that impacted their lives. Nevertheless, the participants

continued to hope and strive for a positive future. In line with the ecological perspective advocated in this thesis I pay particular attention to the socio-structural barriers and opportunities available to these adolescents.

“It’s not like a normal life”

The participants’ place in Irish society was ambiguous. When they compared themselves to Irish peers they felt that their lives and prospects were limited. Tim describes conflicting feelings regarding being an asylum-seeker, he is both grateful and living with uncertainty:

It’s good, like you know, I appreciate it. But it’s not, it’s not like a normal life. It’s not. It’s not really because always you have lots in your mind, you know. Thinking about different thinking about any moment I can get a letter, I can get sent back.

Jaoa goes beyond describing himself as not living a “*normal*” life and states that he is not living at all:

I don’t think that I am living or that I have anything that I want, like. I know that a human cannot have everything, it is not possible to have everything, everything that you want but I, I am just feeling a little bit far from that.
(Jaoa)

The powerful statement that Jaoa is “*not living*” characterizes him as being in a sort of limbo.

As asylum-seekers the participants had little say in where they could live, what education they could pursue and they were also denied the opportunity to work legally: “*Basically you haven’t got much, enough right as other Irish people*” (Abass). The participants felt limited in what they could achieve, relative to their Irish peers: “*If we finish our leaving cert, that’s the best we can do*” (Jaoa). While the State Examinations at the end of secondary school (the Leaving Certificate) represents the beginning of the journey to further education or employment for other Irish students, it is seen as the pinnacle of what asylum-seekers can hope to achieve.

Jaoa, Abass, Tim and Ajoba had all attended secondary school in Dublin before being relocated to Galway. Having reached the age of 18 they found themselves unable to attain the future they had envisioned:

After I had finished my Leaving Cert yea, you got, you're supposed to move from that to colleges. Like you know DCU [Dublin City University], DIT [Dublin Institute of Technology], NCI [National College of Ireland] and that. So, cause of my situation, that I'm asylum seekers you know, living in the hostel, so the school fees couldn't be more expensive, like. They wouldn't be able to sponsor me to college, so I have to defer my space there. (Abass)

The participants were excluded from normality and the “*supposed*” course of events. The institutions Abass references are all based in Dublin, indicating that his perceived future was there rather than Galway. Associated with their unwanted relocation was a denial of their voice in decisions which affected their lives; “*I was, like, in college but they have to move me and I didn't have ... any say in it*” (Tim). This left them feeling abandoned and denied rights that they ought to have been entitled to:

Even under the human rights laws education is a fundamental human right that one should be afforded and be given in to. But I don't think that nobody's looking after that department. (Togar)

The participants were physically and symbolically separated from Irish peers through being housed in ‘direct provision’ hostels. Below Ajoba describes how this separation feels for her:

It's really, really frustrating. Because it's like you been isolated from Irish people. It's kind of more or less it's like you have to be with your asylum people, those people seeking asylum. It's, we are trying to integrate ourselves with Irish people but sometimes it's very, very difficult, very, very, very difficult. It's like they don't see you to be part of them, so you be feeling lonely. (Ajoba)

Ajoba felt that the Irish majority group were not open to associating with asylum-seekers, forcing them to remain separate from Irish society. Martha described a change in people's attitude toward her following disclosure of her asylum-seeking status; “*They look at you like you don't know what you are talking doing here. Here is not, you don't have a chance here.*” Her legitimacy and future prospects are questioned. She describes how this also occurred in an interaction with an African teenager who was not an asylum-seeker: “*she look at me like we are not the same level*”. This association

between legitimacy and asylum-seeking status was also reflected in the account offered by Ajoba:

Sometimes if you are looking for a school, there is a problem, so many questions. Where is your this? Where is your that? In a way you are restricted. So if I get my [case processed] it's like I know that I will get that kind of freedom. I'll also be a normal person, so it will be easier for me.
(Ajoba)

Here Ajoba contrasts the scrutiny associated with asylum-seeking status with the freedom she will have in her imagined future following a successful outcome in her asylum application.

“It's like you've been captured”: Direct Provision is like being in prison

This sub theme explores their experience of the immediate ecology of their living spaces (that is, their experiences within the direct provision centres where they live). The experience of living in the direct provision centres in Ireland was compared to being in prison through direct invocation of the “prison” metaphor (*“It's like a prison sometimes. I mean it is a prison”* - Jaoa) and descriptions of the physical and symbolic boundaries the participants perceived. For example Abass describes feeling completely restricted:

I can't work. I have to stay at home all day, can't study, you can't depend on that weekly allowance [...] we can't travel out of the country lots of things like. Everything basically.

The asylum-process not only distinguished Abass from other Irish people, as described in the previous subtheme, but through imposing restrictions and barriers it confined him:

So far there was a lot of boundaries between an average Irish person and me seeking asylum. There was a lot of difference lot of boundaries you can't ever break like.

The seemingly insurmountable restrictions are evidenced within the direct-provision centres where participants felt they were denied personal space and autonomy:

It's like you don't have a say. In the room, we are three, we are three in a

room, so it's like you don't have your own personal space. But for now you don't have anything to say about it, so it's like you just grab whatever you have, you enjoy whatever you have. (Ajoba)

I can't study at night if I want to read books or you know because roommates might be playing loud music and you know it's very inconveniencing but you know, what else are you going to do? You have to take it, adapt, adapt to the environment you find yourself in (Togar)

In this context of restricted autonomy and privacy both Ajoba and Togar display resilience through describing their only option as adapting and persevering through making the most of their given situation.

Food became emblematic of the restrictions faced. Food in the direct provision hostels represented a de-individualising experience and highlighted the participants' lack of control: "*they give you the same food, it's like prison food*" (Togar). In the extended quote below Ajoba describes her impressions of food in the hostel:

We have our three meals in a day; in the morning, afternoon and evening. So it's like when the time is up you just go down, you eat something. But sometimes there's one thing that, that's pushed me away or, it, like, doesn't make me happy over there. [...] They serve us three times a meal, but I know sometimes you may not feel like eating, or maybe you want to eat later or you want to eat early. You think that "Oh, let me take the food, and take it to my room, take it upstairs". Or there's, you know, they have the small kitchen upstairs so let me take it, maybe I'll put it in the fridge when I feel like I'm hungry, then I will eat. But because they set the time from maybe nine to ten you have to eat your breakfast. That's what you have to do. Even if you are taking the food upstairs or you want to keep it sometimes it becomes a problem. They wouldn't allow you. And we are individual people, you know?

This example illustrates the chief issues faced by the participants in relation to their experiences with food in the asylum-seeking hostels. Restrictions are described in terms of what food can be eaten, when it is served, where it can be stored; "*You have to eat at this time or else you don't have [dinner]*" (Tim). Ajoba describes these restrictions as physically repelling, "*pushed me away*". These restrictions are associated with de-

individuation as Ajoba describes feeling that the distinctiveness of each asylum-seeker is not acknowledged or catered for.

“I have to adjust to a new life and make something out of it”: Coping Strategies employed

This subtheme illustrates that the participants exhibited positivity and resourcefulness. While feeling marginalised and restricted, they demonstrated resilience by actively trying to make the best of their situation. In accordance with a resource-based perspective, they displayed coping strategies in terms of positive self-talk and actions. While they felt that their present circumstances were unacceptable they sought to work toward a more positive future. The coping strategies employed included using their time in the asylum-process to lay the foundations for a more positive future, looking forward to the changes in their circumstances that would accompany a successful outcome of their application for asylum, and engaging in benefit finding by identifying and reflecting on positive aspects of the asylum-seeking process. Take Martha’s summation of her situation as an example:

About the food and the noises and sometimes you don't feel free, the way you want to live, so, they say “if you can't beat them enjoy them!” (Martha)

Deliberate or not, Martha’s re-working of the idiom “if you can’t beat them, join them” illustrates an important aspect of the experiences of the participants of this study. Given that they can neither beat *nor* join “*them*”, they must make the best of their given situation, and so a third option - to “*enjoy them*” is identified. Making the best of their current situation was something all the participants actively tried to do. Moving to adult accommodation was daunting for Ajoba, but through construing the move as an opportunity to learn from adults, Ajoba was able to find a positive outcome from her unwanted move to Galway:

You get to learn things from other people, and where I am now, it's more of grown-ups, so at least being a teenager I will, I get to learn a lot from the adults as well. (Ajoba)

Another coping mechanism adopted by participants was to focus on using opportunities available to them in order to lay the foundation for their future lives. Togar is distinctive in that he looks forward to returning to his birth-country with the education he has acquired in Ireland in order to make a positive difference there:

Maybe one day I return, well-educated and maybe have the power to make some changes and make it a better place to bring back some peace and progress to the community (Togar)

More commonly, the participants envisaged their futures being in Ireland. Education represented a key, positive outcome which would help ensure a positive future:

I've finished with my Leaving Cert, and I've got a diploma, so I know my future will be bright as compared to now, because at least if I, if I, God willingly, I get my own place, it's like I will use the certificate I've got to look for a job, so with that I will move on with my life. (Ajoba)

The course I'm doing right now, the two PLC courses I did [...] they both, both have links to colleges here and in Dublin as well 'cause I wish to go back to Dublin. Go for a level 8 course and further my education, you know, so hopefully when I finish, I'm going to complete it and have a good, get a good result, continue. (Abass)

The participants also coped with their current situation by reflecting on what they had gained from their experiences in Ireland:

I'm kind of feeling that I am able to make a decision on my own. (Jaoa)

My first attending school is Ireland here and I really met a nice person, Breda, she was teaching me in English, how to read, how to write and I am happy. (Martha)

What I've gone through, you know like in some way it make me strong (Tim)

The little I have, I want to develop on it. But at my age, as I compare to some of the teenagers of Irish people, it's like, they don't care, they're just having fun, ah, they have everything, you know, this is their country so ah, there's more time, there's more time. (Ajoba)

In the above extracts the participants highlight the personal growth that has accompanied their time in Ireland. Jaoa has matured, Martha has gotten an education, Tim has grown stronger. – so up to now I have the sense of similarity between the participants, is it the case that these benefits are a bit more individual and distinctive?

Ajoba compares herself favourably to Irish peers, feeling that she has a better appreciation of the opportunities available to her. She sees herself as resourceful; *“I try to grab it, I try to use it”*. The future-orientation of the participants was evidenced in their looking forward to the attainment of refugee status which represented freedom.

What does it mean to me to be an asylum-seeker? Maybe one day and I'll have my paper to be whatever I want to do in Ireland here (Martha)

What will change for me is, is like in a way I will get my freedom (Ajoba)

Making Connections

This theme considers the participants' social experiences. It highlights the important role of other individuals in the acculturation process. The participants' perceptions of the willingness of other Irish to interact with them influenced the extent to which they felt able to form social relationships. Over time they learned how to navigate social relationships in Ireland, with some finding more success than others. The theme also highlights how certain fortuitous relationships have proved particularly helpful for the participants.

“There’s just few of them that would be open to you” – Interacting with Irish People

This subtheme considers the participants' relationships with other Irish people in terms of experiences of racism and attempts to forge social relationships. Experiences of racism were common. In addition, Ajoba and Togar commented on the distance between people in Ireland relative to their birth countries. Jaoa described not having close friends, yet being able to navigate his social relationships with ease. Martha, Tim and Abass described feeling that they had numerous Irish friends. This is interesting given how long they had lived in Ireland (two, four and six years, respectively). This suggests that length of time in Ireland was not necessarily related to the participants' subjective sense of their ability to form and maintain relationships with Irish people.

Racist incidents were typically described as happening in public spaces or in the school setting. For example, Togar described an incident at a bus stop where he was intimidated by a passing car: *“they were calling me all kinds of racial slangs and they were flashing lights on my face as they were driving by”* (Togar). Such incidents were seen as something the participants simply had to get used to: *“It’s normal, like you know, so I don’t count that as an issue any more”* (Abass). Participants characterised

the people making racist comments as deviant from the norm; ignorant, psychologically impaired or another minority group member whose opinion was discounted:

If you knew what you were saying out of your mouth I don't think you would say what you are saying now (Martha)

Psychologically something is wrong. Maybe they have problem adjusting to colour [...] I can't change the colour of my skin, that person has to change his attitude. Change his perception. He is the one that has to change (Togar)

I wouldn't use the word racist, I would say stupid. Basically, most of them are not Irish, to be honest with you. Most of them are not Irish, like for example, Eastern Europeans (Tim)

Each strategy used to deal with racism pathologises the racist while also empowering the participant. The outcome being that participants were able to see experiences of racism as separable from experiences with members of mainstream Irish society. Martha characterises the racist as ignorant. Togar questions the psychological state of the racist and feels that he is not the source of the problem. Tim chooses to use the word “*stupid*” rather than “*racist*” and says that such incidents are instigated by another minority group in Ireland – Eastern Europeans, rather than Irish people.

Jaoa described experiencing only one potentially racist encounter. The incident he related was ambiguous; it occurred as he was walking with other Black friends while listening to music on headphones. A car approached and the passengers called something out of the window: “*I think they called some kind of names or something like that [...] I asked them what happened, and they told me that they was kind of saying the “N” word*” (Jaoa). Other participants also recounted ambiguous instances where they suspected they were being discriminated against on the basis of their skin colour but were unsure. Such incidents happened in situations where the participants were dealing with authority figures such as teachers. In the following examples we see how they try to understand perceived discriminatory behaviour on the part of their teachers or other adult members of the Irish community. In these instances the participants felt they were being treated differently for no discernible reason:

She would give others people the roll to sign and she wouldn't give me roll to sign, and I received my report from school, I wasn't absent for five days, they put absent for me for five days (Martha)

She [the teacher] gave me permission to go out and I went out and I came in and she doesn't remember giving me any permission that I should get out of the classroom right? [...]I got really, let's say angry. I was really, like, I was shouting which at the end like I was in kind of trouble with it, because I couldn't control my temper the way she was acting you know shouting at me for no reason I didn't do nothing you know so I just went off like that like exploded (Tim)

There was one Irish lady sitting and there was this empty seat. It's like I wanted to sit there and it's like, she said "excuse me? Why? Why?" So "can I sit here?" She said, "Yeah, you have to ask before!" And it's like this is a public transportation! So it's like I have to move away anyway, find another seat, but kind of, I don't think if the person was an Irish person she would do that, but because I'm black (Ajoba)

Martha felt that a teacher had been marking her absent on purpose. Tim felt that he was being treated unfairly having received permission to leave the classroom and upon his return getting in trouble while an Irish student who arrived late was not punished. Ajoba felt that a lady on the bus did not want to sit next to her because of her skin colour. These participants struggled to identify a particular reason for why they were discriminated against. The ambiguity that accompanied such interactions affected the participants differently with Tim feeling frustrated to the point that he "*exploded*" in anger.

Togar, Jaoa and Ajoba discussed a sense of distance between Irish people, and a difficulty getting close to them. Togar put this down to a difference between how Irish people interact compared to how people from his birth country interact with each other:

Around here it's like you know people are kind of like a little bit you know a little but held back. They don't want to open up you know, they are kind of, you know, "you stay on your side, I'll stay on my side, I don't know you you don't know me." They pass by, they wink, you know or they might shake the hand and that, ok, and move on (Togar)

Togar describes the superficial encounters he has experienced with Irish people. The interactions are brief and polite yet lacking sincerity. A similar situation is described by Ajoba in relation to her former Irish classmates:

When it comes to the students it's just few of them that will try to be close to you, or I mean chat with you or something like that. But the rest of you, it's like they will be: "Oh, hello, how are you?" It's kind of, it's just on their lips "Hi ya" when you turn back then they will be talking about you (Ajoba)

The lack of in-depth interactions was associated with uncertainty for Ajoba, where she did not know where she stood with her Irish classmates; *"today they will be nice to you, the next day they will pretend as if they don't know you"* (Ajoba). Similarly, Jaoa describes his relationships with classmates as not being 'friendships'; *"I didn't have friends. But I just had people that I was talking to"* (Jaoa). Having acquaintances that he *"was talking to"* echoes Ajoba's feeling that *"it's just on their lips"*.

"I kind of know what to do" – Developing strategies to get along with Irish people

Getting along with others in Ireland was described as a learning process.

Typically, the participants knew little about Ireland before arriving: *"I don't even know what is Ireland before I left my country"* (Martha). While difficult at first, over time they grew more confident in navigating social relationships here: *"So I came here to Ireland, Ireland is take me sometimes to know what is, what they are doing here, and what are they not doing, but now I am ok with it"* (Martha). This process of learning how to get along in Ireland is discussed under two broad categories; learning over time and devising strategies for getting along.

Abass describes the initial difficulties in social interactions in Ireland in terms of a lack of cultural knowledge:

When I first came like, it took me a long while to get used to the Irish 'cause I don't know their beliefs and all you know. I have to get used to their English it took me some while to get used to, you know, their routines, their personality and you know, you have to fit into the environment, you know, to get along with people (Abass)

This extract highlights the need to get along that the participants felt. Abass recognises that it was *"quite tough"* initially due to a lack of understanding. The participants who had arrived in Ireland and were not age disputed had attended at least two different schools in Ireland. Of these participants, all of them described finding the second school easier to navigate. Below Tim describes some of the reasons for this:

At times they would be joking with you and you would take it serious, like

you know. In all the second school was better because we had different like different nationalities, and, but the first one the first one was like, most of them were like Irish [...] the school was kind of like rough you know [...] every day like going to school you'd be thinking about, "ok like what if?" in case somebody do anything to you, what you going to do or you know. But when I moved to the second school I was free minded. (Tim)

Similarly, in the following extract Ajoba describes having an easier time settling into her second school: *"The first one, I was new in this country, so, so it's very difficult for me, but the second school, that I went to, I - there were other people from different countries, but I was more comfortable in that school as compared to the first."*

Participants found that being in a school with other students from their birth country helped: *"When you have somebody from your own country, like, I think he understand you more than others"* (Abass).

Participants also noted that their own efforts were required to get along at school: *"I try, I really try, so I know what ever happens I know at least I have to also come out, whatever they will do, me I, I will try to come out"* (Ajoba). Ajoba has made a concerted effort to "come out" and interact with her classmates. Using the knowledge she has gained from being in Ireland she has developed a strategy to socialise more effectively. This represents one strategy described by participants to facilitate social interactions. Jaoa also felt the need to rely on his own initiative to integrate himself with his new classmates:

Ain't nobody tell you that you have to, but when you go to school, when you come to Ireland at a young age you will go to school maybe, maybe you don't want to play but, nobody is forcing you to do, but as long as your friends are doing it, maybe you just want to get along with them. So maybe you want to play. (Jaoa)

School had represented a context where participants could get to know Irish peers, however, as individuals recognised as adults in the asylum-seeking process they could no longer access education on the same basis as Irish people. Martha was lucky in that she was attending secondary school despite being deemed an adult. The remaining participants were trying to secure further education at the time of the interviews, but this was an arduous process. Being re-located to Galway and being denied the educational

opportunities open to Irish citizens limited the opportunities the participants now had to engage with Irish people.

“If not for her...” The people who have been a help

All participants identified a particular person or people who had helped to ease their transition to Irish life. The people identified by participants offered instrumental and/or social support, thereby making them feel like valued members of a group, e.g. a class at school, among peers or in Irish society. Participants mostly identified teachers as being particularly helpful. Ajoba describes how the teachers in her school, and the principal in particular, made her feel valued:

Where I did my Leaving Cert I would say, even the principal would even go to the extent of, even when it is, when it is Christmas time or Easter, they will give us something, those people that were in the hostel. Maybe they will give us a token, a card, something [...] to show that they really care or they are very happy that we are in the school. I've left Dublin a year ago but they still contact us, "How, how are you doing? How are things? Anytime you come to Dublin you pay a visit, to say hello" (Ajoba)

For Ajoba the teachers fostered a sense of inclusion. This was evidenced by the gifting of tokens such as greeting cards and the extension of invitations to visit them at school again after she had been relocated to Galway. Martha received more instrumental help from a teacher who taught her to read and write. The special relationship with teachers made the participants feel ‘normal’, and countered the feelings of abnormality engendered by the asylum-seeking process:

I enjoyed every minute of it ‘cause the teachers are good. If you have any problems you just go to them. And the class do have fun, and it’s a laugh [...] You could talk to them as a fellow student you know, have a good chat in class. Talk about life and any things that’s worrying you, [...] They just think as I’m a kid so I enjoyed that. (Abass)

Abass welcomed the fact that teachers treated him as “a kid” rather than an asylum-seeker.

Irish peers of the same age also proved to be important sources of support, provided a relationship had been established with them. Martha described having a close bond akin to a sisterhood with her classmates: *“They are like my sisters, like they*

are my friends, they are my sisters, I take them like my sisters". Ajoba established a friendship with an Irish girl who helped to bridge the distance she felt between herself and other Irish peers:

She is very, very lovely to me. So, it's like she told some of her friends that "oh, Ajoba will be coming with us" and it's like, the way they re-acted is like they didn't want to, so kind of, they didn't want me to come with them. So she tried to convince them, "oh, she is my friend, bla bla bla", things like that, so she later told me that "oh, ok, now they've agreed that you can join us". So if not her, it's like I was being pushed away, so you know, they don't want me to be with their group (Ajoba)

Ajoba's Irish friend served as a gatekeeper to other Irish peers and brokered acceptance on her behalf. Tim describes receiving more instrumental help from an Irish friend who used to bring him to and from school: *"if he didn't like me he wouldn't do that and he wasn't in, it wasn't like he was doing that to everybody. It was only me"* (Tim). Tim's relationship with his friend in the above extract served to bolster his self-esteem. The treatment he receives from his friend shows that he has been successful in forming and maintaining a friendship.

Togar received instrumental help from a woman he worked with as part of a work experience placement who provided him with a computer:

The lady gave me the computer and it was helpful for me to finish up all my assignments and submit my projects and everything else. (Togar)

This computer was used by Togar to finish assignments for his college course. This was a particularly useful gift as he no longer had to rely on the computer in the hostel, which lacked the software he wanted to use, or the college computers which were subject to particular opening and closing times. The computer therefore represented greater freedom and removed one obstacle to independent study. In contrast to the other participants, Jaoa described having to rely on himself rather than receiving any specific help from others.

The support that the participants received from teachers, friends and others was an important external source of support to compliment the internal resourcefulness described in the final subtheme of the first theme. However, having been relocated to

Galway, the participants were distanced from many of the important social ties they had formed.

Making sense of it all

This theme considers how the participants make sense of their experiences in terms of their self-concept and the contrasts they note between their birth country and Ireland. The participants noted that they had changed in terms of how they think about themselves and how they behave, yet they also strive to maintain a sense of continuity. This theme addresses how the participants negotiated differences between the cultures they were engaged with and how they reconciled these differences with their sense of self.

Change in self

The participants had gone through many changes through their time in Ireland which ranged from less than two years for Martha to more than six years for Abass. These changes included physical, attitudinal, behavioural and lifestyle changes. Ajoba, who had lived in Ireland for two years, described becoming a more secure and confident person. She described changes that have occurred in her self-concept:

At first I used to be afraid, seriously, based on the things happened in my country that make me come here. It's like I was being afraid, I was an afraid person. So it was very hard for me, but as I said, in Ireland life is more comfortable, as compared to Ghana [...] Even I don't think I would have been able to even come here and talk, no, no, you'll never get me!

She has changed from being an “*afraid person*” to someone confident enough to take part in an interview and share her experiences. Similarly, Martha reflects her improved situation since coming to Ireland:

I have my liberty here, I can go out, I have the friends here and I do whatever I want, and I don't have a time to go outside "don't go there, don't do this, you are not allowed to have friends"

Jaoa notes the physical maturation that has occurred over the two and a half years since coming to Ireland:

I'm becoming big! I grew up a little bit. Because you didn't know me back

then. If I show you the pictures when I came here, like, I didn't have the beard when I came here. Now I have a beard. If my parents one day saw me, they're going say, they're going to get confused!

His physical changes cause him to reflect on what his parents would think if they saw him now. He appears to be a different person to the one that left Angola (*"I look like I am another person now"*). This draws into focus the separation from family members he has experienced.

Tim also notes the maturation that has accompanied his four years in Ireland, but, like Ajoba, the changes he outlines are more related to social and emotional development, rather than the physical maturation described by Jaoa:

Basically this country opened my eyes to different things, you know, how to like interact, interact with different people. And learning, learning a different culture [...] I have changed a lot actually. Yea. Make me kind of, I would say, mature.

Being in Ireland he has learned to interact with a variety of people. His newfound maturity has been of use in the asylum-seeking context, where he must be self-reliant in order to survive:

Now I'm nearly 19 now, so even if I am sick I have to go to the GP myself, but in Africa and you are 19 still even if you get sick you have like, your guardians or your mom

Tim has had to become responsible for himself and take his own destiny in hand; *"even my interview, I have to, instead of a taxi coming for me I have to find my way there, and I was nearly yea late for my own interview which was a big thing."*

While most changes for participants are described in positive terms, some changes were difficult for the participants. Below Abass makes sense of his change in religious orientation – moving from a practicing Muslim to someone who has *"lost [his] ways"*:

When I came to this country everything just suddenly changed, I lost my religion I lost my ways [...] I don't pray. I don't fast anymore. So everything changed. So you see, you get used to the environment, the people here and you forget about, a bit about your roots, you know. That's one thing about

me, I've been trying to get it back but I haven't so [...] going school and then I will come back from schools and having your homework it would be tough to keep up you know so. I just lost it, like you know. So I have myself to blame.

This change in religious orientation is described as a forgetting of “*roots*” caused by his changed environment and lifestyle. For Abass the loss of his religion was accompanied by an uptake of drinking:

My religion doesn't accept drinking, you know. But the drinks keeps on coming, coming so, yea, they just pushed, one day I decided just to have a go since then yea, think it was 3 years ago [...] I don't get drunk though.

Life and other obligations have gotten in the way of his maintenance of his religious obligations. Abass makes sense of these changes by describing himself as helpless to resist them, yet equally he accepts responsibility for them.

Togar resists the notion that he has changed during his time in Ireland, yet he notes that change is inevitable, and that some aspects of Irish life have undoubtedly “rubbed off on him” during his time here:

There is no way you will live in a community that some part of it won't rub off on you and yeah, maybe, [...] as time goes on and as I spend more time here, meeting new people, learning about their culture, their, the differences, whatever attributes they have, their personality, the kind of personality that they have and, I adapt to that.

Togar is passive in these changes. Rather than actively embracing the changes Togar feels that they have occurred merely due to his presence there. Togar does not necessarily see these changes as positive, rather something he must “*adapt*” to.

Continuity in self

Despite the changes that have occurred for the participants, they demonstrate attempts to maintain continuity in their self-concepts. Take Abass, for example, who we saw in the previous subtheme as having “lost” his religion and having taken up drinking alcohol. He says he doesn't drink to get drunk, unlike his Irish friends, and so far has not had a problem with the amount he drinks. He avoids getting “*all the way drunk*”. In this way he maintains a connection to his roots and draws a contrast between himself

and his Irish friends. Maintaining his sense of self in relation to his upbringing appears to be important to Abass, and is reflected in the advice he would give to another asylum-seeking youth coming to the country:

Don't get involved with something you wouldn't do back home like mm
that's all I say. Don't overdo it like, or maybe get involved with the Gardaí.

Maintaining identification with the way they were brought up is also important to other participants. For example, Ajoba continues to attend church in Ireland because it was how she was brought up:

It's part of me. If, if I don't go to church, I don't know it's like, that's, that's
what I used to do, or that's how I was raised up. I go to church. So, when I
came here I still attended church, I still go to church.

Ajoba says she feels “*more comfortable with my people*” so her participation in a predominantly African church in Ireland allows her to maintain a sense of continuity with her upbringing and a connection to other Africans in Ireland. This connection is also felt as an integral part of herself “*it's part of me*”.

Tim maintains a sense of pride in his birth country, representing a link to his past and he wishes to instil this sense of his heritage in any children he may have in the future:

Maybe I can go for holidays or my kids just to see my country where their
daddy's from [...] for my kids to have a little insight where I come from and
my culture you know [...] but apart from that no way!

In the above extract, we can see that this wish to teach his children about where he has come from does not extend to moving permanently back there. His reluctance to return indicates a continued symbolic identification but a wish to remain physically separate from his birth country. Togar who, in contrast, does wish to return to his birth country in the future, has a strong sense of personal continuity, feeling that little has changed for him as regards his self-concept: “*I'm still the same person, but grown up more*”. He is positive about his birth-country and maintains the values he learned there:

That's how we're brought up back home, don't let any day be a waste, do
something useful every day, so. I don't know how the Irish way of life is, I

can't really speak for them, I can only speak for myself so, that's my philosophy on life.

His African identity allows him to feel positive about his lack of engagement in alcohol consumption:

It's not part of what we, we Africans, it's not, we don't take it as part of life, really. We don't abuse it. (Togar)

Evaluating contrasts between cultures

This subtheme considers how the participants evaluated their perceptions of the Irish country and culture relative to their birth country and culture. Participants noted differing expectations of adolescents in their birth country as compared to Ireland. For example, Abass describes the central role a teenage boy plays in the family in his birth country:

Out there the child seems to be the bread winner to help the family, going to work and bringing the money back home. [...] I mean totally different from here I think, you know. So they expect more from you down there.

The clear, active role contrasts with what he feels is expected from teenage boys in Ireland: *“Not that much”*. His uncertainty about what is expected from Irish teenagers may reflect the separation from their life he experiences due to his engagement in the asylum-process. In his birth-country Abass describes a key role of the adolescent in financially supporting the family, whereas in Ireland life is described as more *“simple”*.

In Ireland, the participants are exposed to a more comfortable standard of living. Ajoba contrasts the comfortable life in Ireland to the relative discomfort in Ghana:

It, you get more opportunities in terms of school, in terms of social gathering, like other activities, you get, you get the chance to involve yourself. But when it comes to Africa, it's more or less like it's, it's only comfortable to the rich people, if you are from a poor family or let's say normal, a family that's not too rich, sometimes it's very hard for you.

Like Abass' view of the *“simple”* life Irish people expect, Ajoba feels that life in Ireland is *“easy”*, with access to good quality education and facilities for people of different economic backgrounds. However, despite the higher quality of life afforded in Ireland, the people she feels *“more friendly”* in Ghana.

Participants all felt that adolescents in Ireland lacked a clear role, and that respect for elders was lacking. Togar reflected on the importance of respect for elders in his birth country:

Growing up in Liberia is, there is a sense of communal understanding, respect for elders and you know, you see an elderly person walking on the road, maybe carrying something you don't know him or her, you help them out you walk on the street you say good morning, good afternoon, how are you doing? [...]Everybody is like brothers and sisters, that is before the war broke out. So back here, around here everybody is like , you know, stay on your side I'll stay on my side, neighbours you know don't want to know the other neighbour, everybody keeps.. minds their business kind of, you know.

For Togar, interpersonal relationships and familial closeness were key to everyday life. In Ireland he feels these social ties are weak and finds the people disconnected from each other. Encountering such differences between cultures requires the participants to evaluate these changes and to decide how to cope with them if necessary. For example, Tim also noted the relative freedom of teenagers in Ireland:

You know like here you have so many choices. You can work and become independent [...] but in Africa you don't have anything like that time. Like you going to be a student you have to be student straight up and if you want to work you have to get into work straight up.

The clear role afforded by familial and societal expectations “*you have to be a student straight up*”, is contrasted with the time adolescents are afforded to make up their own minds. The focus on individualism is emphasised in the following extract:

People are expecting, you know, like you have to help the community, or, yea. But here, people do give back as well here, but it's like more like, do you know, like you are going to build on your own like, you know. You can say that “ok, this is Tim here” you know, “ok I am living, I'm doing this for me”, but in Africa like **laughs** you are doing it for the whole family.

Jaoa notes the coping he must engage in to get accustomed to the multiple changes he has been faced with:

In every kind of way. You know just, coming, you know coming, it's not

just about being African, it's about somebody moving to another place. So if you just think about that difference. And coming, learning the language, coping with the culture, like this kind of sport, like in Ireland, I've never known this, I've never played Gaelic in my life so when you come here you have to cope with these things.

Martha, unlike the other participants, had not formed a clear idea of what her birth-country was like, due to how she had lived there ("like a slave, a prisoner"). Martha has little motivation to maintain a sense of continuity between her present and her past self.

Discussion

In this chapter I set out to describe and explore the acculturation experiences of adolescent asylum-seekers in Ireland, and to query whether these experiences were compatible with positive youth development (PYD). The analysis pointed to three main issues which the participants were engaged with, and which illustrate their acculturation experience; 1) dealing with the asylum-process in Ireland, 2) dealing with interpersonal interactions with Irish people and 3) reconciling their sense of self and cultural background with their current situations.

Key to each of these themes is the reciprocal relationship between the individual and their context (the asylum-seeking context, the immediate social context, the extended social context and the cultural context). This is in line with the PYD perspective, where the mutually-influential relations between an individual and their contexts are seen as constituting the fundamental process of human development (Lerner et al., 2012). The findings suggest that the relationship was reciprocal in that the participants impacted and were impacted by their context. However, the participants could not necessarily influence their contexts in the way they wanted to. The active engagement of the participants with their contexts and the subsequent sense-making which occurred underscores the importance of recognising that in order to understand acculturation, the interactional context in which it occurs must be understood (Crockett & Zamboanga, 2009, Schwarz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010; Rohmann, Piontkowski, & van Randenborgh, 2008). In understanding how the participants were making sense of their contexts their developmental stage also comes to the fore. As emerging adults (Arnett, 2000, 2010) they are striving for greater independence, yet as asylum-seekers their autonomy is restricted. I will now take each identified theme in turn and discuss it in relation to the potential for PYD.

Life in the asylum-seeking process

The first theme described the participants' engagement with the asylum-seeking process. This is salient as it has been recognised that the acculturation options available to migrants may depend on the circumstances surrounding their migration (Bourhis et al., 1997; Steiner, 2009). Asylum-seekers seek sanctuary in a new country due to fear of persecution or violence (Berry, 2006). Within the receiving country they may be seen as a drain on resources (Steiner, 2009) and may be more likely to face discrimination (Louis, Duck, Terry, Schuller & Lalonde, 2007). Further, they are likely to have experienced considerable trauma in their homelands, which may impact on their ability to adapt once they arrive in the receiving country (Akhtar, 1999).

The participants in this study were on the cusp of 'emerging adulthood' (Arnett, 2000, 2010) and were recognised as adults according to the Irish asylum system. As such they were housed with other adults in 'direct provision' centres, denied the opportunity to gain employment and accessing third level education was a complicated, expensive process. Effectively, these restrictions limited the quality and quantity of contact they could have with the White Irish majority group regardless of their own desire for interaction.

This is relevant in terms of the potential for PYD as Benson (1997) has identified 40 internal and external assets thought to be necessary for PYD. The restrictions imposed on asylum-seeking youth restrict their access to many of these, including their access to support from adults; their access to a caring neighbourhood that values them and gives them useful roles in the community; their ability to feel safe; encouragement to do well and achieve; creative activities; time at home. Further, having aged-out of the asylum-process the participants could no longer benefit from a caring-school climate, a school that provides clear rules and boundaries and they were distanced from some of the positive adult role models that they had built relationships with (e.g. teachers or principals). This curtailment of the assets that these youth have access to is cause for concern given the association between assets and risk behaviours. Combined large-scale research among adolescents in the US has indicated that as assets rise in number, reductions are evidenced in each of 10 risk behaviour patterns (alcohol use, tobacco use, illicit drug use, anti-social behaviour, violence, school failure, sexual activity, attempted suicide, driving and alcohol use, and gambling) (Benson, 2007). Additionally, this research has indicated that greater assets are associated with thriving

behaviours including pro-social behaviour, academic achievement and delay of gratification.

As adolescents who came to Ireland as unaccompanied minors they did not have familial support. This is significant in that five of the external assets associated with positive youth development involve the family (Benson, 1997; family support, positive family communication, parent involvement in schooling, family boundaries and time at home). Those participants who had aged-out during the asylum-seeking process were relocated away from the social networks they had established in Dublin thereby distancing them from external assets that were previously available to them (relationships with significant adults – e.g. teachers, caring school climate, school boundaries, positive peer influences, and religious communities). The participants described finding it difficult to find a constructive use of their time and the experience of being denied access to educational or employment opportunities meant that they did not perceive that Irish society had high expectations of them.

While the participants were denied many of the external assets deemed necessary for positive youth development, they nevertheless reported wanting to lay the foundations for a positive future where they could work and contribute to society. Yet they felt hindered from doing so through being denied the same life-trajectory as their host-culture peers in terms of accessing education and employment. They felt trapped by the asylum-process and denied personal autonomy regarding where to live, what/when to eat, who to live with. Education was a significant point of reference for them, as in the previous study with African adolescents who came to Ireland through the process of family reunification.

In spite of the limited access to external assets, the participants displayed many of the internal assets deemed necessary for positive youth development (Benson, 1997). For example, in terms of ‘a commitment to learning’ all participants were motivated to seek out further educational opportunities and felt ‘bonded to schools’ they had attended in Ireland. With regard to ‘positive values’ the participants had spent time thinking about social justice issues (human rights for example), felt a responsibility to avoid criminality and bad behaviours, and espoused the value of integrity and honesty – some of which may come from heritage culture values, but may also have been inspired by their experiences as asylum-seekers. The participants had also developed social competencies including the ability to deal with people from at least two cultures, and had learned to make plans and decisions autonomously. The sense of purpose, self-

esteem and positive view of personal future also reflect the internal assets associated with positive identity. The youth in the present study demonstrated resilience through their attempts to adapt to the asylum-seeking environment, yet this resilience emerged in a context with limited external assets, which suggests an important role for the internal assets that had. Assets have been shown to be important to youth in particularly challenging social contexts. For example, Taylor et al. (2002) found that there is a link between developmental assets and thriving among youth in urban gang settings.

In a longitudinal study in a small Midwestern city in the US Scales, Benson, Roehlkepartain, Benson, & Sesma (2006) found that levels of developmental assets were two to four times more powerful at predicting academic achievement, engagement in risk behaviours, and thriving than were demographic factors such as race, ethnicity or poverty. Their findings indicated that changes in a young person's developmental assets profile have significant impact on markers of developmental success. In terms of the present study this is both a cause for concern and an opportunity. It is a cause for concern in that when the adolescents aged-out they were even more limited in the external assets they had access to. It presents an opportunity to enhance the lives of these adolescents by suggesting that enhancing the assets they have access to may have a significantly positive impact as an increase of only two or three assets showed an effect.

A key aspect of the asylum-seeking process for the participants was a sense of uncertainty and a lack of autonomy. Uncertainty has been identified as a major factor in the distress associated with chronic health conditions (Smith & Osborn, 1998). The participants engaged in several coping strategies to deal with the uncertainty associated with being an asylum-seeker. These included focusing on positive aspects of their experiences and hoping for a better future. Forbearance of problems may be a salient characteristic of some communal or collectivistic cultures (e.g., Yue, 2001), and the participants in this study seemed to use this coping strategy. Although this could be viewed as an admirable trait, it is plausible to consider that failing to acknowledge and share some troublesome personal information could impede the psychological health of asylum-seeking adolescents experiencing high levels of cultural adjustment difficulties.

The coping strategies outlined in these findings reflect those found in recent research on adolescent UAM's in Ireland who had not yet aged-out of the asylum-seeking process (NíRaghallaigh & Gilligan, 2010). This qualitative research suggested that maintaining continuity was noted as being important to participants, whereby

participants tried to maintain their religious faith in their new context. Like the participants in this study, further coping strategies noted included looking on the positive aspects of their situations, looking for distractions, and acting independently. These findings also reflect the findings of qualitative research conducted with adult asylum-seekers. For example, in a UK study of Somali female forced-migrants Whittaker et al. (2005) identified a subtheme labelled as a 'get on with it' approach. This was exemplified by the participants desire to be strong and deal quickly with problems rather than dwell on them. Schweitzer, Greenslade and Kagee (2007) conducted an IPA study with refugees (rather than asylum-seekers), and found a number of strategies that helped participants to cope and be resilient (including religious beliefs, social support and personal qualities).

Making Connections

The second theme considered participants interpersonal relationships, with a particular emphasis on how they related to members of the White Irish majority group. The participants faced uncertainty in these inter-personal interactions. As with the participants in the previous study, experiences of racism were common. This is worrying as research indicates that exposure to racial discrimination may increase the risk of developing or exacerbating mental health problems or concerns during the cultural adjustment process. There is an abundance of literature documenting the strong link between perceived racist events and negative health-related and psychological outcomes such as hypertension (e.g., Broman, 1996; Krieger & Sidney, 1996), cardiovascular reactivity (e.g., Fang & Myers, 2001), depression (e.g., Comas-Diaz & Greene, 1994), general psychological distress (e.g., Pak, Dion, & Dion, 1991), and eating problems (e.g., Thompson, 1992).

However, in addition to discriminatory and alienating experiences, the participants also recounted experiences with individuals who emerged as particularly helpful. These were frequently teachers, but also Irish peers or chance contacts, and they helped the adolescents to feel valued. These could be argued to represent some of the external assets described by Benson (1997, 2003). For example, among external assets, Benson (2007) identifies support for adolescents from three or more nonparent adults and adult role models who model positive, responsible behaviour as being important. Navigating interpersonal interactions was seen as a learning process and the adolescents were more comfortable over time in dealing with Irish people. This reflects

‘behavioural’ or learning approaches to acculturation (see Chapter 2). These findings also relate to the importance of these students maintaining social connections with individuals who can validate their sense of self and ways of being. Although relationships may be important to many adolescents and emerging adults, connections to important others may represent essential aspects of self-identity and seem to reflect strong cultural values for international migrants from communal cultures such as Nigeria, Ghana or The Congo (Grills, 2002; Grills & Ajei, 2002). Moreover, for African adolescent asylum-seekers who may be experiencing difficulties adjusting to the asylum-seeking process, close connections and social support networks may reflect critical ways of coping or dealing with acculturation stressors and mental health concerns.

Making sense of it all

The final theme related to how the adolescents made sense of their experiences. As in the previous study, it was in terms of making sense of differences that cultural and ethnic identities appeared to play the greatest role. The participants noted many changes that had occurred within and around them since coming to Ireland, despite the uncertainty inherent in the asylum process they felt safer and more secure. They had access to greater educational opportunities than in their birth countries. Despite feeling positive about the many changes in their lives, the participants strove to maintain a sense of continuity between their experiences and sense of self, and their background and former sense of self. Participant responses exposed the struggle these asylum-seekers faced in adjusting to Irish culture and in maintaining important aspects of their African identity. For example, maintaining religious practices, not consuming alcohol, living a communal lifestyle. The findings also suggest that the participants’ ethnic and cultural identities may have served as a buffer from engagement in health-risk behaviours, for example while some participants consumed alcohol, they did not drink according to Irish drinking norms, they drank according to what they saw as more acceptable in their home countries. Therefore, along with efforts to develop the skills necessary for successful participation in the Irish cultural context, it may be desirable for newly arriving immigrants to maintain an emphasis on cultural philosophy, religion, values, and family roots.

Overall, these findings demonstrate the complexity of experiences related to immigration and acculturation for adolescent asylum-seekers in Ireland. The findings

also have policy implications for the treatment of asylum-seeking youth in Ireland. While the policy of direct provision and dispersal is proposed to be in young people's best interests once they 'age-out' during the asylum-seeking process, the findings illustrate how being re-located disrupts the social ties they had made and limits their perceived autonomy. In line with the stress and coping perspective proposed by Berry (1997), the acculturation process presented these participants with a number of challenges to overcome. The participants utilised the internal and external assets available to them in order to cope with these challenges. However, the external assets identified by Benson (1997, 2003) as being necessary for positive youth development were limited due to the participants' status as asylum seekers. This indicated the importance of considering societal attitudes and the policy when trying to understand acculturation, as proposed by Bourhis et al. (1997).

Across the three themes identified in this study the participants appear to be lacking in the requisite external assets thought to be necessary for positive youth development – and yet they appear to demonstrate the indicators of positive youth development: competence, confidence, connection, character and caring (Lerner, et al., 2012). The participants demonstrated confidence in their belief that they could forge a better life for themselves. Their attitudes toward further education and their wish to enter the workforce suggests a sense of competence. The network of friendships that they had attempted to build indicates connection, yet this was undermined by the asylum-seeking process. Their sense of social justice, not only for themselves but also for others, demonstrated by their engagement with the concept of human rights is indicative of caring. Their desire to give back to the Irish community and/or their heritage communities suggests character.

The emergence of these indicators of positive youth development among these young asylum-seekers is encouraging in that it is suggestive of their resilience and the personal growth afforded by their migration experience. However, it is also worrying because the Irish context does not allow them to capitalise on their strengths, and this may lead to frustration and poorer outcomes in the long run. The PYD perspective includes the idea that the development of the 'Five Cs' leads to the emergence of a 'Sixth C', that is, youth contributions to their family, community and society (Lerner, et al., 2012). However, in the case of the positively developing young people in this study, the asylum-seeking contexts inhibits them from productively contributing to their context by, for example, enhancing the economic welfare of their community or by

engaging with civil society or democratic institutions on the same basis as other members of Irish society. While all forty of the proposed external and internal assets are not necessarily required to ensure positive youth development, the more assets a young person has, the more likely they will display the indicators of positive youth development (Benson, 2003). The findings reported here suggest that these young people relied heavily on their internal assets as they interacted with, and developed in, a challenging context.

The qualitative method used illuminated how these participants strive to adapt and indicated which adaptive strategies may lead to more positive outcomes. A positive sense of ethnic or cultural identity may provide an anchor in the vicissitudes of acculturation, easing the process for asylum-seekers struggling to adjust to the asylum-seeking context and life in Ireland. However, the most salient issue for these adolescents was not necessarily reconciling conflicting cultural expectations or identifications but dealing with the asylum-seeking context, their status as asylum seekers, and its' implications for their lives.

Limitations

The limitations of this study are described in Chapter 11, which provides a discussion of the entirety of the research presented in this thesis.

Conclusion

The experiences described in this chapter problematize some concepts traditionally drawn upon in acculturation research. As discussed in Chapter 2, Berry's (1980, 1997) approach to acculturation has been criticised for the use of the term "acculturation strategies" as it implies that differences in acculturation outcomes are the result of specific choices made by migrants (Schwarz, Unger, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). However, this study illustrates that while the participants were able to choose some aspects of how they engaged with the process of acculturation, they were largely constrained by demographic and contextual factors. So, as with the first empirical study, the findings indicate that, while notions of ethnic identity and cultural background were important parts of the participants' experiences and sense-making processes, other factors may have had an even greater impact on their acculturation experiences, namely the socio-structural barriers that they faced as asylum-seekers and the views of others in sanctioning their position in Ireland.

Chapter 9: Study 3 – Exploring Stress and Coping over Time with an Acculturating Adolescent Asylum-Seeker

In this chapter I present the findings of a longitudinal IPA study which explores the experience of acculturation and coping with one of the asylum-seeking participants (Togar) who had taken part in the study presented in Chapter 8. The findings of the preceding studies were largely consistent with a stress-and-coping (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) approach to the study of acculturation, as adapted by Berry (1997). According to this perspective, intercultural contact places a demand on the acculturating individual. The individual then evaluates the meaning of these experiences, seeing them as either stressors or as benign. When the experiences are judged to be problematic, but controllable and surmountable, then acculturative stress is said to result (Berry, 2006). From Berry's (1997) perspective acculturating individuals then engage in particular acculturation strategies to cope with the acculturative stress (integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation, as described in Chapter 2). However, there is a lack of knowledge of what these strategies actually look like in practice (Ward, 2012). For example, do individuals who have adopted an integration strategy successfully integrate their heritage culture and the host culture at all times, or do they privilege one over the other depending on the context? The findings of Study 1 and Study 2 seem to suggest that an individual's acculturation strategy varies according to their relationship with the context in which it is adopted.

In addition to the acculturation strategies proposed by Berry (1997), further coping strategies are described in the wider stress and coping literature. Lazarus and Folkman (1984) for example identified problem-focused coping (whereby individuals attempt to solve the problem they are faced with) and emotion-focused coping (whereby individuals attempt to regulate the emotions associated with the problem). Endler and Parker (1990) went on to describe a third means of coping: avoidance-oriented coping. Diaz-Guerrero (1979) distinguished between active and passive coping. Active coping resembles problem-focused coping in that it aims to alter the situation. For acculturating individuals, this approach may have limited success if the problem lies in the dominant society, particularly if the dominant group has little interest in accommodating the needs of acculturating individuals (Berry, 2006). Passive coping involves patience and self-modification, and in terms of acculturation strategies it resembles assimilation (Berry, 2006). Again, this will only be successful if the dominant group is willing to accept members of the acculturating group.

In Study 1 I demonstrated how Identity Process Theory (IPT) could offer useful insights into the process of acculturation. As in the stress-and-coping acculturation perspective of Berry (1997), coping plays a pivotal role in IPT. According to IPT, once an individual perceives that their identity is threatened, they try to find ways to remove or modify the threat. These are regarded as coping strategies, and are described as occurring at the intra-psychic level, the interpersonal level and the intergroup level. At the intra-psychic level coping strategies focus on cognitions and emotions, interpersonal coping strategies rely on changing relationships with others in order to cope with threat and intergroup strategies are dependent on various group memberships as sources of support or action.

Given that coping, like acculturation, is necessarily a process that takes place over time, it is important that longitudinal research methods are used to track changes. However, the meta-ethnography presented in Chapter 4 indicated that there was a lack of longitudinal qualitative research exploring the acculturation experiences of migrant adolescents. Within this thesis, the findings of Study 1 and Study 2 indicated that participants found that relating to Irish people became easier for them over time, as they learned what to expect and how to react. This indicates that their experience of, and engagement with, the process of acculturation changed over time. However, these studies were limited in that they were cross-sectional. Any indications of change over time were garnered from retrospective accounts. This study addresses this limitation by investigating the experience of acculturation longitudinally. The data collected allowed for the experience of acculturation over time to be interrogated and so this study compliments the findings of the preceding cross-sectional studies, but offers a deeper insight.

In contrast to the preceding studies, this chapter presents a richly detailed hermeneutic phenomenological analysis of interview data from a single participant whom I have called Togar. In attempting to document the lived experience of acculturation, the cross-sectional approaches with multiple participants utilised in Study 1 and Study 2 presented many challenges. For example, the potential coping strategies that participants can engage in are multiple and varied, and depend on how the individual evaluates the demands they face. This complicates the presentation of findings. It is challenging to outline an individual's personal experience while balancing their account with the experiences reported by other participants. This study demonstrates the value of an idiographic single-participant study for the psychological

study of acculturation. The decision to focus on one individual also reflects the real-world context of the research project in that, as members of a marginalised and hard-to-reach population, the participants who had participated in initial interviews were reluctant to be formally interviewed again as they felt increasingly frustrated with the lack of progress in their asylum applications.

Reid et al. (2005) has suggested that within IPA ‘less is more’. Designs with fewer participants examined at a greater depth are seen as being preferable to broader, more shallow and simplistic descriptive analyses of many individuals (Hefferon & Gil-Rodriguez, 2011). Smith et al. (2009) suggest that studies with a single participant can be particularly powerful. The potential value of such studies is described as lying in two areas. Firstly, such studies allow for a great deal to be learned about how a particular person responds to a specific situation, and secondly there is space to explore connections within a participant’s account, with the greater freedom to explore contradictions within a given account. The method adopted in this study is idiographic because it emphasizes the importance of the individual as a unit of analysis (Smith, Harré, & Van Langenhove, 1995).

Study 1 and Study 2 offered helpful insights into the adolescent experience of acculturation. However, these studies remain broad in scope and pushing the idiographic logic further offers the opportunity to enrich analytic findings (Smith, 2004). The previous studies indicated the importance of an individual’s relationship to their context when understanding their experience of acculturation, but there was limited opportunity to locate their experiences within the life-world of each participant. The preceding studies also suggested that acculturation is an on-going process with no defined end-point, subject to change as the individual matures, as the context changes and as the relationship between the individual and the context develops and changes. To tease out this aspect requires more sustained contact with a single participant to generate a detailed, nuanced examination of acculturation over time. An idiographic study with a single participant facilitates an in-depth exploration of the kinds of factors which are implicated in such differences.

IPA using multiple interviews with the same participant

In the study presented in this chapter, multiple points of data collection were core to the central research question (in that the topic of acculturation is concerned with change over time). In Study 1 and Study 2 I explored the participants’ experiences of

acculturation at a given point in time. In contrast, this idiographic, longitudinal study considers change over time, an important facet of acculturation which is also explored in the following chapter. Smith et al. (2009) describe a longitudinal IPA design as one of the “bolder” (p. 52) options in that it moves away from the relatively straight-forward approach of recruiting a small, homogenous group of participants and collecting data from them only once. Once-off interviews are considered to be the standard approach to data gathering in IPA research (Coyle, 2007). Longitudinal IPA designs have been used to study the transition to motherhood (e.g., Millward, 2006; Smith, 1994, 1999) and women’s experience of brain injury (Howes, Benton & Edwards, 2005). Within these studies, repeated interviews with the participants facilitated a deep exploration of a temporal process (e.g., pregnancy, the return or not to work, and the recovery of physical and psychological function over time).

In the study presented in this chapter the analysis of the first interview had been conducted before going on to the second interview. In Chapter 6 I outlined some of the issues related to longitudinal IPA research. For example, in the time between the interviews the participant may have gone through a process of reflection and rehearsal of things he wanted to say, and previous analysis may inform subsequent interviews (Flowers (2008)). Longitudinal designs also present an opportunity to take elements of the first analysis back to Togar in order to develop or reject my previous interpretations and this formed an explicit part of my strategy. Taking an individual analysis back to a participant can be seen as establishing or demonstrating analytic rigour or credibility as a member check (Flowers, 2008). Overcoming these challenges involved allowing the participant to explore areas of interest to him within the interview and working closely with the primary data to ensure that any analytic claims were rooted in the account offered by Togar.

Allowing the analysis of previous interviews to structure subsequent interviews has also been noted as an advantage in that it maximises depth and gives additional opportunities for probing important topics further (Flowers, 2008). It maximises the opportunity for trust and rapport to be established, and fosters repeated opportunities for disclosure to occur.

Aim

The aim of this study was to explore Togar’s experience of acculturation over time, with a particular focus on how he evaluated his context and the subsequent coping

strategies employed. Coping emerged as a salient aspect of the experiences of the asylum-seeking participants reported in the previous chapter. Coping also features prominently in theories of acculturation, as described previously. Building on this, the concept of coping is examined further in this study, where I explore how Togar copes with the Asylum-seeking process in Ireland as he engages with the process of acculturation. As noted previously ‘change over time’ is an aspect of acculturation rarely studied, either quantitatively or qualitatively. In particular, I wanted to explore what remained consistent and what changed in relation to how he coped with the acculturation in the asylum-seeking context in Ireland. The goal of this chapter, therefore, is to unpack one dimension of the acculturation experience; how Togar made sense of changes in the acculturation experience over time.

Method

Participant

The participant is referred to throughout as Togar. At the time of the first interview, Togar was 19 years-old and living in a direct provision centre in Galway. Togar was born in Liberia. He had been in the asylum-seeking process in Ireland for three years at the time of the first interview. He had arrived in Ireland claiming to be an unaccompanied minor, however, his age was disputed and he was treated as an adult in the asylum-system.

Despite the restrictions faced by asylum-seekers in Ireland he had managed to secure funding to attend college and had completed FETAC level 5 and level 6 courses. His name has been changed to safeguard confidentiality. The first of the interviews conducted with Togar was included in the analysis presented in Chapter 6. The extracts included in this chapter are different to those included previously, but they cover some similar themes.

Data collection

The process of meeting Togar and inviting him to take part in the study has been described previously (Chapter 6). The first semi-structured interview was just over one hour in duration. One year later two subsequent semi-structured interviews were carried out, with a month intervening between Interviews 2 and 3. This resulted in three hours of data in total. The first interview was conducted in a designated room in local youth café. The second interview was conducted in a small classroom in the university. The

final interview was conducted in the youth café – which had moved premises in the intervening time. The primary aim of each interview was for Togar to tell his story rather than to simply be a respondent. This was achieved through encouraging Togar to refer to concrete events he had experienced and exploring the meanings and significance he attributed to these events. The second and third interviews also aimed to explore what Togar felt had changed for him in the intervening year, and what he felt had remained the same. The third interview specifically explored his perceptions of seeking-asylum in Ireland, as this had emerged as a particular concern for all the asylum-seeking participants in Study 2.

Analysis

Unlike most IPA studies, the present study involved a longitudinal component. Analysis of each interview followed the steps outlined in Chapter 5, but there were some differences given that this study involved a single participant and multiple data collection points. Interviews 2 and 3 were treated as a single data source given the limited time elapsed between each interview (one month). Following the analysis of each interview, the themes identified were compared to identify consistency and change in terms of how Togar evaluated his context and coped with it.

Longitudinal IPA studies have been used to represent ‘before-and-after’ phenomena, such as Smith’s (1994, 1999) research on the transition to motherhood, or Millward’s (2006) research on transitioning to motherhood in an organisational context. In these examples, participants were interviewed before and after having children. For each participant their accounts were analysed ‘as a case’ (Millward, 2006, p. 320) rather than focusing on specific themes at each time-point. This was argued to capture psychological change at a higher-order level. Had Togar gained refugee status in the year following the first interview, this study could have represented one such ‘before-and-after’ approach. However, as his case was still ongoing at the times of the second and third interviews, this study is more similar to longitudinal IPA studies which explore how participants experience more protracted phenomena, such as chronic lower back pain (Snelgrove, Edwards & Liossi, 2013). As in the approach adopted by Snelgrove et al. (2013), super-ordinate themes and supporting sub-themes were identified for Togar at each stage of the study using the process described in Chapter 6. A ‘bottom-up’ approach was maintained by repeatedly checking the themes against the data to ensure Togar’s experiences were adequately represented. The themes identified

at each timepoint were then compared so as to identify any consistencies and changes. Further discussion of issues relating to longitudinal qualitative and IPA research is provided in Chapter 6.

Finally, a table was produced that shows each higher order theme and the subthemes that comprise it. The section of the table relevant to each theme is presented throughout the findings. A brief illustrative data extract is presented alongside each theme. This table is the outcome of an iterative process in which I moved back and forth between the various analytic stages ensuring that the integrity of what the participant said has been preserved as far as possible. Analysis of the data established three higher order themes that offer a description and interpretation of Togar's lived experiences of acculturation. Two of these themes are presented below, chosen on the basis that they address the main aim of the present study (that is, exploring how Togar evaluates and copes with the asylum-seeking process). Following this, the discussion examines how the process of stress and coping applies to findings described. The third theme identified but not reported here reflected Togar's broader conceptions of Ireland and Irish culture and how he made sense of and related to these with reference to his sense of self as a Nigerian and an African (see Appendix P).

Findings

Understanding the Asylum-Process

This theme presents an interpretative phenomenological account of Togar's engagement with the acculturation process. It describes how, over time, he has developed particular constructions of the asylum system. His initial view of the asylum-system was that it was akin to a prison. This is similar to the account offered by the participants in Study 2. This understanding developed and was elaborated upon in the subsequent interviews where he articulated a view of the asylum-seeking process as a deceitful system designed to frustrate. This more elaborate understanding of the asylum-seeking process allowed him to develop a strategy of how to cope with it. It appeared to reflect a developmental process as his view of the direct provision system progressed over time. While feeling characterised as a suspect character within the asylum-process, he regards the asylum-process itself as suspect and "illegal". While prison is a punishment for people who engage in illegal activities, he views the system as unjust. This meant he was not a discredited person, rather he could view himself as a worthy, moral and valued person. Given this situation, over time he had formed particular views

of the asylum-system which helped him to understand how it operates, his place within it and how he could navigate it.

Table 9.1 *Understanding the Asylum Process: Subthemes and Characteristic Examples*

	Understanding the Asylum Process		
	A Prison	A Deceitful System	
	Almost like a Prison	Mistrust - The self as Prisoner	
Interview 1	I don't have space, I don't have enough space to manoeuvre or work on		
Interview 2	you don't really have access to a lot of things, you can't work	You keep it to yourself and mind your own business. Just keep a low profile and keep your secret	I think it's a kind of a messed up system, the asylum, because you, for a minor not for a minor to be treated like an adult I don't think it's fair

A Prison

Almost like a prison

A central concern of the present study was to explore Togar's experience of acculturation in context. The context in this case centres on his status as an asylum-seeker in Ireland. As such he is required to live in a Direct Provision accommodation centre (the 'hostel') and was subject to restrictions regarding seeking employment, education and travel as outlined in the introduction. Togar's experience of the asylum-seeking system was described as being in a "prison". At interview 1 Togar considered the asylum-seeking system to be similar to a prison in that it traps him, denies him rights and limits his independence.

This subtheme explores Togar's understanding of the asylum-seeking hostel as a prison and considers the contradictions in the prison metaphor (a prison which does not want the prisoners to stay, a prison with seemingly indefinite sentences, a prisoner from which the prisoners wish to escape from yet remain in- the latter referring to how they have freedom of movement but must return). The following phrases drawn from the first interview support this reading of the text by describing asylum-seekers as individuals who are denied their rights:

Asylum-seekers are not given, are not afforded the rights to study (Interview 1)

There are many asylum seekers who are educated who wants to study, be progressive in the society, but they are not afforded or given the opportunity to do so (Interview 1)

I can't even get a driving licence if I wanted to. So, so, now I don't have rights, my rights are limited (Interview 1)

In Interview 1 Togar rarely directly self-identified as an asylum-seeker, and in using the term Togar appeared to distance himself from the label through using the word “*they*” rather than “*we*”. Yet, as an asylum-seeker his rights are limited. By the second and third interviews Togar more frequently used the word “*we*” when referring to asylum-seekers, thus situating himself as part of that group rather than separate from it. The experience of threatened efficacy and threatened belonging occurred consistently throughout the first interview, consider the examples below where Togar discusses living in the hostel:

It's a small room, you know, no privacy, no, I can't study at night if I want to read books or you know because roommates might be playing loud music and you know it's very inconveniencing but you know, what else are you going to do? (Interview 1)

It's a pain in the neck. But what else are you going to do? It's not as if we have rights (Interview 1)

In each of the above extracts Togar asks “*What else are you gonna do?*” he positions himself as having no choice but to acquiesce in his given situation. The asylum-system in Ireland could be seen as one way in which the society of settlement can encourage ‘separation’ as an acculturation strategy. The understanding of the asylum-process as being similar to a prison remains across the subsequent interviews, but becomes more nuanced.

It's like keeping somebody in a Gitmo camp [...] the only difference is that you can walk around the city. (Interview 3)

So, it's almost like prison, really. But it's different in that at least you can walk around and come in and go out. We are not like locked up in a cage and so. But, that is basically life in the hostel. But it is not as if you have so much of a right to do this. There are Do's and Don'ts (Interview 2)

In the above extracts from interviews 2 and 3 Togar further outlines his understanding of the asylum-seeking hostel as a prison with a difference. It is distinct from a prison in that those interned there are permitted to leave – they are not physically locked into the hostels like prisoners or animals in a cage. Despite having the freedom to come and go, Togar nevertheless feels that life in the hostel denies him liberty. There are rules he must abide by – “There are Do’s and Don’ts”. These formal and informal rules stifle Togar’s autonomy.

Mistrust – The Self as a Prisoner

Taking the analogy of the prison further, this subtheme considers the implications for Togar of being a ‘prisoner’. Being made to feel like a criminal and being denied liberty and autonomy has particular implications for how Togar must act. He feels that he must keep to himself and not make known his educational aspirations. He feels that he cannot comment on the negative (e.g. drug-taking, alcohol use) behaviours of other asylum-seekers in the hostel. His status as a ‘prisoner’ also has implications for how he is treated in that he is denied rights, he faces additional hassles and inconveniences, and others display a lack of trust in his word. Togar feels he cannot trust others and he feels that others (particularly those processing his asylum application) do not trust him. As an asylum-seeker Togar has a suspect identity.

The construction of the asylum-process as a form of prison internment leads to Togar feeling that through seeking education he is doing something illicit because he feels that education is a right denied to asylum-seekers in Ireland. When speaking about his pursuit of education he says:

But at the same time I had to keep it secret. I didn’t want the government to know or the social welfare to know that I am studying because we are not allowed to. (Interview 2)

The criminalisation of his aspirations and the fact that he feels he was not believed throughout his application for asylum support the notion that Togar has a suspect identity in Ireland. This is compounded by the fact that Togar was age-disputed upon arrival into the asylum-system, with the relevant authorities deeming him to be older than he claimed to be, leading him to be treated as an adult:

When I came in, it was the age was disputed because I have no documents to prove how old I am so, that was basically it. So I wasn’t treated as a minor. I

was put in the hostel, I wasn't treated as, I wasn't treated as a minor.

(Interview 2)

The lack of documentation to support his age led to doubt being cast on Togar. This resulted in him entering an adult world that he felt unprepared for. Being treated as an adult was a source of much distress and discomfort for Togar as he was placed in situations that he did not initially feel equipped to deal with:

It kind of was weird for me to be in that condition with older adults in their thirties and if you are a minor and you are sharing a room with them I think it's a kind of a messed-up system, the asylum, because you, for a minor not for a minor to be treated like an adult I don't think it's fair. [...] When I had my second interview I presented my birth [certificate...] but I was still treated as an adult. And they said they just don't believe that I was a minor. So, I think it's a part of the asylum system that is very illegal that should be looked into. (Interview 3)

An interesting reversal is achieved in the above extract. Togar, who has been treated as a suspect character in the asylum-system flips the image of himself as prisoner in a prison through characterising the asylum-seeking process itself as an "illegal" system which is unjust in that it unfairly treats children as adults and doubt the veracity of accounts despite evidence to the contrary.

As an asylum-seeker Togar was left with a sense of uncertainty regarding his future and he felt as if he were left "in limbo" (interview 3). A lack of progress characterised the year intervening the first and subsequent interviews.

Nothing has really changed, really. It's a kind of slow and frustrating procedure, so, well, let's just say that there hasn't been any progress.

(Interview 2)

This lack of progress felt like "stagnation" to Togar. With this "stagnation" came the risk of depression and despair:

You don't know what the future holds for you. And you don't really have access to a lot of things, you can't work, you can't. Emm, there is a sense of stagnation about it. And, eh, the majority of people in the asylum-process just like me are, they feel like, at times they feel frustrated and depressed that their situation is nobody's helping out or nobody's is ah, they are not

being listened to. So it's a very depressing situation. So I will just say that is my position on the asylum system really. (Interview 2)

His status as an asylum-seeker prevents him from progressing. In addition to preventing him finding employment or having a say in where he lives, he feels it affects all aspects of his life:

It affects everything. It affects your planning and what you want to do. If you have any plans, may you want to get married or have kids, or plans for the future, you have to put it on hold until you get that.

The uncertainty that accompanies Togar's lack of progression is associated with a diminished sense of personal autonomy:

At times I feel frustrated, [because] at times I feel I feel like I am not in control. You know? Of situations. And I hate being in that situation where I am not in control. (Interview 2)

Thus the asylum-seeking system in Ireland can clearly be interpreted as threatening Togar's sense of self-efficacy in that he feels a decreased sense of control over situations and over his ability to plan his future life.

A Deceitful System

By Interviews 2 and 3 Togar's understanding of the asylum-seeking system had developed and he elaborated on his understanding of it. In addition to being a "prison" which denied him his rights, he saw it as a system specifically designed to frustrate. Togar felt the system was intended to encourage individuals to give up their application for asylum rather than to help or empower them. This was achieved through "abandoning" asylum-seekers in the hostels indefinitely and making it difficult to get adequate help.

Like somebody could still be here like three years, four years, five years, six years and they are not being sorted out really so. It's, that is the way I see it. At times I feel, you feel like you have been abandoned in the hostel. (Interview 2)

But the model, the way the asylum system is set up, it is set up in a way that you get frustrated so that you either leave, you give up or you go. That is the

way it was set up. (Interview 2)

His understanding of the asylum-seeking system is of a system which is deliberately designed not to work in his favour. Rather, it is designed to frustrate and cause despair. His treatment as an age-disputed youth reinforces his construction of the asylum process as an uncaring system designed to encourage people to leave:

But the process, the way they do it, they don't really care. And they don't believe whatever is the story that you tell them. Even if you are in a situation where you provide evidence they don't take it up because they just dump you in the hostel. That's it. (Interview 3)

This sense of being part of a system which was designed to make him leave also could be taken to make Togar feel unvalued and out of place. A positive outcome of this sense making is that it also helps Togar understand how his application for asylum was rejected on the basis of his first oral hearing:

The way I see it it's kind of biased. Because she already came in with an agenda, you know? Trying to pressurize me, trying to tell me that you know, there is nothing for you here. Just go back to where you come from. And I don't think she is supposed to be doing that. For a person to listen to me, telling me you will find someone to take care of you in your country. All you have to do is go back. (Interview 3)

Basically they all have an agenda and the agenda is that to try and make sure that you find something in the story to reject that person. (Interview 3)

This construction of the asylum-seeking process also helps him to form an understanding of why information was hard to come by, bar that which he got through word-of-mouth from other asylum-seekers or sought through NGOs:

The main, the only official ones that I can see is the informational brochures on how to go back to your country. That is the only one that I know of. Because you always see things officially, I don't know, the, the whole system is not designed that way. To help asylum seekers. It is designed to get them frustrated until they decide to go back on their own (Interview 3)

You know, even basic amenities or even educational things like that, there is

no information for them to feel comfortable. So the whole system is just designed to frustrate them until they decide to go. On their own. Or until they are deported. (Interview 3)

Togar's construction of the system helps him to make sense of why he is still awaiting a satisfactory outcome and why his account is not believed. It also adds to our understanding of Togar's evolving relationship with the asylum-seeking context in relation to the process of acculturation through describing it as a situation in which separation is enforced rather than encouraged. Making sense of the asylum-seeking process in this way allows Togar to re-instate a sense of identity coherence by allowing him to process his situation in a way that makes reconciling his sense of self with his situation possible.

Coping with Being an Asylum-Seeker

This theme describes how Togar copes with these challenges by making sense of them and adapt to them. In the initial interview Togar was very much future-oriented. His educational efforts were geared toward becoming successful, returning to his country and making positive changes. While Togar was still striving to progress academically in the subsequent interviews, his plans were much less long term. As an asylum-seeker in Ireland Togar felt that his life was “*on hold*”, he was in “*limbo*” as he waited to see the outcome of his asylum application. Given this situation he has found and developed ways to cope which help him to navigate his place in Ireland.

Table 9.2 *Coping with Being an Asylum-Seeker: Subthemes and Characteristic Examples*

Time	Coping with being an Asylum-Seeker			
	Adapting	Finding something doing	Learning how to interact	Being lucky
1	Everyday new challenges, you know, you adapt	The most important thing is finding something doing, be effective, be useful, go to school, find something to keep yourself occupied	I study them for a while, I know what they like and what they don't like	
2	I am moving on and moving up	I just don't sit around and do nothing, so I try and get some education, seek help for funding for school, make things better for myself	I'm the kind of person that likes to pick their friends. If I'm gonna pick my friends then pick somebody that whose life style is compatible with mine	If you look back there are some people in the hostel that are not as fortunate as I am

Adapting

Across all three interviews, Togar projected a sense that he was confident in his ability to adapt. When speaking of life in the asylum-seeking hostel Togar said:

It's very inconveniencing, but you know, what else are you gonna do? You have to take it. Adapt. Adapt to the environment you find yourself in
(Interview 1)

As a statement of his philosophy this extract resonates with all of the interviews with Togar, despite his increasingly negative view of the asylum-system in Ireland. Togar's belief in his ability to adapt successfully persists over time and he reflects positively on his current situation relative to the past. In the first interview Togar outlined his attitude to adapting:

[The] most important thing is try and adapt to your environment. The environment, wherever you find yourself, and you try and adapt. There will always be changes, change always happens. Change is a constant factor in the economy. But for you to live comfortably and be comfortable in that environment you have to know how to adapt to that environment. So it's a different thing entirely from where I come from and from here, but what I do is adapt. And have a positive outlook about it all. I make friends, socialise and take positive steps. That's what's involved in adapting. And before you know it, I may not be like an everyday Irish person, but I can be able to survive in the environment where I've found myself in and survive very well

The conviction that he would be able to adapt seems to have been borne out in the subsequent interviews where he reflects on how far he has come in the past year and since arriving. While he does not describe himself as thriving, choosing to say he is doing "OK" rather than anything more positive, he is dealing with the challenges he meets:

I would say I am OK. I am quite better with the place I am [now compared to] last year. Before last year, I am in a better place than I was. So as the year goes on I think I am making some progress (Interview 2)

I have been able to fit in OK in my surroundings. It was when I came new I feel depressed. When I first came. But I had to move, I had to do things to keep myself busy. But now, it's been like four, more than four years now, so

I have now been accustomed to the situation (Interview 3)

Togar describes adapting as an imperative, ‘*had to*’, and as an active process. There is no choice other than to adapt. Across the interviews Togar remains positive about his ability to adapt, and when reflecting on his time in Ireland he feels that he has been successful thus far. While this subtheme has described Togar’s philosophy on adaptation, the question of how he adapts in practice remains to be answered. Given all the challenges outlined in the first theme, how does Togar manage to adapt? The answers to this question are explored further in the following subthemes.

A Positive Self Concept

Maintaining a positive self-concept helped Togar to adapt to life in Ireland, and to continue to adapt despite the lengthy asylum-seeking process. In the first interview Togar described himself as an optimistic individual with a positive outlook on life:

I tend to focus on the positive. What I can achieve for myself so what I can take back is maybe one day, is [...] put the positive experiences that I have here and maybe the education that I have achieved and go back and make a change (Interview 1)

This optimistic attitude, coupled with a future-orientation helped Togar to focus on the positive aspects of his situation and to take advantage of opportunities as he identifies them. In addition to being optimistic, Togar was also confident in his academic abilities:

I did very well in school, got nice grades, got six distinctions that I got out of seven modules (Interview 1)

Besides feeling academically competent, there were other attributes that that can be interpreted as a resource in adaptation. As a male Togar describes the need to remain “strong”, and therefore able to deal with the tragedies that have occurred in his life:

Well, my [close family members] are dead because of the war so [...] I miss those ones, but you know you're a man, you know you have to be strong (Interview 1)

Togar’s positive self-concept persists throughout the subsequent interviews as he remained confident that he will continue to persevere and achieve:

As of now it's cool. But I will find a way to get through. I will find a way. I always find a way (Interview 2)

However there was a conflict between his need to take control and the asylum-seeking situation. Togar felt that he was not at liberty to make his own decisions and that his autonomy was restricted. However, he described his hope as sustaining him through the difficult process of seeking asylum:

I always have the hope, the optimism. The hope that something is going to happen. That I am going to do something to change my situation. So that keeps me alive. That keeps me going. That before that time reaches that I will do something, that something will change (Interview 2)

This positive self-concept could be looked upon as a coping strategy which alleviates the threat posed by having a suspect identity in Ireland as an asylum-seeker.

Finding 'Something Doing'

Across the interviews Togar espoused the virtues of remaining occupied, of finding "something doing" (Interview 1). In the initial interview the goal of this desire to remain occupied was rooted in the future. Togar's educational efforts were geared toward becoming successful, returning to his country and making positive changes. While Togar was still striving to progress academically in the subsequent interviews, the goal of remaining active and engaged was aimed at maintaining positive mental health by avoiding despair.

At the time of the first interview Togar was relatively certain that he would be granted refugee status. His educational efforts at that time were therefore geared towards ensuring he would have a strong foundation to develop from once this status was granted:

I believe that, maybe by the time I'm granted status I would have achieved a lot then instead of being idle and not doing anything. Maybe by the time you are granted the status to stay in the country all those years have been wasted. All those years should have been used in doing something and achieving something (Interview 1)

By the second interview Togar's hopes for the future were more short-term and he articulated them as unfolding on a staged basis, beginning with completing his education and moving towards getting his own successful business.

I take things step by step. My hope for the future first of all is that I will finish my education, get my degree and then probably then one way or the other I will get my residency or my status in this country and then move on. My plan is to get a job, save up some money and set up a business, a successful business, because my dream is to become an entrepreneur of my own like. Have a successful business of my own. (Interview 2)

At both time points Togar envisaged a successful future for himself. However, by the second interview the outcome of his asylum-seeking seemed less certain, reflecting his developed understanding of how the asylum-process operates, and his attainment of residency in Ireland would be achieved "*one way or the other*".

His future orientation at the time of the first interview helped him to project a positive image of himself returning to his birth country to make a positive difference:

I tend to focus on the positive, what I can achieve for myself so, what I can take back is maybe one day is what put the positive experiences that I have here and maybe the education that I have achieved and go back and make a change.

At the time of the first interview he was also applying for further education courses and hoping to be accepted. Acceptance on such a course would provide him with another means of identifying himself – as a student:

My everyday life will be like a student's everyday life, you know, you wake up in the morning, you go to school, after school you come back, you have eh, you have your dinner or lunch or whatever you know, you read, study, and that's it. Eh, you live, you live your life like a student, that's what you do. (Interview 1)

Togar's ability to work toward the future was compromised by the lengthy and uncertain asylum process. In the second interview he describes how his ability to plan for the future was hampered by the fact that he did not know what the future held for him:

[When] I get my residency progression will be much more steadfast. But at the moment there is very little I can do. Because when I finish my course in the next year or two what is there then to do? What is? So, I don't really know the plan there. Or maybe if I find somebody one day, fall in love and get married that will help? Or maybe they might answer me tomorrow and say that I can stay in the country and give me my residency. I don't really know, but because of this uncertainty I don't really know what is going to come. I cannot plan ahead of after completing my education what next.

Through a process of problem-focused coping Togar identified the opportunities open to him and pursued them, enabling him to “*find something doing*”. This allowed him to “*live the life of a student*” rather than an asylum-seeker. This could also be argued to reinforce self-esteem through affording him the opportunity to achieve on his own merits and allowing him to shed the undesirable identity label of asylum-seeker.

Learning How to Interact

In order to adapt Togar describes studying people in order to know how to interact with them. As a self-styled student of behaviour, Togar could occupy the position of outsider while still retaining a sense of self-efficacy. In the first interview Togar described how he achieved this. This tactic can be interpreted as the development of a cognitive skill, allowing him to learn about intercultural interactions and to navigate them appropriately:

I study them, I read them for a while, I study them for a while, I know what they like and what they don't like, [...] so that anytime that I'm dealing with anything in the future and I know how to respond positively with them.

(Interview 1)

In the first and subsequent interviews a protective factor also emerges. Knowing how to evaluate other people helps him to decide who he should engage with and who he should avoid.

You know, when I study them, are they the kind of people that I would like to be hanging out with? If they are the negative types maybe they are the type that do drugs and stuff like that ahh, “Hi OK, I'll see you some other day”, just gradually. (Interview 1)

In the second and third interviews we see that Togar has not formed friendships with Irish people because he generally feels that their way of living is incompatible with his. Even in the first interview he described the principle of communal sharing as being one he could only extend to other Africans as this principle was not adhered to in Irish social interactions. While there are Irish people that Togar is acquainted with, he does not count these among his friends:

But being close friends with, you know, buddies that you can go out with and stuff like that, maybe it's my lifestyle or maybe it is the way I am, but I haven't actually tried really. (Interview 2)

While he describes a difficulty above in articulating why it is that he does not have close Irish friends, he does describe logical reasons as to why this is and it relates to a lack of compatibility in lifestyles:

Maybe because I am a quiet person, maybe. Em, maybe I don't drink or maybe I don't smoke, maybe. I, I really I don't, but really I think it's about compatibility. [...] I'm the kind of person that likes to pick their friends. If I'm gonna pick my friends then pick somebody that whose lifestyle is compatible with mine. Who I can reason very well with. Like, I don't want somebody to put me on the wrong path really. You know, you have to be careful who your friends are. (Interview 2)

This relates to the strategy of adaptation that he described in the initial interview whereby he attempts to choose friends that will benefit him and not lead him astray. Choosing appropriate friends is achieved through a process of studying how individuals act and interact.

In addition to facilitating social interactions, this approach to studying other people also allows him to avoid some of the consequences of the interacting with undesirable individuals. For example, in the second interview Togar describes an experience whereby a female classmate told him that if he did not want to engage with the Irish language he should "*go home*". Through constructing himself as an observer of human behaviour it could be argued that Togar was able to remove himself from this potentially negative situation and to look at it as an objective onlooker. This protected him from potential damage to his self-concept:

She represented some people, some certain segment of the population in

Ireland. So, I just feel disappointed. It doesn't really affect me much because I am, I tend to read and study human behaviour in a way. And I kind of sit back and just study and monitor you, the way you behave and act. Then I know how I am going to like, relate with you. And deal with you. So it doesn't really affected me much. I just felt disappointed with her.

The sense of separation from other people that Togar describes in the extract above can be interpreted as a form of defence against negative perceptions of him.

Being Lucky

While Togar has described himself as having multiple internal resources, as being self-motivated to keep going and as having learned how to deal with other people, he also recognises that there are factors beyond his control which have facilitated adaptation in Ireland. Across the interviews Togar describes himself as lucky in two senses, he is lucky in that he encountered helpful people and he is lucky that certain opportunities became available to him. This 'luck' means that Togar feels that his life is relatively privileged in comparison to some other people in the asylum-seeking hostel. Rather than seeing himself as unfortunate to be in the 'prison' or being denied rights accessible to Irish citizens, he maintains a sense of optimism and describes being favoured by good fortune.

Through a process of downward comparison with other asylum-seekers Togar reflects that he is lucky in that he has been able to take advantage of educational opportunities:

There are some people that are not that lucky like I am. There are some people that need to be lucky. (Interview 1)

I was able to do things to keep me busy but there are some people that, who are not able to do that. It is very frustrating for some people. But I would say that I am a little bit more fortunate. (Interview 3)

While this allows him to feel relatively lucky and content, he is also aware that he does not just want to achieve relative to other asylum-seekers, but he wants to be successful in his own terms too:

I am happy. If you look back there are some people in the hostel that are not as fortunate as I am. So, I don't use it as a parameter to measure my

successes but you know, I have made some progress which I am happy with.

(Interview 1)

Togar recognises that this “*luck*” has its roots in important contacts he has made. These fortuitous contacts included those in Youth Work Ireland who had endeavoured with him to secure funding that he could continue his education:

The Youth Project have organisations that they contact and they raise the money for me, like the last one that I got I studied, paid around four hundred and something Euros for the course. So [Gillian] and the rest of the gang, they helped contact these NGOs and they helped me to, they made donations and they raised money for me to for, to pay for the course. (Interview 1)

This reflection on how having contact with people who have helped him continued in the subsequent interviews, but Togar was cagey about naming them due to the feeling that his educational aspirations were illicit:

Let’s just say I am fortunate because asylum seekers are not allowed, they do not have access to education here. They don’t even have, not to talk about having access to third level education, it’s not possible. But I have some people that are backing me up, that are helping me. Some people that are paying my school fees for me, organisations here in Ireland, organisations that gave me the scholarship. So, I will say that I was one of the fortunate ones. (Interview 2)

His reflections on helpful contacts also extended to others within the asylum-seeking process who knew how to make contact with legal advocates:

Some people were in the asylum hostels that know lawyers and some of them that have similar cases maybe that have been rejected. (Interview 3)

In addition to making helpful contacts, Togar also feels fortunate to have a roommate that he can get along with

You know, you may have to study and you just tell him can I have some hours in the evening to put on the light a bit and study? You have to put it in a way. Luckily for me the guy that I am living with is a reasonable guy. He understands like, so, he will be like, oh, no problem, no problem. So I, we, accommodate each other. We live peacefully. It’s no problem. (Interview 2)

The concept of luck arises more in the second and third interviews. This perhaps reflects a diminished sense of control whereby Togar has come to rely on an external locus of control. Although Togar describes himself as “*lucky*” to be availing of opportunities that others have been unable to secure, this luck can also be seen as the culmination of sustained information-seeking, effort and social skills on Togar’s part.

Discussion

The purpose of the longitudinal study described in this chapter was to explore with a single participant his experience of acculturation. As such, this study addressed one of the main research questions of this thesis through exploring consistency and change in his acculturation experiences over time. Longitudinal qualitative studies of acculturation among adolescent migrants appear to be entirely lacking, as suggested by the meta-ethnography reported in Chapter 4. This study addresses this deficit in the literature by exploring the acculturation experiences of Togar over time with respect to the asylum-seeking context. This relates back to the ‘D’ (development) and the ‘E’ (ecology) in the ABCDE’s of acculturation that I identified in Chapter 2 as being relevant to the study of acculturation among adolescents. Interpretative phenomenological analysis has been shown to be useful in investigating changing experiences over time (Millward, 2006; Howes, Benton & Edwards, 2005; Smith, 1994, 1999), and yet longitudinal IPA research designs are also limited. This chapter also provided an idiographic account of acculturation sensitive to the life-world of a single participant, Togar. The benefits of an idiographic, single participant study are that they help to gain a thorough and more subtle understanding of a particular phenomenon, which could lead to a more general yet nuanced and deeper understanding of that phenomenon (Hayes, 2000). These findings suggest both that multiple interviews allowed a deeper understanding of the same phenomenon (in this case acculturation) and that comparing findings at two different time points allowed for a deeper understanding of change in regard to acculturation and coping.

The focus on coping is warranted as it is a key construct in Berry’s (1997) dominant model of acculturation, and yet is rarely studied in relation to acculturation among asylum-seekers or refugees. For example, a recent review by Kuo (2014) found that the existing literature on coping and acculturation is dominated by empirical investigations of the experiences of voluntary migrants in North America (i.e. USA and Canada). None of the studies they reviewed focused on specific involuntary migrants, such as refugees or asylum-seekers.

The findings resonated well with those of Study 2, reported in the preceding chapter, in which Togar also participated. Togar invoked images of imprisonment to describe his experience of the asylum-seeking process in Ireland, he demonstrated resilience in how he coped with his status as an asylum-seeker and member of a visible minority group in Ireland. There was a large degree of consistency in the experiences he reported over time. However, there was also progression in Togar's understanding of the asylum-seeking process in Ireland, and this evolving understanding may have helped him to cope with this protracted process on an on-going basis. Like the preceding study the majority of the stressors Togar had to contend with stemmed from his lower status in Ireland and his coping efforts were aimed at dealing with the restrictions he faced as an asylum-seeker.

Taking a stress-and-coping perspective on the findings (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984; Berry, 1997) allows us to consider the effect of how Togar made sense of his situation on his acculturation experiences. When making sense of the Direct Provision centre in which he lives, an environment that constituted his immediate context for much of the time, he compared it to a prison. This construction has implications for how he feels he must act within it and how he feels he is perceived. Importantly, he described feeling that, as an asylum-seeker in Ireland he had a suspect and unvalued identity. According to the social identity theory of Tajfel and Turner (1986) and Identity Process Theory (IPT, Breakwell, 1986) having a socially unvalued and undesirable identity can have significant negative implications for wellbeing.

According to IPT, which proved useful when interpreting the findings of Study 1, once an individual perceived that their identity occupies a threatening position, they must engage in a coping strategy to alleviate the threat. Similarly, according to Berry's (1997) stress-and-coping perspective on acculturation, once events are appraised as problematic an individual engages in coping strategies to deal with the problem. In this case, when Togar constructed the asylum-seeking system in Ireland as being deceitful he maintained his sense of integrity while still being able to make sense of how he was treated within the system. Within the IPT literature this could be construed as an intrapsychic coping strategy whereby he modifies his perception of the situation in order to cope with it. This modification was necessary because at the time of the first interview he felt that his application for asylum in Ireland would be dealt with in a timely and fair fashion. However, as time went on his hopes were not borne out, and so by constructing a new image of the asylum-process Togar was able to understand better why his

application for asylum still had not had a successful outcome. Berry's (1997) acculturation strategies, which rest on ideas of cultural identification and participation, are limited in that they do not account for this approach to coping with the acculturation process. Yet, for Togar, his reconstruction of the asylum-seeking process represents an important acculturation strategy in that it helps him to deal with his new status in a new cultural environment. His perception of the asylum-seeking system in Ireland as adversarial echoes research by Conlan, Waters and Berg (2012) which found that a "culture of disbelief" (p. 45) exists in the Refugee Status Determination procedure in Ireland, and that this "informs the approach that some Tribunal Members take and the way in which they set about the task of deciding the appeals that come before them" (p. 45).

In terms of Diaz-Guerrero's (1979) distinction between active and passive coping, Togar's evolving construal of the asylum-process in Ireland represents a passive coping strategy, in that he is not trying to alter the situation, rather he changes how he makes sense of it. According to Berry (1997, p. 19) "passive coping reflects patience and self-modification, and resembles the assimilation acculturation strategy". Yet in Togar's case his acceptance of his role within the asylum-process is not equated with assimilation to Irish society. Since there is nothing that Togar could seemingly do to alter his situation, it was more effective than adoption of a more active coping strategy. This definition of passive coping is somewhat problematic as it ignores the fact that 'cognitive restructuring' requires individuals to be active in restructuring their experiences, such restructuring cannot be achieved without cognitive effort. Nevertheless, this is not an overtly behavioural process, but an internal, intrapsychic activity which is not observable.

As well as having to deal with his immediate, prison-like context, Togar had to find ways to cope with his new, low status in Ireland on an on-going basis, both within and outside the Direct Provision centre. In this context Togar's positive attitude toward his ability to adapt represented a means to cope. This positive attitude appeared consistent across all interviews. As with the strategy of reconceptualising the asylum-seeking process, his positive attitude toward adaptation could be seen as a passive, intrapsychic coping strategy. While the limited rights associated with being an asylum-seeker in Ireland may potentially threaten the underlying identity principles of self-esteem, continuity and distinctiveness (Breakwell, 1989), Togar is able to mitigate these threats by gaining self-esteem from his perceived ability to adapt, this also allows him

to maintain a sense of continuity; as someone who has adapted in the past and will adapt in the future, further it distinguishes him positively from others who may not be able to adapt as well as he has.

While Togar's positive attitude toward adaptation is described as a passive strategy, operating at the level of emotions and cognitions rather than at the level of action, it does appear to have tangible consequences for his subsequent actions. For example, his positive attitude toward adaptation spurs him on to find ways to occupy himself, namely by finding a way to obtain an education while he waits for an outcome to his asylum application. This represents an active coping strategy (Diaz-Guerrero, 1979) in that Togar is actively trying to alter his situation and his prospects. However, this strategy is also not encompassed by the acculturation strategies proposed by Berry (1997), because again, rather than being focused on cultural orientation or participation, it has the more instrumental goal of gaining an education. This education is gained through participation in the Irish education system, but the strategy Togar adopts it to pursue education rather than to pursue participation, and therefore none of the strategies suggested by Berry (1997) encompass this. On the other hand it could also be described as a contextually bound adoption of a behavioural integration strategy. This reflects Arends-Tóth and Van de Vijver's (2003) contention that acculturation is domain-specific rather than generalised across life-domains.

Togar's strategy of studying how to interact with others could again represent a passive strategy used to guide future actions, in that he evaluates the context and adapts his behaviour to suit, rather than attempting to change it. By the second and third interviews Togar spoke more frequently about being "lucky". This could represent Togar's increasingly externalised locus of control as he sees his time in the asylum-process extending indefinitely before him. However, upon interrogating the theme further, much of Togar's "luck" appears to stem from his active information seeking and his social networking both within and outside of the asylum-seeking population. Such support structures represent one of the intergroup coping strategies described by Breakwell (1986).

Overall, the findings problematize the notion of "acculturation strategies" (Berry, 1997) which has been critiqued previously on the basis that the term implies that the "strategy" is independently chosen by the acculturating individual. This study shows that how Togar copes with the acculturation process is co-determined through reciprocal interactions between himself and the context. His status as an asylum-seeker makes

adopting the integration strategy almost impossible in some senses as he is excluded from working with Irish people and living among Irish people.

Widely-used self-report acculturation scales primarily focus on select acculturation domains including ethnic media, food, music, clothing and language preferences, ethnic composition of social networks, birthplace, involvement in cultural holidays and traditions, and cultural values and identity (Zane & Mak, 2003). In the current study, however, Togar's acculturation experiences extended well beyond these domains and involved multiple acculturation stressors and buffers that impacted his sense of self and his adaptation in Ireland in distinct and unexpected ways. This was especially evident in how he evaluated the asylum-seeking system and his place in Irish society, which appeared to significantly affect how he adapted to life in Ireland. He does seem to feel separate from Irish culture, and so he could be described as being 'separated' and yet he does not actively choose to be. In fact, he tries to participate in mainstream culture through the pursuit of education. In terms of Bourhis et al's (1997) Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) a conflictual relationship is predicted as Togar appears to desire integration (at least in terms of contact with and participation in mainstream culture) while State policies promote segregation.

The ways in which Togar coped with being an asylum-seeker in Ireland is consistent with the findings of qualitative research among UAMs in Ireland, adults in the asylum-seeking process and refugees. NíRaghallaigh & Gilligan (2010) found that participants in their study found maintaining continuity important and they found that some participants tried to maintain their religious faith in their new context. As in Togar's case, further coping strategies were described, including looking on the positive aspects of their situations, looking for distractions, and acting independently. The findings presented here also reflect the findings of qualitative research conducted in the UK with Somali female forced-migrants (Whittaker et al., 2005). In this study a subtheme labelled as a 'get on with it' approach was described. This was exemplified by the participants desire to be strong and deal quickly with problems rather than dwell on them, and reflects Togar's desire to 'find something doing'. In an IPA study conducted by Schweitzer, Greenslade and Kagee (2007) with refugees (rather than asylum-seekers) a number of strategies were identified that helped participants to cope and be resilient (including religious beliefs, social support and personal qualities). These reflect the coping strategies identified in the present study in that they reflect an external locus of

control (as with being lucky), the role of other people (also described in the being lucky subtheme) and a sense of self-belief, respectively.

Limitations

A number of potential limitations to this study must be noted. Firstly, this research relied on Togar's willingness to talk about his experiences at a number of time points. Togar's increasing familiarity with me over time may have made him more comfortable in discussing less socially desirable topics with me in the second and third interviews. While this is an advantage in the sense that Togar became more comfortable disclosing to me, it brings up certain issues. For example, the increasingly negative representation of life in direct provision accommodation and the decreasing reports of a lack of engagement with Irish culture over time may be more indicative of Togar's greater trust in me over time, and an associated feeling that he could freely discuss more negative experiences, rather than changes in those experiences over time. In IPA research it is recognised that accounts gathered from participants are co-created between the interviewer and interviewee in a particular context at a given time, and so interpretations offered must be treated with caution and evaluated against the evidence presented (Smith et al., 2009).

Due to the lengthy asylum-process and the stigma attached to being an asylum-seeker coupled with the limited rights afforded to asylum-seekers in Ireland it is possible that Togar belongs to a niche within this target population where he felt better able to speak about his experiences than others would. For example, of the six participants who took part in the previous study, only Togar was both willing and able to take part in further interviews. Individuals who were coping less well may have experiences which differ to those examined in this study. Additionally, different results may be found with other ethnicities or females. However, this study did not necessarily aim at generalizability. Using IPA and privileging Togar's subjective experience provided information about him as a unique individual, and also his perceptions what it is to adjust to life in Ireland within his social milieu. While it may not be possible to generalize the results of this study to the broader population, the findings do illuminate certain aspects of the acculturation process. Furthermore, the use of idiographic case studies is based on finding interesting cases which challenge or deepen existing understandings of social and psychological phenomena (Smith et al., 1995). This study does, however, offer important insights into the links between contextual factors and acculturation. This study of Togar illustrates resilience in the direct provision context,

yet I acknowledge that other individuals in this context may not be coping as well or displaying such resilience.

Given the focus of this study on coping with the asylum-seeking process, the third theme identified was not reported here, despite being relevant to the experience of acculturation. The presentation of findings and discussion here was necessarily selective. I acknowledge that the entirety of Togars acculturation experiences is not represented here.

Conclusion

This study adds to existing knowledge about acculturation among adolescents and emerging adults by demonstrating that in order to understand acculturation, factors other than beliefs and attitudes related to ethnicity, nationality and culture must be considered. Togar had many additional concerns as an asylum-seeker in Ireland. In addition to quantitative studies of adolescents' and emerging adults' acculturation there is a need for qualitative research that considers social contexts and personal meanings. This is demonstrated by the impact of the asylum-seeking process in Ireland on how Togar could engage with and cope with the process of acculturation. Further, in order to fully comprehend the complexity of the acculturation experience, longitudinal studies are necessary. The qualitative analysis presented here shows that contextual factors and personal beliefs about how best to engage with and cope with the asylum-seeking process clearly influence how the acculturation process is engaged with over time.

Chapter 10: Study 4 – Changing Experiences of Acculturation over Time

In this chapter I present a longitudinal IPA study with three of the participants from Study 1. The ‘I’ (Interpretative) in IPA is pushed quite far in this study, relative to the three other studies presented within this thesis. The primary data gathered is put in dialogue with a strong theoretical framework throughout the analysis and findings. In this way, this chapter illustrates a slightly different way of working using IPA compared to the previous empirical chapters. This reflects longitudinal work conducted by Smith (1994, 1999a, 1999b) on the topic of identity change during the transition to motherhood. Within this research Smith engaged strongly with a theoretical framework (the conception of the ‘self’ as outlined by Mead, 1934) in order to analyse the data and present the findings. While the analysis was conducted in a way that was novel for IPA, it nevertheless remained faithful to the theoretical underpinnings of IPA by ensuring that the findings are rooted in the experiences reported by the participants. This chapter similarly presents a longitudinal study in which the analysis was conducted by drawing strongly on a theoretical framework, in this case the PPCT model of human development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006).

As described in Chapter 5, the PPCT model of development offers an important resource in studying the adolescent experience of acculturation. This reflects the findings of the meta-ethnography presented in Chapter 4 in which I suggested how the PPCT model of development could help researchers to approach the study of acculturation. PPCT is particularly promising in the terms of studying adolescent acculturation due to its incorporation of the ‘*macrosystem*’ in its perspective on human development. This recognises that cultural beliefs and values are the basis for many of the other conditions of development. Additionally, the incorporation of the ‘*chronosystem*’ gives recognition to the importance of historical changes and stage in the life-span as influences on development. In line with the perspective taken in terms of acculturation in this thesis as a whole, the PPCT model also emphasises that adolescents are active in their own development rather than passive recipients of external influences (Bronfenbrenner, 1999).

However, the PPCT model of human development has the drawback of not indicating precisely *how* culture impacts on development (Sam & Oppedal, 2006). This has important implications for a study on adolescent acculturation where the emphasis is on the cultural and psychological changes that occur following prolonged intercultural contact (Sam & Berry, 2006). This chapter addresses this issue by

specifically exploring accounts of acculturation in terms of the PPCT model of development. As described in Chapter 2, this thesis does not conceive of culture as a static entity, rather it is seen here as the ways individuals engage with and make sense of the world. Here, the second ‘P’ (Process) of the PPCT model becomes important, as the participants sense-making can be seen as driving their acculturation. Knowing how adolescents make sense of interactions with members and institutions of the same or different cultures is therefore an area of interest. However, most acculturation research does not focus on the day-to-day, lived experience of acculturation; rather it looks at correlates and group-level changes (Stuart & Ward, 2011). Therefore, there is a lack of research offering an emic perspective on acculturation. This leads to a knowledge deficit regarding whether and how adolescents engage with, for example, the acculturation strategies proposed by Berry (1997), and how these function in practice. For example, Ward (2013; Stuart & Ward 2011) described the lack of knowledge of how ‘integration’ as an acculturation strategy was conceived of and experienced by acculturating adolescents.

This study involves a subgroup of the participants from the first study who were re-interviewed a year following their initial interview for this study. These participants were chosen for this longitudinal study due to the significant changes they experienced in their contexts and how they interacted with their contexts as evidenced in their second interview. For example, over the course of that year both they and their contexts changed. For example, two of the three participants moved away from their family homes to attend college in a new city. The third was preparing to sit his Leaving Certificate examination.

As with Togar in the preceding study, the participants in the present study are each in late adolescence, on the cusp of “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2010, described in greater detail in Chapter 9). As immigrants, the participants in this study were developing according to the norms, standards, and values of two different and sometimes conflicting cultural backgrounds. Despite arguably having more of the external assets deemed necessary for positive youth development (Benson, 2003) available than the asylum-seeking participants (Chapter 8 and Chapter 9), they nevertheless faced challenges in reconciling cultural differences, and they also potentially faced racism and discrimination.

Prompted by a concern with how acculturation experiences may change over time in response to both internal and external changes in the individual and their

contexts, this study sought to use the PPCT model of development (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) as an overall theoretical framework for describing and interpreting participant accounts. Drawing on the broad definition of acculturation as the cultural and psychological changes that occur when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into continuous, first-hand contact with each other (Sam & Berry, 2003), this study seeks to situate how these participants ('P' – Person) experience and interpret these changes ('P' – Process) within the ecological systems ('C' – Context) outlined in the PPCT framework over time ('T' – Time). Within this study the following questions were used to guide the analysis of the interviews:

- In what way can the PPCT model of development aid our understanding of adolescent acculturation experiences?
- How do the participants acculturation experiences within each system described by the PPCT model change over time?
- How does 'culture' impact on the participants' experiences with different systems proposed by the PPCT model?
- How can longitudinal IPA designs contribute to the study of adolescent acculturation?

Method

Design

The present study is a longitudinal Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA study). The methodology and the methods used have been described in detail in Chapter 6, therefore only the details pertinent to the present study will be described here. As described previously, longitudinal studies are relatively rare in the corpus of IPA literature; however longitudinal designs have been used successfully to describe and interpret individuals' experiences of life changing events (e.g., Howes, Benton & Edwards, 2005; Millward, 2006; Smith, 1994, 1999a, 1999b). In contrast to the preceding chapter, the study presented here has three participants, rather than one.

As with the preceding study I was conscious of the difficulties inherent in conducting longitudinal IPA research, as outlined by Flowers (2008). On the one hand, re-interview allows a research to maximise the depth of data gathered, offers opportunities to probe important issues further, and maximises the opportunity for trust and rapport to be established between the interviewer and interviewees. On the other hand, there is increased complexity in the research design which can lead to problems

with writing. Therefore, it is important to articulate how the differing interviews, and different analytic stages, relate to a single narrative within a final written account. I was conscious of allowing participants to explore areas of interest to them within the interview. I worked closely with the primary data when constructing themes to ensure that analytic claims were rooted in the participant accounts.

Participants

Three of the adolescent participants (2 male, 1 female) who participated in the Study 1 (Chapter 7) participated in the present study. Each participant represents the first 'P' in the PPCT model of development – the Person.

Data Collection

Two semi-structured interviews were carried out with each participant, with a year between the first and the second interviews. The interview schedule which guided the first interview with the participants can be seen in Appendix E. This schedule also guided the second round of interviews, however, an additional question was asked of participants ('how have things changed for you since I interviewed you last year?'). This was asked near the beginning of the interview. Throughout the second interview I also asked participants to reflect on how their current experiences compared to their experiences the previous year.

Diola and Mark were interviewed at their respective churches at each time point. James, on the other hand, was interviewed in a local youth café at the time of the first interview, and in a classroom on the University campus at the time of the second interview. Interviews at time two were approximately ten minutes longer each than interviews at time one. In total 140 minutes of interview data were recorded at time one (average interview length just over three quarters of an hour), and 185 minutes of interview data were recorded at time 2 (average length just over one hour). The longer interview duration at time two may reflect the participants increasing familiarity and comfort with me in the interview context.

Data Analysis

Data were analysed according to the principles of IPA outlined previously, however, as this was a longitudinal study using an organising theoretical framework, there were some notable particularities. Each interview was analysed in its own right,

and for each interview a table outlining the themes and subthemes was generated. This process was inductive, following the classic IPA style. At this point the analysis diverged from the previous studies, with external theory coming into play at an earlier stage than is typical with IPA. Using the PPCT model as an organising frame work I organised the themes and subthemes identified for each interview, and then combined the tables for each interview according to the participants, see Table 10.2 (abridged for the sake of clarity and brevity) as an example.

Categorising the emergent themes according to the PPCT model was a difficult task as these are not conceptually distinct; they are interconnected. Analysis was an iterative process where the guiding headings were modified as the analysis proceeded. For example, it became clear that presenting the ‘Time’ or the ‘Person’ dimensions as distinct themes was untenable because the changes the participants experienced in each system were a central feature of the overall study design. Therefore the ‘Time’ dimension (or ‘chronosystem’) and the ‘Person’ dimension, feature as key elements of each theme and subtheme. Similarly, within the ‘Context’ dimension the mesosystem is not a context with which the participants directly engage with yet it impacts on their experiences within the microsystems with which they engage. As all systems in PPCT are interrelated, the presentation of each as separate from the other is intended to offer clarity and coherence to the findings, rather than to suggest that they are separable from each other. This is reflected in the discussion of findings related to the ‘macrosystem’, where the participants’ engagement with the concept of ‘Irish culture’ becomes apparent only through their descriptions of how they make sense of interactions and behaviours in their immediate contexts (e.g. drinking alcohol, experiencing racism).

Table 10.2 Diola’s Themes and Characteristic Examples

Person		Microsystem			Macrosystem	
Diola	Home	School	Peers	Nigerian Community	Behaviours	Identifications
Time 1	Duty to family	Importance of education	Part of a ‘real little family’ yet closer to Nigerian friends	Transmit heritage culture values	Being a ‘Party Pooper’ by not drinking	Feeling more Irish than Nigerian
Time 2	Independent	Education key for independent future	Making new friends with similar interests	Do not think she adequately fulfils her role as a female	Drinking, but like a Nigerian	Being Nigerian and Black dictates where she can/cannot go

The table constructed for each participant allowed for consistencies and changes within each system across both interviews to be explored. As with the studies in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8, the final step of the analysis involved looking for patterns across cases. Master themes were formed which reflected participants' changing and evolving experiences of acculturation within each system they engaged with. *Figure 10.1* illustrates how each element of the PPCT model of development has been incorporated into the analysis.

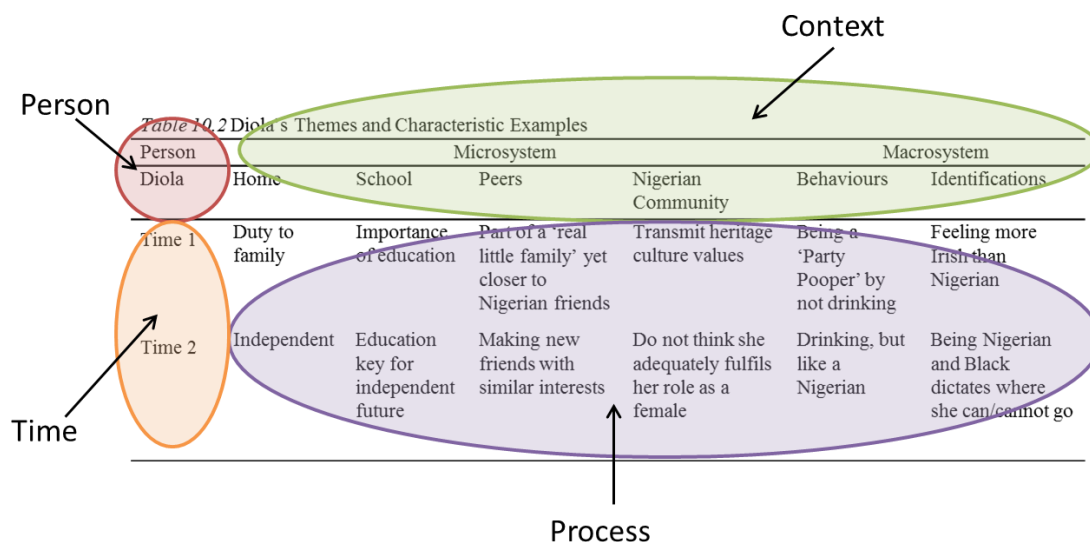


Figure 10.1 Incorporation of the elements of the PPCT model in analysis

Findings

The findings are structured according to Bronfenbrenner's PPCT model of development. IPA studies explore how participants make sense of and interpret their experiences (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore it represents a way of accessing the 'P' – Process which drives the acculturation of the participants.

According to the PPCT model, 'proximal processes' are the drivers of development. Both group and solitary activities such as playing with others or reading, are identified as mechanisms through which individuals come to understand their world and formulate ideas about their place within it. For the purposes of this study I therefore consider the participants' sense-making to be an important 'proximal process' driving their acculturation.

Below I discuss the findings of this study in terms of the constituent elements of the PPCT model of development. The 'Person', 'Process' and 'Time' elements of the model are described within themes focusing on the micro and macro 'Contexts' within which the participants are embedded.

The Person

Bronfenbrenner (1999) described the person in terms of personal characteristics that can significantly influence proximal processes across the lifespan, including demand characteristics, resource characteristics and force characteristics. Demand characteristics, such as age, gender or physical appearance, act as “personal stimulus” characteristics to set processes in motion. For example, all participants were Black adolescents which Study 1 and Study 2 indicated could open them up to experiences of racism; Diola was female while Mark and James were male, in Study 1 participants indicated that different things were expected of Nigerian women than Nigerian men. These characteristics may engender particular expectations in the individuals they encounter in various contexts.

Resource characteristics, by contrast, are not immediately apparent. They include mental and emotional resources comparable to the developmental assets described by Benson (2003) such as past experiences, intelligence, and skills, in addition to material resources such as access to housing, education, and responsive caregivers. Diola was very academically competent, James had active interests in dance and the performing arts, while Mark was both academic and interested in sports. They all lived in Ireland with their families at the time of the first interview and so had access to housing, education and responsive caregivers.

Force characteristics are related to temperament and levels of motivation and persistence. Diola came across as a motivated individual who craved independence and autonomy. Mark described himself as being laid back, but also had a drive to succeed. James described himself as having little interest in school or formal education, but had ambitious hopes for a career in the entertainment industry. Bronfenbrenner notes that even when children and adolescents have equivalent access to resources, their developmental courses may differ as a function of characteristics such as the drive to succeed or persistence in the face of hardship. This shows how environments (or “systems”) can influence personal characteristics, yet also suggests personal characteristics can change environments. This resonates with the definition of acculturation used here, which indicated that “changes” occur following inter-cultural contact, these may be either the members of the minority or the majority culture. It also forms the basis of the Positive Youth Development perspective described in Chapter 5 and Chapter 8.

Context: Interactions in Microsystems

The Family: Diverging from family values

Within the PPCT model the family is seen as a network of interdependent relationships (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). Accordingly, bi-directional influences exist in which the behaviours of each family member affect those of others. The period of adolescence is frequently associated with increased child-parent conflicts; this is attributable both to an increased striving for independence for adolescents and also a time when parents may press for more togetherness (Berk, 2012). Further, cognitive developments during adolescence leads to an improved ability to reason about social relationships may lead teenagers to de-idealise their parents, and consequently they become more likely to question parental authority (Berk, 2012).

There was consistency across individuals and over time regarding what was expected from them by their families. Essentially, they felt they were expected to work hard and not to get involved in sexual relationships. James and Diola felt that this distinguished them from Irish families, where more liberal parenting was perceived to be the norm. While there was consistency in the values transmitted by parents, there were differences in how the participants responded to this. Diola and James described struggling with their parents' maintenance of traditional Nigerian values at home at the time of the first interview. By the second interview they had achieved greater independence from their parents by virtue of having moved away from the family home. While James and Diola resisted their perceived prescribed roles, Mark embraced his.

In the time between Interview 1 and Interview 2 both Diola and James moved away from the family home to attend college in a different city. This reflects an important change in their relationship with the microsystem of the family. For James the family home represented consistency and security at the time of the first interview:

When you go to your house there's always one thing happening, like your family is there. Like you have a tradition, whatever you do, you go home, you talk to your parents and other stuff, it's a whole different world inside the house, but when you go outside the house there's a whole wide world with different options, different things to do [...] when you go in the outside world you're like, there, you're a different person, freedom just comes around you. (James, Interview 1)

For Diola, the traditional values espoused by her parents were associated with feeling undermined due to her gender. This tension is crystallised in her relationship with her father. In the first interview she describes hiding her relationship with her boyfriend from him for fear of his reaction:

Actually my mum knows, but my dad doesn't. If he found us he would blow a fuse box if he found out I think he would actually go after him. (Diola, Interview 1).

This extract illustrates how communication within the family is impacted by Diola's gender, as well as her maturation and independence-seeking in terms of having a romantic relationship. In the second interview her relationship with her father appears more strained:

As the first child I was brought up to, I don't know, fear my Dad. But I don't fear him. Instead of like fearing him, I, I've got some sort of dislike for him (Diola, interview 2).

I can't hide who I am. And I think that's what makes me and my Dad so unclose. I'm me, accept it, deal with it. I'm not going to change who I am for a culture, some rules that are meant to generalise who I am. No. I'm different. (Diola, interview 2)

In the above extracts we can see how Diola questions her father's role in the family and links her father's expectations of her with her cultural background and her role as the "first child". Her culture is associated with "rules" which threaten to stifle her individuality and her autonomy. She rails against this through asserting her difference.

Across both interviews James described the clear views his parents held regarding how he should live his life. Their aspirations for him conflict with his own wishes regarding college. Consider the consistency in the following extracts regarding the conflicts between James wishes, and his parents' wishes for him:

It was like, "Ok, let me tell you something, let me ask something, why are you going to college? Is it not to get a good job and get money", "yeah"
"what if I got a good job and I have money do I have to go to college?"
"Yes, you have to go to college!" But I think sometimes like, they just, they just want their name [associated with] PhD. They just want to know, they

just want to be like “My kid went to college”. (James, Interview 1)

They want to go out and like you know, get a mic or something and announce to the whole of Nigeria, “My son is a doctor for your information ok?” Like yeah, they don’t care about anything else, they don’t even know what you have to go through, the studying and everything. The headaches! (James, Interview 2)

By the second interview James had managed to negotiate a compromise situation where he met some of his parents’ expectations while still being able to pursue his own ambitions. Through pursuing a computer science course in a city on the east coast of Ireland he managed to take advantage of the greater prospects available to him in terms of his interest in the performing arts: “*I am really happy I got [the computer science course] so I can have more opportunities for acting and dance and stuff. It’s more open wide, it’s more closer to England*” (James, interview 2). Diola had also moved away from the family by the second interview. She spoke positively of the new independence this granted her:

When I wake up in the mornings now I don’t have to worry about showering and three lads. I just have to worry about me. I don’t have to worry about going downstairs and making breakfast for them. I have to just make breakfast for myself. I don’t have to worry about making lunch for them before they go out to school. Because I can just grab like a bag of Taytos or something on my way home. And I don’t have to worry about coming home and sweeping the floor and doing the dishes because they are so portable, they are so small, it’s just, I have to clean up after myself. I don’t have to worry on weekends about washing the toilets, mopping the floor, or cooking, ironing, doing their uniforms. Because I just have to worry about me. And I don’t have to worry about getting their homework done with them when I can just stay in the library and do my assignments. And it’s not every day I have to wake up early because my lectures are not every time at nine o’clock. And I can go out when I like, come home when I like. I don’t have some shouting or breathing down my neck. (Diola, Interview 2)

When living at home she felt burdened with responsibilities for the care of several other people as well as the upkeep of the house. Her new situation is free of responsibilities for others and she does not feel the pressure of having someone “*breathing down [her]*

neck”. However, she adopted a traditional role in her new accommodation, describing herself as the “*mommy of the house*” (Interview 2).

James had continued to pursue his ambitions relating to dance and acting, while attending school regularly in accordance with his parents’ wishes. However, throughout the second interview he drew attention to the financial independence he was gaining from his parents through getting paid for semi-regular acting and dance jobs:

So then I opened an account and everything and since then I’ve been getting extras jobs and so I have my own account now so I don’t dip into my parents stuff now. Because with my house bills, they helped me pay my house bills for a while, now I just pay my own stuff. (James, Interview 2)

This financial success symbolised James growing independence and represented a tangible way to show his parents that he was justified in pursuing his love of performing he is becoming more agentic financially as well as in his daily life through moving away. Diola, in contrast feels that she is denied additional support from her father because as a female she is less worthy of investment than her male siblings:

Dad is paying a lot of money to get [my brother] to go for [football] trials [...] But I’m stuck for rent in New City and he’s finding it hard for him to give that to me. And I’m like “is it because he’s a boy?” And he’s like “yeah.” (Diola, Interview 2)

The preferential treatment of her male siblings undermines Diola’s aspirations. When making sense of her treatment, Diola draws on her understanding of being Nigerian (“*the men tend to value their sons*”, Interview 2).

The Family: Maintaining family values

Mark was the most vocal of the participants regarding his desire to maintain the values transmitted to him at home. Across both interviews this affected his relationships with Irish friends as he found certain jokes unacceptable, particularly those about parents: “*There are some jokes that I don’t count as jokes*” (Interview 1), he elaborated more on this in the second interview:

My Irish friends, they have the habit of saying like “your mother” and stuff. And I don’t like that. Like, from my culture like it’s, your mother is really important and if they keep saying that I just get really angry (Mark, Interview 2)

Mark had a number of younger brothers. As he was born in Nigeria he had experienced some life there he felt that it was his duty to educate his younger brothers as to what life in Nigeria is like:

I look out for them and help them in the school work and homework. Lead by example. Try as much as possible to lead with example. And tell them what to do, remind them of, because they were born here, tell them what Africa is about. Like tell them how lucky they are, because they need to know. So, basically that is it. Like, make them not feel too comfortable, because there are lots of other kids that are not comfortable, like, not like punching them or anything but just like letting them know that life can't be as easy as this every time. So, that's it basically. And make them study well.
(Mark, Interview 2)

Adopting the role of 'role model' within the family could be argued to promote him to a senior level within the family unit. A part of that role involves transmitting cultural beliefs and practices to his younger siblings, as well as maintaining a particular standard of behaviour. In the extract above we see how Mark feels that it is important to educate his younger siblings as to where they came from so that they will have the same appreciation of the "comfortable" life in Ireland that he has.

While Diola and James were vocal in their desire to escape the more traditional values espoused by their parents, they nevertheless actively maintained some of them. For example, in the first interview Diola described not telling her father about her boyfriend. In not doing so, she maintained the status quo within the family. Further, in the second interview despite questioning her father's willingness to spend money sending her brother to England for football try-outs while she struggled to meet her rent, she does not challenge him regarding the issue. She describes this as a sign of respect for her mother rather than accepting her father's authority, this may on the one hand appear to reflect her defiance of traditional values, yet it demonstrates her adherence to the respect of parents which she noted was important to Nigerian culture and it effectively maintains the male-dominated hierarchy within the family. Rather than actively trying to change the family system she accepts the freedom she finds elsewhere to satisfy her need for independence.

On the surface, Diola's move to another city appears to be a form of liberation from the duties she was bound to at home. However, in her new situation she also describes herself as "*the mummy in the house*":

I do the cooking. Because they basically eat ham and cheese sandwiches every day. And I'm like "guys, that is so unhealthy! I am feeling so sorry for you!" So I have to like, buy mince beef, I literally – they bought me a cook book! [...] I don't know. I think I'm the mummy in the house. So they're still my boys, so they're still Mummy's boys. (Diola, Interview 2)

The image she portrays could be seen as that of a parallel family, with her as the mother and her housemates her dependents. While she resists this role within her own family, it gives her a status with her new housemates such that she is seen as a vital, valued component. She therefore gains value from the skills and competences she has acquired through her own family. This status entitles her to special treatment, and she resists the notion that it is comparable to her role in her own family:

Lisa: So, in a way you're still left minding boys?

Diola: Yeah, I'm still left minding boys. But they clean up. When they, they do the dishes sometimes as well. They do my dishes as well. And they dry. But the only thing is that they won't be able to learn is how to cook for their own sake. (Diola, Interview 2).

Through highlighting the work her housemates to "*they do the dishes sometimes*", she differentiates the work she does in her new context to that she did in her family home.

Peers – Friendships with Irish and non-Irish Peers

As a microsystem the peer group becomes increasingly important as adolescents grow and develop, with adolescents spending less time with family members (Berk, 2012). Adolescent girls have been shown to value emotional closeness while boys tend to focus on attainments in sports and school, and involve more competition and conflict (Brendgen et al., 2001). Across both interviews there were strong indications that Mark chose his friendships based on a sense of shared values:

With the Indian lads, the way we kind of like have, most of the stuff that I don't like, it's the same with them as well. So, I hang around with them more than I do with Irish friends. (Mark, Interview 2)

The above extract suggests that Mark to some extent engineers his peer group based on the values he associates with his heritage culture and his family life. This resonates with previous research which suggests an adolescent's relationship with parents influences

their social networks and peer groups (Steinberg et al., 1995). This points to important meso-system interactions that are implicated in peer relationships in terms of the formation and maintenance of peer groups. It also points to how Mark actively engages with his micro-system (in this case his friendship group) in order to derive the most benefit from it. Similarly, the extract below shows how his Irish friends satisfy another need, but in a different context: *“Most of the Irish friends I have, like I made through sports, so that’s where I basically see them. On the pitch”* (Mark, Interview 2). In this instance Mark engages with Irish friends while meeting his wish to participate in sports. This shows how Mark engages differently with friends depending on the context, at school he chooses to socialise with Indian peers, but in the sports arena he associates primarily with Irish friends.

By the second interview both James and Diola were presented with the need to make new friends in the new cities they had moved to. While in Interview 1 James had described himself as being open to all people, regardless of background or nationality, it is other black or immigrant students that he has befriended on his course rather than native white Irish peers: *“one of the guys is black and another one is from Poland or something, we just hit it off”* (James, Interview 2). It is difficult to say whether he found it easier to make friends with other minority group students because they had shared interests, or because Irish students were more reluctant to make friends with him.

Diola had found school to be a venue where she found it easy to make and maintain friendships with Irish peers. She felt to her class was like *“a real little family”* (Interview 1) due to their shared history. Despite feeling this familial bond with her classmates, it was the Nigerian ones that she felt closest to due to a shared sense of *“endurance”* (Interview 1). Having started University Diola too had moved away from many of her friends and had to make new ones. The people she described spending her time with in her new city were almost equally split between Irish and Nigerian individuals: *“three are Irish and four are Nigerian”* (Interview 2). While describing a friendship group that was relatively evenly split between Irish and Nigerian individuals, the anecdotes offered throughout the interview tended to describe situations where she was socialising with her Nigerian friends rather than Irish friends.

As well as navigating new friendships, in the second interview James described navigating the friendships of his childhood. Technology and social networking sites had enabled him to make contact with many of the people he had been friends with as a

child. Trying to re-instate these friendships had not turned out to be a positive experience with James:

People are not the same anymore. People expect like someone say to me like “oh you are rich now” or something like that. Rich?!? I just deleted him as a friend. Because they think, they have a mentality there that once you leave Nigeria and move to Ireland or England or America you automatically become rich. (James, Interview 2)

Drawing on available social representations, James former friends see him differently now that he lives in Ireland. This is a disappointment for James, who does not feel that the friendships are viable anymore: *“you can’t keep in touch anymore, it doesn’t work. They have moved on like, I think it is about time I moved on as well like”* (James Interview 2).

School: Support and acceptance from teachers

Late adolescence coincides with the completion of secondary school and the transition to further education or work. Academic achievement becomes relevant at this stage as it affects higher education options and job opportunities and so the school microsystem becomes increasingly important. Within this microsystem adolescents need environments that are responsive to their expanding powers of reasoning and their emotional and social needs (Berk, 2012). Accordingly the relationships they have with teachers are important. While in Chapter 7 I explored the contrasts between the participants’ experiences of school in Ireland versus their birth country, here I consider the impact of relationships with particular teachers over time.

Across both interviews Diola described positive relationships with the majority of her teachers. Even in the second interview, when she had started University and was no longer attending secondary school, the perceptions that her teachers had of her remain an important point of reference for Diola’s self-concept:

My principal loved me [...] She dragged my parents into school to tell them I was really smart and intelligent because I was like the Captain of the debating team and I was head girl and like, there’s a different side of me in school then there is at home. Like when I’m in school I’m serious. I’m focusing on what I’m doing. And I have fun in school as well I wasn’t the goody-goody two shoes in school. (Interview 2)

Whereas in the family micro-system Diola felt undervalued due to her gender and her noncompliance with expectations, at school she felt valued and recognised.

Like Diola, James no longer attended secondary school, yet a relationship he had with a particular teacher remained a salient influence in his life, even though he was admittedly not academically oriented: *“I just talk annoy the teachers and disrupt the class”* (Interview 1). In the second interview he described the particularly positive influence a teacher had had on his life through first initiating the dance group of which he is a member: *“this guy got us to do a talent show in [school], he got almost all the black kids. [...] He was really nice actually. He’s sound like. He’s done loads of stuff with the black community”* (Interview 2). This engagement with students and their specific interests contrasts with James’ recollections of student life in Nigeria, where teachers were feared: *“in Nigeria the student is so scared of the teachers. Like I think that is terrible like you know. I was actually so scared of it”* (Interview 1).

Across both interview Mark too described positive relationships with teachers willing to offer him support, motivation and guidance: *“I had problems in my English and the teachers always like telling me not to give up and stuff, like. To keep working on it. And they showed me how to do it. And I felt like my grades improved in English. And I was really happy, so that’s, that’s like the highlight of my experience with teachers here. They are like, really, really close”* (Mark, Interview 2). The school microsystem was responsive to his needs and recognised the particular challenge he faced as an immigrant student in Ireland. He demonstrated his competence by being able to adapt following advice and intervention from teachers.

Other salient microsystems: The wider community

In this section I consider other important microsystems relevant to the participants. In the case of Diola I explore her relationship to the wider Nigerian community in Ireland, with Mark I consider his experience of sport in Ireland and for James I consider his interactions with the Black community in Ireland with respect to his dance group.

In the previous subtheme I considered how Diola had felt that her teachers at school saw potential in her and valued her academic abilities. This contrasts with how she felt the Nigerian community in Ireland viewed her:

Because I’m so free and bubbly and like I talk to a lot of lads, the adult community here think that I’m some sort of slut, or something like that. Like when my results came they were all shocked because I, I had been written off, like “yeah, she’s not going anywhere with her life”. But I have fun. And

I know when to stop having fun and when to knuckle down and study
(Interview 2)

As in the microsystem of the school, Diola describes being able to balance her desire for fun with the need to work. However, while her teachers appeared to commend her efforts, the Nigerian community in Ireland did not appear to recognise them. However, following her achievements in the Leaving Certificate she feels their perceptions of her may have changed: *“I don’t know, the Irish people see me differently to the way the community sees me. Well, I think the views of me now is changed, but I don’t know”* (Interview 2). The fact that she went on to achieve good grades in her leaving certificate exams enforced both the image of herself as academically proficient and as misunderstood by the African community:

I like the balance of when I study today I can party tomorrow again, do you get me? So they didn’t like, see it through my eyes. They already believed, “yah, she is doomed. She is not going to get very far in life.” [...] But when I got my results I was like, “yup, I proved you wrong!” (Interview 2)

Diola uses imagined dialogue to convey her thoughts on how the Nigerian community in Ireland viewed her, and imagines countering their view with her Leaving Certificate results. This extract illustrates how over time her relationship to this particular microsystem changes as the perceptions of the Nigerian community in Ireland change in response to Diola’s achievements and academic progression.

At the level of the meso-system, Diola felt that members of the African community in Ireland judged her unfavourably for breaking the rules at home. Her misbehaviour was deemed to reflect badly on the family and to contravene her role as a female: *“the rest would still be like “yeah, you are making, you are embarrassing your parents, you are giving them a bad name, you are a girl, you shouldn’t be doing this, you should be studying””* (Interview 2). She resists this image of herself, dismissing their criticisms through a rephrased idiom *“all work and no play makes someone really dull!”* Diola had to work through how she could negotiate the cultural values and associated judgements she experienced as a result of being a member of that community.

While Mark felt supported in school by teachers there was another prominent arena where Mark did not feel as supported. Sport was a major factor in bringing Mark together with other Irish young people; however it was an area where he felt that he was not necessarily valued or recognised. Indeed, at the time of the first interview he felt

that he was sometimes singled out as a target for abuse because he was black:

“sometimes in like, in soccer matches like the crowds just go crazy and turn on you. Sometimes the referees.” (Mark, Interview 1). This persisted and at the time of the second interview Mark described feeling bullied by supporters:

It’s the, like the supporters like. Like say we were playing away and the supporters of the other team they just, I don’t know, for some reason they just single me, they just single you out. They just bully you basically.
(Interview 2)

In the extract above Mark changes the sentence from “they just single *me*” to “they just single *you* out”. This could be seen to distance him from the hurt caused by being targeted by opposing supporters. Sports is a double-edged sword for him, it gives him a venue to make Irish friends and was a major career aspiration for him, yet he felt limited in Ireland regarding how far he could progress. By the second interview Mark felt that, as an immigrant he did not have the social capital to forge a career as a sportsman in Ireland:

Ireland is a very small place and the possibility of bias, of being biased is very, very high. Like, my experience with the sports, the sporting here, is eh, isn’t really great. So, I think there is too much like “I know you” and “oh, I know him, that’s my friends son” and stuff, so automatically you have to be like, you know what I’m saying, like living next door to them. (Interview 2)

Mark understands his exclusion from success in soccer in terms of the size of Ireland and the privileging of those who have connections. In the above extract we hear the voices that Mark feels he is up against – those who coach the teams, who would rather have local people on the team who have a familial history in the area. He felt that expending further energy trying to overcome the obstacles he faces as an immigrant in the Irish sports world would be futile and result in a lose-lose situation whereby he misses out academically as well as in sports:

I just feel like I am not part of the plan. I have always felt that like. [...] I just feel like I am not part of the plan and I, like I have always tried and like push, push, push to be like over here, like a foreigner. And I know there are some foreigners that did decent in sport, but like, the more I try, the more they try and bring you down. (Interview 2)

Feeling that he is “*not part of the plan*” Mark feels excluded from his dreams of becoming a professional footballer. This is experienced as both frustrating and insurmountable: “*The more I try, the more they try and bring you down*”. As a result he felt he had to make the pragmatic decision to focus on academic success, because he feels there are less barriers for an immigrant in the Irish education system: “*if I work hard in school I can make it*” (Mark, Interview 2). Being black made Mark a target for abuse during matches, the fact that he was an immigrant meant that he was not part of the local networks that seemed to determine much of the success in sports in Ireland. Like Diola, Mark had to contend with pressure, but in his case the pressure stemmed from the dominant Irish community. Diola somewhat managed to overcome this through achieving academically. Mark he felt that the sporting system was set up against him and he decided to withdraw.

James’ dance group was a salient micro-system in his life. Within this micro-system James, as a black male was a majority group member, and it was his white Irish friend who was in the racial minority:

When they see there’s a white guy in my crew they’re like, “Can you dance man?” Because the guy in my crew does the like battle, he just dances, dances against black people. But when a black person, they do a dance battle, [and the] black person wins, it doesn’t matter that much, he’d be like “ay, whatever man” but if a white person wins, yeah, it would be shameful for the black person, he’d be like “aw, man I got beat by a white guy”.

(James, Interview 1)

Across both interviews, the dance group is a context where James can be proud of his race and ethnicity, and he can express it to acclaim in Irish society though the dance performances his group arrange. His dancing also turned into a way for him to make some money: “*It was really good getting paid to do what you enjoy!*” (Interview 2). However, as the extract above illustrates it was also a context where issues of race are salient, with black people being said to feel shame if they lose a dance battle to a white opponent.

Context: Understanding Microsystem Interactions through Macrosystem Constructs

The macrosystem consists of the cultural values, laws, customs and resources available in a given society, it comprises:

the overarching pattern of micro- meso- and exosystems characteristic of a given culture, subculture, or other extended social structure, with particular reference to the developmentally instigative belief systems, resources, hazards, lifestyles, opportunity structures, life course options and patterns of social interchange that are embedded in such overarching systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1994, p. 25)

The participants in this study have developed in two different macrosystems, with different overarching belief systems, lifestyles and opportunities. In the context of late adolescence and emerging adulthood constructing a worldview, or a set of beliefs and values to live by, is seen as essential for attaining adult status (Arnett, 2001, 2006). This means that the participants' perceptions of the macrosystem, and their relationship to it, become increasingly important.

This theme deals with sense-making which occurs within the micro-, meso- and exo-systems, and so the subthemes described here necessarily overlap with some of the preceding themes described. The emphasis in this theme is on how the participants make sense of salient interactions in terms of the macro-system in which they are embedded including ideas of nationality, race and ethnicity. The focus is on experiences relating to drinking as a social norm and racism, and the participants changing perceptions of Nigeria with respect to their experiences in Ireland.

Drinking

At the time of the first interview none of the participants drank alcohol. By the second interview both Diola and James described regularly consuming limited amounts of alcohol. Alcohol consumption was described by all three participants at the time of the first interview as a particularly "Irish" behaviour ("*90% of the Irish boys, my friends that I know, they drink*" Mark, Interview 1). Diola did not discuss her attitudes toward drinking in detail at the time of the first interview other than to note that she did not drink. James felt that at the time of the first interview he did not need to drink, because as a black person with "*black blood*" he could have fun without alcohol. Mark felt that drinking was an integral part of Irish culture, describing being drunk as "*a normal thing*" and feeling that "*you have to drink if you are Irish*". As a non-drinker himself, he felt excluded from claiming an Irish identity. The perceived culturally sanctioning of drunkenness conflicted with how permissible he saw drinking as being among Nigerians: "*if you drink you are not regarded, they do not really look at you well.*"

Diola and James, the two participants who had moved away to college, described how they had begun to consume alcohol in the year following the first interview. This longitudinal design therefore allowed for exploration of their construction of alcohol at two different time points, from the perspective of non-drinkers and then as drinkers. Their descriptions of their alcohol consumption could also be interpreted as telling regarding the macro system in which they are now embedded versus the macro system of their birth. For example, drinking is regarded as an important part of Irish culture, particularly among college students (MacNeela & Bredin 2011).

James had initially described his choice not to drink as being related to being African. He described Africans as being able to have exciting parties without the need for alcohol. In the second interview he manages to reconcile his drinking with his sense of self as an African by characterising his drinking as being different to that of his Irish peers (*“my Irish friends drink more than me”*, Interview 2), yet he describes it as *“challenging...like trying to keep myself balanced, like I don’t want to be drinking too much”*. The idea of trying to keep a *“balance”* in his drinking behaviours could reflect an overall desire to balance the mores of one culture with those of another. This tension is also reflected in his conflicts with his parents over their aspirations for him. In the first interview James described the fact that he, as a black person, was able to have fun without alcohol, in contrast to Irish people. In the second interview, his perspective seems to have changed:

One of my friends doesn’t drink in Dublin. He is black but he doesn’t drink as well, and he is always going out as well but he doesn’t drink. Like I admire his courage like but I drink. I used to say I wouldn’t drink when I first came but I do now. (Interview 2)

The above extract brings many important issues to the fore. James describes his friend’s decision not to drink as *“courageous”*. In the first interview James portrayed his non-drinking as natural and as more fun than drinking. In the second interview he associated his non-drinking with *“when I first came”*, a time when throughout the first interview he describe himself as naïve and unknowledgeable regarding how the world worked. As a late adolescent he may be in Marcia’s (1989) moratorium and trying on many “possible selves through adopting Irish cultural mores for drinking. The fact that he described his drinking as distinct from his Irish friends drinking could show that he is

not fully committed to the adoption of Irish drinking norms and values regarding alcohol consumption.

Diola has also begun drinking in the year intervening the interviews. Diola describes how her new housemates display their drinking habits through constructing a literal monument to their capacity to drink:

We've been living in the house for two months. And he has a pyramid made of cans of drinks that's like 8 by 4 in his room all stacked up, and it's almost touching the wall. He drinks, probably five cans in a day. There's a lot of drinking in, no, Irish people love to drink. They love the drink. (Diola, Interview 2)

She also described how the issue of alcohol consumption could make certain social situations difficult to navigate. For example, in Interview 1 Diola felt that her status as a non-drinker cast her as a "*party-pooper*" among many of her peers. In the second interview, even though she had begun to consume alcohol she felt that she was judged because she did not consume strong enough alcohol in large enough quantities. Like James, she characterises her drinking as different to that of other Irish people:

I don't know, I hate drink. I just like my WKD or my Smirnoff Ice, that's like the lemon one and it's only 4%. They all think, "yah, you're a baby, you don't like to drink", but it's just me. I wasn't brought up drinking. (Diola, Interview 2).

In the extract above Diola again presents an imagined dialogue to illustrate the conflicting world-views she faces. She connects her dislike of drinking to how she was raised, but equally she lists three different alcoholic beverages which she does like to drink allowing her to construct a middle ground between drinker and non-drinker, and describing pressure to drink more. Through limiting herself to what she sees as softer drinks she resists comparisons to the excessive amounts of alcohol consumed by her Irish peers. She further emphasises her bubbly personality to illustrate why she does not need to consume greater quantities of alcohol:

If you see me out you will probably think "she's drunk", but I'm not. I'm probably drunk on Lucozade or red bull or something. But no. Because I always like to know what is going on around me. I'm not going to drink and be so out of it that I don't know what's going on or what I'm doing. When

I'm going out I like to be sensible. (Diola, Interview 2)

This strategy of describing how she does not need alcohol to have a good time echoes James' description of how having "*black blood*" negates the need for alcohol consumption. Diola describes that when she drinks she likes to remain "*sensible*", as with her approach to school it appears that she is seeking balance. While maintaining her Irishness, Diola resists the drinking culture while still negotiating a middle ground. This aligns her behaviour with her view of how Nigerian people consume alcohol, when they choose to do so:

Diola: Nigerian people probably drink at home and get wasted in the safety of their own house than to go out and be falling all over the floor. And literally not know where they are going or how they got home or remember what happened last night.

Lisa: So they wouldn't do that?

Diola: No. Well some would and some wouldn't. It depends how you were brought up. Because some Africans have adopted the Irish way of living. Not that there's anything wrong with it. But I just prefer drinking in my house and being able to roll up to bed and not drinking in the pub and falling around in the pub and getting kicked out by bouncers, that's embarrassing.
(Interview 2)

In this extract Diola describes excessive alcohol consumption as an "*Irish way of living*" which some Africans may have adopted. In not doing so she could be argued to be retaining her cultural heritage, yet she sees herself as "*100% Irish*" (Interview 1) and so her cultural identifications could be described as complex and behaviour-specific to some extent.

James and Diola's decision to start drinking alcohol could indicate an interaction between their developing sense of self with respect to their previous macro-system, the prevailing values of which continue to be communicated to them via their families and members of their heritage culture in Ireland, and their current macro-system, where drinking is seen as the norm. Their decision to drink involved a re-interpretation of what alcohol means relative to their sense of self as a Nigerian individual vis-à-vis an Irish individual.

In contrast to James and Diola, Mark had not begun to consume alcohol by the time of the second interview, despite alcohol consumption featuring in his experiences of socialising in Ireland. In the first interview he described how his Irish friends teased him over this, but he took this in fun and felt that this did not affect his relationship with them, although it may suggest a certain level of discomfort on the part of drinkers dealing with non-drinkers:

I hang around with like older people as well and they will just say “Oh Mark, what do you want?” and I will just say “oh, I want 7up”, so when they bring it over they’ll be like, they will let me have a sip and then they will be like “Oh, I, I threw in some, some... alcoholic dash in there” and I’ll be like “are you serious?” yeah, yeah, and they’ll be like “oh, no we are only joking” so I don’t find it hard like not drinking. (Mark, Interview 1)

Again in the second interview Mark described that being a non-drinker did not necessarily negatively impact his social life. However, he did feel that since drinking is almost compulsory for Irish people, he could never be Irish:

It’s not possible like. Like the culture here is too, is so different so, I can try! I always try to be but like, every time I try I just can’t. Unfortunately you have to drink. You have to be able to drink! But I don’t drink so. But that passion. I really want to get that passion. That passion, it’s really good. It’s crazy. (Mark, Interview 2)

While he notes the impossibility of ever becoming Irish and bridging the many cultural gaps, he does identify an aspect of Irishness that he would like to adopt for himself, the “passion”. In this way he seems to be able to incorporate selective aspects of “Irishness”.

Racism

In Chapter 3 I noted that the potential for African immigrants in Ireland to experience racism was high. The preceding studies have indicated that racism is a common experience for the participants. This subtheme explores how the participants make sense of such experiences in terms of macro-level constructs such as culture, ethnicity and race. In the present study each of the participants reported having experience with racism although James describes having experienced it more indirectly than either Mark or Diola. Interrogating these experiences in terms of how participants

present social explanations for them can help to explore how they see their place in the macro-system in Ireland and how they understand the place of others.

In the first interview Diola's experiences of racism or discrimination based on race were largely historical and relegated to the years when she had first moved to Ireland. She felt that she had overcome any differences between herself and peers and that, based on her time spent in Ireland and her relationship with her friends here that she was "*Practically Irish*" (Interview 1), indeed she described herself as "*100% Irish*". However, following her move to a new city she was confronted with challenges to her sense of inclusion in Irish society. Upon her arrival in her new city, Diola was advised that because she was black there were certain areas that she should avoid:

A man was asking me was I new and I was like "yeah" and he said "where do you live?" I was like, [area], and he was like "OK, that's grand, but I would advise you not to go to [area B] or [area C] basically the North of the city, just stay away from there". And that, the North of the city does look run down. It looks like the Calcutta of [Baile Beag] (Interview 2)

This advice, given to her by a taxi driver during one of her first days in Baile Beag came as a surprise ("*I didn't know [Baile Beag] would be like that, because I thought [Baile Beag] was grand*", Interview 2). She counters the potential exclusion by describing the no-go areas as impoverished and run-down, an undesirable part of the city for her to be in, regardless of whether she is welcome or not ("*the Calcutta of [Baile Beag]*" Interview 2).

While she describes her experiences in her new city as generally positive ("*everyone is friendly*" Interview 2), she did describe witnessing an incident of racial aggression after a party there. That night Diola came to a conclusion regarding the implications of living in her new city with regard to how she would behave in the future, given her status as a black female. She felt that she was required to associate with white people in order to make herself acceptable as a black female. This conclusion followed an incident which occurred on the walk home from the party where she had just witnessed racially-motivated aggression. The incident involved a group of Polish males:

It was only, me and my friends it was only the Africans walking home that day and, I was walking with a lad, one of my best friends, and the man, your man must have been like "Courva" you know? That thing, "with your fat

ass” and my friend was like “that’s disrespectful. I’m not going to let him call you that.” And he just went over and was like “can you apologise for what you just said?” and he like, the man, the Polish guy, head butted him and everything. Trying to have it on because he’s black or something. But my friend is extremely violent, so a fight broke out and I had to like literally drag them away. And my heel snapped and everything. And I was begging the Polish guy like “yes my ass is fat, I don’t care, I don’t want any trouble.” (Interview 2)

This incident again brings not only Diola’s skin colour but her gender to the fore, highlight how she impacts her context through her demand characteristics. She is called “*Courva*” (polish word for “bitch”) and her physical appearance forms the heart of the insult. Following this, her male African friend came forward to defend her and demand respect. In this incident traditional gender roles are seen to be enacted with a physical altercation between the males and Diola calling for peace. Diola puts the racism down to the Polish men’s status as immigrants who do not know better, yet this verbal and physical assault leads her to formulate a plan to avoid future altercations: “*When I go out in [Bailr Beag] now I’m not just going to go out in a group of only Africans. If it’s mixed or you go out with only whites they’re fine*” (Diola, Interview 2). This could be seen as a practical, safety-related issue. While it arguably does not impact on her self-perception in that she does not internalise a negative self-image, she does feel the need to structure her social circle in a way that will prevent her feeling unsafe or threatened.

I have already explored some of Mark’s experiences of racism in terms of his engagement in sports. He differs from Diola in that racism may be a more substantive issue for him that has affected his decisions and career goals. What is important in terms of this subtheme is how he interprets the experience of this racism. In the second interview he felt that the prevalent preference for local, Irish-born youths limits his hopes to develop a career in Irish sports. Beyond the sports arena, Mark saw racism in Ireland as pervasive, but not deeply affecting: “*after a while you get used to it*” (Mark, Interview 1). However, in the first interview he did describe how such casual racism could be frustrating, for example below he describes how a classmate angered him through insensitive comments:

He is always just talking about like black people and then, like, all the others tell him like, “aw, stop you’re so racist” and stuff. And then I just get angry some days like “Why are you always doing this? Why are you always doing

that?" [...] I don't know, maybe he didn't mean to, but he was doing it. And I was just getting angry. So I told him and he was like "No, I'm not racist!" [...] he said "oh I have lots of black friends", "but like what you are saying about them is very wrong!" And then like, later it was his story that he didn't really mean it that way. (Mark, Interview 1).

Mark was supported by fellow classmates, indicating to some extent that racism is deemed socially unacceptable. Mark responded to the incident by questioning why the racist comments were made and trying to explain that they are hurtful. In this instance he was able to address racism in an empowered way because he was dealing with a single individual with the support of friends. In the case of sport he felt that he was up against an entrenched system. Having withdrawn from sports by the second interview Mark feels that he experiences less racism:

Maybe it's because I am playing less sport now that I don't really experience it. But like before, when I used to play sport, every time I experienced that all. (Mark, Interview 2).

In the first interview James felt that he had not suffered from racial discrimination having gotten in "*on the right foot*". He described not being subjected to anything that left a lasting impression on him: "*I haven't had any major, major, racism, like you know. Maybe like names calling, like, I don't know, I can't remember*" (Interview 1). However, in the second interview he did note that people sometimes had negative preconceptions about him due to his race, highlighting again the impact of demand characteristics on context:

A white lady comes straight towards us and when she saw us she crossed straight away to the other side of the road. Because she was scared she was going to get robbed or something. You know, walking like this way, usually the white women get scared and move to the other side. Yeah, they are scared of us walking at night because they think we are going to like, we are going to rob them or something. Yeah, that happens every time. (Interview 2)

James actively decided not to take offence at this behaviour, rather he puts himself in the place of the individuals who avoid him and draws on social representations of other minority groups when he tries to make sense of the incident among friends:

I was talking to some of the guys the last day [...] they were saying like why do white people cross when they see them? But I was like “think about it this way, you know travellers? If I am walking and I see a bunch of travellers coming I wouldn’t walk on the street because they are going to be looking for trouble and I don’t want to be start fighting there. I just go my own way. It’s the same way with white people, they want to feel safe like. (James, Interview 2)

James draws upon a social representation of black people as dangerous and feels that it makes sense for a white person to avoid him if it helps them to feel safer. He compares this to how he would react to seeing a group of members of the travelling community. These social representations reflect macro-level general belief and stereotypes which helped the participants make sense of their experiences.

Understanding Nigeria

This final subtheme considers the important issue of how the participants relate to Nigeria (the country of their birth) relative to Ireland. This discussion centres on their overall conceptions of Nigeria and draws on some of the previous discussion to illustrate points made. In this way it is concerned with changes in the participants relationship to the macrosystem which they were born into.

All participants felt that Ireland was less corrupt than Nigeria, and that people in Ireland had genuine opportunities to succeed. For example, in the first interview Mark stated “*generally it’s tougher in Nigeria. It’s easy here, that’s what I will say like. Nicer and you have more freedom to express yourself. And the government is good here as well.*”

Throughout both interviews Diola described herself as identifying strongly with Ireland and considering herself to be Irish rather than Nigerian. She described herself as not being a “*freshie*” (Interview 2). This, she explains is “*what we would call people that just moved here, like they still remember everything*” (Interview 2). Nevertheless, she aligned herself with particular values that she associated with Nigeria rather than, including respect for authority, and a sense of personal endurance and optimism. She did not have anything negative to say about Nigeria across both interviews, yet she felt she did not have a place there. Across the interviews she wished to retain some characteristics she associated with Nigerians, namely respect, optimism and endurance. On the other hand she wanted to distance herself from the patriarchal system she saw as dominating relationships there:

I mix and match it. I take what I like from one race and what I like from another race and I like, I like the Irish freeness and the way they can speak their mind. And I like the hope side and respect side and ambition side of Nigeria. I'm diverse! I go with the flow or things. I think that's why. I went with, I saw some things Irish people did and I liked it and I decided "yeah, I'll copy that" but then I've seen some things Irish people do and I'm absolutely appalled by it and I'm like "Ew, I'm not copying that!". Like I can never be cheeky to people who are older than me. I would rather just go to my room and keep quiet. Even if they annoyed me, I won't say it, I'll just keep quiet and stay in my room. But I've seen my friends screaming at the tops of their lungs to their parents which is highly disrespectful. (Interview 2)

James took a relatively dim view of Nigeria in the first interview, and felt that Ireland was comparatively safer with a less corrupt government. Nevertheless, he did not appear to feel much of an affinity with an Irish identity. Feeling a lack of connection to Nigeria did not imply a connection to Ireland. He described the Nigerian government as backward, and he felt unsafe there. At the macro-level he felt that limited educational opportunities meant that people turned to crime to support themselves:

There's just a small way of getting a good education than Ireland and Nigeria so people who doesn't get a good education tends to do something else for money, so like, like, stealing, robbing, so crap like this, there's always robberies, loads of robberies around the areas and stuff like you know. (Interview 1)

Like James, Mark had conflicting views of Nigeria at the time of the first interview. While he felt Ireland was "*easier*" and that teenagers had more "*freedom*", he also felt that, having grown up in Nigeria he had the skills to entertain himself without the need for technology and he was not wasteful. However, in the second interview he is frustrated that the situation in Nigeria is not improving: "*Because like most of other countries are moving forward whereas Nigeria is moving backwards. I don't know, it is just getting worse*" (Interview 2). By the second interview he had also begun to question the values that he had held there relative to the values he has now. Possibly to alleviate cognitive dissonance related to being born in a country that he does not view positively he articulated a distinction between the country, the corrupt people and "*the people who are trying*" (Interview 2). It is the latter that Mark is proud of:

I think the country is not great. [...] People say they are proud of it. But I'm not really. But I am proud of it, like. Like, I'm proud of people that are surviving. People that are pushing. People that keep believing. People that keep trying. People that make it on their own. People that are not corrupt. I am proud of them. But of the country, I am not proud of that.

Over time the participants have noticed differences in what is considered acceptable in Ireland versus Nigeria, or among Irish people and among Nigerian people. The participants had to negotiate these two different sets of beliefs communicated by seemingly opposing macro-systems. Mark describes this process as an attempt to behave in a "*normal way*", which is associated with Europe rather than Africa:

I am trying to learn to behave in like a normal way, in a European way compared to Africa. I am still trying though, but from time to time there is that rage that comes out but it is better than before. It is just the mindset like. What is wrong and what is right. Like, what my rights are as a human being. What, like, people are not allowed to do to me. What I am not allowed to do people. (Interview 2)

The feeling that behaviours and norms associated with Africa are somehow "backward" echo the embarrassment James described in the first interview relating to hearing negative media reports from Nigerian. While James found that Nigeria was "*doing nothing*" (Interview 2), and felt that the country let itself down, Diola and Mark continued to feel both positively and negatively about Nigerian. For example, Mark found Nigeria to be a place where what he now finds to be unacceptable was acceptable, and he feels that having lived in Ireland he could not revert to the beliefs he once held in Nigeria:

I just find that here, oh my god I can't believe I did this. I can't believe I did that. And if I go back to Africa like the people that I hung around with would be like "Oh Mark, you have really changed!" So, like, and I see someone I'd be like "what are you doing man? What are you doing? Are you ok? What's wrong with you?" like, "Are you ok?" So lots of other like things as well (Interview 2).

Discussion

This longitudinal IPA study investigated the acculturation of three adolescent Nigerian immigrants living in Ireland. Using the PPCT model of development as an organising framework for the analysis, the findings point to the diverse ways in which acculturation impacts on experiences across life domains and how these experiences can change over time. By interpreting the findings using the PPCT model of development as an organising framework, I was able to draw attention to how changes within the individual and in the contexts with which they engaged impacted on their engagement with the acculturation process. This meant that the longitudinal design adopted was integral to the study, as time is a key element of the PPCT model. The longitudinal design allowed for ‘time’ to be more fully incorporated than a cross-sectional design would allow for. In this discussion I explore the implications of these findings for the study of adolescent acculturation.

According to the PPCT model of development individuals affect their contexts and are affected by them in reciprocal interactions. Consequently, the findings of this study showed how the participants made sense of the changing relationships they had with the contexts within which they were embedded, and the relationships they had to the individuals within those contexts. Further, the PPCT model is concerned with how ‘proximal processes’ drive development, and conceives of culture as being important in development. In this case the participants interpretation of their experiences were considered to be the ‘proximal processes’ driving their acculturation. The IPA methodology is geared toward exploring / interpreting the ‘lifeworld’ of the participant and so was appropriate for investigating the issues important to participants and examining how they make sense of these issues (Smith et al., 2009). This allowed for an exploration of how the participants negotiated the acculturation experience in each ecological system of the PPCT model of development.

The acculturation strategies proposed by Berry (1997) occur in a broader sociocultural context, yet they have most often been examined as static outcomes or as predictors of broader adaptation, with process elements being largely ignored (Ward, 2013). The findings reported here suggest that the PPCT model of development offers a valuable resource in framing and explaining the analysis of these adolescents’ experiences of acculturation and illustrate how acculturation is an interactive process between individuals and their contexts. In turn, the detailed findings and analysis presented can be seen as illustrating how Bronfenbrenner’s theorising becomes manifest

in the lives of acculturating adolescents. The findings also connect to some of the main criticisms of mainstream approaches to acculturation research among adolescents; namely that the acculturation strategies proposed by Berry and colleagues (1997) are too simplistic (Chirkov, 2009; Rudmin, 2009), as is the idea that these strategies are relatively stable (van de Vijre, 2003, 2004), mutually exclusive (Rudmin, 2004) and have a universal character (Bhatia & Ram, 2004).

The results give us privileged access to the negotiation of meanings within the ecological systems proposed by Bronfenbrenner (1999) which comprise the ‘C’ (Context) of the PPCT model of development. Bronfenbrenner’s theorising is increasingly being incorporated into theorising on adolescent acculturation (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012), as researchers increasingly acknowledge the importance of the reciprocal relationship between acculturating individuals and their contexts (Sam & Oppedal, 2006). However, such research does not invoke the PPCT model – the most recent incarnation of Bronfenbrenner’s ecological model of human development. The benefits of this model over the earlier versions are that it gives greater emphasis to the agentic qualities of the developing individual, whereas prior incarnations of the model tended to prioritise the role of the context (Bronfenbrenner, 1999, Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006). This is relevant to the findings of this study because the individual’s interpretation of their changing contexts was key to understanding how they engaged with them. For example, Mark saw no room to progress in the sports arena in Ireland due to a lack of social capital (in terms of having a long history in the area and contacts) and so he chose to focus on the academic arena as a means to succeed. Therefore, it is not only the context *per se* that is important, but how individuals evaluate and respond to it.

The findings point to the different influences or ‘voices’ that become salient in each context, and how the participants positioned themselves relative to these ‘voices’. This points to the dialogical nature of the acculturation process (Hermans & Kempen, 1998). For example, in the family context James struggled with the competing voices of his parents and their educational aspirations for him, and his own desire to be an entertainer and live a more Westernised lifestyle.

The ‘dialogical self’ challenges both the idea of a core, essential self and the idea of a core essential culture. It conceives of self and culture as a multiplicity of positions among which dialogical relationships can be established. It allows for the study of the self as ‘culture-inclusive’ and of culture as ‘self-inclusive’ (Konig, 2009),

with the individual conceptualised as being inseparable from the concept of culture, but the concept of culture also being reliant on the individual (Hermans, 2001). In terms of acculturation as a dialogical process, the results of this empirical study seem to require the recognition of aspects of identity beyond cultural identity in the acculturation process, leading to a consideration of other dimensions as gender, age, and significant others. For example, Diola negotiates her position not only as a Nigerian in Ireland, but as a female in her family and among her peers, and at first as a non-drinker, and later a drinker among Irish and non-Irish peers, as someone who is too Westernised in the eyes of members from her heritage community, but more Nigerian in terms of her alcohol consumption. The recognition of the multiple voices involved in the negotiations faced by acculturating individuals led Rosa and Tavares (2013) to suggest that: “The deepening of the relational and communicative universe between cultural positions and other I-positions appears to us as a priority in the development of a dialogical perspective of acculturation” (p. 282). An individual’s cultural or ethnic identity should therefore be considered in relation to the other identity positions that they feel are accessible to them as opposed to in isolation.

In accordance with the PPCT model of development, a dialogical perspective on acculturation recognises that changes in both the individual and the context can prompt renegotiation of positions previously held. As surroundings change, old positions could become redundant, challenged or dysfunctional in the new context and withdraw to the periphery of the personal position repertoire, whereas positions may be developed in order to answer the challenges of new environmental contexts (Konig, 2009). This is reflected in how both James and Diola renegotiated their stance in alcohol consumption, with each adopting what appeared to be a form of compromise over time – they began to consume alcohol, but did so in what they described as a safe way which contrasted with the manner in which Irish people tended to consume alcohol. This is noteworthy given that near-universal drinking among Irish students has been highlighted in a comparative survey across 21 countries, with no gender differences in the prevalence of drinking among Irish students (Dantzer, Wardle, Fuller, Pampalone, & Steptoe, 2006). Additionally, Boland et al. (2006) found that self-reports of problematic drinking among female medical student cohorts increased significantly between 1990 and 2002. Diola and James described their drinking as safe and more in line with Nigerian norms than Irish norms. This reflects findings by MacNeela and Bredin (2011) who found that female university students constructed their drinking as safe and in line with gender

norms. The intersection of different identities therefore may be an important factor to consider in future research into student drinking norms or immigrant drinking norms. The findings also illustrate that acculturation is necessarily an on-going process which cannot have a defined endpoint because individuals and their contexts are in constant flux, and any changes can bring intercultural differences to the fore. For example, racism became a more immediate issue for Diola over time with her move to a new city, while it became less of an issue for Mark due to his withdrawal from sports.

The macrosystem is important in the PPCT model of development because all the other systems are embedded within it, and so its influence is described as permeating every system and interaction described by the model. However, in terms of the study of acculturation, the PPCT model does little to describe precisely how culture influences interactions within each system. This is important in terms of the findings of this study. The participants were born in one macrosystem (Nigeria) before moving to another one (Ireland). This impact of this can be seen not only in the interactions that occurred within the micro-systems as described above, but how the participants make sense of cultural differences (for example, the drinking culture in Ireland), their place in society (through exploring how they interpret experiences of racism) and their perceptions of Nigeria and Ireland. Taking a dialogical perspective on acculturation illustrates how culture relates to each level of the PPCT model. By conceiving of self and culture as a multiplicity of positions among which dialogical relationships can be established we can understand how the participants engaged with and resolved negotiations with relevant voices the contexts with which they interacted. According to a dialogical perspective, the process of acculturation can be conceptualised as a reorganisation and innovation of the self through dialogical interactions between cultural positions within the self and/or with the parameters the new cultural environment affords (Konig, 2009). However, as the findings of this study illustrate, positions beyond cultural ones are also salient to acculturating individuals.

In terms of describing the participants experiences of acculturation in terms of the static strategies described by Berry (1997 – integration, separation, assimilation or marginalisation), the findings suggest that this is not tenable as a means of describing their overall approach to acculturation. While the participants described themselves as getting on well in Ireland and with other Irish people, the analysis highlighted the often contested relationships they had, with different issues becoming salient depending on the context. For example, Mark did not socialise with Irish peers much at school due to

the irreverent jokes they made, but he did socialise with them in the sports arena where they shared a common goal. However, in the sports arena he had to face discrimination from the fans of opposing teams and from those who selected team members. This research therefore raises questions regarding the suitability of Berry's (1997) classic four-fold typology when trying to understand acculturation experiences. As König (2009) noted regarding the notion of fixed cultures and acculturation:

In individual identities these supposedly separate 'blobs of jelly' almost immediately become runny when introduced to each other and form idiosyncratic personal mixtures of colour and texture, combinations which make the discussion between assimilation or segregation completely redundant. (p. 116)

Conclusion

The picture that emerged from this study highlights the complexity of the lives of young African immigrants in Ireland. In line with a cultural hybridity perspective on acculturation the multiple identities within these adolescents appear as dynamic resources that they constantly negotiate and construct. In using an IPA approach to investigate these issues, the fluidity and context-dependence of these negotiations has been highlighted. By using IPA I was able to explore how participants made sense of their interactions within particular contexts of the PPCT model. This indicated that the Dialogical Model of Acculturation can offer an insight into how 'culture' relates to the acculturation process. This research has shown that the process of immigrant acculturation is not a simple process of integration but one that can be highly contested and characterized by conflict, negotiation and even painful experiences. I have drawn attention to the ongoing renegotiations of previously held positions that the immigrants engaged in as they adjusted to a new or changing environments. These findings emphasize the unique experiences of Black immigrants in Ireland whose adaptation processes are impacted by their race. These findings also draw attention to the need for research that examines the immigrant adaptation process as a dialogical process rather than as a simple integration of dominant culture to culture of origin.

Chapter 11: Discussion and Implications of Findings

The path I choose through the maze makes me what I am. I am not only a thing, but also a way of being--one of many ways--and knowing the paths I have followed and the ones left to take will help me understand what I am becoming.
- Daniel Keyes, *Flowers for Algernon* (1966)

This thesis set out to explore the acculturation experiences of two specific groups of African adolescent immigrants to Ireland; one group who came to Ireland through the process of family reunification, and one who came as unaccompanied minors seeking asylum in Ireland. This exploration was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the process of acculturation *like* for African adolescent immigrants in Ireland, who either came through the process of family reunification or as unaccompanied minors?
2. How do their experiences correspond with dominant models of acculturation?
3. How do these experiences change over time?
4. What is the impact of the asylum-seeking process on the process of acculturation?
5. What are the policy implications, if any, of these experiences?
6. What can theories other than dominant acculturation theories offer to the study of adolescent acculturation (e.g. theories of Positive Youth Development, bio-ecological theories of development, Identity Process Theory)?

Throughout the meta-ethnography (Chapter 4) and the empirical studies (Chapters 7, 8, 9, 10) I have aimed to answer these research questions using qualitative approaches. The aim of this chapter is to consider the thesis as a whole and its implications for acculturation theory, acculturation research, and policy and practice issues relating to international migration and asylum-seeking. Firstly, I summarise the key findings from each of the study chapters. I then go on to explain the ways in which these findings contribute to psychological theories of acculturation and the use of qualitative methods in the study of adolescent acculturation. Next I discuss some of the practical implications of this research, the possible limitations of the thesis, and I reflexively consider my role in the research process. Finally, I introduce possible avenues for further research.

Overall, the findings point to the complexity of acculturation as a process. They suggest that how an individual experiences and engages with the acculturation process is dependent on contextual influences such as the attitudes of other groups and life domains, as well as factors intrinsic to the individual, such as life-stage and personal characteristics. Therefore, acculturation is seen as the result of an individual's active engagement with their context.

Overview of findings

This thesis is comprised of a meta-ethnography of qualitative research on the experiences of acculturating adolescents and four qualitative studies with acculturating asylum-seeker and refugee adolescent adolescents in Ireland. The qualitative methods used to analyse the data collected and the theories and perspectives used to interpret the results can all be encompassed by the 'ABCDE' model of acculturation put forward in Chapter 6. This model proposes that in addition to the affective, behavioural and cognitive changes typically considered important during acculturation (Ward, 2001), developmental and ecological changes are integral the process of acculturation. Accordingly, identity process theory (IPT, Breakwell, 1986), the person-process-context-time (PPCT, Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) model of development and positive youth development perspectives (PYD, e.g. Lerner, 2005) each assume an interactive relationship between a developing individual and their changing contexts. This proposed ABCDE model reflects current thinking in acculturation research, with increasing attention being paid to the impact of developmental and ecological considerations on acculturation (Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2010; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012).

In the case of IPT the emphasis is on how individuals can incorporate new elements into their identity structure. IPT pays particular attention to how changes in the ecological context in which an individual is embedded, as occurs in the case of international migration, can change an individual's social status and potentially threaten their identity. In this research the identity threats stemmed from restrictions imposed by the immigration system and experiences of racism. In the PPCT model of development the focus is on how an individual's active engagement with their context drives their development. This research conceived of individuals' sense-making as driving their acculturation. In line with this, the findings suggested that the participants' understandings of their context, and their role with in it, changed as their contexts, and

they themselves, changed. PYD perspectives seek to identify which combinations of an individual's resources and those of the social ecology can promote thriving among individuals. The findings pointed to the resilience of participants as they demonstrated indicators of positive youth development despite a lack of the external assets that have been proposed to be necessary for positive youth development (Benson, 2003).

Summary of findings related to the research questions

The meta-ethnography (Chapter 4) aimed to address key elements of the first research question which relates to the experience of acculturation among adolescent international migrants. This study developed a greater understanding of how immigrant adolescents engage with the process of acculturating through a synthesis of published qualitative research on adolescent acculturation. The findings had important implications for understanding the experience of acculturation and the models used to research adolescent acculturation. The themes suggested in this synthesis pointed to the main issues of concern for acculturating adolescents across different host-heritage combinations. These issues related to their relationships with the particular life domains of the family, the peer group and the school. The findings also indicated the importance of 'time' *vis-à-vis* the amount of time that had elapsed since migration and the age of the participants. The study concluded that qualitative research into adolescent acculturation has much to offer in terms of helping us to better understand the experiences of adolescents, particularly regarding how acculturation is experienced differently across life domains. This led me to suggest utilising the PPCT model of development (Bronfenbrenner, 1999; Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 2006) as a framework to aid in the understanding of adolescent acculturation. In addition the meta-synthesis highlighted gaps within the existing qualitative research into adolescent acculturation. These gaps included the need for longitudinal qualitative research and the need to include a greater variety of host and heritage culture combinations in research. These issues were further investigated within this thesis in the subsequent chapters.

The first empirical study (Study 1, Chapter 7) focused on exploring the experiences of adolescents who had moved to Ireland from African countries through the process of family re-unification. The study presented two themes which were derived from an interpretative phenomenological analysis of the participants' accounts of their experiences in Ireland. These were: Belonging and Being Different. These themes indicated that participants engaged with the process of acculturation by

negotiating their sense of belonging and place in Ireland while concurrently making sense of the differences between themselves and other Irish adolescents. The findings diverged from the models traditionally used to understand adolescent acculturation, indicating that a sense of belonging was not necessarily rooted in a sense of ethnic group or national group identification. In this first study I also explored how the participants could be conceived of as being engaged in avoiding or dealing with threats to their identities. Using key ideas from Identity Process Theory (IPT, Breakwell, 1986) I described how the process of migrating to Ireland sometimes placed these adolescents' identities in a threatened position. The move to Ireland had an impact not only on their ethnic identity, but on their sense of self as a student, an adolescent, a son or daughter. The participants managed the identity threats they experienced by building a sense of belonging in Ireland and cultivating a sense of positive distinctiveness. The findings suggested that the participants were successfully adjusting to life in Ireland, despite struggles in particular life domains. This study showed how an individual can actively engage with their context to affect the course of their acculturation, and also how context was an integral part of the process of acculturation by determining or restricting the opportunities available.

The findings of Study 1 reflect previous research which has indicated that migrating to a new country or being a member of a minority group can threaten particular elements of the identity structure (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2010; Timotijevic & Breakwell, 2000). It also echoes other research from an IPT perspective which has suggested that the belonging principle may be of particular importance to minority or immigrant groups and their members (Jaspal & Cinnirella, 2012).

Study 2 (Chapter 8) involved adolescent participants who were in the process of seeking asylum in Ireland. In this study I explored the experience of acculturation in a different context, and the relationship of the findings to existing models of acculturation. I also queried whether the asylum-seeking context in Ireland was conducive to positive youth development when considered from the point of view of aged-out unaccompanied minors living in a hostel environment. The findings suggested that, even in these challenging circumstances, the adolescent participants displayed the internal assets deemed necessary for positive youth development. However, the adolescents had limited access to external assets due to their status as adult asylum-seekers. Having 'aged-out' during the asylum process, four of the six participants effectively lost access to some of the external assets that they had previously had access

to as unaccompanied minors, including helpful teachers and supportive friends when they were relocated to a new city and treated as adults in the Irish asylum system. This study further underscored the importance of context in the process of acculturation. The ‘acculturation strategies’ proposed by Berry (1997, 2006) have proved to be fruitful area of research, yet a singular focus on such concepts could lead to the conclusion that immigrants are solely responsible for the course of their acculturation. The field is marked by a lack of knowledge surrounding the reciprocal interactions between an individual and their context. Alongside the individual’s thoughts and choices, attention should be applied to the context in which these experiences are embedded.

The findings of Study 2 are encouraging in that they suggest that the participants demonstrated resilience. However, the lack of external assets that these adolescents felt that they had access to was worrying given large-scale research among adolescents in the US has indicated that as assets rise in number, reductions are evidenced in each of 10 risk behaviour patterns (alcohol use, tobacco use, illicit drug use, anti-social behaviour, violence, school failure, sexual activity, attempted suicide, driving and alcohol use, and gambling) and that greater assets are associated with thriving behaviours (Benson, 2007).

The main focus of Study 3 (Chapter 9) was to explore the experience of acculturation and coping over time. The study represents a longitudinal, idiographic study with a single research participant (‘Togar’) who was in the asylum-seeking process. This chapter explored how acculturation experiences can change over time as the individual develops and their interactions with the context change. The findings demonstrated consistency over time, in that there was limited progress in Togar’s application for asylum in Ireland. However, the way in which he understood and made sense of his situation did evolve, which appeared to help him cope with the on-going uncertainty of his position in Ireland. By coming to understand the asylum system as one designed to frustrate him, he was able to make sense of his prolonged status as an asylum-seeker. His response was agentic rather than passive, characterised by active efforts to stay busy and productive. This study highlighted the importance of conceiving of acculturation as an on-going process, rather than one with a defined endpoint. It further highlights the need for expanded use of longitudinal research in qualitative studies of adolescent acculturation. The findings of Study 3 contribute to the overall picture of the Irish asylum-seeking system as being challenging, stressful and protracted (Breen, 2008; Conlan, et al., 2012).

Study 4 (Chapter 10) also investigated the experience of acculturation over time, exploring how the acculturation experiences of three participants from Nigeria changed over the course of a year. This study underscored how changes in the individual's context can impact their acculturation experiences, this time in reference to youth who were free to pursue occupational and educational opportunities. This study also suggested how developmental transition can change an individual's acculturation experiences. This study differed from the proceeding study as the participants were not in the asylum-seeking process, and so were better able to access education and were free to move around the country according to their needs and wishes. Two of the participants had moved to a new city. This had the effect of causing them to re-evaluate their experiences as they moved between contexts. The generation of the qualitative themes was guided by the PPCT model of development. In line with this model the themes highlighted the interaction of individual characteristics (age, gender, personal goals, and physical attributes) with features of the micro- and macro-systems which the participants engaged with over time. This study also allowed for greater exploration of gender-related issues that could not be achieved in the preceding studies. The findings of the study supported the adoption of a dialogical perspective on acculturation (Hermans, 2001). As their surroundings changed, old positions became redundant for the participants (being a 'non-drinker'), were challenged (taking part in sports) or became dysfunctional in their new contexts (relationships with parents) and withdrew to the periphery of their sense of self. Additionally new positions were developed in order to answer the challenges of new environmental contexts (e.g. a new 'drinking' identity) (Konig, 2009).

The final research question asks how the acculturation experiences of adolescent refugees can differ from those of adolescent asylum-seekers. Participants in all studies shared certain experiences: experiences of racism were mentioned in all studies and the participants seemed to react to them in similar ways, for example through feeling angry and frustrated, through minimising the impact of such experiences, through pathologising the perpetrators. The experience of racism also highlighted the embodied nature of the acculturation experience. Through coming to a country with a predominantly White population, the relationship of the Black participants to their own bodies changed as their physical appearance became a mark of differentiation. Participants also had to learn how to interact with Irish individuals, and they generally had positive experiences with teachers and fellow students in school. The participants

all discussed challenges regarding making sense of differences between themselves and their native Irish peers and their future in Ireland. However, the participants' accounts of their acculturation experiences as explored in these studies also exhibited elements of divergence according to asylum-seeking status. The asylum-seeking participants faced great uncertainty. Their autonomy was limited as they could not choose where to live, what to eat, what educational opportunities to pursue, and they were physically separated from the majority group by being housed in Direct Provision centres. In terms of their acculturation experiences this added obstacles to integrating with Irish people. The differing experiences within and between groups highlight the need to pay attention to the reciprocal relationship between individual and context in order to understand acculturation experiences.

Contributions to acculturation theory

Throughout this thesis I have drawn attention to the importance of attending to context when trying to understanding the experience of acculturation, particularly among adolescents and emerging adults. This point has important implications for acculturation theory. Acculturation continues to be understood predominantly from a universalist perspective (Berry, 1997), with an emphasis on cultural identification or stress and coping. This thesis has challenged concepts based on such frameworks by illustrating the relevance of other elements of the life-world to participants' understandings, interpretations and experiences of acculturation. For example, in this thesis I have highlighted the applicability of Identity Process Theory (IPT, Breakwell, 1986) to studies of acculturation, and how this draws attention to elements of identity affected by acculturation beyond ethnic identity. I also illustrated the importance of investigating acculturation in context by exploring the challenges to Positive Youth Development (PYD) arising from the restrictions inherent in being placed in the asylum-seeking system in Ireland. I further highlighted the benefits of adopting ecological models in the study of acculturation, thus broadening the perspective on acculturating beyond ethnic and national identities.

Ward (2008) tried to coax acculturation researchers out of "Berry's boxes" (p. 105) in order to avoid being constrained by the popular and appealing frameworks and models that Berry (1997, 2006) has proposed. In this thesis I have moved beyond "Berry's boxes" to illustrate how a new perspective on identity (IPT) can help to illuminate our understandings of how adolescents engage with the acculturation process,

how the PPCT model of development can inform our understanding of adolescent acculturation and how acculturation research should consider the acculturation context, particularly in terms of how it can impact the potential for positive youth development (PYD).

Contributions to knowledge about the experience of acculturation

The themes discussed in this interpretative phenomenological analysis illustrate the issues faced by a specific group of adolescents engaged in on-going inter-cultural contact. There was evidence of underlying shared themes within these chapters which can be interpreted using existing sociological and psychological research into the experience of acculturation, development and identity. The themes also indicated the important role of macro and micro contexts in the acculturation experience. For example, while existing research has identified integration as the most beneficial way to acculturate (Berry, 1997; Berry et al., 2006; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013), there is a lack of information on what integration means in terms of the lived experiences of acculturating individuals (Stuart & Ward, 2011). This makes it difficult to draw firm conclusions regarding why this is the case, and arguably whether it is the case at all. This findings of this thesis help to shed light on the personal meaning of integration. Thus, it appeared that integration did not necessarily mean that values of the host culture could be reconciled with values of the heritage culture (e.g. drinking norms), but that the participants felt able to navigate areas of contention (by not drinking, or not binge-drinking, but still socialising with Irish peers). Future research should therefore continue to investigate the how individuals actually engage with the process of acculturation and what concepts like integration mean in practice for them (Ward, 2013).

The combined findings of this qualitative thesis support a contextually-bound, sense-making, developmental approach to conceiving of acculturation. All participants interviewed for this study managed to balance heritage beliefs and values, with a certain level of adoption of Irish culture. Most participants appeared to adopt more of the Irish culture when they were in social situations with other Irish people than when they were in more private settings such as the family home. However, to conclude that they adopt the separation acculturation strategy at home and the assimilation strategy in public would be premature and simplistic. Such a dichotomous position was undermined by variation in the adoption of Irish cultural norms according to the particular situation and

the sense made of it at a particular time. As described in Chapter 2, previous acculturation research has considered cultural maintenance combined with either contact with the host culture (e.g., Berry, 1997) or adoption of the host culture (e.g., Bourhis et al., 1997). Through its focus on lived experience, this thesis considered both cultural contact and adoption. The findings indicated that, in terms of lived experience, adoption of the host culture and contact with the host culture are not necessarily equivalent. For example, participants could comfortably socialise with Irish people without adopting their drinking norms. Even in cases where their drinking behaviour changed over time, the participants described drinking according to standards of their heritage culture rather than Irish culture. Therefore, in order to get a comprehensive picture of acculturation experiences it seems it is necessary to explore culture maintenance with reference to *both* culture adoption and cultural contact.

Contributions to the use of IPA to inform acculturation research and social and developmental psychology

This thesis was comprised of four studies utilising the IPA methodology. These studies represented a variety of different ways that IPA can be used in psychological research; with a moderate-sized group (ten individuals), with a small group (four and three, respectively), and with a single participant. Two of these studies used a cross-sectional design and two used a longitudinal design. The research showed that IPA is a useful methodology when understanding social psychological and developmental psychological issues. It enabled context to be considered due to its concern with the participant's sense of 'being-in-the-world' (Smith et al., 2009). It also demonstrated the practicalities of conducting longitudinal IPA research. The research further demonstrated how IPA allows for the findings to be put into dialogue with existing theories, while still adhering to the principles of the IPA methodology.

Policy implications of the findings

On the surface, Irish public policy with respect to immigration claims to be in favour of multi-culturalism and presents itself as inclusive and promoting integration (Fanning, 2012). However, even among those participants who came to Ireland through the process of family reunification and thus had a relatively secure and stable future in Ireland there was a sense that they were not entitled to claim Ireland as 'theirs'. This meant that inclusion was not necessarily a reality for them in contemporary Ireland. The

need to support asylum-seeking youth arises strongly from the findings of this research, particularly in ensuring they have access to the external assets required for positive youth development. However, discouragingly, many of the groups that I liaised with in order to recruit participants have lost funding due to the ongoing economic crisis that has affected Ireland since 2008. The participants and other asylum-seekers like them will likely suffer as a result. The claims that the ‘dispersal’ of asylum-seekers who have aged-out in the asylum-seeking process would benefit them was challenged by the findings. The strategy distanced them from important contacts and friends they had forged during their time in Ireland.

"Children First" (Department of Health and Children, 1999) is the name of the national child protection guidelines in Ireland. Issued in 1999, these guidelines were intended to improve the ability of staff working with children to recognise child abuse and to be aware of child protection procedures and practices, to provide health board personnel with clear guidance in assessing child abuse cases, and to support and encourage organisations to work co-operatively in protecting children. One of the underpinning concepts for these guidelines is that everyone has a duty to protect children and that this is not simply the job of social workers or other health professionals. The Government has decided that "Children First" should be applied consistently by health boards, Government Departments and by organisations which provide services to children. The accounts of the participants in the studies included in this thesis indicate that in some instances Irish society is living up to the promises made in Children First. For example, the participants generally recounted positive experiences with teachers, who were seen as being caring and helpful. However, there were also instances where the promises were not being kept. Participants sometimes felt discriminated against by teachers or members of the general public. Voluntary organisations who work specifically with young asylum-seekers and refugees in Ireland lost their funding during the course of the research, resulting in a loss of support for this potentially vulnerable group.

The overall positive relationships that most participants reported having with their teachers and classmates could be seen as a positive reflection of the attempts to create a welcoming atmosphere for so-called “newcomer” students in the Irish education system, reflected in the guidelines for intercultural education in the post-primary school published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA, 2006). However, the fact that experiences of racism and discrimination from

classmates were also relatively common suggests that there may be a way to go before all students “respect and celebrate diversity” (NCCA, 2006, p.1).

The policy of dealing with unaccompanied minors has become more uniform and now unaccompanied minors are placed in foster care where possible. This could represent a great improvement through providing a greater level of personal care and attention. However, the issue of ‘aging-out’ is still of concern, as it is for all children in foster care who reach the age of 18. For example, when the aged-out participants in this research moved to Direct Provision, they found themselves in a rigid, institutional system in a new city. They shared rooms with adult strangers. While the participants in this research generally felt fortunate regarding who their roommates were, there was the potential for the experience to be negative or even abusive. In relation to minors in Direct Provision, Geoffrey Shannon, Special Rapporteur on Child Protection commented in his fifth report to the Oireachtas (2011) that:

given the wide variation amongst residents in such centres, with single parents sometimes required to share with strangers and families with teenage children of opposite gender sharing one room, and in the absence of appropriate supervision and support, there is a real risk of child abuse. (p.32)

For these aged-out minors, the relative stability of their previous residential care situation was supplanted with realities of the adult Direct Provision hostels. This occurred in the absence of parental support and guidance, without certainty as to their long term legal status, and in a new cultural environment. They faced all these issues on a limited income (€19.10 per week) and with no right to employment. The process of transitioning to the adult Direct Provision system needs to be revised to ensure that adolescents who must go through this process are supported to develop positively. Given the potential for the Direct Provision system to challenge the positive youth development of asylum-seeking young people, it is surprising that asylum-seekers are only referred to fleetingly once in 'A Vision for Change' (Department of Health and Children, 2006), the strategy document which sets out the direction for Mental Health Services in Ireland. The findings of this thesis suggest that, given the ambiguous position of asylum-seekers in Irish society, asylum-seekers require support specifically tailored to their precarious situation.

Overall, the findings of this thesis suggest that in order to have a positive acculturation experience, African adolescent immigrants need to feel a sense of

belonging in Ireland while still feeling connected to their heritage culture. This is challenged by aspects of the asylum-seeking process and experiences of discrimination in Ireland. Further research is recommended to explore culturally sensitive outreach strategies to inform newcomers about available resources to help meet their acculturation needs, such as the Irish education system; accessing support groups and NGOs; and social networking.

Limitations

The participants in these qualitative studies included only Black African adolescents. Such individuals make up only a small proportion of those who have migrated to Ireland over the last two decades, and so the findings are not purporting to apply to all immigrants in Ireland. As is mentioned in the introductory chapters acculturation is thought to affect members of the minority group more profoundly than members of the majority group (Berry, 2011). However, members of the majority group, in this case White native Irish citizens, also undergo acculturation instigated by on-going intercultural contact. The effects of acculturation on native populations are rarely studied. Further, research has indicated that the acculturation preferences of the host culture members affect the acculturation experiences of minority group members. This study did not explicitly investigate the acculturation preferences of any majority group members. However, this thesis aimed to explore the lived experiences of a particular group of acculturating adolescents, and while I acknowledge that majority group members must also engage with the process of acculturation following intercultural contact their experiences were not the focus of the present thesis. There remains a need to explore the acculturation experiences of majority group members.

Another limitation is that the empirical studies comprising this thesis present data from relatively small samples. However, this is a necessity for IPA research which requires small homogenous groups of participants (Smith et al., 1999). Homogeneity in the groups was not entirely possible, and is indeed never entirely possible in any study with more than one individual (though the participant groups did all share certain characteristics in that they were Black and had moved to Ireland from an African country and were within a particular age range). Therefore care has been taken to provide contextual information about each participant to assist with generalisation where possible. In addition, the level of detail provided by these examples may make some of the findings transferrable across settings and populations (Yardley, 2000). For

example the studies have highlighted the need to know about the life contexts of adolescents in order to understand how well they may be able to adapt to new situations such as transitioning to a new country while asylum-seeking or following family reunification.

The impact of gender on the experience of acculturation emerged as salient in Study 4. However, the data gathered in the preceding studies did not allow for this aspect of the acculturation experience to be further explored. This may indicate a limitation in the data gathered during the interviews and suggests that the addition of more gender-oriented questions in the interview guide may have allowed for further exploration of this potentially important area.

My status as a White female researcher who was both older than the participants and member of the Irish majority group no doubt had an effect on the data generated. Participants may have felt uncomfortable sharing certain experiences with me. To counter this I spent time among the participants prior to interviewing them and I interviewed them in places that were familiar and comfortable to them. However, this could not guarantee that they would feel happy to share all their thoughts and feelings about their experiences in Ireland. This may be particularly true for the asylum-seeking participants who have a history in Ireland of being interrogated and disbelieved as part of their application for asylum. These participants may have felt, despite reassurances to the contrary, that things they disclosed in the interview may impact their case for seeking asylum in Ireland. IPA recognises that interviews are co-constructed with participants, and that the findings generated are an interpretative endeavour on the part of the researcher who is attempting to make sense of how the participants make sense of their experiences. Therefore, care must be taken if generalisations are to be drawn from this research.

A final limitation of this study is that all participants in the study had been living in Ireland at the time of the interviews. It would have been arguably more illuminating to interview them before moving to Ireland as well as when they were living in Ireland. The practicalities involved rendered pursuing this line of enquiry impossible for this thesis, particularly given the focus on asylum-seekers. However, future qualitative research could endeavour to explore experiences pre and post migration among refugees and asylum seekers.

Future Research

Future research could add to the findings of this research in a wide variety of ways. Firstly within research into acculturation it is evident that there is a need to evaluate the outcomes and feasibility and costs of providing additional support to adolescents who have “aged-out” in the asylum-seeking process in order to ensure positive youth development is a real possibility for them. Evaluation of these services could lead to recommendations for standard practice to be incorporated across the asylum-seeking service. I would also suggest that in-depth experiential research with those who assess asylum-claims could provide an insight into how these cases are judged and the impressions of asylum-seekers that they are working with.

Given the high rate of reported experiences of racism among the participants in this research there is a need for further studies that specifically investigate the impact of racism and discrimination on African immigrants’ overall health and wellbeing, and to explore further their coping strategies to deal with racism and discrimination in order to adapt to life in Ireland.

The present research included only first generation immigrants. Including second generation African adolescents in future research would afford the opportunity to explore the similarities and/or differences in experiences and coping strategies. Further, family-based approaches which have the family as the unit of study could be adopted given the important role that parental views and expectations played in the findings.

This research has highlighted the strength of using an idiographic approach to inform studies of acculturation. Future research should use a similar approach to consider the acculturation experiences of other immigrant groups in Ireland, the majority members experiences of acculturation and the acculturation experience of indigenous minority groups (e.g. members of the travelling community). Such an approach could also be used to explore the experiences of individuals born in Ireland to immigrant parents.

Reflexivity

I have recognised the importance of acknowledging my own impact on this research and how my involvement as a researcher, interviewer, and analyst has shaped the outcomes of this thesis. Throughout my time attending the youth club that some participants were involved in and the churches that some participants attended, and

during the time spent interviewing it became evident that I was building rapport with my participants. They seemed to see me as a potential source of information about life in Ireland and sought information about the education system due to their knowledge that I was a university student. I was asked a wide variety of questions about courses available, how to apply and what careers are available following particular courses. I believe that as these were the areas I was asked about it was also clear that these issues were important for the participants themselves. Given my age and status as a White female from the majority group, I felt that the participants may have looked at me in a similar way to the way they regarded youth workers or teachers (in some instances) that they came into contact with. Reflecting on my knowledge at the start of this thesis I may also have been seeing my participants as younger versions of myself who had been dealt a different hand in life, and comparing their experiences with my own migratory, family, peer and school experiences. This brought up important practical and ethical questions for me regarding my relationship with my participants and how I interpreted their narratives as I also became invested in some of the lives of my participants, particularly those seeking asylum. Examples of reflexive engagement with the research process are provided in Appendix G.

Concluding comments

This thesis is an important step towards understanding the experience of acculturation among adolescent refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland. The use of a qualitative approach to research has allowed me to develop an understanding of the experience of acculturation for adolescents who came to Ireland in very different circumstances – as asylum-seekers or through a process of family re-unification. I have been able to highlight shared and divergent experiences and the need to acknowledge individuals' life contexts and histories when trying to understand how they acculturate and adjust to life in a new country. I have extended theories of acculturation by situating the reciprocal interactions between an individual and their context at the heart of this research. It is my hope that this research, and future research like it, will help to contribute to improving the lives of young immigrants in Ireland. In particular, I hope that it can in some way effect positive changes in the lives of adolescent asylum-seekers and the adolescent children of refugees.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Participant information letter for studies 1, 2, 3 and 4

Appendix B: Guardian information sheet for study 1 and study 4

Appendix C: Adolescent Participant consent/assent form

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Appendix H: An Extended Example of Analysis from the Interview with Abass (Study 2)

Appendix I: Grouping emergent themes into master themes from Johnny's super-ordinate themes (Study 1)

Appendix J: The frequency with which data from participants in Study 1 contributed to the analysis

Appendix K: The frequency with which data from participants in Study 1 contributed to the analysis

Appendix L: The frequency with which each theme in Study 1 occurred

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Appendix N: A visual representation of the frequency with which each theme in Study 1 occurred

Appendix O: A visual representation of the frequency with which each theme in Study 2 occurred

Appendix P: Unreported theme from Study 3

Appendix A: Adolescent Information Letter

Adolescent Information Letter



Adolescent Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland – Information Sheet

You are being invited to take part in a research study.

We want to know more about African teenagers and African teenage refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland. You can help us find out. This 'Participant Information Sheet' will tell you why the research is being done and what will happen if you take part.

If you agree to take part, we will ask you to sign an 'Assent Form'. If you are under 18 years of age we will also ask your parent or guardian to sign a 'Consent Form' to show that they allow you to take part in the research.

Take as much time as you need to read this sheet. If there is anything that you don't understand, we will explain it to you. You should only agree to participate in this research study when you understand what it is about, and you have had enough time to think about it.

Thank you for reading this.

This research is interested in finding out about the thoughts and experiences of African teenagers and African teenage refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland. We want to find out what teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18 think about their lives in Ireland. We are asking you to participate because you can help us to understand. The reason we are interviewing a small number of teenagers is so that we can get a good understanding of what life is like for each of them. We want to hear your voice, and we think the best way to do this is through interviews.

Up to 20 teenage refugees and asylum seekers will be asked to take part in the study. If you agree to take part we will interview you twice, once this year and once next year. Each interview will last about 40 minutes. A room in 'the GaP' in Galway city centre will be made available for the interviews, interview rooms on the university campus will also be available, or your parents can suggest somewhere else.

We will ask you what it is like for you living in Ireland. We may talk about how you have found life in Ireland, friends, how you feel about school in Ireland and what it's like being in a family from another culture.

If you do decide to take part you will be asked to sign an 'Assent Form' and will be given this information sheet to keep. Your parent or guardian must sign a 'Consent Form' if you are under 18 years of age.

You are free to stop taking part at any time throughout this study without giving a reason. This will not affect your rights in any way.

These interviews may bring up both good and bad feelings as you think about past and present experiences. You might find that you would like to talk more about some of the things covered in the interview. I will be happy to recommend someone to you.

Interviews will be recorded and typed up for each participant. The interviews will be used as part of a study which will be published in a psychological journal over the next four years. Your real name will not be used in the report.

Your privacy is important to us. Any details that could be used to identify you or your family will be removed from the report. Things you say during the interview may appear in the report, but you will not be named in it. All information collected will be stored in a way that protects your identity and the identities of people you talk about during the interview. All information that is collected about you during the course of the research will be kept strictly confidential and will not be shared with anyone else. The information will be used only for research purposes.

The only exception to confidentiality is if you disclose information relating to a child protection issue. In this case parents or school/club authorities may have to be informed.

You can contact the research team if you have any questions or complaints during your participation in the study. See contact information below.

Further Information

If you have any questions, please call Lisa Ann Kennedy at 087- 797 6119 or email l.kennedy5@nuigalway.ie. You can also contact Dr. Pádraig MacNeela who is supervising this research (091 495 121).

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you may contact 'The Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice-President for Research, NUI Galway, ethics@nuigalway.ie

Appendix B: Guardian Information Letter

Guardian Information Letter



African Adolescents in Ireland

Dear Parent/Guardian,

We want to know more about African teenagers and African teenage refugees and asylum seekers in Ireland. Your child is being invited to take part in research to help us find out. This 'Participant Information Sheet' will tell you why the research is being done and what will happen if your child takes part.

If you want your child to take part, we will ask you to sign a 'Consent Form'. If you do not understand something we will be happy to explain it to you.

Take as much time as you need to read the information sheet. You should only agree to allow your child to take part in the research when you understand what will happen and when you have had enough time to decide.

Thank you for reading this.

We want to find out about the thoughts, feelings and experiences of African teenagers and African teenage refugees and asylum-seekers in Ireland. We want to find out how teenagers between the ages of 15 and 18 think about themselves, where they come from and their lives in Ireland.

We are asking your child to participate because he/she can help us to understand what life is like for adolescent refugees and asylum-seekers. The reason we are interviewing a small number of teenagers is so that we can get a good understanding of what life is like for each of them. We want to hear their voices, and we think the best way to do that is through interviews.

Up to 20 African teenagers and African teenage refugees and asylum seekers will be asked to take part in the study. We will interview your child twice, once this year and once next year. The interview will last about 40 minutes. You can choose where the interview takes place. A room in 'the Ga' in Galway city centre will be made available for the interviews, interview rooms on the University campus will also be available, or you can suggest somewhere else.

We will ask your child what it is like for them living in Ireland. We may talk about how he/she has found life in Ireland, friendships, how he/she feels about school in Ireland and what it's like being in a family from another culture.

The interviews may make your child feel good and bad as he/she thinks about experiences. If your child would like to talk more about some of the things raised during the interview I would be happy to recommend someone to you.

Your child can only take part in the study if both you and he/she agree to. If you decide to allow your child to take part in the research we will ask you to sign a 'Consent Form' to show that you give permission. Your child can stop taking part in the study at any time without giving a reason. This will not affect your child's rights in anyway.

Interviews will be recorded and typed up. Your child's name will not be used. Another name will be used when interviews are typed up to protect your child's identity and privacy. The interviews will be used as part of a study which will be published in a psychological journal over the next four years.

Your privacy is important to us. Any details that could be used to identify you or your child will be removed from the report. Things your child says during the interview may appear in the report, but your child will not be named in it.

All information collected about your child during this research will be kept strictly private and confidential; it will not be shared with anyone else. All information collected will be stored in a way that protects your child's identity. The information will be used only for research purposes.

The only exception to confidentiality is if a child were to disclose information relating to a child protection issue. In this case we may have to tell you and/or relevant authorities (such as school) about what was said in the interview.

If you have any questions or complaints during your participation in this research please contact the research team. The contact information is at the end of this sheet.

Further Information:

If you have any questions, please call Lisa Ann Kennedy at 087 797 6119, or e-mail l.kennedy5@nuigalway.ie. You can also contact Dr. Padraig MacNeela who is supervising this research (091 495 121).

Thank you very much for your interest in this study. Your co-operation is much appreciated.

If you have concerns about this study and wish to contact someone independent and in confidence, you may contact The Chairperson of the NUI Galway Research Ethics Committee, c/o Office of the Vice-President for Research, NUI Galway, ethics@nuigalway.ie

Appendix C: Adolescent Consent/Assent Form



National University of Ireland, Galway
Ollscoil na hÉireann, Gaillimh
School of Psychology

CONSENT FORM
Adolescent Assent/Consent Form

Participant Identification No.: _____

Title of Project: Adolescent Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland

Name of Researcher: *Lisa Ann Kennedy*

Please tick the boxes:

1. I have read the information sheet for the above study and have had the chance to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand the information provided and have had enough time to consider the information. ☐
3. I understand that participation is voluntary and that I am **free to withdraw at any time**, without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected. ☐
4. I agree to take part in the above study. ☐

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix D: Parental Consent Form



School of Psychology

CONSENT FORM Parental Consent Form

Participant Identification No.: _____

Title of Project: Adolescent Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Ireland

Name of Researcher: *Lisa Ann Kennedy*

Please tick boxes:

1. I have read the information sheet for the study and have had the chance to ask questions. ☐
2. I understand the information and have had enough time to consider the information. ☐
3. I understand that participation is voluntary and that my child is **free to withdraw at any time**, without giving any reason, without my legal rights being affected. ☐
4. I give consent for my child to participate. ☐

Name of Participant

Date

Parent's Signature

Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix E: Interview Schedule for Study 1

Thank you for deciding to take part in this study. I am interested in hearing your feelings and opinions so feel free to talk as much as you want about things that are important to you. Before we start I just want to remind you that this interview will be recorded. You can stop the interview at any point if you decide you don't want to continue and you don't have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Do you have any questions for me before we start? If you feel ready to begin we can start the interview.

1. I'm interested in finding out about your experiences in Ireland. First of all, tell me a little bit about yourself....

Prompts: Name, age, year at school, numbers of brothers and sisters, length of time in Ireland

2. Tell me what it's like for you to be a Nigerian teenager in Ireland at the moment....

Prompts: What are the similarities and differences between Nigerian teenagers and Irish teenagers?

What is life like for teenagers in Nigeria compared to teenagers in Ireland?

Do you mix with other Irish teenagers much? (at school, where you live, in your free time)

What is similar and different about how Irish teenagers and Nigerian teenagers socialise?

3. You came to Ireland from Nigeria. What does being Nigerian mean to you?

Prompts: What are the similarities and differences between being Irish and being Nigerian?

How important is your Nigerian background to you? Tell me about the Nigerian community here? Do you feel a part of that? How? Tell me about how you fit in to the Irish community...

4. You're currently attending secondary school. Tell me about your life at school....

Prompts: What year are you in? How many nationalities are in your class? Tell me about an average day at school... Tell me about why you go to school... What is good and bad about school? Does being Nigerian make a difference to your school life? How do you get on with your classmates / teachers? What do you think your teachers think of your school work?

5. Tell me about your friends....

Prompts: How often do you get to see them? Where are they from? What do you do together?

What are your favourite things to do with them? Is there anything you do that you don't enjoy about socialising with them?

6. You told me earlier about your school life. I'd like to hear about your life outside of school too. What is life like for you outside of school?

Prompts: How do you spend your time outside of school? Where do you go? What do you do?

Who do you spend your time with? What do you look forward to doing in your free time?

7. You told me a little bit about your family earlier, I'd like to hear more about that. Tell me what it's like for you to be in a Nigerian family.....

Prompts: What are the similarities and differences between Nigerian families and Irish families?

What are the similarities and differences between Nigerian parents and Irish parents?

8. You have been in Ireland a number of years now. Do you think you have changed since coming to Ireland?

Prompts: Has how you think and feel about yourself changed since coming to Ireland?

9. What do you think your life will be like once you finish school?

Prompts: What do you think you will do when you have finished school?

What would you like your adult life to be like?

Appendix F: Interview Schedule for Study 2

Thank you for deciding to take part in this study. I am interested in hearing your feelings and opinions so feel free to talk as much as you want about things that are important to you. Before we start I just want to remind you that this interview will be recorded. You can stop the interview at any point if you decide you don't want to continue and you don't have to answer any questions that make you feel uncomfortable. Do you have any questions for me before we start? If you feel ready to begin we can start the interview.

1. I'm interested in finding out about your experiences in Ireland. First of all, tell me a little bit about yourself....

Prompts: Name, age, year at school, numbers of brothers and sisters, length of time in Ireland

2. At this point in time you are in the asylum-seeking process. Tell me what it's like for you to be an Asylum-Seeker in Ireland at the moment....

Prompts: What is an asylum-seeker? What does it mean to you to be an asylum-seeker? How does it affect your life? Has it changed the way you think or feel about yourself? Do you see yourself differently now than before you came to Ireland? What are the similarities and differences between Asylum-Seeker teenagers and Irish teenagers? What is life like for teenagers in [birth country] compared to teenagers in Ireland? Do you mix with other Irish teenagers much? (in your free time/socially) Do Irish teenagers and [birth country] teenagers socialise differently?

4. You came to Ireland from [birth country]. What does being [nationality] mean to you?

Prompts: What are the similarities and differences between being Irish and being [nationality]?

How important is your [birth country] background to you? Tell me about the [birth country] community here... Tell me about how you fit in to the Irish community....

5. You're used to attend secondary school. Tell me about your life at school....

Prompts How many nationalities are in your class? How did you get on? Tell me about an average day.... Tell me about why you went to school... What was good and bad about school? Did being an asylum-seeker make a difference to your school life? Did being [nationality] make a difference to your school life? How did you get on with your classmates / teachers? What do you think your teachers thought of your school work? Are you currently attending school or college?

6. Tell me about your friends....

Prompts: How often do you get to see them? Where are they from? What do you do together? What are your favourite things to do with them? Is there anything you do that you don't enjoy about socialising with them?

7. You told me earlier about life in the hostel. What is life like for you outside of the hostel?

Prompts: How do you spend your time? Where do you go? What do you do? Who do you spend your time with? What do you look forward to doing in your free time?

8. You have been in Ireland a number of years now. Do you think you have changed since coming to Ireland?

Prompts: Has how you think and feel about yourself changed since coming to Ireland?

9. What do you think your life will be like once you are no longer an asylum-seeker?

Prompts: What do you think you will do? What would you like your adult life to be like?

Appendix G – Sample extracts from my reflexive diary

20th January 2010

While I was in the GRSG offices today a lady – XXX, a refugee who has been in Ireland for many years, was in the office finishing off some work and agreed to talk to us. She talked about the different expectations of adolescents across cultures, where in Ireland they seem not to be expected to help out at home as much, have fewer chores and the concept of ‘child rights’ is espoused. She talked about the ‘culture of self-esteem’ whereby children are praised regardless of their ability, and views this as detrimental in the long run. She spoke of different views on spanking, whereby it is very much frowned upon here. She talked about how, due to the work expected of them at home, certain immigrant children don’t have as much time to socialise as Irish children. Immigrants often have larger families and help in caring for younger members is expected from older children. In relation to the differences between school systems in Ireland and the country of origin, XXX felt that, in private schools at least, they are very similar, with physical punishment generally not used and similar expectations from children. She did comment, however, that in government schools “anything happens”. Compared to the time she went to school she imagines the school system at home to have changed, just as it has here.

In relation to searching for participants she mentioned that immigrant groups have been heavily studied in the Irish population – “Nobody wants to be a specimen”. She advised having a relationship with the participants first and they would be more amenable to take part in the study. She mentioned that interviewing both parents and adolescents was a good idea as the answers from both groups were likely to differ greatly.

Language: She told me that countries from the west of Africa were English speaking, and only differed in terms of tone and inflection from the English spoken here. A point to note is that many eastern Europeans came as refugees before accession.

6 July 2010

Yesterday I attended a small cooking group run by SPARK for young asylum-seekers and refugees (aged about 17 to 21 years). I met XXX (of SPARK) at the Gaf and from there we went to Dunnes to pick up the ingredients for the group. As it was the first day of the group the emphasis was on getting people chatting so the meal prepared was to be basic – a salad, potatoe salad, chicken, strawberries and natural yogurt. We returned to the Gaf to meet the participants – Martha, Jaoa and XXX, before walking to No. 4 drop in centre. As the meeting progressed more participants turned up – two more boys and a girl. The boys appeared to adopt stereotypical gender roles allowing the girls to do the tidying up and the washing.

12 July 2010

This week a girl closer to my own age took part in the group. Got me thinking more about my own position as a researcher and how I would cope as an asylum-seeker. The loneliness and lack of opportunities much be terrible. I also talked to some of the boys more about where they had come from. Jaoa showed me Angola on the map. I talked to Abass about movies he was interested in and sports he likes. The boys again showed traditionally male attitudes – by expressing a degree of homophobia. The girls on the other hand challenged such views and expressed more liberal ideas. Boys complaining a bit about the food.

Interview 1 – Anna – 18th August 2010

Was conducted in the Gaf with Anna. Anna arrived a little bit late (half an hour) as she had slept in. Prior to the interview I asked her to clarify whether she was a refugee or an asylum-seeker but she was not sure which label would apply to her. I knew from XXX that she has refugee status having come to Ireland through a process of family reunification. However, the term is not meaningful to her.

I was surprised that she spoke so often of being lonely and not being part of any group of friends as she was quite willing to talk and offer opinions both in the interview setting, in the cookery group and in the summer camp. Indeed I bumped into her last week in town with a friend of hers – however she said on that occasion she had been simply delivering a message to a fellow Gaf attendee and they had decided to walk into town together. Her description and perception of her life is quite at odds to how I would have imagined it to be. It seemed by the end of the interview that Anna had said all she wanted to, but on reflection there are areas I could have probed more.

We conducted the interview in a room upstairs in the Gaf where there is a pool table. It was a large room, I set up a table and chairs in one corner so it felt quite private. The room was empty except for the two of us, but it contained double-sided glass in the door and there were security cameras in the room which made me feel confident that it was a secure environment for the both of us. I dressed casually, similar attire as I had worn to the cookery group and summer camp. I think Anna was comfortable taking to me in part due to the fact that she had met me on a couple of occasions before and that we had chatted previously.

Interview 1 –Martha -25th August 10

Martha strikes me as a warm, friendly, sociable girl. Her looks are striking and she was the object of attention for one of the boys at the summer camp but she paid his interest in her little heed, while remaining friendly and chatty with all the participants in the camp. Prior to the interview she was offering support by consoling and hugging another participant in the summer camp whose father was in hospital.

Martha seemed reluctant to talk about her experiences in Sierra Leone so I did not want to push that too much for fear of upsetting her. Like Anna she expressed a strong liking for teachers at school but also reported negative encounters with teachers. Being an asylum-seeker she lives in a hostel, in a room with three other girls, so there is no option really to discuss her “family life”.

She referred to a holiday in Dublin with a friend which she had just returned from which I should possibly have explored more – maybe I allowed her reluctance to talk about some issues to interfere with the areas I had initially wanted to explore. In hindsight there were areas that she was willing to talk about that I could have pursued further.

Togar – Interview 1 – 1st September 2010

Conducted in the Gaf meeting room. I had met Togar before at the summer camp and I suspected he would potentially be up for a debate as he had a long animated discussion with XXX about styles of music and he had asserted that if she did not like rap music she must be racist. This was not an argument, but a good-natured debate. Of course, the interview is not a venue to challenge his beliefs but to explore them. Nonetheless I was looking forward to probing his thoughts on the areas in my interview schedule. The interview was interrupted twice, despite having booked the meeting room in advance. Before commencing the interview, Togar declared that we would be done within 15 minutes. Thankfully he talked at length during the interview.

The first interruption was because a girl needed the room for English lessons. Upon seeing that the girl was visually impaired Togar took her hand and introduced

himself. I maintained a greater distance, perhaps illustrating the distance between people that Togar had already commented on during his interview. As an Irish person maybe I am more distant and reserved than I ought to be.

The second interruption came once we switched rooms to the pool room because some other people wanted to use it to play pool. Also Togar excused himself to use the bathroom and returned with an apple.

Interview 1 – Ajoba – 7th September 2010

This interview was conducted in the Gaf in the meeting room upstairs. Ajoba arrived before me and phoned to tell me she was there. It was raining and the Gaf was closed to youth as it was early in the day (11am) so we met at the shop on the corner and went in together. Ajoba is over 18 and commented a couple of times during the interview that she would not have felt comfortable talking about herself like this in the past.

Like Togar she also commented on the distance between herself and other Irish people. Following the interview we both left the Gaf and walked together until our paths took us in different directions – I was heading back to my flat, she was going to walk around the shops in the shopping centre. We talked about the weather and the contrast between the weather here and the weather where she grew up. Her comments echoed those made by Anna during the first interview. She also commented on how in Ireland we could experience every sort of weather over a period of only ten minutes.

Interview 1 – Toben – 8th September 2010

Location of the Interview not ideal – small kitchen off main church with nowhere to sit down. Toben was very friendly and amiable. Tall, with dark freckles on slightly lighter skin. He seemed very sociable and to have numerous friends among the other young people in the congregation. He seemed to be very positive about life in Ireland. He enjoyed sports and socialising with Irish as well as African friends. The Pastor and XXX apologised after the service for not having given out more consent forms and information sheets as they had been busy during the service and they hadn't gotten a chance to. I will return again next week. Toben was happy to take part and his mother was happy to give consent.

28th September 2010

I went back to [church] today to begin recruiting parents. I texted XXX in advance to see if he would be there, and he replied that he did intend to go. We arranged to meet at one outside the church. However this morning he sent me a text to let me know that because he could not get any transport he would not be attending. He told me to ask for the church secretary when I went and that they would be happy to help. I was a little nervous going up without a specific point of contact, but I had already told Millicent during the week that I planned to attend and wanted to talk to her, so I knew at least one person was expecting me.

When I arrived at the church it sounded in full flow and I did not want to walk in and interrupt, so I went upstairs to where the Sunday school is held and asked one of the ladies running it if it would be alright if I spoke to the secretary. She remembered me from before and sent a teenage girl to fetch the secretary for me. I waited in the corridor and XXX came to meet me. I explained the study to her and she agreed to make an announcement at the end of the service about the study and to give out information sheets. I also asked to speak to XXX, who came up with a lady named XXX, who also agreed to give out information sheet to parents of teenagers in the congregation.

I was again surprised by “noisiness” of the service, a complete departure from my experiences of mass in Ireland. The teenagers here are very involved in the service,

singing and playing instruments throughout, although not always appearing the most interested. There is much dancing and singing and loud responses from the congregation when asked for an “Amen”. I was, again, the only white person at the service, and while I tried to join in I did feel awkward and out of place. It does not feel natural to me to dance in the aisles or loudly reply “Amen” in part due to my experience of a reserved mass, and in part due to my lack of faith. I very much enjoyed attending the service though, but did not feel part of it. My study was announced, as promised, during the announcements at the end of the service, and afterwards some people came over to shake my hand. Overall I felt the people again to be very open and welcoming.

15th March 2011

I met with XXX and her husband today at their family home in Oranmore. I got the 8.30am City Link bus out, which got me to Oranmore for 9.00am. I had arranged to meet Fola at ten, so I used the extra time to find the house and get myself a cup of tea before the interview. I also picked up a box of chocolates to thank her for agreeing to take part and since she would be the first parent I would interview.

At ten to ten I decided to call her to see if she would mind if I arrived a little early. The first couple of times I tried her number it was engaged. When I got through to her she said it would be no problem to arrive early. I knocked on the door but there was no response. I rang the bell and there was no response. I began to wonder if I had the right house. I called again and she said that she would be just a minute and she let me in shortly after.

I gave her another copy of the information sheet and the consent form – even though she would not be in the main study I would be recording the interview so I wanted to be sure that if I used any quotes that I had her consent. I gave her time to read over the information sheet before asking her to sign the consent form. Then I gave her the box of chocolates and thanked her for agreeing to take part, and for having me in her home. She said I shouldn’t have gotten the chocolates but seemed happy with the gesture.

She said her husband was home and asked if he could sit in. I said that usually I interview people individually but if he wants to sit in that’s no problem. About half way through the interview he came in and sat at the other side of the sitting room to us. He did not contribute to the interview, other than once when Fola looked to him for inspiration while trying to answer a question. This makes me think about gender roles in the family and authority.

Once the interview was over I asked if he wanted to be interviewed himself and he seemed eager to take part too. Before I began to record again he commented that bringing chocolates was not something they would typically do in Nigeria and compared it to the idea of manners, where they do not feel the need to say “please” or “thank you” but he very much likes that we do that in Ireland.

22nd June 2011

I met with XXX today for some background insights. He wanted to meet at the university as he would be in town today and it was convenient for him. I booked the meeting room in St. Anthony’s. I was concerned that we would not have enough time for the interview as he had an appointment scheduled an hour after our appointed start time, but he seemed eager to do the interview today so I did not want to re-schedule. He arrived a little bit after our appointed time (10 minutes or so) and I paid for his parking at the pay and display opposite St. Anthony’s. Despite my initial concerns that we would not have enough time the interview ran for just over an hour. My initial concerns over his quiet speech seem to have been unfounded as I felt he spoke loudly and clearly,

so the transcription shouldn't prove too difficult. I will also make contact with his wife who Gabriel says is willing to share her experiences with me. Gabriel made some interesting comments about how he feels that Nigerian men struggle with the fact that women enjoy a more equal status in Ireland. He noted that he sees marriages failing because in Ireland the women are often the ones who work while the men cannot find employment – this, he feels, undermines their authority and makes them feel like they are useless.

He talked about how, in Nigeria, parents can rely on other locals to keep their child in line. They know that if they allow their child to walk home from school that they will be watched along the way by other members of the community who know who they are and where they should be going. This knowing of neighbours and community spirit was voiced in the interviews I have already conducted, as was the idea that this is absent in contemporary Ireland. Irish parents certainly do not like other people “parenting” their children, and the idea that other people are watching their child is met with suspicion.

15 July 2011

I got XXX number through XXX. When I first called him he thought it was in relation to interviewing his son, however he seemed happy to be invited to share his experiences as a parent with me himself. We arranged it for this morning at 10am. I called over to his house (20mins walk from my own) at 10am after a little difficulty finding it. There I was introduced to his wife, teenage son and toddler daughter, as well as his friend XXX. I explained the study to them all, and it was only then that he fully appreciated the fact that I would be taking at least an hour of his time. His pastor and pastor's wife called over while I was there for some assistance with something on the computer (I don't know what) but they were interested in hearing about the study too, and advised me that a questionnaire would be easier and less time consuming – as I well know! They debated the pros and cons of the methods I had chosen amongst themselves, and as XXX and the Pastor worked in another room on the computer the remaining people in the house (son and toddler excluded) talked about parenting experiences in Ireland, the role of each parent and associated difficulties, as well as what they missed about Nigerian. The stories they told were illuminating and I would have liked to turn on my recorder to capture them, but that was not appropriate. Also, I did not have consent forms with me for that! After much jovial yet insightful discussion XXX returned.

Appendix H: An Extended Example of Analysis from the Interview with Abass (Study 2)

School: Positive
Teachers – approachable
Teachers – relate to like fellow students

Teachers – see him as ‘a kid’ – normalise?

And what was secondary school like there?

Oh great, great, great I enjoyed every minute of it cause the teachers are good, if you have any a problems you just go to them yea and the class do have fun and it’s a laugh yea just talk to them nicely like you know. You could talk to them as a fellow student you know have a good chat in class. Talk about life and any things that’s worrying you, you know they’re free like you know they’re open-minded you know. They just think as I’m a kid so I enjoyed that I enjoyed that my stay there so.

Positive school experiences in Dublin – teachers “great” “a laugh” “fun”
Being able to speak to teachers “as a fellow student”

Teachers see him as “a kid” – school a venue where he got to be “normal”??

Schools – belonging, cater for everyone, all nationalities
Belonging - Friends through sport

And were there may students in that school who were not native Irish say like yourself?

Yea, ah the school was a made for everybody there were Irish there and not Irish there as well so but we all get along together just like I wanted to come on the sports here that’s how I got to know the most of my friends you know. So yea there were non-nationals there but we still all get along together, there are not that much but still, the same beliefs so *mm*.

School – inclusive “made for everybody”, got along with other students – made most friends through sports
Use of term “non nationals”
People are different but share same beliefs

Irish students – inclusive, in and out of school -

Irish students – not all ‘perfect’

So you don’t think there was a problem mixing between?

No, no, no even after school right the Irish lads do like invite us around to come over have a party or go out at night or something so I don’t think there was any. But there’s some cases em nothing perfect, you know, you do have have your worse moments you know having quarrel and a maybe one of your fellow students yea ah just things just happen once in a while but not every day like you know so its good.

Irish “lads” open to mixing with the asylum seekers, invited them out to parties
School life not perfect – some fights “quarrels”, but not everyday, and sees this as normal – reassures that it is good

Occasional disagreements in class – not race-based

What kind of things would happen with the natives?

Just a quick quarrel maybe you’re not happy with a maybe no just a quick student fight you know in class maybe you sitting in my spot you know something like that you know or they say ah maybe have a quarrel about a girl in class or something you know *mm* just you know student just teenager stuff like you know not that much you know *yea* over money or stuff yea and I’m like *ok*.

Fights centred around “teenage stuff” – girls, money, seats in class – In school he can be a normal teenager – asylum-seeking status not important here?

Teachers – give individual,

tailored attention – support, inclusion	<p><u>And the teachers you said were good too?</u></p> <p>Yea, very nice best teachers so far I think I’ve come up here so far yea cause they understand any time I have problems with topics they do give me private lessons you know after school lesson and just for me to understand the topic yea. So they were quite good yea, <i>mm</i>.</p>	Teachers – good, gave extra help after class, private lessons, help to understand
<p>*****<u>Later in Transcript</u>*****</p>		
Deviation from “normal” trajectory	<p><u>And em you said that you were also accepted for a course that you couldn’t do, what was the course that you had wanted to do?</u></p> <p>Ah, basically after I had finished my Leaving Cert yea, you got, you’re supposed to move from that to colleges like you know DCU, DIT, NCI and that, so cause of my situation that I’m asylum seekers you know living in the hostel, so the school fees couldn’t be more expensive like they wouldn’t be able to sponsor me to college so I have to defer my space there. Last two years ago was it last year?</p>	Asylum-seeking process denied the normal progression of life events – “you’re supposed to move from that to colleges...”
Grounds for exclusion – Being an asylum-seeker means being subject to fees	<p>Yea, last year I could have yea, cause I finished my Leaving Cert in 2009 so I was supposed to go to NCI, got accepted to do a level 7 course so cause of the school fees and the expenses and all so, I couldn’t find any, ah, volunteers just to sponsor me to school so I have to settle down for a PLC course <i>mm</i> so thats what I’m still doing right now. Cause last year I did eh level 5 FETAC at work and this year I’m hoping to complete eh level 6 FETAC at work in GTI so, hopefully, things are going to be good, go good there so.</p>	<p>“I could have...” unrealised possibilities</p> <p>“I was supposed to go.../I was accepted...” proper course of events</p>
Compromise – settling for a lower level course		Fees – barrier he must face as asylum seeker that peers do not have to deal with
Progressing in education		Educational progression despite barriers
Optimistic re. Future education	<p><u>And what’s the course in GTI that you are starting?</u></p> <p>Yea advanced business management yea, so hopefully, I just finished, ah, ‘cause it was yesterday I went for my enrolment you know and I registered, paid the school fees, got my ID so hopefully next two weeks or next week I’m going to start yea. I’m looking forward to it.</p>	Enthusiasm about starting new course and educational progression
Continuing education – attempts to stay on course?	<p><u>And how long with that course be?</u></p> <p>Ah, just for a year as well, so after then, cause the course I’m doing right now, the two PLC courses I did I’m going to be doing I mean for the last year and this year they both, both have links to colleges here in Dublin as well cause I wish to go</p>	<p>Future hopes – to continue to progress educationally and to return to Dublin</p> <p>“good result and continue”</p>

back to Dublin *mm* go for a level 8 course and further my education you know so hopefully when I finish, I'm gonna complete it and have a good, get a good result continue so. Don't know. *Cool*.

******Later in Transcript******

Being Nigerian – proud
Nigeria – returning in the
future as a visitor
Return to Nigeria – Nigeria
will be new experience
Would not change his birth
country – pride

And what does it mean for you to be Nigerian do you think?

I'm proud of I'm from there you know *mm* I see nothing wrong with that cause I been out from my country for like seven years or so, so not that I'm getting used, I'm used to the environment, and situation and I am sure if I go back to my country to be a visitor it will seem a totally new experience for me cause its been like a while a long while I've been out of my country so I don't know. I'm proud of where I'm from so I would never change it for the world so, it's ok.

Coming from Nigeria – “proud”
“nothing wrong with that”
But distances self from country? “I
been out of my country for like seven
years”
Used to Irish Environment now, if he
returns it will be as a visitor.
“my” country” – wouldn't change it

Returning to Nigeria –
future, after education is
complete – visit

And do you think you will go back?

I will ah once ah once like my education is, stuff, I've finished finish my education I will go back and come back again so cause I'm used to Ireland already so *mm* that's just.

Returning to Nigeria – would go and
come back again “I'm used to Ireland
already”

Asylum Process – ongoing
– hope for positive
outcome
Stamp – access to
education and work
Accustomed Ireland –
wishes to remain

And you're in the asylum seeking process at the moment?

Yes I am indeed, I've been in it for some while now, the leave to remain process and I'm just hoping for them to give me a stamp for, so I could work and go to college here.

Asylum seeking process – “for some
time now” Getting “stamp” would
mean he can work and to to college

Asylum Process –
stressful/frustrating – ‘pain
in ass’
Asylum-process –
distinguishes him from
other Irish people
Asylum-process – Less
rights

And what does it mean for you to be an asylum seeker in Ireland at the moment?

To be honest its stressful em a pain in the ass that what I'm gonna call it, cause can't just expect me to stay in it all this time not do anything all day, so but mean I don't get, I never, I will never stay in the hostel anyway don't say in it always look for something exciting down there just to go and do outside so. It's a hard life that's what I'm going to tell you cause I can't say more than that cause, it is hard there cause you have basically you haven't got much enough right as other Irish people live in the country so, its sign of a, a kinda of different the one differentiating, differentiating from the Irish people so. There are some certain

Asylum process - “pain in the ass”,
dong nothing all day, the constant
search for something exciting outside
the hostel
“a hard life”, lack of rights compared
to other Irish people “a sign” –
indicator of difference
“boundaries you can't go...”

boundaries you can't go like you know, so. I don't think, its the law should be changed or some so that's what I'm gonna say haven't got much, mm.

And can you give me an example of what makes it such a pain?

Asylum Process – different
Asylum – process –
restrictions

Not you, ok, you're working no more than my other Irish fellows work a way I can't work I have to stay at home all day, cant study, you can't depend on that weekly allowance once a day like so. These are, don't know we cant travel out of the country lots of things like. Everything basically, so mm. Cause the other day I took a look at your basic rights as an asylum seekers it ain't good man.

“can't work, can't study” limited
finances, “can't travel outside of the
country”
Basic rights as an asylum seeker – not
good – Rights discourse

And how do you think things will change for you if you get your stamp 4?

Stamp 4- move on
Stamp 4 – new
life/progress
Desire to be normal

Oh I think, oh then I will benefit a lot, a lot of things are gonna, I can't wait for the day to get it like you know I just want to move on with my life and achieve stuff like you know if I had my stamp four, right, I would be offered from a course in College right now and able to study, work, have a new life and have a new beginning you know, just enjoy things like you know, do things like the other, I mean have the same rights as the Irish people like you know. Don't want to be differentiated from ah just because of the race, just want to be treated as normal mm. It would mean, I mean I've had a lot of change in my life right now so, just waiting for the stamp for it ok.

Getting stamp 4 -benefit a lot, “move
on with life (is life on hold now?)
achieve stuff”
“new life, new beginning”
Getting the same rights as other Irish
people, not different
Not different because of race?
Becoming “NORMAL”

Much change in life –
wants an end to change?

And what about besides being an asylum seeker, maybe being an African in Ireland today what's that like?

Being African in Ireland –
good and bad

Today ah, its all the same I think, being an African in Ireland ah you get to know like ah I don't know how to explain these but oh you do have your bad and good moments sometimes being an African the you know there's racist stuff like you know you do get that once in a while but not that much its bad then but, you just sometimes you know you do come across good, the good Irish peoples and bad Irish guys like, so but I don't count that as being racist or something, but the living between us it just depends on maybe I've a good day or a bad day it depends on the kind of people you meet up on the day you go out.

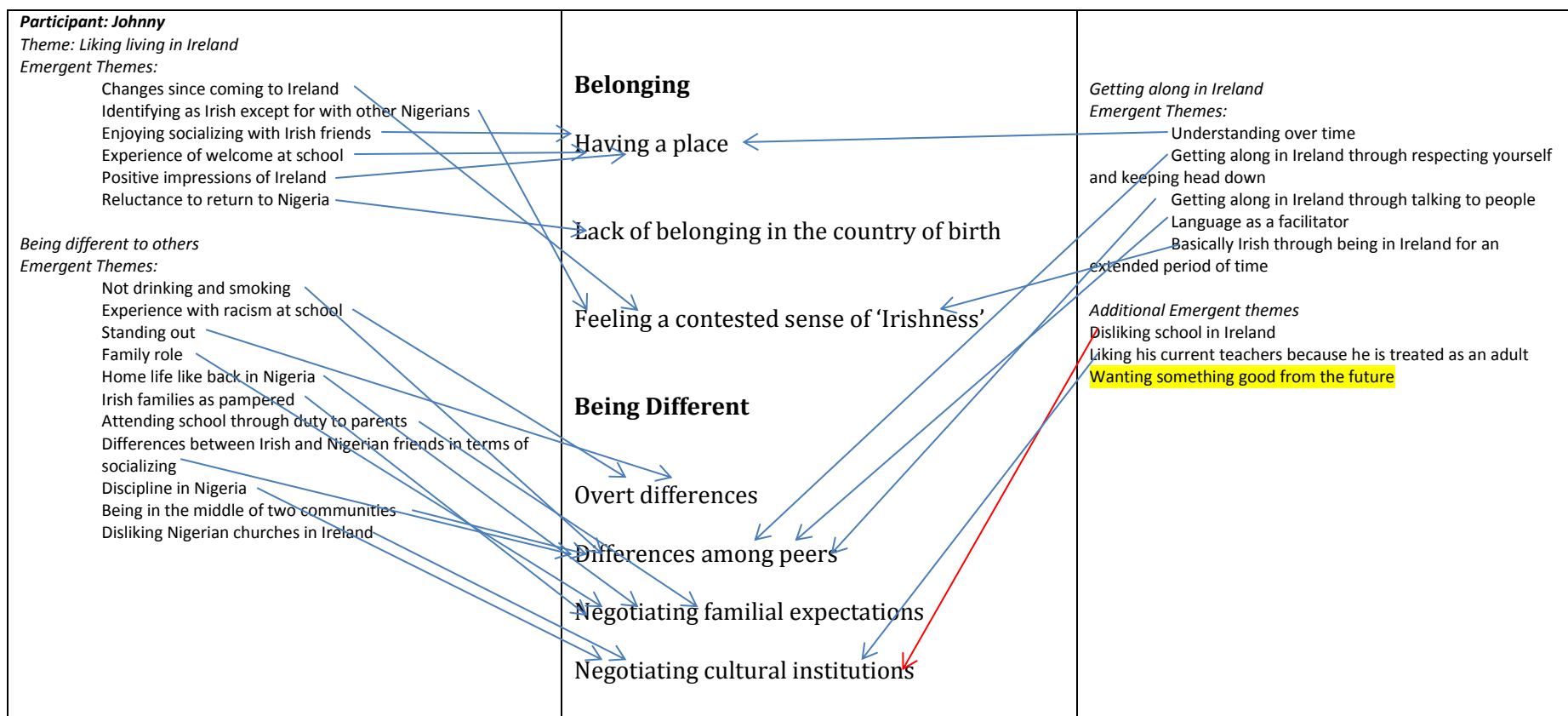
An African in Ireland – “the same”
Good and bad “moments”

Interpreting experiences –
potential for both good and
bad days
Racism – ‘hit and miss’
experiences

Being an African in Ireland – not that
bad”

Bad experiences put down to chance,
the kind of people you meet

Appendix I – Grouping emergent themes into master themes from Johnny's super-ordinate themes (Study 1)



Appendix J: The frequency with which data from participants in Study 1 contributed to the analysis

The screenshot displays the NVivo 10 software interface. The title bar indicates the file is 'Refugees (NVivo 10).nvp - NVivo'. The ribbon menu includes tabs for File, Home, Create, External Data, Analyze, Query, Explore, Layout, and View. The 'Home' tab is active, showing various tool groups like Workspace, Item, Clipboard, Format, Paragraph, Styles, Editing, and Proofing.

On the left, the 'Sources' pane shows a tree view with 'Internals', 'Externals', 'Memos', and 'Framework Matrices'. Below this is a vertical navigation bar with buttons for Sources, Nodes, Classifications, Collections, Queries, Reports, Models, and Folders.

The main area displays the 'Internals' table, which lists participant data. The table has the following columns: Name, Nodes, References, Created On, Created By, Modified On, and Modified By.

Name	Nodes	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Adam	8	47	28/09/2011 11:38	LAK	01/05/2013 13:15	LAK
Anna	8	64	28/09/2011 11:48	LAK	01/05/2013 12:32	LAK
Danielle	9	46	28/09/2011 09:08	LAK	01/05/2013 09:20	LAK
Diola	9	48	28/09/2011 11:46	LAK	01/05/2013 12:33	LAK
James	8	72	28/09/2011 11:41	LAK	01/05/2013 12:32	LAK
Johnny	8	40	28/09/2011 11:47	LAK	01/05/2013 16:29	LAK
JP	8	43	28/09/2011 11:39	LAK	01/05/2013 13:45	LAK
Juba	8	32	28/09/2011 11:51	LAK	01/05/2013 12:33	LAK
Mark	10	48	28/09/2011 08:33	LAK	01/05/2013 08:53	LAK
Toben	8	39	28/09/2011 11:51	LAK	01/05/2013 12:34	LAK

At the bottom, the status bar shows the user 'LAK' with '10 Items' selected. The Windows taskbar at the very bottom includes the Start button, taskbar icons, and the system tray showing 'Welcome Center', 'AutoPlay', language 'EN', and the time '09:21'.

Appendix K: The frequency with which data from participants in Study 2 contributed to the analysis

The screenshot shows the NVivo 10 software interface. The title bar reads 'Asylum-Seeking Participants (NVivo 10).nvp - NVivo'. The ribbon includes tabs for File, Home, Create, External Data, Analyze, Query, Explore, Layout, and View. The 'Home' tab is active, showing options like Go, Refresh, Open, Properties, Edit, Paste, Copy, Merge, Format, Paragraph, Styles, Editing, and Proofing. On the left, the 'Sources' pane shows a tree view with 'Internals', 'Externals', 'Memos', and 'Framework Matrices'. The main workspace displays a table titled 'Internals' with the following data:

Name	Nodes	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Abass	13	147	21/03/2012 14:02	LAK	21/03/2012 14:10	LAK
Ajoba	13	135	21/03/2012 14:07	LAK	21/03/2012 15:35	LAK
Jaao	13	107	21/03/2012 14:06	LAK	21/03/2012 14:08	LAK
Martha	13	89	21/03/2012 14:08	LAK	21/03/2012 15:21	LAK
Tim	13	117	21/03/2012 14:05	LAK	21/03/2012 14:08	LAK
Togar	13	159	21/03/2012 14:03	LAK	21/03/2012 18:41	LAK

The bottom status bar shows 'LAK 6 Items' and the Windows taskbar at the bottom with the time '09:33'.

Appendix L: The frequency with which each theme in Study 1 occurred

Refugees (NVivo 10).nvp - NVivo

File Home Create External Data Analyze Query Explore Layout View

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Sources

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Nodes

Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Being Different	0	0	01/05/2013 12:35	LAK	01/05/2013 12:35	LAK
Differences Among Peer I	10	115	01/05/2013 12:38	LAK	01/05/2013 09:19	LAK
Familial Differences	10	62	01/05/2013 12:38	LAK	01/05/2013 09:19	LAK
Overt Differences	11	66	01/05/2013 12:38	LAK	01/05/2013 09:20	LAK
Relating to cultural institut	10	68	01/05/2013 12:39	LAK	01/05/2013 09:19	LAK
Belonging	0	0	01/05/2013 12:34	LAK	01/05/2013 12:34	LAK
Contested Sense of Irishn	9	24	01/05/2013 12:37	LAK	01/05/2013 09:20	LAK
Having a place in Ireland	3	5	01/05/2013 12:37	LAK	01/05/2013 09:20	LAK
Familiarity With Local	3	9	01/05/2013 12:37	LAK	01/05/2013 08:53	LAK
Place in a social grou	10	58	01/05/2013 12:37	LAK	01/05/2013 09:19	LAK
Role in an institution	9	17	01/05/2013 12:37	LAK	01/05/2013 09:19	LAK
Not Belonging in the coun	10	56	01/05/2013 12:37	LAK	01/05/2013 09:19	LAK

LAK 12 Items

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EN 09:22

Appendix M: The frequency with which each theme in Study 2 occurred

Asylum-Seeking Participants (NVivo 10).nvp - NVivo

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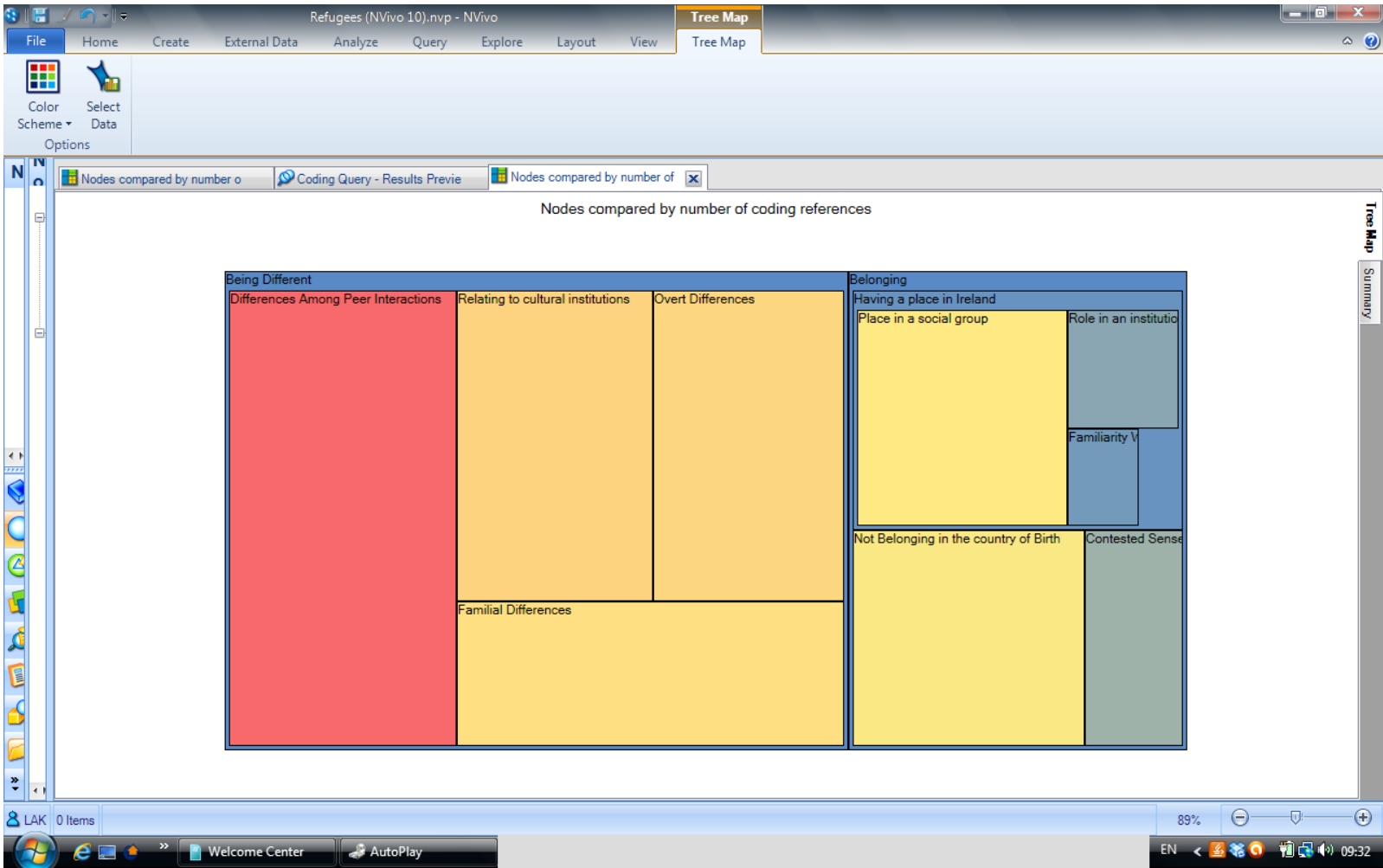
Name	Sources	References	Created On	Created By	Modified On	Modified By
Abass	1	1	21/03/2012 14:20	LAK	21/03/2012 14:33	LAK
Ajoba	1	1	21/03/2012 14:20	LAK	21/03/2012 15:24	LAK
Jaoa	1	1	21/03/2012 14:20	LAK	21/03/2012 14:33	LAK
Life as an Asylum-Seeker	6	135	21/03/2012 16:08	LAK	21/03/2012 16:38	LAK
I have to adjust to a new life and make so	6	58	21/03/2012 14:58	LAK	22/03/2012 18:51	LAK
It's not like a normal life	6	34	21/03/2012 14:57	LAK	22/03/2012 18:30	LAK
It's like you've been captured	6	43	21/03/2012 14:58	LAK	22/03/2012 18:30	LAK
Making sense of two cultures	6	113	22/03/2012 18:52	LAK	22/03/2012 18:53	LAK
Change in Self	6	40	22/03/2012 15:20	LAK	22/03/2012 18:51	LAK
Continuity in Self	6	23	22/03/2012 15:19	LAK	22/03/2012 18:44	LAK
Contrasts between Cultures	6	50	22/03/2012 15:20	LAK	22/03/2012 18:44	LAK
Martha	1	1	21/03/2012 14:20	LAK	21/03/2012 15:22	LAK
Relations With Others	6	126	21/03/2012 16:58	LAK	21/03/2012 17:11	LAK
I kind of know what to do	6	49	21/03/2012 16:58	LAK	22/03/2012 18:33	LAK
The people who have been a help	6	29	21/03/2012 16:58	LAK	21/03/2012 18:38	LAK
There's just few of them that would be ope	6	48	21/03/2012 16:57	LAK	22/03/2012 18:02	LAK
Tim	1	1	21/03/2012 14:20	LAK	21/03/2012 15:22	LAK
Togar	1	1	21/03/2012 14:20	LAK	21/03/2012 18:39	LAK

LAK 18 Items

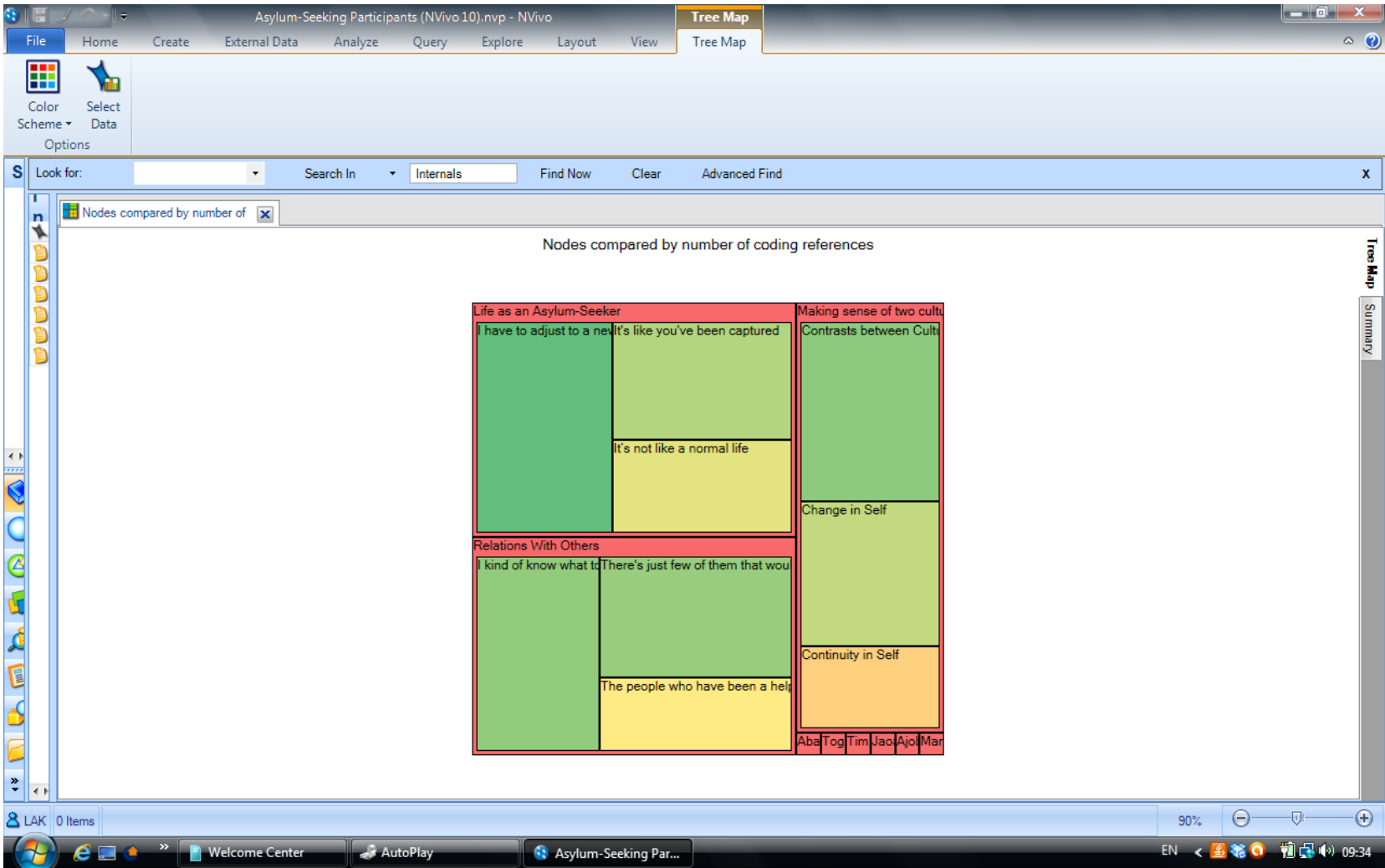
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Appendix N: A visual representation of the frequency with which each theme in Study 1 occurred



Appendix O: A visual representation of the frequency with which each theme in Study 2 occurred



Appendix P: Unreported theme from Study 3

Making Sense of Conflicted Identities

This theme considers how over time Togar felt more distanced from identifying with his birth country and also with Ireland. I explore how Togar uses his identification with Africa to maintain a sense of connectedness despite the lack of either an Irish or a Liberian identity. His African identity allows him to construct a place in Ireland while withdrawing from certain aspects of Irish life and offering him solace when he is excluded from aspects of Irish life.

Conflicted Identifications:

In interview 1 Togar was positive about Liberia, and his descriptions of Liberia resonated with his current situation (as ‘a country of freed slaves’). However, in interview 2 Togar feels ambiguous regarding what being Liberian means to him, stating that he is unsure what it means and that it is associated with pain and conflict. He feels in time he will come to understand being Liberian better, but for now his thoughts on the matter are equivocal. Togar also has a conflicted relationship with a sense of Irishness, which did not seem to progress during his time in Ireland. Togar has not actively tried to form friendships with Irish people due to a perceived incompatibility in lifestyles.

Togar feels that being a Liberian means little in the Irish context where he is faced with derogatory stereotypes of foreigners who are in Ireland for financial gain:

Whether you are a Liberian or an African I think they have the same, it has even been made worse by the recession. They have the same mentality of foreigners coming in and taking their dole money and all of that so. Most of the people have that mentality. You know, you should go back to your country and stop, what is it they call it again? Freeloading. (Interview 2)

Togar sees himself as derided in the eyes of the majority group in Ireland, his sense of self-efficacy and esteem could be threatened through being seen as a ‘freeloader’ rather than an active contributor to society.

By the second interview Togar has not engaged with what he sees as being Irish. In the first interview he felt his identification with Ireland was a “work in progress”, but he was willing to engage with others and learn what it is to be Irish, and adapt to it.

It's still a work in progress, as time goes on and as I spend more time here, meeting new people, learning about their culture, the differences, whatever attributes they have, their personality, the kind of personality that they have and I adapt to that. (Interview 1)

By the second interview Togar appears even less engaged with Irish life, having admittedly not learned anything about Irish culture during his time here. For example, he characterizes his engagement with the native language as limited to a few stock phrases:

I don't speak any word in Irish and I don't know about the culture. Let's just say as for the Irish maybe that is something I need to learn more about. I won't say that I am more Irish, let's just say I haven't learned anything of Ireland since I came here. Maybe it's just me. I have never bothered to learn. I can only speak a few words in Irish. Maybe “go raibh maith agat” [thank you], maybe “feach ar sin” [look at that] and maybe “is feidir linn” [yes we can]. Stuff like that. I don't know much about the history or the culture or things like that. (interview 2)

Given Togar's lack of identification with Ireland and Irish culture, I consider now his sense of being a Liberian, since that is his birth-country. At the time of the first interview Togar described feeling positive about being Liberian: *"It's my country, I love my country and I'm very proud of my country. And I wish to return one day to make changes too because my country is still a war torn country"*. He describes feeling love and pride in relation to his country but acknowledges the difficulties caused by war. However, by the second interview Togar feels increasingly conflicted regarding what it means to him to be Liberian, and the issue of civil war and trauma dominate his understanding of being Liberian:

Being Liberian, it's kind of tough really because I can't really say that being a Liberian means this and that because I left Liberia at a very young age. We didn't have much, so, but the person my age living in Liberia was like mostly, it was mostly conflict. You find a way out of the country, if you know people that can help you out. I was lucky. (Interview 2)

Togar's sense of being Liberian has been disrupted and being Liberian is no longer a source of pride but associated with loss. However, Togar also includes a sense of hope and a desire for a better future in his thoughts on what it is to be Liberian. While he still identified as a Liberian, and uses the word "we" to locate himself as part of that group, he remained ambivalent as to what being Liberian means:

I would really, don't know what it means to be a Liberian because we saw so, so many conflicts that it has traumatized us over the years. And we are just looking for a new beginning. A new future. That's what we are looking back ahead of us now, for a brighter future. That's what we, be grateful that you are alive. Because it has been a terrible, terrible couple of years back home. There is nobody in Liberia that doesn't know somebody, there is no family that hasn't lost somebody in the war. There was like back-on-back civil war. Twice. During the era of Samuel Doe, during the era of Charles Taylor. Two long civil wars that devastated the whole country so. But, I'm, I'm glad that I am alive, still alive. (Interview 2)

This ambivalence is in contrast to the idyllic views of communal living described in Interview 1. While such images are apparent in the subsequent interviews, they are used to describe an African way of living rather than life in Liberia. By the second interview Togar, rather than describing Liberia as the idyll, describes a feeling of disassociation from the country and a focus on his own survival:

Because I don't really know what to be proud of? To be Liberian, I really don't know. Because so many things has happened that you're going to ask yourself why? Why does this have to happen to you? Why does this have to happen to us? Families are being decimated, separated. You, I think it's going to take a while, maybe in the next forty or fifty years, maybe for you to know what it means to be a Liberian, but as of now there is a lot of pain associated with it. The war and everything. For you to like try to seek a certain pride in your country. To try to seek something useful in your country. Your main objective is yourself. For your safety. For your wellbeing and mental health.

Elaborating on this focus on the self Togar draws on his knowledge of classic psychological theory to explain the reason for his diminished identification with Liberia:

There is a psychologist, Abraham Maslow, that does something about that, order of needs. [...] But now, I am at the bottom of the ladder, as of now. Trying to get my head above water. Trying to satisfy my physiological needs

of security, food, shelter, education. So it's gonna take a while before I get to that. That ladder, where I can sit back and say, yeah I am proud to be a Liberian. This is what it means to be a Liberian. So I, I am not there yet. (Interview 2)

Given a lack of identification with either Ireland or Liberia, Togar's success at feeling a connectedness to others is called into question. However, as explored in the next subtheme, Togar's sense of an African identity fills this void.

African Identity

Despite a lack of identification with a Liberian or Irish identity, Togar has a consistently strong sense of pride in being African. Togar understands Ireland in terms of contrasts with Africa and these contrasts remain congruent across the interviews. Togar does not agree with much of the behaviour that he sees in Ireland, but in order to understand this he draws on the fact that the Irish have a different culture. Relative to Africans, Togar sees the Irish as being more distant from each other. He also describes anti-social behaviour that he does not see as being acceptable in Africa.

His understanding of the asylum-system in addition to his understanding of his place in Ireland and his lack of identification with 'Irishness' have led him to see himself as excluded from certain aspects of life (employment for example) yet as wilfully withdrawing from other aspects (the Irish drinking culture for example). This subtheme explores how Togar actively constructs his place in Ireland through his identification with Africa, allowing him to maintain a sense of empowerment and choosing to actively withdraw from some aspects of Irish society while also actively being excluded from those aspects he wishes to engage with.

Togar's depiction of Africa across the interviews is constructed using images of communal sharing, respect, connectedness and togetherness. In the first interview he described Africa as a place where people shared with each other according to their need:

Back in Africa you know we gather together we share stuffs together we share farm produce, we share fish produce, we, you know there is that sense of community sharing you know. If you have your neighbour can come and borrow from you and we just love it. When you come back from you have something you call up your neighbour and "come, come and have this, share this thing with me". Or maybe you are coming back from the farm, you call up on your neighbour and say I have this, do you have anyone in your home take some, you know, it's an African tradition. (Interview 1)

In the second interview Africa continues to represent the ideal, yet his experiences of trauma there are also reflected in his descriptions:

Africa is a wonderful place to live in. It is not somewhere where you would be wondering in the morning how cold the weather is. **Laughs** It is a very sunny, very hot, and if the heat gets too high you can just jump into the river, have a swim. So it is a very wonderful place, tropical area. Only two seasons we have, it's either it's rainy season or it's dry season. Ah, wonderful scenery, you know foods. The food is great and everything. But just, we lacked peace really. We don't know long the peace is going to last or how, what the future holds, but Africa is a wonderful place to be. It's a nice, nice, everybody treats - the culture is different, everybody is friendly. You know, if not for the war, you know, which pitted people against people. Ethnic backgrounds. If not for that. When the war is over everybody forgave each other. We all, we all lived peacefully you know. There is respect. The culture in Africa, respect for each other. It's a nice place. (Interview 2)

Togar associates the concepts of peaceful co-habitation, connectedness and respect to African life and as distinct from the negative consequences of the war which divided his country. When Togar talks of Africa, he is referring to his own experiences in Liberia, however when he mentions Liberia by name he summons up the specific negatives associated with civil war. 'Africa' is a more positive construct of his Liberian experience, reflecting his love of the land and the people. Being able to separate 'Liberia' and 'Africa' allows him to retain a sense of pride in where he was born while accepting the atrocities that happened there. The sense of peaceful co-habitation and connectedness associated with Africa contrasts with his views of Ireland as a place where people are disconnected from each other.

(In Ireland) everybody keeps to their own business. But it's not the same thing with the African people.

And you think that's an all-over Africa?

Yeah, it is because he is from South African, I am from Liberia, there is another guy that I am living with in that house that is from, he is from Nigeria and there is another guy, I don't know where he is from. So we, and that is how we relate with each other. But the other people that are foreigners, the Polish and the Irish people that are also our neighbours, even during Christmas period, nobody - everybody just mind their own business. So it is a different cultural thing. (Interview 2)

It is interesting to note Togar's use of the word foreigner in the above extract. He refers to "The Polish and the Irish people" as "foreigners", despite the fact that he is in Ireland and therefore in this context he is the foreigner. Togar's sense of belonging to the African community is strong and characterized as a given since he is an African. This contrasts with his impression of Ireland arguably not having a community:

You can't not be part of the African community so long as you are African.
You are part of the African community.

And what about the Irish community? Do you feel a part of that?

Do they have a community? *laughs*

You tell me.

It is, eh, it is the Irish society which you are part of. It's another bigger society. You are in it, so as maybe, I would not say that I am part of it but maybe one day if I get my residency, I am allowed to live here, work here, pay taxes, then I might say I am part of it. But let's just say I am not just part of it now. (Interview 2)

Togar feels excluded from Irish 'society' through not being allowed to work and pay taxes, and he also questions whether the Irish have a community at all. Togar is present in the Irish community, but not part of it. The sense that Ireland lacks a community and a sense of connection between people pervades the interviews and stands in contrast to Togar's sense of Africa's interpersonal orientation:

Back home in Africa we are more like sharing happiness and there might be war there might be famine there might be but somewhere somehow we try and find a way to bring people together and be happy (Interview 1)

In the above extract Togar refers to Africa as “home” indicating a continued personal connection with Africa. While acknowledging the harsh circumstances he experienced there (war, famine), he describes it as a place where people endeavour together to unite and “be happy”. In contrast, Ireland is characterized as a place where misery predominates:

Around here you can tell from looking at people’s faces at times that they are not maybe they are not happy. They are not happy with the situation, the way things are, the way, [...] the economy is or maybe they are don’t have a job or maybe you can just tell by looking at their faces, most times they are not happy. (Interview 1)

His understanding of Irish people as unhappy allows him to understand the drinking patterns he sees in Ireland. Through characterising Irish drinking as “abuse” and as an escape form from mental health issues he positions Irish drinking as problematic. He then compares Irish drinking to alcohol consumption “back home” in Africa thus positioning himself as justified in not engaging in the problem drinking:

I think that people drink a lot around here to get away from something, I think they want to use it to get away from something. And I think maybe people are running away from something, maybe from depression or, or from one form of problem or the other so they want to use the drink as a suppressant. So. It's a different thing entirely, back home we don't, we don't abuse it like that, the way it is abused around here. (Interview 1)

Togar’s sense of himself as an African helps him to construct a position which justifies his lack of engagement with the drinking culture in Ireland:

I don't do drinking too much. No. Probably I have one beer in a week, probably. You know I haven't had a beer in [a long time], and maybe if I go out with friends I might have maybe one or two beers, that's all. It's not part of what we, we Africans, it's not - we don't take it as part of life, really. We don't abuse it, you know, you have to know your limits you know, and you stop it and you go home and sober up. (Interview 1)

For Togar being African is about respecting his limits and not going beyond them regarding alcohol consumption. This differs from what he sees as an Irish notion of “*going out*” which appears to involve dangerous levels of alcohol abuse; “*if they want to go out they call some friends, get a taxi, get smashed, get drinks and you know what I mean*” (Interview 2). In opposition to this socialising and alcohol abuse which verges on dangerous (‘get smashed’), Togar positions African socialising as safe and geared at uniting people: “*going out maybe to visit family members, and we share food, we share drinks together. That is what we see as going out. Or maybe visit nice places and come back home in one piece. So it's different*” (Interview 1).