

RESEARCH STUDY ON IMMIGRANT PARTICIPATION IN ART AND COMMUNITY ACTIVITY THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF IRISH

Ariel Killick

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Introduction

The aim of this research was to study the participation of immigrants and children of immigrant background in Irish-language arts agus community activities, and look at the approaches and attitudes of relevant Irish-language organisations towards the integration of immigrants in their activities.

Contextual data from the 2006 Census

It is worthwhile referring to the 2006 Census in which the ethnicity of those claiming ability to speak Irish was first investigated as well as age and contextual usage. The vast majority of the 2006 Census respondents claiming an ethnicity other than White Irish and the ability to speak Irish were under the age of 20, with between 36.3% and 44.3% claiming such ability in the following categories: “any other White background”, “Black or Black Irish African”, “Any other Black background”, “Asian or Asian Irish Chinese” and “Any other Asian background”, as opposed to 62.9% of “White Irish” in that age group.

The figures for Irish-speakers over the age of 20 are markedly lower, with only between 2.1% and 8.8% of those in categories other than “White Irish reporting ability to speak Irish.

A similar pattern is reflected in the results for the breakdown in situational usage. The majority of those under the age of 20 speak Irish within the education system only, with figures numbering between 325 and 3,942, for categories other than “White Irish” and and 12,538 for those of “Any other White background”. The results for those speaking Irish outside the education system on a daily or weekly basis are markedly lower, with figures generally between 2 and 98 in all ethnic groupings, apart from those of mixed background, with figures of between 171 and 254 persons for those situational classifications, reflecting the higher numbers of people in that larger ethnic grouping. The numbers speaking Irish less often than daily or weekly outside the education system only are larger than these last figures for all groupings however, though still mere fractions of those speaking Irish within the education system only.

Corresponding figures for those aged 20 and over in all ethnic groupings reveal less than 100 persons in each grouping speak Irish on a daily or weekly basis within or outside of the education system, apart from the “Other including mixed background”, which returns figures between 25 and 152 for the four situational classifications involved. The reported figures for those of a mixed ethnicity or ethnicity other than “White Irish” are significantly higher for “speaking Irish less often, outside the education system only”, with between 89 (“Any other Black background”) and 706 (“Other including mixed background”) persons reporting such usage.

Previous research in this area

Although I was contacted a number of times during 2005 and 2006 as Chairperson and public representative of iMeasc, a network of Irish-speaking immigrants, by people requesting members' participation in various research studies, it has been difficult to track such studies and there appears to be little research available on immigrants/migrants and the Irish-language, with the notable exception of Justin McCubbin, a young Irish-speaking American who is currently completing a PhD (in Irish) on *Immigrants in Ireland and the Irish Language: The language ideology and practice of Irish-speaking immigrants to Ireland*. Justin is not, however, covering the participation of immigrants in Irish-language art and community activities in his research. He does however believe that immigrants will, in future, have the same range of views towards the Irish language as native Irish people, a view reinforced by a recently published report entitled "*The Irish Language and The Irish People*" which revealed" that support for the Irish language was as high among foreign nationals as the Irish born, with no difference in outlook between a sample of the total population and a sample of only those born in Ireland". McCubbin also states that "a good case could be made to argue that Irish-language arts would bring immigrants into Irish-language society more quickly and with less barriers, perhaps, than normal social networks just because of their institutional structure."

Some reference to the Irish-language and immigrants is made in a study, published in 2008, of the integration experiences of four nationality groups in Ireland "*Getting On - From Migration to Integration: Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian and Nigerian Migrants' Experiences in Ireland*", by the Migration and Citizenship Research Initiative, UCD, looking at the political, economic, social and cultural implications of integration. The study featured one paragraph discussing Irish:

"In Ireland, State policy and popular opinion encourages and facilitates bilingualism. Migrants similarly value the ability to communicate in a variety of languages. However, there is no evidence that adult migrants are being encouraged to see the Irish language as a means of communication and integration in Ireland, despite the fact that many of their children are learning it in school." (p24)

My research would appear to contradict the view that adult migrants are not "*being encouraged to see the Irish language as a means of communication and integration in Ireland*". Four respondent organisations stated they had policies regarding immigrant integration and it was recently reported (12.5.09, www.Gaelport.com) that three Irish-language schooling bodies in both the North and South have produced leaflets in languages including Portuguese, Polish, Russian, French and Romanian containing information explaining the opportunities that exist in the sector to parents.

Both above study and another study, "*On Speaking Terms*", also prepared for the Immigrant Council of Ireland, make calls supportive of Irish, with the latter study stating that "*Courses in the Irish language should also be provided as an elective module, as many migrants are interested in learning it and will contribute to promoting the use of the language.*" (p. 94)

Piarsa Mac Éinrí, Director of Immigration and asylum research at the Migration Studies Unit, in University College Cork, has brought up the matter of Irish in relation to immigrants in two speeches, to the Merriman Summer School in 2002, entitled "Beyond Tolerance: Towards Irish Models Of Multiculturalism?", in which he states that "*The Irish language community would need, however, to have a hard look at some of its own attitudes, which can at time be isolationist, elitist and intolerant.*" In another speech in the same year however, entitled "Cultural identity and political transformation" to the Irish Association Annual Conference, he states that "*Multiculturalism should celebrate all cultures, including the dominant one, within an agreed, common, rights-based*

framework. Those minorities within the dominant culture, Irish speakers are a case in point - who feel themselves to be excluded, can join forces with other minority cultures.”

This appears to have happened on a small scale in a number of cases, such as *Club Scannán Idirchultúrtha Chluain Dolcáin* (the Clondalkin Intercultural Film Club) recently launched in an Irish-language cultural centre by the Mayor of South County Dublin. An tIonad Buail Isteach has also featured films from other countries in its programming and community radio stations such as *Raidió na Life* (“Liffey Radio”) and Near Fm (both in Dublin) and *Raidió Fáilte* (“Welcome Radio”, Belfast) have made some efforts to integrate immigrants or immigrant language material into their programming as well.

Other ways in which immigrants and the Irish-language have been highlighted in recent years include the recruitment of Seán Óg Ó hAilpín, of mixed Irish and Fijian descent, as one of the “faces” of Seachtain na Gaeilge. He was also selected as an Ambassador for the 2008 European Year of Intercultural Diversity and is often regarded as an shining example of successful integration in Ireland. He has also most likely had a significant influence in the development of the GAA’s integration strategy, which is to include the production of a multilingual welcome pack. An immigrant from New Zealand, Tony Watene, part of the administration staff at Croke Park, is also seeking to get agreement for a *Play and Learn scheme*, “*where the children will come and learn to play Gaelic games with their friends and parents will come to the club and learn English or Irish.*”

In relation to the arts, RTÉ Television broadcast a four-part programme in 2007 entitled ‘*Níos Gaeil ná na Gaeil*’ (“More Irish Than The Irish”) which followed four adult immigrant volunteers as they learnt Irish over ten weeks. The participants were also exposed to various traditional artforms, as well as Irish-language song, as part of the initiative.

If comedy can be defined as a verbal artform, the work of the well-known Irish-American comedian, Des Bishop, cannot be ignored. His show, *In the Name of the Fada*, broadcast in 2008 on RTÉ, which followed his journey as he mastered the language, apparently prompted an approximately 600% increase in calls to one organisation providing Irish-language courses and generated massive, primarily positive, media coverage and public discussion. Des toured his show ‘*Tongues*’ around Ireland last year and is currently touring a show entitled ‘*Unbéarlable*’. His highly-polished Irish-language version of the hip-hop song ‘*Jump Around*’ (Léim Thart) has been hugely popular. A short film, ‘*Yu Ming Is Ainm Dom*’, featuring the experience of a Chinese teenager coming to Ireland having learnt Irish instead of English, has also been widely shown since its release in 2003.

Research method

The research method consisted of an email survey and was primarily chosen due to severe and unchangeable time constraints involved with my full-time employment workload.

Survey questions

The survey had twelve questions, probing numbers of immigrant participants in activities, ethnic breakdown (including whether the participants were tourist, adult residents or children of immigrant parents), policies and approaches to immigrant integration and the organisations’ thoughts on inherent issues and measures and supports required for immigrant integration into Irish-language arts and community activities. Unless specifically distinguished, the term ‘immigrant’ shall be used to include both adult immigrants and children of immigrant parents in the Irish school system, whether born in Ireland or not.

Surveyed organisations

Fifteen relevant Irish-language organisations were targeted as well as two other individuals centrally involved in Irish-language activity relevant to this study and a total of eight organisations returned survey answers. Whilst the involvement of a much larger scale cohort of organisations would be necessary to truly gauge the integration of immigrants in Irish-language art and community activity, this was not possible in the context of time constraints and an unfunded college paper of 5,000 words.

Regrettably, despite follow-up calls, some of the most significant organisations for artistic activities, such as an *Comhlachas Náisiúnta Drámaíochta, an Taibhdhearc, Gaelchultúr, Oideas Gael*, and community activities such as *Cultúrlann Mc Adam Ó Fiaich* and *Comhluadar*, did not return surveys, thus substantially limiting the breadth and depth of this research project.

A description of the respondent organisations is given below. A description of the organisations targeted who did not respond is given as a supplement at the end of this paper.

Oireachtas na Gaeilge

Ireland's foremost Irish-language cultural festival, established in 1897, hosts two annual festivals in May and November, featuring competitions in all aspects of the traditional arts, but with Irish-language verbal and sung artforms being a primary feature, as well as a multi-faceted Irish-language literary competition, and an art competition. The festivals encompass a myriad of different Irish-language related such as workshops, book and cd launches, stalls, themed conferences and talks, youth and sport activities, and a parade.

Club Sult/Club Sonas

("Fun Club/ Happiness Club")

An Irish and world music dance club, running for several years in central Dublin, sponsored by Foras na Gaeilge. The club's events are compèred in Irish and frequented largely by Irish-speakers. The club is also a platform for Irish-language artforms such as sean-nós singing, as well as traditional Irish instrumental music, and other artists, primarily music and performance artists, working in the medium of Irish. The club regularly features music and dance performers from around the world.

Conradh na Gaeilge (Head Office)

(The Gaelic League)

Founded in July 1893, *Conradh na Gaeilge* is "the main voluntary community organisation that promotes the Irish language in Ireland." It engages in a wide range activities including political lobbying, organised social events and summer camps for young people, community campaigns, an online Irish language chart radio station and *Seachtain na Gaeilge*. It has numerous branches throughout Ireland as well as overseas.

Conradh na Gaeilge, Galway

The Galway city branch of *Conradh na Gaeilge* that was chosen for its significant activity in relation to immigrants in Galway. It also has a building in which events from *sean-nós* singing clubs to an world-music club dance night.

Glór na nGael

“*Glór na nGael* helps communities to develop the necessary skills and plans within their own resources to make the usage of Irish a permanent and sustainable feature, done through a nationwide competition with each community’s efforts and achievements recognised at a national awards ceremony.” It has been likened to the Irish-language equivalent of the Tidy Towns Initiative and has numerous branches overseas as well as in Ireland.

Ionad Buail Isteach

(Irish Language Drop in Centre)

Founded in August 1993 “to promote the Irish language in Temple Bar and in Dublin”. It “aims to give Irish speakers a chance to meet and use the language socially, through conversation groups”, and other related activities. It is quite progressive and proactive as regards immigrant integration and has been involved in Irish classes specifically for foreigners.

Ógras

(“Youth Organisation”)

Ógras organises a wide range of fun and educational events throughout the country through the medium of Irish for young people between 13 and 19 years of age.

Gaelscoileanna
("Gael Schools")

Gaelscoileanna is an umbrella body for Irish-medium schools whose "principal aim is to develop, facilitate and encourage Irish-medium education at the primary and post primary level throughout the country". It also provides practical support and teacher in-service training courses.

Research questions and results

Participant numbers and ethnic breakdown

Four respondent organisations keep no record of demographic data or ethnic background of participants, *an tIonad Buail Isteach* keeps only a very rough record (name, telephone number and email address) and states that it is their policy not to seek too much information from people unless they wish to share it themselves. Both *Ógras* and *Gaelscoileanna* keep such records, *Ógras* having to submit a report of that nature to the Department of Education.

Most organisations were able to give estimates of the number of total participants in their activities over the last five years as well as estimates on the proportion of participants from ethnic backgrounds other than Irish only who take part on a regular basis. *Oireachtas na Gaeilge* reported around 50,000 total participants and only about 15 of backgrounds discernably other than Irish, with all coming from English-speaking/Irish emigrant recipient countries (North America, Canada, England, Australia and New Zealand), with 2% being tourists and some 98% being adult residents, which would indicate, unsurprisingly, that those progressing to competition level in Irish-language arts are most likely to reside in Ireland.

Club Sonas estimated 1,500 total participants over the last five years and that 60 of that number were of backgrounds other than Irish, with 10% of those being tourists, 70% being school students with parents from countries other than Ireland and 20% being adult residents.

Conradh na Gaeilge, Head Office, estimates hundreds of thousands of participants in its various activities (including *Seachtain na Gaeilge*) over the last five years and that some five in every 100 participants are of backgrounds other than Irish only, with 1% being tourists, 1% being school students and 3% being adult residents, with the majority coming from the afore-mentioned English-speaking countries, and some 1% from Eastern/Western Europe, with more school students in that category. *Conradh na Gaeilge* Galway estimates that there are 40 participants of backgrounds other than Irish in activities every month and 50 such participants in Irish-language classes each year, with all being adult residents and the regional breakdown being 60% Western European, 10% Eastern European and the remainder, 30%, from English-speaking countries.

Glór na nGael estimates its total participant numbers at least 65,000 over the last five years, spread through 130 committees with 100 participants in local activities each. Although it has 41 committees registered in 28 different countries and estimates 10,000 participants over the last five years in English-speaking countries, 5,000 in Western Europe, 375 in Eastern Europe and none in countries of the African continent or Asia, it was not able to provide any demographic data on immigrants participating in their activities in Ireland.

An tIonad Buail Isteach estimates it has had over 2,500 participants in its activities over the last five years, and that around one third of the participants in its weekly conversation group and related activities are of backgrounds other than Irish only. *An tIonad* has been running Irish-language

classes for foreigners for 6 years, and whilst not providing figures for those participants, out of the total of 25 people who took part in a recent training scheme to teach Irish on a voluntary basis, 10 were of backgrounds other than Irish, a highly significant finding which may indicate their activities over the years are bearing substantial results. *An tIonad Buail Isteach* was not, however, able to give any figures on the breakdown of participants by country due to their policy on data collection.

Ógras states it has around 3,000 individual members and that about 10-12% of those members are of backgrounds other than Irish only, 80% of which were tourists invited to their events, 15% students with immigrant parents and 5% adult residents. *Ógras* also gave a detailed breakdown on those participants, with as previously found, the vast majority, 243 persons, coming from English-speaking Irish-emigrant recipient countries, of which 230 were tourists, 12% school students and 4% adult residents. Interestingly, the next highest category were participants from Eastern Europe, numbering 42, with 24 being tourists, 14 school students and 4 adult residents. Next came Western European participants, numbering 15, with 7 being tourists and 5 school students and 3 adult residents. Participants with a background from the African continent had 14 participants, almost all of whom were school students, none being tourists and 2 being adult residents. Participants with a Middle-Eastern background had nine participants, and in contrast with those with an African background, the majority here were tourists, 6, with 3 being students and none being adult residents. Participants from backgrounds from the Far East and South-East Asia had 5 participants each, with 3 each being tourists and 2 each being students. Those with a South American background numbered only 2, both of whom were adult residents. By far the strongest representation, apart from tourists from English-speaking and Eastern European countries, were school students with a background from those countries, numbering 12 and 14 respectively, and those with an African background. The representation of those with backgrounds from the Far East, South East Asian and the Middle East were very poor at school level and would indicate a need to target growth amongst those cohorts if possible, even more so than is obviously needed for other members of backgrounds other than Irish.

Gaelscoileanna estimates it has over 37,000 students in some 212 schools (170 primary and 42 post-primary) and that approximately one third of those schools has students of backgrounds other than Irish only. Whilst they do not have detailed statistics as yet, there are apparently one or two schools in which up to 20% of students are of backgrounds other than Irish. There are however 'some schools' which do not list having any such students, and *Gaelscoileanna* currently have no figure regarding students with at least one parent of a background other than Irish. They collate a basic figure in which the only distinction made is between those from countries within or outside of the European Union (apart from Ireland), showing that a small majority (55% or thereabouts) of the students from other countries were from countries within the EU. The collating of a more detailed breakdown on the ethnic background of those students and indeed immigrant parents would appear to be too burdensome at present in the context of the significant amounts of data on various aspects of the *gaelscoileanna* that *Gaelscoileanna* has attempted to collect, although one hopes this may become possible in the not too distant future.

Integration policies and approaches

As for the question regarding the organisation having any particular policy or approach to integrating immigrants in their activities, *an tOireachtas* has no such policy or approach, does not intend to devise one in future and does not contact local groups of immigrants to publicise the organisation's activities.

Conradh na Gaeilge, Head Office, and *Conradh na Gaeilge*, Galway both do not have such policies or approaches however *Conradh na Gaeilge*, Head Office (Dublin) states that it does try to attract immigrants to their classes and states it would be very happy if the *iMeasc* branch would make one for them, however I understand the *iMeasc* branch, set up whilst I was Chairperson of that group of Irish-speaking immigrants, to have been largely non-functional for some time. The head office in Dublin also gave no answer in relation to any ways in which it contacts local groups to publicise the organisation's activities.

Conradh na Gaeilge, Galway states that it might devise a policy to integrate immigrants in its activities in future and that contact is made with local immigrant groups to publicise the organisation's activities through the person who organises events or activities for them in the Club.

Club Sonas does have a policy or approach to integrate immigrants in its activities, however it states that it essentially involves bringing musicians from other countries to play at their events and states that their policy has more to do with opening Irish people's minds to other countries than integrating immigrants in the events. *Club Sonas* also states that it will contact English-language schools for foreigners, though it does not specify whether these will be tourists or adults residents, however it would rightly appear to be seeking the inclusion of the Irish-language and related artforms in the cultural element of English-language tuition in such schools.

Glór na nGael states that it has a tourism, cultural and planning policy and organises conferences both in Ireland and abroad. *Glór na nGael* also gives assistance to people to come to Ireland from all the countries which have *Glór na nGael* committees to attend Irish-language and cultural courses of three such Gaeltacht-based course providers, however *Glór na nGael* states that it does not have any specific ways of contacting local immigrant groups "beyond those used to contact [any] other group."

Three organisations would appear to have strong immigrant integration policies or approaches: *Ógras* and *Gaelscoileanna* and *an tIonad Buail Isteach*. In the case of *an tIonad*, it states that it has always had such a policy, which has involved Irish-language classes for immigrants since 2003 and welcoming all who are interested in Irish or Gaelic culture. Its website features the Chinese, Russian, Spanish and Polish flags prominently as well as videos featuring a series of brief phrases spoken by an Irish-speaker and then a speaker of those respective languages. They have been organising an Irish-Language/Spanish weekend and been participating in the Latin American Film Festival for the last ten years. *An tIonad Buail Isteach* is a member of a number of groups, including *Integrating Ireland*, and gains much contact with immigrants, students and tourists through such co-operation as those organisations "distribute information on *an tIonad*." *An tIonad* also distributes flyers to the immigrant information centres and libraries etc.

Ógras states it has an equality policy and that the organisation is open to all as long as they are interested in learning and using Irish. *Ógras* is currently creating links with other organisations working with immigrants to introduce *Ógras* to them.

Gaelscoileanna states that it has been pro-active on this issue seeking every opening to publicise their schooling system so immigrants understand that Irish-medium education is a favourable choice for themselves as well and that they will be welcome, regardless of background. They have explanatory leaflets published in French, Romanian, Portugese, Russian and Polish and have made contact with the Irish Immigrant Council to distribute information amongst 'the immigrant

community'. The organisation's policy has apparently always been to welcome all regardless of religious and class background and the schools encompass a number of denominations, both Catholic, Interfaith and Multifaith, with many recently established schools in the latter two categories. *Gaelscoileanna* intend to keep adding to their work to ensure immigrants understand the both the existence of Irish-medium schooling and its availability to them, and would appear to be well aware of the importance of engaging immigrant support for Irish-medium schooling as a significant and growing proportion of Irish society to ensure the success of their own aims. *Gaelscoileanna* has also been active in the development of the Intercultural Strategy in Education, and in light of recent controversy about the possibility of 'white flight' being behind in the growth of *gaelscoileanna*, rather than any growth in appreciation of Irish and Irish culture, *Gaelscoileanna* would appear to take the issue of immigrant integration very seriously, which bodes well for their participation in Irish-language arts as most are given a comprehensive introduction to many such artforms and the various Irish-language organisations involved through the schooling system. *Gaelscoileanna* states that the various cultures in the schools in general are celebrated, though this may be somewhat limited by the lower percentages of children of immigrant background in Irish-medium schools, a finding contained in research conducted by the ESRI to be published this year. *Gaelscoileanna* has only recently started discussions with the Immigrant Council of Ireland, though they have been intending to do so for some time, and would like to look at the best way to undertake the distribution of information about choosing Irish-medium education amongst those of backgrounds other than Irish. They also intend advertising in Metro Éireann, a newspaper for immigrants, where they have also previously been given publicity.

Particular integration issues and required measures and supports

Oireachtas na Gaeilge stated that people of a background other than Irish would need Irish to participate in workshops, competitions etc, and stated that “we have no answer” in relation to measures and supports needed to face such issues. *Club Sonas* also stated that there would be no particular issues involved in regards to the integration of such people in the organisation’s activities and gave no answer as to measures and supports needed. *Conradh na Gaeilge*, Galway, did not answer either question, however the head office in Dublin said they faced the same issues as they would in relation to attracting persons of an Irish background to activities i.e. “we would not know their level of Irish”.

Glór na nGael stated that the only two issues that needed to be answered were whether immigrants were interested in Irish and whether they were interested in developing Irish as a living language amongst their own community and broader afield if possible. I take it that the respondent here means the immigrant’s local geographical community in Ireland rather than developing the use of Irish as a living language amongst their own country of origin community, but this was not specified. *Glór na nGael* states that these communities have particular needs that would have to be assessed and to which resources would have to be allocated, but that these needs have not yet been assessed by *Glór na nGael*.

An tIonad Buail Isteach states that it is seeking the assistance of other organisations in relation young children and foreign parents wishing to pass Irish onto their children. As they are a voluntary organisation with few resources, *an tIonad Buail Isteach* states it is only able to allow them to attend all their events, but they are not managing to focus on Irish-language events or events featuring Irish-language artforms specifically for young children of immigrant background.

Ógras views the lack of information to be the primary hindrance and that funding is needing to conduct work in this area and set up an integration initiative. It states that it cannot be expected that volunteers have all the expertise and that workshops and information days are required to introduce the groups to each other.

Gaelscoileanna again gave the most comprehensive discussion, stating that publicity on Irish-medium education amongst the immigrant communities was an issue as well as publicity amongst those who give them information on education, so they understand they will be welcomed in Irish-medium schools, and to ensure that they are given this choice along with other schooling choices on an equal basis. *Gaelscoileanna* also states that the advantages of the system for immigrants needs to be publicised as well the success stories in the sector from the children themselves who are doing extremely well, presumably the respondent means children of immigrant background here. Budgetary issues are cited as well marketing/public relations personnel in relation to undertaking such publicity.

Only *Ógras*, *Gaelscoileanna* and *an tIonad Buail Isteach* gave any additional views on the research topic, and it is significant that the two primarily involved in work with school students, and thus at the coalface of demographic change in Ireland, gave substantial responses. *Ógras* states that it is always seeking to mix and link its young people with others from various countries and backgrounds and that it would be open to recommendations in this regard. *Gaelscoileanna* makes an interesting point that due to the Irish-medium schools’ significant experience in language-immersion education, that children without any knowledge of Irish, regardless of background, are on an equal footing in the Irish-medium system, as many children of Irish background also have very little Irish upon

entering the system, with approximately 95% of that cohort coming from non-Irish speaking households. Although I am not knowledgeable on the schools' practices myself, it would appear that they are well adept in maintaining an Irish-language school environment, as far as teaching is concerned, in the context of classes of children with little Irish.

Conclusions

Foremost, further research would have to be conducted to gain a true reflection of the current state of immigrant integration in Irish-language art and community activity. Individual interviews are likely to have produced far more substantial results, both in terms of the number of respondents and the depths of answers, however this was regrettably impossible due to time restrictions and one can thus only gain a small insight on this issue.

Some conclusions can however be drawn, and Piaras Mac Éinrí's description of the Irish language community being, at times, 'isolationist and elitist' comes to mind when viewing the results of an *Oireachtas na Gaeilge*, however it must be remembered that any festival which is essentially based around a large number of competitions in various areas is by definition, elitist, and necessarily so in the context of cultivating the achievement of high standards in Irish-language arts. It is my view however that the aim of promoting Irish-language artforms should also necessarily encompass the integration of immigrants and that making contact with and inviting local immigrant groups would be of benefit in raising awareness of these artforms and attracting such people, as a growing proportion of modern Irish society, to their pursuit and support. An issue which may be hindering this is that *an tOireachtas* is like a small island of Irish-speakers, only lasting as long as the festival wherever it is held, in which almost all people one encounters at the various venues will speak Irish, apart from the regular experience of certain towns where non-Irish-speaking staff at the various venues are entirely indifferent, and *an tOireachtas* may be understandably be reluctant to decrease this special atmosphere, which most festival attendees rarely encounter apart from the Gaeltacht, by inviting immigrants who may not speak Irish. Here the issue of integration for the benefit of a peaceful society in future rubs up against the fact that many Irish-speakers are rarely in an environment where they can express themselves and be universally understood in Irish in their own country, unlike English speakers in most aspects of Irish life, and Irish speakers generally find the prospect of such an environment very appealing. The seriousness with which both *Ógras* and *Gaelscoileanna* are approaching the issue of immigrant integration in their activities, however, is one of the greatest causes for hope for immigrant integration in Irish-language art activities, as traditional Irish-language artforms and other general art activities through the medium of Irish form a significant part of both groups' activities, particularly *na gaelscoileanna*, and it is not unreasonable to expect that, like Seán Óg Ó hAilpín, other children of immigrant background will grow up to be fluent practitioners of such artforms, and that they may well end up in *Oireachtas* competitions in future.

It would appear that some organisations can learn from the approach taken by *an tIonad Buail Isteach*, who, despite having a very rudimentary website and seemingly being organised at a level and in a way quite different to other more 'professional' organisations, appear to have significant experience as well as a considerable degree of success in attempting to integrate immigrants into their activities. With regard to the lack of participants of South American background in *Ógras* data, there may be much to be gained from linking in with *an tIonad Buail Isteach's* affiliations and Spanish-speaking resources. The widely-documented large presence of Brazilians in Gort, Galway and a collaboration with the GAA may also be of some use, however changes to work-permit laws

for Non-EU citizens in view of economic changes have already resulted in changes to the prominence of Brazilians in this region.

The Irish-language organisations surveyed also face the difficult issue of a lack of funding and resources to facilitate immigrant integration, however having a diverse range of cultural backgrounds amongst their groups can be in their interest for the strengthening and diversifying of Irish-language activity, which has much to gain from artforms from different cultures presented in the medium of Irish as far as attracting native Irish people to the language in new and different ways. It would appear persons of backgrounds other than “White” or English-speaking backgrounds also need to be specifically targeted, as their numbers are particularly low from that data that can be referenced.

On the whole, there does seem to be some awareness of the importance of integrating immigrants into Irish-language arts and community activity, focussed largely within those organisations in large cities and those dealing with large numbers of young people. As net inward immigration has only been a recent phenomenon in its current form, as far as the countries of origin involved, I believe there has, proportionally, been some good progress to date and hope this will continue to grow.

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Piaras Mac Éinrí – www.migration.ucc.ie

Targeted Non-Respondent Organisations

Comhluadar

("Company")

Supports parents who want to speak Irish with their children, through the organisation of social and educational events such as parties, workshops, trips and exhibitions.

An Comhlachas Náisiúnta Drámaíochta

(National Drama Association)

Promotes Irish-language drama and other forms of Irish-language verbal artforms, such as an tAgallamh Beirte, an Lúibín, an Cheapóg, an tAmhrán Saothair, organises local drama festivals in various centres throughout the country, a special festival for third level colleges and a National Festival.

Cultúrlann Mc Adam Ó Fiaich

(Mc Adam Ó Fiaich Cultural Centre)

A major Irish-language cultural centre in West Belfast, containing a restaurant, theatre/conference/workshop space, art gallery, and Irish-language book/gift shop. The centre hosts various workshops in Irish, a branch of the above-mentioned Comhluadar meets here as well as singing groups. A resident theatre company is also situated in the building, as is Belfast's "inclusive" Irish language community radio, Raidió Fáilte, and Pobal, the umbrella organisation for the Irish speaking community in the North of Ireland. Numerous classes, primarily in Irish, are also run in the centre.

Gaelchultúr

("Gael Culture")

Situated in Temple Bar and promotes the Irish language and various aspects of Irish culture, through classes and workshops in Irish, Irish-language song and dance for different groups from teachers, students from abroad, tourists to the general public.

Concos (Comhchoiste na gColáistí Samhraidh)

(Joint Committee of Summer Colleges)

A federation of Irish Summer Colleges.

An Taibhdhearc

(“*The Galway Theatre*”)

Founded in 1928 and is the National Irish-Language Theatre, producing five plays each year, touring four plays nationally, and providing experience and training to young Irish-speakers interested in theatre. Also organises a scriptwriting competition.

Oideas Gael

(“Gael Teaching”)

A long-standing organisation in Donegal running Irish-language courses and cultural activity holidays covering areas such as marine painting, pottery, instrumental music tuition, dancing amongst others.

Colleen Dollard

A fluent Irish-speaking American woman involved in teaching Irish to immigrants and organising innovative Irish-language events in Dublin for several years now, having worked closely with an tIonad Buail Isteach.