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Racial-Ethnic Identity in Modern Ireland: Variation, and Influence on Psychological Wellbeing

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ABSTRACT

There is lack of empirical psychological research on racial-ethnic identity and its relationship with psychological wellbeing in Ireland. The current study explores the relationship between racial-ethnic identity score using the Multi-Group Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM) and psychological wellbeing using the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSE). 184 people, who included Irish and non-Irish, participated in the study using random and snowball sampling methods. No significant relationship was observed between the participants on both racial-ethnic identity scores and self-esteem scores, and racial-ethnic identity scores and self-efficacy scores. Differences in racial-ethnic identity scores were examined according to gender, age and length of stay in Ireland. There was no gender difference in racial-ethnic identity score, older participants scored less on the MEIM, and although not significant, a trend was observed showing a negative correlation between amount of time spent in the country and MEIM score. Finally, the majority ethnic group in this study (white Irish) scored significantly lower than all the minority ethnic groups put together. Results suggest that development of a racial-ethnic identity is independent of self-esteem and self-efficacy, and also that ethnicity is more salient for younger participants, minority ethnic groups and newly immigrated participants.

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INTRODUCTION

Identity

Development of an identity is an important and unavoidable process during the lifespan of any individual. At each stage of development the individual has to define himself as a person within its immediate environment, usually by asking the simple question: who am I? Paraphrasing Erikson's definition of identity, Patricia Miller (2002) wrote that identity is the understanding and acceptance of both the self and one's society. According to Erikson, adolescence is a critical period in identity formation. During this period, there is an exploration of various identity possibilities and, sometimes, rebellion against the standards and beliefs of parents in order to develop a strong adult self (Hunt & Hilton, 1975; Belsky, 2007). Formation of an identity is multifaceted, in that, there are different aspects of one's life that is developed throughout the lifespan. Examples of identity types include sexual identity, gender identity, social identity, political identity, racial identity and ethnic identity.

Ethnicity

The terms race and ethnicity are arguably two distinct phenomena but both have in fact been used interchangeably in many literatures. Race and ethnicity overlap quite considerably, not all races are ethnic groups while some ethnic groups may be races or might have been races in the past (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). Ethnicity is a relatively new term, in that its inclusion in major English language dictionaries only began in the 1960s (Glazer & Moynihan, 1975). The word ethnic has robust history. Its Greek origin, *ethnos*, meant nation, signifying a people of common blood or descent (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). In Latin *ethnicus* meant heathens or others, referring to people who did not share the dominant religious beliefs. Its English derivative, *ethnic*, appeared first in the 15th century and had the same religious connotations, depicting persons who were neither Christian nor Jew (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). A more recent meaning of the term ethnicity has taken a subjective turn, in that; it describes a personal belief of membership to a certain group. The

classical definition of ethnicity, given by German sociologist Max Weber, suggests the main point that ethnic attachments occur between people of real or assumed common ancestry. It is the belief in this common descent that is most important over any fact of actual common descent. In other words, ethnicity is mostly subjective based on the perception of the individuals involved. The foundations of this belief include physical resemblance, shared cultural practices and a shared historical experience of intergroup relations (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). A few textbook definitions sprung from this Weberian tradition, but the emphasis shifted from grouping people based on a shared past history to a people with a present common culture that includes language, religion or social practices.

However, the point has been made that distinct cultural practices have been on the decline over time, especially among migrant communities in a larger population (Glazer & Moynihan, 1975; Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). Despite this, group classification and attribution of common characteristics to these groups still exist. In the United States, fewer subgroups of the American population, like Irish-American, Italian American, or Jewish, display cultural practices that would be recognizable as distinctively originated from its native region. In keeping with the Weberian definition of ethnicity, the ancestral origins of these groups are what set them apart from the dominant population or each other. Based on “... some level of shared ‘social or cultural characteristics’ or ‘historical experiences’” (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p.18), lawyers, students, ballet dancers, etc. might also have a claim to be referred to as ethnic groups. So a more solid definition than Max Weber’s is needed.

Ethnic identity

Trying to find an explicit definition of ethnicity or ethnic group that satisfactorily eliminates the ambiguities presented in the academic usages of the terms while remaining close to the Weber’s classic definition is difficult. However, Richard A. Schermerhon’s definition comes close, stating that an ethnic group is “a collectivity within a society having real or putative common ancestry,

memories of shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their people-hood” (as cited in Cornell & Hartmann, 2007, p. 19). Schermerhon further adds that the ethnic group is usually a subpopulation within a larger society and identification with this subpopulation is self-conscious (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). This is distinguished further from an ethnic category, which is a marker imposed by others from the outside group. To become an ethnic group, a claim of identification must be internally asserted to the externally defined ethnic category (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). Therefore, it follows that Rotheram and Phinney would define ethnic identity as “one’s sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the part of thinking, perceptions, feelings, and behavior that is due to group membership” (as cited in Smith et al, 2009, p. 146). Ethnic identity greatly influences our behaviors. Eating preferences or habits, clothing style, choice of sexual or romantic partners, appropriate age for marriage, and so on; are to some extent decided based on the past traditions and current practices of the ethnic group that we identify with (Berger, 2011). In addition to behaviors, ethnic identity is likely to influence the way we think, about ourselves and about others. Ethnocentrism is a “belief in the normality and superiority of one’s own people and their way of doing things” (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). It is the fundamental element of ethnic identity, functioning for the most part on a positive level, as a function of group solidarity. It pulls together members of the group, defining them as “we”, separate and distinct from “others” (Back & Solomos, 2000). Umana-Taylor and colleagues (2002) found that while having a sense of pride might enhance adjustment in the individual, an oppositional identity that rejects the influence of the dominant culture, and chooses only to exclusively partake in one’s own group activities might prove to be less adaptive to the society at large. Depending on which part of a multiethnic population an individual identifies with, whether the dominant or minority, there is a confinement to either superiority or inferiority (Glazer & Moynihan, 1975). This suggests that ethnic identity might have an influence on the daily psychological well being of everybody. Research has shown that ethnic group identification

correlates with academic achievement, stress management, self-construct, development of mental illness, self-esteem issues, and self-efficacy (Smith et al, 2009; Bhui et al, 2008; Bracey, Bámaca & Umana-Taylor, 2004; McMahon & Watts, 2002).

Race & ethnicity

The definition of race is just as difficult to answer as ethnicity is. The technical meaning of a race as a biological term is a genetically distinct subpopulation of a given species (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). Colloquially speaking, racial categories are based more on appearance than genetics. Genetic differences that occur within supposed racial groups are much more than those that occur between them (Berger, 2011; Fenton, 1999). Racial differences as markers for other differences such as physical ability and intelligence between supposed racial groups have been discredited, attributing such differences with historical circumstances and cultural differences more accurately (Fenton, 1999). Skin color is only one of many physical attributes that can be used to divide the human species into groups. Others like hair texture, facial structure and body forms, which are due to genetic codes or environmental influences, are more diverse within racial groups. The persistent idea of a relationship between biologically distinct human races and physical ability or behavior has led to tragic events in history of civilization and continues even today.

Clearly, race and ethnicity are not referring to the same thing; however, they are not mutually exclusive social concepts either. The split between the two occurs mainly in the formation of the categories. Race classifications are usually imposed on a collection of people by the dominant population within the society, while ethnicity is formed based on assertions by members of a certain group. However, the racial subgroups created are usually ethnically diverse in that they consist of a combination of backgrounds that are different from the dominant group. For example, the American population subgroup of Hispanics consists of Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, Spanish, etc. (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). In spite of this, Hispanics along with other minority

racial groups are stereotyped collectively, usually attributing them with negative or inferior characteristics.

In the Irish census form, racial categories include the term “Traveller” to distinguish an ethnic group that share a common history, customs and traditions but are not racial distinct. Yet, this group suffers from marginalization, rejection, prosecution and social exclusion. Therefore, interchangeability of the terms ethnic identity and racial identity can be seen easily, but it is important to recognize the differences between the two social constructs. In keeping with this understanding, the term “racial-ethnic” shall be used from now on in this paper to reflect the dynamics between the two terms, and ethnic identity will be used to refer to racial-ethnic identity where previous studies have done so.

Race & ethnic identification within a diverse population

Minority racial-ethnic groups usually fare poorly on well-being indicators like poverty, social inclusion, health status, infant mortality rates, life expectancy, literacy, political representation and social voice (Farrell & Watt, 2001). Especially in discriminatory and racially segregated societies like the American south before the 1960s, the level of life satisfaction among minority groups would be markedly very low. As noted earlier, this builds within the deprived group, a sense of solidarity, comradeship and community that strengthens their sense of ethnic identity. This process is known as the *ethnicization* of a racial group (Cornell & Hartmann, 2007). For the African Americans, this was epitomized by the civil rights movement lead by Martin Luther King Jr. in the removal of “Negro” (an externally imposed racial category) and replacing it with “African American” (an internally asserted ethnic identity). In communities where there is a high disparity in poverty, educational opportunity and health status between the majority and minority racial-ethnic groups, there are certain psychological trends that are noticed. For example, Martin Kilson (1975) wrote, “...some blacks have a qualified self-doubt about their ethnicity... seek

identity re-formation, catharsis, and therapeutic benefits”. This suggests that years of being treated as second-class citizens might have an effect on the self-esteem or self-efficacy of racial-ethnic minority members. However, in a society that has a well-integrated system of inclusion and diversity within its population, there are less likely to be significant differences in psychological well being among racial-ethnic groups. It is this proposed effect of identification with a racial-ethnic group in Ireland on psychological constructs like self-esteem and self-efficacy that this research project is concerned with.

Race & Ethnicity in Ireland

Due to economic growth, Ireland has seen a rise in the migration of people from other EU countries in order to live, work and study. There has also been an increase in applications for asylum, and the number of visas and work permits issued to applicants from non-EU countries (Lodge & Lynch, 2004). Despite the major increase in the number of racial-ethnic groups in Ireland since the turn of the century, research into the issues which concern these groups are not available. One of the contributing factors to this might be that the general consensus in Ireland during the early days of this increase in diversity was that racism is not a problem in Ireland (Farrell & Watt, 2001). Ireland is also predominantly known for its openness and friendliness towards everyone, but many have suggested that there is a ‘dark side’ to this view of contemporary Irish society (Loyal, 2003; Fanning, 2002). Fanning (2002) cites the institutional or structural inequalities towards foreigners like the Hungarian refugees admitted into Ireland after the UN convention in 1951 and the Jewish refugees from 1938 onwards in response to the Nuremberg laws. Unlike the America of the civil rights era, there are fewer blatant and direct acts of racial or ethnic discrimination, based on skin color or otherwise, in Ireland. Although incidents of verbal and physical assaults do occur, they are not commonplace within Irish society. There is no segregation of public facilities, schools or residential areas. The Irish history of colonialism, poverty and emigration has perhaps produced sympathy within the Irish people towards others who suffer the

similar plight of oppression, poverty or any other hardship that would force people to seek better opportunities for themselves in a foreign land (Fanning, 2002).

McVeigh and Lentin (2002) cites processes by which racialization of Irish society has been encouraged. Firstly, there has been an evocation of Irish cultural authenticity in light of the recent movements of immigrants into the Irish state. Fears have been expressed by some citizens in relation to Ireland losing its cultural identity. Secondly, there is the perception of Ireland as a passive and porous nation, which has an exploited immigration policy allowing an influx of foreigners. A third process is by blaming the foreigners or immigrants for causing racism in Ireland because of their perceived unwillingness to assimilate into the Irish norms and traditions. Forming of stereotypes by way of projection is a fourth process. Some of which are, Jews being constructed as being money-oriented, Travellers being constructed as dirty, and Black people being depicted as hyper-sexual (McVeigh & Lentin, 2002). Anti-immigration policies, stereotypical falsehoods, unfair portrayal of immigrants in the media and substandard living conditions of asylum seekers and refugees, and the occasional verbal and physical assault are contributory factors to the psychological wellbeing of ethnic group members.

The Travelling community consider themselves a small indigenous ethnic minority group who share common history, customs and traditions who have had to fight to keep its identity as such over the years (Collins, 2001). They have suffered discrimination, marginalization and racism because of cultural practices, which are largely different and portrayed negatively in the media. Television programs like Channel 4's *My Big Fat Gypsy Weddings* or documentaries like Ian Palmer's *Knuckle* do not help alleviate the negative stereotype of the Irish Traveller. This is a problem that other racial-ethnic groups face as well. Frequently certain groups are depicted as having particular characteristics which are not unique to that group or not a representation of all the members of that group. Stereotypes undermine the individual and personal identity of the person on

the receiving end of them. Issues like this have gone unnoticed or ignored in the past, however; recently there have been changes to suggest that this is no more the case. The public debate and dialogue about racism and ethnic integration has increased by highlighting the issues of concern of immigrant communities (Farrell & Watt, 2001).

Anti-racism movements in Ireland started in response to the ongoing discrimination experienced by Travelling community. From the 1980s and early 1990s, Travellers were becoming more recognized as an ethnic group and the chorus of disapproval of their experiences opened the discussion of racism and ethnicity in Ireland (Lentin, 2004). Until then, the dominant public and Irish institutions had refused them recognition as a distinct ethnic group on grounds that Travellers were as Irish as the “settled” population. Beyond the anti-racism initiatives that looked after members of the Travelling community, other organizations have been established to campaign against discrimination of other ethnic minorities. For example, Harmony is a group that was put together by parents of black children to campaign for anti-racist legislation in Ireland; others include Platform Against Racism and National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism (NCCRI) (Lentin, 2004). The detention and deportation of ‘illegal’ immigrants has now taken the attention of contemporary anti-racism groups in Ireland. Anti Racism Campaign (ARC) and Residents against Racism (RAR) are organizations that speak out against the treatment of non-European refugees and asylum seekers (Lentin, 2004).

In addition to racism in the Irish society, there are other issues that affect the psychological wellbeing of non-Irish people in the country. For example, in the educational system, Donal O’Loingsigh (2001) raises the point that primary schools in Ireland were either denominational or multi-denominational, with a majority of them being Roman Catholic schools and a minority of Protestant schools. Non-denominational schools were rare and not supported by government funding. This created a problem because the religious and cultural needs of minority ethnic-groups were not met by the educational system. He suggested a scheme of intercultural education in which

both majority and minority cultures are acknowledged and accommodated for in the educational system. Consequently, the Irish government has shown commitments towards ensuring that children will be educated to value social and cultural diversity, providing education that embraces the diverse traditions, beliefs and values of its population (Lodge & Lynch, 2004).

Racial-Ethnic Identity, Self-Esteem, Self-Efficacy and Psychological Wellbeing

Self-esteem is generally referred to as a person's feelings of worth, specifically the negative or positive thoughts about themselves (Rosenberg, 1979). Coopersmith defines self-esteem as "a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes the individual holds toward himself or herself" (as cited in Bracey et al, 2004). The Rosenberg Self-Esteem (RSE; Rosenberg 1979) measure is the most widely used instrument for self esteem. According to Erikson (1968), it is during adolescence that an individual explores several changes in their search for a self-identity. The experiences of youth in this period will shape their psychological wellbeing, and in effect their self-concept (Phinney, 1991). Hence, there is a frequent and continual use of self-esteem as a substitute for measuring psychological adjustment (Bracey et al, 2004).

Self-efficacy is the belief an individual has about his or her ability to act as required in a particular situation to experience satisfying outcomes (Carlson, Miller, Heth, Donahoe & Martin, 2010). Self-efficacy is a major determinant of how an individual copes with stress especially the appraisal stage of stress perception (Park & Folkman, 1997). Research into the relationship between coping self-efficacy and effective coping in athletes has suggested that a significant positive relationship exists between the two constructs (Nicholls, Polman, Levy & Borkoles, 2010). For the purposes of the current study, a generalized self-efficacy measure was used to assess the participant's general ability to respond and to control normal situational demands and challenges. The Generalised Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) was developed by Schwarzer and colleagues and it is a ten-item scale that scores individuals on belief in the their own ability to respond to new or difficult

situations and to deal with the related obstacles or setbacks (Schwarzer, 1992). It is also a suitable indicator of quality of life.

The literature from previous research on ethnic identity and its impact on psychological variables has predominantly been carried out among adolescent minority populations in the United States. However, in a UK study, Bangaldeshi girls who wore traditional clothes compared with girls who wore western clothes had a higher likelihood of developing mental issues in the future (Bhui et al, 2007). This suggests a relationship between the wearing of traditional clothes, as a measure of cultural and ethnic identity, and psychological variables that influence the development of mental illness. Other research supports this theory of a negative association between ethnic identity and depression (Roberts et al, 1999; Arroyo & Zigler 1995). Several studies have investigated the relationship of racial-ethnic identity with self-esteem and self-efficacy (McMahon & Watts, 2002; Kiang, Yip, Gonzales-Backen, Witkow & Fuligni, 2006; Bracey, Bamaca & Umana-Taylor, 2004). While some studies have found a significant positive correlation between racial-ethnic identity and self-esteem or self-efficacy, some others have shown only a tentative relationship or no relationship at all (Phinney, 1990). White and Burke (1987) performed a study of White and Black college students that revealed no significant relationship between self-esteem and ethnic identity; Houston (1984) found that ethnic identity, as measured by “Black consciousness”, was unrelated to measures of self-esteem (as cited in Phinney, 1990). Cross (1991) found weak and no significant correlations between ethnic identity scores and wellbeing in some studies and warns against always expecting strong correlations and the attribution of such relationships to ethnic identity (as cited in Kiang et al, 2006). The levels of assimilation of the dominant culture by the minority ethnic group and perception of persecution due to minority group membership have been found to be better predictors of psychosocial wellbeing than ethnic identity (Rosenthal & Cichello, 1986). Other identity patterns and factors can determine the acquisition of a satisfactory wellbeing. Religion, socio-economic status and experiences of external oppression are a few factors that can influence individual and collective self-esteem, self-regard, and self-concept. It has not been determined by

research whether these findings will be replicated in either direction, if at all, within a new multicultural, multiracial and multiethnic society like Ireland's.

Kiang and colleagues (2006) investigated the relationship of ethnic identity on the daily psychological well being of adolescents from Mexican and Chinese backgrounds and found positive links exist between regard for the ethnic group and levels of daily happiness and inversely for daily anxiety over a 2-week period (Kiang et al, 2006). This was in keeping with majority of contemporary research, which also found a positive correlation between ethnic identity and components of wellbeing (Umana-Taylor, 2004; Umana-Taylor, Diversi, & Fine, 2002). Researchers in this study measured the protective effect of ethnic regard and ethnic centrality on the stressful demands of everyday life. Ethnic regard is the feeling one has towards his or her ethnic group; while ethnic centrality is the extent to which an individual's ethnic group is central to their self concept (Kiang et al, 2006). The ethnic identity measure used in the study was an adapted Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity that was more suitable for Chinese and Mexican participants. The results show that ethnic regard and not ethnic centrality was more important in dealing with stress by acting as a buffer against normative stressful demands (Kiang et al, 2006). Participants with a high ethnic regard were better equipped to deal with the negative effects of stressful demands.

Due to the increase in the number of biracial families in the American society, Bracey and colleagues felt it was important to study their ethnic identity and its psychological impact. The researchers compared ethnic identity measures of biracial adolescents with monoracial White, Latino, Black and Asian adolescents and found that biracial adolescents scored higher than Whites but not other racial-ethnic groups (Bracey et al, 2004). Biracial adolescents also differed from the other groups in self-esteem, scoring higher on the Rosenberg self-esteem scale than Asians but not Black adolescents. For all racial-ethnic groups, however, there was a significant positive

relationship between ethnic identity and self-esteem, after controlling for possible compounding variables like parental education (Bracey et al, 2004). Ethnic identity was measured in this study using the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992).

Ethnic Identity and self-worth has been linked with coping strategies and aggression in urban African American youth (McMahon & Watts, 2002). Although the use effective coping methods is related to ethnic identity and self esteem, it has been hypothesized that individual who have a greater sense of ethnic identity and attachment to their ethnic group may also have a greater amount of sensitivity towards culture-specific stressors. Neville, Heppner and Wang (1997), in a research with African American college students, found that the more pro-Black sentiments an individual held, the more stress the individual experienced. Similarly, in a study using Jewish youth, the participants were more sensitive to culture-specific stressors if they had higher levels of ethnic identity (Dubow, Pargament, Boxer, & Tarakeshwar, 2000). However, both studies did find that higher levels of ethnic identity did improve the chances of dealing with these stressors by using more active and effective coping strategies. McMahon and Watts (2002) sort to find out if the same phenomenology occurred with African American youth, using Phinney's MEIM as a measure for ethnic identity. Overall, the result of their study suggests that a strong positive sense of ethnic identity was related to active coping, resulting in less support for aggression and exhibition of aggressive behavior (McMahon & Watts, 2002).

Other research designs and methods have been used to explore the relationship between racial-ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing. A number of researchers have chosen to use a longitudinal approach to study the development ethnic identity in young children and whether this could be used to predict such things as academic achievement, attitude to violence and aggressive behaviour (Smith et al, 2009; Altschul, Oyserman & Bybee, 2006).

In the study conducted by Smith and colleagues (2009), the racial-ethnic preferences of elementary school through to second grade children were assessed using Spencer's (1996 Racial

Attitudes, Beliefs, and Stereotypes Measure-II. This is a more suitable instrument that uses a pictorial paired comparison approach to assess racial preference. Due to their advancing skills, third grade children were assessed using the MEIM Belonging subscale to measure racial-ethnic identity (Smith et al, 2009). Harter and Pike's (1984) Pictorial Perceived Competence Scale for children was used to measure self-esteem, while information on the level aggressive behavior was obtained from parents and teachers using the Aggression subscale of the Child Behavior Checklist (as cited in Smith et al, 2009). The results suggest that as a whole, own group racial preference increased with age but this did not significantly correlate with the racial-ethnic identity measure obtained in third grade. Overall, a modest but significant relationship existed between the measured racial-ethnic identity and social acceptance, physical appearance, and behavioral conduct (Smith et al, 2009).

In the study conducted by Altschul and colleagues (2006), the researchers studied three components of racial-ethnic Identity; feeling connected to one's racial-ethnic group (Connectedness), being aware that others may not value the in-group (Awareness of Racism), and feeling that one's in-group is characterized by academic attainment (Embedded Achievement) in low-income African American and Latino adolescents. The results suggest that these components are relatively consistent over a two-year period and are important predictors of academic achievement. Their results were consistent with previous research, supporting findings that youth who scored high in REI Connectedness, REI Awareness of Racism, and REI Embedded Achievement did attain better grades at each stage of assessment over the two-year period (Altschul et al, 2006). However, the findings were not compared between gender and racial-ethnic groups.

Differences in racial-ethnic identity among gender, age groups and length of stay in country

Research that has explored the differences of racial-ethnic identity among males and females has generally been conclusive that both gender have similar levels of racial-ethnic identity.

Cokley (2001) found that among African American males and females, the same level of racial-ethnic identity was measured. Interestingly, females who scored higher in racial-ethnic identity scores tend to have a higher level of academic self-concept. Rates of attrition were higher among boys than girls, so males no longer associated a strong racial-ethnic identity with the pursuit of academic achievement (Cokley, 2001). Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, and Cogburn (2008) also did not find gender differences on the ethnic identity subcomponent of ethnic centrality, nor were there any influences of gender on its relationship with academic achievement. Little support for gender differences was also found in a study of urban African American and Latino high school adolescents measuring racial-ethnic affirmation and belonging (Pahl & Way, 2006).

As mentioned earlier, adolescence is the period where there is an exploration of different identities in the journey to forming a self-identity. Erikson (1968) further theorizes that ethnic identity changes over the course of one's life starting with the identity exploration in adolescence and culminating in adulthood. Young people will have less developed sense of self, whereas adults will have formed a clearer and more advanced sense of self in complexity. Research has shown that adults are more likely to report higher ethnic identity search scores and ethnic identity affirmation scores when compared with younger participants (Yip, Seaton, & Sellers, 2006). Although Yip, Gee, and Takeuchi (2008), did not find any differences across age groups in mean level of ethnic identity for US born Asian adults, they found that the role of ethnic identity in respect to coping with discrimination varies with age.

In addition to looking at the age groups of their participants, Yip and colleagues (2008) explored the differences between immigrant and U.S. born Asian adults. The researchers observed that immigrants reported a higher level of ethnic identity than their non-immigrant counterparts. Other studies have found similar results; Rumbaut (1994) reported that adolescents born outside the United States were more likely to refer to themselves using terms that included their national origin.

Whereas, adolescents born in the United States were more likely to use a hyphenated-American label when describing their own ethnic identity (Rumbaut, 1994).

Differences in racial-ethnic identity score between ethnic groups

The development of a racial-ethnic identity is an essential part in the development of a balanced self-identity, especially in individuals with whom ethnic or racial issues are salient. This usually means members of ethnic minority groups than ethnic majority groups. The experiences of an ethnic group within a society are an important determinant of the strength of ethnic identification (Phinney, 1996). Erikson's psychosocial identity theory, as mentioned earlier, proposes that adolescents explore different forms of identities on their way to forming a strong identity. Ethnic minority youth, during this period of exploration, are more aware of their race ethnicity and the role it plays in the formation of their identity. Salience of ethnic identity increases for adolescents particularly in societies where ethnic minority status implies less power, high experiences of discrimination or prejudice (Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007). Rotherham and Phinney (1987) have also theorized that contact with ethnic groups other than one's own would also increase ethnic salience (as cited in Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007). So it follows that ethnic majority members would have less chances to interact regularly with other ethnic groups, therefore ethnicity would be less salient or important for them compared with ethnic minority members. And research in this field has supported this hypothesis (Roberts et al, 1999; Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007). An exploration of the variation of ethnic identity by ethnicity and geography found that ethnic identity has varying salience for the same ethnic groups members in different geographical locations (Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007).

Rationale for Current Study

The terms race and ethnicity have emerged from the need in recent history to socially differentiate groups of people from each other for numerous reasons. This, in more often times than

not, usually end up with negative consequences. Sometimes, separation and segregation of racial or ethnic groups are institutionalized within modern societies around the world. The experiences of members due to membership of their racial-ethnic groups have the capability to affect psychological wellbeing and adjustment. Ireland has recently seen a change to its perceived homogeneity of race and ethnic groups, but little psychological research exists to explore racial-ethnic identity and its psychological impact.

On basis of a lack of research in Ireland concerning the development of ethnic identity and its relationship with psychological wellbeing in Ireland, this study explores whether there is an overall relationship between racial-ethnic identity, self-efficacy and self-esteem. Some previous research has suggested that there have been positive significant correlations between racial-ethnic identity, self-efficacy, self-esteem and other measures of quality of life (McMahon & Watts, 2002; Kiang et al, 2006; Bracey, Bamaca & Umana-Taylor, 2004). Previous studies, like White and Burke (1987) and Houston (1984), have found no significant relationships between racial-ethnic identity and self-esteem (as cited in Phinney, 1990). Examination of these contradicting findings would suggest that there are separate factors that can determine the establishment of a self identity, in terms of race and ethnic group membership and a self concept, in terms of self worth and self belief in ability. Despite the inconsistency of the literature from previous explorations, the main hypothesis of the current research maintains that there will be a significant and positive correlation between racial-ethnic identity scores, as measured using the MEIM scale (Phinney, 1992), and self-esteem scores from Rosenberg's Self-esteem Scale (Rosenberg, 1979). A similar relationship is expected between racial-ethnic identity scores and self-efficacy scores measured with the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (Schwarzer, 1992).

In addition to this rationale, almost all previous studies has taken its participants from a population, irrespective of racial-ethnic group membership, are fundamentally nationals of their resident country. It has not been determined whether the participants are immigrants or not. If so,

what is their length of residence in their host country; are they first, second or third generation immigrants; and are there significant differences between them? Late adolescence and emerging adulthood is the critical age group where racial-ethnic identity starts to become a significant aspect of a personal identity. Compared with younger adolescents, emerging adults mostly identify with very specific ethnic groups, using words like Vietnamese, Bangladeshi, or Korean as opposed to just Asian, to describe themselves (Berger, 2011). The researcher of the current study suggests that there will be significant differences in racial-ethnic identity scores between age groups and residential length of stay in Ireland. Gender differences in racial-ethnic identity scores have not been observed in any of the previous studies that sex differences has been explored (Cokley, 2001; Pahl & Way, 2006; Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, and Cogburn, 2008). It is hypothesized in the current research that no differences will be found between male and female participants when it comes to overall racial-ethnic identity.

Bracey and colleagues (2004) found that the racial-ethnic identity scores of biracial participants were significantly different from mono-racial participants. In keeping with previous research that attributes higher levels of ethnic identity to minority groups; it is hypothesized that the racial-ethnic identity scores of non-Irish participants will be statistically different from that of the Irish participants. Similarly, it is hypothesized that the racial-ethnic identity scores of participants considered White would be statistically different from that of the non-White participants.

The general design of the current research will be a questionnaire based cross-sectional correlation study. A correlation analysis of the relationship between racial ethnic identity, self-esteem and self-efficacy will be performed so as to test the first hypothesis listed below. This will be done using SPSS to calculate the Pearson's r coefficient to determine the correlation relationship between racial-ethnic identity, self-esteem and self-efficacy. To determine if there are significant

differences between age groups, gender and residential length of stay, a number of statistical analyses will be carried out.

Hypothesis Summary

- i) A significant correlation between racial-ethnic identity and self-esteem, and racial-ethnic identity and self-efficacy.
- ii) There will be a significant difference in racial-ethnic identity scores between age groups, and residential length of stay in Ireland but there will be no gender differences.
- iii) There will be a significant difference between Irish participants and non-Irish participants in Racial-Ethnic Identity score.
- iv) There will be a significant difference between racial categories White and non-White participants in Racial-Ethnic Identity score.

METHODS

Materials

The materials needed for the research study was the questionnaire packet developed by the researcher and a pen or pencil. The first page of the questionnaire contained a cover letter that introduced the participant to the study and informing them of the anonymity and voluntary nature of the study. The topic of the research study or any explanations of the measured constructs were not included in the cover letter. The questionnaire packet contained 4 sections. A copy of the questionnaire packet is included in the appendices section.

Part 1 was a demographic questionnaire designed by the researcher to determine certain classification groups for further analysis. The questions include “Age”, “Gender” and “How long have you lived in Ireland?”

Part II was the Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES; Schwarzer, 1992). This is a 10-item scale that contains questions like “I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough” and answers “Not at all true”, “Hardly true”, “Moderately true” & “Exactly true” corresponding to a scored value of 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. The score for each item are summed to give a total score, the higher the score the greater the individual’s generalized sense of self-efficacy. Developed in Germany by Matthiues Jerusalem and Ralf Schwarzer, the original has been modified from a 20-item scale to an improved 10-item scale that has been proven to be both reliable and valid in various field studies. There have been high reliability scores for the measure with alpha values ranging from 0.75 to 0.91 (Schwarzer, Mueller & Greenglass 1999).

Part III was the Rosenberg’s Self-esteem Scale (RSE; Rosenberg, 1979). Self-esteem has been repeatedly used to measure the psychological adjustment of adolescents in numerous studies (Bracey et al, 2004). The RSE is a 10-item measure that contains 5 positive questions like “On the whole, I am satisfied with myself” and 5 negative questions like “At time I think I am no good at all”. The responses to these questions were scored on a 4-point Likert scale with 4 possible answers ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree” corresponding to a value of 1, 2, 3 or 4. After recoding, the items were scored so that the higher total scores indicated higher levels of self-esteem.

The Rosenberg measure is the most widely used instrument for self esteem. The measure has been used with a widely diverse samples and moderately strong alpha values have been obtained, ranging from 0.80 to 0.88 (Umaña-Taylor & Shin, 2007; Bracey et al, 2004).

Part IV was a revised version of the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM; Phinney, 1992). This is a 15-item scale; the first 12 questions quantify an overall measure for ethnic Identity while questions 13, 14 and 15 were used for purposes of categorization in terms of ethnic groups. The suggested ethnic name groups from the original measure were adapted to suit the population diversity in Ireland. Ethnic group names like Asian American, Hispanic, Latino and American Indian were removed and the racial-ethnic group list consisted of White (Irish), White (Other), Black (African), Black (Other), Asian (Chinese), Asian (Indian), Asian (Other) and Other (Including mixed background). Participants were asked to write out a specified racial-ethnic group if not covered by the listings above. At the beginning of the questionnaire, participants were asked which ethnic group they considered themselves to be, no options were given so participants had to write this out in their own words.

The MEIM has been used in dozen of studies and revised over the years but has consistently shown good reliability scores. The alpha values are usually above 0.80 across a wide range of ethnic groups and ages (Roberts et al, 1999). The measure is composed of two factors for measuring ethnic identity, 5 questions for ethnic identity search (a developmental and cognitive component) and 7 questions for affirmation, belonging, and commitment (an affective component). Example of an ethnic identity search question is “I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs”. An example of an affirmation factor is “I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me”. Responses were scored on a 4-point Likert scale with 4 possible answers ranging from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree” corresponding to a value of 1, 2, 3 or 4. The mean of all the 12 items calculates an overall score for ethnic identity. The items were coded as such that the higher value of ethnic identity corresponded

with greater exploration and commitment towards one's ethnic group, more partaking in ethnic customs and traditions, and more affection and fondness towards that ethnic group.

Participants

The method of sampling used for this study was mostly a snowball method and convenient sampling. The questionnaire packet was distributed to a number of people who further distributed questionnaires to family members and friends. In total, 129 paper questionnaires were returned.

An online version of the questionnaire packet was also created. An email was sent to contacts, asking them to participate in this research study by clicking on an address link and following the instructions laid out. These participants were also encouraged to forward the email to known contacts that might be interested in the taking part in the study. In total, 55 participants attempted the online questionnaire and all attempts were recorded.

Overall, the sampling methods employed tried to ensure a fair mix of participants between Irish and non-Irish people while not specifically targeting any racial-ethnic groups. Due to the nature of the study, specific targeting of such groups might affect the outcome. 42.4% of the participants were Irish (n = 78), 47.3% of the participants were nationals from other countries (n = 87), while 10.3% (n = 19) did not indicate whether they were Irish or non-Irish.

The number of male participants was 93 and 88 were female participants while three participants did not indicate which gender they belonged to or identified with. The age of participants ranged from 15 to 62, with an average of 28.03 years old and standard deviation of 9.75. Participants were then divided into 4 age categories; 25 years or younger, 26 to 35 years, 36 to 45 years, and 46 years or older.

Design

The design method of this research project was a questionnaire based cross-sectional correlation research study. Firstly, a correlation analysis of the relationship between racial ethnic identity, self-esteem and self-efficacy was performed. And then, a cross sectional analysis of racial-ethnic identity across gender, length of residence in Ireland, age groups, racial and national categories. The racial-ethnic identity was the predictor variable while self-esteem scores and self-efficacy score were the criterion variables.

Procedure

Participation in the research study was voluntary. Individuals were approached with the questionnaire, which contained a cover letter. This cover letter introduced the researcher and the reason for the research study. It describes the format of the questionnaire and the length of time estimated for completion, which was less than 12 minutes. The cover letter informed the participant of their right to not complete the questionnaire and withdraw their responses at any point of the duration of the questionnaire. A number of copies were distributed in the DBS library to students who were studying on a certain evening. Copies were also left at the reception desk, with permission from the librarian, for a week. Students were free to pick up copies, fill them out and return the completed questionnaires to a designated box. On two occasions, the questionnaires were distributed in a Business classroom that comprised of a good mixture of Irish and non-Irish students.

The online version of the questionnaire was an exact replica of the paper questionnaire packet in terms of wording. This online version was facilitated by the website Kwiksurveys.com, which is a free and fully featured avenue to create surveys, polls and forms. An email was sent to a group of people with a link to the address of the research questionnaire. This directed the participants to a cover statement same as the one on the paper questionnaire packet. If accepted,

participants proceeded to answer each question. All questions were voluntary and not compulsory in order to continue.

For ethical purposes, the contact details of 3 organizations were presented at the end of the questionnaire. This directed any participants who might have issues with the topic of the research study to the relevant help service. Cairde is a community development organization that tackles the health inequalities among ethnic minority groups by improving access to health care, and participation in health planning and delivery (“Cairde: About Us”, 2012). Immigrant council of Ireland provides information, support and legal advice to immigrants and their families (“Immigrant Council: Background”, 2010). Samaritans is a 24-hour telephone support service that provides confidential emotional support for people who are experiencing feelings of distress or despair (“Samaritans: About Us”, 2011). Contact information of the researcher and the supervisor were also provided. After completing each questionnaire, the completed questionnaire was stored in a secure box to guarantee anonymity and security.

RESULTS

The total number of questionnaire attempted and returned was 184. Paper questionnaire packets attempted and returned was 129 and the online version of the questionnaire was attempted 55 times.

Descriptive analysis

i) Gender

Male participants were 93 and female participants were 88, while 3 participants did not answer the question on gender. Table 1 below shows the percentage breakdown of participants by gender.

Table 1. Percentage breakdown by gender.

	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Male	93	50.5
Female	88	47.8
Did not specify*	3	1.6
Total	184	100

ii) *Ethnic category/Ethnicity*

Participants were from a variety of ethnic backgrounds. Using question 13 on the MEIM questionnaire (see appendix) as a determinant of ethnic group or ethnicity, there were 8 options to choose from. Table 2. shows the frequencies of each ethnic category.

Table 2. Frequency distribution of ethnic categories of participants.

Ethnic category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
White (Irish)	78	42.4
White (Other)	39	21.2
Black (African)	20	10.9
Black (Other)	1	0.5
Asian (Chinese)	4	2.2
Asian (Indian)	2	1.1
Asian (Other)	15	8.2
Other, (incl. mixed)	6	3.3
Sub-total	165	89.7
Did not specify*	19	10.3
Total	184	100

As seen above, the distribution of the participants shows that the majority ethnic group is “White (Irish)” at 42.4% of the overall participants. The rest of the participants who included their ethnic group membership made up 47.3% of overall participants.

iii) Age & Length of residency in Ireland

The average age of participants was 28.03, with a standard deviation of 9.75. The lowest age was 15, while the highest value for age was 62. A number of participants did not include age in their returned questionnaire. The participants were divided into 4 age groups, and their corresponding mean and standard deviations are 25 years or younger (n= 94), 26 to 35 years (n=43), 36 to 45 years (n=24), and 46 years or older (n=11).

Of the 184 questionnaires attempted and returned, 78 participants were of Irish background, 87 participants were of non-Irish decent. Virtually all participants of Irish background have spent all their lives in Ireland. The average age of all Irish participants was 30.08 (SD = 10.98) and the length of residency in Ireland had a mean of 29.03 (SD = 10.84), while the average age of non-Irish participants was 24.31 (SD = 6.40) and the length of residency among non-Irish participants had a mean of 5.27 (SD = 5.33).

Table 3. Average age and residency length of participants.

	Irish participants	Non-Irish Participants
Mean age	30.08	24.31
Mean Length of Residency	29.03	5.27

iv) *Ethnic identity, Self-esteem & Self-efficacy*

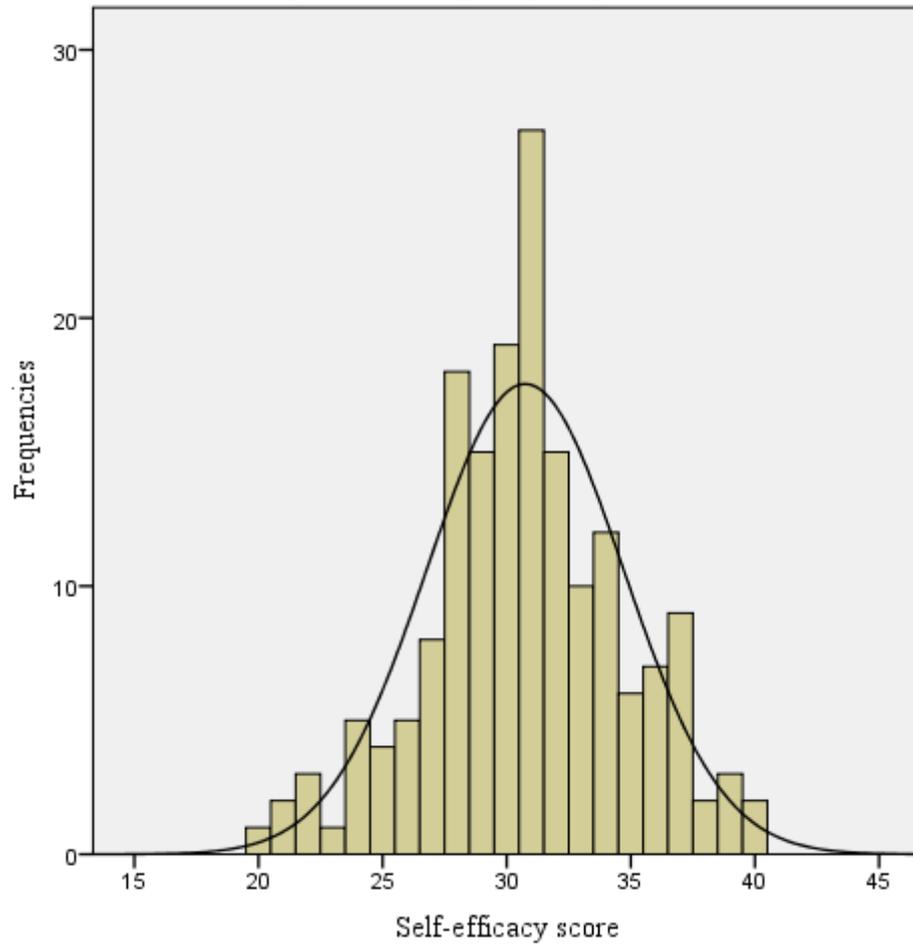
The computed values for ethnic identity, self-esteem & self-efficacy for all participants were normally distributed. The mean and standard deviations for the three main variables are summarized in the table below.

Table 4. Mean and standard deviation of measured variables.

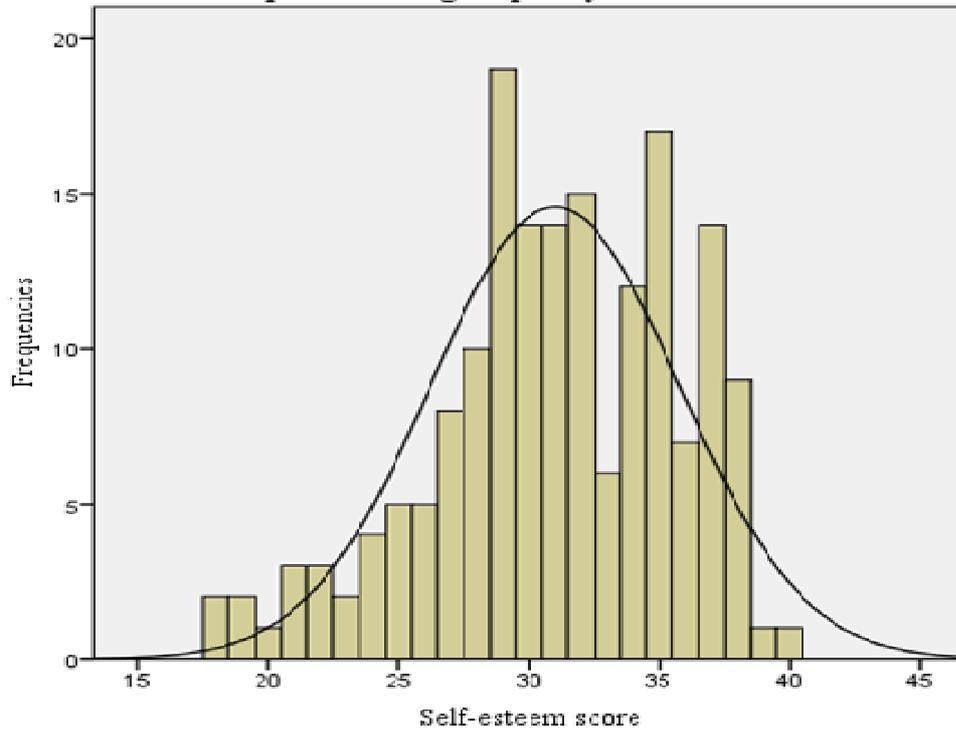
	Ethnic-Identity score	Self Esteem score	Self Efficacy score
Mean	2.72	30.99	30.74
Standard deviation	0.65	4.76	3.96
Number of scored participants (n)	160	174	174
Missing scores*	24	10	10

The following graphs show the normal distribution of the measured variables:

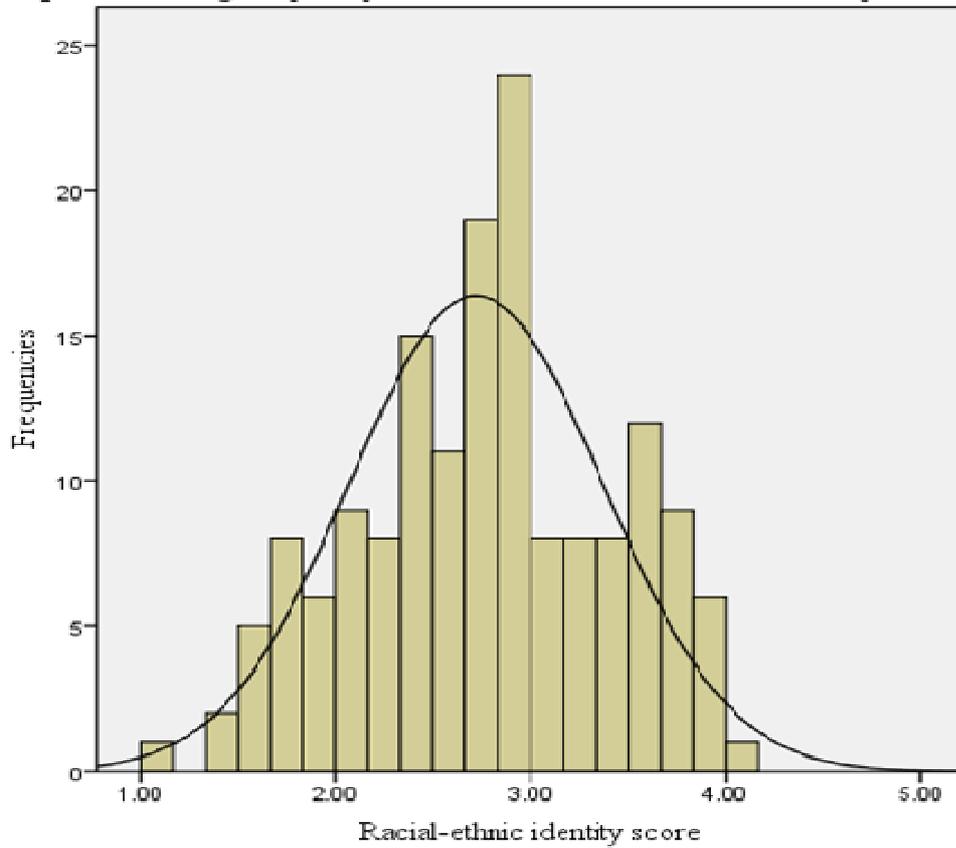
Graph 1. Showing frequency distribution of Self-efficacy



Graph 2. Showing frequency distribution of Self-esteem score



Graph 3. Showing frequency distribution of racial-ethnic identity score



Inferential analysis

To test the first hypothesis that a significant relationship will be observed between racial-ethnic identity and self-esteem, and racial-ethnic identity and self-efficacy, a scatter plot of the two relationships was produced. The regression line of the relationship between self-esteem and racial-ethnic identity, R^2 , had the value of 8.13E-4. The regression line of the relationship between self-efficacy and racial-ethnic identity, R^2 , had the value of 3.68E-5. A Pearson's correlation analysis was performed on the three measures; racial-ethnic identity score, self-esteem score and self-efficacy score. The correlation between racial-ethnic identity and self-esteem was found to be a non-significant correlation ($r = 0.029$, $df = 158$, $p = 0.720$). The correlation between racial-ethnic identity and self-efficacy was found to be a non-significant correlation ($r = 0.006$, $df = 157$, $p = 0.94$). The results do not confirm the hypothesis of the current study; as such the first hypothesis is rejected. There is no significant relationship between racial-ethnic identity and self-esteem, or racial-ethnic identity and self-efficacy.

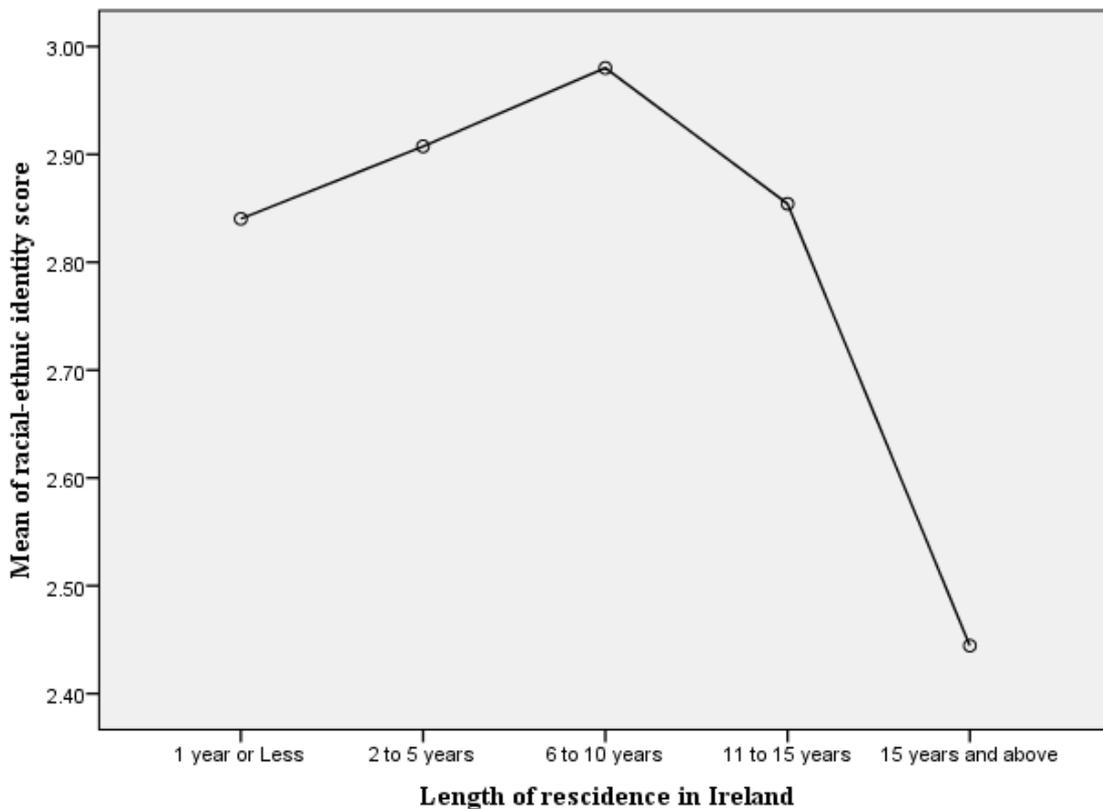
An independent sample t-test did not find a significant difference between males ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 0.69$) and females ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 0.59$) in ethnic identity score ($t = 0.86$, $df = 156$, two-tailed, $p = 0.39$). This supports previous research that has found no gender differences in racial-ethnic identity scores.

For the purpose of analysis of racial-ethnic identity score between age groups, participants were divided into 4 categories; 25 years or younger with a mean MEIM score of 2.85, ($SD = 0.64$), 26 to 35 years with a mean MEIM score of 2.55 ($SD = 0.59$), 36 to 45 years with a mean MEIM score of 2.48 ($SD = 0.49$), and 46 years or older with a mean MEIM score of 2.23 ($SD = 0.76$). A one-way ANOVA showed an overall significant difference between age groups ($F_{3, 146} = 4.63$, $p = 0.004$). A post hoc analysis ($p = 0.037$) revealed that the age group 25 years or younger ($M = 2.85$, $SD = 0.64$) had a significantly higher racial-ethnic identity mean to that of the age group

45 years and older ($M = 2.23$, $SD = 0.76$), but the other groups were not significantly different from each other. Controlling for nationality status by splitting data set into Irish and non-Irish participants, there were no significant differences found between the different age groups ($F_{3, 146} = 2.09$, $p = 0.13$).

For the purpose of establishing whether racial-ethnic identity is defined by length of stay in the country, the data set was split between Irish participants and non-Irish participants. Among the non-Irish participants, no significant difference was found between groups defined by length of stay in Ireland ($F_{3, 146} = 0.44$, $p = 0.78$). Although a graphic representation of the data shows a trend suggesting that racial-ethnic identity score decreases with an increase in the amount of time spent in the country (see graph 4). An analysis for Irish participants was not carried out because almost all Irish participants in this study have spent their entire lives in the country.

Graph 4. Showing the variation, by length of residence, of racial-ethnic identity among non-Irish participants



The mean racial-ethnic identity scores of non-Irish population ($M = 2.88$, $SD = 0.68$) was found to be significantly higher ($t = -3.50$, $df = 155.81$, two-tailed, $p = 0.001$) than that of the Irish population ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 0.57$). This demonstrates that the non-Irish participants have a higher level of racial-ethnic identity than their Irish counterparts. The mean Ethnic Identity scores of participants considered non-white ($M = 3.07$, $SD = 0.65$) was significantly higher ($t = -4.51$, $df = 157$, two-tailed, $p = 0.0001$) than that of the white participants ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 0.60$). This demonstrates that non-White participants have a higher level of racial-ethnic identity than White participants.

Table 5. Showing variation of ethnic identity score among race and ethnic groups

Variables		Mean	SD	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Ethnic Identity	Irish	2.54	0.57	-3.50	0.001
	Non-Irish	2.88	0.68		
Ethnic Identity	White	2.58	0.60	-4.51	0.0001
	Non-White	3.07	0.65		

Despite the significant differences in racial-ethnic identity scores of Irish and non-Irish participants, there was no significant correlation between racial-ethnic identity scores, self-esteem scores and self-efficacy score in either group. In the non-Irish group, the correlation ($r = 0.075$, $df = 80$, $p = 0.51$) between racial-ethnic identity score and self-efficacy was a weak positive non-significant relationship, and the correlation ($r = 0.012$, $df = 81$, $p = 0.91$) between racial-ethnic identity score and self-esteem was weak positive non-significant relationship as well. The same analysis was carried out for Irish participants but the results showed non-significant relationships the three variables.

Qualitative question on ethnic group

A question on the MEIM questionnaire asked the participants, in terms of ethnic group, how they would describe themselves. This allowed the participants to use their own words to name the ethnic group to which they belong or identify with. Responses were mostly “Irish”, “African”, “French”, or “Italian. However, there were some respondents who identified with race rather than nationality. These responses included terms like “Black”, “White”, or “Caucasian”. Some responses were a combination of both race and nationalistic identity; “Black African” or “White Irish”. A few responses included a religious identity; “Irish Catholic”. Other responses to this same question were: “Undecided”, “A Human Being”, “A Good Person”.

DISCUSSION

The rationale behind this research study was to explore whether the widespread research on racial-ethnic identity and psychological variables, like self-esteem or self-efficacy, were consistent in the modern Irish population. Although there have been a large number of research dedicated to the relationships between racial-ethnic identity scores, self-esteem, self-efficacy, academic achievement, attitude to aggressive behavior and other psychological constructs, there has not been any empirical psychology research done in Ireland. Ireland has become more diverse in terms of racial-ethnic groups, bringing with it diversity in culture, traditional practices and language. It is important to explore what impact this relatively new phenomenon of multiculturalism has on the general well being of all Irish residents, and the current study begins such exploration albeit in only a small scale. This study also adds to the previous body of research on this topic by providing a different geographical setting. Firstly, this study examines if there is an overall significant correlation between i) racial-ethnic identity and self-esteem, and ii) racial-ethnic identity and self-efficacy. Secondly, the racial-identity scores were compared between age groups of 25 years or younger, 26 to 35 years, 36 to 45 years and 46 years or older. Differences in racial-ethnic identity scores between gender and the amount of stay in Ireland were also examined. Lastly, the overall data was analyzed to see if there were significant differences between Irish participants and non-Irish participants, and in terms of skin color, White participants and non-White participants.

Racial-ethnic identity, Self-esteem and Self-efficacy

Previous research has usually found a strong positive correlation between racial-ethnic identity and self-esteem, self-regard, self-efficacy or other positive attributes (Bracey et al, 2004; Kiang et al, 2006; McMahon & Watts, 2002). However, this study did not find a significant correlation between the scores of racial-ethnic identity and self-esteem. This is consistent with some previous research that has found no significant relationships between the two constructs (Phinney,

1990). White & Burke (1987) and Houston (1984) studied Black and White college students and their results independently found no influence of ethnic identity on self-esteem (as cited in Phinney, 1990). A study of ethnic identity and psychosocial adjustment among Italian-Australian adolescents also could not conclude from its results that the Italian ethnic identity status of its participants was responsible for psychosocial adjustments. Instead, the researchers found that the parents' embeddedness into their own community, the willingness to assimilate the dominant culture, and the perception of problems due to minority group membership was more important (Rosenthal & Cichello, 1986).

Self-efficacy was also not significantly related to the measured ethnic identity. Previous research have mostly found that self-efficacy, usually in tandem with self-esteem, is related to how individuals form identities of themselves (McMahon & Watts, 2002). One of the possible reasons why the results of the current research do not support previous research on the topic might lie in the sampling method and other limitations of the current study. A majority of the participants of the current study were academic students or educated people who are in the work force. It could be speculated that these kinds of people have achieved a level of self-worth, self-esteem and self-efficacy that is independent of their identification with any ethnic group.

As mentioned earlier, Ireland has made some strides in other to incorporate the multi-ethnic groups that are present in the country. The work of anti-racism movements and government laws with anti-discriminatory policies might prove to have worked well in incorporating members of other racial-ethnic groups into the Irish society. Establishment of not-for-profit agencies like the Immigrant council of Ireland, that helps support and provide legal advice to immigrants may prove to be influential in why racial-ethnic group membership in Irish society is not linked with self-esteem nor self-efficacy.

Racial-ethnic identity and Gender

In the current research, there was no gender differences found between the ethnic-identity scores in the whole sample. In studies that have explored the gender differences in racial-ethnic identity, there has been a general consensus that racial-ethnic identity levels are similar for both boys and girls (Cokley, 2001; Pahl & Way, 2006; Chavous, Rivas-Drake, Smalls, Griffin, and Cogburn, 2008). The results in this study did maintain the observations of little support for gender differences when measuring racial-ethnic identity.

Racial-ethnic identity, age and length of stay in the country

Previous research has supported the hypothesis that older participants are more likely to report levels of racial-ethnic identity that are higher than those of younger participants (Yip et al, 2006). However, the observation from the current study is reversed. Participants were divided into age groups of 25 years or younger, 26 to 35 years, 36 to 45 years and 46 years or older. The group, 46 years or older scored a significantly lower racial-ethnic identity score than the youngest age group. This was totally unexpected as Erikson's theory on identity formation proposes that young people would have a less stable self-identity than adults because of their tendency for exploration of a wide variety of identities (Erikson, 1968). This might suggest that there is a gradual assimilation into the dominant culture as people age that makes identification with a particular culture not important in a society like Ireland's. Race and ethnicity could become less salient to individuals because of the less segregated and discriminatory environment that the participants of this study were chosen from. Cornell & Hartmann (2007) cites that *ethnicization* occurs when a group has to build a sense of solidarity, comradeship and community to protect against discrimination and oppression from a dominant group of people. If it were possible that a society is capable of producing a perfect environment for the incorporation of different racial-ethnic groups without conflict, then the need to form a group identity based on race or ethnicity would be irrelevant.

However, the results of this research should be taken theoretically because it is possible that the limitations of the current study would affect the relationship between age and ethnic identity formation. Further research would be necessary to explore whether Ireland has such a seamless multicultural society.

Data from non-Irish participants was analyzed to check for a relationship between the length of stay in Ireland and racial-ethnic identity scores. The results suggest no differences between the total lengths of time that has been spent in the country with the levels of racial-ethnic identity. Non-Irish participants were divided into groups defined by the length of time in Ireland. Groups were made up of the following; 1 year or less, 2 to 5 years, 6 to 10 years, 11 to 15 years, and above 15 years. Although the data shows a trend that suggests the higher the amount of time spent in Ireland, the lower the racial-ethnic identity score, this was not a statistically significant relationship. This is similar to the trend observed earlier when comparing racial-ethnic identity scores with age groups of participants. Older participants seemed to score lower in the MEIM questionnaire than younger participants. It would be reasonable to speculate that the same reasons are responsible for both trends. Initially, when immigrants arrive in the country, they would hold in high regard exploration and affirmation of their ethnic group tradition and customs, but as they continue to live in the country and assimilate into the Irish society, their race and ethnicity becomes less salient. However, this interpretation of results is strictly speculative, as the design limitations of the current research would prevent such a conclusive explanation. A longitudinal study would need to be carried out to follow the same set of participants in order to determine if their racial-ethnic identity scores does in fact reduce over a period of continued residence in the country.

Racial-ethnic identity and ethnicity

Finally, the current study explored the differences in racial-ethnic identity between Irish and non-Irish participants. In a previous research, Umana-Taylor and Shin (2007) examined the ethnic identity differences between ethnic groups at separate locations. The researchers found that Asian

Americans scored higher in the Ethnic Identity scale than European Americans. The majority status of the European Americans in the Midwest brings about a decreased salience of ethnicity that reduces the need for ethnic identity search or affirmation. In keeping with these findings, the results of the current study suggest that the same is true within Irish society. The mean racial-ethnic identity scores for Irish participants were significantly lower than the mean for non-Irish participants.

Using the same rationale, the participants were divided into “White” and “non-White” in terms of racial category. “White” participants scored lower than the other participants in the MEIM measure for racial-ethnic identity. The majority of the sample gathered for this study was “White” in terms racial category, about 64% of participants identified themselves as either “White (Irish)” or “White (Other)”. In the 2006 census results for Ireland, the number of Irish people residing in the country was reported as 3.6 million from a total population of 4.2 million (CSO, 2006). This is similar in the amount of disparity between Irish and non-Irish in the current study.

Discussion on qualitative question on ethnic group

A question on the MEIM questionnaire asked the participants, in terms of ethnic group, how they would describe themselves. This allowed the participants to use their own words to name the ethnic group to which they belong or identify with. The common trend was to use the same category label presented in the questionnaire to answer questions 13, 14 and 15; “My ethnicity is”, “My father’s ethnicity is” and “My mother’s ethnicity is”. That is, responses were mostly “Irish”, “African”, “French”, or “Italian, in other words, these participants identified with their nationalistic background rather than their skin color. This suggests that as an alternative to race, people are also likely to identify with their country or geographical region of origin. It is possible that the different ethos and traditions of specific nations are more easily identified with as a group because of its ready made characteristics; political stance, national flag, national anthem, military power,

economic status and so on. However, there were some respondents who identified with race rather than nationality. These responses included terms like “Black”, “White”, or “Caucasian”. Some responses were a combination of both race and nationalistic identity; “Black African” or “White Irish”. A few responses included a religious identity; “Irish Catholic”. It is seen in these cases that religious affiliation can be considered an ethnic grouping. The conflict-laden history of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland is a typical example of how the *ethnicization* of religious groups can occur. While the majority of participants answered this question appropriately, however a few of the responses received were as follows: “Undecided”, “A Human Being”, “A Good Person”. Perhaps it is the view of these participants that categorization of people by geographic locations, ethnic groups or religious affiliations is less important than recognition that we are all human beings not biologically distinct from each other. This supports the consensus among the scientific community that race or ethnic groups are not in any way genetically different subgroups of the same species, the variation that occurs between perceived racial-ethnic groups are only due to historical circumstances and cultural differences.

Conclusion, limitations and recommendations for further research

Although this research has added to other studies in the understanding of the relationship between racial-ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing, there are a number of limitations to consider. Despite these limitations, however, the current study has led the way in the enquiry of racial-ethnic identity in modern Ireland. It has been discussed that ethnic categories were formed by the need to distinguish groups of people based on perceived similar characteristics, behavior or ability. More often than not, a majority population that has access to power and more resources imposes these categorizations from outside. This usually leads to the development of a sense of solidarity, comradeship and community from within these minority ethnic groups, and similarly within the majority population. The level of affirmation, connectedness and affection that an individual feels towards their ethnic group has been shown to correlate with some measures of

psychological wellbeing or adjustment. This correlation is usually dependent of the relationship that exists between the majority population and the minority ethnic groups. Racism, discrimination, and prejudice towards minority groups can have a detrimental effect of measures such as self-esteem and self-efficacy. The change in the homogeneous population in Ireland has seen a rise of acts of racism and immigration policies are continually being restricted. However, many organizations are working to promote social inclusion, anti-racism and multiculturalism in Ireland. This study explored the relationship and did not find a significant correlation between the ethnic identities (as measured by Phinney's Multi Ethnic Identity Measure) of its participants and their psychological wellbeing (as measured by Rosenberg's Self-esteem measure and Generalized Self-efficacy). This might suggest that participants have developed an ethnic identity that is independent of their self-esteem or self-efficacy. The current study also examined the variations of ethnic identity levels between age groups, gender and the length of time spent in the country. The results show that older participants had less ethnic identity scores than their younger counterparts. However, non-significant differences were found between gender and residential length of stay in Ireland. Finally, the study found that Irish and White participants scored lower in the ethnic identity measure than non-Irish and non-White participants. Suggesting that majority racial-ethnic groups generally possess less salience for ethnic identity.

Although careful precautions had been taken into consideration for the design of this research study, there are still limitations and weaknesses to the study that should be considered when interpreting its results. Firstly, the sample of participants were not randomly selected, instead a snowball and convenient method was used. As mentioned earlier, this might mean that the participants are not representative of the entire population of Ireland. This method of sampling is open to bias and the results might be skewed towards undergraduate students at DBS and other people, which is not representative of the entire population. As a recommendation for further research, using a randomly selected sample from different geographic locations and different

socioeconomic classes might improve the quality of the current study. Secondly, the design of the research project was affected by limitations imposed on the researcher as an undergraduate student. A longitudinal approach to measuring development of racial-ethnic identity over a period of time and observing its effects on the psychological wellbeing on the same participants would give a more accurate interpretation of results. More sophisticated data analysis and more variables could have been employed to give better understanding of the dynamics between racial-ethnic identity and psychological wellbeing. Another limitation of the researcher is access to a larger sample of ethnic minority populations. Due to the lack of substantial participants from each minority ethnic group, analysis of ethnic identity score against ethnic groups in the current research was limited to blanket identifiers such as Irish vs. non-Irish participants. Further research should examine the individual minority ethnic groups against one another and against the majority populations in terms of ethnic identity score.

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APPENDIX

Questionnaire Packet

Hello,

My name is Akeem Taiwo, and I am a final year psychology student at Dublin Business School. I am required to carry out an empirical research project as part of my degree program.

The following questionnaire is divided into 4 parts, each part should not take more than 3 minutes to complete. Answer each question as honestly as possible. Although no personal information shall be required, each completed questionnaire will be kept confidential and stored safely. Access to each questionnaire is limited to the researcher and supervisor for analysis. The questionnaire is voluntary and you reserve the right not to complete the questionnaire, even after starting. If you wish to continue, please attempt all questions.

Thank you for your cooperation,

AT.

PART I

Please answer the following questions.

Age:

Gender: Male [] Female []

How long have you lived in Ireland?

PART II

Please read the sentences below and select an answer for each statement which indicates how much the statement applies to yourself.

1 = Not at all true 2 = Hardly true 3 = Moderately true 4 = Exactly true

1	I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.	
2	If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.	
3	It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.	
4	I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.	
5	Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.	
6	I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.	
7	I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.	
8	When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.	
9	If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.	
10	I can usually handle whatever comes my way.	

PART III

Instructions: Below is a list of statements dealing with your general feelings about yourself.

If you strongly agree with the statement circle SA.

If you agree circle A.

If you disagree circle D.

If you strongly disagree circle SD.

1.On the whole I am satisfied with myself	SA	A	D	SD
2.At times I think I am no good at all	SA	A	D	SD
3.I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	SA	A	D	SD
4.I am able to do things as well as most other people	SA	A	D	SD
5.I feel I do not have much to be proud of.	SA	A	D	SD
6.I certainly feel useless at times.	SA	A	D	SD
7.I feel I am person of worth, at least on equal plane with others.	SA	A	D	SD
8.I wish I could have more respect for myself.	SA	A	D	SD
9.All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am failure.	SA	A	D	SD
10.I take a positive attitude towards myself.	SA	A	D	SD

PART IV

In Ireland today, people come from many different countries and cultures, and there are many different words to describe the different backgrounds or ethnic groups that people come from. Some examples of the names of ethnic groups are Chinese, African, Indian, Irish, Russian etc...

The first 12 questions are about your ethnicity or your ethnic group and how you feel about it or react to it.

Please fill in: In terms of ethnic group, I consider myself to be _____

Use the numbers below to indicate how much you agree or disagree with each statement.

(4) Strongly agree (3) Agree (2) Disagree (1) Strongly disagree

- 1- I have spent time trying to find out more about my ethnic group, such as its history, traditions, and customs. ()
- 2- I am active in organizations or social groups that include mostly members of my own ethnic group. ()
- 3- I have a clear sense of my ethnic background and what it means for me. ()
- 4- I think a lot about how my life will be affected by my ethnic group membership. ()
- 5- I am happy that I am a member of the group I belong to. ()
- 6- I have a strong sense of belonging to my own ethnic group. ()
- 7- I understand pretty well what my ethnic group membership means to me. ()
- 8- In order to learn more about my ethnic background, I have often talked to other people about my ethnic group. ()
- 9- I have a lot of pride in my ethnic group. ()
- 10- I participate in cultural practices of my own group, such as special food, music, or customs. ()
- 11- I feel a strong attachment towards my own ethnic group. ()
- 12- I feel good about my cultural or ethnic background. ()

1: White (Irish)

2: White (Other)

Please Specify _____

3: Black (African)

4: Black (Other)

Please Specify _____

5: Asian (Chinese)

6: Asian (Indian)

7: Asian (Other) Please Specify_____

8: Other, (Including mixed background) Please Specify_____

13- My ethnicity is (use numbers above) []

14- My father's ethnicity is (use numbers above) []

15- My mother's ethnicity is (use numbers above) []