"I think they're just the same as us": Building Solidarity Across the Self/Other Divide

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The geographical movement of individuals all over the world has consequences that are both societal and psychological. Rapid contact with cultural others can be problematic at the community and individual level, however it also offers opportunities for connection and solidarity between self and other. Drawing on the results of a qualitative interview study based in Ireland with Irish locals, immigrants and asylum seekers, four representational strategies to familiarize the other and the act of perspective taking are explored. These strategies allow the individuals to find common ground occupied by both self and other so that identities can be extended, bridging the divide between self and other which offers possibilities for dialogue, connection, mutual obligation, inclusion and solidarity in the newly multicultural space.

This article will consider the development of a city in Ireland into a cultural contact zone and the implications that has for solidarity building amongst migrants and locals. Firstly, the structural and psychological processes of the zone's development will be taken into account and the identity spaces available for solidarity building will be explored.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CULTURAL CONTACT ZONE

When we consider the concept of a "contact zone", it is important to reflect on what contact can mean and do. Allport (1954) suggested that contact between group members can lessen prejudice and encourage engagement. The hypothesis holds that if a majority and minority group member meet and have a positive experience of one another, an attitude change will follow: getting to know one another can break down stereotypes. Under ideal circumstances, the group member with whom one has had the positive experience will be viewed as "representative" of their group, and this positive attitude will be generalized, replacing the initial assumptions that were based on negative group stereotypes. The key element in Allport's hypothesis was what defined "true" contact: equal-group status within the situation; common goals; intergroup cooperation; and institutional support. The absence of these inhibits attitude-transforming contact taking place: even if positive contact occurs, the group member will be seen as the "exception to the rule" rather than a representative member. However, contact and engagement between self and other, whether at a real or imagined level, brings with it the greatest possibility of the development of solidarity between self and other.

Although human beings have migrated since the dawn of time, globalisation has caused recent rates of immigration to rise exponentially, developing "cultural contact zones", spaces where cultures that were previously unconnected meet, all over the globe. Currently, there is estimated to be over 191 million migrants worldwide, representing more than a twofold increase of migrants in less than fifty years (I.O.M., 2005). As a result of this increase in the international movement of people, individuals from cultures previously held apart are coming into rapid contact with one another. These meeting places present new identity challenges to both individuals and communities (Hermans, 2003; Appadurai, 1990) and to the contact hypothesis. Migrants must transition to their

new migrant identities and the local community must cope with the changes to their context, all while coming into contact with one another.

These changes and challenges are particularly evident in Ireland. In contrast to the British situation (see Tsirogianni & Andreouli, this issue), before the 1990s Ireland was s relatively homogeneous culture. Few individuals not of Irish or British background came to Ireland and non-EU migration to the country was insignificant: most Irish nationals would never have locally encountered individuals who were ethnically different (MacÉinrí, 2008). In 1985 the net migration rate stood at -9.8%, but newfound economic prosperity changed the country dramatically. The migration rate rose to 1.6% in 1995, and by 2007, Ireland had the third highest migration rate across the 27 EU member states (C.S.O., 2007). Ireland's foreign-born population now accounts for 11.4% of its total 3.8m population. Amongst the migrant population are asylum seekers whose applications rose from 39 applications in 1991 to 12,000 in 2002 (ORAC, 2006). As a result of the sudden increase in immigration and local visibility of other cultures and ethnicities, Ireland began to experience cultural change on a grand scale.

The societal impact of migration-brought challenges can be great. If there is a lack of integration and social cohesion between local and migrant communities, there can be an important effect on society. In defense of their cultural continuity, communities may begin to establish and support extreme-right political parties (Kessler & Freeman, 2005), fuelling the "immigration card" in political debates (Geedes, 2003; Alonso & Fonseca, 2009). Cork saw the establishment of "*The Immigration Control Platform*", an organization dedicated to the lobby for strict immigration control in Ireland. Europe-wide political initiatives have been implemented, however, to aid social cohesion such as the Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration Policy in the European Union. Some countries are attempting to reshape the understanding of national and cultural identities by modifying their citizenship policies. Germany, for example, has altered its citizenship policies to one of *jus solis:* individuals born within the borders are now automatically citizens, and this may, in time, transform what it means to "be German".
The reverse can also occur, however, and public opinion can turn politics away from multiculturalism. In 2003, the Irish politicians argued that the *jus solis* citizenship was being exploited by foreign nationals and asylum seekers searching for "constitutional

shortcuts" (Brandi, 2007) and concern for Ireland being "swamped" by migrants brought about a public referendum which altered the country's constitution (Lentin, 2004). The public voted in favour (in four to one majority) of closing a constitutional "loop-hole" and set criteria for citizenship. The new *jus-sanguinis* (from-blood) criteria makes conceptions of national identity and "true" citizenship more exclusive (O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2008). A few attempts have been made by the National Consultative Committee on Racism and Interculturalism alongside the *Know Racism* campaign and the publication of "Integration: A Two-Way Process", a report to the Minister for Justice. However, a multiethnic and inclusive Ireland is not yet a reality (MacÉinrí, 2002).

THE INDIVIDUAL IMPACT OF MIGRATION: ENCOUNTERING ALTERITY

While the impact upon the geographical site can be evident in demographic statistics, social psychological questions pervade concerning the psychological impact of these societal changes. What effect does increased movement across borders and contact with alterity have on the self? How do people engage with cultural others, what representations do they project? What impact does it have on the self? What impact does it have on society? This paper demonstrates that for migrants, the distinction between self and other cannot be assumed because it can collapse, develop, change, and reverse as individuals move between identity categories (Gillespie, 2007). Culture works upon universal psychological processes, providing a foundational structure for identity development and processes (Sussman, 2000). Conceptualising the self as a historically and culturally situated system that is not separate from other persons or society acknowledges the centrality of others to the self and identity development (Hermans, 2003; Howarth, 2002) particularly at times of migration.

Migration is not simply an action of movement between here and there: it is a structural and psychological process that is increasingly complex and *two-way*. The structural process of migration brings individuals and cultures into contact, changing social landscapes. Psychologically, the migration process demands identity and meaning reconstruction to make sense of the new life world (Moghaddam, 2006, 2008; Mahalingam, 2008). Firstly, when individuals physically move across borders, they come

in contact with the local community: an action that involves the acquisition of new identities (Moghaddam, 2002) and a reconstruction of self both by the self and by the new community. The migrant must negotiate the transition from "local" and "national" in their home community to an "immigrant" and "foreigner" in the new setting. While the development of these new identities is somewhat straightforward (in that immigrants would expect to become "immigrants"), much psychological work is involved in the management and integration of these identities, which are often laden with unwanted social meanings and stigma. For example, the category of "asylum seeker", while a legal term denoting that the individual is applying for refugee status, is very socially meaningful identity that raises emotional reactions (Verkuyten & Steenhuis, 2005). These issues and the personal meanings attributed to the identities must be negotiated alongside the acquisition of the identities themselves.

Once the individuals move, they must also deal with their new environment and adapt to it. Although they are the ideal, successful integration and the development of a multicultural society are not always possible. Migrants often experience racism and prejudice in the new context: asylum seekers in particular often experience low levels of tolerance (Faughnam, 1999; Tannam, Smith, & Flood, 1998; Begley, 2001; Verkuyten & Steenhuis, 2005). Therefore, despite any intention or desire on their part, integration and identity development will be hindered if the local community is closed to them. Of course, the choice does completely belong to the host group either: the preferred strategy of the majority could be assimilation, but this will not be possible if the migrating individuals wish to maintain the links to their original culture and do not relinquish their hold on it.

The local community may have an important impact upon the migrant community, but the "two-way" process also works in reverse: the local community is often profoundly impacted by migration (O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2009, 2010). Although the impact upon the dominant society is largely ignored in research, locals too must negotiate their identities due to the movement of others. The presence of migrants can cause uncertainty at the individual and community levels, challenging their sense of unity due to the newly present cultural, religious, linguistic, and ethnic backgrounds (Suarez-Orozco, 2004). Despite their own lack of movement, locals are subject to the

same processes as migrants in that there are also demands upon them to negotiate and reevaluate their identities in the changed social setting, and struggle with the tension between what is familiar and what is strange (Boesch, 1998). The change in the cultural structures of the community can pose a threat to the cultural identity of community members (Zarate, Garcia, Garza & Hitlan, 2004) leading to fears that they will be overwhelmed and outnumbered. This can prompt them to delineate and defend boundaries between in- and out-groups and between self and other (Kinnvall, 2004; Moghaddam, 2009). Individuals can seek local niches and identity positions that are often rooted in the past such as traditional cultural identities (O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2008), traditional religious identities (Kaufman, 1991) and, problematically, fundamentalist religious movements (Arnett, 2002; Antoun, 2008; New, 2002; Sen & Wagner, 2009), in order to maintain a sense of self, of tradition, and of membership to an enduring history.

CONTACT IN THE CONTACT ZONE

The statistical changes taking place at the societal level may suggest that Ireland is a site of intercultural contact, but is there contact in the contact zone? One explanation for the public concern regarding the citizenship "loophole" may have been the constructions of the problem in the media and the fear of the unknown other. Although the number of individuals migrating to Ireland is large, contact between groups is mainly at the imagined level and engagement between groups is paradoxically rare: statistics from the *Know Racism* Report indicate that 36% of Irish people have no contact with foreign nationals (Know Racism, 2005). In situations such as these, the societal picture is often used to imagine the local (Bowen, 2008): when speaking about migration, individuals commonly use words and phrases that represent the migration situation as large-scale and dramatic, even if that is not their real experience of it. The use of this dramatic language serves to legitimize their complaint, defense and often rejection of the other (Verkuyten & de Wolf, 2002; Figgou & Condor, 2007). Migrants can also employ this legitimization strategy: for example, constructing the generalized community as racist and unwelcoming (Gillespie et al., in press; Kadianaki, 2010). These social and individual developments could also be explained by in-group favouritism and bias. It has long been observed that

people tend to positively differentiate themselves and their in-group from other people and out-groups (Ichheiser, 1949; Mead, 1934). Sustaining the high status of the in-group provides a positive identity for its members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). As individuals develop part of their self-image from the group membership, this can manifest intergroup bias (Hewstone, Rubini & Willis, 2002), the tendancy of evaluating ones own group more favourably than the out-group. Favouring one's in-group and differentiating it from the out-group can bolster and protect the in-group's identity.

Given that actual contact between groups can be uncommon, the generalized image the self holds of the other is profoundly important not only in encouraging or deterring contact. Perceptions, however, even when generalized, are not fixed, as the groups are relating to each other on an ongoing basis. As Power's (in press) model of dialogical engagement supports, self and other (and therefore groups as a whole) are in dialogical relationships (influenced by history, culture, politics and the media, etc.) with one another. Depending on the discourse and acts between the groups, there are two possible outcomes of dialogue: further distancing between self and other (which is a potential route to violence and dehumanisation), or engagement with the other through recognition and perspective taking. The first outcome of the model holds much empirical weight, reflected in the amount of studies focusing on negative attitudes, racism and stereotyping amongst nationals (e.g. Esses, Dovidio, Jackson & Armstrong, 2001; Zarate et al., 2004), but the second possible outcome of the model, recognizing and "becoming other" (Gillespie, 2006), is where the potential for transformative contact and dialogue lies (O'Sullivan-Lago, in press).

The debates and statistical changes taking place at the societal level suggest that Ireland is a site of intercultural contact, but is there contact in the contact zone? If there is contact, what are the outcomes of it? One explanation for the public concern regarding the citizenship "loophole" may have been the constructions of the problem in the media and the fear of the unknown other. Although the number of individuals migrating to Ireland is large, contact between groups is mainly at the imagined level and engagement between groups is paradoxically rare (O'Sullivan-Lago, 2009). Therefore the societal picture is used to imagine the local: when speaking about migration, individuals commonly use words and phrases that represent the migration situation as large-scale and

dramatic, even if that is not their real experience, as it serves to legitimize their complaint, defence and often rejection of the other (Verkuyten & de Wolf, 2002; Figgou & Condor, 2007). Migrants also employ this legitimization strategy: for example, constructing the generalized community as racist (Gillespie et al., in press; O'Sullivan-Lago, 2009). How, then, can solidarity be fostered between self and other in the contact zone?

THE POSSIBILITY OF SOLIDARITY

The principle of solidarity (or "friendship") dates back to Aristotle's *Politics* as "the will to live together", for friends "have all things in common". Developing from this idea, solidarity is understood as a mutual attachment between individuals and/or groups that encompasses two levels: a *factual* level of the actual common ground between the individuals, and a *normative* level of the mutual obligations of aid due to that common ground (Bayertz, 1998). Although manifestations of solidarity are not binding, the sharing of common ground has a subjective and emotional dimension for individuals, from which a feeling of obligation towards "us" emerges.

A question emerges here in the context of multicultural spaces: is the building of solidarity, the realization of common ground and therefore mutual obligation between groups, possible? Can contact that is meaningful and transformative occur in a space such as Ireland, so that the divide between self and other can be breached? The implications of solidarity creation can be individual and also political. Moghaddam (2009) has suggested that the development of omnicultural societies (rather than multicultural) can result in a society where intergroup relations are organized around human universals and distinct collective identities are celebrated at individual and political levels. The goal of the omnicultural policy is to encourage individuals to develop a superordinate *primary identity* that includes all human beings. Membership of subgroups (e.g. religious, ethnic, professional identities, etc.) should only be supported as *secondary identities* that are less important than the overarching primary identity. Moghaddam suggests that if this policy were to succeed, the citizenry would feel loyalty and obligation to human beings first and foremost before any secondary group membership.

In previous work (O'Sullivan-Lago, Abreu & Burgess, 2008), the assertion of the primary identity was demonstrated in action: immigrants and asylum seekers emphasized their identities as human beings so to demand acceptance from the local community. While the strategy is a powerful one, its basic nature and the use it was put to, suggests profound inequality and an asymmetry of power between the groups and its promotion without secondary identities is problematic. Firstly, the situations where an individual feels the need to emphasise that they are a human being must be when the individual experiences *dehumanisation*. Resorting to being accepted solely on the basis of being human reinforces unequal power relations between majority and minority groups (Mahalingam, 2007). The continued use of the identity to enforce acceptance will have implications for identity and development as it could have harmful effects on self-esteem and cultural pride that may transfer to following generations. While the idea of omniculturalism and solidarity amongst the human race is appealing, it is a type of assimilationist strategy that cannot hold when real differences in the secondary identities emerge (Valsiner, 2000). Studies have demonstrated that groups can easily engage in processes of dehumanization (Chryssochoou & Marcu, 2005; Haslam, 2006) and infrahumanisation (Castano & Giner-Sorolla, 2006) of out-groups, particularly when the group categorizations are meaningful to the individuals (Demoulin et al., 2009). When the other is distrusted (Marková & Gillespie, 2007) and a potential threat to the self, the primary human identity is not powerful enough to maintain solidarity. In a case study presented by O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu (2010), although Nora attempted to use her primary identity in an act of solidarity with asylum seekers to Ireland, the distrust of them rendered both the act and her primary identity weak in the dialogue. It would seem that while it is a useful base for acceptance, if solidarity is to be fostered in a meaningful and powerful way, it must be more complex and go beyond the primary identity.

INTRODUCTION TO THE EMPIRICAL DATA: FOCUSING ON SOLIDARITY

The current analysis will revisit migrants' and locals' accounts of their experiences of migration to Ireland that were collected in Cork in 2007 and 2008 (O'Sullivan-Lago,

2009; O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2009, 2010). The approach entails a qualitative in-depth interpretation of culturally situated and embedded interviews. The analysis will present selected results from a large data corpus of 44 diverse individuals: 12 Irish nationals, 17 immigrants and 15 asylum seekers. The immigrant participants were from mainly European countries and the asylum seekers mainly from African countries. They had been resident in Ireland for differing lengths of time, ranging from months to many years. Both the Irish locals and the immigrant participants were recruited through educational support centres, while the asylum seekers were recruited from refugee hostels.

The participants were invited to participate in interviews on the topic of migration. The interview schedule explored their personal experiences and meanings they attributed to migration and cultural identity (such as, "What does being Irish mean to you?"), their group perceptions (such as, "If an Irish person was asked to describe you, what do you think they would say?") and their anticipated futures (such as "What do you think your life in Ireland will be like in the future?").

Analytical Framework

The analysis presents discursive data from the interviews that have been analysed in terms of the representations of self and other which was conducted in stages, via an interpretive analysis of identity positions used by the participants and an exploration of the representations of self and other made by those positions. The positions utilised by the participant were coded by interpreting how the participants positioned themselves at the time of speaking. The codes included simple self-identifications, for example, "I'm an asylum seeker", and more interpretive identifications such as, "My mind is liberated but I still have in my mind my culture. I still have it, in my mind and in my heart and I'm not going to forget about it" was coded as the participant's Filipino position.

The interviews were analysed for sections referring to cultural others. How the other was represented was interpreted and cross-referenced with the position from which the participant was speaking. For the purposes of this paper, the identity positions from which the participants attempted to connect and represent the other positively, extending

their identities to include the other, were paid particular attention to. This excluded positive statements that were specific to an individual rather than the group, for example:

> Where I worked before, my manager was so good you wouldn't think she was an Irish. Like the people from the centre here – she is too good to be Irish.
> (Tahmah, Asylum Seeker).

Although Tahmah represented her manager and the centre workers as good people, she did not extend that representation to the group. In order to theorise on how the specific positioning of self and other can foster solidarity in the new multicultural space, the representations that fostered solidarity on the more general *group level* were paid attention to.

BUILDING SOLIDARITY: CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS IN THE MULTICULTURAL SPACE

The theoretical assumption inherent in the analysis was that immigration and the development of the multicultural space would demand the development of new identities and the negotiation of them. The individuals in the present study were ascribed new identities of "local", "immigrant" and "asylum seeker" in the new space and were required to negotiate the meaning of them. The presence of the other precipitated contact (on real and imagined levels) and the individuals were faced with the challenge of the multicultural space and whether or not to foster solidarity with the other.

Responding to each other, the individuals were in positions to facilitate or block connection the other (Gillespie et al., in press), their representations containing both positive and negative content (Adams & Raisborough, this issue): containing possibilities for conflict or enrichment. Focusing on the facilitation of the connection, some representations and ways of positioning the self in relation to the other provided space for the creation of solidarity between the groups: the self was able engage in processes to familiarize the unfamiliar other (Wagoner & Oldmeadow, 2008). In the current data, there were four representations that extended solidarity across the self/other divide that

built upon varying degrees of similarity and recognition, from the broadest level, that of humanity, to religion, collective history, and membership of the European Union. When the solidarity was challenged, for instance due to the actions of the other that challenged the similarity between self and other, some participants engaged in acts of perspective taking.

Building Solidarity: Humanity

The broadest representation was that of the primary identity of humanity. Emphasising this identity allowed the Irish to make the unfamiliar other familiar to the self in a very basic way, enabling the creation of common ground between people of all cultures and ethnicities, due to their shared humanity. From this position, the immigrants and asylum seekers were able to stress their humanity and negate differences:

> They're only different because they grew up in a different country and they grew up with different em, how would I say, different ways and different food, but everybody's the same really when it comes down to it in the end, really. When you get to know people you get to see how close they are to you so then you can say, 'God, there's not much difference between him and me in anything really'… in actual fact I think as time goes on you see more similarities than you do of the differences and it's the similarities you work with. (Anthony, Local)

> We wouldn't let anyone starve to death. Regardless of the circumstances: because they're human. (Conor, Local).

Both Anthony and Conor, two Irish locals, stress in these examples the basic similarities amongst human beings. Anthony stresses the irrelevancy of cultural differences "when it comes down to it in the end" and Conor evokes a basic obligation to his fellow human beings. Both view the migrant individuals they have known as human beings like themselves and are able to generalize the representation to their communities, extending a shared identity space to the other.

The immigrants and asylum seekers however, did not feel this identity space, basic as it is, was recognized by the locals and therefore they demand it:

> They would say, 'Oh are you Italian?' and I was running away, I was afraid… I try to not ever have an identity that people can say 'He's Italian'; I think they should see the person: he can be from wherever he is. (Giovanni, Immigrant).

> I would like to tell them [Irish people] to have an open mind and know that everything that happens has a reason and they should treat us as normal human beings... We are all human beings and there are times when it is good to have an open mind and see the other side of the story and then they will know how to act. (Alike, Asylum Seeker)

Both Giovanni and Alike make powerful arguments. Giovanni puts forward the claim that nationality is irrelevant, one should "see the person" instead of stereotyping them, and Alike asserts that she and her fellow asylum seekers are human beings and the Irish should be more open to them because of their humanity.

Building Solidarity: Collective History

Through representations of the collective history of self and other, it was possible to build solidarity between the migrants and the Irish. Ireland has a long history of emigration, which was appealed to on both sides:

> Back to the fifties and the twenties when everyone was leaving, I mean, back to the Famine! Jesus, America is practically Irish... How Irish people can turn around and say, 'Oh refugees coming in here' – we did the exact same thing!... One Irish person would go into a room and you look again and there's twenty of them there. (Eoin, local)

An Irish person should know better than me what is asylum because there are millions of Irish asylum that emigrated for asylum in America, so they should know better than us. How and what does it mean 'asylum', you know, better than us because they experienced it before we did, you know. My country start to experience this seven, eight years ago, and Irish, long time ago they experienced this, so they should know better than us. (Sava, Asylum Seeker)

Both Eoin and Sava represent the Irish as having a collective history of immigration to America. Interestingly, both represent the migration as asylum seeking. While Sava suggests that great number of Irish migrants in America, Eoin adds that America is "practically Irish" as the migration has been over centuries, dating back to the Great Irish Famine. The implication of the representation from both is that any rejection of immigrants and asylum seekers would be hypocrisy: the migrant identity is extended to include self and other. The immigrants and asylum seekers are doing the "exact same thing" that the Irish did, and that common history can connect them and demand acceptance.

Building Solidarity: Europe

The evocation of the European identity and representing migrants as European provided a superordinate identity where solidarity amongst Europeans could be fostered and encouraged:

Irish people have really taken the European Union thing on board in a big way really and in general we welcome all Europeans, you know? Anybody that's European, I think anyway, would be very, very welcome here… They grew up a little different with their different things, they might have a different religion, you know. Just different music tastes a little, but we all blend in bit by bit. We move more towards a European style of things. (Anthony, local)

> I don't feel like immigrant, I feel like European citizen, I am in Europe so I feel the
> same if I was living in Spain or in Poland or France or Slovakia. Just people have to
> know it, that we are all European. I don't feel like a foreigner here. (Paul,
> Immigrant)

For the locals, using this positioning links them to a wider, but still specific, community which allows them to build solidarity with immigrants. Anthony details that there may be differences in religion or music, yet the European countries are blending into one another "bit by bit" and therefore all Europeans are welcome in Ireland. For the immigrants, the position could be used in the same way: to stress a common connection with the host group on which they could build their integration and solidarity. Paul conceives Europe as one cultural space so that there is no difference living in Ireland to living in Spain or Poland etc. and therefore he is neither an immigrant nor a foreigner, but a European living in Europe.

Building Solidarity: Religion

The belief in God also provided a platform from which to build common ground and solidarity. Ireland is predominantly Catholic, but the Muslim asylum seekers used the strategy nonetheless:

> There is no difference, because you here are Christian and there is no difference,
> there is no difference between Islam and Christian: just small details, just small
> things. It's not big lies and this. We have the same morals and the stain [sin] is not
> good in my culture like yours, so to be bad to people is not good in my culture or
> here: so we are similar. No difference between us. (Basim, Asylum Seeker)

> The Irish go to church; we are going to the mosque: only this difference and
> nothing else. We also believe God like the Irish people believe God. It's only a
> small difference that they go to church and we go to the mosque. (Hassan, Asylum
> Seeker)

I feel better here because me too, I am a Christian. Every Sunday I go to church together with the people, we enjoy, after the church we take some coffee together and talk about something. (Faisal, Asylum Seeker).

Similar to the position stressing humanity, representing self and other as believers in God, rather than their forms of worship, provided a base for commonality as "We have the same morals", "We also believe in God". The differences between the religious are downplayed as "small" details and differences, but the underlying philosophy of belief in God and treating others well is stressed, emphasising the mutual obligations between the two groups. However, only asylum seekers used the strategy.

When Solidarity Is Challenged: Perspective Taking

Although solidarity was promoted through the various representations, the gap between self and other was very much present and experienced by the participants, which hindered its actualization. Discord was evident through the experience of racism and rejection, particularly in the case of asylum seekers. However, the desire for solidarity and the extension of the self towards the other was present even at times of rejection. In the following excerpt, Sade, despite experiencing rejection from the Irish, takes their perspective to suggest a way forward:

When you listen to [other asylum seekers] they say 'oh they [the Irish] are racist: they don't like them, especially the coloured ones', but I don't think that's true. Don't think that's true. You know, it's not easy to: I see reasons for them, for the Irish to not be friendly... It's just like, okay let me use this analogy, somebody like you: you have a farm. You have a farm. You have a cow in the farm. You've got the cow to the stage where the cow has milk and you have to start taking milk from the cow. Suddenly somebody from somewhere comes in and starts milking: the jealousy is going to come in, you understand? The bitterness is going to come in. I think that is how Irish people see asylum seekers: coming to feed from what they

have worked for. But that's not it: you could allow the person milk from the cow. Instead of even allowing the person to milk from the cow, why not give the person another cow? Let the person raise the cow up and have its, our, own milk. You understand? Rather than feeling angry about somebody coming to take from you. (Sade, Asylum Seeker)

Sade presents a metaperspective: what she thinks the Irish think of her and her fellow asylum seekers. In her farm analogy she takes the perspective of the other, describing how the asylum seekers are taking from the Irish, and suggests that the locals' bitterness towards them is understandable and justified. Her solution to this is is solidarity. The Irish can choose to share their wealth, to help the asylum seekers fend for themselves, rather than being bitter about it. In that way, asylum seekers can become self sufficient.

In Sade's account, the Irish are simply bitter towards asylum seekers, but others, like Salim are the victims of racism. Despite his experience, he maintains an understanding of the situation, taking their perspective in order to remain open to solidarity with the locals:

Some people don't like the, how do you say, foreigners... some don't like the coloured people, so it's a little difficult for them to accept that. And some of them are good, you know, there are some people that are good, but most of them I think they are a bit, when you are walking in the street you hear that, 'hey n*****, go home', and we hear that kind of stuff, but it's ok, it's ok... As I told you, it's a matter of time. And we heard the problems are racial because there are some African people here and they did a lot of bad stuff and they start accusing them: they think we are all the same, all together maybe. We look like them so we will be like them. Anyone who had something like that: that reaction will be normal. (Salim, Asylum Seeker)

Although he experienced racist confrontations with the Irish, Salim takes their perspective explaining that their dislike of African people is due to the Africans' actions: the "bad stuff" they have done. Salim acknowledges this perspective and states that the reaction is normal, but that acceptance and solidarity is still possible, in fact, only a matter of time as there are some Irish people that are "good" that will enable the connections between the groups.

CONCLUSION

Globalisation and rapid immigration have clearly created a newly multicultural space in Ireland that poses challenges for both migrants and locals. As identities are evaluated in relation to others (Hermans, 2003) and relations in communities are dialogical, the aim of this paper was to explore the ways in which solidarity might be formed between the groups now resident in the multicultural space and examine what identity spaces are available that will bridge the gap between self and other.

Allport's (1954) theory suggests that solidarity can be formed if majority and minority groups have contact, and that the experience of it is positive. If there is equal group status in the situation, there are common goals and co-operation amongst the groups and institutional support of it; the positive experience may be generalized to the group level. However, in a situation of rapid immigration and the development of a multicultural space, the experience of intensified uncertainty can lead to ontological insecurity motivating nationals to set down and defend group boundaries (Kinnvall, 2004). Migrants then must, in addition to coping with migration, negotiate these boundaries. Contact at all must be take place before the conditions of Allport's positive experience contact can be a reality. The contact apparent in the data was not that of actual contact, but contact on the level of the imagination, of representations and it is that generalized image that the self holds of the other that is profoundly important in encouraging or deterring contact. Although barriers to the other were constructed elsewhere in the data (see O'Sullivan-Lago & Abreu, 2010), some spaces were available to facilitate the other.

An extended body of literature exists to substantiate that individuals tend to differentiate themselves from others and evaluate their own group more positively (e.g. Ichheiser, 1949; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and it was clear that this was so in the data presented here: rather than evaluate the other positively, the self found ways to extend the self identity to the other, to familiarize the other and thereby circumvent the threat of the unfamiliar other to the in-group. As self and other are in a dialogical relationship that is influenced by such things as history, culture, and politics (Power, in press), it was these things that allowed connections with the other to be made.

Although essential characteristics in some circumstances can be employed to entrench differences between groups (see Raudssepp & Wagner, in press), in this instance, the groups enlisted the sharing of essential humanity to unite self and other, echoing the call made by Moghaddam (2009) to give priority to the primary identity humanity over secondary identities. From this position, both self and other were constructed as members of the same one group to which each had an obligation. The use of this identity by the locals extended the identity space so that "secondary" identities such as culture, ethnicity, religion etc., could be disregarded. The immigrants and asylum seekers were also able to engage the other in this space, representing themselves as inherently equal to the more powerful majority group by disregarding legal status and nationality, the minority groups stressed the obligation due to them by the locals. The human identity is not one that can be challenged unless the relationship becomes monological and self or other is dehumanized (Rosa, 2007).

Influenced by history, the individuals were also able to call upon the collective history of Irish migration to America. Recalling the tradition of Irish emigration and representing the Irish as asylum seekers in their own right constructed any rejection by the Irish as hypocrisy. This representation built on experiences not strictly belonging to the self (in the case of the Irish) but the collective, allowed an imagining of the experience of the other (Zittoun, 2006). The commonalities between the groups' histories and present situations enabled a sense of solidarity and mutual obligation to be formed due a shared experience. The immigrant identity of the collective was extended between self and other, sharing a space that familiarized the other to the self.

Representations of a European identity, although still broad, were the most specific used. Similar to the representations of humanity, "being European" negated differences between that group and facilitated solidarity amongst many in the contact zone. Unlike representations of humanity, however, this representation is specific to nationality: while the European others become familiarized to the self, and that part of the self's identity is extended to them, no obligation or solidarity is built with asylum seekers, who remain other.

The final space from which solidarity could be fostered was through religion. While it is noted in psychological literature (e.g. Pargament, 2001; Spilka, Hood, Hunsberger, & Gorsuch, 2003) that human beings often respond to crises by coping through religion, the use of religion in this case was different and by only one group. The asylum seekers alone used this representation to extend their identity between self and other and represent the Irish as similar, thereby building a platform for solidarity. Rather than focusing on a particular religious belief, it was the belief in God that provided the similarity and just like the representations of humanity; the differences between the religions were ignored as secondary, while the basic belief and morals were stressed as common ground between self and other.

While there was evidence of the attempts to build solidarity amongst the groups and bridge the divide between self and other, experiences of racism and rejection were common in the data. When faced these experiences however, the individuals could take the perspective of the other in order to represent the cases of racism as understandable: leaving the self open to contact with the other. Sade was able to take the perspective of the Irish to find understanding of their reluctance towards asylum seekers and suggest a path to cooperation and solidarity. Salim too, despite personally experiencing racism from the Irish, was able to engage with the locals' perceptions and discount their racism as defence due to poor behaviour from other Africans. Both individuals represented the actions and attitudes of the Irish as understandable, extending a representation of normality, thereby remaining open to contact with the other.

Although the individuals presented here were attempting to bridge the gap between self and other by finding ways of representing self and other that stressed common ground and mutual obligations, how satisfactory are the attempts to connect on the

imagined and group level? The representations of self and other as human, immigrants, Europeans and believers in God are very broad identities that may not hold their meaning when real differences (Valsiner, 2000) in culture, legal status and ethnicity to name a few, bring the mutual obligations into question. Would these positions be respected in the face of diversity and dissent? Would solidarity be sustained if the groups' interests are no longer "*inter-ests*" (Sammut, this issue)?

It may also be possible to argue that the spaces offered to the other are limited and general because the other is as yet mostly unknown. Ireland's development into a multicultural space is only beginning: contact is mainly at the group level and solidarity is therefore being built between with generalized others. If real contact, in Allport's terms, becomes actualized, there will be a distinct possibility of positive contact being generalized to the group. It has been demonstrated here that there was engagement at the imagined level, and it is through these shared identities that social change can emerge (Kessi, this issue). Even when identities were perceived as distinct the individuals experienced racism, they were still able to take the perspective of the other. Both of these actions indicate a strong intention amongst these individuals to make the unfamiliar other familiar and build solidarity to bring social change. Should real, meaningful contact occur and the spaces demonstrated here built upon, avenues towards more complex connections could open up, bringing with them the potential for change at the individual and societal level: avenues towards a more inclusive society.

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