

Out-of-School Social Activities among Immigrant-Origin Children Living in Ireland

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Abstract: In recent years, the children of immigrants have become an integral part of the Irish national tapestry. This article sheds light on their social engagement outside the formal education system by exploring sports and cultural participation among the children of immigrants. Participating in sport, fitness and cultural pursuits provides children and young people with opportunities for enjoyment and social interaction and may ultimately strengthen community cohesion. In addition, cultural participation outside school has been found to enhance engagement and academic progress within school. The findings show that, at nine years of age, immigrant-origin children are less likely to take part in organised sports or structured cultural activities (such as music or dance classes) than their Irish peers. The participation gap is greater for those from non-English-speaking backgrounds and those whose families are from Eastern Europe, Africa or Asia. The gap between immigrant and Irish children's leisure participation reduces over time, although involvement at nine has a notable influence on participation at 13 and involvement among Asian young people remains lower than among other groups. Lower self-reported popularity levels among immigrant-origin 13-year-olds are largely explained by lower levels of involvement in organised sports. The findings therefore have implications for ensuring the inclusion of immigrant children in out-of-school activities and for their integration more generally.

I INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, immigration has featured strongly on public policy agendas across Europe and beyond, resulting in a considerable body of empirical research in the field, especially in 'old' immigrant-receiving countries. In these countries,

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the ease with which the new arrivals settle in is found to be associated with level of education, religion, immigration status, and opportunities to engage in social and leisure activities (Kim, 2012). One of the main barriers to integration¹ is proficiency in the language of the receiving country, which influences inter-ethnic relations and social integration (Espenshade and Calhoun, 1993; Pfeffer and Parra, 2009). Increased immigration into traditionally “emigration” countries, such as Ireland, has also fuelled recent research, particularly on the topic of labour market integration (Kingston *et al.*, 2015; McGinnity and Lunn, 2011; Barrett and Duffy, 2008). Growth in immigrant² numbers, including children of immigrant origin, has resulted in an increased policy focus in Ireland on the economic and social integration of the new arrivals, especially after the expansion of the European Union in 2004 (see Office for the Minister of Integration, 2008; Glynn, 2014).

As immigration to Ireland has increased, the children of immigrants have become an important part of the national social fabric, and increasingly a focus of national policy. In 2011 immigrant children accounted for 8 per cent of the total child population in Ireland (Department of Children and Youth Affairs, 2012:29). Growing numbers of immigrant children are reflected in the increase in empirical research on these children, particularly in the school context (Smyth *et al.*, 2009; Darmody *et al.*, 2011). Many of these studies have highlighted the importance of the social sphere in the process of integration of children of immigrant origin (Devine and Kelly, 2006; Ni Laoire *et al.*, 2009; Darmody *et al.*, 2012; Curry *et al.*, 2011). Taken together, existing studies identify a number of factors that impact on the social integration of children and young people including legal status, English language proficiency, and the quality of social interaction with peers and teachers. Proficiency in the language of the receiving country is often considered the main influence on social integration, and is closely linked with the country of origin.

Leisure participation, including structured out-of-school sport and cultural pursuits, forms part of children’s social world. Contact with peers outside the formal education system is particularly important for the newly arrived children of immigrants, as it gives an opportunity for both sides – newcomers and native-born children – to learn about each other (Darmody and Smyth, 2015). Furthermore, participation in sport has been found to raise self-esteem and confidence among immigrant children as well as enhancing their popularity with peers (Erkut and Tracy, 2002).

¹ The authors acknowledge that the term “integration” is a contested one. However, it is useful in the current context in talking about social integration of immigrant-origin young people.

² The authors acknowledge the challenges involved in grouping immigrants in a meaningful way and that differences in experiences can also vary within groups. For the purposes of this paper, the authors use the term “immigrant” to refer to adults who are born outside Ireland. Their children are referred in this paper as “children of immigrants” or “immigrant children”.

In this paper, we focus on the structured leisure participation of immigrant children and youth in Ireland through the lens of social integration. We identify factors that influence the social world of these young people, and explore the extent to which participation patterns change over time – when children move from primary to second-level education. In so doing, we utilise two waves of survey data from the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) Study. The GUI study provides new information on children and young people generally underrepresented in existing national studies; those from immigrant backgrounds. Ireland represents an interesting case study for two reasons. Firstly, the immigrant group is a highly educated one (see Darmody *et al.*, 2016), so immigrants in Ireland may not lack the educational and cultural capital which can act as a barrier to cultural participation. Secondly, it is a heterogeneous group in terms of national and linguistic origin which is likely to reduce the likelihood of the emergence of “ethnic enclaves” which reduce social integration. The article seeks to address the following questions:

- Do the children of immigrants have lower levels of engagement in sport and cultural activities? How far is any such difference explained by family background?
- How does the gap differ across different immigrant-origin groups, language proficiency and over time?
- What are the consequences of participation in sports and cultural activities for children’s feelings of popularity with their peers?

The paper is organised as follows. In the next section, we present the theoretical framework (social integration) and related empirical research. Section III explores previous research on the leisure participation of newly arrived migrants. In Section IV we describe our data, methods and empirical analysis. We present our results in Section V and Section VI concludes the paper.

II SOCIAL INTEGRATION OF CHILDREN AND YOUTH OF IMMIGRANT ORIGIN: THE ROLE OF LANGUAGE AND FRIENDSHIPS

The term “social integration” is generally understood as a dynamic process where different groups of people through dialogue form a united society (Rubin *et al.*, 2012). In the educational context, Langenkamp (2009) and Arnot *et al.* (2014) view it as involving the formation of academic and social relationships within the school and participation in all school activities, while Van Houtte and Stevens (2009) also highlight the importance of social integration outside school. Arnot *et al.* (2014)

argue that levels of participation are likely to affect the child's sense of belonging in school, their ability to make friends as well as their ability to work "within the culture, ethos and discipline of the school" (p. 9).

The social integration of immigrants is a multi-dimensional concept influenced by a number of factors, with proficiency in the language of the host country seen as an essential asset by a number of authors. Language proficiency is a socio-cultural resource that facilitates the acquisition and transmission of information through social interaction and is of particular importance at the time of migration (Schaeffer and Bukenya, 2010). Many studies have looked at the experiences of immigrant and ethnic minority children for whom the language of instruction in school is different from their mother tongue (Eurydice, 2009). Limited language proficiency has been found to prevent immigrant-origin children from "joining in" activities at school (Arnot *et al.*, 2014) and to negatively influence their academic attainment (Stanat and Christensen, 2006). However, the language gap between immigrant-origin and native children generally reduces over time in the host country (Cassen and Kingdon, 2007). While most immigrant-origin children utilise the language of instruction during the school day, the situation may be different outside school hours, with many using their native languages in the family context (Little, 2010). This may impact on the structure and nature of friendship groups among immigrant children and youth.

Friendships have an important role to play in social integration. In the UK, Arnot *et al.* (2014) found that children did not perceive the school or teachers as playing an active part in their socialisation in school. Rather, they viewed their peers, especially individual friends, as much more important in settling in and developing a feeling of belonging to the school. It is important to note that peer relations are not always positive in their impact on children's sense of self. However, supportive friendships can enhance student's self-esteem and encourage social interaction with other students (Dunn, 2004). Establishing and sustaining friendships over time is important for individual wellbeing and for emotional and social support over the life trajectory. Children with friends, even one friend, are found to have better social skills and experience fewer adjustment problems (*ibid.*).

In addition to language proficiency and friendship networks, social integration is influenced by a range of other factors. According to Liu (2013), the process is also influenced by the personality of immigrant-origin children, their parents' integration level, cultural background, the age of the child, the time the child spent in the school, their educational background and their health. The author argues that these factors do not act independently but can affect each other. Overall, children employ a variety of ways to cope with the migration experience, although activating their social and cultural capitals is often hampered by non- or misrecognition of their cultural currency (see Devine, 2009; 2011). Existing research has shown that social integration is also often conceptualised by teachers and principals as putting in place support structures to ease the adjustment of newly arrived migrant children

and youth in the school context. However, positive social integration in the school “might not carry through” outside (Arnot *et al.*, 2014).

III THE SOCIAL WORLD OF IMMIGRANT CHILDREN – THE IMPORTANCE OF LEISURE ACTIVITIES

A growing body of international literature on migration focuses on social interaction among and between individuals. By participating in leisure activities (sport and cultural pursuits), children may develop certain competencies, attain mental and physical health, learn about their strengths and abilities, and form friendships and relationships (King *et al.*, 2003). It is through social participation that children and young people form ties with their communities and develop social skills (Law *et al.*, 2006).

An increasing number of studies have explored immigrant social participation, mostly focussing on adults. These studies have employed a number of theoretical approaches: the *opportunity approach* (see Lindsay and Ogle, 1972), whereby the activities of immigrants are hampered by their opportunities to participate, often driven by their poorer socio-economic circumstances; the *ethnicity approach* (Washbourne, 1978), indicating that participation is influenced by cultural preferences, norms and values, whereby adherence to certain cultural practices and religious beliefs may significantly affect people’s leisure participation; and *acculturation/assimilation theory*, referring to the acquisition of the dominant group’s social norms. Immigrants may also lack the advantages associated with early socialisation in the host country (Stodolska, 1998). Social interaction has the potential to act as a protective factor: providing immigrants with a sense of belonging, emotional support, and a source of information. While this is important for all, the protective functions provided by social interaction are of particular importance for newly arrived immigrant families and their children. The fluidity of their situation means that during their movement between countries, immigrant families may need to negotiate their position in the receiving countries several times and many are likely to experience a sense of dislocation (Darmody *et al.*, 2011).

Highlighting the importance of social and cultural engagement for immigrant children, Sime and Fox (2014) note that

engagement with cultural and leisure activities can create opportunities for newly arrived children to ‘bridge’ networks and participate in interactive processes of capital generation, highlighting the significance of making services accessible (p. 7).

Furthermore, there is now a growing body of research on the role of migrant children in facilitating family integration (McGovern and Devine, 2016). The

authors note that children are often a link between home, school and communities contributing to “belonging-making” (p. 50) of migrant families. While day-to-day participation in formal and informal activities is important to all children, it is especially so in case of children and youth of immigrant background. There is now a growing recognition of the importance of leisure activities for the development of skills and competences, social relationships, as well as long-term wellbeing and self-confidence (Coalter, 2005; Janssen and Le Blanc, 2010; Biddle and Asare, 2011). Providing opportunities for young children from different backgrounds to interact is important as international research shows that negative attitudes towards children of other races or minority cultures are already apparent at pre-school stage but become more pronounced with age (Tormey and Gleeson, 2012).

In line with studies on adult immigrants, existing studies of immigrant-origin children and youth have also identified low levels of participation in leisure activities. An Australian study, *Children’s Participation in Cultural and Leisure Activities* (Australian Government, 2009), found a noticeable difference in the participation rate of children born in other countries compared with those born in Australia or in a mainly English-speaking country. Several studies have highlighted barriers to leisure participation, in the form of the child’s personality and cultural background. When exploring the experiences of Chinese children in Irish primary schools, Liu (2013) found that children from some Asian countries have difficulty forming deep friendships with their Irish peers. According to their parents, this pattern is explained by the children’s introvert personalities. The second reason was because the language and culture their children grew up in was different from that of Irish children, thus making social integration difficult. Parents’ proficiency in the host language can also be a factor; poor proficiency levels may hinder their access to information about local culture and opportunities, and can have an impact on the activities of their children (Liu, 2013; Doherty and Taylor, 2007). Furthermore, Liu (2013) noted that some parents tended to prioritise academic activities over sport and cultural participation.

Affordability of leisure participation as a barrier is also evident in a study by Byrne *et al.* (2006), who explored the free-time and leisure needs of Irish young people aged 12-18 years living in areas designated as socially and economically disadvantaged. The findings of this study also indicate that suburban and rural youth have less access to mainstream youth clubs than their urban counterparts and that distinct gender differences exist in sport participation.

It is worth noting that participation patterns in social and cultural activities may change over time as children enter pre-adolescence and adolescence. This may often coincide with a time when young people move from one level of schooling to another and changes may relate to a number of individual background as well as institutional variables. International studies have noted that school-based efforts to support immigrant children’s social participation, acquisition of the language of instruction, and overall academic progress are critical to ensuring their successful

integration. However, students spend only part of their time in schools, and school-based activities are often complemented by additional structured and unstructured leisure activities outside school hours (Pittman *et al.*, 2004; Roffman *et al.*, 2003; Fahey *et al.*, 2005).

IV METHODOLOGY

4.1 Data Sources

To address the research questions, the paper draws on two waves of the child cohort of the *Growing Up in Ireland* study. A nationally representative sample of 1,105 schools was selected, approximately one-third of all primary schools in Ireland at that time. Eighty-two per cent of these schools were recruited into the survey and a sample of children and families generated from within these schools. Data collection for Wave 1 of the Child Cohort took place from September 2007 to June 2008. The response rate at family level was 57 per cent, yielding information on 8,568 children as well as their primary and secondary caregivers, their school principals, their teachers and childminders. Four years later, these children were followed up at 13 years of age, with a response rate of 88 per cent (for those taking part in the initial survey). Data for both waves were reweighted to be representative of the population of young people in Ireland.

4.2 Analytic Strategy

For the purposes of this paper, immigrant families are defined as those where both parents were born outside of Ireland or, in the case of lone parent families, where that parent was born outside Ireland. The analyses not only look at the difference between immigrant-origin and Irish children, but at differences among the migrant group in terms of national origin and language background. The outcomes of interest are based on the primary caregiver's (usually the mother's) report of whether the nine-year-old child takes part in a sports/fitness club and in cultural activities (dance, ballet, music, arts, drama, etc.)³ "outside school hours". At 13 years of age, young people themselves were asked about whether they played sports with a coach/instructor or as part of an organised team and whether they took part in dance, drama or music lessons. As the sample was selected on the basis of the school attended, multilevel modelling techniques were used to take into account of the clustering of individuals within groups (Goldstein, 2011), thus providing more precise estimates of the effects of school (and teacher) characteristics. The models presented in this paper were carried out using the MLwiN computer package

³ The authors acknowledge that what is counted as a "cultural activity" may be culture-specific; what are considered cultural activities for the majority may differ from what are considered cultural activities for immigrant groups.

developed at the Institute of Education, University of London (see Rasbash *et al.*, 2012).

The analyses present a series of nested models for both outcomes. The first model looks at the raw differences between migrant and Irish groups, taking account of gender only. Additional analyses explored the difference by national group (distinguishing between UK, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Africa and Asia) and by language background (English-speaking and non-English speaking, with a further group with “poor English proficiency” based on parental reports of whether they could read a child’s book in English). The second model explores whether migrant-Irish differences in social participation are explained by family and child characteristics. The GUI survey collected rich information on several dimensions of family background, including mother’s education and family structure. A four-fold classification of mother’s education is used: Junior Certificate (lower secondary) or less, Leaving Certificate (upper secondary), post-secondary and tertiary levels. The family structure measure distinguishes between lone parent and two-parent families. Controls are also added for whether the child has siblings and whether the family is living in a rural or urban area; factors which may influence levels of participation in organised activities. Previous research has shown lower levels of participation in structured activities among children with special educational needs (McCoy *et al.*, 2014) so this is taken into account in the second model.

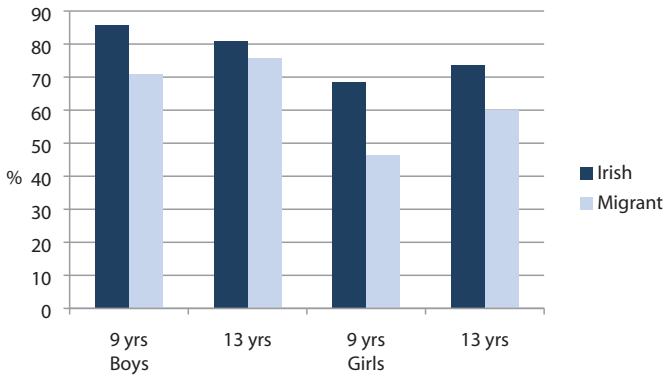
Because of the paid-for nature of many out-of-school activities (Smyth, 2016), the third model takes account of household income (measured in quintiles) to assess whether the migrant-Irish participation gap is explained by differential economic resources. The fourth model looks at the type of school attended in terms of DEIS (disadvantaged) status and gender mix, as previous research (Smyth *et al.*, 2009) had indicated a differential distribution of migrant children across different types of school. Where information is missing on any of the independent variables, these cases are included in the model but with a dummy variable indicating missing values. This has the advantage of retaining as many cases as possible in the analyses.

V RESEARCH RESULTS

Growing evidence shows the benefits of leisure participation, especially structured activities, for children’s self-image, confidence, skill development, school engagement and wellbeing (Erkut and Tracy, 2002). The current analysis sets out to explore whether differences exist in leisure participation between native Irish and immigrant-origin children. Figures 1 and 2 show the patterns of participation in structured sports and cultural activities by immigrant background, distinguishing boys and girls. At both nine and 13 years of age, Irish children are more likely to

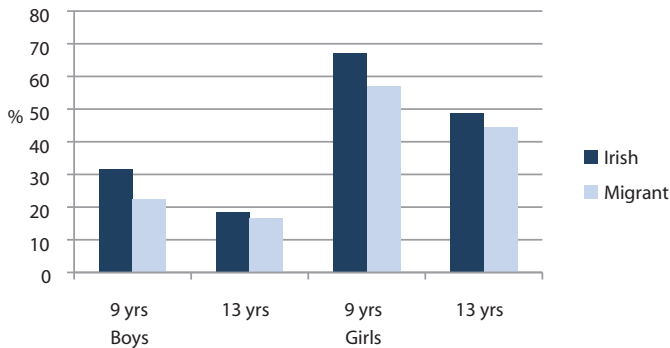
be involved in organised sports than migrant children, although the gap reduces between the two waves, especially for boys. There are gendered patterns of participation for all groups, with males more likely to take part in sports activities than girls among both Irish and migrant groups. However, there is particularly low participation in structured team sports among immigrant-origin girls at the age of nine. Cultural participation (Figure 2) is also highly gendered and levels of involvement are much lower than for sport among both immigrant-origin and native boys. As with sports, there is a difference in participation between Irish and immigrant-origin nine-year-olds, a difference which reduces in size over the four years to 13 years of age. It is worth noting that the gap in participation in structured leisure activities at the age of nine is greater than the gap in informal social activities; 12 per cent of migrant children had no or only one friend compared with 8 per cent of Irish children, though the proportions with large friendship networks were broadly similar between the two groups.

Figure 1: Participation in Structured Sports Activities (age nine and 13)



Source: GUI Wave 1 and Wave 2.

Figure 2: Participation in Structured Cultural Activities (age nine and 13)



Source: GUI Wave 1 and Wave 2.

Table 1: Multilevel Logistic Regression Models of Sports Participation among Nine-Year-Olds from Migrant and Irish families, Controlling for (a) Family Background, (b) Household Income and (c) School Characteristics

	<i>Raw Differences</i>	<i>Family Background</i>	<i>Household Income</i>	<i>School Factors</i>
Constant	0.735	0.636	0.556	0.590
Male	0.142***	0.144***	0.143***	0.128***
Migrant background (Ref.: Irish)	-0.195***	-0.194***	-0.174***	-0.172***
Mother's education:				
Upper secondary		0.092**	0.074**	0.064**
Post-secondary		0.125***	0.097**	0.087**
Higher education		0.145***	0.104**	0.090**
Lone parent family		-0.041**	-0.015	-0.009
Urban location		-0.053**	-0.059**	-0.039*
Child has siblings		0.046*	0.065**	0.061**
Special educational needs		-0.076**	-0.070**	-0.067**
Household income (quintile):				
2nd			0.046*	0.041*
3rd			0.091**	0.083**
4th			0.100***	0.092***
Highest			0.133***	0.123***
No information on income			0.087**	0.081**
School social mix:				
DEIS Urban Band 1				-0.143***
DEIS Urban Band 2				-0.062*
Rural DEIS				-0.011
School gender mix:				
Boys only				0.014
Girls only				-0.047*
Breakdown of migrants by nationality:				
UK	-0.043±			-0.046±
Western Europe	-0.082±			-0.091±
Eastern Europe	-0.287***			-0.274***
Africa	-0.191***			-0.141***
Asia	-0.409***			-0.405***
Breakdown of migrants by language background:				
Native English speaker	-0.108***			-0.086***
Non-native English speaker	-0.294***			-0.272***
Poor English proficiency	-0.238***			-0.201***
No. of primary schools	893	893	893	893
No. of children	7,524	7,524	7,524	7,524

Source: *Growing Up in Ireland*, children's cohort, Wave 1.

Note: *** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05, ± p<.10.

While clear differences could be observed between native Irish and immigrant-origin children in participation in sport and cultural activities, the next step in the analysis explores how far this is explained by family background and whether the participation gap differs across different immigrant-origin groups and over time. Table 1 shows a series of multilevel logistic regression models designed to explore the size of the gap in sports participation between immigrant-origin and Irish nine-year-olds, all else being equal. In terms of raw differences, as shown in Figure 1, immigrant-origin children are less likely to take part in organised sports; this translates into a gap of just under 18 per cent net of gender.⁴ Sports participation is higher among better educated families and where the child has siblings, but lower for lone parent families, those with special educational needs and those living in urban settings. Taking account of these factors makes no difference to the immigrant-Irish gap in participation. However, taking account of household income is found to explain a small part of this gap so the paid-for nature of activities excludes some immigrant families. School characteristics explain very little of the participation gap, though sports participation is lower in urban DEIS schools (especially the most disadvantaged, Urban Band 1) and in single-sex girls' schools.⁵ Even taking family background, income and school characteristics into account, there is a gap in sports participation between immigrant-origin and Irish children. While this pattern can be interpreted as evidence of lack of integration, it is also possible that the types of activities on offer may be unfamiliar to immigrant-origin children as they are heavily focussed on team sports such as GAA games.

The lower part of the table presents the results of separate models which unpacked the migrant effect to look at the extent to which there are differential experiences across different migrant groups in terms of national origin and language background. Sports participation is found to be lower among African, Eastern European and, in particular, Asian families, a pattern that does not change when other factors are taken into account. Again, this may be, at least partially, explained by the types of sport activities on offer and the preferences of migrant groups regarding how to spend their free time. Levels of participation are only slightly lower among UK and Western European groups than among the Irish children and the coefficients are on the margins of statistical significance. In terms of language background, participation is lower among all migrant groups, but this difference is much smaller for those whose family's first language is English. Although it is argued that engagement in sport encourages language acquisition and social integration, the findings suggest that language may act as a barrier for migrant families and children in finding information about the activities and getting involved in clubs.

⁴ The 18 per cent comes from the odds ratios which are calculated by exponentiating the log-odds that are reported in the tables.

⁵ The impact of child gender and gender mix should be interpreted as follows: the constant refers to the base category girls in coeducational schools, the dummy "male" refers to boys in coeducational schools while the terms for single-sex schools relate to the effect of being in a single-sex school for boys and girls respectively.

Table 2: Multilevel Logistic Regression Models of Cultural Participation among Nine-Year-Olds from Migrant and Irish Families, Controlling for (a) Family Background, (b) Household Income and (c) School Characteristics

	<i>Raw Differences</i>	<i>Family Background</i>	<i>Household Income</i>	<i>School Factors</i>
Constant	0.713	0.581	0.528	0.555
Male	-0.342***	-0.349***	-0.351***	-0.349***
Migrant background (Ref.: Irish)	-0.115***	-0.128***	-0.111***	-0.109***
Mother's education:				
Upper secondary		0.121***	0.107***	0.100***
Post-secondary		0.175***	0.151***	0.143***
Higher education		0.282***	0.245***	0.235***
Lone parent family		-0.095**	-0.073**	-0.070**
Urban location		-0.001	-0.006	0.007
Child has siblings		-0.002	0.013	0.011
Special educational needs		-0.026*	-0.021±	-0.020±
Household income (quintile):				
2nd			0.016	0.013
3rd			0.047*	0.041*
4th			0.078*	0.071**
Highest			0.103**	0.094**
No information on income			0.062*	0.056*
School social mix:				
DEIS Urban Band 1				-0.109**
DEIS Urban Band 2				-0.050
Rural DEIS				-0.071*
School gender mix:				
Boys only				-0.027
Girls only				-0.020
Breakdown of migrants by nationality:				
UK	-0.039			-0.045
Western Europe	0.093			0.050
Eastern Europe	-0.147**			-0.176***
Africa	-0.212**			-0.204***
Asia	-0.180**			-0.229***
Breakdown of migrants by language background:				
Native English speaker	-0.070			-0.049±
Non-native English speaker	-0.157***			-0.172***
Poor English proficiency	-0.211***			-0.187**
No. of primary schools	893	893	893	893
No. of children	7,524	7,524	7,524	7,524

Source: *Growing Up in Ireland*, children's cohort, Wave 1.

Note: *** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05, ± p<.10.

Turning to cultural participation, immigrant-origin nine-year-olds are significantly less likely to take part than Irish children, which translates into a gap of around 11 per cent net of gender. Cultural participation is much higher among more educated families and lower where the child has special educational needs or is living in a lone parent family. The immigrant-Irish gap in participation becomes slightly larger when the higher educational profile of immigrant families is taken into account; in other words, immigrant-origin children are less likely to be involved in attending music or dance classes than might be expected given their parental educational background. The gap reduces slightly when household income is taken into account; as with organised sports, it appears that affordability is an issue and that fees put participation in such cultural activities out of reach of some immigrant families. Children attending DEIS schools have lower levels of cultural participation but school characteristics make very little difference to the migrant-Irish gap in involvement. In terms of nationality, cultural participation is found to be lower among immigrant families of Eastern European, African or Asian origin, with no differences found between UK or other European and Irish children. As with sport, cultural participation is lower for children whose families' first language is not English, again suggesting language barriers.

Table 3: Multilevel Logistic Regression Models of Team Sports Participation among 13-Year-Olds from Migrant and Irish Families, Showing Raw Differences, Differences Adjusted for Family Background, Household Income and School Characteristics and Differences Adjusted for Sports Participation at Age Nine

	<i>Raw Differences</i>	<i>Adjusted Differences</i>	<i>Sports Participation at 9</i>
Migrant background (Ref.: Irish)	-0.094**	-0.076**	-0.038*
Breakdown of migrants by nationality:			
UK	-0.036	-0.040	-0.031
Western Europe	-0.078	-0.102±	-0.086
Eastern Europe	-0.130**	-0.136**	-0.073±
Africa	-0.051	-0.034	0.000
Asia	-0.187**	-0.199**	-0.109**
Breakdown of migrants by language background:			
Native English speaker	-0.072**	-0.045±	-0.027
Non-native English speaker	-0.136***	-0.133***	-0.072**
Poor English proficiency	-0.016	0.013	0.060
No. of primary schools	882	882	882
No. of children	7,418	7, 418	7, 418

Source: *Growing Up in Ireland*, children's cohort, Wave 1.

Tables 3 and 4 repeat these analyses for the same children when they are 13 years of age. The first two columns of Table 3 show raw differences and differences adjusted for family background, household income and (second-level) school characteristics. The third column takes account of sports participation at the age of nine. There is still a significant raw gap in team sports participation between immigrant-origin and Irish teenagers but this is reduced in size to about 9 per cent. As before, little of this gap is explained by family or school factors. The gap is slightly reduced when participation at age nine is taken into account; in other words, participation is lower among immigrant-origin young people partly because they did not get involved in sports at an early age. Additional models (not shown here) show a larger immigrant-Irish gap for 13-year-old girls than for boys, a pattern that merits further investigation. It is expected that the language proficiency of immigrant-origin young people will have improved over time, with the effect of language of origin of parents diminishing in impact; immigrant-origin teenagers from non-English speaking backgrounds are less likely to take part in team sports but the gap is much narrower than at nine years of age.⁶ Among national groups, only the Eastern Europeans and Asians have significantly lower participation than

Table 4: Multilevel Logistic Regression Models of Cultural Participation among 13-Year-Olds from Migrant and Irish Families, Showing Raw Differences, Differences Adjusted for Family Background, Household Income and School Characteristics and Differences Adjusted for Cultural Participation at Age Nine

	<i>Raw Differences</i>	<i>Adjusted Differences</i>	<i>Cultural Participation at 9</i>
Migrant background (Ref.: Irish)	-0.034	-0.037±	-0.008
Breakdown of migrants by nationality:			
UK	-0.001	-0.003	0.009
Western Europe	0.125*	0.090	0.079
Eastern Europe	0.012	-0.030	0.017
Africa	-0.007	-0.006	0.044
Asia	-0.165**	-0.199**	-0.141**
Breakdown of migrants by language background:			
Native English speaker	-0.006	0.005	0.020
Non-native English speaker	-0.063*	-0.084*	-0.040
Poor English proficiency	-0.057	-0.049	-0.003
No. of primary schools	882	882	882
No. of children	7,418	7,418	7,418

Source: *Growing Up in Ireland*, children's cohort, Wave 1.

⁶ The estimates for those whose parents have poor English language skills are not significant in the third model, most likely because this group is very small.

Irish 13-year-olds. For Asians, some of this gap is explained by family and school factors as well as participation at age nine. For Eastern Europeans, the gap is mainly explained by prior participation levels.

While immigrant-origin and Irish children differed somewhat in the levels of cultural participation at the age of nine, by age 13 rates of cultural participation do not differ significantly between these two groups (Table 4). They are, however, significantly lower among non-English-speaking families, a pattern that is largely driven by prior participation. In other words, having English as a first language facilitates access to structured cultural activities at age nine and this then influences patterns of later engagement. Participation levels among those from the UK, Eastern Europe or Africa do not differ from Irish rates. At the same time, participation is significantly higher among those from Western Europe, partly because they have a more advantaged profile. Participation is significantly lower among those of Asian origin, which is partly explained by levels of prior participation; however additional, possibly qualitative, analyses are needed to shed more light on the patterns of cultural participation among this group.

Table 5: Multilevel Regression Models Of Popularity (Piers-Harris Subscale) among 13-Year-Olds from Migrant and Irish Families, Showing Differences Adjusted for Family Background, Number of Friends and Popularity at Age Nine, and Sports and Cultural Participation at Age Nine

	<i>Family Background</i>	<i>Friends and Popularity at 9</i>	<i>Sports and Cultural Participation at 9</i>
Migrant background (Ref.: Irish)	-0.360**	-0.190*	-0.112
Breakdown of migrants by nationality:			
UK		-0.127	-0.110
Western Europe		-0.434	-0.401
Eastern Europe		-0.290	-0.153
Africa		0.290	0.356±
Asia		-0.633**	-0.453*
Breakdown of migrants by language background:			
Non-native English speaker		-0.137	-0.197
Poor English proficiency		0.062	0.062
No. of primary schools	870	870	870
No. of children	7,150	7,150	7,150

Source: Growing Up in Ireland, children’s cohort, Wave 1.

*Note: *** p<.001, ** p<.01, * p<.05, ± p<.10.*

Previous research using GUI data has shown the benefits of cultural participation on cognitive development and socio-emotional wellbeing (Smyth,

2016). It might be expected that becoming involved in structured activities outside school may also enhance the development of social networks and relationships. At both nine and 13 years of age, young people were asked to complete the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale Second Edition, which is a 60-item self-report instrument for the assessment of self-image in children and adolescents between the ages of seven and 18. The scales are scored so that a higher score indicates a more positive self-evaluation in the domain being measured. The popularity subscale consists of 12 items reflecting the young person's assessment of their relationships with their peers. A limitation of the measure from the perspective of social integration is that the scale does not distinguish between relations with children of native origin and those from the same nationality group. It could be argued that, given the heterogeneity of the immigrant population, this is not likely to be a serious limitation; children attend schools with peers from a variety of national backgrounds so friendship groups are unlikely to be limited to a particular national group.

The longitudinal nature of the GUI study means that we identify the effect of social participation by focusing on changes in popularity between nine and 13 years of age. Table 5 shows that 13-year-olds from immigrant families are significantly more negative about their popularity than their Irish peers (Column 1). About half of this difference is explained by having had fewer friends and feeling less popular at the age of nine. Taking part in structured sports activities at nine results in improved popularity four years later for both immigrant-origin and Irish children. In contrast, cultural participation does not influence popularity. Differences in popularity between immigrant-origin and Irish young people are no longer significant when sports participation is taken into account; however, Asian young people continue to be more negative than other groups about their popularity.

VI DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

According to the 2011 Census figures, immigrant children make up approximately 8 per cent of the total child population in Ireland. Immigrant-origin children have a strong presence in Irish schools, with a considerable number of urban schools reporting a high proportion of these children among their student body (see Smyth *et al.*, 2009). Attention to the academic and social integration of these children has increased over time. International studies have noted that school-based efforts to support immigrant children's adaptation, language acquisition, and overall academic progress are critical to ensuring their successful integration and educational achievement. However, students spend only part of their time in schools, suggesting that school-based activities should be complemented by additional initiatives to provide immigrant-origin children with academic (Pittman, *et al.*, 2004), social (Roffman *et al.*, 2003) and emotional support (Rhodes, 2004) outside of school

hours. Providing opportunities for young children from different backgrounds to interact is important as previous research shows that negative attitudes towards children of other races or minority cultures are already evident at pre-school stage and become more pronounced with age (Tormey and Gleeson, 2012).

In Ireland there is now a growing body of research on children's out-of-school activities and the way in which they vary by social background, parental education, gender and having special educational needs (McCoy *et al.*, 2012b; Coughlan *et al.*, 2014). The GUI study has particular advantages in exploring activities among migrant children, given that the sample size is large enough to capture heterogeneity in terms of nationality and language background among immigrants. The analyses presented in this paper focus on two types of activities: participation in organised sports and involvement in structured cultural activities (e.g. music and dance classes). In line with international studies, the results presented here show that social engagement in structured activities is lower among immigrant-origin children and young people than among their Irish peers. The immigrant-native participation gap was mainly explained by proficiency in English, rather than by school or family background factors. However, affordability plays a role as lower income families are less likely to take part in sporting and cultural activities, which mostly charge fees, and income levels explain part of the immigrant-native gap.

Some international studies have shown lower participation in sport among some immigrant groups (Doherty and Taylor, 2007). In Ireland, differences have been found between Asian and Western preferences regarding leisure activities (see Liu, 2013), a topic that merits further research. The GUI findings indicate lower levels of sports participation at the age of nine among Asian-origin children and, to a somewhat lesser extent, those from Africa and Eastern Europe. Language barriers appear to play a role, though sports participation is still slightly lower for native English speakers than for their Irish peers. In addition to language, the type of sporting activities available may impact on participation. There is a focus on team sports in Ireland (see Fahey *et al.*, 2005), and not all children may enjoy team sports (such as Gaelic football, hurling or hockey) or may have no history of playing these games and following these teams. This is an area that merits further attention as sport participation among immigrant-origin girls in this study was particularly low. While it is widely acknowledged that participation in sport has health benefits, the findings of the paper point to benefits in terms of social integration, with sports participation enhancing popularity for both immigrant-origin and Irish children.

Cultural participation shows broadly similar patterns to sport regarding rates of participation by nationality of origin and mother tongue. Again, participation levels at nine years of age were significantly lower among Asian, African and Eastern European children and among those whose native language was not English. In the GUI survey, cultural activities were captured in terms of participation in out-of-school classes in dance, ballet, music, arts and drama (grouped into a single category). It is possible that different national groups take

part in other cultural activities not named in the survey. As the data available provide no information on preferred types of cultural activities, the topic merits further research. For example, qualitative research with immigrant-origin children might also help unpick the mechanisms underlying their lower participation in cultural activities, and also the variation between groups. It is possible that separation in forms of cultural participation may lead to concerns regarding between-group contact and subsequent integration trajectories.

Taken together, analyses of the two waves of the study indicate both continuity and change in the leisure participation of immigrant-origin children between nine and 13 years of age. There is some evidence that these young people become relatively more involved in sports and cultural activities over time, most likely reflecting improved English language proficiency, greater adjustment to life in a new country and greater familiarity with the kinds of out-of-school activities available. However, Asian teenagers remain less likely to take part in these structured activities while those from a family whose first language is not English continue to have lower rates of participation. Furthermore, earlier involvement (at the age of nine) is predictive of later participation after the transition to second-level education.

As the evidence grows that patterns of participation that are laid down in childhood carry into adulthood, it is important to ensure that as many children and young people as possible have an opportunity to participate in leisure activities after school. Participating in sport, fitness and various cultural pursuits provide children and young people with the opportunity for enjoyment and for forging new friendships and thus may enhance social cohesion. Integration is a two-way process in which host countries have an important role to play through, for example, outreach activities to the immigrant community and offering a broader range of sports, fitness and cultural activities. Poor English language proficiency emerges as a serious barrier to the involvement of immigrant children in out-of-school activities, highlighting the importance of policy efforts to promote destination-country language acquisition for immigrant adults and language support for immigrant-origin children and young people at school. Affordability can also limit the participation of less advantaged groups, including immigrants, an area that merits greater policy focus (see Smyth, 2016). In addition, as types of leisure participation vary across countries, having a variety of age-appropriate activities available may enhance leisure participation among different national groups and may offer more opportunities for immigrant-origin girls.

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