

Minority Status, Social Welfare Status and their Association with Child Participation in Sporting, Cultural and Community Activities*

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Abstract: Participation in sporting, cultural and community activities can have significant emotional, physical and social benefits for children. A small literature now exists exploring the factors that promote or inhibit children's participation in these activities. This paper adds to the literature using a large child-based dataset collected in Ireland, the *Growing Up in Ireland* dataset. The paper investigates the role of minority status as a barrier to child participation in a range of activities. Minority status in this paper is characterised as being non-Irish born, non-Roman Catholic, or having a family member in receipt of some form of social welfare. The association between such characteristics and child participation in sporting, cultural and community activities is examined using multivariate analyses. The results highlight that these factors are associated with lower participation in structured activities though the impact varies according to activity and minority grouping. The implications of the findings for policy are discussed.

I INTRODUCTION

Background to the Study

Participation in sporting, community and cultural activities plays a key role in child development (McGee *et al.*, 2006). A number of studies have found positive associations between participation in activities and a range of child outcomes including educational competence, behaviour, social skills and self-esteem (Berger, 1996; Fletcher *et al.*, 2003; Sacker and Cable, 2005; McGee *et al.*, 2006, Bailey, 2006, Findlay and Coplan, 2008; Fredricks and Eccles, 2008; Bandy and Moore, 2009; Holder and Coleman, 2009; McCoy *et al.*, 2012a; 2012b).

Within the literature, there is a distinction between participation in activities that may be considered as either "structured" or "unstructured" (Mota and Esculcas, 2002; Bartko and Eccles, 2003). In the case of structured activities, Lareau (2003) coined the phrase "concerted cultivation" to describe parenting styles that attempt to nurture a child's talents, including education and social performances, through participating in certain structured activities. Benefits accruing from participation in structured activities manifest themselves by widening a child's "social convoy" (Kahn and Antonucci, 1983; McGee *et al.*, 2006) and helping the child to learn positive skills and competencies (Fletcher *et al.*, 2003). Additionally, this participation aids the development and strengthening of social relationships and raises self-confidence (Fredricks *et al.*, 2002). Lareau (2003) noted that middle class parents use after school programmes – including sporting and cultural activities – as a means of improving a child's confidence in social situations, through negotiation and communication with adults. Participation in these programmes helps to nurture favourable skills, attitudes and behaviours in a child including improving a child's language and literary skills (Bodovski and Farkas, 2008). The contrasting "accomplishment of natural growth" theory, also observed by Lareau (2003), outlines that children from working class

families are more likely to play outside with siblings and other children from the neighbourhood, as opposed to taking part in structured activities. In Ireland, previous research using the *Growing Up in Ireland* (GUI) data has found that participation in (structured) cultural activities has a positive impact on a child's reading and maths attainment, but other structured activities have differential impacts on these measures (McCoy *et al.*, 2012a; 2012b).

Previous studies lend support to Lareau's theory, providing evidence of barriers to child participation in structured activities being associated with a number of factors. For instance, the literature has found a well-established link between low income and various other forms of social exclusion (e.g. De Haan and Maxwell, 1998; Room, 1995; Hobcraft and Kiernan, 2001). In the case of structured activities in particular the literature has shown that personal characteristics such as ethnicity, migrant status and poverty have been found to cause variations in participation among children (Fredricks and Eccles, 2008; Feldman and Matjasko, 2005; Stratton *et al.*, 2005; Jellum *et al.*, 2010; Khoo and Temple, 2008). For example, an Australian study found that children with unemployed parents, children born overseas, or children who had a parent born overseas in a non-English speaking country were less likely to participate in sporting activities (Stratton *et al.*, 2005). Similar results were also found for immigrants in New Zealand, Australia and America with the level of English literacy having an impact (Jellum *et al.*, 2010, Khoo and Temple, 2008 Lueck and Wilson, 2010, Yu *et al.*, 2003). Immigrant participation in social and community groups and activities has the potential to contribute to developing friendships and a shared sense of community between migrants and local residents. It also has the potential to improve social integration and social cohesion in multicultural societies (Tartakovsky, 2012, Khoo and Temple, 2008). However, a Canadian based study found participation difficult for immigrant youths who took part in such activities due to language differences and having little familiarity with the activities of the host country (Doherty and Taylor, 2007). A number of other studies have found links between ethnicity, migrant status and/or poverty and participation in structured activities (Fredricks and Eccles, 2008; Jellum *et al.*, 2010; Hofferth and Sandberg, 2004). McCoy *et al.*, (2012b) also found that there was "... a clear social gradient in the uptake of structured activities and the uptake of these activities was predominantly among children from middle class families". In accord with these findings, Gallie *et al.* (2003) identified involvement in community clubs and organisations (tertiary sociability) as an indicator of social exclusion – albeit they note that social exclusion is a multifaceted concept.

In this paper we examine whether children from certain minority groups – non-Irish, non-Roman Catholic or from a social welfare receiving household – have a higher likelihood of being socially excluded as measured by tertiary sociability (Gallie *et al.*, 2003). We investigate the associated differences in participation rates in structured activities for children from these families, while also controlling for a range of other potential socio-demographic confounders using data from the GUI study. Previous literature (McCoy *et al.*, 2012a) has explored participation in both structured and unstructured activities (such as reading a book, watching television and playing computer games) using this data. We add to this literature by exploring the association between certain minority groups and participation in structured activities. We focus on structured activities in particular as this is an indicator of social exclusion (Gallie *et al.*, 2003).

Social Participation Among Immigrant Minority Groups

Over the past twenty years, Ireland has undergone an economic and social change that moved it from a homogenous country with a history of high net emigration to a culturally diverse society, both in terms of ethnicity and religious affiliation. With respect to migration, for much of its history, emigration rather than immigration was the norm in Ireland. However, with the economic success of the so-called Celtic Tiger and accession of a number of relatively poorer eastern European states to the EU, there was a trend of net immigration over the first decade of the 21st century. By 2011, 654,043 (14.5 per cent) of people living in the state were considered to be non-Irish.¹ Within the international literature, there are a number of factors identified that may lead to differences between immigrants and natives in participation in the activities of a resident country. Lueck and Wilson (2010) identify a range of mechanisms including preferences for social customs and language preferences, the age of migration, current age, years of residency in a country, ethnic networks, family extendedness and perceptions of prejudice. Khoo and Temple (2008) found that migrants' social and community participation (in the case of adults) is related to their English language proficiency and level of education. They believe that these factors encourage greater confidence among immigrants to engage with the wider community. Similarly, in the case of immigrant women, Rublee and Shaw (1991) and Stodolska (1998; 2000) identified a set of immigrant specific constraints on participation in leisure activities which included poor language skills, lack of orientation in the life of

¹ CD635: Population Usually Resident and Present in the State (Number) by Sex, Principal Economic Status, Nationality and Census Year – Central Statistics Office (CSO). This figure includes Irish-American, Irish-British etc.

the host country, post-arrival social isolation and cultural differences. While these studies focused mainly on adults, it is possible that immigrant children also face barriers to participation in structured activities because of these factors. As a result, a central objective of this study is to explore the patterns of participation in structured activities among immigrant children and whether differences are attenuated by the length of time they have lived in Ireland.

Social Participation Among Religious Minority Groups

In the case of Ireland, Catholicism is by far the dominant religious affiliation of Irish citizens – just under 85 per cent of people in Ireland consider themselves to be Catholic.² Traditionally, this percentage would have been higher but it has been reduced over the past number of decades due to increased levels of immigration, and a decrease in the influence of the Catholic church. In this paper we wish to determine whether belonging to a religious minority, which we define as being non-Catholic, leads to different patterns of participation in structured activities. Iannoccone (1998) highlights that economically important social behaviour including physical and mental health is strongly influenced by religious belief. Zada (2006), in the context of education choice, argued that religious parents may have a desire to shield their children from external influences to preserve their religious identity. They also noted that as the share of a religious group grows a smaller share of parents from the religious group chooses religious-influenced activities. This is highly relevant in the case of school-aged children in Ireland as in the GUI dataset, almost 93 per cent of families describe themselves as Catholic. In the case of the minority religious status, the largest group are Protestants (approximately 3.5 per cent) followed by non-denominated Christian groups (approximately 3 per cent).

We hypothesise that participation may vary between minority and majority religious groups, however, there are competing expectations about the nature of this relationship. Based on Zada's hypothesis in the context of education choice, it may be the case that individuals who belong to a minority religion prefer that their children participate in religious-based structured activities of their own minority religion, such as youth clubs organised by a Church. On the other hand, it may be the case that given the strong associations between the Catholic Church and some structured activities (such as the GAA) this may discourage minority religious groups from participating in these activities. While the association is equivocal in the sense

² CD702: Population Usually Resident and Present in the State by Nationality, Sex, Religion and Census Year – CSO.

that some structured activities may be favoured by the minority religious groups and some may not be preferred, the key influence for both may be the desire to protect the religious identity of the minority religious group (Zada, 2006).

Social Participation Among Social Welfare Recipient Households

The final key objective of the study is to assess whether children of social welfare receiving households are less likely to participate in structured activities. While social welfare includes a range of both universal and means-tested benefits, we aim to assess the association between child's participation in structured activities and household receipt of certain social welfare payments; unemployment benefits, employment support (including family income support (FIS)), one parent family payments and disability payments. These payments represent different forms of income supports for working age households, we do not include universal payments to families such as child benefit. While within these specific categories some payments are means-tested and some are social insurance payments, the majority of the payments that we examine as part of this paper fall into the means-tested category (60.88 per cent).

We hypothesise that there are several mechanisms through which these specific social welfare payments may be associated with their child's participation in structured activities. First, there may be a stigmatising association with several of these social welfare payments. For example, existing literature has found labour market exclusion to represent a form of social exclusion (Levitas, 1998). Much literature has found that there is a stigma attached to receiving social transfer payments (Goffman, 1963; Yahr and Pomeroy, 1969; Rank, 1994) and that this stigma even acts as a deterrent to receiving payments (Morfitt, 1983). Lindbeck *et al.* (1999) assume that earning one's own living through paid employment is the social norm. Receiving unemployment benefit or support has a social stigma, however, Lindbeck *et al.*, also suggest that different types of transfers have different levels of stigma attached. At the time the data used in this study was collected (September 2007 to June 2008), a relatively low percentage (18.15 per cent) of families in GUI were in receipt of the four social welfare supports that we examine. Therefore, we suggest that there were high levels of social stigma attached to receiving these payments in Ireland at this time. If earning one's own income is viewed as the social norm, higher levels of stigma may be attached to payments that replace earned income compared to payments which supplement it such as employment support payments. In this paper, we are exploring whether this stigma is intergenerational and manifests itself in

children through non-participation in structured activities. Bandura (1977) has argued that "... most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling". In this context, it may be that observing parents engaged in activities outside of the household – whether this is paid work or volunteering – may encourage children to similarly engage in extra-curricular activity.

Beyond a stigma or modelling effect, more obviously there may be a poverty effect surrounding social welfare which could be associated with lower participation of these children in structured activities. Indeed, a central element of many definitions of poverty is the inability to participate in the normal way of life of society (Townsend, 1979, Mack and Lansley 1985, Nolan and Whelan, 1996). From this perspective it is argued that poverty and social exclusion cannot be measured by income alone (Nolan and Whelan, 2010). In the models that follow the effect of social welfare payments is measured net of income, however, receipt of benefit may capture poverty associations that are not picked up by income alone. To accommodate these potential associations we also include an additional variable within the model which represents the degree to which a household relies on these types of social welfare payments. This measure has been found to be highly associated with poverty especially among children (Russell *et al.*, 2010). In the case of some types of social welfare payments it may be the case that the poverty effect dominates a potential stigma or modelling effect associated with accessing social welfare. For example, the FIS payment is a supplementary payment to individuals who are in low paid employment so while these individuals may not be facing labour market exclusion they still may be socially excluded (along with their children) due to a lack of resources to participate in societal activities. It is worth noting that the vast majority of activities examined in this paper do require some form of payment.

To investigate these issues the remainder of the paper is developed as follows: in Section II the GUI data and the methods employed in this paper are described. In Section III descriptive statistics and the results of a series of multivariate analyses are presented and in Section IV the study findings, their policy implications are presented and Section V concludes.

II DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The data used in this paper is taken from the GUI (www.growingup.ie) survey (Greene *et al.*, 2010). This is a longitudinal study carried out in Ireland and consists of two cohorts: an infant cohort of over 11,000 nine-month-olds, and a child cohort of 8,568 nine-year-olds. While the data is intended to provide a panel of observations by surveying the same children at

different time points, this paper uses only the first wave of data relating to the nine-year old cohort, which was conducted between 2007 and 2008. This was the only wave available at the time of analysis. The survey is constructed around a sample of 900 primary schools in Ireland. The study required the cooperation of the study child, their primary caregiver and their teacher. In 98 per cent of cases, the study child's primary caregiver was their mother.

In the GUI survey, the principal caregiver is asked to record the study child's participation in any clubs/organisations outside of school hours. Participation in sport in GUI is recorded if a child is a member of a sport or fitness club, such as a gym, a GAA club, or a soccer club etc. With regard to cultural activities, participation refers to being involved in such activities as ballet, music, drama or arts. Community activities consist of participation in organisations such as youth clubs, homework clubs, scouts or girl guides.³ Since an emphasis of this paper is to understand the impact of minority status, including social welfare status, on children's participation in these activities, it is important to acknowledge that a large proportion of these clubs requires some payment for membership and/or participation. For instance, according to the GUI survey, 84 per cent of sports clubs, 95 per cent of culture clubs, 96 per cent of scouts and girl guides, 76 per cent of youth clubs and 57 per cent of homework clubs require payment.

In modelling the probability of children participating in sporting, community and cultural activities, a series of probit models were used. In each case, the dependent variable takes a value of one if a child participates in a particular activity or zero otherwise. Other possible econometric methods that could be employed include a multinomial logit model to explore combinations of participation in structured activities. A nested logit structure could be used to explore potential substitutability between participation in activities. We chose to use probit models because we were primarily interested in understanding potential barriers to participation. Therefore, we felt that a binary model would be most suitable to explore whether children do or do not participate.

Our central independent variables included in these models are whether or not the study child is born outside Ireland, whether they are Roman-Catholic, and whether a family member is in receipt of a particular class of social welfare payment. With regard to children born outside Ireland, the dataset contains a variable which details whether an immigrant child had resided in Ireland for five years or less, or six years or more. The inclusion of

³ While these activities were recorded separately in GUI for the purpose of our analysis we have combined them as participation by children in these activities was relatively low overall.

this variable allows us to gauge whether duration of residence among children born outside Ireland has significant associations with their level of participation. For the remainder of this paper, a child will be referred to as non-Irish if they were born outside Ireland, regardless of their ethnic background. We also control for whether or not English is the main language spoken at home (allowing us to differentiate between English and non-English speaking immigrants). In the case of the non-Catholic variable, it is important to note that religious affiliation does not necessarily reflect religious identity. However, in the absence of more detailed information on religious identity, we have used religious affiliation as a proxy for religious identity. With respect to the disability payment variable we note that in cases where a disability payment is not paid directly to a disabled person, such as carer's allowance, we omitted them from the analysis. We have also included a variable identifying what percentage of the household's overall income is comprised of social welfare payments. With regard to the social welfare payment variables, unfortunately, the GUI data does not allow us to identify which member of the household is receiving benefit payments. This leaves open the possibility that in some cases, it is adult siblings or grandparents that are receiving them rather than the child's parents. However, the number of children within the dataset from a household receiving social welfare payments with a non-parent of age to receive social welfare payments is quite low (.036 per cent), and therefore does not, we expect, distort our findings.

Previous studies exploring participation in children's activities have found a range of variables that are significantly associated with involvement (McCoy *et al.*, 2012a) and we control for these in our econometric analysis. These include household variables related to parental marital status, the education levels of the primary caregiver, equivalised household income and where the family lives as well as individual level variables such as, the child's gender, if they have a chronic illness and whether the child has been bullied. We acknowledge that being bullied or having a chronic illness are not demographic variables, nevertheless, we felt that inclusion of these variables was important as they may be mediator variables for non-participation in activities. In addition, interactive variables were created to examine whether there were additional effects if children were both non-Irish and non-Roman Catholic, or if they were members of one of these groups and had a parent receiving a social welfare payment.

The data used in our analysis is weighted to represent the population from which it is drawn. Additionally, the standard errors are adjusted for clustering effects at the school level.

III RESULTS

Table 1 provides a definition of the variables that were included in the analysis along with the percentages of respondents belonging to each category.

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Percentage of Sample</i>
Sports Activity	Study child is a member of a sports club (e.g., soccer, golf, gym)	78.56
Culture Activity	Study child is a member of a cultural club (e.g., drama, music, ballet)	53.30
Community Activity	Study child is a member of a community based club (e.g., scouts, guides, youth clubs)	24.05
Any Activity	Study child is a member of any of the above clubs	93.64
Non-Catholic < 6 Years	Study child's family is non-Roman Catholic	6.62
6 Years or More	Study child was born outside Ireland and has resided in the country for less than six years	5.02
Non-English Speaking	Study child was born outside Ireland and has resided in the country for six years or more	6.10
Unemployment	English is not the primary language spoken in the household	7.39
Employment Support	Household member in receipt of unemployment payments such as job seekers allowance	3.47
One-Parent Payment	Household member in receipt of social welfare payment to supplement a low level of earned income	3.70
Disability Payments	Household member in receipt of lone parent payment	6.29
% of household income from SW	Household member in receipt of social welfare payments for a disability	5.50
Primary Education	Percentage of household income comprising of social welfare payments	
Lower Secondary	Mother completed primary school only – Base Category	3.34
Higher Secondary	Maternal education of Junior Certificate or lower Secondary	14.29
Non-Degree	Mother received her Leaving Certificate	31.49
Primary Degree	Mother has a non-degree third level education	24.78
Postgraduate	Mother has received a third level degree	13.28
Both Parents Married	Mother has a postgraduate degree	9.83
Separated	Parents of study child are married – Base Category	82.30
	Parents of study child are separated	4.70

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics (contd.)*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Description</i>	<i>Percentage of Sample</i>
Divorced	Parents of study child are divorced	1.74
Widowed	One of study child's parents has been widowed	0.65
Never Married	Study child's parents never married	10.26
Parent Volunteer	Study child's primary caregiver participates in local voluntary organisations	38.13
Bullied	Study child is bullied – reported by primary caregiver	21.62
Male	Study child is male	48.60
Chronic Illness	Study child suffers from chronic illness	10.15
Open Countryside	Study child lives in the countryside – Base Category	32.39
Village	Study child lives in a village	9.36
Town	Study child lives in a town	28.70
Other Cities	Study child lives in Galway, Cork, Limerick or Waterford	7.00
Dublin County	Study child lives in County Dublin	9.58
Dublin City	Study child lives in Dublin City	12.75
TV Bedroom	Study child has a TV in their bedroom	37.41
DVD Bedroom	Study child has a DVD player in their bedroom	30.08
Games Bedroom	Study child has a games console in their bedroom	30.50
Computer Bedroom	Study child has a computer in their bedroom	6.27

Table 2 below presents the results from the probit models exploring participation in various sporting, cultural and community activities. We present the results for the models where all independent variables were entered simultaneously into the models. We did this because we are interested in the net effects associated with, for example, migrant status or religious status whilst controlling for education, income and other factors. The rationale for this is that from a social exclusion perspective, we are interested in understanding the specific effect associated with such factors. We present the marginal effects (MEs) of the variables in our models to facilitate interpretation of the results. The MEs show the average effect that each variable has on the probability of a child participating in any of the activities. As a starting point, we present the results of a model explaining participation in any of the activities and then break the analysis down to explain participation by type of activity. In the case of equivalised income, we have multiplied our marginal effects by 1,000 in order to make interpretation easier. Therefore, the marginal effects observed here are for a €1,000 change in equivalised income.

Table 2: *Probit Models Explaining Child Participation in Sporting, Cultural and Community Activities (Marginal Effects)*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Model 1 Any Activity</i>	<i>Model 2 Sports Club</i>	<i>Model 3 Cultural Club</i>	<i>Model 4 Community Activity</i>
Non-Catholic	-3.5***	-5.8***	-3.1	4.5**
Lived in Ireland <5yrs	-3.7**	-6.7**	-3.0	-8.7**
Lived in Ireland for 6 Years or More	0.7	-0.6	2.0	-4.3
Non-English Speaking	-8.2***	-10.0***	-7.1**	-5.4
Unemployment	-5.6***	-10.4***	-10***	0.7
Employment Support	0.9	-4.7*	0.7	3.1
One-Parent Payment	1.9	2.0	-5.8*	2.7
Disability Payment	0.0	-0.01	0.6	-0.8
% of household income from SW	-1.0**	-1.4**	-0.3	0.6
Lower Secondary	1.6	9.4***	3.1	-5.5*
Higher Secondary	4.3**	12.6***	10.1***	-7.8**
Non-Degree	3.8*	13.7***	13.6***	-6.1*
Primary Degree	6.5***	13.2***	19.6***	-7.9**
Postgraduate	3.9	14.4***	27.6***	10.8***
Parents separated	-2.4	-4.2	-7.7**	3.0
Divorced	-1.7	-1.3	-2.3	5.8
Widowed	-3.1	-10.0	1.6	8.2
Never Married	-3.0**	-7.5***	-5.0**	1.1
Parent Volunteer	5.3***	5.8***	5.9***	7.8***
Bullied	0.2	-3.2**	1.1	4.4***
Male	0.0	15.5***	-33.6***	-3.5***
Chronic Illness	-3.9***	-6.1***	0.5	3.0
Village	1.8	3.2	-0.3	1.8
Town	-1.0	-2.8*	-1.8	5.4***
Other cities	-1.4	3.9	-1.9	4.4
Dublin County	-1.9	-6.5**	-3.5	8.4***
Dublin City	1.4	-4.6**	3.8	16.6***
TV in Bedroom	0.5	1.3	-0.8	2.8
DVD in Bedroom	-3.9***	-6.4***	-4.6**	0.1
Games console in Bedroom	0.4	0.2	-3.9**	-0.3
Computer in Bedroom	-2.9*	-5.1**	-1.6	4.9*
Equivalised Income	0.026***	0.0315***	0.025***	0.0093*
Log likelihood	-15521.648	24962.566	-29904.418	-27702.444
Pseudo R ²	0.1078	0.131	0.156	0.0383
Prob > chi ²	0	0	0	0
Wald chi ² (22)	297.15	592.25	990.7	163.69

***denotes significance at the 1 per cent level; ** denotes significance at the 5 per cent level; * denotes significance at the 10 per cent level. Marginal effects have been multiplied by 100.

The results of the probit models as presented in Table 2 suggest that a child having recently moved to Ireland or being a non-Roman Catholic has a significantly lower probability of participating in any activity. Being non-Roman Catholic confers a reduced probability of participation by 3.5 percentage points (pp). In the case of being non-Irish born, children's likelihood of participation is only negatively affected if they have resided in Ireland for less than five years. In addition, an interaction term between non-Irish born and non-Roman Catholic was investigated but was not significant, we therefore, present the main effects models only. Our results further indicate that if English is not the main language spoken in the household, the probability of participation is reduced by over 8 percentage points.

Children in households in receipt of unemployment benefit were less likely to participate in any of the activities, with their likelihood of participation reduced by 5.6 percentage points, but there was no difference in participation rates for other social welfare categories. However, the level of reliance on social welfare by the household is a significant predictor of participation levels, suggesting that the degree of welfare dependency may be relatively more important than the type of welfare payment for explaining participation. This may point to social exclusion due to limited resources, which is not captured with the income variable (income is highly significant in this model but has a very small marginal effect). In the case of income, we find that a €1,000 euro increase in income is associated with a .026 per cent increase in participation in any activity. This supports the possibility, as outlined earlier in this paper, that low resources present significant barriers to participation of children in structured activities.

When we examine each type of activity separately (Models 2, 3 and 4), it is clear that there is consistency in many of the results across the different categories of participation. In respect of sports, for example, being non-English speaking (-10pp), non-Irish (-6.7pp) – for children who have lived in Ireland for less than six years and non-Roman Catholic children (-5.8pp) are less likely to participate than English speaking, Irish and Roman-Catholic children respectively. In the case of cultural activities, participation is also reduced for non-English speakers. However, we observe a somewhat different pattern with respect to community activities. For instance, in the case of community activities, non-Roman Catholic children are more likely to participate.

Furthermore, we also find some differences with respect to social welfare payments – being in receipt of unemployment benefit, for example, has a negative relationship with participation in sports and cultural activities but not community activities and being in receipt of one-parent benefit is negatively associated with participation in cultural activities but not sports or

community activities. Receipt of lone-parent payment is associated with significantly lower participation in cultural activities and receipt of employment income support is significantly associated with lower participation in sporting activities. We note that in the case of the model exploring participation in community activities, the Pseudo R^2 is much lower than the other models suggesting that the participation decision for community activities is more difficult to explain compared to participation in sporting and cultural activities.

The finding with regard to volunteering activities on behalf of the primary caregiver is noteworthy. Across all the activities, having a mother who is involved in voluntary activities has a strong positive relationship with a child's participation in all the activities. This result lends support for Bandura's (1977) hypothesis that human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling. In the case of our results, this suggests that children are influenced in their participation in structured activities by observing their parents engage in voluntary activities. While the focus of our attention is on the role of non-Irish, non-Catholic and social welfare status on participation, other results are worthy of comment when we analyse the results by participation by activity. Children with electronic devices in their bedrooms such as a DVD or VHS player or computer are less likely to play sports or participate in cultural activities than those who do not, however, no relationship for these variables is observed in the case of community activities. The findings for maternal education, gender and health are consistent with the previous Irish studies (McCoy *et al.*, 2012a; 2012b).

IV DISCUSSION

We can break our discussion down by the three categories of minority status that we explored in this paper. For non-Irish born children, it appears that the initial negative relationship with participation is mitigated by the length of time spent in Ireland, as participation appears to increase with the passage of time. Some care though is warranted in the interpretation of these results given the age of the children involved. At age 9, those who had been resident for 6 or more years would have arrived in Ireland prior to the commencement of formal education. By contrast those who were resident for 5 years or less would have arrived in Ireland after the start of formal schooling. Relating this to the work of McGee *et al.* (2006) on social convoy, it is conceivable that joining a cohort of children being brought together for the first time in school may be crucial, rather than the length of time actually spent in the country. In other words, it may be the juncture at which children

arrived, rather than their duration of time in Ireland that explains these results. The future release of subsequent waves of GUI data will allow for a more detailed examination of this issue. Previous research suggests that parental nationality is also important (Cheadle and Amoto, 2011; Stratton *et al.*, 2005). Initially, this was included in the models. However, due to a high correlation with variables on whether the child was born outside Ireland and whether they speak English at home, we have focused on the child's nationality instead.

Language appears to also be a significant barrier to participation in sporting, cultural and community activities in Ireland, and not speaking English at home reduces the probability of participation in all activities, with the strongest effect observed for community activities. This supports the findings from existing literature that highlights the importance of language proficiency in determining levels of social inclusion by children. However, the causality with respect to this variable is difficult to disentangle. It cannot be said for sure that being less fluent in English causes non-participation, or if these children have a poorer level of English because they are not participating in these activities and so do not benefit from the language development opportunities provided by such participation.

In the case of non-Roman Catholics, they are less likely than Roman-Catholic children to participate in sporting activities, but the probability of participating in community activities is higher. Community activities may include youth clubs associated with church and religious groups, which would be consistent with Zada's (2006) argument that parents from religious minorities try to shield their children from external influences to protect and promote their own religious identity, when the size of the minority is small. However, further details on the nature of community activities would be needed to confirm the exact type of community activities that these children engage in.

In respect of welfare payments it is notable that unemployment benefit is the only payment where there is a consistent negative association with participation in sporting and cultural activities. The mainly non-statistical significance in respect of other benefits, such as lone parent or FIS in our probit models, and the significance of the percentage of income comprised of welfare payments, suggest that it is the degree of dependence on welfare support rather than the receipt of support per se that may present barriers to participation. As we have mentioned above, if this is true, we could observe that the stigma attached to welfare payments may be higher for unemployment benefits, which replace earned income, relative to employment support payments which supplement earned income. This can be observed in our results as children with a parent receiving unemployment benefits are less

likely to participate in structured activities compared to children with parents receiving other forms of welfare payments. This result suggests that low resources impacts on participation of children in structured activities from income supporting welfare receiving households. In the case of sporting activities, the percentage of the household's income comprised of social welfare payments is also negatively associated with participation.

It is also likely that the length of time for which the household had been in receipt of welfare payments will have a significant influence on the importance of these payments on participation. The GUI does not contain information on duration of benefit receipt however, information is contained on duration of unemployment which shows that 92 per cent of unemployed mothers had been in that situation in excess of one year. In the case of unemployed fathers, almost 80 per cent had been so more than six months.

When comparing the three groups of activities in this study, participation in sporting and cultural activities are both negatively affected by being in receipt of social welfare but participation in community activities is not significantly affected. We can use the location of the study child to postulate what might be driving these findings. If a child is living in a town, or in Dublin, then their probability of participation in "community activities" will be significantly higher. In fact, the association with participation in community activities and living in Dublin city is very large, the largest of all the significant associations. Specifically, we find that living in Dublin city is associated with over a 16 pp increase in participation in community activities. In addition, the relationship with social welfare status and parental education levels do suggest that these activities may be centred in urban areas of lower socio-economic groupings, although we still observe a positive and significant income effect (at the 10 per cent level). Interestingly, there is no significant difference if these activities are located in any of the other Irish cities.

Policy Implications

While it may be tempting to suggest a range of policy responses based on a particular interpretation of our results some caution is warranted. Differences in the levels of engagement observed on the part of minorities does not automatically imply disadvantage; though we accept that it is perhaps incumbent upon majorities to demonstrate that it does not. Assuming that difference does equate to disadvantage in this instance two further factors should be borne in mind. First the results relate to a set of conditions that pertain at a particular point in time. Economic conditions, attitudes to and of migrants, religious identity as well as the legal, policy and cultural context that underlie the observed differences are all subject to change. Indeed the recent history of Ireland underscores how rapidly some of these things can

change and with this perhaps levels of engagement across groups. Second, allowing for the possibility that broader socio-economic changes do not resolve potential disadvantage on the part of minority groups, the potential for unintended consequences to arise from ill-considered policy responses must be considered. Where attempts to address disadvantage accentuate rather than attenuate difference there exists the potential to exacerbate a situation by for example fostering resentment. The need for caution is therefore clear. At a minimum our results suggest policymakers should ascertain in greater detail the nature of the differences we have found, what those directly affected by them attribute the difference to, and what their experience of the difference is. Until this clearer understanding is reached it is premature (as well as arguably patronising) to suggest subsidies, quotas or other policy measures should be enacted.

V CONCLUSION

This paper has added to the existing literature on activity participation by showing that children who are born outside Ireland, who are non-Roman Catholic or who have a family member on social welfare, have significantly different participation rates in a range of structured activities in Ireland. Our results show that the effects on non-Irish born children may be moderated by the length of time the child resides in Ireland. Non-Roman Catholic children had significantly lower rates of participation in sporting activities but higher rates in the case of community activities. With regard to social welfare payments it appears that unemployment benefit payments are linked to lower rates of participation except in the case of community activities. As a final note of caution given the cross-sectional nature of the available data, this analysis does not attempt to identify causation and we are only able to discuss correlation between variables. Thus, while important patterns have been identified in this paper, further work is required to identify causal pathways to build concrete policy recommendations. This paper is an important first step in the analysis of potential factors associated with minority status that promote or inhibit child participation in structured sporting, cultural and community activities of children in Ireland.

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