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STUDENT CROSS-CULTURAL FIELD RESEARCH

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# Coloureds and their Perceptions of Identity in East London

*by Jared Aida, exercise science*

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## **Introduction**

Many researchers come to South Africa to conduct studies with the white and black populations. There is a group that is often forgotten, however, the Coloureds. Most people around the world have never heard of this group, even though they make up the third-largest population in South Africa. They are a unique and dynamic group, yet research concerning them is extremely limited (Adhikari 2006; Haaruun 2007; Zegeye 2002). The term “Coloured” was coined by the South African government to describe people of mixed racial heritage who were “intermediate shades between [white and black]” (Cape Colony, Cape Consensus 1904). The appearance of mixed-race people is nothing new to the world. Whenever a new group of people have come into contact with another race, there have been varying degrees of miscegenation. “Mestizo,” “Mulatto,” and “Creole” are some of the terms that have been used to describe the offspring of such unions.

However, the degree to which the Coloured construct has been accepted, both politically and socially, is something unique to South Africa. During apartheid, the Coloured construct was further solidified into South African society by way of the formal discrimination the group received. Because of their diverse and heterogeneous nature, researchers and identity analysts have speculated as to how the Coloured population collectively identifies with the other sub-identities they belong to. They have also questioned the legitimacy of the Coloured identity. With the end of apartheid, individuals in the Coloured community have also begun to debate the validity of a Coloured identity. This paper will explore the perceptions of Coloureds in East London regarding their various subgroup identities (African, South African, Coloured, Afrikaans-speaking) similar to Bornman’s study in 2008. It will also explore their perceptions regarding the government, Coloured culture, and the acceptance of the Coloured identity. Studying the perceptions of the Coloured community may help the South African government better understand how to incorporate this previously estranged group into post-apartheid South Africa and will provide insight into how mixed-race people find their place in society.

## **Social Identity and the Bornman Study**

Social identity theory claims that membership in various groups helps to define one’s personal identity (Tajfel, 1981). In the case of South Africa’s Coloured population, those groups or sub-identities include Afrikaans-speaking, Coloured, South African, and African, among others. The degree of identification with these identities will influence the behavior of the Coloured people (Brown, 1986).

Social identity analysts have also viewed identity as a dynamic concept. As people go through new experiences, the social identity of individuals may change (Breakwell, 1986; Deaux, 1993; Hall, 1990; Korf and Malan, 2002). Hence, changes of identity will often correlate with changes in the social or political environment. In order to measure the effects of political and social change in South Africa since the dissolution of apartheid, Bornman (2008) conducted three studies in 1994, 1998, and 2001. She measured how strongly the Coloured community identified with the various identities to which they belonged. The results showed that the Coloured population identified most with the Rainbow Nation, or South Africa. Given their strong racial allegiances in the past, it was interesting that the Coloured community identified more as South Africans than as Coloureds. Fifteen years after apartheid, the political and social environment continues to change in South Africa. The resignation of Thabo Mbeki from the presidency and subsequent appointment of Jacob Zuma as president may have had an effect on the Coloured community. The recent schism of South Africa's dominant party, the African National Congress (ANC), is expected to have an effect on the population as well. Since the perceptions of the Coloured community will influence their behavior, it is especially relevant to study Coloured identification during this period of change (Bekker, 1993).

### **Coloured People and their Sub-Identities**

From the mid-1600s until now, Coloureds have had a difficult time finding their place in South African society. When Dutch settlers first landed in South Africa, there was a degree of interracial breeding between European men and slave women (Bloom, 1967). While many of these women came from the native Hottentot tribe, a substantial portion of them also came from the East Indies and India (Bloom, 1967). These unions resulted in the births of mixed-race children who were neither white nor black. Their mixed pedigree would come to reflect their socioeconomic status in society—superior to blacks but inferior to whites (Bloom, 1967). When apartheid began in 1948, the racial classification and intermediate status held by Coloureds became more solidified. While interracial mixing may have originally been responsible for the classification of Coloureds, other sub-national factors such as religion, ethnicity, and language have also played important roles in helping to define the Coloured group (Anderson, 2003; Bornman 2008; Zegeye, 2002).

The classification of a Coloured person remained as vague during apartheid as it had been previously: "A Coloured is a person who is not a white person or a Bantu [black]" (Population Registration Act, Act No. 30). The vagueness resulted in some Coloureds being classified as blacks and some Coloureds being classified as whites (Posel, 2001). Families and relatives were sometimes forced to live in separate areas depending on classifications based on physical appearance (Posel, 2001). Coloured people continued to occupy a position in society below whites but above blacks (Anderson, 2003; Zegeye, 2002). They enjoyed many privileges that were withheld from the black population but were denied other rights and privileges that the white population enjoyed. In this way, they acted as a buffer to keep the blacks and

whites separate. Many Coloureds used this status of superiority over blacks to escape severe racism and persecution from whites but at the cost of forming alliances with blacks (Anderson, 2003). During apartheid, it was common for Coloureds to identify more with whites in order to escape persecution and preserve their privileged status above blacks (Anderson, 2003; Morse & Peele, 1974; Zegeye, 2002).

In the past, Coloureds were forced to identify themselves as members of an intermediate class. Although some claim that the Coloured people continue to occupy a "gray zone" in society (Haaruun, 2007), the Coloured community generally identifies with at least four groups today, Afrikaans-speakers, Coloureds, South Africans, and Africans. Similar to other groups from heterogeneous nations, the Coloured community faces the issue of contending loyalties (Mattes, 1999). In South Africa, the struggle between racial and national loyalty is obvious. According to Tajfel (1981), the stronger a group identifies with one group, the weaker its identification will be with a competing group. In this way, the strong racial loyalties that exist in South Africa may slow the attempts to strengthen national unity. The formation of a new and unifying national identity has been one of the government's greatest challenges since apartheid ended. The creation of new national symbols and slogans, such as the new South African flag and the "Rainbow Nation," are examples of the government's attempt to bolster nationalism (Bornman, 2006). In her study, Bornman (2008) found that each racial group identified the most with their South African identity. This study indicates that the government's efforts to bolster the South African identity have been met with some success.

Besides race, language seems to be the next strongest predictor of sub-national loyalty (Bornman, 2006; Bornman, 2008). Afrikaans is traditionally the first language of the Coloured people. Afrikaans runs deep in Coloured culture and has long been a defining part of the Coloured identity. However, studies show that English has been replacing Afrikaans at an increasing rate (Bosch & de Klerk, 1998). Many older people in Coloured communities are beginning to worry about the effect this will have on the younger generation. They feel the dissolution of Afrikaans may lead to the dissolution of the Coloured identity and way of life.

A supranational African identity has also become a prevalent sub-identity in South Africa. During Mandela's tenure, unity through South African identity was emphasized with phrases like "The Rainbow Nation." However, during Mbeki's tenure, the emphasis shifted from the South African identity to the African identity as a whole (Eaton, 2002). This has been evident with the increasing popularity of phrases such as the "African Renaissance" and an "African Century" (Bornman, 2008). In emphasizing a more inclusive pan-African identity, the government hopes that South Africans will not only feel less prejudice toward one other but will embrace fellow Africans from other nations as well. The effectiveness of these efforts have been met with mixed results. Bornman's results in 2008 showed that four of the five groups (blacks, Coloureds, Indians, Afrikaans-speaking whites, English-speaking whites) identified significantly more with sub-national and national identities than with supranational identities; the exception was the black group. More research must be conducted to

gauge how these efforts are being received by the Coloured community as well as other minority groups.

### **The Coloured Identity Issue**

One issue that has been argued by Coloureds and social identity analysts alike is whether a true Coloured identity exists or not. The unique origins, degree of political and social acceptance, discrimination and solidification of the construct during apartheid, and lack of homogeneity when compared with other races, make the Coloured identity a controversial topic. With the dissolution of apartheid, an increasing number of Coloured people have begun to debate the existence of a Coloured identity. Many feel that it is a social construct from apartheid—a tool of discrimination. The following quotes, taken from a forum entitled “Is there a Coloured Identity?”, reflect some of the views of the Coloured people in South Africa today:

My roots are as mixed as a *briyani*, and that’s what I love about me, is that I am able to identify with the world at large because I’m the “interesting” one. We shouldn’t deny who we are or be ashamed of where we come from. . . . However, I often wonder what being Coloured actually means. . . . I certainly feel “at home” with Coloureds but we’re all just so different that I wonder what it is that binds us. Is it language? . . . Is it skin color or facial features? We come in all shades, from lily-white to deepest ebony; brunettes, blondes, and redheads, and every hue of eye color. Our features are Asian, European, and Asian. Is it mixed parentage? Most of us can’t even say when the mix occurred and in what combinations.

There is no Coloured identity. The term Coloured is a social and political construct set in economics was foisted upon a diverse group of people by colonials. The construct predates 1948. . . . As it is a construct, it can be deconstructed.

The traditional definition a Coloured South African is a person who has one parent or grandparent who is white and one who is not. This will not always hold water, so it depends on how Coloureds in general see themselves. Do they regard themselves as unique as far as language, culture, tradition, and heritage is concerned; in short what are the things that make them different from any other group in South Africa. Do they wish if the above indeed exists to preserve it or would they willingly be absorbed by another say black group? Only the Coloureds can supply the answers. (Fisher, 2008)

These quotes illustrate the spectrum of opinion regarding Coloured identity in the Coloured community today. Many Coloureds are resilient in asserting that the Coloured identity is a political construct set in place by European colonists, and, as such, its use and place in South Africa is outdated. On the other hand, many continue to cherish their mixed ancestry, which historically has been the defining characteristic of the Coloured identity. However, these same individuals realize this defining characteristic is rapidly losing substance in South Africa. Although there is support for both sides in South Africa’s Coloured community, no conclusion has yet been reached.

Social identity analysts have also argued over the existence of a Coloured identity. Adhikari (2006) argues that the correct view of Coloureds has not been arrived at. Coloureds have been incorrectly identified as an extremely dynamic racial group whose identity has transformed and changed throughout time. However, Adhikari contends that Coloureds have actually possessed an identity that has lasted ever since the group was formed sometime in the late-nineteenth century. Adhikari states that Coloureds formed their own group identity on the basis of assimilation into the dominant group (whites), intermediate status (lower than whites but better than blacks), negative associations (being seen as the “leftovers”—not being able to fit into the white or black category), and marginality. He also states that due to these four factors, the Coloureds’ identity has been promulgated throughout time with occasional small transformations.

On the contrary, Zegeye (2002) argues that even though the apartheid regime tried to impose a single identity on all Coloureds, there is no one identity to define a Coloured person. Instead, the Coloured identity is based on regionalism, language, and ideology. For example, the cohesiveness of the Coloured people during apartheid was defined not by their imposed identity but by resistance to their imposed identity. One of the most poignant points Zegeye makes is that there may be no true Coloured identity at all. Citing Gerwel (1975), he argues that in order for a group of people to be truly distinct, separate, and unique, they must share a certain degree of homogeneity. Outside of their mixed roots, Coloureds do not exhibit any distinctive homogeneity. As stated earlier, their identity is largely based on regional and ideological differences. Under this definition, Coloureds would not qualify as their own distinct category of people.

In summary, researchers, identity theorists, and Coloureds have all debated whether or not there is a specific Coloured identity, but none have yet reached a definitive conclusion, and perhaps they never will. I echo the latter of the three Coloured speakers in Fisher’s forum in stating that ultimately, the answer resides in those who are Coloured. The essence of this study is not to conclusively determine whether a Coloured identity exists but to explore the perceptions Coloureds have regarding their Coloured identity and other subgroup identities. This paper will primarily explore the attitudes of the Coloured community in East London regarding various sub-identities, the government, and culture. This study was designed in comparison with Bornman’s study in 2008, which showed that Coloured people tended to identify more strongly with their national identity than with any other supranational or sub-national identity. In exploring their perceptions of identity, I hope to better understand the behavior and attitudes of this people. Ultimately, this will provide insight into to how the government may help the Coloureds and other mixed-race people find their place in society.

### *Method*

In this study, fifty-two individuals of mixed-race origin designated as Coloured in the South African census were interviewed in the formerly Coloured community of Buffalo Flats in East London. This area includes Parkside, Parkridge, Buffalo Flats,

Alphendale, and Fynbos. The adjacent neighborhood of Egoli was historically not part of the community but will be considered part of the Coloured area due to the high number of Coloured residents. Of the fifty-two participants in the final sample, only nine did not live within the boundaries of the Coloured community. Most of the interviews were conducted in English, with the exception of a few that necessitated an Afrikaans translator. The interview questions consisted of qualitative and quantitative questions that gauged participants' attitudes regarding government, identity, and Coloured culture, among other things. Qualitative and quantitative questions were used in order to explore correlation as well as causation regarding Coloured identity issues. The interview instrument can be seen in Appendix 1. Of the quantitative questions, participants were asked to rate on a Likert scale how important certain sub-identities (African, South African, Coloured, Afrikaans-speaking) were to their overall identity as individuals. This survey was similar to the two previously conducted by Elirea Bornman (2008) in 1998 and 2001. Responses included "very important," "somewhat important," "do not know/neither important nor unimportant," "not too important," and "not important at all." The highest possible score was five, and the lowest possible score was one. A higher score indicated a stronger identification with that particular sub-identity. The instrument also contained some yes/no questions. All participants participated voluntarily by signing a written consent form. Participants were found using the snowball technique beginning at the primary school where I volunteered.

After data collection, the quantitative data was analyzed using one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) to determine whether there were any significant differences between the mean-scores found for each sub-identity. Scheffe tests were then used to pinpoint where the differences were. These statistical tests were also applied to the mean-scores of an older sample (over thirty-five years old) and a younger sample (under thirty-five years old). These two age groups are reflective of those who were old enough to have experienced and remembered apartheid. By comparing these groups, we learn about any differences in attitude between the older and younger generation.

It is important to note that the data was restricted to a small sample within the Coloured community of East London. Given the small sample size and location, these findings cannot necessarily be extrapolated and applied to the whole Coloured community of South Africa. Indeed, time and time again, participants stated that Coloured culture and customs differed according to the region and religion of the people. For this reason, recommendations for research in the future could include conducting similar studies with Coloured populations in other areas of the country. Also, this study did not include other racial groups for the sake of depth and detail.

### *Result*

Of the fifty-two volunteer participants, the age range was eighteen to seventy-four years old with an average age of thirty-nine years. Females made up 59.6 percent of the sample (n=31), and the remaining 40.4 percent were male (n=21). Participants were further separated into two age groups: an eighteen to thirty-five group and a



thirty-six to seventy-five group. This was done in order to compare the attitudes that were and were not largely or directly influenced by apartheid. Of the fifty participants who were asked about their racial ancestry, 72 percent (n=36) could name at least one bloodline, whereas 28 percent (n=14) could not name one bloodline. Of the participants who could name more than two bloodlines, they could only trace their pedigree as far back as their great-grandparents. It is also important to note that many people still referred to Coloureds as a racial group when providing their racial ancestry. This information illustrates the extent that the Coloured identity is established in South Africa. It is not as crucial to know your ancestry as it is to know that one comes from mixed ancestry, for this is the chief determinant of the Coloured identity.

Of the fifty-two participants, fifty scored their four sub-identities. Overall, there was considerable variation of scores between the four sub-identities. Two of the sub-identity scores [Afrikaans-speaking and African] were lower than a four, indicating considerably low Coloured identification with them. The highest average was the Coloured identity with a score of 4.3 (See Table 1). The next highest was the South African identity with a score of 4.12. Both the South African and Coloured identity scores were considerably close in value. The Afrikaans-speaking score (3.76) was considerably lower than the preceding scores, and the African score (3.18) was still lower; however post-hoc Scheffe tests revealed no statistical difference between the African and Afrikaans-speaking scores. Post-hoc Scheffe tests revealed that the African mean differed significantly from the Coloured and South African means.

TABLE 1: The means, standard deviations, and comparative Scheffe tests between the four sub-identities.

|         | African                           | South African | Coloured | Afrikaans-Speaking |
|---------|-----------------------------------|---------------|----------|--------------------|
| M       | 3.18                              | 4.12          | 4.3      | 3.76               |
| SD      | 1.17                              | 1.19          | 1.05     | 1.42               |
| Scheffe | F13 > F12 > F14 > F34 > F24 > F23 |               |          |                    |

\*\*Comparisons significant on a 0.05-level; 1—African, 2—South African, 3—Coloured, 4—Afrikaans

When the mean-scores were compared between age groups, one-way ANOVA indicated the attitude toward Afrikaans was significantly different between the younger and older samples (See Table 2). The younger sample mean was 3.9, and the older sample mean was 4.15. This difference can be explained by the decreasing emphasis and use of Afrikaans by the younger generation. These results confirmed other studies that showed Afrikaans is evermore replaced by English (Bosch and de Klerk, 1998). The other sub-identity comparisons between younger and older samples showed no significant differences according to one-way ANOVA. Table 2 shows the mean-score comparisons of sub-identities for the older and younger samples.

These scores indicate that Coloureds in East London identify strongly as both South Africans and Coloureds. Coloureds feel their Afrikaans-speaking heritage is a relatively important part of their identity. Participants scored Afrikaans higher than Bornman's (2008) sample in 1998. This does not necessarily mean that Coloureds as

a whole are beginning to identify more strongly as Afrikaans speakers. It is possible that Coloureds in East London simply identified more with Afrikaans than the representative sample of South African Coloureds Bornman took in 1998. This finding could also be attributed to the fact that twenty-nine people were interviewed who were over the age of thirty-five as opposed to the twenty-three who were younger than thirty-five years old. In interviews, the younger generation generally identified significantly less with Afrikaans than their older counterparts. Since there were a greater number of older participants, this might explain the stronger score for the Afrikaans-speaking identity.

TABLE 2: The means, standard deviations, and comparative Scheffe tests of the sub-identities for the older and younger age groups.

|         | African           |       | South African |       | Coloured |       | Afrikaans-Speaking |       |
|---------|-------------------|-------|---------------|-------|----------|-------|--------------------|-------|
|         | Old               | Young | Old           | Young | Old      | Young | Old                | Young |
| M       | 3.11              | 3.27  | 4.18          | 4.05  | 4.21     | 4.41  | 4.15               | 3.19  |
| SD      | 1.29              | 1.03  | 1.25          | 1.13  | 1.23     | 0.796 | 1.15               | 1.61  |
| Scheffe | F4 > F3 > F1 > F2 |       |               |       |          |       |                    |       |

\*Comparisons significant on the 0.05 level; 1–African, 2–South African, 3–Coloured, 4–Afrikaans

Of the fifty-two participants who were asked if they accepted the term “Coloured,” only five participants (9.6 percent) rejected it. Participants’ main reason for rejecting the Coloured identity was that it was a “tool of separation,” or “a tool of dividing the people” which “entrench[ed] the differences and the labels and racism of the past” (n=3). The other reason why people rejected the Coloured identity was because of the stigma attached to the identity (n=2). It should be noted that the phrases “Coloured term” and “Coloured identity” were used interchangeably in the interviews.

*Discussion*

As part of her study in 2008, Bornman found the Coloured population identified more with their South African identity than with other identities (supranational, racial, language). This study was conducted in order to gain greater understanding of why Coloureds identified more with their South African identity than other identities, as well as to explore the acceptance of the Coloured identity within the Coloured community in East London. In 2008, Bornman asked a representative sample of South African Coloureds to rate their feelings of being called South African on a scale of five. She also asked them to rate their closeness to their other sub-identities on a scale of five. A higher score indicated a stronger attachment to the group. My study asked participants to rate each of their sub-identities on a scale of five based on how important it was to their personal identity. Although the wording of questions varied between studies, the essence of the studies remained the same—measuring emotional attachment to various identities.

After conducting this study, mean-scores showed that Coloureds in East London identified more with their Coloured identity (mean score of 4.3) than their South

African identity (mean score of 4.12)—contrary to Bornman’s findings in 2008. However, quantitative analysis revealed no statistically significant difference between the South African and Coloured scores. It is evident that the Coloured community in East London strongly identify with their South African and Coloured identities. When compared with Bornman’s study, the East London Coloured community scored their racial identity significantly higher than in 1998 (mean score of 3.5) and 2001 (mean score of 3.9) (Bornman, 2008). It is possible that Coloureds in East London have historically identified more with their racial identity. While the bastion of the Coloured community may be Cape Town, there are many strong Coloured communities spread throughout South Africa. East London has a rich Coloured history dating back to before the relocation from North Side to the Buffalo Flats community (Thomas, 2008). The majority of Coloured people in East London were quite proud of their racial identity. Another possible alternative as to why Coloureds identified more with their racial identity is that they have become increasingly more proud to be Coloured. During apartheid, being Coloured was a mark of lower classification, a ticket to second-class citizenship, and it is possible that Coloureds would be less proud to identify with their racial identity. Because of this, they were often more inclined to try to identify with the white population, particularly with the Afrikaans-Speaking whites (Anderson, 2003; Morse and Peele, 1974; Zegeye, 2002). Participants in older and younger groups both identified strongly as South Africans. This attitude is consistent with the results Bornman (2008) found in 1998 and 2001. However, thirteen out of forty-six people (28 percent) said their South African pride was negatively affected because of current government actions. In many cases, people associated the poor government and economic situation with South Africa and accordingly decreased their pride in being South African. This should be duly noted, because, if not remedied, identification as South Africans could decrease amongst the Coloured community despite any attempts by the government to bolster nationalism.

This study also showed that the emphasis regarding the African Renaissance should be reconsidered. The African National Congress originally emphasized South African unity during Nelson Mandela’s tenure, but under Thabo Mbeki that emphasis has shifted to African unity. The government hoped this more-inclusive emphasis might unite the people as Africans and help them overcome past prejudices (Eaton, 2002). However, of all the sub-identities measured, the African identity was scored the lowest (mean score of 3.18). This denotes considerably low identification as Africans amongst the Coloured community in East London. This also shows a marked decrease from Bornman’s (2008) mean score of 3.8 in 2001. However, it must be noted that there are limitations in comparing this study’s results with Bornman’s. In her study, Bornman was studying Coloured identification with African culture and not African identity. Despite the government’s effort to eliminate prejudice by appealing to their African identity, the Coloured people in East London do not feel included in this identification. One participant succinctly summed up the Coloured attitude on the matter: “When I hear ‘African’, I think of black people, not me.” This attitude was widespread among older and younger participants alike. The South African govern-

ment may want to rethink their approach to nation-building, because the Coloureds of East London are estranged with the present approach. This issue is particularly pertinent in light of the recent resignation of Thabo Mbeki and succession of Jacob Zuma as the South African president.

The younger generation also seems to identify increasingly less with Afrikaans. Of all the comparisons between the older and younger age groups, identification with Afrikaans was the most significant. The younger generation identified significantly less with Afrikaans than the older generation (See Table 2). These figures reflect the decreasing prevalence and importance of Afrikaans in Coloured communities. In post-apartheid South Africa, many of the Coloured schools were Afrikaans-speaking schools. However, there are only a few left in East London and most have switched to English in order to help facilitate integration. This pattern is widespread across the country (Gilmartin, 2004). The result of this change is that Coloured children are becoming more proficient at English, and Afrikaans is losing its prominence in the Coloured community. It is not uncommon to meet Coloured children who cannot speak Afrikaans fluently. Globalization has also affected the decreasing popularity of Afrikaans. As Western influence and culture has infiltrated South Africa, English has become more popular. This trend has caused serious concern among the older generation in Coloured communities. To the older generation, Afrikaans is a major part of Coloured culture. One older participant spoke of Afrikaans and its importance in this way:

You'll find that we quickly adapt to colloquialism . . . for us, language is culture. . . . We've been educated in Afrikaans, I communicate in Afrikaans, I make friends with people using this medium.

This participant expressed the high regard that older Coloureds hold for Afrikaans. It is a vibrant part of their culture, and this is self-evident in the creolization of Afrikaans within Coloured communities. In many places (*i.e.*, East London, Cape Town) the Coloured people have stylized Afrikaans into their own unique language. It is commonly referred to as *kombuis* Afrikaans, or "kitchen" Afrikaans. It mixes English and Afrikaans and uses a considerable amount of slang that is oftentimes unique to the region. Many older participants felt that their culture was dissolving as English steadily replaced Afrikaans. The increasing number of Coloured families leaving Coloured communities may also be taking a toll on the culture of the Coloured people, and this may be a topic for future research.

One of the main purposes of this study was to gauge the number of people who rejected the Coloured identity and understand why this was. Of the fifty-two participants, 90 percent ( $n=47$ ) responded that they have no problem accepting the Coloured identity. Five participants did not accept or desire to be known as Coloureds. Before conducting this research, it was hypothesized that those who rejected the Coloured identity did so for political reasons. Since the Coloured identity was solidified and popularized by the apartheid government, it seemed logical that many would reject it as a remnant of the apartheid regime and its injustices. Three of the five rejected it on such grounds.

In the future, possible ideas for research may include conducting similar surveys on a wider scale in order to measure how widespread this opinion is throughout the Coloured community in South Africa. The other response encountered as to why participants rejected the Coloured identity was completely unanticipated. Two of the five participants who rejected the Coloured identity did so because of the negative stereotype associated with the Coloured identity. Although only two of the fifty-two participants stated this as the actual reason for rejecting the Coloured identity, the negative Coloured stereotype was a topic often encountered in interviews. One participant shared her feelings on the Coloured stereotype and its effects on her:

I sometimes think that I'm a bit ashamed to be Coloured . . . because there is a stigma attached to being Coloured: you're rude, you're vulgar, you're drunk, you're a drug addict, gangster [and swear].<sup>1</sup> And I don't know where this comes from. My Indian friends always say, "You're different than other Coloureds. You don't drink, you don't smoke, you're not loud." . . . It's a bit hard to be proud to be Coloured when people look down on you just because of your race.

In the "New" South Africa, there are no longer any "Europeans Only" signs hanging in store windows or other forms of overt racism that typified apartheid. The type of racism encountered today is a more subtle type of racism that comes in the form of stereotyping. While stereotyping can be found in any nation, something should be done when it drives people to reject elements of their identity. Although this attitude was reflected in only two participants, future research should be conducted in order to measure how widespread this issue is throughout the country and to monitor its growth in the future.

Another significant and unanticipated finding was a marked shift in the way the older generation and younger generation viewed their mixed ancestry. In the apartheid years, the Coloured identity was more defined by what they were not rather than what they were: "A Coloured is a person who is not a white person or a Bantu [black]" (Population Registration Act, Act No. 30). The Coloured people were excluded from both groups—they were neither white nor black. This was a negative way to view the Coloureds' mixed ancestry. Adhikari (2006) described this as "negative associations" and explained that it was a key component in the establishment of the Coloured identity. However, in interviews with younger participants, this negative perception was replaced with a much more positive view. Instead of being neither white nor black and feeling excluded, participants perceived themselves as white and black. The younger participants were very proud of their mixed ancestry, seeing it as a benefit in today's society. They felt that because of their mixed background they could identify with anyone they came into contact with. This shift in attitude may indicate that the younger generation has overcome the "negative associations" of the Coloured identity formed during apartheid. It is also important to highlight that all of the twenty-three younger participants accepted the Coloured identity. This finding shows that at least the younger generation in the Coloured communities of East

London have made tremendous progress in overcoming the negative psychological effects of the apartheid past.

### Conclusion

The Coloured people of South Africa are a dynamic group. There may be debate as to the acceptance of the Coloured identity, but this study shows that the vast majority of the Coloured community in East London accept their racial identity. The Coloured people in East London identified strongly with their racial and national identity but identified considerably lower with their African identity. This may be a sign to the South African government to consider adjusting their current emphasis on the African identity. The Afrikaans language is also becoming increasingly less important to the rising generation. This may gradually lead to the complete disappearance of Afrikaans among the Coloured population. Since Afrikaans has historically been a central part of the Coloured culture, the Coloured way of life may be dramatically altered in the future. However, the younger generation does show signs that they view the Coloured identity in a much more positive view than in the apartheid years. This is indicative that the psychological injuries of apartheid are fading with the younger generation. There is still much to learn about the Coloured people in South Africa, and more research needs to be conducted to understand the attitudes and perceptions of this understudied population.

### NOTE

1. Text in brackets was noted in other interviews and hence is added in this quote in order to make it more reflective of all participants' attitudes.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Interview Instrument

#### Interview Questions:

1. Could you please tell me a bit about your yourself?
  - What is your full name?
  - Where are you from? (hometown)?
  - Where do you live now?
  - How old are you?
  - Occupation?
  - Do you know your ancestry?
2. First, I'd like to talk about how *political systems* have influenced your identity.
  - How did you feel about the apartheid government?
  - Did this attitude influence your pride in being South African or was it separate and independent? If so, in what ways?
  - How do you feel about the government today?
  - Has this attitude influenced your pride in being South African or is it separate and independent? If so, in what ways?
3. What sorts of things make you feel proud to be South African?
  - What sorts of things do not make you feel proud to be South African?
4. What sorts of things make you feel proud to be Coloured?
  - What sorts of things do not make you feel proud to be Coloured?
5. On a scale of one to five, please rate each sub-identity on how important it is to your personal identity: African, South African, Coloured, Afrikaans speaker. [five is very important; one is not important at all].

6. If you had to choose, which sub-identity is most important to you? Or rather, which do you feel is most important to who you are? Why?
7. In the context of democracy, what identity do *you* give yourself?  
What does this identity mean to you?  
In today's society do you accept the ethnic identity of being "Coloured?" Why?  
Have you encountered disagreement amongst others regarding the acceptance of the term "Coloured?" Why do they feel that way?
8. In a recent study, it was found that Coloured people said that their South African identity was more important to them than their Coloured identity. Why would you think that is?
9. What does the "Rainbow Nation" mean? How is South Africa with achieving that? What has to happen to make it a "Rainbow Nation"?
10. How is racism today in South Africa?
11. Coloured Culture? (customs, traditions, behavior, personality characteristics)? Blend or unique?
12. Coloured fractionalization?
13. Other issues that Coloured people face? In East London/Eastern Cape?



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# The Role of Votive Offerings in a Nabataean Burial

*by Dana Blackburn, archaeology, and Krystyna Hales, archaeology*

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## Introduction

The Brigham Young University Wadi Mataha Project for 2008 was sponsored by BYU's department of anthropology and the David M. Kennedy Center. The excavations took place from 6 May to 3 June 2008, with the excavation of site 16I taking place from 21–27 May. The chief purpose of the excavation was to test the theory produced from the previous season's excavations that artifacts such as ceramics, lithics, and fossils were used as votive offerings in Nabataean ritual situations (Johnson, D., 2008:3). Site 16, a Nabataean rock-cut tomb, provided an ideal situation for this theory to be tested in the context of Nabataean burial rituals. We excavated one of the cists, or individual burial places, within the tomb. During the excavation and subsequent lab analysis of bones and artifacts, we determined that many of the artifacts recovered from our cist support the idea of Nabataean votive offerings being used in funerary rituals.

The entire tomb has been dated to have been in use between the end of the first century BCE and the end of the first century CE (Johnson). It is probable that loculi were carved out of the tomb as needed rather than all at once, with the earlier ones closest to the door. This theory is supported through the change of style seen in some of the cists. If this is the case, then cist I would have been carved toward the latter end of the tomb's usage, probably in first century CE. However, the artifacts recovered offer very little diagnostic evidence of dating, so it is difficult to be sure.

## Background Information

Many people have heard of Petra, Jordan, the Rose Red City carved out of rock, but few people actually know where it is, not to mention who built it. In fact, the extent of common knowledge about Petra is that the "treasury," one of its monumental tombs, was included in an Indiana Jones movie as the hiding place for the Holy Grail. The treasury is a very impressive sight to behold, but there are grander, even more exquisite tombs located throughout Petra. Who were these people who spent years carving tombs out of the rocks? They are known as Nabataeans. These people created a sanctuary in Petra, and it became the largest city in a kingdom that ruled from at least 323 BCE to CE 106 when Rome annexed Arabia (Anderson, 2004).

The origin of the Nabataeans is hazy at best, and scholars have come up with several theories in attempt to explain where they may have come from. The best-supported ideas conclude an origin from Mesopotamia or northwestern Saudi Arabia based on language comparisons and snippets of recorded history that have survived (Taylor, 2005). We know the Nabataeans were a nomadic tribe of Arabs who settled

the area known as Edom. When the Edomites moved into Judea after the Babylonian captivity of the Israelites during the sixth century BCE, the area east of the Arabah Valley became vacant. The Nabataeans, who had mastered survival in the desert, soon inhabited the desolate desert between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba (Taylor, 2005). Through the rising up of their kingdom, the Nabataeans subsequently spread as far north as the northern area of the Dead Sea and as far south as northern Arabia.

They found their niche and their wealth in the merchant trade routes of frankincense, myrrh, bitumen, and other valuable trade items throughout the Mediterranean and Near East (Taylor, 2005). The Nabataeans' cunning mastery of water supply in the desert only encouraged the rise of their kingdom. As their wealth increased, Nabataeans began to settle down; it was during this time that they built the city of Petra, probably during the second to third century BCE (Taylor, 2005). It was here the Nabataeans constructed a multitude of tombs, and it is one of these tombs we excavated in order to gain further insight into Nabataean burial practices.

The burial practices of a society indicate the social, economic, ritual, and religious complications of that society. Ucko stated:

In the vast majority of cases known ethnographically, a culture or society is not characterized by one type of burial only . . . on the contrary, one society will undertake several different forms of burial and these forms will often be correlated with the status of the deceased (Pearson, 1999).

In Petra, abundant rock-cut tombs appear in every direction and in every shape and size. Some have elaborate carvings and water features around the entrances, such as the treasury and the garden tomb. There are also more humble and crudely constructed tombs, such as the one we excavated. The grander the tomb, the more resources and skill it took to construct and, consequently, the more expensive it was. By looking at the basic tomb structure, size, and décor, we see evidence of social stratigraphy within Nabataean society.

Archaeologists have studied many aspects of the Nabataean world including the temples, language, iconography, art, and theology. When studying their burial practices the one main source that information is gathered from is a short passage recorded by the ancient Greek geographer Strabo:

They think dead bodies no better than manure; as Heraclitus says, corpses are more to be thrown away than dung heaps. Wherefore they bury even their kings beside their privies (Harding, 1967).

Strabo interpreted the Nabataeans' burial practices as disrespectful and irreverent toward their dead. However, the archaeological record suggests this interpretation was a classic case of cross-cultural misunderstanding. Strabo was raised in the Roman Republic, where cremation was the most popular burial practice (Nock, 1932).

The Nabataeans left bodies by dung heaps, exposed to the elements and creatures, until only bones remained. Then they gathered the bones, wrapped them in cloth shrouds, placed them in wooden boxes, or ossuaries, and finally interred the ossuary in the family tomb. The Nabataean burial practices did not relate to what Strabo

knew or understood concerning mourning of the dead, resulting in his harsh disapproval. While almost everything else has disappeared through time, the Nabataean tombs have survived a millennia; and the sheer amount of time, effort, and energy the Nabataeans put into constructing proper resting places for their dead suggest that worshipping the dead was actually a very significant part of their culture. A society would not expend so many of its resources on something considered mere routine.

Nabataeans left votive offerings at tombs and other ritual sites, such as open-air shrines and niches. Votive offerings are objects deliberately placed in a sacred or special place. The practice of placing votive offerings may be traced back to ancient cults and continues still today; for example, the common Western practice of taking flowers to the grave of a loved one. Nabataean votive offerings included common items such as stones, pottery, incense, and foodstuffs, as well as the uncommon shells, fossils, jewelry, and even vessels full of water (considered very sacred by the Nabataeans). Some votive offerings may have been plain and unaltered by human hands, whereas others show signs of alteration, such as painting, chipping, or carving. In our cist, we found both altered and unaltered votive offerings. Some of these human modifications appear clearly on the objects; however, this is not always the case.

### Description of Tomb and Cist

Site 16 is a rock-cut tomb located in the Wadi Mataha region of Petra prominently placed overlooking the bed of an ancient waterway. The tomb chamber is 4.6 meters wide east to west, 6.5 meters long north to south, and 2.7 meters high (Johnson, 2008). The tomb is off most of the common paths used by the Bedouins and tourists, and only accessible by climbing directly up the rock-face. It faces east, as many of the tombs in Petra do, enabling it to receive protection from high winds. Although it was obvious to us that the tomb had been raided, probably on multiple occasions, its discreet location and inaccessible entrance contributed to its relatively good state of preservation. There is only a small platform inside the door, which has successfully discouraged potential occupants. Chisel marks are still visible, indicating that the tomb was carved into the rock by hand. The architect created both a door to the north (right), and a window to the south (left) of the tomb, providing a substantial amount of light to permeate the tomb during morning hours (Fig. 1).

The tomb has twelve loculi (cists) or individual burial chambers cut out of the rock, five on the north, five on the south, and two on the west wall. We excavated cist I, which was located in the center at the south end of the tomb (Fig. 2). Compared to several of the other cists, there were



Figure 1.

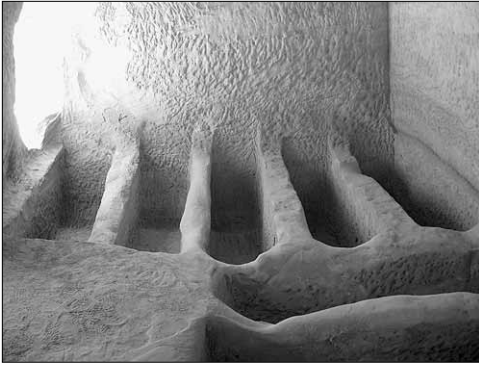


Figure 2.

changes in the soil. This helped us to see which levels had been disturbed, how the artifacts were deposited, and which levels contained artifacts still in situ, or in their original depositional locations. There were four stratigraphic units in 16L, each consisting of very fine, light tan and gray sand, with some small rocks of sandstone and gray chert. A white, paste-like, clay mineral coated some of the rocks and artifacts throughout all four SUs. We have not successfully identified the mineral, but the lack of its appearance in the other loculi suggests its deliberate placement in this specific tomb. Generally speaking, SU1 was disturbed and mixed with modern materials.

SU2 supplied a moderate amount of very scattered human bone, along with several ceramic sherds, many small rocks, and one very flat, chiseled stone—likely spall from the tomb construction. SU2 also exhibited a very disturbed layer of soil, with scattered, broken bone and rock throughout. One item of note was a curved wooden branch about thirty centimeters in length with what appeared to be some type of textile wrapped around one end and charred at the same end. This item seems to resemble some type of crude torch (Fig. 3). This was a unique find and, as is customary, was turned over to the Jordanian antiquities department for safekeeping. Unfortunately, this prevented us from studying and examining it further. It was certainly crafted in a deliberate manner and left behind, but it is unclear if it was a votive offering on its own, a tool used in the burial ritual, or just a means of providing light for those in attendance, among countless other possibilities.

SU3 contained a collection of scattered human remains in no apparent original context, even from secondarily deposited processes. Most of these bones were very

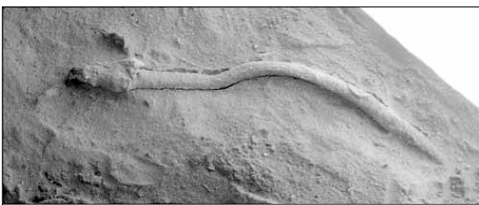


Figure 3.

fewer large rocks on top, and it was only filled about two-thirds of the way with sand.

On this project, we excavated by natural stratigraphic layers or units (SUs), meaning that anytime the soil changed in color, compaction, composition, or artifact type, we started a new SU. Rather than excavating in arbitrary ten-centimeter levels, another common excavation method, we decided that it was more important for our data to note natural

changes in the soil. This helped us to see which levels had been disturbed, how the artifacts were deposited, and which levels contained artifacts still in situ, or in their original depositional locations. There were four stratigraphic units in 16L, each consisting of very fine, light tan and gray sand, with some small rocks of sandstone and gray chert. A white, paste-like, clay mineral coated some of the rocks and artifacts throughout all four SUs. We have not successfully identified the mineral, but the lack of its appearance in the other loculi suggests its deliberate placement in this specific tomb. Generally speaking, SU1 was disturbed and mixed with modern materials.

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SU3 contained a collection of scattered human remains in no apparent original context, even from secondarily deposited processes. Most of these bones were very

poorly preserved. A moderate number of Nabataean plain-style ceramics were scattered throughout the layer, as well as patches of textile in the north-central portion of the cist. SU3 contained a moderate to heavy layer of rock, most abundant in the north section of the cist. Also, SU3

had some pieces of intact wood sections, which showed evidences of carving and drilling. At this level, the wood pieces seemed to be associated with the textile. Much of the artifact concentration occurred at the north end of the cist, giving the wood and textile there possible significance as pieces of an ossuary, or bone box used for secondary burials, which could have been placed at this end of the cist.

SU4 contained the final stratigraphic unit in cist 16I resting on the bedrock. This layer contained a scattering of human bone, ceramics, wood, and textiles. A collection of seeds were scattered throughout SU4, but one concentration was noted in the north central section. Two shallow depressions were observed in the final bedrock floor, one in the very north end and one in the south. These were chiseled out of the floor surface and measured four to five centimeters in depth at the deepest point. The depressions extended the entire width of the cist, forming a shallow, narrow basin at both ends. One of the other cists in the tomb had evidence of plans to make similar depressions, but they were unfinished. The depressions in cist 16I were unique from the other cists. It is still unclear what purpose they may have served, but a variety of ideas have been proposed. One interpretation comes because of the small concentration of pottery sherds found in the northeast corner, suggesting this is where the Nabataeans originally placed offerings and grave goods during a burial. Another explanation proposes it is both a head and footrest, because it is the same on both ends. It could be that this is where each ossuary was placed, because it is estimated that there were three individuals buried here. However, none of these ideas have conclusive evidence that rule out the other possibilities. The most important thing for us to recognize is that this particular cist was different from the others in the tomb. Did it have a different architect? Was there something unique about the individuals buried here? Was it a stylistic change in Nabataean architecture? It is fun to think of the possibilities but sad that we may never know.

### **Human Osteology Analysis**

The purpose of our excavation was to recover the remaining contexts of original Nabataean burials, including human remains and their votive offerings. However, since this paper focuses on the votive offerings, very little detail will be discussed in regard to the actual burials we excavated. Of course, it is important to keep in mind that all the votive offerings found in this cist were placed in honor of those buried here, which gives purpose and context to the other items of discussion.

Based on the osteological analyses performed, it is estimated that there were three individuals buried in cist 16I. One of these individuals was a juvenile, and the rest of the human bones belonged to two adults, one male and one female. The male was sexed based on a sacrum found; it was excavated in two pieces that fit together, this sacrum was lighter in color and more curved than the other sacrum found. The female was sexed according to a pelvis and sacrum found. The sacrum differed from the males in that it was larger, flatter, and darker in color. It was excavated in three pieces that all fit together. The pelvis was badly deteriorated (Fig. 4), but measurements taken in situ suggest that it belonged to a female younger than twenty-

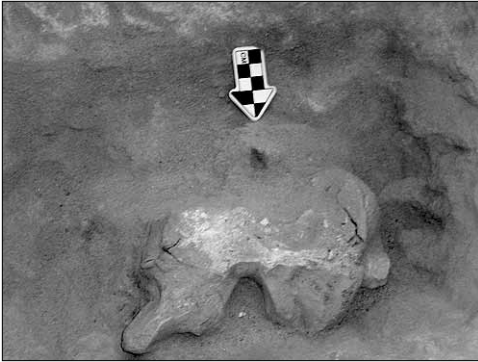


Figure 4.

five years old. The four teeth found suggest the individuals they belonged to were young adults, based on wear, with the age range of three of them being from twelve to twenty-four years old, and the other one being from twenty-four to thirty years old.

Though SU4 had the heaviest concentration of human bone, most of the bone recovered was very scattered. However, the placement of the female pelvis in the northwest corner

is noteworthy. Separated from most of the other human bone and artifacts, the pelvis was surrounded by several ceramic pieces. Bellwald mentions the discovery of an adult human pelvis surrounded by ceramics, “five, unpainted, nearly identical bowls” in the main Siq of Petra. This suggests the possibility of a ritual practice by Nabataeans:

The bone must have been removed from the body after its decomposition because there are no traces of any cuts or other damage. Perhaps these deposits are the result of a commemorative rite, consisting of the removal of a bone from a skeleton and its careful reburial. . . . There are other examples of such Nabataean post-funereal rites in Petra. Apart from this new find in the Siq, a tomb in the northern part of Petra, either Nabataean or Roman in date, was excavated in 1958–59. The burial was well preserved and apparently undisturbed in modern times, but the feet had been severed and the pelvis was missing (Parr 1960). It is clear that the pelvis must have been removed after the decomposition of the body since the rest of the skeleton still lay in its original position and showed no sign of damage. This, together with the new find in the Siq, suggests the existence of a tradition among Nabataeans of the removal of certain bones, particularly the pelvis, after decomposition of the body for further commemorative rites (Bellwald, 2003:80).

It is merely conjecture for us to suggest that this might have been the case with the female pelvis. However, its particular placement away from most of the other finds, its resting atop the north-end depression, and its being surrounded by ceramics, all suggest a deliberate placing rather than it haphazardly ending up in that position after all these years. Therefore, the suggestion that its placement might have been related to a post-funereal rite is not implausible, especially with similar evidence from other Petra burials.

### Faunal Bone Analysis

Analysis of faunal bones tell a lot about the people and culture of a particular site. For instance, any butcher marks on the faunal bones may suggest certain ways

the animals were being used by the habitants, tools they might have used, or their butchering methods. Also, the occurrence of faunal bone from one species, and an absence of another common to the area may suggest the community preferred one type of meat over another, or there may have been certain restrictions on usage of a particular species. The presence of juvenile faunal bones versus adult faunal bones may also determine possible animal husbandry, or merely someone's preferred meal. Without a specific context to relate to, it is difficult to name all of the ways faunal bone analysis may contribute significant data; however, suffice it to say that because of countless possibilities in what it may or may not say about the people, culture, or specific archaeological site, faunal bone analysis is crucial.

There were only three faunal bone specimens excavated from 16I, and they all belonged to a juvenile goat. The inhabitants of Petra have herded goats for millennia, with record of this being the Nabataeans main occupation after settling. It is not surprising then that goat bones were found in the cist. However, it is unlikely, though not impossible, that a goat (particularly a juvenile) would have climbed up into the tomb on its own. Therefore, we should consider the possibility that a Nabataean deliberately placed a goat, or these particular parts of a goat, in the cist during the funerary rituals. Nabataeans commonly feasted as part of funerals, and these faunal remains could be evidence of such a practice. Whether part of a feast or some other ritual, the evidence suggests these goat bones are probable votive offerings, left behind in the tomb with some purpose in mind.

### **Ceramics Analysis**

In archaeology, ceramic analysis may provide diagnostic evidence for dating purposes, as well as the types, forms, and decorations used by a culture on their ceramics. Though as a group, a pile of sherds may all look the same, a trained eye may separate out sherds based on wares, painting styles, and even whether it was a jug, bowl, or plate. In Petra, there is no want for Nabataean ceramics; sherds are so abundant that they crunch under your feet as you hike through the wadi. Archaeologists have studied Nabataean pottery, and it has become very useful in dating sites down to a specific period of particular pottery. Unfortunately, our cist lacked any diagnostic pottery pieces that would help us specifically date the burials.

Three of the four stratigraphic units contained ceramic sherds, but no complete ceramic vessels. Eighty-six ceramic sherds were recovered from the cist, and they originated from no fewer than fifty-three vessels. More than 75 percent of the ceramics were modified after the vessels were broken, either with paint or mineral around the edges of the sherds, or by chipping on the edges and surfaces. This suggests that the Nabataeans brought the sherds as individual votive offerings rather than vessels to be used as containers.

### **Lithic Analysis**

Archaeologists most often use lithic analysis to investigate the kinds of stone tools used by a particular people, as well as what materials were used to create the



Figure 5.

the Nabataeans. They were common items found along most paths a Nabataean would have walked. Therefore, lithics were easily accessible, like most objects used as votive offerings. Lithics are also easily altered for a worshipper's particular purpose in offering. A few of the smaller lithic flakes appeared in our cist, but the majority of the rocks were much larger. The most noteworthy lithic was incised with a Nabataean 'K' (Fig. 5). One theory is that this 'K' stands for *Kutba*, the Nabataean equivalent of the Egyptian god Thoth, which gives substantial support to identify this lithic as a votive offering.

### Wood Analysis

Wood is important archaeologically because it is dated using Carbon-14 testing. Though these tests are expensive, it is worth the cost when no other means of dating a site exists. The types and forms of wood uncovered in archaeological situations may also give further insight into construction techniques, trading for foreign building materials, traditions of furniture, utensils, weaponry, transportation, and burial rituals, depending on its individual context.



Figure 6.

tools, where the materials came from, and how they were obtained. The types of tools used may help determine particular lifestyles among a people, including what they hunted and ate. Larger lithic samples may also supply information such as what kind of grain was being ground into meal and possible building materials. Larger rocks, natural or modified, as well as smaller lithic flakes left over from making stone tools, were all used as votive offerings by

We recovered ninety-four wood fragments from the cist. All of the wood had been worked, and nail holes occurred in four of the pieces. The fragments included five pieces of planks, two wedges, and two corner pieces. The partial planks with nail holes (Fig. 6) and the corner pieces

suggest that a type of square wooden object held together by nails was placed within the burial chamber. It is not outrageous for us to interpret these as evidence for the burial of at least one ossuary in this cist.

### Textile Analysis

Textile analysis gives insight into production methods of cloth, styles of clothing, and other forms of textiles, as well as their uses. In Nabataean burials, the bones



were often wrapped in linen shrouds before being placed in ossuaries or burial chambers. We recovered ten pieces of linen from the cist. The largest piece contained three to four centimeters of the selvedge (the original edge of the textile). It also showed deliberate ribbing within the fabric, presumed to be decoration. In this same textile, there are two holes visible, where it is possible a brooch or other jewelry was pinned (Fig. 7). Unfortunately, tomb raiders stole any objects of significant value centuries ago. Another textile of note was a much smaller fragment; however, it had three pieces of dark purple wool embedded into the weaves of the linen. The color purple often represented royalty, and it was a common practice by the those of lower social class to decorate textile with it in order to imitate elevated status (Elwell, 2001). Whether the family members were trying to imitate status, or if they just put a special piece of cloth in the grave as a votive offering or shroud is hard to support without original context.

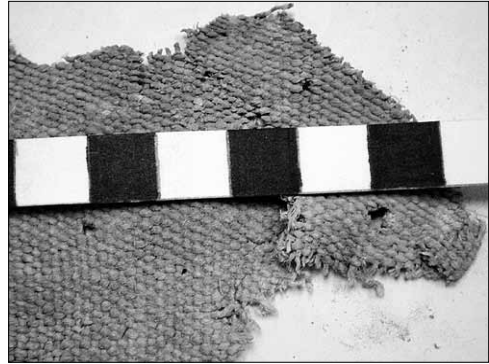


Figure 7.

During the 2006 excavation season in a region near Petra, a Nabataean burial was uncovered that had woven textiles laid over the deceased's face. The rest of the burial was encased in a leather shroud. It is possible that our textile was used in the same manner, either covering the face or the rest of the body (Perry, 2007). Even today, many cultures cover the faces and bodies of their deceased before or during burial. Though this practice may generally be interpreted as a sign of respect, it is presumptuous to assign more meaning than this to Nabataean burials, because we simply do not know what significance the covering of a body may have held for them.

### Miscellaneous Artifact Analysis

We also found a variety of other artifacts within the cist that were possibly used as votive offerings, including four fossils (one was manipulated), one piece of manipulated, petrified wood, two iron nails, presumably used to hold the ossuary together, and the most unique find in our cist—a small fragment of parchment (Fig. 8) inscribed with what Johnson thought to be two cursive Nabataean letters dating back to CE 1–100. The Jordanian department

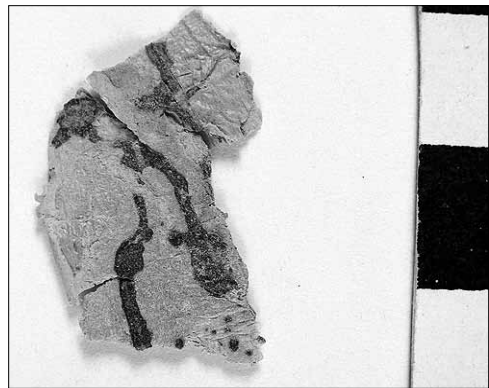


Figure 8.

of antiquities is in possession of the parchment because it is a rare find, particularly these thousands of years later. Nabataeans commonly used papyrus, but without directly analyzing the parchment, we are unable to determine what it is made out of or to specify what the characters represent. However, we may conclude that some type of written document was placed with the burials, whether it was brought to the deceased or perhaps to a deity on behalf of the deceased, and it too may be considered a votive offering.

### Conclusion

We found substantial evidence to support the theory that Nabataeans did use votive offerings in their burial ritual. This evidence includes the faunal bone, ceramics, lithics, wood fragments, textile pieces, fossils, and the parchment recovered from the cist. Each of these, we believe, were deliberately placed in this cist by the Nabataeans during the funerary rituals or during subsequent visits to the tomb. It is still unclear as to whether these offerings were being made *to* the deceased or *on behalf of* the deceased to one of the many Nabataean deities. It is hoped that further evidence recovered from subsequent excavations will help us more clearly and accurately answer these questions. We also conclude that the burials in cist I were secondary burials according to the typical Nabataean burial tradition. The sheer amount of wood retrieved, as well as their shapes, the presence of nail holes, and the discovery of two nails, all suggest that the bones were placed in ossuaries, and may have even been wrapped in linen shrouds.

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# **“Give Us More Water”: A Case Study of Social Impacts of a Local Water System in Guanajuato, Mexico**

*by Matt Cox, Latin American studies*

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## **Introduction**

For the residents of the small villages located outside of Irapuato, Guanajuato, Mexico, having sufficient water is a crucial need that is not often met. During the three-to-four month long dry season there is no rainfall in these villages, and during the rest of the year rainfall is inconsistent. Water levels of small local rivers fluctuate significantly with the amount of rainfall and, therefore, cannot always be depended upon to meet the villagers' water needs.

In an effort to improve the water situation for this area, the state government installed a well and water tank system in the village of Santa Rosa in 2001. The system serves the three villages of Santa Rosa, El Encino, and La Estancia, each at a roughly twenty-minute walking distance from one another. During the time this study was carried out, the water level of the well had decreased significantly and output had lessened due to overuse and lack of rainfall. As a consequence, many water users in the villages complained about the service provided and were anxious for improvements to be made.

The main purpose of this paper is to present a historical case study of the water system in Santa Rosa as one demonstration that water development projects may cause significant social impact. As the literature lacks post-project evaluations of the actual social impact caused by small water development projects, I further argue that practitioners and academics must be more aware of the potential impact of these types of projects. This study shows a few ways in which water development projects may impact the social dynamics of a small community by explaining the relationship between specific events in the implementation and continual use of the system in Santa Rosa, or the technical aspects of it, and the users' reactions to those events. To a smaller degree it also discusses instances when social relationships and dynamics have had an impact on the technical management of the system.

Following a review of the literature, the social impact of this system will be presented from the point of view of the villagers, who are the actual users of the system, and of the local water authorities that work with it. First, I will present the origin and background history of the water system and the users' experiences with it in that part of the development. This history will mainly provide a background context of the system, while also bringing to light the social impact surrounding its installation and initial development. I will then discuss the current state of the system, as well as the users' opinions and reactions to its increasing inadequacy in order to highlight how various technical provision issues are affecting users' behavior and relationships. Lastly, to project potential future impact, I will detail the future plans for the water

system according to local water authorities and analyze the communities' position on these future plans.

### **Literature and Significance**

Since the early 1990s, there has been an increasing focus on participatory management in the water development sector, emphasizing privatization and user involvement (Mycoo 517; La Participación de la Sociedad Civil 3; also see Cernea's book for an earlier discussion of participatory management emerging prior to 1990). It is only since this shift that the field has begun to recognize a need for evaluating the social impact of projects. Before this acknowledgement, feasibility studies and project evaluations focused mostly on technical and economical issues (Tortajada, Environmental Impact Assessment of Water Projects in Mexico 4). Just as important as the technical logistics of a project are the social repercussions the project will create within the communities and personal relationships of the people. In a study done on large dam projects in Mexico, researcher Enrique Castelán recognizes this past avoidance of social issues and states:

[large dams] are the result of a wide and complex planning process, where cultural, economic, social, political, and environmental issues must be considered concurrently, and where the specific weight of each element is defined by the objectives, priorities, and need of the people" (Castelán 175).

Castelán joins many other researchers and practitioners like Cecilia Tortajada, who agrees:

it has been demonstrated that social and environmental issues can result in the failure or success of the best engineering projects and are a critical aspect of project planning, implementation, and success (Tortajada, Environmental Impact Assessment of Water Projects in Mexico 4).

While there is greater emphasis and consideration for the social impact of water projects, social impact evaluations still tend to be pre-project studies conducted on large-scale projects. What is lacking in the research, and what this current study offers, are *post*-project evaluations that analyze *small* groundwater projects. Understanding how a project actually affects the social structure and dynamics of the community helps to ensure continual success and sustainability of the intervention. Also, small groundwater projects can sometimes alter community social structure more than large-scale projects by embedding themselves in the already-established structure of the community.

#### *Pre-Project vs. Post-Project Evaluation*

Post-project evaluations of a water project demonstrate the actual success or failure of the system. These evaluations provide a clear view of not only what went wrong or right in terms of project implementation but also help project managers to know how to improve their practices and adapt to the new social environment. The majority of current studies are feasibility studies carried out prior to project implementation in order to discover potential problems that could arise in the future. By

looking at the effects after the water project has been implemented, project planners will be more informed when developing plans and proposals. By building up post-project evaluation research, these project planners ideally will avoid serious effects detrimental to the social knitting of the community.

As an example, the “water and social life project” is an effort of the Lake Chapala office of communications in Jalisco, Mexico, to educate water users about the unseen effects of their water use on the other community members. In a report on the project, Escamilla and Kurtycz recognize that water provision and use in this area is at the center of a dispute between local communities. Users who live on or near the lake blame communities upstream for low water levels and lake water pollution, without taking any personal responsibility for these problems. Overall, many of the issues are due to users not admitting accountability for their impact on the quantity and quality of the water. These social perceptions and complications prevent any easy resolution of the problem. Subsequently, the office of communications is working to obtain videotaped testimonials of local water users to present to leaders in the communities who will analyze the internal perceptions of the water issues, hoping to find common ground for all interested parties. The project expects this discussion will reveal to users the need for them to change their perceptions (Escamilla and Kurtycz 460, 463). Through the “water and social life project,” the Lake Chapala office of communications uses post-project social impact evaluation in a participatory manner in order to change water use internally. In this way, project management is improved because leaders and administrators are aware of the actual effects of the water provision service.

Cecilia Tortajada has done extensive research through the Third World Centre for Water Management on Environmental Impact Statements in Mexico, which are evaluations required by law (General Law of Ecological Balance and Environmental Protection, or LGEEPA) for water projects, and include minor treatment of social impact. She states:

The LGEEPA established that post-project evaluations are mandatory. . . . However, the legislation does not have any instrument to force the developers either to utilize effectively the EIS [Environmental Impact Statement] they have produced at high cost, to follow it up, or to make post-project evaluations (Tortajada, Environmental Impact Assessment of Water Projects in Mexico 3).

The required EISs in Mexico are not being administered and applied appropriately, reflecting the general lack of consideration for post-project social impact analysis in the country. If water projects are to be successful and properly maintained, project managers must be aware of the ways in which the project changes social relationships and activities.

#### *Large vs. Small Projects*

Small groundwater projects impact communities differently than larger projects. Dams, for example, fundamentally change the geographical, relational, and social make-up of community members’ interactions. When considering social impact eval-

uations of water development projects, the majority of studies address dams or other large projects where social impact is more apparent (Castelán; Tortajada, Evaluation of Actual Impacts of the Ataturk Dam). These projects deal with the resettlement or relocation of entire communities, which obviously alters social relationships and interactions. However, the literature inadequately addresses small, typically groundwater projects, where direct social impact is often less visible but can be more influential in the functional success of the project.

Small groundwater projects install an infrastructure into an already-existing social community. Prior to project implementation, the community has established geographical, hierarchical, and social relationships that determine community member interactions and roles. As water is provided to households within the community, unequal provision may seriously alter hierarchical roles. With local community members put into management roles, social relationships may change based on power struggles or unfulfilled responsibilities. These social effects are unique to local groundwater projects but are often overlooked in social impact evaluations (see Aksit and Akcay, Biswas, Jayatilaka, and Tortajada).

As we have seen, the recent literature on water development projects is focused mainly on analyzing social impact, but the literature still emphasizes pre-project analyses of large-scale projects. This current research fills the gap by gathering post-project data on the social impact of a local groundwater project, and emphasizes the need for further post-project, groundwater project evaluations in the field of water development.

### **Methodology**

The data for this study was collected between September and November 2007. In order to complete the study, I utilized three data collection methods: participant observation, interviews, and participatory learning and action activities. I acted as a participant observer in various situations in order to gather information about how the well is run and how users interact with the water system. I participated in and observed the following situations: a community water meeting, the local water committee fixing pipes, water arriving at a house, and the water pump at the well being run. I conducted fifteen individual informal and unstructured interviews with water users in the villages. I also interviewed two *delegados*, the government leaders from two of the villages that the water system serves. I interviewed four community water authorities, the municipal engineer, and the state engineer. To supplement these interviews, I directed three participatory learning and action activities with local water users and water committee members, in which participants identified problems in different situations and put forth possible solutions to the problems. Two of the activities involved making maps of the water system and other water systems in villages nearby, and the third involved making a calendar outlining monthly rainfall in the area.

There were a number of limitations to this study that should be recognized. First, I was in the field location for only three months, which did not allow for long-term evaluation of the situation or a thorough, more involved study of the social impact

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presented by a broad number of water users. Second, the time period of data collection (September–November) covers the end of the rainy season and the beginning of the dry season for this area. This means that the water level of the well was already decreasing because of the seasonal cycle, which may have distorted evaluations made by water authorities on the status of the well.

### **Conception and Initial Development of Water System**

Construction of the water system that currently serves these villages began in 2000. This was a project of the Guanajuato state government. According to a state engineer, this year was termed “the year of water” by the current state governor, Vicente Fox. The year was celebrated by building a number of community water systems throughout the state (Jaramillo, personal interview). According to many sources, the villages solicited the municipal government for a water system, and the state government granted the project (Chávez, personal interview, 27 September 2007). The state sent engineers to the villages to determine the most propitious spot to drill the well. Though the well was drilled in 2000 by a private company hired by the state, it sat for a year or two without having the rest of the project finished. According to Ramón Jaramillo, a state engineer in charge of rural water systems, the project was paused because the municipality refused to move along with it (Jaramillo, personal interview). With projects like this, the state government will generally approve the project and put forth part of the funding, but the municipal government is in charge of most of the project implementation. The state government then oversees the construction and later supervises diagnostic tests and maintenance, while the municipal government carries out these activities and is responsible for any necessary maintenance beyond the capacity of the local water committee.

The water system in its entirety was built in two major installations, finally being completed in 2002. The first major installation was drilling the well. This perforation was funded entirely by the state government, with costs totaling around Mex\$1,144,200 (the rough equivalent of \$114,000). The second installation took place in 2001 and included the water tank, conduction lines, and feeding lines. The cost of the second installation was around Mex\$1,312,900, equal to approximately \$131,200. The cost was divided between the federal, state, and municipal governments, and the local users (Jaramillo, “Respuesta a solicitud”). According to engineer Jaramillo, this cost was divided between the three governments in the following percentages: the federal government paid 50 percent, the state 25 percent, and the municipal another 25 percent (personal interview, 26 November 2007). Despite this cost break-up, all informants from the villages claim the users were charged a portion of the cost of the system that, according to Efrén Chávez, the president of the local water committee, amounted to 5 percent of the total cost (personal interview, 27 September 2007). In response to this claim, Jaramillo explains that the municipal governments pass off a fraction of the cost charged to them to the communities, or the local users. He said the municipality of Irapuato, to which these three villages belong, is most well known for this (personal interview).

No matter what the state government affirms, the local water users are certain they were charged part of the cost of the water system. Most informants agree the amount was not too much, but no one can verify how much the amount was; responses range from Mex\$200 to around Mex\$1,000 (roughly \$20–100). Most informants claim this cost was paid in two or three installments that together added up to the entire 5 percent required of the users. Currently, the water users collectively pay the electric bill for the pump on the well. This monthly charge is divided between the number of registered users in each of the three villages (Juarez Jr., personal interview, 30 November 2007).

Water committees organized within each village collected the funds provided by the users for the installation of the system and continue to collect the money for the monthly electric bill. These committees are made up of local community members, which have been given the responsibility of overseeing the delivering of water in their village, the registering of users, the maintenance of pipes, and the collection of charges. Each committee consists of a president, secretary, and treasurer. These are elected positions where each member has no limited term but serves in the position until they decide to leave, or the community forces them to leave (Chávez, personal interview, 27 September 2007). Because the members of these water committees are local community members and not trained engineers or public officials, they cannot make informed decisions concerning the upkeep of the well and are often susceptible to acting in their own self-interest.

### **Past Experiences of Water Users**

Over the short history of this water system, users have had many experiences that support both the positive and negative side-effects of the system. First of all, nearly every informant is thankful for the convenience of the water system. Instead of having to travel at least once a day to the river to obtain water, families now receive water once a week from a faucet outside their house. With this, they can store up the water they will need during the week for drinking, cooking, washing, and cleaning. This water system provides a service these villagers had never known before, one that now seems indispensable to them.

The water system also provides clean water, another benefit the villagers could not always enjoy with river water. The well is equipped with a device that chlorinates the water and cleans out harmful minerals from it, attempting to increase the well water's potability. In the river, the water is contaminated with soap suds and garbage from most of the families going there to wash clothes. Yet, the experiences of the villagers still demonstrate that the benefits of clean water also bring negative effects, as shown in the below examples.

#### *The Case of Las Adjuntas*

When the well and pipes were first put in, water was delivered to four villages: Santa Rosa, El Encino, La Estancia, and Las Adjuntas. The village of Las Adjuntas lies on the opposite side of Santa Rosa and the well and tank (figure 1). According to Enrique Gallardo, the municipal water engineer, there was no separate pipe that passed



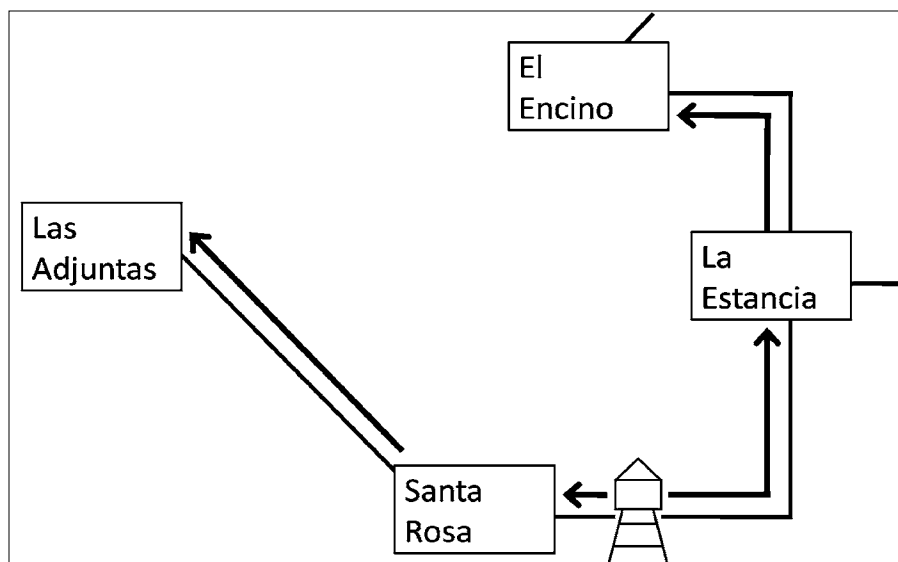


Figure 1. Geographical orientation of the four villages originally serviced by the well. This map was drawn based on input provided by Efrén Chávez, president of the local water committee.

by Santa Rosa directly to Las Adjuntas; there was only one pipe that distributed water to both Santa Rosa and Las Adjuntas. As water was delivered to Las Adjuntas, there was not enough water pressure to get the water all the way to the village. The people of Las Adjuntas, consequently, were consistently not receiving water but were still expected to pay a portion of the electric bill charged to their village. Soon representatives from the village went to the municipality to lodge a complaint and to petition that a valve be placed on the pipe in Santa Rosa, and a separate pipe be installed that would go directly to Las Adjuntas. Gallardo says the people in Santa Rosa refused to put in another pipe and valve. As a result, Las Adjuntas removed themselves from the water system altogether, no longer receiving water from the well in Santa Rosa (Gallardo, personal interview).

While engineer Gallardo, who lives in and works for the municipality, can offer a more objective view of the history with Las Adjuntas, one can still see the effect the situation had on relations between the two villages. Because of poor planning when the system was installed, Las Adjuntas was forced to either ask for a change or leave the water system, and because of Santa Rosa's stubbornness, Las Adjuntas was left with the latter option. This event has abandoned the people in Las Adjuntas without piped water, obliging them to depend upon small amounts of water from a tanker truck provided by the municipality once or twice a week, and scarce river and dam water (Gallardo, personal interview).

Various informants in Santa Rosa also project a different perspective on the situation with Las Adjuntas. According to them, Las Adjuntas suddenly refused to pay their portion of the electric bill without any explanation. After a little while of this,

the general water committee cut off the water to the village, leaving Las Adjuntas to fend for itself. Though this contrasting version has not necessarily brought about any direct negative actions on the villager's part, their understanding of the situation should be taken into account by water authorities. By knowing that the people in Santa Rosa believe Las Adjuntas stopped receiving water because they refused to pay the bill, the local authorities will know to evaluate more closely any social issues that may arise from future changes in the system's management.

#### *The Dispute between Santa Rosa and La Estancia*

Susana lives in La Estancia, one of the two villages that receive water from the well. Until 2007 October, Susana was the secretary in the water committee of La Estancia. Her responsibilities included collecting the monthly charges for the electric bill from each user, keeping track of those who paid, and turning in the collected funds to the secretary in Santa Rosa who would then pay the bill in the city. In an interview, she related an event that occurred a few years before, shortly after the well and tank system began functioning. She recalled that José, from Santa Rosa, was the *pozero*, the person in charge of running the well. He was also the treasurer over the well. According to Susana, he, along with the rest of the water committee from Santa Rosa, decided one day to cut off the water to La Estancia. They claimed the well belonged to them, and no one else should be getting water.<sup>1</sup>

When the people from La Estancia complained, José allegedly forged a letter from the chief engineer in the municipality that verified the legitimacy of them cutting off the water to the village. After that, the committees from both La Estancia and Santa Rosa ended up going to the municipality for a meeting with the chief engineer in order to work out the dispute. The engineer saw the forged letter and, according to Susana, said that he did not write reports on notebook paper but rather filled out forms (Susana believes José probably took the sheet of paper out of his son's school notebook). The engineer also argued that the signature on the letter was not his, that "his signature was different."

In the end, the water was never cut off from La Estancia. Susana did not say whether or not this dispute removed José from his position as *pozero* or treasurer, but it is unlikely that it did. Pedro, the current *pozero*, told me that he began working the well sometime around September 2005, and that José, being the previous *pozero*, had trained him. No matter what the immediate result was, José still has a bad reputation with Susana and is remembered for his attempt to cut the water off to La Estancia. Also, he is not appreciated by some people in Santa Rosa, as will now be seen.

#### *Misappropriated Funds in Santa Rosa*

Alfredo Juarez Jr. currently serves as the treasurer in the water committee in Santa Rosa and also in the general committee over the whole well and water system. The work he does in the community of Santa Rosa goes far beyond his specific responsibilities as treasurer—he is often left in charge of repairs, town meetings, and other duties, meaning he is involved in the management of the water system. I discussed one day with Alfredo the possibility of receiving funds from the

municipality to install dry toilets in the village. He told me the following experience as the reason why they could not receive funds from the municipality.

As has been mentioned, the original cost of the installation of the water system was partly divided among the users. The water committee in each village was responsible for collecting the charge from each household and then turning the money into the municipality. According to Alfredo, when the committee in Santa Rosa collected the funds, they never made the deposit in the city. Alfredo claims that each household had to pay around Mex\$200, totaling some Mex\$9,000 (or nearly \$900). He does not know where the money went, only that the committee (of which José was the treasurer) never deposited it with the municipality (Juarez Jr., personal interview, 30 November 2007).

Alfredo himself did not know this money was not paid until a few years after the fact. While he was serving as the treasurer for the community school, he went to petition funds from the municipality. He was told the community had a Mex\$9,000 debt and until that was paid the community would not be receiving any more funds or projects from the municipality. Alfredo's conclusion is that the committee members pocketed the money without telling anyone (Juarez Jr., personal interview, 30 November 2007).

This experience brings to light two effects the water system has had on these communities. First, for those people from Santa Rosa who, like Alfredo, know the money was never turned in to the municipality, there are hard feelings toward José and the other community members who were on the committee during that time. Alfredo, in the interview talking about this experience, expressed the idea that most of the people of Santa Rosa are selfish and only looking to benefit themselves. Whether or not Alfredo's feeling is justified does not matter as much as the fact that he is not pleased with those people who were on the water committee and participated in stealing these funds (Juarez Jr., personal interview, 30 November 2007).

A second result of this experience is the unavailability of funding and projects from the municipality for the village of Santa Rosa. From analyzing Alfredo's perspective of the events and the way in which he found out about the village's debt, one can assume the misappropriation of the funds in 2002 has caused the community school to not receive essential funding. One can also assume that other projects the village has solicited from the municipality in the past years have been denied as well on account of this debt. These assumptions are not verified, given that only one informant mentioned the debt with the municipality, but it is evident the actions of José and the previous water committee have changed the social perceptions of the committee and altered relationships they may have had with community members.

### **Current Situation and State of the System**

Water is delivered to each of the three villages in the system every six days. For example, if water is delivered to El Encino on Tuesday, it will be delivered there again the following Monday. Also, if water is delivered to El Encino on Tuesday, it is delivered to La Estancia on Wednesday and to Santa Rosa on Thursday and Friday.

Pedro, the *pozero*, runs the pump at the well until the forty thousand liter storage tank is full and then opens valves to release the full tank of water to the village to which it corresponds. The amount of water each village receives is determined by the number of full tanks (or half tanks) Pedro delivers to them. That amount is fixed by the water committee and does not change.

Over the few years the system has been running, the heavy and nearly constant demand for water has been taking its toll on the well. As of November 2007 (following the rainy season), only two meters of the bottom of the well were submerged in water (Chávez, personal interview, 25 October 2007). It also took much longer than before to draw out the same amount of water. According to Pedro, the amount of time it took to fill the storage tank increased from four to seven hours between September and November 2007. Because the amount of water sent to each village has not been decreased, the pump at the well is being run for longer periods of time and is being forced to work harder to pull out the scarce amount of water left. Both Ramón Jaramillo and Enrique Gallardo, state and municipal engineers respectively, argue that the pump is being overworked beyond its capacity and that some change must occur soon before the pump gives out completely. Each of these engineer's opinions concerning what action should be taken will be discussed below.

### **Current Experiences and Reactions of Water Users**

The manner in which water is distributed to each village, the diminishing water level, and the weakening state of the water pump, all cause specific reactions in the users. In general, these reactions are negative. However the people remain neutral, exhibiting perhaps some frustration but not any outward action, or they learn simply to cope with the frustration.

#### *A Constant Flow of Water*

Zoraida lives along the main street in Santa Rosa, after coming into the village from the city, Irapuato. While most of the village is sprawled across a hill leading up to the other side of town where the well and tank are, Zoraida's house lies just at the bottom of the hill, in the lowest part of the village. As the water pipes come down from the top of the hill through the village, the location of Zoraida's house puts her at the lowest part on the water line. This means that Zoraida always has water at her faucet, despite the fact that water is delivered only once a week. She is not exactly sure why this happens, but she assumes it must be because the water that is not used up after being delivered sits in the tube and gathers in the low point by her house. Zoraida uses a faucet at her house that she can open and close. As a result of this phenomenon, Zoraida may be the only person in these three villages who could say she has running water.

#### *Problems on "the Hill"*

Mariela starts up the hill balancing a white, five-gallon bucket of water on her head with her right hand, while with her left she guides along her six-year-old daughter. Her husband finishes filling his bucket from the river and follows behind his wife, walking slowly up the steep hill. Mariela and her young family live at the

top of what is referred to as “the hill” in Santa Rosa. “The hill” lies on the outer edge of the village, separated both physically and often socially from the main part of the village. For some reason, Mariela has not been getting water at her house on the top of the hill. It has been four weeks since they received water. And for four weeks, every day, they carry water up from the river to wash the dishes and to bathe. After about ten minutes of walking up the hill, they arrive at the house and set the heavy buckets down on the ground outside, barely spilling a drop of water out of the uncovered buckets. Mariela’s husband rests long enough to grab another empty bucket, then heads back down to bring the water that will be used later to wash the dishes.

In the meantime, Mariela is quickly reminded of the hard work required to bring water up from the river every day. After not receiving water at their house for four weeks in a row, her husband went to complain to Alfredo Juarez, Jr., the man in charge of many aspects of the well and tank system in Santa Rosa. Juarez blamed the problem on Pedro, the *pozero*. Pedro blamed it on the well. With no one taking responsibility for the lack of water, Mariela and her family are left to get water from places other than the community well. They go to the river daily. She carries one bucket; her husband carries two. Once a week, they go to his mother’s house, where more water arrives from the well, and fill up water tanks with about fifteen liters of clean drinking water for the week. Mariela and her husband are trying to see if they can buy a donkey that would help them carry the water up the hill. Despite the cost, a donkey would make it so only one person would have to go to bring water up from the river, making the daily trip much easier.

Along with Mariela and her family, there are three other households on top of the hill that do not receive water from the well. In one of these households lives Ana, Mariela’s neighbor across the street. Ana is not married and lives alone with her daughter. Her father lives on the same property. That is why she is still living there—to take care of him. Recently, though, the government provided Ana, along with about thirty other families in the village, with materials for a new house. Ana chose to build her new house down next to the kindergarten, right in the main part of the village. In November 2007, she painted the final decorations on the outside walls of the house and prepared to fill in the cement floor. She was planning to have the water tap closed off at her house on the hill and a new one opened at the new house as soon as she moved in. In order for the water committee to be willing to open a new tap for her, she had to keep paying her portion of the water bill before she moved even though she hardly ever got water at her house on the hill. If she stopped paying her current bill, the water would be cut off, and she would have to pay an extra fee to have it reopened at her new house.

Mariela’s and Ana’s experiences show that some users are coping with the failing service of the system by changing their routine and finding alternative ways to get water. Ana has chosen to move to a more central part of the village and continue to pay her bill even when she does not receive water. She has learned to accept that she does not get water at her house and has decided to alter her living situation rather than confront and solve the problem.

Mariela's solution has been to retrieve water from the river and to borrow from her mother-in-law. She and her husband have also decided to make an investment in buying a donkey in order to help carry the water from the river. Specifically, the social impact here is innovation; the lack of water at her house has caused Mariela to change her way of doing things around her home, but Mariela's change of habit is not necessarily good. Certainly, she and her husband have taken the initiative to solve the problem for themselves, but this has meant that they spend more time retrieving water than they would spend if it arrived at their house, and they are using dirtier water for cleaning and bathing. A better solution would be a change in the running of the well; specifically, the water committee should discover why water does not arrive at the houses on the top of the hill and then make the necessary change so that it does.

*Opening Valves*

According to Mariela, the reason the four families on the top part of the hill rarely receive water from the well is because people living in the main part of the village open valves along the water line. All the pipes that carry water from the well to the tank, from the tank to each of the three villages, and throughout the villages, lie for the most part above ground, not buried. Pipes have been constructed bending around rocks and curving along the sides of roads. At various points on the pipe (nine places within Santa Rosa) there are valves that can be opened and shut to control the flow of water. Just as the pipes lie out in the open, the valves are not covered, nor locked, thus making them easily accessible to anyone who desires to open or close them.

The well and storage tank are located on the north side of Santa Rosa, just outside of town (see figure 2). When the water is delivered to the village of Santa Rosa, it comes down from the more elevated north end and down the hill toward

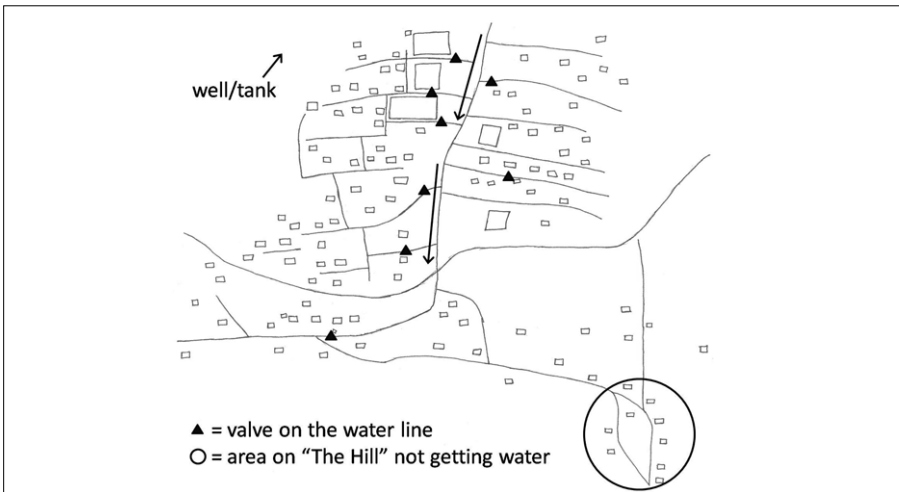


Figure 2. Orientation of water valves and water flow in the village of Santa Rosa. Arrows show the direction of the flow of water from the tank down through the village. This map was created through interviews and discussions directed by the author with approximately ten villagers.

the main part of the village (as indicated by the arrows in the figure). Pedro delivers water to the main part of the village one day by closing the two valves on the east side of the main road and the next day delivers to that east side area and the hill by opening the same two valves and closing all the rest. It is on this second delivery day that people living in the main part of the village sometimes open the valves out in front of their houses in order to get more water. As a result, water pressure in the tubes is lowered and the amount of water decreases, effectively not allowing water to reach the high parts of the hill where Mariela's and Ana's houses are (Juarez Jr., personal interview, 30 November 2007).

Not only did Mariela claim this was happening, but local water committee members and other water users living in the main part of the village attested to it as well (Juarez Jr., personal interview, 30 November 2007).

### **Future Outlook According to Local and Governmental Authorities**

Because they do not live in the villages or visit them often, neither Enrique Gallardo, the municipal engineer, nor Ramón Jaramillo, the state engineer, see the social dynamics at play in the communities. They do not know that Mariela and her neighbors are not receiving water or that Zoraida always has water or of many other things happening at a local level. The responsibility of engineers is to supervise the general technical issues that arise and are beyond the control (or ability) of the local water committee. Hence, the recommendations Gallardo and Jaramillo put forth to solve the problems that have recently arisen with the well do not deal with any sort of social repercussions but rather focus on the well's decreasing capacity and the pump's decreasing capability.

Enrique Gallardo suggests a larger pump be installed at the well. The pump in place as of November 2007 has a twenty-five horsepower engine; it was removed and serviced in May 2007 (Chávez, personal interview, 25 October 2007). According to both Gallardo and Efrén Chávez, president of the local water committee, this is the second pump that has been installed in the well; the first pump was only ten horsepower, and was removed after it burned out due to overuse (Gallardo, personal interview; Juarez Jr., personal interview, 30 October 2007). Gallardo believes a larger pump with more horsepower will have the sufficient strength to draw out the small amount of water left in the bottom of the well. He also explains that the municipal government only covers 50 percent of the cost of new pumps, charging the other 50 percent to the users (personal interview).

In a visit to the communities in November 2007, Jaramillo strongly recommended that the pump at the well not be run for as long a period of time as it was being run. As mentioned previously, during this time it was taking about seven and a half hours to fill the storage tank. Jaramillo said the pump should not be run for more than two hours at a time in order to decrease the amount of strain put on the well with its small amount of water. Implementing this recommendation would mean filling the tank would take more than twice as long, effectively delaying delivery times and perhaps meaning less water is delivered to each village as well.

**User's Reactions**

The users of the well and tank system react much differently to its failing capability than do the engineers, their reactions being based on the demand side of the equation. Informants presented their solutions in phrases like “pump more water!,” “run the pump longer!,” and “give us more water, not less!” The only fact they see and understand, for the most part, is they are receiving less water and they want more. Few informants are concerned about the long-term costs that excessive pumping will have on the well and the future water supply.

We have already seen another response in the case of Ana, the woman who lives on the hill across the street from Mariela. Ana, though she rarely gets water at her house, decides to pay the portion of the monthly water bill charged to her so she can still have water when she moves to her new house in the main part of the village.

Another reaction we see is of a woman named Luisa, who lives in El Encino. Luisa has never married and lives with her sister and her family and their father. Each week when the water arrives, she fills ten fifty gallon drums outside the house, as well as two small clay pots for drinking. When asked how she would change things with how the water is distributed, or if she would prefer to have more water delivered, she responded, “No.” She claimed that if more water was delivered, or water was delivered more than once a week, they would spend more money on the bill each month, and they would waste the water. Luisa believes the villagers (including herself) would waste the water if they were given more, so she feels no larger amount of water should be delivered.

The different reactions of the users show the disparity of the social impact from this water system. First of all, the users’ and engineers’ opinions differ greatly; the users normally demanding more water instead of evaluating and considering the cost of more pumping on the well. However, even among the users there is confusion; some ask for more water, and others—like Luisa—figure that with receiving more water the people would waste more water. These reactions and future plans (or recommendations) are evidence of the differing social impact that has come from this water system and must be evaluated and considered in any attempt to improve the system.

**Discussion of Social Impact**

As shown in the stories presented above, the social impact from the water system in these villages is caused by two main factors: the system itself and individuals’ actions. The system itself has affected social relationships of community members through both the technical functioning of the system and the management practices of the water committee members. First, in terms of its technical functioning, we see how the water system fails in distributing even amounts of water to households within the same village and also between villages. In the case of Las Adjuntas, the system was unable to provide sufficient water to the entire village. Within Santa Rosa, the system provides a constant supply of water to Zoraida who lives in the lowest part of the village but does not supply water to Mariela’s family and her neighbors



on top of “the hill.” Also, the system as currently designed allows public access to shut-off valves, thus altering the proper distribution of water.

These technical aspects of the water system have affected relationships between individual people and entire villages. The problem with Las Adjuntas getting water effectively cut off the entire village and created a rift between Las Adjuntas and Santa Rosa. Zoraida benefits individually from the malfunctioning of the system by always having access to water, while still sharing the same amount of the financial burden as the rest of the village. The system has affected Mariela and her family by changing their economic decisions (they are considering buying a donkey in order to transport water more easily) and by encouraging innovation as they adapt their daily routine to their lack of water. Lastly, we see the relationships between many water users have been affected by the open access to water shut-off valves. Those who take advantage of this access are restricting water to other users, like those on “the hill” for example. Those who are not receiving water for this reason are aware of the people who open valves and steal water, which has created feelings of resentment within those relationships.

The water committee’s management of the water system has also affected social relationships within the villages. Two examples of these management actions come to light in the data. First, the committee members in Santa Rosa attempt to improperly exert their authority to cut off water to the village of El Encino. Second, the same committee abuses its power through embezzling funds that were supposed to go toward the installation cost of the water system. Both of these actions have negatively affected relationships between individuals. We see Susana in El Encino, who is still irritated by the committee member who tried to cut off the water to her village. Individuals in Santa Rosa are also harboring feelings of bitterness toward those committee members who embezzled funds years ago. In addition to this abiding ill will, the misappropriation of funds may have also restricted municipal government funding to the village of Santa Rosa.

Oftentimes connected with the impact of the water system itself, individuals’ actions have affected social relationships within the villages as well. The main example of this is how some users open water valves to steal water for themselves on days or times they are not supposed to be receiving water. Though these actions initially depend upon the technical functioning of the system—in that the valves are physically open to public use—individuals are making the choice to take advantage of this design. As already mentioned above, this affects social relationships by cutting others off from water access and thereby creating discontent. Individuals’ actions within the management system have also affected social relationships. The management actions usually generate negative feelings within relationships between users but have sometimes in turn affected the functioning of the system, in that they have altered the distribution of water between and within villages.

## **Conclusion**

The beginning of this paper quoted Cecilia Tortajada:

it has been demonstrated that social and environmental issues can result in the

failure or success of the best engineering projects . . . construction of water projects is not enough: integral management is very much needed if a successful and stable water sector is expected, and if improvement of the environment, health, life-style of the population, etc. are a serious concern (Tortajada, Environmental Impact Assessment of Water Projects in Mexico 4).

Through reviewing the history of the water system in Santa Rosa, Guanajuato, Mexico, we have seen that this specific system has had significant social impact on the communities, ranging from personal innovation to changed community perceptions to reduced municipal funding. These social changes do not stand alone; they have come in direct response to the implementation and management of the water system. If water development projects are going to be successful and have a more positive impact on the social aspects of the communities they service, management must first evaluate the impact post-project, and then work within the new social dynamics to continually improve and manage the system. By identifying the actual social impact post-project, the project planners will better address the possible impact of future projects and appropriately plan within the current social structure of the community.

#### NOTE

1. When Susana told me this story, she only mentioned that they tried to cut off the water to La Estancia, not saying anything about El Encino.

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# A Will Written Solution

*by Michelle Kincaid, law*

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## **Introduction**

Combating the cycles of poverty that exist within many regions of Africa may seem a daunting, if not impossible, task. Providing a sustainable way for women to support themselves economically provides a particular challenge for Ugandan women because of cultural barriers and legal hurdles that must be overcome before relief may be experienced. Much of existing literature suggests that overcoming these barriers in order to improve the legal status of women, and consequently their economic status, is unlikely. However, based upon field research conducted within secondary schools, these formerly drawn conclusions seem conjectural and outdated. Education within secondary schools is a highly viable option to effectively increasing awareness and bringing about crucial changes within the rising generation of Uganda. This vehicle, combined with broader initiatives aimed at reaching the older generation should be combined in order to improve the circumstances for women in Uganda in the future.

## **The Ugandan Context**

To assume the social challenges facing Uganda are evenly distributed grossly underestimates the complexities of the nation. Uganda incorporates fifty-six tribes, each with its own customary practices, within a geographic area approximately equal to the state of Utah.<sup>1</sup> An additional layer of stratification exists between districts, with people recognizing by sight or by name an individual's region of origin.

In addition to pre-existing cultural diversity, rapid urbanization and development has stratified the population and created staggering differences in access to technology and education for those in city centers compared to those living in surrounding villages. Furthermore, the nation's political history has entrenched this stratification within the population by differentially granting power to selected individuals and their supporters. Notably, since independence from British colonization in 1962, Uganda has had seven governments, four of which have obtained power through force of arms (Brett, 1995).

An additional aspect of complexity arises from clashing values of land ownership. In pre-colonial Uganda, communal clan-ownership dictated access to members apportioned to family units under the authority of the male head of family (Kabanda, 2005). It was not until the British introduced individual ownership through systems of private estates that communal ownership of land was effectively abolished (Kabanda, 2005). However, in some regions, particularly in the northern districts of the country, traditional clan-ownership remains the norm.

Amidst this complexity, the legal status of women has been largely overlooked. This discrepancy is manifest in the fact that women produce over 80 percent of the

food and provide 70 percent of the agricultural labor in Uganda, yet they own less than 7 percent of the land (Human Rights Watch, 2003). The inability of women to own and to inherit property stems from a number of sources. Some of the primary sources are lack of education for both women and those responsible for local enforcement and the fact that customary African and Islamic laws often undermine statutory law (Jansen, 2006; Loftspring, 2007; Ssenyonjo, 2007).

As early as 2002, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) noted with concern the continued existence of legislation, customary laws and practices on inheritance, land ownership, widow inheritance, polygamy, forced marriage, bride price, guardianship of children, and the legal definition of adultery, discriminates against women and conflicts with the constitution and the convention (Ssenyonjo, 2007; CEDAW, 2002). Legal scholars and analysts have postulated that increasing economic rights for women (or enforcing existing rights in rural areas) will help to break the chains of poverty and gender inequality that currently exist (Loftspring, 2007; Sawaya, 1995; Ssenyonjo, 2007). It is generally understood that increasing economic rights education is a critical component in affecting sustainable change and in weakening resistance to shifts in societal acceptance of legal practices and norms (Asiimwe, 2001; Ezer & Ross, 2006; Jansen, 2006; Loftspring, 2007; Sawaya, 1995).

Clearly identified barriers to effective statutory enforcement, with respect to inheritance, exist because traditional practices, such as property grabbing in intestate successions and cultural mores against will recording, prevent effective inheritance transfers. They also leave many widows without remedy when their husbands die and their in-laws are either unwilling or without the resources to provide for them (Asiimwe, 2001; Jansen, 2006; Loftspring, 2007). Furthermore, customary practices provide additional barriers to women economically sustaining themselves. For example, the tradition of widow cleansing (in which a widow is not considered freed from her former husband until she has had unprotected sexual intercourse with a number of partners) exacerbates the spread of HIV and AIDS. The result of this action being the societal shunning of women suspected of being infected with these diseases. Another customary practice of paying a bride price enforces the false notion that women are property and have no legal standing apart from their husband, which further complicates the ability of women to use property gained within the marriage as a means of support upon the death of their husbands (Harries 1994; Just Die Quietly, 2003; Loftspring, 2007).

Enforcement of existing statutory remedies for women is often nonexistent in Uganda. This is due either to ignorance, political opposition, corruption, or because it directly conflicts with cultural norms (Horizons, 2003; Ezer & Ross, 2006; Loftspring, 2007). A generally proposed solution has been that grassroots rights education can improve women's economic status without disrupting cultural traditions, if carried out using culturally-sensitive educational policies, curriculum, and pedagogical methods (Harries, 1994; Mikell, 1992; Sawaya, 1995). However, there are still questions regarding how best to implement education policies, curriculum, and pedagogies to facilitate greater awareness of legal rights, particularly for women.

Secondary schools represent one important potential educational resource that may be able to increase awareness and understanding of statutory legal rights. Furthermore, students within schools represent the upcoming generation of Ugandan leadership. The attitudes and beliefs held by students currently attending secondary schools provide crucial indication of the future of Ugandan society and the fate of the women within the society.

### **Description of the Study**

#### *Purpose*

There is considerable debate on how best to implement education policies and resources to facilitate awareness of current legal rights in Uganda, particularly for women. Thus, there is a critical need for research that evaluates the awareness and understanding of legal rights, including inheritance rights. In addition, research needs to assess current educational curriculum, pedagogies, and resources that may facilitate legal education in culturally sensitive ways. The goal of this research was to assess secondary head-teachers' (school administrators) and students' awareness and understanding of cultural norms and statutory laws regarding legal rights and succession rights specifically. This information will enable a better understanding of how education may facilitate a more effective knowledge of and access to succession rights, particularly for women. In addition to educational interviews, interviews of practicing attorneys, both in private practice and within the legislature were also conducted in order to provide the most current attitudes toward effective change within the broader legal context of Uganda.

The primary research focused on the potential for using secondary schools as a vehicle for providing education regarding legal rights. This study evaluated secondary head-teachers' and students' awareness of educational policies, curriculum, and pedagogies regarding the legal issues, specifically that of inheritance rights. The research assessed the extent to which secondary curriculum and pedagogy may facilitate better understanding of legal rights generally.

In addition, the research evaluated the extent to which existing gaps exist between the curriculum as described by head-teachers and perceived by students. Given that these educational methods have been designed within the culture (Ugandan Ministry of Education), the research also was designed to understand how this type of education is being done in a culturally sensitive manner. The research also assessed head-teachers' and students' awareness of cultural norms and statutory laws regarding successions rights specifically. The research analysis of the data was designed to identify how education curriculum and pedagogy may facilitate the improvement of effective access and use of existing succession rights, particularly for women (Chatlani, 2007; Harries 1994; Jansen, 2006; Sawaya, 1995; Ssenyonjo, 2007).

#### *Research Questions*

The following research questions directly guided this study:

1. To what extent do head-teachers and students in secondary schools express aware-

ness and understanding of both cultural norms and statutory laws regarding inheritance rights?

2. What types of informal and formal secondary education curricular and pedagogical methods address Ugandan legal rights in general and inheritance rights in specific?

a. To what extent do head-teachers and students feel these methods are effective at raising student awareness of legal rights, such as inheritance?

b. To what extent do head-teachers and students feel secondary education curricular and pedagogical methods focus on women's legal rights in general and towards inheritance rights (such as will writing) in specific?

3. Based on the research, what recommendations can be developed to facilitate greater uniformity of awareness and understanding of legal rights, such as inheritance, through secondary education curriculum and pedagogy?

#### *Description of Subjects*

The subjects for this research project included head-teachers and students of public and private secondary schools in Mukono District, Uganda. Attorney interviews were also conducted, involving a representative from the legislature, a private practice, or a corporate practice. Head-teachers were those defined by the school to be functioning in an administrative capacity within the school. Subjects were interviewed in person.

#### *Methods or Procedures*

The data collection was done in the field over a six-week period, on-site in Ugandan secondary schools. Attorney interviews were conducted in the capital city of Kampala.

Secondary school students and head-teachers were chosen as subjects in this study using a two-stage stratified random sampling technique. Stage 1: All of the secondary schools in Mukono District, Uganda, were stratified on the basis of the following criteria: 1) urban or rural, 2) government or private, and 3) large (over five hundred students) or small (less than five hundred students). Of note is the fact that the stratified category for urban and small did not exist within the district. One school was randomly selected from each of the remaining seven categories. Stage 2: At each of the selected schools, the headmaster was invited to participate. Notably, in five of seven schools, because history or political education teachers were familiar with course content, an interview with the administrator for these subjects was conducted, rather than with the headmaster. In addition, a stratified random sample of the students was taken. The students at each school were stratified on the basis of the following criteria: 1) 'O' and 'A' grade level and 2) gender. Two students were randomly selected from each of these four categories to participate in the study. This process generated a sample of twenty students from each of the seven schools for a total sample of fifty-six students and seven head-teachers, or their equivalent.

#### *Data Analysis*

Interview data was analyzed using qualitative data analysis methods. Interview data was analyzed for explanatory themes and patterns emerging from the

data regarding research questions 1 and 2. Qualitative data findings were used to derive recommendations to facilitate greater uniformity of awareness and understanding of legal rights, such as inheritance rights, through secondary education curriculum and pedagogy.

## **Findings**

### *Education in Secondary Schools*

For the reader unfamiliar with the Ugandan educational system, a brief background explanation is useful. As opposed to the U.S., the vast majority of schools in Uganda are private. Rural schools incorporate day students, but when it can be afforded, students board at the school. 'A'-level students differ in age, but typically begin around age twelve and finish at about age eighteen (although, students may be considerably older if they took time off from school to work and earn money in order to pay for school fees). 'A'-level studies incorporate four years of general education. 'O'-level studies incorporate two years of elective education. Students who return for 'O' level typically range from age eighteen to twenty-one. There are more males who achieve 'O'-level status than females.

Early in the interview, questions were set to ascertain if students differentiated between practices that are upheld by tradition and those that are enforced statutorily. One reason for the differentiation was to note if the practice of property grabbing continued because of general ignorance to statutory protections or for other factors. The vast majority of students recognized that property grabbing continues because of traditional practices and that women who become victims of the practice may seek legal redress when it occurs.

One generally accepted proposition in the available literature reviewed before the field study was that legal redress was not a reasonable alternative for women because of the social opposition for women who pursued legal recourse when their marital property had been seized by their husband's clan members. In this literature, women were assumed to forego legal action, because they feared being shunned by their community. Based upon student responses within the Mukono district (the central region of Uganda), disparagement by the community was not a likely result by a woman who sought relief from the courts. Students typically identified access and the high cost of legal protection as barriers more likely to prevent legal remedy. The majority of respondents, however, identified FIDA-U (a voluntary, nongovernmental, nonprofit association of female lawyers in Uganda established to address the status of women in the nation through grassroots education as well as legislative lobbying) as a place that women should turn to when in need of any sort of legal assistance concerning domestic issues.

One notable example was the proposition that will writing as a broad-based solution is not possible because of the popular belief that writing a will is comparable to a final sacrament and its writing invites death to come. As a general proposition, this belief is largely outdated. Students had sometimes heard of this belief, but it was clear among students in both levels of studies, none believed that will writing itself would increase the likelihood of death occurring. Similarly, the vast majority of students



believed that other people (even those within villages who are largely uneducated) would feel the advantages to will writing would outweigh their fears that will writing may hasten death.

These perceived advantages were the reason most students indicated that in the future they planned on writing a will (some female students indicated both they and their husbands would need to write a will). When asked for their motivation behind this intention, most students recognized that a will would eliminate conflict among family members upon the event of their death (although several students identified authentication and other technical issues as obstacles to effective enforcement). Furthermore, all students understood that a will was legally enforceable and would be a way to eliminate potential instances of property grabbing within their own family. There was no significant difference in responses regarding whether or not students would be willing to write a will between students who came from a polygamist household as opposed to those who came from a monogamous union. This was significant as inheritance laws are governed by different statutory acts depending on whether the union was Muslim, traditional, or otherwise recognized.

Not all students indicated a clear intention to write a will in the future. Some students indicated there were existing practices that identified the legal heir and they saw no need to break from tradition. The terminology of a legal "heir" was explained in an attorney interview later as belonging more to practices in the northern regions of Uganda, where tribal ownership of land remains more prevalent than in the other regions. Furthermore, one female student from central Uganda was adamant that she would not need to rely upon her husband to write a will, because she was going to own property in her own name (which is legally possible in Uganda, but as previously stated, total female land ownership in Uganda remains at 7 percent).

The majority of students remained steadfast that change was possible and that information was the key to bringing about change. Their feelings were mixed as to whether or not secondary education was the best place to get information. Some thought students carry home messages learned in school back to their families, but others disagreed, feeling that their contact with relatives in villages would not be an effective way to implement change. Not surprisingly, the division in opinion generally corresponded with whether or not students were boarding or day students. Some students identified secondary education as a way to change viewpoints for people in Uganda in the future but felt that teaching people now through messages conveyed by the local council or by radio were much more likely to result in changed viewpoints (several students made the comment that newspapers and other printed media would not be as effective in rural settings). Many identified issues of trust and credibility, as well as language barriers, as being important considerations for any dissemination of information.

As an overall observation, most students were positive when they spoke of their own future and whether or not they anticipated that they would manage to resolve conflict and prevent potential situations of homelessness or transience that plague widows today. Most students had a general awareness of human rights, however,

they did not segregate women's rights specifically from other blanket constitutional provisions. Significantly, traditional viewpoints were not apologized for rather they were generally accepted as the status quo despite recognized tension sometimes leading to conflict between tradition and the legal systems.

Also of note was the general trend of students to identify broader issues of political corruption and the need for more industrialization before that of women's rights. Women's rights, and particularly inheritance issues, were not identified as pressing issues by students in secondary schools when discussing current legal or political challenges within Uganda. Notably, within the current curriculum, sex inequality has been gaining steady recognition. However, specific discussion of other areas of gender inequality or of challenges facing women in broader contexts of inheritance or property ownership are not within the topics covered by the school curriculum.

#### *Head-Teacher Interviews*

As a generalized observation, head-teachers (which included political science and history teachers) were the most discouraged regarding the state of affairs and the possibility for improving circumstances for women as compared to both practicing attorneys and secondary students. The age range of those interviewed was twenty-eight to forty-four. All interviewees had been educated in Uganda, most at Makerere University, in the capital city of Kampala.

Interview questions were designed to first discuss the general curriculum regarding women's rights and encompassing inheritance issues within that context. While most educators were pessimistic about the likelihood of change by people regarding inheritance or will-writing practices, almost all saw secondary education as a place to effectively teach about women's rights.

Many educators were dubious in their feelings about changing thinking of those in villages. Unlike student responses, there was no clear delineation among headmasters who harbored doubt regarding the effectiveness of secondary schools as a vehicle between those who had been raised in rural areas as opposed to urban centers. However, most lumped superstitious and traditional views within the same category and attributed these views to the elderly or some other nameless group. None of those interviewed cited a specific example of a relative or a friend living in a village who harbored views that traditional practices of property grabbing were legally enforceable or that will writing was equivalent to a final sacrament. In several interviews, head-teachers seemed to indicate that changes were happening in central Uganda, but in other districts, the changes were not likely to happen soon. The basis for such statements again was based upon generalized notions of the people occupying other regions of the country and perhaps indicated more of a regional bias or prejudice than a doubt as to the real possibility for change.

#### *The Legislative Approach*

In order to gain understanding of the current situation (both legal and otherwise) of Ugandan women, attorney interviews were not restricted to inheritance practices but expanded to women's rights generally. The rights discussed encompassed wom-

en's legal status currently and related issues of property ownership and divorce. For this part of the research, a female attorney currently assisting in the drafting of forthcoming legislation was interviewed.

The first observation made by the attorney looking over the interview questions was that they were limited to only the problems and ignored the progress that had been made to that point. This observation pointed out an unintentional, yet notable bias that existed in the field research design. The focus had been exclusively on the gap in equality between many Western nations and the current status of women within Uganda's legal and political systems. All interview instruments and research questions had been designed without recognition for the progress that has been made at a rapid rate as the political situation within Uganda has significantly stabilized within the past two decades. While this limited paradigm was not fatal to the narrower issues of inheritance rights, it is possible that had questions been worded differently, a more optimistic viewpoint may have been expressed by a greater number of headmasters interviewed during the research.

Despite the initial observation, several very prominent issues regarding the current status of women and their future legal gains were covered. In particular the draft legislation for the Domestic Relations Bill (2008) was discussed.

At the outset, the Domestic Relations Bill is designated as:

an act to reform and consolidate the law relating to civil, Christian, Hindu, Bahai, and customary marriages; to provide for the types of recognized marriages, marital rights and duties; separation and divorce consequences thereof and for other connected matter[s].

Upon passage, the legislation will govern approximately 90 percent of the population with respect to the majority of domestic matters.

Several important provisions are incorporated into the draft legislation that are anticipated to positively impact women in Uganda. The first is a specific prohibition against widow inheritance (the practice of another male relative of the deceased husband, often a brother, "inheriting" his brother's widow, often following widow cleansing). This is seen as a move that will encourage marriage by consent of each of the parties while also helping to decrease rates of HIV/AIDS transmission.

Another positive inclusion within the legislation is with respect to the bride price. The bride price (referred to as "marriage gifts" within the legislation) is not required for marriage, nor may any party who has received them legally demand their return. This provision again plays into the aspect of mutual consent in a marriage by freeing a woman to leave a marriage without her relatives being forced to repay the gifts given by the family of her husband upon his introduction. Traditionally, the husband's clan has demanded repayment of the bride price before allowing a bride to leave a marriage. While the legislation makes important strides forward with its prohibition of widow inheritance and against demands for repayment of the bride price, its most progressive strides forward have brought the legislation into a fair bit of controversy.

The first of these provisions is its recognition of spousal rape. The legislation specifically allows one spouse the right to deny the other sexual intercourse upon "reasonable grounds," including fear that to engage in intercourse will cause psychological injury. Violation of the law is enforceable as both a criminal offense and a civil wrong. In addition to the explicit recognition of women's sexual rights, the legislation also greatly expands its definition of property interest for women.

Customarily, following the introduction ceremony in Uganda, a woman may leave her family's home and join her husband's clan. The clan provides the couple with land to cultivate, and, in return, the couple's gain is incorporated into the overall gain of the husband's clan. In keeping with Western expectations, the proposed Domestic Relations Bill recognizes both monetary and nonmonetary contributions of each partner, as well as the ability of a spouse to acquire and maintain separate property during the marriage. Furthermore, the legislation expressly prohibits the unilateral disposition of either spouse with respect to marital property.

Controversy has been generated also by the draft legislation's liberal granting of marital property to both parties upon divorce by allowing a court to consider monetary as well as nonmonetary contributions. Furthermore, it allows for the grant of no-fault divorce when "the sole ground [for the grant of a divorce is] that the marriage has irretrievably broken down."

These provisions generate considerable controversy due to their break from historical expectations and practices. In the past, grounds for divorce required two causes of action for a woman to be granted a petition, while only one was required for a man. Furthermore, nonmonetary contributions were not recognized and spousal maintenance was also not a possibility, where both conditions have been incorporated into the current draft legislation. It remains uncertain whether or not these changes are likely to be enforced.

Uncertainty surrounding enforcement stems from several sources. Notably, this piece of legislation (or very similar drafts) has come before the legislature since 2005 and has been defeated after each presentment. While Uganda requires that one-third of the seats within its legislature be reserved for female representation, the gesture is seen as largely ceremonial (even by the president). Furthermore, the gap between legal rights and actual enforcement is well recognized. Especially at the village level, where the local council and the police are charged with enforcement, both a general lack of information and education as well as a resistance to change from current practices are likely to prevent effective implementation of women's legal rights.

A final aspect of challenge remains to be seen in regions of Uganda where clan ownership of property predominates. In those areas, enforcement of legal rights presents additional challenges as they directly conflict with customs still in practice. Despite these challenges, many, including the attorneys responsible for drafting the new Domestic Relations Bill, remain optimistic about the future for women in Uganda.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The overall status of women in Uganda is behind by Western standards. Traditionally, widows are unable to effectively inherit property and daughters are allowed

a disproportionately small share as compared to sons. Furthermore, in cases where family conflict prevails, property grabbing by the husband's clan members may effectively leave a widow destitute. While this widow may technically have legal recourse, both social and economic factors may prevent her from securing relief. A potential solution to this dilemma is to bypass conflict by introducing will writing as an effective means of allowing the conveyance of property in a way that is in better harmony with societal notions of propriety. As such, the awareness of the boundaries between legal and traditional practices were explored among secondary 'O'-level and 'A'-level students. The qualitative research was designed with the intention of determining how best to implement education policies and resources to facilitate awareness of current legal rights, particularly for women.

The primary research focused on the potential for using secondary schools as a vehicle for providing education regarding legal rights. The research assessed the extent to which secondary curriculum and pedagogy may facilitate better understanding of legal rights generally. Additionally, interviews of practicing attorneys in Uganda were conducted in order to supplement the findings of interviews within secondary schools.

The research was guided by questions that sought to answer the extent to which head-teachers and students in secondary schools express awareness and understanding of both cultural norms and statutory laws regarding inheritance rights. It explored the types of informal and formal secondary education curricular and pedagogical methods addressed in Uganda with respect to legal rights in general and inheritance rights in specific. Based upon the research, several observations as well as recommendations were generated.

The first of these observations is that the general assumption that will writing within the context of Ugandan culture is not a possibility due to the fact that many feel will writing is a final sacrament, or it increases the chances of death, is an outmoded assumption. Based upon student responses, the thinking of those in rural villages may be changed with information. A further note is that the recent history of HIV/AIDS has likely broken down many previously held notions against will writing as many have been forced to consider succession planning in recent years. However, it may be that will writing is not the only effective means of improving circumstances for women.

Indeed, it may be that among the upcoming generation, there are fewer social barriers to women owning property and improving their circumstances. Consequently, educational resources may not need to focus on the importance of succession planning but instead be aimed more broadly at informing students of already existing rights. The legislature has largely paved the way for a progressive future for women in Uganda. It is the enforcement of this legislation upon which the status of women depends. Therefore, it is critical that students are taught the contents both of the Constitution of Uganda and of subsequent legislation.

Furthermore, this education should not happen in isolation but should be disseminated in the broader context of Uganda. Repeatedly during interviews, both in

rural and urban locations, students referred to information they had heard on the radio. Students consistently expressed the view that it is the availability of information that determines the viewpoints of their relatives in rural village settings. Consequently, messages that the Ministry of Education prioritizes are likely to be most effective if coupled with broader public-service-type messages aimed at increasing awareness. It is by informing the older generation while at the same time setting an effective core curriculum for the younger generation that change will happen.

**NOTE**

1. See Constitution of Uganda. Third Schedule.

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# Creating Citizens in the Modern Irish State: Primary Schools as Indicators of Identity Ambiguity

*by Charlotte Williams, sociocultural anthropology*

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## Introduction

Galway, Ireland's third-largest city and located on the western coast, exemplifies the country's unique transition into an economically viable European state. Ireland is a country of contrasts, in which modernizing trends coexist with more traditional ways. Though the city is situated amidst remnants of its ancient history with castles, ruins, and holy sites around its fringe, it also actively embraces modernization. This modernization is largely a result of efforts in Galway, and Ireland in general, to attract foreign investment, which has allowed for a rapid rise in the country's standard of living. However, many of the traditional means of subsistence and living patterns are still clearly evident within the city. Farms full of livestock, thatched houses, and narrow roads paved over old horse and carriage routes are often situated beside modern apartments, large brick houses, and corporate food chains. Trendy housewives with bleached blonde hair walk their manicured dogs past old men in tweed caps tending their cattle. Young men in sports cars pull to the side of narrow roads to allow tractors to pass. Grocery stores are frequented by devout elderly Catholics and young working Lithuanian women alike. Immigrant children from Africa and Brazil learn the Irish language in school.

The contrasts evident from a stroll through the city reflect the contrasts, even paradoxes, similarly present in the country's changing sense of nationalism. Indeed, the current forces present in the national dialogue regarding identity pose difficulties in reconciling new needs with older historical patterns. From its inception, the Irish state has made calculated efforts to inculcate a sense of political identity in its citizenry. Once given political autonomy in the 1920s, Ireland, like any post-colonial state, faced the problem of constructing a new national identity out of former experiences under an often repressive colonial regime that disparaged its native traditions. Beginning on a large scale in the fifteenth century, the process of British colonization imposed English culture on the Irish—most evident in the spread of the English language. With the exception of a few regions in which Irish was still the first language, by the nineteenth century, the English language had largely replaced the country's original tongue. Many of these changes came begrudgingly, and many people in Ireland strived to foment rebellion against the British behind a banner of claimed homogeneous identity as Irish people, often connected to their Catholic faith. Based on this background, in which assimilation with the British coexisted with reactions against their oppressors, the new Irish nation tried to determine what its identity would be in the wake of independence. Since then, Ireland has undergone internal debate regarding its identity and what measures the state should take to foster nationalism in the citizenry.

The Irish government tried a variety of political, social, and economic strategies to build a self-sufficient nation as it debated the form its national identity should take (Gibbons 1996; Graham 2001; Smith 2003; Castle 2001) but failed to progress beyond poverty until it entered the Celtic Tiger, a period of rapid economic growth that began in the 1990s and more or less continued until 2008.<sup>1</sup> The influx of this new wealth triggered a profound change in the philosophy of the state; Ireland shifted away from its insularism. This shift marked a turn toward Europe and the world and brought with it new significant factors that brought the nation's political identity into question.

During a period of eight weeks, I researched this new context in which competing forces vied for power in the shaping of Irish identity. I noted the ideas conveyed in the community of Galway at large but focused most of my time and attention on three primary schools in the city, two public schools and one private school, each with a different ethos, religious affiliation, and demographic breakdown, as I will detail later. However, the messages put forth in each school were largely uniform.

Schools are significant institutions for instilling identity into citizens. Anthony Smith (1991) asserts:

[civic education] is potentially the most significant feature of territorial nationalism and the identity it seeks to create. Observers often remark on the seriousness with which the regimes of new states embark on campaigns for literacy and primary education of the whole population . . . equally important is the content of that education in the territorial nations. [Often] education is as much for the benefit of the national community as for the individual (118).

In most nations with strong states in place, schools serve as socializing agents for children, ideally forming them into the variety of citizens considered optimal by the state (Smith 1991; Gellner 1983). Likewise, the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) put forth by the Ministry of Education for Ireland states that one of the major aims of primary education is "to enable the child to develop as a social being through living and cooperating with others and so contribute to the good of society" (PSC 7). The messages put forth in schools are significant, as they are indicators of the way the state wishes its citizens to form their identities. As a result, the school system grapples with the same issues present on the national level.

My research in Galway suggests that in their portrayal of their national identity, the Irish struggle to accommodate the competing forces present within Ireland's current social context. This paper will examine some of these forces, especially as they are conveyed by the primary school system. Some of the forces I will discuss are grounded firmly in Irish history; for example, lingering effects from colonialism still present in the nation's infrastructure and psyche, Celtic revivalism, which continues to be vital to Ireland's efforts to define itself, and the continued influence of the Catholic Church. Other significant factors are relatively new, including membership in the EU, the nation's recent wealth, massive immigration to the island, and increasing secularization. Correspondingly, I argue that as schools in Ireland largely take their cue from the state, the inability of the latter to achieve a definitive identity like-



wise results in a lack of overarching coherence in school messages. Indeed, messages within Galway's primary schools, coming from curriculum guides, textbooks and other literature, school decoration, and teaching interactions, manifest this identity struggle. Within these schools messages are largely put forth as if there is no incongruity; however, outside the schools the attempted reconciliation is controversial and some in the population point out the lack of coherence.

A large portion of literature on Ireland focuses on Northern Ireland or about relations between the North and the Republic, including in the realm of identity crisis (Finaly 2007; Fahey 2005; McCarthy 2005) and school messages (Hayes, McAllister, and Dowds 2007; Barton and McCully 2005). Instead, I will refocus on the issues that now seem of more significance in the psyche of Irish in the Republic.

Specifically regarding identity formulation in Irish primary schools, Sugrue and Furlong (2002) look at the clash between tradition and change in schools but focus on the role of the principals exclusively. Roland (2006) looks at the clash between Irish identity and a globalized identity in the schools. Further, articles often discuss ethnicity and identity exclusively (Rose and Shevlin 2004; Aisling 2005; Bryan 2008) as is explored in depth by Devine and her collaborators (2005; 2006; 2008). Her articles focus on the reactions of teachers and students to immigration and how the two groups form their ethnic and national identities in the face of recent diversity. However, as Smith points out "a national identity is fundamentally multi-dimensional; it can never be reduced to a single element" (Smith 1991:14).

Therefore, while my research discusses ethnicity and immigration, I will also examine other forces I see as vital to understanding Ireland's identity ambiguity. While there is overlap in these studies and mine, my combined unit of analysis—focusing on state messages—and subject focus on history, modernity, religion, ethnicity, and wealth present a different take on identity within Irish schools. My research is collaborative with existing research, contributing a new angle in investigating Irish identity through a multipronged analysis. The definition of national identity I focus on is that provided by Smith: "[it is] a multi-dimensional concept, and extended to include a specific language, sentiments, and symbolism" (Smith 1991:vii) of the nation. I base my research on Smith's assertion that national identity is a "collective cultural phenomenon" (vii) and is indicative of the notions of personhood that members of their states hold.

### **Introduction to the Schools**

Before discussing the factors involved in messages regarding identity, I will briefly relay my methods of study, provide a brief description of the structure and basic functioning of the school system, and introduce the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999) from the state to provide context for the rest of the paper.

I first chose Galway for my study because of its position as a moderately large city in a rural area. This location provided a medium for viewing both rural and urban life in Ireland. Further, movements to revive ancient Celtic culture are strongest in the western portion of the country where Galway is located—an important factor

in Irish notions of identity, as I discuss later. The area also provides a range of school types from which I picked three.

I focused my efforts on analyzing the curriculum of the schools, observing classrooms, and talking with teachers, both informally and through structured interviews. Within the schools, I looked primarily at the fourth through sixth classes.<sup>2</sup> I felt this age group would best reveal the messages the state most wants to socialize in young children, because they are young enough to be highly moldable and old enough to expose to the issues of historical and political significance that may seem too complex or unpleasant for younger classes. These messages geared toward the older students are still highly simplified, which is helpful to the researcher as they can reveal the main points the state wants communicated amid a sea of complexity. Within this paper, I include some description of the reactions of school participants including faculty, students, and parents, to the messages within the schools, but my primary focus is on the messages themselves.

It was sometimes difficult to work my study into the schools' busy end-of-the-year schedules. During periods when I could not get into a school, I observed and participated in other community events and read about current issues in the local and national newspapers. I also lived in an apartment with four roommates: an Irish couple, a female Lithuanian hotel worker, and a female Chinese student at the local university, all in their twenties, who provided further data that was especially helpful given their diversity. These subsidiary events comprise a sizable portion of my study.

#### *School Structure and History*

Much of the school structure is based on that devised by the Catholic Church dating back to colonization. Historically, schools had a board of management consisting of at least one priest, and was organized by the local bishop, who also served as the school's formal patron in overseeing the school and providing funding. During this era, the church provided coeducational schooling for the first three years of primary school, then separated the sexes at age seven after the children's first communion. This system roughly continues today. Though the government funds the schools, each school still has a formal patron, which is often a clergyman in the Catholic Church. Though not the majority, some Catholic primary schools are still single-sex after the first few grades. However, there is a steady trend of clergy opting out of administrative positions, leaving laypeople in charge of Catholic schools. In non-Catholic schools, which are likewise increasing in number, the patrons and boards of management are also laypeople or authorities within the religious-affiliation of the school.

The Department of Education determines the curriculum and standards for the schools and mandates the standardized testing. The topics within the state curriculum include language (English and Irish), mathematics, social environmental, scientific education (history, geography, and science), arts education (visual arts, drama, and music), physical education, and social, personal, and health education (SPHE), which includes religion. The curriculum does not lay out specifics for religion leaves this to the prerogative of the patron and school.

State inspectors from the department of education visit each school every other year to verify they are meeting minimum requirements regarding school management and teaching the curriculum. Apart from this, the state gives considerable autonomy to each school's board of management. All three schools made teaching the state curriculum their main focus and tried to get through all the material each class was expected to learn.

Both Patrick and Tom, the principals of Galway Educate Together and Mervue respectively, reiterated to me that Ireland's educational system is different from any other in the world largely because of its outgrowth from the church. Tom remarked that it was "hard to explain to someone who's not Irish." This comment implies the nature of the Irish school system is deeply linked to political identity.

### *The Three Schools: A Cross-Section*

Each school I studied in Galway represents a different type of educational experience. This allowed me a look into different ways of performing the same function, which is the education of the youth using state-mandated curriculum intended to create desirable citizens. Collectively, they provide examples of the majority of types of schools present in the country. Grianach, a small private school of about forty students under the patronage of the Seventh-day Adventist Church and led by the principal, Shirley; Mervue, a medium-sized (a couple hundred students), all girls Catholic National School, comprised of economically disadvantaged students and headed by Tom; and a fairly large, multid denominational school of a few hundred students, Galway Educate Together (GET), under Patrick. All three schools had a sizable immigrant percentage. At GET and Mervue, faculty informed me that about 50 percent of the students are immigrants, and at Grianach, while all the fifth and sixth class students were Irish, up to about half of the other students were not.

### *Introduction to the Curriculum: Change and Renewal*

The *Primary School Curriculum* guide from the Ministry of Education details the espoused motivations of the state in the curriculum, as well as the emphases it feels are important. The guide points out several times that Irish society is undergoing rapid change. The introduction to the guide asserts:

[it] represents a major departure in the history of primary education in Ireland. It is the culmination of many years of development and planning. . . . The last major revision of the curriculum for primary schools was *Curaclamna Bunscoile* (1971). Since then there has been a combination of educational, economic, social and cultural developments in Irish society, these developments have been taken into account in this revision (6).

It goes on to say that the curriculum "is designed to cater for the needs of children in the modern world" and that "the introduction of the *Primary School Curriculum* is an exciting opportunity for change and renewal in primary schools" (6). The attitude of renewal and change illustrates that the state wants its schools to evolve with current issues and to project fitting messages regarding identity for the new social context.

### Complexity within Post-Colonialism

I now move on to discuss the specific forces interacting within the schools and nation, starting with post-colonialism. Besides influencing the inner workings of the school system itself (as alluded to previously), Ireland's post-colonial state is of major importance to the national identity of the country at large. Ireland is a unique case within colonialism as it is the only western European country to be colonized by another Western country. It is also unique in the way it has dealt with its colonial history, spanning from extreme reactions against British rule, to current feelings that range more from ambivalent to highly favorable feelings toward the UK. Though sentiments have changed over the years, the state still continues to face this overarching question: what emphasis should it promote for Irish identity after seven hundred years under Norman and British rule? As noted earlier, much of Irish culture is derived from colonial experience during which British culture was pervasive. How much, then, should the country identify with the UK? How much should citizens react against the UK and identify with notions of traditional Irishness? Is this latter idea even feasible anymore? According to Graham (2001):

the point about Irish nationalism, the features within it that have prevented it from being a movement toward liberation, is that it is, *mutatis mutandis*, a copy of that by which it felt itself to be oppressed (Graham 2001:8).

This fact certainly stands as a sore spot for the country and prevents it from ever fully regaining its Irish cultural roots. Should the country instead focus on its role as a European country? Ireland continues to hash out these questions, and the education system provides messages pulling for each of these three sources of identity.

#### *Anti-Colonialism in Schools*

The schools certainly reflect the British influences evident throughout the country. They also make overt reference to Ireland's colonial history. Though various informants told me that little residual bitterness exists towards the UK, there are certain venues within the community and national discourse that still hearken back to the wrongs experienced under colonialism. This remembrance of historical wrongs is likewise evident within the schools. The curriculum book for history notes:

it would be almost impossible for a child to understand the contemporary life in Ireland without some basic notion of a number of key periods in Irish history [including] repercussions of colonisations [sic] . . . still at the root of many issues in contemporary Ireland and Britain (PSC 78).

In keeping with this message from the state, the schools have small reminders of the colonial past in their decorations. In the Mervue fourth class, one exhibit on the wall based on the class trip to the Galway city museum had a picture of a skull with the caption explaining that it belonged to a woman who was killed by English "invaders." At Grianach, the main floor hallway has several pictures and typed information explaining the history of the building, including an explanation about two small graves to the side of the building. The graves belong to a married couple who,

as the legend goes, were killed by drunken English soldiers. Decorative features like these accompany information in textbooks that affirm colonial grievances, especially in reference to the Great Famine. I noticed novels within the classrooms in the three schools that focused on this event.

*That was Then, This is Now*

However, these messages regarding colonialism and Britain are considerably less extreme than those of the past. Patrick, the principal of GET, told me he remembers some of his lessons from sixth class in the 1970s, "It was psychotic. They taught us things like 'the filthy English burnt and mutilated the Irish.'" In contrast, the schools now put forth messages of friendship and admiration of British more frequently than they raise notions of past injustice. The classrooms contain many books published in the UK, students and teachers commonly discuss UK sports, all parties partake in UK media and pay attention to UK celebrities.

Further, many students within the schools have British parents or were born in the UK themselves. Sean, a professor of Irish Studies at the National University of Ireland at Galway and one of my informants, noted the large numbers of Irish in the UK and vice versa provides for an "interconnection" between the two peoples. While schools still portray Ireland in a very positive light (which was the central focus of messages during the era of strong reaction against colonialism) they do so alongside messages that the UK is also good.

Indeed, it seems that many of the grievances so important to Irish in the past are now more relegated to historical references than are major contributors to the nation's psyche. Sean affirmed that "people are no longer obsessed with past grievances and insular issues," which he attributes to Ireland's status as a "maturing democracy." Similarly, Patrick told me that "Irish nationalism is thought of differently now than that of thirty years ago. There's revisionism in history, events become more distant, and there's new diversity in Ireland." Patrick feels regarding this latter point, that immigration in Ireland has forced the country to consider its current context, rather than dwell so much on past wrongs. Many others I talked to affirmed this position, and while colonialism and associated grievances are topics that are still prevalent in academic discourse regarding Ireland, this emphasis was not reflected according to my observations on the ground.

However, this balance between recognition of historical injustices and current friendliness to the UK seem to be somewhat awkward, especially as the UK still controls northern Ireland. The schools do not indicate that these two views on the colonial context are perhaps difficult to reconcile. I seldom noted reference to northern Ireland in the schools, for instance, and when I did, it was mostly in terms of the north as the Ulster region of Ireland that had ancient significance.

And while the messages in the schools regarding Ireland's post-colonial status are not coherent, the school participants seem unbothered by this incongruity. I never heard the faculty nor students ask questions regarding these messages, nor did I observe any sign of heightened emotions during discussion of any of these categories.

This perhaps speaks to the monotony of colonial discourse in the schools, as well as other factors of distance in time from the troubled eras, and Ireland's current wealth which seems to foster a forgiving attitude.

### **Wealth as a Precipitating Factor**

Indeed, the country's new wealth is another important factor influencing school messages as the nation adjusts to a new material standard and is likewise increasingly a prominent factor influencing identity as Ireland embraces innovation and modernization in various ways. Similar to its unique position in colonialism, Ireland is the only country in its region (northwest Europe) to be consistently mired in poverty until very recently, that is, until the onset of the Celtic Tiger in the 1990s. As Luke Gibbons (1996) puts it, "Ireland is a first world country, but with a third world memory" (Gibbons 1996: 3).

This new wealth has afforded Ireland a flood of opportunities it did not have before. Largely, it is now experiencing the modernizing trends that accompany industrialization, whereas other Western countries have experienced this marked transition into technology and a high standard of living for decades. The population is proud of its perceived progress. Patrick told me that "many Irish have gone abroad, and we're not so parochial. The economic situation has allowed people more opportunities." Such opportunities extend to education. Patrick further said that while priests and other educated people used to have high prestige as a minority group in Ireland (as recently as twenty years ago he claims), "now the former class structure has broken down some as Irish people are generally more educated" as well as more well-traveled, and comprise a more "western European country than a rural country at the fringe of Europe. Irish citizens are much more cosmopolitan than they used to be." Likewise, the *Primary School Curriculum* notes:

in a rapidly changing society effective interpersonal and intrapersonal skills and skills in communication are essential for personal, social, and educational fulfillment. . . . The curriculum places a particular emphasis on promoting these skills and abilities so that children may cope successfully with change (*PSC* 7).

It later details that it responds "to changing needs in science and technology, social personal and health education, and citizenship" (7).

### *Modernism vs. Tradition*

The nation and state have not simply embraced modernism and abandoned notions of Irish tradition; on the contrary, both are held up as deeply important for the country. Knowledge of the Irish language, participation in Gaelic sports, and celebration of Irish music, art, and holidays are all highly encouraged in the public sphere, including in the educational system. How then, in the context of wealth, does the nation reconcile the pulls for embracing modern life with preserving tradition? Anthony Smith (1991) points out:

changes in cultural identities . . . refer to the degree to which traumatic developments disturb the basic patterning of the cultural elements that make up the

sense of continuity, shared memories and notions of collective destiny of given cultural units of population (Smith 1991:25).

For the Irish, while the onset of wealth has served as a blessing, it has also been a traumatic event for their notions of continuity as the nation must decide what role tradition plays in their new context. Smith goes on to comment:

the question is how far such developments disrupt or alter the fundamental patterns of myth, symbol, memory and value that bind successive generations of members together while demarcating them from “outsiders” and around which congeal the lines of cultural differentiation that serve as “cultural markers” of boundary regulation (25).

#### *Dichotomous Evaluations of the Past*

The method by which proponents of Celtic revivalism selectively applaud the past seems based on an underlying emphasis the state and school system likewise adhere to: poverty and subordination are bad, and wealth and independence are good. Thus, not all tradition is of equal value. Rather, messages within the schools imply tradition is positive when connected to Irish ancestors before colonization—when the Irish were independent and self-sufficient—and when connected to ideas about their favorable differences from the English during colonization (the image, for instance, which Graham points out that easy-going farmers tended their cattle in the quaint countryside which the Irish felt contrasted with notions about the British being invasive, high-strung workaholics) (2001:10). Based on this assumption, the schools positively portray agriculture, a field of historical significance, as both traditional and as modern. In displaying it as traditional, school books include pictures of the stereotypical rural farmer tending livestock in the field in front of his thatched-roof house. Such an image shows contrast to those ideas about the British during colonization. Alternatively in the realm of modernization, books show technologically savvy farming techniques, complete with efficient machinery and corporate ownership. This image signifies that Ireland is on par with other Western powers, and is up-to-date on innovations in technology and social ideas.

But when tradition is connected with being impoverished or subservient, both during the era of British control and in the years before the Celtic Tiger, it is portrayed as backward and undesirable. The students seem to likewise exhibit this mentality. For example, one assignment in the Mervue fourth class asked the girls to write a letter to a friend from the standpoint of passenger on board the Titanic. Despite the reality that virtually all the Irish on board the Titanic were third-class passengers, only one of the twenty-some students wrote from this perspective. One other girl, a Nigerian immigrant, wrote from a second-class perspective, and all others wrote as if they were first-class passengers. The letters from the latter group involved discussion of the cinemas and restaurants on board, as well as fancy jewelry they could buy on the ship and other niceties. Apparently any sense of wanting to experience the life of their poorer ancestors was overshadowed by the desire to imagine living in vast wealth during this era. The assumption seemed to be that the rich people on Titanic were those worth imitating.

Likewise, the schools often compare Ireland's past economic state to its present one in an evaluative manner. For example, a teacher in the fifth class at GET, Sarah, followed a lesson from her curriculum manual that asked the students to compare an Irish school from 1825 to their own school. As she led the class in considering the materials used then versus the materials used now, as well as the implications of school life for the two, she made it clear that the Irish of the past were very poor, and in turn how lucky today's students were to have such nice schools. Similarly, the history textbook for the class included a chapter centered on a few photographs of a Donegal school from the late 1800s. It raised a series of points to contrast conditions and mentalities. Sarah noted that the desks in the picture were fixed to the floor with no backrests, and there were canes in the room used for corporal punishment and asked, "Is this like your classroom?" The commentary concluded by saying the picture "seems a bit prish for current schools."

Similarly, a teacher in the Mervue fourth class, Denise, reviewed with the students their trip to the Galway City Museum. The discussion again made clear that those in the past were significantly poorer, and that they relied on myths to explain their world. They discussed, for instance, a banana-shaped baby bottle that could feed two babies at the same time as people often had rapid-succession births. They also talked about the pictures they saw of boys in dresses, a practice Denise said was designed to fool malicious fairies looking to take away little boys. To this, one girl responded, "I don't believe in fairies." "No," Denise replied, "it's probably not true." She explained that fairies and witches were used to explain why people became sick.

In each of these cases, the tone of the messages was one of recognizing the unfortunate circumstances of the past, and some messages implied that old ideas could be superstitious and silly. However, when discussion in the schools turns to ancient Celtic ancestors, mystical beliefs are dubbed as exciting and romantic, rather than as superstitious or silly. In textbooks and novels in the classrooms, the Celts are portrayed as wealthy for the time, and characters are attractive in physique and dress. Such images contrast with those of the poor from the Colonial and pre-Celtic Tiger era, in which people are often pictured as emaciated figures wearing ragged clothing.

Gibbons discusses this glorification of ancient ancestors. He argues it serves to validate qualities Irish people want to assign to blood, including notions of the Irish race being a people innately resistant to external subordination (which applies to the turn-of-the-century heroes who revolted against colonialism as well, another glorified group among Irish ancestors). Gibbons comments:

[asserting the Irish as a unique race allows the nation to hold up] an image of an embattled people surviving intact and maintaining unity in the face of two thousand years of upheaval, invasion and oppression . . . the concept of race also helped to explain the persistence of continuity in the midst of change and . . . the racial notion of an original native purity allowed nationalists to cite the effects of conquest to explain away some of the less desirable aspects of Irish life, attributing them to the slave's propensity to mimic his master's vices (Gibbons 155).



Again we see the idea of the favorable and unfavorable ideas of Irish past either being held up or castigated accordingly. The “less desirable aspects of Irish life” which Gibbons discusses can be attributed to the aggressor, rather than the Irish people who, as the argument goes, by nature could not be this way.

Further in keeping with the assumption that wealth and independence are favorable, in addition to focusing on the pre-colonial past, schools also embrace modernization. Textbooks stress the goods and commodities that Ireland sells to other countries through advanced technology. For example, they relay Ireland’s role in the development and manufacturing of prestigious commodities like medicines and computers. Books and class discussion frequently reference modern trends in recreation (surfing the Internet, playing basketball, going to pop music concerts, vacationing in other countries, etc). And the students themselves reflect such descriptions. They had many material items with them at school, were typically picked up by their parents in cars, and often discussed traveling with their parents, especially to other European countries and America. At various points, I observed the students manifesting their desire for various material objects. During Irish class at Grianach, the children read a poem about a nostalgic sort of love for a little house, to which one boy replied, “I prefer a big house.” In an exhibit in sixth class of GET, the students wrote brief autobiographies. One Irish boy, Zane, discussed his like of various expensive things and activities, such as playing golf with his dad, expensive hotels where he had stayed in Los Angeles, and even confessed being “materialistic” and liking expensive things like mega yachts, mansions, gold watches, and cars. At Mervue, the girls talked about their summer plans to travel internationally and recounted past trips they had been on.

And so, while the schools do not directly say so, it seems that there is an underlying logic regarding themes of tradition that are pushed alongside modernity to contribute to the national identity. In fact, wealth seems to be the force the state and population most eagerly embrace and the one for which they provide the clearest rationale for reconciling with other features of identity.

Gibbons (1996) points out that some city elites in Ireland reacted to the rapidly-changing nature of Irish society in the face of modernization with a desire to call back to the (often fictive) past and to glorify tradition. The schools similarly emphasize the presence of a rapidly changing society and say the state of flux can be confusing. As discussed in the introduction to the schools, their stated solution is to orient students in this new context by imbuing them with skills to flourish. This disparity between the elites Gibbons describes and the espoused view of the state is notable and perhaps serves as an indication of the emphasis the state will increasingly push toward modern savvy rather than Celtic revivalism.

### **Implications of Immigration**

Like the debate regarding tradition versus modernity, wealth has also spurred another major tension influencing identity in Ireland, immigration. Various researchers note that ethnicity is important to identity and oftentimes notions of mono-

ethnicity can be strongly pushed (Smith 1991; Gellner 1983; Kraidy 2005). Historically this has certainly been the case in Ireland, with ideas of ethnicity intertwined with notions of Celtic history and Irish essence. The history of poverty in the country has discouraged immigration to the island and has, in turn, allowed the notion of a single ethnicity of Ireland to cultivate. However, as noted, recent wealth to the island has attracted immigrants in large numbers—many of them from non-English speaking countries (Eastern Europe, South Asia, Africa, Brazil, etc).

Jürgen Habermas (1999) discusses how immigration and asylum seekers can make clear the “latent tension between citizenship and national identity” (Habermas 340), and tensions with immigrants are largely rising in many European countries (Habermas 1999; Taras 2008; Baumgartl and Favell 1995). Based on my observations of Irish news stories and my discussions with Irish people as well as immigrants, it seems that Ireland, at least currently, exhibits less xenophobia than many other European countries. Indeed, besides the draw of its economic prosperity, immigrants are attracted to Ireland for its generous state subsidies given to immigrants and refugees, and they further seem to enjoy the relative tolerance of the country to foreigners (though I did encounter skepticism and opposition towards immigration among some people).

Despite this atmosphere of general tolerance, immigrants are posing challenges for the department of education in various ways. To address strain on the schools caused by the dramatic influx of immigrants, the state created policies to provide financial aid to schools in accordance with the number of immigrants they have. Recently, the state has had to set up emergency schools (Patrick says some people refer to them as “black schools,” as the students are primarily African) around the country to accommodate surplus immigrant children the local schools are not equipped to handle. Galway, though not as overwhelmed as some regions, has likewise experienced large-scale immigration and has received public aid to hire English teachers for immigrant children as well as to simply accommodate the increased number of children in the schools.

Correspondingly, the students in each of the three schools represented a diverse mix. Though each school had a sizable local Irish population of students, each also had immigrants from the current and former British commonwealth, as well as many eastern Europeans, Asians, Nigerians, and some from various other Hispanic, Middle Eastern, and African countries.

Those I talked to within both the Galway community and the schools I studied felt favorable toward immigration. My informants provided various rationales for such feelings. Some saw immigrants as economically beneficial to the country, some claimed they wanted change in Irish society, especially in the religious and law sectors, and felt that immigration helped to usher this change, still others portrayed a sense of empathy toward the immigrants based on the country’s own past experience with migration, and some cited the obligation to help the poor from other countries just as they feel Ireland was helped, both by its own immigrants to other countries and Ireland itself through EU aid.

However, this sudden and large-scale immigration poses various questions: How will Ireland reconcile immigration to its largely mono-ethnic identity? Will the population continue to largely welcome immigrants, trend more in the future toward xenophobia, or react in the middle?

School messages currently send a very clear message regarding acceptance; however, they do not offer clear reconciliation regarding the different messages for ethnic identity. The current portrayal of Ireland's own history with out-migration illustrates the differing messages regarding ethnicity priorities in Ireland.

### *Immigrant Assimilation*

On one level, the negotiation between multiculturalism and Celtic identity is less problematic as many immigrants assimilate thoroughly. For instance, one display in Grianach entitled "Favourite Foods" illustrated that the immigrant children largely embraced mainstream Irish tastes (chips or fries, common cereals in Ireland like Weetabix and Ready Brek, cookies, ice cream, pizza, etc). In the display, a Nigerian boy even signified that children may embrace Irish food even if their parents do not. He wrote that he and his brother and sister enjoy pizza, while his "mum, dad, and granny" do not. Other common traits among the immigrant students further illustrated assimilation; most were fluent in English and had Irish accents, many exhibited interest in Irish sports and celebrities, almost all wore clothes that were indistinguishable from those of native Irish children (though some Muslim girls also wore scarves), and both my observations and information from teachers indicated that the children played and talked together across immigrant or ethnic lines.

However, the immigrant students fell within a spectrum of levels of assimilation. On the other extreme, students did not speak English, and did not come from a Catholic background in contrast to the majority of Irish students, nor did they especially fraternize with children not from their country. Further, while immigrant children from European countries could typically blend in physically with native Irish children, those from other parts of the world are physically distinct, creating a constant potential for ethnic differentiation.

### *The School Push for Multiculturalism*

In any case, rather than push exclusively for assimilation, the schools promoted messages of the validity and value of multiculturalism. While there was some controversy among the population regarding immigrants, within the schools the only direct messages were those of tolerance and acceptance of these groups. Especially amidst allegations of racism on the part of the state in its policies toward immigrants and refugees (Finlay 2007; Mac An Ghail 2004), its overt messages of tolerance within the schools are notable.

The curriculum guides and textbooks express such ideas. The history curriculum book directs teachers to emphasize the everyday experience in history, local, national, and international, including "the contribution of different ethnic groups to human development . . . hence . . . the study of people from non-European contexts" (PSC 78). Similarly, the SPHE curriculum guide for fifth and sixth classes encouraged teachers

to talk about “lifestyles of families in different cultures” (PSC 61). Further, the preface of a religious textbook series (published in Ireland) used in Mervue asserted that teachers should strive to give deference to other cultures, as well as consideration of other religions, as they teach. Specifically, it noted that lessons should be adapted to the cultural backgrounds of the students, and that teachers should make comparisons between these cultures and Irish culture. Indeed, Patrick told me that textbooks now include images that are less-traditionally Irish. “Before the curriculum change,” he said, “stories in textbooks often centered around Irish myths and legends with homogenous white middle class illustrations. Now textbooks are more multicultural and sociocultural.”

Also, the decorations throughout each of the schools’ hallways, meeting areas, faculty rooms, and classrooms, were often along an international theme, with special deference to those nations represented by students at the schools. The classroom in the fourth class in GET, for example, featured student-made posters about the food, fashions, recreation, and geography in Nigeria, and each included a section entitled “similarities with Ireland.” Such decoration makes clear the ideal to accept immigrants, treat them with respect, and actively try to find commonalities with them.

This attitude of multiculturalism was also evident within actual teaching interactions between teachers and students. The teachers often put special emphasis on learning about the countries and cultures of students within their classes, both through following the state curriculum and by infusing it themselves. Denise, at Mervue, told me that she used the textbooks as a guideline, but sometimes specified the lessons and assignments to “make them appropriate to the class.” For instance, while one geography textbook suggested assigning the class to create exhibits on Norway, she instead focused on Poland, Nigeria, and Romania as they were the countries of origin of some of the girls in her class.

GET organized an “International Day” consisting of a day-long festival in the school gymnasium dedicated to learning about the various countries that make up the student body. Representative parents from twenty-seven of the forty countries of origin present at the school came to the festival and manned booths that displayed elements of their native culture (decorations, food, music, dress, etc.) they wished to show the students. The parents seemed enthusiastic, greeting the students that would wander to their booth and offering them to taste a sample of their food, or to paint their country’s flag on the students’ faces. The school encouraged students to dress up to represent a country or culture, which many did, and many of the teachers and faculty also wore international costumes.

Also, both GET and Mervue taught a song about children throughout the world to further relay this message of the goodness of multiculturalism. The lyrics included reference to various countries “all over the world,” and indicated that by being friends with children from different places, they could build “a family of children.” All the classes at GET learned the song and sang it together at a ceremony for dedicating a recently finished addition to the school building. Girls in the Mervue fourth class also knew and sang it for me at Denise’s instruction.

In our discussions, the teachers sounded favorably disposed to multiculturalism in the schools. Mary, for instance, commented, "It's kind of good because it allows the kids to appreciate different cultures and backgrounds. It's good to learn that from a young age, it makes them less prejudiced." The teachers also did not complain about discipline problems being connected to place of origin but attributed it to individual variation and parenting skills (which they also did not link with place of origin).

What place does this embracing of multiculturalism leave for the Irish culture? As previously noted, the simultaneous presence of both these forces is perhaps less difficult to reconcile when immigrants embrace portions of Irish culture deemed significant (knowledge of the English and Irish languages, adherence to Catholicism or at least Christianity, interest in local history and sports, membership in the EU, etc). However, reconciliation becomes more complicated when immigrants blatantly clash with notions of Celtic culture.

#### *Problems and Pulls for New Views*

Despite putting forth messages of acceptance, Patrick notes that the school system is experiencing a culture shock from the influx of immigrants. A contributing factor is that immigrant children are not being evenly distributed throughout the schools, as certain areas house more immigrants than others. Further, the inability of some students to speak English causes trouble in communication. While both GET and Mervue have teachers specifically for teaching English, they only work with the students for part of the day, and when these students are in the regular classroom, as Sarah from GET relayed, sometimes teachers have "to do a lot of miming." Most non-English speaking pupils are in the lower grades and seem to have at least a basic understanding of English by the time they reach the upper grades, as was the case in the classes I observed. Regardless, the process can be frustrating for both the teachers and students. Tom, the principal at Mervue, especially noted that some are reluctant to try to speak English and prefer to talk in their native languages with other children from the same country.

Also in the realm of language learning, while immigrants are expected to fulfill the same curriculum requirements as other students,<sup>3</sup> Patrick reports that some immigrant families just want their kids to focus on English. Several students at GET are exempt from learning it, after they complained sufficiently to various people in the education system. Similarly, the teachers told me that some immigrant students seem less interested in some subjects pertinent to Ireland. Sarah said she noticed that while some of her Irish students "feel passionate about some things, those from other countries are not as into, and are less enthusiastic about learning it. Like the 1916 rising—immigrants don't know the background. They would hear it from their parents if they were Irish, but immigrants wouldn't."

The religious backgrounds of immigrant children may also be problematic in the schools. Sometimes the students, especially the non-Catholic students, do not wish to participate in the religious customs of the Irish schools. For this reason, Patrick says that multid denominational schools are gaining in popularity for immigrants, "as they

better cater to their diverse backgrounds and religions." But multid denominational schools are in the minority and often immigrant children must go on waiting lists, sometimes for years, to get in. Further, even multid denominational schools may encounter conflict with students' religion. For example, Patrick told me that a few years ago a Muslim family who was interested in sending their daughter to GET did not want her to sit or play with boys. "But that was their issue; we don't segregate here. So [the father] had to make a choice." Patrick says the family decided to move to Dublin, and they sent their daughter to a Muslim school there.

Indeed, though my observations and the description of most of the teachers indicated the students largely fraternized together, sometimes this was not the case. For example, in the Mervue fourth class Denise told me that the two Polish girls in the class mostly stuck together and kept to themselves. Tom held a view that the students segregated themselves as they aged; as four-year-olds, kids will all play together on the playground, but by the time these same kids are in fifth and sixth class, there are distinct groups organized by background. He maintains it is behavior they learn from their home, to "stick with your own, don't stick with others." He says that at Mervue they "actively encourage integration but can't force it."

While the official school messages so unilaterally push for embracing immigrants, it becomes clear neither they, nor the state, have a clear rationale for reconciling immigration with other certain realities of Irish life, and specifically, with other major forces influencing national identity. Indeed, this mixed account of the dynamics of immigration in the schools becomes even more complicated when paired with the likewise stressed message regarding Celtic identity.

### **The Continuing Role of Celtic Revivalism**

Celtic revivalism, the term coined for the renewed embrace of the traditional Irish language, literature, sports, and customs has been a major force in the national psyche since before the creation of the republic. Its importance is clear in the decision of early government leaders in the republic to make Irish the first official language of the republic, and though the revivalist efforts for the language certainly has its detractors, Irish continues to be largely embraced by the government and people in the country. The relatively recent practice of addressing the language as "Irish" rather than "Gaelic," a term extended to Scottish and Manx indigenous languages as well, illustrates the current desire to designate the language as uniquely Irish, a language carrying the island's essence.

Correspondingly, Celtic activities and traditions are still very much promoted in the public sphere with encouragement from the state. However, the current social context involving immigration and affinity for the EU especially make the future of Celtic revivalism more uncertain. Will people continue to care to hearken back to ideas that many consider a twentieth-century invention rather than a true revival of ancient ways? Or will the nation deemphasize these ideas of the past and instead look toward the future? Currently, the state seems to want it both ways; it continues to emphasize Celtic Revivalism while simultaneously embracing other forms of iden-

tity that align Ireland more with Europe and the broader world. Indeed, the brand of Celtic Revivalism currently in favor is more conducive to transnational deference. School messages have shifted, along with the national discourse, from the insular version of Celtic revivalism that was paramount until the Celtic Tiger to one that still allows for openness to the outside.

This more open approach however, does create a certain degree of ambivalence regarding how Celtic tradition should be infused in current life. Though elements of Celtic revivalism have taken root in the population—for example, many students have Irish names (such as Fionn, Padraig, Brigid, Cian), cities often hold Celtic festivals, and Gaelic sports are especially popular—there are inconsistencies in its use. I never, for instance, witnessed people just chatting in Irish; rather, it was always used in formal public settings. Also, dedication to espousing Irish tradition is evident in different degrees in different regions. While use of the Irish language in public is prominent in the western portion of the island (in signs, lecture, museums, and options to read newspapers in Irish), it is not in the east. This reality is especially notable as the state in Dublin, located in the east, still affirms notions of Celtic identity largely in school messages. Further, openness to other countries does not stop at a level of courteous, but distant, respect. Rather, the country is highly influenced by foreign cultural forces, especially American, British, and European media and trends. In fact my observations of Irish entertainment, technology, attire, conversation, and other facets of life seem to indicate these latter forces are probably much more influential than are notions of Celtic identity.

### *Instilling Irish Identity*

The fact that other forces than Celtic identity are increasingly important in Ireland may lessen the ethnic bond that Irish have to each other. The task of inculcating citizens with a sense of Irishness based upon a specific rendering of history and ethnic belonging is an important one to the state. It serves to legitimize specific discourses about national identity that those in control deem worthy. Smith claims:

the deep preoccupation of many Irish nationalists with the revival of a Gaelic culture . . . [is] typical of [the] intense rediscovery and spiritual mobilization of a lost ethnic past in the service of a newly politicized community, where every member must be re-educated into the new vernacular culture that claims to be the only authentic voice of the people (1991:129-130).

Such an assertion of re-educating citizens perhaps gives light to the *Primary School Curriculum's* justification for teaching the Irish language and revivalism messages in the schools:

An engagement with the Irish language [in] primary education extends the child's linguistic experience and deepens cultural awareness. The curriculum recognizes [sic] that an experience and a knowledge of Irish are important in enabling the child to begin to define and express his or her sense of national and cultural identity (PSC 27).

However, within the schools I studied the desire to embrace the assumed latent sense of Irish identity through language was less acute than the curriculum would indicate. The students I observed, as a group, seemed ambivalent about learning Irish. Sarah, at GET, told me that for the most part, her students feel like Irish is “okay.” She said, “Some think it’s boring, some think, ‘what’s the point?’ and others like it.” The teachers seem to also convey this ambivalence to a degree. Some teachers (like some members of the broader community I talked to) felt there should be less emphasis on Irish in the curriculum. Sarah, for example, said she thought too much time was allocated to teaching Irish, at the expense of other subjects that she felt should receive more time like PE, science, and SPHE. Further, some teachers and other citizens felt Irish is not taught particularly well in the schools, and the state should create a better system for its instruction.

However, while wanting it to receive less emphasis, Sarah still affirmed that Irish was important to learn. Repeating the guide almost verbatim, she said, “It’s part of the national and cultural identity.” She went on to say, “It’s an ancient language, and I would not like to see it become extinct,” and “as Ireland becomes closer to Europe and the states, it needs its own heritage.” I asked her what parts of the Irish culture she views as important, and she listed, “Music, dance, the landscape, sense of humor, storytelling, literature, film-making, art.” Others I talked with (both in the schools and community) relayed similar ideas—that learning Irish in schools preserves the culture, and that it serves as a community-strengthening device. One Irish man commented that “it’s nice to be able to speak to Irish people in Irish, especially if you’re outside the country. It’s a community-building thing.” Similarly, one student at Gri-anach told me that she likes the idea of speaking in Irish with friends so that others would not know what they are saying. Further, Gaelscoileanna, all-Irish speaking schools, are witnessing growth in the country, an indication that people value the knowledge of Irish.

Besides emphasizing the Irish language, schools often reference other Celtic topics, including sports, as noted, and Irish holidays. Textbooks discuss various Catholic holidays, as well as ones especially significant to Ireland’s ancient past: Halloween and St. Patrick’s Day. Also, as noted, the schools affirm participation in Irish music. For example, at GET’s International Day, the parent manning the Irish booth played the spoons, a traditional Irish instrument.

#### *Importance of Ancestor Myths*

Further, as a major base of the Celtic revivalism movement, the schools reference the ancient Celtic peoples. Though I noted in the immigration section that textbooks focus less than they used to on Celtic ancestors and myths, they are still very much present. Textbooks often reference Celtic myths and legends that romanticize and heroize Celtic ancestors. One textbook at GET summarized the way in which the ancient Celtic peoples are largely portrayed in the books, which reflects ideas advocates for Celtic revivalism have pushed for decades, that the Celts were “a race that lived in pre-Christian Ireland.” The implication of this statement is notable in that the notion



that the Celts constituted a separate race from their other western European neighbors (and following, from any other group in the world). In addition to pre-Christian peoples, "saints and scholars" in Ireland are equally valued, the religious figures like St. Patrick are portrayed as beacons of civilization.

Smith points out that for some Irish it is the Celts that are especially important to Ireland as an "aristocratic warrior society . . . one that was rural and free and filled with spiritual wisdom" but that for others the most idyllic era in Ireland was that "after the conversion by St Patrick, famed for its monasteries, its Celtic arts and its Christian learning and literature, when Ireland preserved, almost alone, the torch of intellect and civilization in a barbarian West" (Smith 1991:67). The praise of either of these groups poses problems in the praise of the other.

The praising of the Celts as free of outside influence could be difficult to reconcile with the praise of the saints and scholars, given their Roman background in religion and literary tradition. Likewise Smith's mention of the common label of the "barbarian west" would seem to cast dispersion upon Ireland's own pre-Christian peoples. However, I saw no mention of either of these contradictions in the schools.

Rather, the messages in the schools affirmed Smith's further observation:

the dual cult of Celtic heroes and Christian scholar-missionaries suggested to a returning Irish intelligentsia what a free Ireland might have become, had its development not been thwarted by the Norman invaders, and then brutally cut off by the English Protestant conquests. The vision of an ethnic golden age told modern Irish men and women what was "authentically theirs," and how to be 'themselves' once again in a free Ireland" (Smith 1991:67).

It thus seems that any intrinsic conflicts between idealizing these two groups simultaneously is treated as irrelevant; the important connection is that both groups existed prior to colonization, and are thus worthy of praise.

In order to justify placing these groups on pedestals as national heroes, books within the schools portray ancestors as being intelligent, civilized, and capable of amazing deeds. In addition to general praise of the saints and scholars for their emphasis in learning, teaching, and writing, several books also praised the Celts for their cultivation of Ogham (an early alphabet system) among other accomplishments. This is logical in the context of Gibbons' explanation that "Irish historians . . . took considerable pains . . . to argue that the ancient Irish acquired literacy and kept written records in the pre-historic era" (Gibbons 1996:154). He goes on to say that "this was part of a general counter-offensive by a new wave of Irish historians which posited the existence of an *original* Irish civilization, rivaling Greece and Rome in its cultural attainments" (154). Such assertions argue for the importance of the Celts and their high achievements, qualities to which the students could perhaps turn for inspiration in considering their ethnicities as Irish.

However, in pushing their messages, the books sometimes put forth ideas that are likely inaccurate. Some books convey ancestral myths without making clear they are not founded in fact (for example, implying the Celts invented chess for

example, or that St. Patrick literally dispelled snakes from Ireland). Further, books portray the pre-colonization peoples, especially the Celts, as unrealistically ideal looking. Renditions of Celtic legends in the history textbooks are drawn in comic book style, portraying Celtic men with rippling muscles and epic stances, and all the women as thin and beautiful. Cartoon figures of other groups of people throughout the book are not portrayed in such an idealistic manner.

Though it is a significant force on the national level as well as a major theme within the schools, it became clear to me that Celtic revivalism does not stand out as the most important part of national identity. Patrick specifically mentioned he thought immigration was just as important an issue. Further, during one interview in which I asked a series of questions about his school regarding their efforts to inculcate Irish identity in the students, Patrick let me know I was focusing too much on this theme at the exclusion of others and commented that "our main goal is not to make sure our students go home each day feeling more Irish." His comment makes sense in light of the schools' earnest attempts to juggle the different forces pulling for sway over the national psyche.

### **Connection between Religion and Identity**

Religion, as noted, is also central to identity quandaries in Ireland, in part because it is often connected to notions of Celtic identity. As Smith (2003) points out, while nationalism is often treated as a secular ideology, it can be intimately connected with religion in some instances and, he argues, it is generally applicable to the modern context. He asserts:

religion is vital to both the origins and the continuing appeal of both nations and nationalisms in the modern world. This is something . . . that is often overlooked, with consequences that make it difficult to explain the scope, depth, and intensity of the feelings and loyalties that nations and nationalism so often evoke (Smith, 2003:15).

These feelings of national loyalty tied to religion certainly hold true in Ireland. However, although most people claim to be Catholic and still see their faith as a major component of their Irish identity, Irish people are becoming less devoted to the actual doctrines and practices of the church.

Historically, the church has been an integral part of Ireland's cultural identity and largely served as an ideological anchor in the struggle against the British. The preamble to the Irish Constitution makes direct reference to the Holy Trinity, and the Catholic Church is closely linked with certain popular elements of Celtic Revivalism like Gaelic sports, though, as Sean put it, "There's less of a connection now."

Indeed, the influence of the Catholic Church in the nation is waning. Sean asserted, for instance, that "the idea of a political leader quoting the Bible, as happens in America, would never happen now. It would be seen as inappropriate." Likewise, while the Catholic church still holds significant sway with the elderly, some immigrants, and a section of the adult and youth population, the number of those who could be considered devout Catholics is dwindling among the younger demographic.

This latter group contains a variety of attitudes regarding the church varying from apathy to antagonism. The rates of church attendance are much lower than in the past, and the trends in family structure and reproduction practices, including cohabitation, use of contraception, and single parenting, indicates they are not espousing orthodox Catholic teachings. Further, there is a sizable number of people who simply do not consider themselves “believers” (their term), including several of my informants. My informants both within and outside of the school system offered a variety of explanations for this trend away from devout Catholic following, including secularization in conjunction with an aging democracy and economic wealth, church sex scandals and acts of hypocrisy, and exposure to other systems of thought.

Amidst this climate of lessening adherence, the education system in Ireland is one of the historical bastions of Catholic faith. Teaching religion, like Irish, is mandated in the schools. The introduction to the *Primary School Curriculum* notes that “the development and implementation of the curriculum in religious education in primary schools remains the responsibility of the relevant church authorities” (PSC 6). Such an allowance illustrates the power these churches, which are overwhelmingly Catholic, may hold in the schools. The *Primary School Curriculum* justifies such authority and emphasis in religion in asserting:

for most people in Ireland, the totality of the human condition cannot be understood or explained merely in terms of physical and social experience. This conviction comes from a shared perception that intimates a more profound explanation of being, from an awareness of the finiteness of life and from the sublime fulfillment that human existence sometimes affords (PSC 27).

Thus, the curriculum “is designed to nurture the child in all dimensions of his or her life: spiritual, moral, cognitive, emotional, imaginative, aesthetic, social and physical” (PSC 6).

This requirement of spiritual instruction also illustrates that religion is a priority to the state because teaching it requires substantial time and effort on the part of teachers, especially in preparation for the students’ first communion (Mary, at GET, especially complained about how stressful this endeavor was at the Catholic school she previously taught at). However, schools also manifest ample evidence of the country’s changing relationship with the church. Importantly, for example, parents have the choice of opting their children out of religion classes and other religious activities in the schools.

#### *Continuing Importance of Church*

Even in the face of declining influence, the Church still enjoys a large degree of state support, both regarding its role in education, and in its activities at large. Because the church and state in Ireland have historically been so intertwined, politicians are expected to be mindful of the opinions of bishops and clergy in various political issues. The Department of Education continues to voice support for Catholic religious teaching, so long as it is in a spirit of openness of other ideas. While church attendance is decreasing, Inglis (2007) estimates that 65 percent of Irish attend church weekly, down

from 91 percent in 1973–74. The fact that considerably more than half the population still regularly attends the Catholic Church relays that the church is still of value to a significant portion of the population.

Correspondingly, all three schools show ample signs of religious influence. Grianach and Mervue overtly have a religious affiliation and discuss religion in school. Even GET, which is nondenominational and focuses more on traits of good citizens than overt religion, offers after-school religion classes.

While Mervue is the only Catholic school, each school has elements that reflected Catholic ideas (though Grianach is officially Seventh-day Adventist, their messages are catered to be congruent with Catholic beliefs). Both Mervue and Grianach incorporate religious rituals into the school day, including prayers at the beginning and end of the day and before lunch. At Grianach the students sing religious songs at the beginning of the day and sometimes during class. The girls at Mervue attend liturgies at a nearby church. Further, Mervue, as previously noted, continues to reflect the norm of decades ago when schools, at the behest of the Catholic Church, were single-sex.

Further, decoration in the schools illustrates religious influence. Grianach has posters in the classrooms and hallways that relay messages about God in the students' lives, such as "God loves you" and "Always trust in God," as well as posters with prayers on them. The school has pictures of Jesus and displays on the walls representing Bible stories. Mervue has crucifixes in virtually every room, and the classrooms have wall decorations that outline Catholic doctrine (Mervue fifth class had a display on the joyful, sorrowful, and glorious mysteries, for example), as well as rosaries and figurines of holy figures like Jesus, Mary, and angels. And while GET has no ostensibly religious decorations or ritual promoting religious messages, there are still traces of religious preference. One display featuring alliteration poems in the fourth class, for example, included one that read "evil Eve exists" and depicted in crayon a naked woman on one side, and the woman with a cloak on the other side. Apparently the teacher found it appropriate to present it along with all the other poems. Also, a poster in the hallway of GET had the pictures of all the students who had recently received their first communion and it congratulated them on this achievement.

For their part, students seem willing to participate in the SPHE classes, whether they are connected to a particular religion or not. Indeed, though religion is somewhat controversial among adults both connected to and outside of the schools, the students seemed to view religious instruction as simply another class. At Grianach, all the students participated during religion. At GET, the children made posters and did projects on various groups of people and their religious beliefs and participated in health-like classes geared toward self-esteem and teamwork. At Mervue, Denise told me that her Muslim student participated in religion class and answered questions (although Denise told me she was exempt, at her parents request, from having to go to liturgies with the rest of her class).

Though the students seemed fairly uniform in their response, faculty members I talked to in the schools had differing views on religion in the schools. Some felt teaching Catholicism was a positive contribution to the schools. Denise felt it was

beneficial in providing good messages, and Mary, at GET, likewise affirmed Catholicism. In fact, Mary went so far as to express frustration with parents who do not instill religion in their children. She feels that while having religion in the schools is important, parents also need to encourage spirituality. She said, "Children are young, so if parents are not sending them to the religion classes, the parents are making the choice for them." She further complained that at her last school (Dublin Gaelscoil), it was a huge amount of work for the teachers to have religion in the school, "but most kids don't go to mass with their parents, so it's wasted effort. It's not fair to leave it all up to teachers."

As with many of the other topics discussed this far, the role desired of religion and the Catholic Church in schools is accompanied with ambivalence. As noted, both the state and some faculty members expressed the desire to inculcate a sense of spirituality in the students (though some did not like teaching a specific religion as I will discuss later), and all seem at least to want to inculcate a sense of morality in students. While it seems this push for desirable, ethical behavior will continue in Ireland, it is less clear whether the Catholic Church will continue to be an integral part.

#### *Secularization and Spirit of Questioning*

As alluded to previously, the trend toward less church attendance and religious devotion correlates with increased economic prosperity in Ireland. Ernst Gellner (1983) asserts "the widely held secularization thesis . . . maintains that the social and psychic hold or religion diminishes with industrialism. The extent to which this is true . . . is open to debate; that it is true to some extent is not" (Gellner 1983:84). According to some of my informants, this thesis holds in Ireland. Sean asserted that "secularization is inevitable. All maturing democracies and developing capitalist countries, at least in Europe, almost always become increasingly secular as wealth and education increase." Correspondingly, as the state has aged and become wealthier, Irish laws have been mitigated so they do not so closely follow moral codes of the Catholic church (the passing of laws to make contraception and divorce legal, for instance). Inglis argues that such behavior does not necessarily denote secularization so much as deinstitutionalization of the Catholic Church in the Irish psyche (Inglis 2007:205). Either way, the church is indisputably less influential.

Sean went on to claim that "the church doesn't see the same influence on people. People make up their own minds on things." He did acknowledge that there is still "a significant Catholic population and there are strong believers, but there are more a la carte Catholics. They claim to be Catholic, but they aren't influenced by the church. People now do not follow slavishly the dictates of Rome." Inglis likewise confirms the presence of this a la carte group, and further outlines a similar group, which he terms "creative Catholics" who "no longer confine themselves to the Catholic menu to decide how to live a spiritual and moral life, but look at other religious menus and mix and match, according to their tastes and preferences" (2007:214).

Such manifestations of the lessening adherence to Catholic doctrine were evident to an extent in the ignorance of students regarding church doctrine. For example, in

one incident in the Mervue fourth class, Denise asked the class a series of questions about the pope's visit to Ireland. The answers were tentative and for the most part incorrect. In the end, she told the class the answers, including the date (1979) of his visit. There was clearly uncertainty among the students regarding the pope and his role, and they had apparently not been inculcated regarding the importance of the pope's visit, an event that previously had been a highly important happening.

#### *Less Influence of the Church Institution in Schools*

I noted earlier that the Catholic Church was largely responsible for school structure and functioning in the past. Correspondingly, most of the positions of authority in the school system were held by bishops, priests, and nuns. However, as Patrick, from GET, put it, "Lately a lot of priests are opting out of this position, and more parents are becoming patrons." He further added that "there aren't many nuns in the schools anymore," (though he said that one school in Galway City is run by a nun) and few Christian brothers are a part of the system. I asked him why this is so. He shrugged and commented that fewer people are becoming priests and nuns these days, so their numbers are dwindling.

However, none of the people I talked with sounded especially remorseful about this trend. On the contrary, people both within the schools and in the larger community seemed eager for the school system to change in various ways from how it used to be, and those in charge of the school system seemed desirous to change its image from that of harsh nuns and priests inflicting corporal punishment liberally. Patrick, from GET, lamented that the mentality toward authority dynamics in the schools used to be that "the teacher is the teacher, the parent is outside," and that "the teacher is ruler, and the principal is king." He stressed that GET embraces the trend in schools to move away from that sort of attitude and encourage parent involvement. Likewise, far from the old mentality that school children should not question the major institutions in their lives, especially the Church, material in the *Primary School Curriculum* espouses an aim "to instill a love of learning . . . that will express itself in an enquiring mind and a heightened curiosity" (PSC 7). Indeed, Inglis asserts that "the era of the simple faith that characterized Catholic Ireland up to the 1960s is rapidly disappearing. Critical reflection and scientific rationality have brought an end to . . . unquestioning acceptance of Catholic church teaching" (Inglis 2007:206).

Even the historical structure of the schools has recently been, at least in part, rejected. Most schools are not single-sex, as they used to be, and Keane and Denise at Mervue expressed no desire for single-sex education in their school. Denise, who was willing to give Mervue the benefit of the doubt, stated that she expected there was a reason the school was single-sex, though she also said that she prefers co-educational schools, as they provide "a better mix." Keane was not so generous in his assessment. He openly said he felt that all primary education should be co-educational, and that there is no benefit to single-sex education. He lamented, however, that Mervue was unlikely to become co-ed any time soon, as the tradition of single-sex primary education was long established in the school's area. However, the fact that most schools are

co-educational shows a trend toward the sentiment expressed in the *Primary School Curriculum* that “stereotyped expectations of gender roles can . . . inhibit the child’s educational achievement. It is important that school and classroom planning ensure an equal educational experience for both boys and girls” (28). Such an idea implies the state is leaning away from the notion that schools should socialize youths into orthodox Catholic gender roles, a motivation for single-sex education historically in Ireland. However, the fact that some schools still are sex-specific, despite this statement, indicates that segments of the country (and ideas within the state) either find a way to reconcile this idea to sex-segregation or simply do not embrace such a mentality.

In any case, for the most part, faculty and administrators as well as those in charge of the state curriculum seem to want to align the schools with notions of modern European institutions by making discipline less harsh, employing more entertainment methods of teaching, and especially by making the curriculum and messages more welcoming to all groups.

#### *Desired Appeal to All Groups*

Accordingly, the introduction to the *Primary School Curriculum* further indicates its emphasis “to develop a knowledge and understanding of his or her own religious traditions and beliefs, with respect for the religious traditions and beliefs of others” (PSC 36). Likewise, many of the faculty I spoke with especially stressed this point. Shirley told me that in the school, only two pupils were members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, and their religion classes were Bible-based rather than denomination-based to avoid offending anyone (although this could still be problematic for the three Muslims in the school, although she did not note this). She said that given the very small percentage of students who practiced the official religion of the school “pushing our beliefs wouldn’t be ethical, would it?”

Sarah, at GET, likewise did not like the idea of schools pushing one religion, though she went further in her view than Shirley. She told me she’s “not a believer,” complained about the Catholic “agenda” in the country, and did not like the church’s influence in the schools. Instead, she prefers GET’s approach to religion, saying that “teaching about different religions is good. It allows for students to be more open-minded and to understand other viewpoints.” Patrick, from GET, also affirmed their school’s approach to religion as discussing various ideas and generally emphasizing civic traits more than religion.

On the other hand, Denise, at Mervue, felt comfortable with their Catholic religion courses, explaining, similarly to Shirley, that they were open to other systems of belief as well. My observations corroborated this conclusion, it was clear that each school made a concerted effort to appeal to their students of different faiths and to not offend anyone. This effort was important, in the context of immigration. On one hand, the church has received a boost from the steady stream of Catholic immigrants entering the country. Many of these are from Eastern European countries like Poland and Romania, and their devotion to the church is, my informants tell me, typically more stalwart than that of the younger Irish. Sean asserted that “immigration has

been a huge boom to the church. The church is in huge decline, but not as much now because of the immigrants."

However, immigrants strain as well as boost the church. While many are Catholic, most are not and Patrick explained this latter group is increasingly sending their children to multid denominational schools (like GET) that they feel cater better to their diverse backgrounds and religions than do the Catholic schools. Some develop their own schools that operate with state approval. In Dublin, there are schools for Muslims and Jews, Sean asserted that "immigrants have challenged the system to be more willing to embrace other religions." Mary at GET reaffirmed this assessment, saying, "The role of the Catholic Church needs to be reviewed because of all the immigrants . . . the Catholic Church needs to change with this reality."

Accordingly, at Mervue, the religion classes are more inclusive of secular people and other religions than those of the past. The cover of the religion textbook for the Mervue fifth class consisted of cartoon figures representing various groups. In addition to a bishop and monks, it includes a Jewish rabbi, Roman soldiers, and people of different ethnicities. While it provided texts for Catholic liturgies, prayers, and biographies of Saints, the book also included stories pertinent to current issues in various countries, and including non-Catholic students. Throughout the book were stories about a girl in Pakistan, a confirmation in Chile, a nun who helped combat drugs, Bono's efforts for debt relief of poor countries, and Gandhi's work in India.

It seems that so long as Ireland's social trajectory remains on its current course, the church will need to continue to change to remain relevant to the people. Smith points out:

religion . . . may preserve a sense of common ethnicity as if in a chrysalis. . . . But unless new movements and currents stir the spirit within the religious framework, its very conservatism may deaden the ethnics or it may become a shell for an attenuated identity. Clearly, organized religion by itself is not enough" (Smith 1996:36).

In any case, though the church does not necessarily jibe easily with other identity forces, the schools continue to give deference to it in various ways. Perhaps one factor helping this continued trend is that secularization stands in contrast to some identity forces, namely national pride in historical achievements linked to rebellion from colonialism and Celtic Revivalism. The disavowal of the Catholic Church and/or embracing of secularism may be interpreted by some as a partial renunciation of patriotism and fallen heroes.

### **European Identity**

While national pride in perceived historical achievements may be an obstacle to secularization, there is still an undeniable trend toward waning religiosity in Ireland, a trend that certainly mirrors much of the rest of Europe and probably illustrates one of the ways in which Ireland is embracing Europe. EU membership played a role in lifting Ireland out of poverty, and the majority of Irish feel favorably toward the EU and greatly values its position as an EU member. Moreover, as Sean pointed out,



Ireland has distinguished itself from England in openly embracing the EU, whereas the UK has more reluctant ties. Ireland made sure to make Irish an official working language in the EU, and Irish people express desires to mimic what they seem to see as European sophistication. As Ireland continues to modernize and further entrench itself in the EU socially and economically, some within the population voice questions: Is the fixation on reviving ancient Celtic culture a hindrance to Ireland? Instead, should it focus on European identity as the way of the future? In short, is it more important to be Irish or to be European?

In the schools, European identity seems firmly ingrained in students and the state curriculum often focuses on EU countries, especially in the primary school upper grades. Textbooks in the classrooms detail the history of the EU, providing dates each country joined, flags of the member nations, maps of the EU territory and similar information. The curriculum for SPHE specifically asks teachers to be “aware of various EU cultures” in their teaching.

Likewise, when choosing topics to cover regarding other countries, the teachers gave deference to EU countries (after countries of immigrant children in the classrooms).

The classes did projects on countries in the EU, both on individual countries and the EU as a whole. At Grianach, for example, the students had an assignment to create football jerseys for each EU member state inspired by each country’s flag. Such an assignment sends messages that each EU country is special and important. Mary, at GET, told me that her class specifically studies the European Parliament, even though she says, “Some is a bit over their heads.” She further noted, “The kids seem to love learning which ones joined recently.” Each of the faculty members I talked with agreed that emphasizing Europe in teaching was important. As Denise from Mervue put it, “It’s an important aspect of Irish life now. The world is becoming a smaller place.”

Along with these pushes toward Europeanism, there is increasing interest in teaching other European languages in the schools. There are summer schools in Galway that offer language teaching, and several of my informants in the schools and community expressed a desire to see other European languages taught in the primary schools; one elderly man in the community asserted that “there is too much religion in schools, and not enough teaching of languages. Spanish and French would be useful;” and Patrick, from GET, mentioned he would like to introduce foreign language classes. Regarding this potential push, the curriculum guide, under the category “European and Global Dimensions,” comments on the validity of learning European languages:

In seeking to enable children to realise [sic] and express their individual and national identity the curriculum takes account of our historic links with European culture and our modern membership of the European Union. It recognizes that children’s linguistic and cultural awareness is enhanced by an experience of foreign language learning and that future curriculum development will take account of this in the context of the outcome of the pilot project on modern languages. (PSC 27)

This project, the National Project on Modern Languages, started in 1998 and introduced either French, German, Spanish, or Italian to fifth and sixth classes in selected schools. According to one news report from the Ministry of Education, thirteen hundred schools applied, which comprises about one-third of all primary schools in Ireland. As of 2006, four hundred schools participated. Such high numbers illustrate the demand for learning European languages ("Dempsey"). One ministry official said the program was beneficial, "These children have not just expanded their language skills but also their awareness and appreciation of their European identity and other cultures." She further added that "language skills and cultural awareness are very important in contributing to Ireland's economic, cultural and civic well being and our school curricula must reflect this" ("Minister Hanafin"). Patrick similarly commented that teaching European languages at GET would help their students engage in Europe and the world in the future.

Also, falling in line with EU environmental legislation, Irish schools take active part in encouraging "going green." The state provides an award, a green flag, to schools that fulfill a minimum standard of environmental behavior. Textbooks, classroom lessons, posters, and student projects send messages about not polluting, saving water, recycling, gardening, and riding bikes. Teachers seem to embrace the curriculum in this realm of environmentalism as well. Sarah, from GET, said, "Because of climate change and the environment, we are more aware than ever of teaching children about going green." Though EU restrictions on carbon emissions, water pollution, and other environmental topics is sometimes controversial in Ireland, especially among farmers, ("Limerick") the curriculum the state puts out embraces the call to become more eco-friendly.

But again, this embrace of the EU is certainly not bereft of complexity. As waning devotion to the Catholic Church is problematic to historical national pride, embracing a transnational political body also puts national identity in an awkward position. None of the EU countries have figured out how to navigate between a national and transnational identity. While Celtic Revivalism's still-strong hold pulls for distinct nationalism, other indicators in the schools imply an increasing openness to a larger superstructure. For example, several classrooms at GET had posters relaying information from the UN's 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, which emphasized the dignity of all peoples regardless of nationality. The posters detailed some highlights of the convention, including the idea that:

[a]ll children from birth to age eighteen are entitled to: name and nationality . . . practice religion . . . health care, food and clean water, free education, play, speak their own language, to learn about and enjoy their own culture, to not be used as a cheap worker, to not be hurt or neglected . . . to be protected from danger, [and] to know about rights and responsibilities (UN General Assembly 20 Nov. 1989).

In light of Habermas' (1995) assertion that "asylum seekers and immigrants generally present the European states with the problem of whether special citizenship-

related duties are to be privileged above those universal, trans-national duties which transcend state boundaries" (341), this message is notable in emphasizing the latter category of transcending state. But as with the other categories, the schools do not acknowledge the tension between EU identity and distinctive Irish identity.

### **Conclusion**

Jacques Derrida (1998) provides insight into the effects that identity questions can produce. "Does . . . 'disorder of identity' favor or inhibit an amnesia? Does it heighten the desire of memory, or does it drive the genealogical fantasy to despair? Does it suppress, repress, or liberate? All of these at the same time, no doubt" (Derrida 1998:17). The varying interpretations and tensions regarding identity I encountered in the schools based on the interplay of wealth, immigration, Celtic revivalism, religion, and affiliations with Europe illustrate these conflicting effects, although the schools do not offer direct acknowledgement nor reconciliation of the differing messages which reflect Ireland's disorder of identity.

Faced with congealing a national identity after hundreds of years under British control, Ireland spent much of the twentieth century dealing with its colonial demons. Now, both the state and schools express a changing attitude toward their colonial past and their current relations with the UK. While the extreme anti-colonial bend of the past is much mitigated now, through curriculum, decoration, and teaching interactions, the schools certainly still acknowledge the wrongs suffered under colonialism. However, this focus is not at the forefront of teaching, and other issues take up more time and attention. School messages indicate friendliness and admiration for the UK, and by the accounts I heard, the strong emotive reactions toward colonialism that were apparent twenty years ago are a relic of a past generation. Though controversy remains in teasing out authentic Irishness from the infusion of British culture that transpired under colonization, and the alliance with the UK continues to be uneasy in various ways (notably regarding Northern Ireland), it seems that the country's new wealth has put them in a position to let bygones be bygones. In any event, the schools condemn colonization and affirm current friendliness with the UK without clearly transitioning between the two modes of thought.

Breaking from the poverty Ireland had experience for hundreds of years, during and after colonization, the Celtic Tiger has not only changed the focus on colonialism but has affected virtually every issue dealing with identity in some form. Among these issues is the tension between embracing modernism and preserving tradition. This tension is accordingly played out in the schools, knowledge of modern skills in math, languages, and technology are encouraged alongside engagement in traditional Irish language, sports, music, and art. Textbooks both glamorize Bono and romanticize the rural farmer of yore with his thatched-roof house. Both modernity and tradition are clearly important, but school messages also make clear that not all within these categories is worthy. When tradition is connected with being impoverished and/or subservient, typically connected with both the era of British control and the years before the Celtic Tiger, it is portrayed as backward and undesirable. In

this way, the state and schools are able to better reconcile the pulls for tradition and modernity; both become acceptable when they provide the proper symbolic cachet. It may be notable, however, that while some in Ireland have desired to address what they see as modernization's toll on Irish values with a renewed emphasis on the past (whether real or invented), the school system emphasizes meeting the confusing state of change in Ireland by imbuing students with the skills to flourish in modernity. Wealth has catapulted Ireland from the position of a poor relation to a legitimate force in the EU and the world, and both the state and schools seem eager to embrace this new status. Indeed, wealth is probably the topic of least ambiguity for the state and school system.

Wealth has also spurred a flood of immigration to Ireland. Ireland's reaction to this trend sets it apart from much of western Europe; while other European countries dealing with mass immigration often exhibit xenophobic tendencies, Ireland has largely been welcoming of these newcomers. My informants suggested this reaction in part stems from Ireland's unique history with immigration; the country's past of poverty and migration to America and other countries makes them sympathetic to others in similar situations. This combined with the country's gratitude to the EU for helping to lift them out of poverty makes many people feel the need to do their part for other poor peoples. Further, my informants indicated that growing disillusionment with models of the old order, notably the Catholic Church, make some people more open to new systems of thought. This attitude is prevalent within the schools; they strongly embrace multiculturalism and encourage pupils to take interest in the various countries of origin of their peers. Often immigrant children assimilate quite well in the schools, and children frequently play across national, ethnic, and religious lines. However, immigration is not devoid of controversy; it has put strain on schools to accommodate the number and diversity of backgrounds of the immigrant children: some children never really integrate into the schools and some in the schools and larger community are wary of these foreigners.

Further, immigration complicates identity in adding diversity to Ireland's previously virtually mono-ethnic population, an issue that becomes more obvious when immigrants are unwilling or unable to embrace Celtic Revivalism and various important aspects of Irish culture. Regardless, the curriculum and other school messages virtually unilaterally affirm multiculturalism and acceptance without offering clear reconciliation between the different messages for ethnic identity.

Celtic Revivalism has long served as a battle cry for the unification of Irish people under the banner of common ethnic and cultural heritage. It served to strengthen the self-esteem of the nation, arguing that their ancient ways were not backward or savage, as it was portrayed by their English oppressors, but rather noble and spirited. As for virtually any nation, the ancestor myth is important for Ireland and especially for proponents of Celtic Revivalism. Assigning favorable attributes to their forbears, in this case, especially intelligence, courage, and spiritedness, allows proponents to argue that these characteristics are defining for the Irish ethnics and are similarly present in its modern citizens (which potentially poses a problem for integrating im-

migrants, as alluded to above, especially since Irish history is not made up of the contributions of various ethnic groups the way it is in the U.S.). While Celtic Revivalism continues to be a significant movement, in the schools as well as in the national discourse, messages have shifted from the insular version of Celtic revivalism which was paramount until the Celtic Tiger to a focus on propping up Irish people as a significant force in the world at large. But since revivalism is actively encouraged alongside multiculturalism, and European identity, it seems the schools expect students to wear whichever identity hat corresponds with the class they are in. Further, as Celtic revivalism has historically been connected with the Catholic Church, the weakening influence of the latter makes the future course of revivalism less clear.

While the Catholic Church continues to be an important factor in the national psyche, its sway is lessening, especially among younger generations, a phenomenon which has largely corresponded with increased wealth in Ireland. While students still take classes in Catholicism in the vast majority of schools, many of the past characteristics of the Church's presence are mitigated in current schools. This trend corresponds with Irish life in the private and public sector generally, and the state, though still respectful toward the church and under its sway to some degree, is increasingly secularizing itself. Few people I talked to seemed remorseful about these developments. On the contrary, many were enthusiastic that Irish culture was becoming more open to other ideas. Regarding the schools, my informants were pleased that the harsh teaching tactics connected with the church have fallen out of favor.

The church itself has also become more open to other philosophies and spiritual ideas, in part likely due to its desire to appeal to immigrants. In any event, while diminished from its past role, the church is still a major force within the schools and the general culture. As Ireland takes pride in its status as an increasingly modern, democratic country, and largely welcomes immigrants who often have different faith traditions, the presence of the Catholic Church in the schools becomes increasingly awkward, and sets Ireland apart from most of its western European neighbors.

Ireland, like all EU countries, also faces the dueling pulls between national identity and transnational European identity. Ireland has, on the whole, embraced its membership in the EU. It eagerly adopted the euro, participates in easier traveling access between EU countries, and strives to adhere to EU legislation and directives. The curriculum for schools often focuses on the EU, and the presence of many students originally from other European countries frequently draws focus to the shared European identity the schools like to stress. However, the balancing act for the state and schools is awkward in determining the proper role of Irish versus European identity. For example, many schools would like to incorporate other European languages into their schools, an endeavor which might threaten time allotment and enthusiasm for Irish-language classes.

Though they do not openly acknowledge the conflicting messages, it seems the state and schools are striving to accommodate the differing elements discussed in this paper. Further research could more extensively explore the topics I have grazed and could examine these factors in light of Ireland's ever-evolving social context. Even now,

as wealth largely contributed to the identity issues Ireland faces, current economic problems the world over make the future of Ireland's wealth unclear, and this development will likely effect other factors. Notably, some immigrants in Ireland are starting to return home as Ireland's prosperity has lately stagnated. Researching identity within this new, and perhaps transient, stage of economic recession may provide evidence of how firmly held the various notions of identity are, versus how tied to wealth they are.

Smith points out that national efforts to rediscover the authentic self become intensely important "to many divided and disoriented individuals who have had to contend with the vast changes and uncertainties of the modern world" (1991:17). In the course of whatever future social changes may contribute to the current identity questions in Ireland, the *Primary School Curriculum* points out that "the relationship between education and society is dynamic and interactive. Education not only reflects a society but is an influence in shaping its development" (PSC 6). Indeed, schools will no doubt continue to play an integral role in illustrating the competing forces present in Irish political identity.

#### NOTES

1. Like much of the world, Ireland is currently facing economic hardship.
2. In this context, the Irish use the word "class" instead of "grade," as in the United States.
3. Excepted only if an immigrant is ten years old or older when he/she comes into schools, is the child of a diplomat, or has special needs.

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