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Rivista sulle trasformazioni sociali

Postmodern Othering or Established-Outsiders Relations? Understanding the Reception and Treatment of Immigrants in Ireland

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This chapter examines the discriminatory and exclusionary treatment experienced by migrants in Ireland and argues that Elias's established-outsider approach offers a more plausible framework for understanding the reception and treatment of immigrants in Ireland than various postmodern sociological analyses.

Over the last fifteen years, high and sustained levels of immigration have transformed Irish society. Between 1999 and 2008 the population increased by 18 per cent – the highest rate in the 27 countries comprising the European Union. Increasingly multi-ethnic and cosmopolitan, the emerging pattern of cultural heterogeneity and diversity – with immigrants from 188 countries – is unprecedented. From a nation defined previously by large-scale emigration, Ireland has now become a country of entrenched immigration.

These socio-cultural changes have, in varying ways and at different levels of intensity transformed a number of sociological aspects of Irish society: the operation of labour markets; the state regulation of political and civic rights; cultural issues concerning diversity, citizenship, multiculturalism, integration, and ethno-racial domination. They have also reframed a number of socio-economic issues concerning class, poverty, unemployment, social welfare, social exclusion, housing, political representation, trade union membership, national belonging and membership, and equality in Ireland (Loyal 2011).

Despite Ireland's tourist-orientated national self-image as a welcoming, hospitable country, varying levels of racism directed towards migrants undoubtedly exist. In a survey carried out in 2000, almost 80 per cent of individuals from black or ethnic minority groups living in Ireland claimed they had experienced some form of racism or discrimination while living here (O'Mahony, Loyal, Mulcahy 2001). More recent reports have suggested that this level of discrimination has not diminished[1]. A study carried out by the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency in 2009 found that Ireland was among the worst five countries in the EU when it came to racial discrimination and abuse.

Migrant workers have also suffered from high levels of exploitation in the workplace. According to Quinn and Hughes (2004), work permit holders earn up to 14 per cent less than indigenous workers, despite the fact that they are on the whole better qualified. The number of cases that the Labour Relations Commission Rights Commissioner Service has processed involving foreign workers has continually increased. There has also been a steady increase in the number of cases dealt with by the Equality Tribunal on employment equality grounds. More particularly they rose from two in 2000 to 71 in 2004. In 2003, 85 cases related solely to racial discrimination with an unspecified number also falling within the 76 undertaken on multiple grounds. These investigations into employment violations included a variety of offences: the employment of migrant workers with unequal pay and conditions in comparison with other Irish or EEA staff; failure by employers to pay workers pre-arranged wage rates; paying workers below the minimum wage; workers being subject to excessive working hours; illegal pay deductions, with recruitment costs to be borne by the prospective employee; and the non-payment of overtime or holiday pay. Large-scale cases including the Irish Ferries dispute and the Gama controversy in which Latvian and Turkish workers, respectively, were sometimes receiving just over €2 an hour when the minimum wage stood at over €7. All this was broadly illustrative of the multifaceted nature of employment violations against migrant workers (Loyal 2011).

Migrant workers have also been hindered from accessing employment and certain occupations because of

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[1] In a follow-up survey based on a different methodology (McGinnity *et alii* 2006), an ESRI study found that reports of incidents of racism taking place in a variety of contexts had continued.

prejudice and discrimination. Non-Irish nationals are three times more likely to experience discrimination while looking for work, while it is estimated that black people are seven times more likely. Moreover, once in the workplace, non-Irish nationals are twice as likely to experience discrimination than Irish nationals. Thirty-two percent of work permit holders reported experiencing harassment and insults in the work place, constituting the second most common form of discrimination (McGinnity *et alii* 2006).

The report-based evidence cited above portrays a one-sided and extreme picture of discrimination in Ireland that is in reality more complex and needs to be qualified in two ways. First, a far right anti-immigrant party has yet to emerge in Ireland, where a longstanding centre-right populism remains dominant. Second, unlike nearly all other European and North American states, Ireland has not been strongly affected by post-2001 anti-Muslim hysteria.

Explaining ethno-racial domination in Ireland

Studying racism and ethno-racial domination is a complex and contested endeavour. There are perhaps few areas in the social sciences where the degree of emotive political and ethical involvement is as high as it is on the issues of racism and discrimination. This means that the sociological approach undertaken can often be framed by preconceived, heteronomous evaluations that are extraneous to the subject matter. The result is a perspective that ends up praising or blaming one side or the other rather than explaining social processes regardless of their relative "goodness" or "badness". In addition, the concept of racism has become increasingly expansive and contested. Historically 'racism' has accrued more and more meanings and inflections, so that its use has become indistinguishable from "prejudice", "discrimination", "ethnocentrism" and "xenophobia".

Academic discussions of ethno-racial domination and discrimination in Ireland have generally been dominated by questions of culture, subjective identity and representation. This reflects broader patterns that characterize the field of sociological theory more generally in which 'cultural studies' and 'post-structuralism' have recently become paradigmatic explanatory frameworks. The use of French models of "race and racism" as the basis for understanding and explaining Irish variants of ethno-racial domination has been particularly popular, while the new writing on racism and immigration in Ireland has borrowed especially from abstract French post-structuralist philosophy. Rather than adopting a sociological reflexivity towards these concepts (as opposed to the self-reflexivity involved in acknowledging one's social position and location in the social world in terms of gender, ethnicity and so on), writers and migration experts in Ireland have uncritically adopted this framework in their analyses of racism and immigration. Consequently, a large number of the articles and chapters in a variety of major edited works on racism and immigration in Ireland have focused too restrictively on the discursive construction of a narrow sense of Irishness and Identity, and its concomitant engendering of Otherness (Cullen 2000; Gillespie 1999; Gray 1999; Lentin 2000; Lentin, McVeigh 2002; McDonagh 2002; O'Toole 2000; Sinha 1999; White 2002). Such analyses have tended to concentrate on interrogating the homogenous and exclusionary construction of national discourses of Irish identity as white, settled and Catholic. Such a restrictive notion of identity, it is argued by these writers, militates against the construction of a more inclusive and encompassing notion of a multi-ethnic Ireland by stigmatizing or racializing an "out-group" or "Other". The apparent solution to such exclusionary definitions and processes is to celebrate diversity, difference and hybridity.

More specifically, the majority of the various theoretical frameworks contained in these edited books can be accommodated within two broad positions: first, those post-modern positions which rightly emphasize power (conceived in a zero-sum manner) and racialization (Lentin 2000; Lentin, McVeigh 2002; Gray 1999; O'Toole 2000; Sinha 2000; 2002; White 2002); and, second, those liberal positions which focus on the importance of celebrating diversity, multiculturalism, and pluralism (Farrell, Watt 2001; MacLachlan, O'Connell 2000; Monsengwo 2001; Tannam, Smyth, Flood 1998). Notwithstanding their divergent conceptual frameworks in relation to power, both of these broad positions share an emphasis on difference and diversity and also an analytic framework which approaches racism through a Self—Other, Us—Them dynamic. Thus, typically, it is suggested that «Othering – denying equal legitimacy to individuals and cultures that do not conform to one's own arbitrary, ever shifting criteria of normality – is a two-sided coin. On the one hand it creates a clearly defined undifferentiated 'them' …

On the other, it forges a bond of solidarity» (Ni Shuinear 2002: 177). Or that «we cannot understand Irish racism, or the Irish racialization of the Other, without understanding the racialization of the Irish self» (Lentin 2000: 3).

It is my view that the singular emphasis on the construction of Irish identity, Otherness and diversity is problematic for a number of reasons. First, such an analysis fails to explain why these self–other or Us–Them processes emerge in the first place. Accordingly, it therefore remains at the level of description rather than explanation. Second, the historical specificity of Irish national ethno-racial social dynamics is submerged under an imported theoretical model in which all European societies construct 'Others' in order to construct an in-group identity. All European societies, as modern societies that need to 'Other', are painted as racist without examining the different racial inequalities within and between between these societies and the concrete socio-economic mechanisms that explain them. Processes of racialization and stigmatization are, however, uneven, complex, and historically determined. Earlier processes of ethno-racial discrimination had a significant class dimension so that disempowered groups or those on the lower rungs of the social ladder, including peasants and workers, were racialized as an inferior race or a 'breed apart' by middle-class and aristocratic groups in their construction of racial typologies. Whether and which groups are racialized, and the intensity and extent of negative evaluative judgments associated with race, vary and have shifted historically. The post-modern and liberal standpoints that have been drawn on by Irish sociology have, in affect, disarticulated the social and economic conditions of the emergence of forms of signification and racialization. The signification of 'Otherness' as a basis for racialization and racism, can have effect and meaning only within determinate historical economic and political relations of social domination. Such perceptual and cognitive distinctions are made by embedded individuals in the real world, in their practices and in their struggles over symbolic and material resources. Language as a practice, as Wittgenstein rightly notes, is always embedded in other, broader practices or forms of life (Wittgenstein 1958). Third, the exclusive focus on difference and Otherness in these analyses ignores the contradictory attitudes – or what Gramsci called 'contradictory common sense' (Gramsci 1971: 323–43) – which many in the indigenous population have towards immigrants. Far from a general fear about difference, these include more specific concerns about competition for scarce resources, maintaining status and distinction, jobs and pay levels. But these can often co-exist with feelings of mutual identification and humanitarian concern towards asylum seekers and migrants and their social conditions in other social contexts. The crucial point here is to avoid analytically transmuting the complex and contradictory attitudes of the indigenous population into a flattened metaphysical formula about a 'fear or dislike of the Other' – but rather to analyse these responses empirically within their specific social contexts. Fourth, there is also often a prevalent and unwarranted idealism in the focus on racism conceived as a 'discourse' or 'narrative', rather than seeing ethno-racial discrimination as a manifestation of material and symbolic practices embedded simultaneously in institutions and bodies as habitus (Wacquant 1998). That is, there is a failure to look at social relations, networks, figurations and the interdependencies between individuals.

Established and outsiders

Poststructuralist approaches that rely on an abstract, idealist, and ultimately a speculative notion of Othering rooted in modernity are limited in their scope for explaining the diverse and differentiated causes underpinning the concrete social contexts within which ethnoracial forms of discrimination are expressed in Ireland. It will be argued below that Elias provides a more robust and explanatorily powerful sociological framework. Although his established-outsider model is also, at one level, a broad model to the extent that it explains constructing an 'out-group' in terms of racial, ethnic, class and gender differences within a single general framework in the same way that the notion of Othering does, there are major differences. Elias's approach takes as its point of departure 'humans in the round', so to speak, who are at once material, social, and psychological beings motivated by economic forces, social interdependencies and susceptibilities, as well as by emotions and drives rooted in their habitus. Such a framework allows us to understand and examine the multi-faceted ways in which ethnoracial discrimination in all its empirical manifestations takes place without forcing it into a singular theoretical straightjacket, be it a Marxist or Weberian emphasis on economic criteria tied to accessing scarce resources, or a psychological pro-

pensity to Other rooted in Western modernity as poststructuralists argue. As we shall see below economic factors certainly play a role in ethnoracial discrimination but so do socio-psychological processes entailing status distinction as expressed through verbal abuse directed at non-Irish nationals. In addition, Elias's approach is grounded in a historically informed and concrete analysis of actual hierarchical social relations (or figurations) of power. Unlike the Othering framework which tends to have a dichotomous and in some ways (and paradoxically) essentialised understanding of fixed-frozen power relations grounded upon identities based on 'whiteness' or 'Irish-ness' standing opposed to non-White, or non-Irish marginalised groups, Elias posits a processual sociology in which power ratios may shift so that groups may lose their dominance to varying degrees. He also offers a relational framework within which power relations and forms of discrimination exist between subaltern migrant groups.

For Elias the material and socio-psychological dynamics underpinning discrimination are ultimately manifestations of a long-term conflict rooted in the struggles between survival units and the different levels of power that exist between them. That is, it refers to a universal process that is expressed through concrete communities linked to specific places and forms of life with their own histories. This is an anthropological rather than philosophical argument that is amenable to empirical investigation.

Elias and Scotson's theory of established–outsiders relations was based on a study in 1958–61 of a community on the outskirts of Leicester that was then ethnically homogeneous, white and working-class. But it has proven to be highly relevant and illuminating when applied to the effects of the mass migrations that have taken place in the world since then.

The Established and Outsiders (2008 [1965]) is a study of a small suburban community in Leicester (fictitiously) named Winston Parva. The book examines the dynamics between three distinct neighbourhoods or "zones": zone 1 inhabited by a middle class population; zone 2 characterised by an 'old' established working class population; and zone 3 characterized by a newly arrived population which was working class. The old communities refused to have dealings with the new community other than those imposed by occupational ties. Elias and Scotson showed that, even without any visible ethnic markers, tension could arise between groups within a community simply on the basis of differences in their length of local residence. Elias and Scotson point to four major tendencies shared by established-outsider relationships. A tendency: to see outsiders as anomic; for the established to judge outsiders according to the 'minority of the worst'; for outsiders to internalize their stigmatization and group disgrace; and for established groups to perceive outsiders as "unclean" or polluting (Dunning 2004: 82).

Although often mistakenly interpreted as a separate theoretical foray from his *magnum opus*, *The Civilising Process*, the discussion of established–outsider relations in fact also forms a central part of that work, albeit in this case abstracted from a longer-term historical framework. Issues concerning the length of chains of interdependency, social cohesion, the self-restraint of drives and affects, adherence to behavioural codes, and claims of status superiority as *more* 'civilised' are all present in the study of Winston Parva. Elias's central point in this work is that it is the configuration of their social relationships, and not their characteristics *per se* that explains the relationship of domination between groups. Central to established–outsider relations, therefore, are not the characteristics of the groups themselves, whether 'race' as a physical marker or culture as a social factor is utilized. Given the wide range of differences and similarities, the selection of what is deemed similar or different is relatively arbitrary – although historically physical or normative–cultural differences have dominated. Rather, of fundamental explanatory importance is the *unequal power ratio* between these groups, itself determined by the way they are bonded together, their different degrees of organization and cohesion. A singular emphasis on race, racialization, nationality, religion, or ethnicity – whether the focus is on differences in skin colour or cultural values – draws attention away from what Elias considers a broader and more pertinent causal factor that explains the process of domination and discrimination: a differential in the power ratio between groups. *The Established and Outsiders* thus constitutes a small-scale investigation into the sociology of power underwritten by an analysis of the structure of social figurations.

When established groups feel exposed to an attack against their monopolized power resources, they use stigmatization and exclusion as weapons to maintain their distinct identity, assert their superiority, and keep outsiders in their place. In Winston Parva, processes of group charisma and group disgrace involved maintaining a positive "we-image" by the established residents and a negative "they-image" through the stigmatization of outsiders and

the propagation of collective fantasies (Elias 2009 [1998]: 73–81). This, in turn, involved generalizing the worst characteristics from the "anomic minority" of a group to the whole group – attributing to all those living in zone 3 negative characteristics that only pertain to a small "minority of the worst", whilst simultaneously attributing the best 'most nomic' behaviour onto the established group – modelling the self-image of the dominant group in terms of characteristics held by the "minority of the best".

The established–outsider framework, according to Elias, serves as an empirical paradigm of a universal human theme involving power, exclusion, and inequality. It provides a standardized or exemplary model with which researchers «can better come to grips with the similarities and differences of other cases» (Elias 2008 [1990]: 213). In light of this claim, I will use the established–outsider model to examine the dominance–subordination relations that exist between Irish nationals and newly arrived immigrants, in order to show that it has greater explanatory force in explaining ethno-racial domination in Ireland than the poststructuralist approaches discussed above.

In applying Elias's framework it is important to acknowledge the similarities and differences between his discussion of Winston Parva and the Irish case. Rather than examining the neighbourhood relations between groups following the arrival of white working-class immigrants from within the country, the sociological object concerns the social exclusion and discrimination faced by newly arrived white and non-white immigrants from outside the country. It therefore entails issues involving skin colour and ethnicity that were absent from Elias's study. Second, the Irish case not only involves a shift in the composition of the groups studied but also in scale. Rather than examining small, contiguous neighbourhood dynamics, I shall draw primarily on evidence gathered from a study that included 80 qualitative interviews, focus groups and 400 surveys of Chinese, Nigerian, Lithuanian and Indian migrants scattered ecologically across the country. In addition, I shall also draw on data from other qualitative and quantitative studies and opinion polls undertaken in Ireland.

Unlike in many other developed countries experiencing mass immigration, the majority of non-Irish nationals come from the European Union and are, on the whole, well qualified. The census estimates that 275,775 individuals from the EU-25 were resident in Ireland in 2006, making up 66 percent of the non-Irish population. Almost 120,000 of these were from the accession states that joined the European Union in 2004. The European nationals who had migrated to Ireland, were followed by nationals from Asia (11 percent), Africa (6 percent), and North and South America (5 percent). According to the 2006 census, the largest, and paradoxically least discussed, group of non-Irish nationals was from the United Kingdom. They were followed by immigrants from Poland, Lithuania, Nigeria, Latvia, the US and China. Non-Irish nationals are also on the whole very well qualified. While they reported higher overall levels of education than the Irish population – 38 percent were thought to have had tertiary education, compared to 28 percent of Irish nationals[2] – the majority of immigrants have settled around Dublin and other major cities including Cork, Galway and Limerick.

Despite their high levels of qualifications, many migrants in Ireland were forced into jobs for which they are over-qualified. Although 23 per cent of Lithuanians had a third level qualification, only two per cent of them are working as professionals. One study found that employers, faced with applications from candidates who were identical in all relevant characteristics other than their ethnic or national origin, were twice as likely to call Irish applicants for interview than they were minority nationals (McGinnity *et alii* 2009). Many migrants face problems accessing work. Competition for economic chances of power plays a major role in many aspects of group conflicts and established–outsider relations, and Elias remains sensitive to issues of economic monopolisation in his analysis of established outsider relations (Elias 2008 [1990]:211). As we can see from the above, such processes are also evident in Ireland. Immigrants have also been concentrated in specific economic sectors, particularly in low-pay occupations. Three-quarters of all nationals from the EU accession states, for example, were concentrated in four industries: manufacturing, construction, wholesale and retail trades, hotels, and restaurants (CSO 2008). Nigerians have also been concentrated in 3-D (dirty, difficult and dangerous) occupations that indigenous Irish nationals have refused to take up (Immigrant Council of Ireland 2008).

Social closure aimed at securing privileged access to material resources has played a vital role in the discrimination and exclusion of migrants. It is the difference in power chances of Irish nationals compared to immigrants

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[2] CSO, "Census 2006 Volume 10 – Education and Qualifications. Table 31," http://beyond2020.cso.ie/Census/TableViewer/tableView. aspx?ReportId=76961.

that permits them to exclude and discriminate against the latter. The greater social cohesion, solidarity and uniformity of norms and self-discipline that characterize Irish nationals as a result of living in the same country for a substantial period also allows them to hold positions of power, including positions of recruitment. In addition, length of residence allows Irish nationals to develop specific norms, standards and distinctive conduct, and to share forms of knowledge. Further to this, length of residence and transmission of beliefs and property mean that certain chances of power are thereby made available in addition to those derived from superior wealth and local knowledge, social connections and "know-how". These networks «represent inheritable chances to exercise power in relation to others which, as a group, have only limited access to, or are excluded from, such chances» (Elias and Scotson 2008 [1965]: 176–7). Irish nationals, though with some variations depending on class position, have been able to monopolize sources of power to a relatively high degree and this means that they are able to deny these chances and opportunities from immigrants. The transmission of standards runs parallel with the transmission of property and access to occupations.

Although acknowledging that economic processes play a central role in his analysis Elias, nevertheless moves beyond reductionist Marxist analysis of class and economic power (Elias 2008 [1990]: 211). Hence, in addition to materialist explanations, he rightly also points to the operation of non-economic factors relating to status and recognition playing a part in explaining the ostracization and discrimination perpetrated by native-born groups. The need for self-enhancement and looking down on the members of other groups appears as a ubiquitous feature of all societies according to Elias. He notes: «it is difficult to imagine a human society that has not developed a stigmatising technique in relation to a part group akin to that encountered in Winston Parva».

Although 'the value one attaches to oneself as a member of a group or as an individual person is … one of the most fundamental ingredients of one's existence as a human being (Elias 2008 [1990]: 229), struggles for the satisfaction of other human requirements may become more protracted when the certainty of material needs has been firmly established. Non-economic factors relating to status become increasingly important where power balances are less uneven, for example, between middle-class migrants and the indigenous working and middle-class elements of a host population. Here, struggles for the satisfaction of human requirements other than material resources and physical survival, relating to recognition and status, become more protracted. Social superiority engenders feelings of human superiority and contributes to the self-endowment of group charisma, which has as its correlate, group disgrace imposed on the less powerful group. Exclusion and stigmatization are powerful weapons for maintaining identity, asserting superiority, and for keeping others subordinate. According to Elias, the need for status distinctions has an important biological and historical rationale for human survival[3].

The explicit discrimination many immigrants have faced from Irish nationals has certainly involved maintaining a status distinction between the latter and the former. It also follows from their social cohesion and social reproduction of values that have resulted in "rigidities of outlook and conduct". This means established groups «have been brought up in the belief that everyone does, or ought to, feel and behave in the essentials as they themselves feel and behave … By and large the threshold of tolerance for forms of behaviour and belief that are different from one's own, if one has to live with the representatives in close contact, is still exceedingly low» (Elias and Scotson 2008 [1965]:183).

Some of these "rigidities of conduct" and status distinctions are expressed in the verbal abuse that immigrants have experienced from Irish nationals outside the economic sphere. As one immigrant from Nigeria noted: 'If they could find a means of hijacking you and sending you back to your country, they would have done it. Just imagine when we go for shopping, they will come and meet you. «You f**king black stupid thing, get out of this place, you go back your f**king country» (Abassi, Nigeria). Though a large amount of abuse is directed at Africans, immigrants from Asia, including Chinese and Indians, also noted significant levels of abuse: «If I walk in O'Connell Street in the middle of the night, maybe some drunk man will shout at you "Chinese b******d"» (Ho, China). In

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[3] «In the last resort these techniques may have a survival value. Collective self-glorification may strengthen the integration of a group, and thus improve survival chances' (Elias and Scotson 2008 [1965]: 227). This quest for self-enhancement, of maintaining a differentiated and hierarchical status order is underpinned by what he deems to be the basic unit of sociological analysis – survival groups that fear each other. He adds 'The fear of each other built into the situation of human groups is one of the main causes of group hostilities, in the case of established and outsider groups as in many others» (ibid.: 230).

another case a Sikh student from India, wearing a turban, reported experiencing abuse every day of the three years he had spent in Ireland.

There are however, some respects in which the Irish case diverges from Elias's Winston Parva and a later more extreme model of power and racial differences in the US South that he refers to as the Maycomb model[4]. The broad picture of exclusion and discrimination appears more complex. The established and outsider groups are both differentiated by various internal strata. Established groups may be stratified according to class, whilst outsider groups may be hierarchically differentiated according to class and ethno-national characteristics. This means that we need to examine multiple established–outsider figurations, entailing groups that are established in some contexts and outsiders in others. Lower class Irish nationals are outsiders themselves in relation to higher ranking economic elites whose more secure socio-economic position, class codes and behavioural norms and restraints are expressions of their higher levels of economic and cultural capital. This also means that the modality and form of discrimination expressed by established groups may differ according to their class position. Irish nationals in a higher social class, and therefore with a different habitus, may not express their verbal racist hostility as explicitly as those in the lower social classes. They may discriminate more 'informally', so to speak – employers refusing to give job interviews to Nigerians. In other cases, where they have high levels of cultural capital as well as economic capital, and therefore a more cosmopolitan outlook, they may find acts of discrimination to be repulsive.

Further to this, outsider, immigrant groups are differentiated through the existence of racial hierarchies. The interviews undertaken with immigrants tended to confirm this. Specific groups, who are phenotypically perceived as different from Irish nationals, especially in terms of skin colour (principally immigrants from Nigeria, and to a lesser extent Chinese and Indians from Asia), have been targets of explicit verbal abuse in a way that Lithuanians from East European have not. The EU's Fundamental Rights Agency's report of 2009 reinforced the view that such hierarchies operated. Seventy-three per cent of those who were surveyed from sub-Saharan Africa stated they had experienced racism in Ireland, as opposed to 25 per cent of those from central and Eastern Europe (Fundamental Rights Agency 2009: 6). Other studies have yielded similar results (O'Connell *et alii* 2008; ESRI 2006).

A further effect of established–outsider relations also appears to be present in the Ireland. The proliferation of negative images and other negative characterisations of immigrants by established groups have, sometimes become accepted by migrants themselves, according to their hierarchical treatment – thus further weakening their social position. The power differential allows the stigma to stick without counter-assertion, and the discrimination to has the effect of 'biting into' the immigrants, so to speak. The internalization of negative or stigmatized self-images by less powerful groups – so much that those who are disempowered often see themselves through the eyes of the dominated – is also present in the inter-national and inter-ethnic hostility among migrants. Examples are hostility between Polish and Chinese nationals or Lithuanian and Nigerian nationals. Thus some Lithuanians in interviews talk about Nigerians as lazy or as here to "sponge" off the welfare system and Chinese talk about the abuse they have received from Polish migrants when working in shops, for instance.

In addition, to fully understand the complex divisions between multi-player figurations, we need to look at different levels in society. This means that, in order to examine the variety of uneven power balances, we need to move from what Elias (1978) would call a one-level game model to a multi-player game model played at different levels. An understanding of the hostilities and rivalries between established and outsider groups requires a conceptualisation in terms of multi-group constellations that are layered and variable. This entails not only examining the role of the media and politicians, together with business and economic elites, but also the state policy and state classification. State discourses have both individualized migrants and disempowered them in terms of rights and entitlement. Rather than providing all residents with the same civil and political rights, bureaucratic state classification schemes engender systematic patterns of discrimination. The legal and administrative immigrant categories of "asylum seeker", "refugee" and "economic migrant" are important in that they confer different rights and entitlements to resources in contrast to Irish citizens. These rights and resources include: access to social welfare, to education, to fair treatment in the labour market and workplace, to social services including the health service, as well as the right of individuals to vote, to have family members live with them and to be treated equally and

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[4] Elias compares the Winston Parva model with what he calls the 'Maycomb model' which represents a more extreme power imbalance between established and outsider groups (Elias 2008 [1990]: 209–31)

free from discrimination generally. The administrative categories and classifications used by the state also play an important role in defining processes of self-identification by Irish nationals and immigrants and this reinforces the immigrants' social exclusion. Both dominant and marginalised groups come to define themselves and each other through such categorisations. This is not simply an ideological or cognitive influence but about «everything that native insertion into a nation and a state buries in the innermost depths of minds and bodies, in a quasi-natural state, or in other words far beyond the reach of consciousness» (Bourdieu 2004: xiv). In other words, it involves a question of habituses.

Racism and recession

In the immediate context of the recession, the power difference between established Irish workers and immigrants have shifted slightly in favour of the former. It appears that racism is increasing as immigrants increasingly become scapegoated for the loss of Irish jobs. Such scapegoating has been led by the state and politicians supported by the media. The state initially responded to the recession by increasing restrictions both on the entry of work permit holders and on their rights and entitlements once they arrived here, claiming that Irish nationals needed to be prioritized for jobs. These new restrictions fed into a populist discourse that served to apportion blame for the lack of jobs to migrants. The call for a clampdown on work permits and the creation of tougher permit rules was led by a vociferous group of populist politicians. As Fianna Fáil, TD Noel O'Flynn remarked: «What in the name of God are we doing bringing workers in when we haven't work for our own people?». Such views were also echoed by local politicians. In November 2009, the Fine Gael Mayor of Limerick called for the cutting of social welfare payments and deportation of immigrants, including EU nationals, who were abusing Ireland's generous welfare system or who could not find work in Ireland. An *Irish Times* poll carried out at the end of 2009, found that 72 per cent of respondents wanted to see a reduction in the number of non-Irish migrants, and for some or all migrants to leave the country.

However, this shift may be seen as a short-term phenomenon. The nature of the uneven balance of power between the groups and the tensions between them are not fixed, but continually altered in changing conjunctural contexts. Processes of exclusion and stigmatization alter as power ratios between groups become less uneven. Over the long term, power differences may lessen between established and outsiders, the fantasy-laden collective "we-images" of social superiority characteristic of the established may begin to diminish. The power to stigmatize through closing ranks diminishes when a group can no longer maintain a monopoly on the principal sources of power available and exclude migrants from these resources. For Elias, economic changes and/or functional democratization tend towards equalizing power ratios. Outsider groups that had formerly accepted their inferiority and low position in the social hierarchy may come to challenge and contest their stigmatization, and to pursue a more equal access to various power resources in a dialectic of oppression and counter-oppression. As migrants begin to organize more effectively, to overlook their internal group differences, and to form alliances with other social actors such as trade unions so that the power balance in Ireland shifts, they will be in a better position to retaliate and resort to counter-stigmatization. However, gratification derived from the self-endowed group charisma and feelings of status superiority may, because of the specific logic of emotions, mean that social prejudice may remain for a time even following a shift in the balance of power and the lessening of *de jure* and *de facto* discrimination.

Conclusion

Elias's established–outsider framework allows us to see that ethno-racial distinctions not only create symbolic and material barriers between groups but also emotional barriers which rigidify these antagonistic relations. The theory also allows us to transcend both a one-sided idealism and a similarly conceived one-sided materialism, and to deny the separation of the material and symbolic spheres in the first place other than as an analytical device. Although Elias argues he is transcending Marxist reductionism, he nevertheless sees Marxism as an indispensable

starting point for his analysis. We need to examine social practices involving «real individuals, their activity and the material conditions of their life [which] can be verified in a purely empirical way» (Marx and Engels 1976 [1846]: 37). Moreover, rather than examining ethno-racial discrimination in order to assign blame and guilt, we need to try to understand the power mechanisms that engender it and the modalities through which it is expressed, utilizing more 'detached' scientific sociological accounts. This involves moving beyond imposing simple dichotomous labels of racist and anti-racist to divide and evaluate the moral standing of various groups in the population. The social dynamics underlying processes of social closure in which more powerful groups have a self-image of themselves as better – sometimes asserted as national group identity by members who define themselves as similar – have both a material and a symbolic dimension. In terms of the former, discrimination permits economic and occupational advantages and privileged access to the means of production. Superior job positions can be reserved for native members while excluding migrants, in turn reinforcing the established groups' cohesion and power. In terms of the latter, it provides a sense of social superiority, pride, and positive self-valuation.

Rather than looking specifically at ethno-racial domination, Elias used the term "established–outsider relations" in order to emphasize exclusionary processes generally. Yet this concept has some limitations. The term is equally prone to reification. Moreover, because it is a generic concept more capacious than race, ethnicity, or class distinctions which are meant to be seen as manifestations of it, the term can by its very generality sometimes mean that the specific modalities and mechanisms of domination that distinguish, for example, racial domination as compared to say class stratification, and which may have their own peculiar logic, are overlooked. However, this specificity of domination would have been accepted by Elias as something that was to be uncovered empirically in each instance, as long as it was within the context of different power ratios.

In Ireland, processes of immigration and ethno-racial domination need to be understood within a framework which includes such concepts as the social relations of capitalist accumulation, cultural nationalism, social closure and status, and state regulation and control. This entails a conceptual shift from looking at two-player game models, simply involving Irish citizens and immigrants, to multiple three- or four-player game models on different levels involving the state, capital, trade unions, and immigrants (Elias 1978 [1970]: 71–103). Elias's approach not only allows us to move beyond accounts focusing singularly on identity (Brubaker, Cooper 2005) but also beyond some of the inherent theoretical, empirical, and strategic limitations of the dominant post-modern and one-sided materialist understandings of ethno-racial and ethno-national processes of domination and discrimination in Ireland. Equally it provides a more solid conception of power and a more robust conception of social actors. Rather than talking of power in an abstract metaphysical sense, something that characterizes a number of the approaches adopted in the Irish analyses mentioned above, Elias's grounded, processual, and relational understanding of the concept provides a helpful tool for empirical analysis[5]. Elias's also has a superior ontological starting point for his analysis when compared to these theorists because he starts out from a plurality of individuals who are in one way or another interdependent with one another. Figurations are irreducible – they do not exist independently of individuals, nor do individuals exist independently of them.

Although there are differences between the Winston Parva study, the Maycomb model and the Irish case, there are also features that all three share: 'In all cases, the newcomers are bent on improving their position and the established groups are bent on maintaining theirs. The newcomers resent, and often try to rise from, the inferior status attributed to them; and the established try to preserve their superior status, which the newcomers appear to threaten. The newcomers cast in the role of outsiders are perceived by the established as people "who do not know their place"; they offend the sensibilities of the established by behaving in a manner in which in their eyes clearly bears the stigma of social inferiority; and yet, in many cases, newcomer groups are apt quite innocently to behave, at least for a time, as if they were the equals of their new neighbours. The latter show the flag; they fight for their superiority, their status and power their standards and beliefs, and almost everywhere in that situation they use the same weapons, among them humiliating gossip, stigmatizing beliefs about the whole group modelled on observations of its worst section, degrading code words and, as far as possible, exclusion from all chances of

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[5] His definition of power is refreshingly straightforward. 'We depend upon others; others depend on us. Insofar as we are more dependent on others than they are on us, they have power over us, whether we have become dependent on them by their use of naked force or by our need to be loved, our need for money, healing, status, a career or simply for excitement. (Elias 1978 [1970]: 93).

power – in short, the features that are abstracted from the figuration in which they occur under headings such as "prejudice" and "discrimination" (Elias, Scotson 2008 [1965]: 182–3).

Because these sociological insights are at once theoretical and empirical, and which apply both universally and to particular social situations, Elias allows us to move beyond the lacunae that characterize more fashionable post-structuralist approaches with their abstract notions of 'Othering' and power. The current structure of social figurations in Ireland, characterized by differential power balances and varying levels of social cohesion, allows us to see why Ireland is not yet a land of one hundred thousand welcomes.

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