

Critical Psychology in Ireland: Diversity challenges unitary discourses about “the Irish”

Geraldine Moane¹
University College Dublin

Abstract

The development of critical psychology in Ireland has been severely constrained by the economic crisis and the accompanying economic policies that have been in place since the last overview of 2006. The economic recession has been accompanied by efforts to shift blame from elites to “the people” by invoking “The Irish Psyche”, and this paper offers a critical analysis of this trend. Additionally, there have been several developments in the Republic of Ireland that have resulted in critical psychology becoming less marginalized. Most notable has been the recognition of diversity as a key area, with sustained efforts to develop theory and research on ethnic diversity and on lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) psychology. The Psychological Society of Ireland adopted a policy on Equality and Inclusive Practice that has been followed by efforts to place diversity on the agenda for accredited undergraduate courses and professional training. Additional areas in which there has been ongoing theory and research include several applications and developments of liberation psychology involving community education, LGBT spirituality and community arts. Other developments include critical historical perspectives, participatory action research, and social constructionist approaches to poverty and its impact.

Keywords: Irish psyche; diversity; LGBT psychology; liberation psychology; critical history; participatory action research; poverty

Introduction

In considering critical psychology in Ireland since 2006, the most obvious development is the economic collapse that has occurred in some global contexts and in the Eurozone, with its specific manifestations in the Irish context. To find a language for this is itself a project for critical psychology, and indeed critical psychology can play an important role in shaping the discourse around these economic events and in developing understandings and strategies that can aid in resisting and transforming the suffering currently being experienced in many sectors of society. Critical psychology can share with feminist and liberation psychologies the aim of understanding the collective, community and individual dimensions of the current crisis with a view to participating in the social transformations that will arise out of this moment in history.

Currently in Ireland there is still limited analysis of the profound dimensions of the economic collapse, the reality of which is still only becoming apparent. There is little published material from a critical psychology perspective, yet this cannot prevent us from considering its implications. Therefore the first section of this overview will provide an attempt to reflect on the discourse surrounding the economic collapse. The paper will then move on to developments in the Psychological Society of Ireland (PSI) in relation to equality and

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inclusive practice that provide a very positive manifestation of critical psychology. The paper will conclude with specific examples of developments in theory and research that include applications of feminist and liberation psychology, participatory action research, critical social psychology and critical historical studies.

The University may be considered a microcosm of some of the trends associated with the economic collapse, of which neo-liberal managerialism is the most obvious. In the specific context of the University in which I am currently employed, the last six years have seen firstly the imposition of the medical/scientific model of research in psychology, one result being that only publications in peer reviewed journals listed in ISI are considered as outputs. Another practical matter is that due to cutbacks in the public service and a hiring freeze there has been a loss of up to 15% of academic and administrative positions. This has presented further barriers to the development of critical psychology, and has also meant that workload burdens on colleagues have hindered their capacity to co-author this paper. Hence this overview is sole authored in the sense that I have taken on the task of presenting the final manuscript to the *Annual Review of Critical Psychology* (ARCP). However, in order to allow my colleagues to give voice to their critical interests, I have adopted a strategy of asking them to write summaries of their work in their own words and I have included these below.

The last review in 2006 provided a thorough historical and contextualized overview of critical psychology in Ireland (Madden & Moane, 2006). Themes included a long historical experience of colonization and its legacies that include a contested notion of “Ireland”, with the previous paper and this paper focusing on the Republic of Ireland, itself most often referred to as Ireland. Although Northern Ireland is also part of the island of Ireland, politically it is part of the United Kingdom, with psychologists in Northern Ireland often holding membership of both the Psychological Society of Ireland and the British Psychological Society. The previous article noted the conservative nature of the profession of psychology in Ireland, and described several strands of critical psychology. This article will focus on developments since 2006. Given the above considerations, it will necessarily be selective particularly in the examples of critical psychology in the last part of the article.

The current context

An overarching pattern of the “economic crisis” is now well established – over lending by banks leading to a property bubble that collapsed with subsequent massive banking debts that have been transferred into sovereign debt. In Ireland this resulted in 2009 in the need for what has become known as “a bailout” – a loan of money from the troika of the ECB, the IMF and the EU, along with agreements regarding fiscal and economic policies known as “austerity”. The end result of this in 2012 is an unemployment rate of over 14%, complete stagnation in the housing and retail markets, along with cuts in all areas of social welfare and support to marginalized groups. In turn this has resulted in big increases in emigration and rises in indicators of mental distress such as hospitalization, suicide and prescription drugs. The report of a tribunal into government collusion with bankers and developers (The Mahon Report) detailed widespread corruption during the decade or more of the economic boom referred to as of “the Celtic Tiger”, with corruption operating up to and including the Taoiseach (Prime Minister) of the time. It may be noted here that in the election of 2011 the dominant party (Fianna Fail) was reduced by 80%, although its replacement coalition now looks indistinguishable.

It is worth noting here that the collapse of the Catholic Church in Ireland has been a feature of the 2000's. A government sponsored report provided extensive evidence of child sexual abuse by clerics, the cover-up of allegations and the protection of perpetrators by the church officials. The Murphy Murphy (200x) Report (and the preceding Ryan (200) Report that documented abuse in church run residential institutions) explicitly focused on the interest of church officials in defending the church's property and power, and thus unleashed profound public disillusionment. The unraveling of Catholic Church influence continues alongside economic collapse.

While the economic crisis clearly has individual and group impact through loss of income etc., it is also a collective experience, and I would suggest that a challenge for critical psychology is to further its analysis of collective psychology(ies). Allowing for diversities within the Irish context, Ireland is a small country with a population of just under 4.5 million, half of whom live in urban areas, with 1.5 million living in the Dublin area. Even with the development of digital and social media, there is still something of a "national" media, that is, radio, TV and print media with which a large percentage of the population engage, and that form what may be called a "national" discourse. Some of these are supported by State policies while others are owned by the private sector. There is the very strong presence of a dominant discourse that views austerity as the only policy that will "lift" Ireland out of its difficulties, and even a reference to "Ireland inc" to which all activity, including cultural and educational, should contribute. Of course along with this dominant discourse is what may be called the majority view, manifest in opinion polls, media and electoral trends, namely an analysis that clearly identifies politicians, bankers and developers – crony capitalism/global capitalism—who took risks and should bear responsibility for current massive debts.

A notable feature of discourse surrounding the economic collapse is the blame game. From a majority view (as expressed in public opinion polls) the responsibility for the crisis lies with an alliance of bankers, developers and elected politicians. Yet a dominant discourse of "we all" has emerged along with official reports and other devices that shift the responsibility to "the people". Phrases such as "we all partied", "the Irish people borrowed more than anywhere else" all invoke an undifferentiated collective, obscuring enormous disparities in levels of income and expenditure and in access to power and policy making. Indeed, over the course of the Celtic Tiger, although income levels rose for most sectors of society, there were much greater gains for high earners, with the result that income inequality increased (Allen, 2009).

Perhaps the most dramatic example of such a discourse is provided in comments made by the current Taoiseach (Enda Kenny) at a meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos on January 26 2012. Kenny is quoted as saying: "What happened in our country was that people simply went mad borrowing" (Scally & Burke Kennedy, 2012), a blatant shifting of blame from financial elites to the general public. An article by a former member of the board of the IMF wrote of: the Irish "obsession" with "owning bricks and mortar", "bureaucratic inertia and reluctance to take responsibility", "people pleasing" and a "lurch" from mania to despair, linking these to our colonial past, which is also linked to the "diffidence and deference" (Casey, 2009). Another element of this discourse is a commonly asked question – why are "the Irish" not out on the streets like "the Greeks", a comment on the contrast between on street demonstrations in Athens and the lack thereof in Dublin. The usual answer refers to the passivity and compliance of "the Irish". This uncritical approach to media has meant that the plethora of grassroots networks, such as Claiming Our Future that have begun to mobilize

after an election that decimated the party that was in power over the course of the Celtic Tiger has gone unreported, with no attempt to analyze alternative forms of mobilization.

Discourses about national characteristics may be a rising feature of the current economic crisis, and they now involve many countries in Europe. They can clearly be seen to serve the political agenda of nationalization of debt, but they may have more disturbing consequences. They may be seen as a process of psychologisation that formed the focus of the 2010 *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*. Fernandez argues that psychologization may be associated with stigmatization, with discourses of inferiority-superiority, and with divisiveness (Fernandez, 2010). The above discourse about “the Irish” can also be linked to colonial and postcolonial discourses that positioned the Irish as inferior and as deserving the calamities of history.

An analysis of this discourse is just one example of the role that critical psychology can play in public discourse about the economic collapse. A first effort to draw together examples of critical thinking on the current crisis in Ireland was a symposium at the annual conference of the Psychological Society of Ireland. The panel presented the evidence base for some of the assumptions about debt and expenditure and linked them to individualist capitalist discourse (Roseingrave, 2011). Storey (2011) placed Northern Ireland conflict in the context of economic and historical processes. The symposium considered themes relating to the Irish psyche that had been present in interviews with elites (McDonnell & Moane, 2011) and argued that persistent inequalities in Irish society reflect the reciprocal relationship between systems/structures, institutions and behaviour and psychological processes (Muldoon, 2011).

Mobilizing around Diversity in the Psychological Society of Ireland

During the so-called economic boom of the mid 1990s onwards and as a result of the expanded EU Ireland became a destination country for people from Eastern European countries, and to a lesser extent, from African (mainly Nigeria) and South American (mainly Brazil) countries, with much smaller numbers from the Asian region. This increase in immigration posed a challenge to psychological services and provided the impetus to form, in 2007, a Cultural and Ethnic Diversity Special Interest Group in the Psychological Society of Ireland. At the same time there had been ongoing mobilization of the lesbian, gay bisexual and transgender (LGBT) movement that became concentrated in campaigns for gay marriage. The general visibility and vibrancy of the LGBT movement stimulated the founding of the Sexual Diversity and Gender Issues Special Interest Group, also in 2007. There is considerable overlap in the aims of the two Special Interest Groups (SIGs), and there has been some discussion on combining into one “diversity” Special Interest Group, given the small numbers involved in both groups. For the moment the groups have focused on developing a profile for their respective areas of interest. We have co-operated on several occasions, attending each other’s meetings, sharing workshop and symposium space at PSI conferences, and participating in the development of PSI’s policy on Equality and Inclusive Practice. It was generally agreed by members of the SIG’s and others in PSI that not only was such mobilization essential for providing effective psychological services but that it would also provoke wider critical discussion and debate about psychology itself and about Irish society. Although the Sexual Diversity and Gender Issues SIG aims to encompass gender and psychology of women, the main focus of the group since its foundation has been on LGBT issues. This has been a neglected area in psychology in Ireland - for example, as far as we know, there has been only one PSI symposium on sexual orientation (in 1997) prior to the founding of the SIG. During the 1990s, despite the decriminalization of homosexuality in 1993, there was a major focus on combating homophobia (the main term in use at the time to

refer to prejudice and discrimination based on sexual orientation) through provision of supports, services, lobbying, research and education by mostly voluntary groups, researchers and academics (Moane, 1995; O'Donnell, 2008). Over the 12 years since 2000, along with economic changes came more funding and visibility for LGBT activism and research, particularly from philanthropic sources.

A working group on Equality and Inclusive Practice was established in 2007, initiated by the then Director of Professional Development in PSI and involving several members of the PSI. An advocacy group for lesbians and gay men, Gay and Lesbian Equality Network (GLEN) was also involved in providing impetus for this Working Group. In 2008, after more than a year of consultation and development, the Working Group on Equality and Inclusive Practice launched a one-page policy statement that has since provided a platform for further developments in the area of equality and inclusive practice. The policy clearly spells out 11 grounds for which policy is needed. These grounds include the nine grounds covered in Equality Legislation in Ireland (gender, age, sexual orientation, marital status, family status, religion, disability, race and membership of the Traveller community) with an additional two grounds (ethnicity and socio-economic status) added during the consultation procedure. The policy is placed in the context of ethical guidelines, acknowledges discrimination and social exclusion, and supports the development of culturally competent services.

The policy was launched by the President of PSI at the annual conference of the Psychological Society of Ireland, where a symposium was also held, 'Psychology in the 21st century - towards equality and inclusive practice'. This was chaired by Dr. Joseph Duffy (then Director of Professional Development, PSI) and provided a platform for discussing theory and research related to inclusive practice. Featured in the symposium were papers which provided introductory material relevant to the policy: 'Getting to today – addressing and promoting equality and inclusive practice within the Psychological Society of Ireland' (Joseph Duffy, PSI); 'Inclusive Practice' (Odhrán Allen, Director of Mental Health Strategy, GLEN); 'Same-Sex Couples and their families: State of the Evidence' (Claire Cullen and Cathy Kelleher, SDGISIG and 'Cultural Competence and Psychological Service Provision in Ireland' (Dermot Ryan and Jennifer Rylands, CEDSIG).

Following this an implementation group on equality and inclusive practice that adopted the acronym EqUIP developed a strategy to implement the policy in education, training, research and professional practice. EqUIP offered a workshop at the 2010 PSI annual conference on *Equality and Inclusive Practice* (Baird, 2010) involving case presentations of clients from diverse backgrounds, highlighting the specific issues arising with, for example, religion and sexual orientation. EqUIP is embedded in PSI structures, with a strategic plan that has been approved by the Council. Former and current Presidents of the society and Directors of Professional Development have been active supporters of EqUIP, which aims to have representation from all of the Divisions and Special Interest Groups in PSI. Currently guidelines on diversity have been included in accreditation criteria for Doctorates in Clinical Psychology and in Counselling Psychology, and the relevant programmes have sought input from members of the two SIGs to address this area.

The two SIG's share a cultural competence framework with a broad understanding of links between psychological health/distress and inequality, social exclusion and marginalization. Conversely, equality and social inclusion are foregrounded. I have explored these links with examples from the Irish context in an article published in *The Irish Journal of Psychology* (Moane, 2008) which provides a broad overview of these themes using the framework of

Liberation Psychology. Both groups have also sought to support and foreground research in an Irish context on diversity issues. While there is currently very little funding for research in this area, funding has been available from Government and private sources over the last decade for policy related research, and there has been an increase in both undergraduate and postgraduate research in this area.

A significant research study by Maycock et al. (2009) highlighted the extent of homophobia in Ireland and documented the levels of psychological distress in LGBT individuals. Maycock et al. obtained data through an online quantitative survey with 1,100 participants with an age range of 14 to 73, albeit with over-representation of 20-39 year old males living in Dublin. Maycock et al. also undertook a qualitative study with fourteen interviews with professionals in the area and 40 interviews with self-identified LGBT people. The study found that 80% reported verbal assault; 40% reported experiencing the threat of physical violence, 25% reported physical assault, 9% reported sexual assault, and 25% reported name-calling or harassment at work. Linked to these experiences, 25% indicated that they had been prescribed medication, 28% reported that they had self-harmed at least once, 40% had attempted suicide at least once, and 40% had concerns about alcohol. In reviewing these findings, Maycock et al. also point to evidence for resilience and support: respondents scored an average of 7/10 on satisfaction and happiness, and reported satisfaction and support from friends, family, the LGBT community and environments such as work and school.

Maycock et al. also included questions for transgender respondents that indicated high levels of discrimination and also of psychological distress (McElroy & Sherlock, 2010). Their study and that of Collins & Sheehan (2004) are among the few (perhaps only) studies of transgender experiences in Ireland. An overview of health services by McElroy (2009) also highlighted lack of services and difficulties of access to services that are available for transgender people. In this context the SIG organized a seminar (McElroy & Sherlock, 2010) and a workshop: "Transgender issues" with an input from TENI (Transgender Equality Network of Ireland) on terminology, psychological issues, and guidelines for best practice that had previously been circulated to all PSI members (McDermott, 2010).

Two studies, both linked to emancipatory frameworks, draw attention to strength and resilience among LGBT people. I used the framework of liberation psychology to deliver and evaluate workshops that focused on homophobia and reactions to homophobia, and then explored psychological strengths that could be linked to being LGBT and strategies for transformation at the personal and political levels. Psychological vulnerabilities mirrored findings from quantitative research, and included fear, hopeless, isolation and the sense of being burdened. The exploration of strengths identified hope, courage, humour, pride, enjoying sex, and feeling connected worldwide. Evaluations of the workshops indicated that participants on the one hand saw benefit in focusing on oppression and being able to name and explore their experiences in this area especially as it was contextualized in an analysis of liberation that highlighted strengths and possibilities for change (Moane, 2008b).

The second study by Reygan (2010) explored the meanings of spirituality in a qualitative study involving LGBT participants who had developed their sense of spirituality outside of organized religion. Reygan writes:

Analysis generated three overarching themes: Religious Homophobia; the Eclectic Meanings and Functions of Spirituality; and Spirituality as Political. The subordinate theme of personal spirituality included: the journey; stillness and dynamism; personal authority; contemplation; interconnectedness; communing with nature; and community. Overall participants' spiritualities were influenced by the

historical, if no longer current, dominance of the homophobic Roman Catholic Church in Ireland. Nevertheless participants lived in an increasingly pluralistic Irish society and, despite the potentially negative dividend of religious homophobia, their eclectic spiritualities played an important and affirming role in their lives.

There have been several studies in reviewing studies of LGBT youth, one of which, by Reygan (2009) found that among a sample of 25 LGBT youth the majority experienced problems in school and did not consider their school a safe place to be LGBT. Almost half the sample reported that homophobia impacted negatively on their studies and one fifth left school early citing negative reactions to their LGBT identity as one of the main reasons they left. Sarma (2007) undertook a national study of youth on behalf of BeLonG To Youth Service, which is a national funded support service of LGBT youth. Sarma (2007) found that among 173 respondents (age range 18 to 25) 65% had taken drugs as compared with 24.9% of the general youth population. Sixty percent had used drugs in the 12 months prior to the study, 40% had used drugs in the previous month and 11% had experienced sexual assault whilst “incapacitated due to drugs”.

Homophobic bullying as been found to be widespread in Irish schools, with a study by Norman & Galvin (2004) finding that, while 79% of teachers may be aware of the presence of homophobic bullying in the secondary school system, 90% reported that their school’s anti-bullying policies contained no reference to homophobic bullying. A study from Trinity College Dublin by Minton, Dahl, O’Moore and Tuck (2006) found that 50% of LGBT youth had been bullied in comparison with 16% of the general youth population. The same study found that 29% of young LGBT participants had practiced unsafe sex and almost 6% had been paid for sex. While these findings highlight the challenges facing LGBT youth in Ireland, such negative experiences have become the focus of nationwide campaigns and peer support groups developed by BeLonG To Youth Service.

Another area of research in reviewing policy studies related to Health Services, Reygan writes:

The LGBT Health (HSE, 2009) report was the first mapping exercise providing an overview of health and social service provision as well as support for LGBT people in Ireland. As the report indicates, little information exists about the health determinants, health status, health-seeking behaviours and risk profiles of the LGBT population in Ireland. LGBT Health indicates that LGBT people and their health needs are often invisible in terms of Irish health service policy and provision and that there are no exact data about the size and make-up of LGBT communities in Ireland. LGBT Health also points to the mental health concerns and high incidence of depression and anxiety among LGBT people.

The study highlighted the problems that LGBT people experience in relation to parenting, adoption and the general vulnerability of LGBT families. Another health related study by Devine, Hickson, McNamee and Quinlan (2006) found that 11% had concerns about drug use and 30% expressed concerns about alcohol consumption. Devine et al.’s study found difficulties in disclosing sexual orientation to health practitioners, citing this as an obstacle to accessing health services. Their study and another by Gibbons, Manandhar, Gleeson and Mullan (2007) found anti-homosexual bias in service delivery. Thus the overall findings of these studies is that education and health environments present considerable challenges to LGBT people and present obstacles to effective use.

The Sexual Diversity and Gender Issues SIG has aimed to provide a platform for emerging research on LGBT issues by organizing symposia for the annual conference of the Psychological Society of Ireland. The first Sexual Diversity and Gender Issues SIG

symposium was held at the PSI annual conference in November 2008. Claire Cullen chaired the SDGISIG sponsored symposium entitled '*Sexual Diversity and Gender Issues: The Irish Context*'. As the titles of the symposium papers indicate, there was considerable variation in methods and perspectives. The following presentations were included in the symposium for which Dr. Geraldine Moane (UCD) served as discussant: "I'm not Homonegative ... I think": Using the IRAP to measure implicit homonegativity (Cullen, 2008); Get the picture? A Photovoice project exploring minority stress among sexual minority youth (Kelleher, 2008); Are Irish Women really as Self-assured as Irish Men? Implicit Versus Explicit Beliefs (Vahey, 2008). This symposium was designed to: (a) showcase some of the gender and sexuality-related research conducted by members of the SDGISIG; (b) to introduce new methodologies that would usefully complement existing measures used to study sexual and gender-related prejudice; and (c) to foster discussion and suggest future research/intervention avenues.

Titles in the symposia of the following years again illustrate the diversity of topics, and possibly represent the vast bulk of research in the area by psychologists, not all of whom are critical in their perspectives. SDGISIG sponsored symposium again illustrate included papers on "Understanding and Predicting Homophobia: An Application of the Theory of Planned Behaviour" (McLoughlin et al. 2009), "Lesbian and Gay Spirituality: A Phenomenological Study" (Reygan, 2009), and "Assessing Sexual Orientation in Research: The Need for Conceptual and Operational Complexity" (Cullen and Barnes-Holmes, 2009). Papers presented in the 2010 symposium included "The use of conversion therapy for sexual minority men and women" (McDermott, 2010), "Experiences of LGBT youth in the school system" (Reygan, 2010), "A preliminary exploration of the experiences and needs of transgender people in Ireland" (Coogan & Sarma, 2010), "Conceptual and methodological issues in research on sexual and gender diversity" (Cullen, 2010). Although a symposium was not organized for 2011, two papers on sexual orientation were presented: "Disclosure of sexual identity in the workplace" (McIntyre & Nixon, 2011) and "Keeping on the "straight" and "narrow" – Lesbians' Coming Out Stories" (Spies et al, 2011).

The titles of the papers listed above provide a good introduction to the topics that are relevant to gender and sexual diversity. Considerable conceptual and methodological complexity is acknowledged, and issues include youth, coming out, spirituality, homophobia and conversion therapy. They illustrate a plurality of methods and theoretical frameworks. They can be considered to be pioneering in an environment which up to recently lacked research in this area. While they may not all be explicitly critical, at this point most researchers in the area see themselves as breaking silence, opening new ground, challenging the status quo and contributing to equality and social justice. The PSI symposia offered a meeting ground and a platform for publication that hopefully encourages further research and dissemination.

The Cultural and Ethnic Diversity Special Interest Group has had a somewhat similar trajectory to the Sexual Diversity and Gender Issues Special Interest Group. The Cultural and Ethnic Diversity SIG has played an important role in placing diversity on the agenda in research, education, training and policy. The contributions of the group to EqUIP have been especially effective in demonstrating the value of highlighting diversity issues in every context of psychological practice. This has often worked to the advantage of the Sexual Diversity and Gender Issues SIG – where sexual orientation might not be seen as a relevant dimension of diversity, cultural diversity clearly is. The Cultural and Ethnic Diversity SIG has also been involved in delivering training on Doctorates in Clinical Psychology and

Counselling Psychology, and has been involved in organizing workshops and symposia at annual conferences of PSI.

Describing the first symposium at the PSI annual conference in 2008, Dermot Ryan writes:

The CEDSIG also held its first symposium at the 2008 Annual Conference. Irin McNulty and Liliana Morales gave some very practical tips on working through an interpreter in a clinical setting. The winner of the Postgraduate Award at the 2008 Annual Congress of Psychology Students in Ireland, Fiona Kelly (UCD), gave an excellent presentation on her study of mental health needs among help-seeking migrants in Ireland. Her colleague from UCD, Aileen O'Reilly, gave a fascinating presentation on the psychological and sociocultural demands international third-level students encounter in Ireland. Finally, we were honoured to have Dr Angela Veale from the Department of Applied Psychology at UCC participate in our symposium. Angela blew us all away with a presentation on the ethical and methodological challenges she and her international team have encountered on a participatory action research project in Africa. The project is examining the social reintegration of girl mothers and their children who have returned from fighting forces in Uganda and West Africa.

In 2009 the Cultural and Ethnic Diversity SIG also organized papers and symposia that provided research on "Interethnic Friendships and Interethnic Attitudes" (Kilduff & O'Reilly, 2009), "PTSD and Trauma in Irish Psychiatric Outpatient Services" (Kelly et al., 2009) and "Research and Evaluation Methodologies With Non-Western Populations" (Veale, 2009). A further symposium in 2010 focused on family issues, including separated children seeking asylum (Rylands, 2010), an all Ireland programme for immigrant parents (Bayly, 2010), child-rearing in transnational families (Veale et al., 2010) and immigrant youth in foster-care in Ireland (Greve, 2010).

These papers involved clinical examples and research studies using a variety of methods to highlight the motives and experiences of diverse groups of families involved in migration, and described efforts to develop a framework for working with families that could be implemented across the Health Services and that would explicitly acknowledge the varied circumstances of children and parents. There has been a considerable focus on delivery of services for immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers that would acknowledge issues such as separation of children from families and the role of interpreters. A critical investigation into the suitability of traditional psychological services for asylum seekers is the subject of a PhD thesis by Irin McNulty, who is currently undertaking interviews with service providers and service users.

Describing some development in service provision, Jennifer Rylands writes:

Examples of psychology service provision which aim to provide a culturally competent service for clients from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds:

- (i) HSE specialist Psychology Service for (adult) Refugees and Asylum seekers (based at St Brendan Hospital, Rathdown Rd, D7) which started in approx 1992 as part of a range of HSE services for Bosnian programme refugees received by Ireland.
- (ii) The HSE Psychology Service for Separated Children Seeking Asylum, commenced in 2001 as part of the adult service, now based in HSE Dublin South east Psychology Service.
- (iii) And finally the HSE Psychology Service for Victims of Human Trafficking, based also in HSE Dublin South East Psychology Service, started in 2010.

Contemporary Research (2006-2012)

The 2006 review in ARCP provided a comprehensive overview of historical and contemporary trends in critical psychology in Ireland, adopting a fairly broad understanding

of critical psychology to include examples of theory, research and application that had broad social relevance and/or employed methodologies that were innovative and inclusive. In this section I do not attempt such a broad overview. Being aware that much work in critical psychology can be unpublished, and rather than summarize the work of colleagues, I asked them to describe their research in their own words. In order to obtain up-to-date information about current research, I emailed colleagues in departments or schools of psychology in the Republic and asked them to brief me on developments in their own research and also to provide me with contact information for other colleagues whose work would be relevant to ARCP. The results were quite limited, in that many colleagues who had previously been active in critical psychology did not have new developments to report; only one respondent knew of work that was unfamiliar to me; and several colleagues involved in critical psychology had left the country for academic positions in other countries. And as the above account indicates, there has considerable focus among many in mobilizing around diversity and equality in PSI.

The following account by Paul Kelly of his involvement in a Critical Psychology Network in 2004-5 provides personal insights into the context in Ireland and supports the points made in the previous ARCP article about the conservatism of the profession in Ireland (Madden & Moane, 2006):

After approximately a year of meeting as a group we decided to go public with our interests by inviting the well-known UK based critical clinical psychologist, David Smail, to run a public seminar at which we would launch the newly named 'Irish Critical Psychology Network'. This event was advertised and we were encouraged by the number of mostly clinical and academic psychologists who attended, approximately 30 in all. Although the event appeared to be a success with a lot of engaged debate and discussion on the day, it was followed by a change the dynamics of the group of four with disagreements emerging about how to proceed from this point. We initially had high hopes of seminar attendees expressing an interest in joining us but this did not happen. Furthermore, two of the group of four began talking about moving away from Ireland, and this subsequently happened with the group dissolving in all but name. This also resulted in the opportunity to contribute to the teaching of critical psychology to clinical psychology trainees ending, and it has not since been requested by the course.

In making sense of the brief flowering and subsequent withering of the 'Irish Critical Psychology Network' it appears that there were a number of different system level and individual factors at play that contributed to each phase of this journey. In its flowering phase, I would identify the overall economic climate as a significant factor as this created the opportunity for psychologists from outside Ireland to come here to work and to bring critical influences with them. It also resulted in funds being available for teaching/training and attendance at conferences etc. I would also contend that there was some element of circumstance or perhaps luck in my meeting the individuals involved in the Irish Critical Psychology Network at that particular point in time. From an individual perspective, I feel that my own level of motivation and optimism was heightened due to my previous experiences of the relative success of developing such groups in the UK. However, in its withering phase many of these factors were reversed as the Irish economy began to run into trouble and the opportunities for professional and personal development shrank. My colleagues in the group often commented on how difficult it was to advance professionally in Ireland unless one was prepared to 'play the game' and being critical of mainstream psychology was certainly not a route to professional advancement. This apparent conservatism within psychology in Ireland was supported by the silence that greeted the PSI symposium in 2005. In our later reflections on this, our overall subjective impression was that being critical in the context of mainstream psychology circles in Ireland was alright if it meant being critical of other mental health professions but it was close to heresy to be openly critical within our own professional group. Perhaps the most significant factor in the group's dissolution was the loss of two key members with the consequent loss of the solidarity and support that being connected to others with similar interests involves.

Overall, it is clear that many of the reflections in this piece are personal subjective impressions of a journey but to me they represent how being critical of mainstream psychology is never easy and relies greatly on the support and solidarity of others, but is also dependent at times on the vagaries of luck and circumstance. However, in my view, perhaps the greatest barrier to the development of critical psychology in Ireland is the overall conservative nature of the profession. This conservatism is re-

enforced by the ways in which the current neo-liberal dominance of Irish society has led to an economic disaster with the consequent fears for job security and loss of social status for psychologists. In my view, this serves to narrow the scope for criticism as psychology, which has always predominantly relied on its relationship with powerful mainstream social institutions for its patronage, is likely to further align itself with dominant mainstream ideology in the perhaps unconscious hope of maintaining its power base in an increasingly insecure economic environment.

It is to be hoped that the publication of a policy on Equality and Inclusive Practice seemed to mark a new departure in PSI, and more openness in the profession. There is a strong commitment in the Working Party (EqUIP) to continue with a strategic plan that will place diversity issues on the agenda in Psychology. However, there is no guarantee that this will further the development of Critical Psychology – perhaps the next “country issue” of ARCP will allow the opportunity to evaluate this! The extract above also illustrates that despite the small size of Ireland, those involved in critical psychology can remain isolated. This is partly linked to the contextual issues that Paul Kelly describes.

Another factor in the fragmentation of critical psychology lies in the label itself, which on the one hand has a very broad reach, and on the other can seem to specify a particular approach. For example I have identified my areas of interest as feminist liberation psychology and LGBT psychology (Lykes & Moane, 2009; Moane, 2011), and I adopt a politicized approach that clearly articulates with critical psychology. I have received opposition in the School to my proposals to have critical psychology included on the School website as an umbrella for some of the diverse interests in the School; and while I have attended critical psychology conferences, I think of my interests as more aligned to feminist psychology. Thus the term can work as an umbrella term for me, and indeed I have taught an undergraduate module on Critical Psychology over the last three years, and have used critical psychology collections on all of my modules. However, for me the phrase feminist liberation psychology remains a more informative description of my work.

This year I replaced the title of my Critical Psychology module with Liberation Psychology, and found that the latter attracted a greater number of students, but curiously, many of them were not “critical” of psychology, as nearly all of the students who enrolled for the Critical Psychology module were! I defined Liberation Psychology as work that involved an applied component, and the module focused on specific example of feminist and liberation psychology in action in diverse contexts. For me both “feminist psychology” and “critical psychology” are too broad, and it seems to me that the majority of work in both categories tends to be discursive rather than applied. Feminist liberation psychology signals emancipatory practice involving working with women in marginalized and diverse contexts (see Lykes and Moane, 2009 and Moane, 2011 for further discussion). By the end of the module students were clearly critical of psychology and also saw many new examples of practice.

Several students have completed PhDs with me, drawing on broad emancipatory and liberation psychology frameworks. An example is provided by Martina Carroll (Carroll, 2010), who undertook an analysis of racism and anti-racism using mosaic as an Art form that could create a dialogical space in community settings in which understandings of racism could be developed and represented. Here Carroll summarizes her research and provides examples of images and themes:

The ARCmosaic (Action Research and Creative Arts Mosaic) model is positioned within an emancipatory paradigm. Three separate mosaic projects on the topic of racism/antiracism were run with three small groups of adults <women> living in a working class neighbourhood in Dublin. Group

discussions about racism and art work were recorded, transcribed and analysed using IPA (Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis). The mosaic projects were process oriented and were allowed to evolve organically through the actions of the participants...using art and discussion together helped to move participants into a more personal dialogical process. Participants began to develop an increased understanding of racism across the project.

The encoded image of the butterfly symbolizes the visibility and vulnerability of many immigrants. In the process of decoding, this group <Group !> were delighted to find new meaning emerging from their finished mosaic. They saw that there were two sides to the picture, the dark stormy sea and the calm peaceful land.

For group 2, in their mosaic called "Unity Journey" the super-ordinate theme was 'Isolation', because they felt that people are isolated when they are perceived to be different. This is reflected in the bridge, fence and roots symbols. Difference does not just relate to ethnicity; everyone who is different is at risk. The images are intended to reflect the dislocation and poverty experienced by many people resulting from migration both internationally and within the country. They have the horse and caravan to symbolize Travellers who were clearly perceived as different.

Ethnic difference is specifically encoded in the symbol of the black and white keys on the piano keyboard...Two strong symbols of identity were encoded by group 3. The fireplace symbolizing the Irish as warm and welcoming..the geometric shapes symbolize the diversity of opinions that exist.

Other research includes an analysis of leadership drawing on re-evaluation counselling and psychology of oppression and liberation (Ruth, 2006); and the work of Siobhan Madden, co-author of the previous article in ARCP (Madden & Moane, 2006), who is currently undertaking a doctorate with a working title of 'Narratives of Voice of Feminist Community Activists: Interrupting Neoliberal Rationalities'. There are undoubtedly other examples of research that were not identified owing to the limited methodology employed. The following descriptions are provided by the remaining three respondents (in alphabetical order) to the email described above.

Adrian Brock, with a background in philosophy and history, writes

I began my career as a researcher in history and philosophy of science and, although I have spent the last 24 years in psychology departments, I never really left that field. The point is important in that, as a specialist in history and philosophy of psychology, psychology is something that I try to understand rather than something that I do. Indeed, there are some in the field of history and philosophy of science who maintain that a certain intellectual distance from the object of one's investigation is an essential prerequisite for writing good history. This is a complex issue which is best discussed elsewhere.

I have broad interests in history and philosophy of psychology but my work on indigenous psychologies will serve as an illustration. Starting in the 1970s, several psychologists in Asia, Africa and Latin America argued that the psychology that was being imported into their countries from Europe and the United States was culturally inappropriate and would have to be substantially revised if it was to be made relevant to the local context. A more radical wing of the same movement rejects Western psychology entirely and tries to build an alternative out of indigenous resources. The indigenization movement has representatives all over the world but it is particularly strong in India, the Philippines, South Korea, Taiwan and Mexico. The movement to establish a European social psychology in the 1970s that was led by figures like Henri Tajfel and Serge Moscovici was an indigenization movement of a kind.

Although self-conscious indigenization movements are a relatively recent phenomenon in the history of psychology, indigenization itself is not. As many writers have noted, the kind of psychology that was established in the United States at the end of the nineteenth century was very different from the psychology in Europe from which it was derived. Among other things, it was more practical and 'applied' but the differences went beyond the topics that were investigated and distinctively American approaches like functionalism and behaviorism began to emerge. The differences between American and European psychology did not lessen in the years that followed. If anything, they became more pronounced. Thus when large numbers of European intellectuals began to arrive in the United States following the Nazi takeover of Germany in 1933, natural scientists were generally able to continue the work they had been doing at home, whereas psychologists who had been schooled in the Gestalt and psychoanalytic traditions encountered a psychology that was dominated by behaviorism.

In keeping with the comments made at the outset, I do not take a position on whether or not indigenization is "a good thing". I am more interested in what it tells us about psychology. No one to the

best of my knowledge talks of indigenous physics or indigenous biology. This may suggest that psychology differs from these subjects in important respects.

Orla Muldoon writes about her work in critical social psychology:

I write about the apparent blindness in Irish society to both structural divisions and banal influences of national, religious and gendered identities on everyday life in Ireland. A key element of my position is that these macro-social influences have consequences in terms of everyday social practices as well as in terms of the political and psychological positioning of individual in wider society. So for example my recent work has looked at how rituals associated with Irishness such as the St Patrick's day parade, whilst explicitly seeking to celebrate multi-cultural Ireland can actually act to exclude, to make immigrants to Ireland feel excluded. Similarly other events such as the Easter commemoration of the foundation of the state, a more sombre celebration of Irishness, can serve to highlight divisions within the nation rather than facilitate a sense of shared identity. I argue that these cleavages arise as a consequence of the existing cleavage within society.

The role of these differences in everyday life or on days of ritual celebration can be constructed as both trivial and/or circumscribed. However I argue that they are not trivial, rather they are markers of divisions that are both acceptable and consequential in terms of social and psychological resources. These differences are very important to the sectarian divisions in Northern Ireland and the classed divisions in the Irish Republic.

My research documents the nebulous and persistent influence of poverty on exclusion in Irish society and religious division in Northern Ireland, despite explicit discourse of inclusion and stated policy to the contrary. My empirical analyses of these issues indicate that these divisions influence behaviours, stereotyping of those believed to be from 'the other' community'. I argue that we socialise our young people into accepting these differences which then flatten appetite for social and political change that deliver significant progress towards tackling such divisions. Large scale surveys also indicate that these differences influence a host of outcomes such as community cohesion, mental health and life satisfaction. This also creates a host of difficulties for those using and delivering public services and attempting to spearhead reform that could genuinely benefit all.

Angela Veale describes some of her work using participatory action research:

The project was a participatory action research (PAR) project with girls aged 13-18 years that aimed to give voice to their experiences within the juvenile justice system and also to develop a social action project to address issues they identified as important. It exemplifies meaningful participation as outlined by Montero (2000). This is all the more remarkable as participants are minors (under 18 years) and a group that is traditionally difficult to engage in psychological research (young people in contact with the law). Even more unusual is participation that gives female minors a voice. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, Art. 12 and the National Children's Strategy (Ireland) give a legal and policy imperative to the involvement of children and young people in research. In 2007, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child expressed deep concern at the lack of basic data on juvenile justice in Ireland and noted that children, in particular those who have been in contact with the youth justice system, should be involved in research designed to implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child. An outcome of the research presented here is that participants engaged in dialogue with the Ombudsman for Children (Ireland) and senior representatives of the Gardai (Irish Garda), and a later evaluation of the project indicated that the experience of feeling respected and listened to was a life-enhancing, if even life-changing for some young participants.

The Project

This project involved nine girls aged 13-18 years, almost half of whom had been in contact with the Police (that is, they had received at the minimum a formal caution) and half the participants were community peers from within the same disadvantaged inner city communities in an Irish city. Community peers had no formal contact with the Police and were not experiencing crisis. This proved to be an important decision as the different experiences and levels of functioning fostered emotional regulation, mutual learning and support within the group. The project was carried out in conjunction with

an Irish youth organisation Youth Advocate Programme (YAP) Ireland and all participants who had been in contact with the law were receiving services and support from youth workers. Facilitators included a psychotherapist, a creative artist and two peer researchers from the same community as the girls. The PAR project involved four phases:

Phase 1: Participatory definition of question-posing, data gathering and analysis.

The aim of phase 1 was to identify the research questions, issues, and priorities on youth justice and social integration by engaging the young people through creative arts processes. Phase 1 involved 12 once-weekly 2 hour workshops with a group of 6 girls. As it was a research project, we recorded each workshop by taking notes. The notes were brought back to the group each week so that they could see what had been written and comment on it. From week 4, the workshops were also recorded with a digital voice recorder. These were transcribed and also brought back to the group. This was also a particularly useful way of recording the text in the girls' improvised dramas. The transcriptions could then be used as scripts for the dramas the following week.

Phase 2: Planning a social action.

The aim of phase 2 was to plan and implement a social action emergent from the first phase. Over the three months of phase one, they started to work out ways that they can express their views through the creative arts, for example, they created characters with clay and drawings which were animated to produce an animation; they started a Bebo site and began to take initiative and identify things they wanted to do and people they wanted to talk with. During this phase, an idea crystallized that they wanted to make a DVD using the storylines and characters that emerged in this phase.

Phase 3: Implementing a social action

Not all participants from the first twelve weeks wished to continue with the project so those that choose to engage in making the DVD were invited to introduce a friend to the project. In this way, three continued and three new participants joined the project and so six girls were involved in the social action phase.

Phase 4: Analysis, reflection and dissemination of project findings

As a social action, the group made a DVD they entitled "Girls Out Loud" which they have since shown and discussed with the Ombudsman for Children, high ranking members of the Police with responsibility for juvenile justice, their schools and others in their communities.

The incorporation of action is central to PAR projects. In this project, participants were given control over decisions about the use of resources (money) in the project so that they could decide what social action they wished to undertake with the available budget. The action undertaken, the production of their DVD 'Girls Aloud' required interactions with outside agencies where participants were required to orient their utterances towards an audience such as the Police. This necessitated a shift from a very confrontational style to one of being people with something to say that deserved to be heard respectfully and in turn they had to present their views in a way they felt would enable them to be heard. Tint (2009) notes that the word 'dialogue' derives from the greek words *dia* meaning "through" and *logos* meaning "the word" and that it captures the flow of connection and exchange through words in which parties to the process can be changed by a transaction. Arguably in this process, participants

asserted their authentic voice.

Conclusion

The attempt to provide an overview of critical psychology in Ireland presented several challenges, both conceptual and practical. This article focused on the current economic crisis, mobilization around diversity, equality and inclusive practice, and new and emerging work that the researchers themselves judged to be examples of critical psychology.

Practical challenges and obstacles to the ongoing development of critical psychology were clearly identified in several ways. Critical psychology is still very much a minority presence in psychology in Ireland. This can be partly linked to the historical effort to establish psychology as a profession in a catholic dominated country, which perhaps amplified the conservative nature of evidence based psychology. The current economic climate and the accompanying neo-liberal discourse place both ideological and practical barriers to those, especially those at the start of their career, interested in developing critical approaches.

The critical psychology documented in this paper has tended to have a practical focus, perhaps reflecting the interests of the author as well as the needs of the profession and of society to challenge unitary discourses, whether about “the Irish” or about “people”. Diversity and equality provide a focus for mobilization, and placing them firmly on the agenda for the profession has had the effect of encouraging critical discussion of the profession. It has been heartening and encouraging to be able to document this emerging movement in Ireland.

The work described here has been undertaken both by established professionals (academics and practitioners) and by newly emerging PhDs. The increasing strength of neo-liberal models in universities and the scarcity of secure academic jobs has placed greater pressure on new PhDs to undertake more traditional research and to keep their more radical interests on the margin. It may be that the contexts in which critical psychology develops in Ireland are either privileged or marginal, and those who contributed to developing critical psychology will have to hold these spaces and encourage younger researchers. Thus holding the space for critical psychology will continue to cross contexts and generations.

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Contact details:

Geraldine Moane

School of Psychology

University College Dublin

Belfield, Dublin 4, Ireland.

Email: ger.moane@ucd.ie