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Is everyone Irish on St Patrick's Day? Divergent expectations and experiences of collective self-objectification at a multicultural parade.

### ABSTRACT

We examine experiences of collective self-objectification (or its failure) among participants in a 'multicultural' St Patrick's Day parade. A two-stage interview study was carried out in which ten parade participants (five each from ethnic majority and minority groups) were interviewed before and after the event. In pre-event interviews, all participants understood the parade as an opportunity to enact social identities, but differed in the category definitions and relations they saw as relevant. Members of the white Irish majority saw the event as being primarily about representing Ireland in a positive, progressive, light, while members of minority groups saw it as an opportunity to have their groups' identities and belonging in Ireland recognised by others. Post-event interviews revealed that, for the former group, the event succeeded in giving expression to their relevant category definitions. The latter group, on the other hand, cited features of the event such as inauthentic costume design and a segregated structure as reasons for why the event did not provide the group recognition they sought. The accounts revealed a variety of empowering and disempowering experiences corresponding to the extent of enactment. We consider the implications in terms of collective self-objectification, the performative nature of dual identities, as well as the notion of multicultural recognition.

The psychology of crowds has been a topic of interest to scholars working within the social identity tradition in social psychology since the relatively early years of that approach (Reicher, 1984; 1987), and the psychological understanding of crowds has been transformed as a result. Whereas 19<sup>th</sup> century accounts centred on mindless 'contagion' and the fickleness of crowd members (Le Bon, 1985) and situationist theories of the 1970s stressed deindividuation (Zimbardo, 1970), social identity theorists have sought to highlight the meaningful and normative character of crowd action. Accordingly, much research effort has gone into demonstrating how behaviour that seems irrational to observers is rendered meaningful when we understand the content of the collective identities at stake and the unfolding intergroup relations within which they are formed (Drury & Reicher, 2000; Reicher, 2001; Stott, Adang, Livingstone & Schreiber, 2007). More fundamentally, crowd action is seen as both a product of broader social relations and a source of social change, rather than some kind of suspension of normative conduct or detachment from ordinary sociality, as classic crowd psychology would have it (Reicher, 1996). As such, social identity researchers are drawn to crowd behaviour as a domain in which to elucidate processes underlying social determination and social change more generally.

This line of research been further enriched by theoretical developments stressing the performative nature of social identities (Klein, Spears & Reicher, 2007). From this perspective, not only are existing group norms a guide to behaviour, but group members may also seek to consolidate particular understandings of identity content by enacting it. In other words, behaviour can serve to actively shape group norms in a desired way rather than merely following them like a script. Furthermore, such identity enactment may be constrained by the action of others, both within and beyond the group, who wish to advance alternative conceptions of the categories. Thus identity-relevant behaviour can be viewed as part of the process of construction and contestation of the ingroup category.

The notion of collective self-objectification (CSO; Drury et al., 2005; Drury & Reicher, 2005, 2009) speaks to how these enactment processes can play out in a crowd setting. Self-objectification entails the 'imposition of self or identity' (Drury & Reicher, 2009, p.717), such that, through collective action, one is able to impose one's understandings of categories and category relations on events rather than having them imposed by outgroup others. The main concern for Drury and colleagues is how self-objectification can result in an experience of empowerment in the context of protest and social movements. For example, in one study of CSO in the context of an anti-roads campaign, activists were able to temporarily thwart an attempt to destroy a local green, reclaiming it as a communal space. In so doing, they were able to impose their shared understanding of legitimacy on events, an outcome that was experienced as empowering (Drury, Cocking, Beale, Hanson & Rapley, 2005). Drury et al. suggest that such experiences of empowerment arise from collective action that succeeds in changing the world in a way that accords with one's identity. They argue that the achievement of CSO, underpins the experiences of exhilaration and the subsequent sense of commitment that are often associated with participation in crowd events.

While this process has usually been examined in settings of direct confrontations, we can also consider the importance of CSO in crowd events that are not characterised by overt conflict in the same way. Indeed, one may expect to find opportunities for CSO wherever a group can overturn power relations (however temporarily) by changing some feature of the world to reflect its members' understanding of their identity (Drury & Reicher, 2009). In this paper, we consider the relevance of CSO to events that do not ostensibly involve struggle and conflict, such as national celebrations.

It has been suggested that one way in which nations and other large groups can take on a more immediate, material character is through events in which people are brought together in a crowd that in some way represents the entire group or community, such as

festivals and parades, even if not all of the group members are literally present (PMMRG 2007, p298). Research on the Prayag Magh Mela, an annual Hindu gathering in Allahabad, has explored how pilgrims experience the crowds as an embodiment of the ideal Hindu community, allowing them to live fully and authentically as Hindu devotees in a way that would not usually be possible for them, and enhancing their collective identity as Hindus (Cassidy et al., 2007; PMMRG, 2007). This work highlights the role of recognition by others at such events in fostering an embodied sense of connectedness, or what anthropologists have referred to as 'communitas' (Turner, 1969).

Yet, while such events may afford the possibility of having one's identity validated by others' recognition, this cannot always be assumed. Anthropologists in particular point out that collective events are not the expression of a final, consensual, understanding of the group, but serve as important sites for the contestation and negotiation of potentially incompatible understandings of roles, identities and authority (Bryan, 2000). Different participants in a collective event might seek to enact different versions or understandings of the ingroup category, with some having greater means to impose their understanding on the whole event than others, even in the absence of open conflict. These points underlie critiques of the notion of communitas as failing to capture the contested nature of ritual, although the binary opposition of communitas versus contestation has not gone unchallenged (Coleman, 2002). Accordingly, a variety of experiences of success and failure of identity enactment are possible. In the current study, we focus on a national celebratory event in order to examine, first, whether the notion of CSO is relevant beyond settings of crowd conflict and whether it can therefore complement anthropological accounts of collective events by explicating the identity processes involved; and second, the extent to which self-objectification and its failure leads to experiences of empowerment and disempowerment.

### **Identity enactment, multicultural recognition and dual identities**

The study of identity enactment within collective events is important for understanding not only crowd behaviour itself, but also social relations more broadly, including issues pertaining to multiculturalism. Theorists of multiculturalism have argued that various forms of oppression have forced devalued groups into a demeaning image of themselves, and that multiculturalism as a 'politics of recognition' counteracts this by replacing identities imposed *on* minority groups with ones imposed collectively *by* them (Kymlicka, 1995, 2001; Taylor, 1992). This argument is based on the notion that ethnic groups have a need to express authentic cultural identities, a notion that is potentially problematic because it implies an essentialist conception of 'true' identities. CSO, however, provides a way to consider multicultural recognition in social psychological terms, without the need to reify 'culture' as through there were such things as true versus false versions of pre-existing cultural identities. Multicultural recognition can be conceptualised as an orientation to people's identities that does not force them to position themselves according to someone else's definition of who they are (Hopkins & Blackwood, 2011).

Social psychologists have often approached the topic of majority-minority relations in relation to multiculturalism by examining the role of subgroup (e.g. ethnic) and superordinate (e.g. national) identities. Superordinate identities, whereby people represent themselves inclusively as belonging to one single group, contribute to more positive intergroup attitudes (Gaetner & Dovidio, 2000). However, it can also reduce awareness of inequality and impede social change. While superordinate identity often appeals to majority groups, minority groups generally prefer a dual identity comprising both subordinate and superordinate levels of categorisation (Dovidio, Gaertner & Saguy, 2009; Hornsey & Hogg, 2000). Is it therefore of interest *how* minorities go about presenting themselves as a distinct subgroup and part of a common ingroup at the same time and whether their ability to do this is shaped by the

somewhat different representational concerns of the majority (Hopkins, 2011).

National celebrations are likely occasions for the performance of national identities, so examining SCO at such events could tell us a great deal about how dual identities are negotiated in practice.

### **A multicultural St Patrick's Day**

St Patrick's Day is one of the most prominent examples of a 'national day', albeit one that is celebrated widely across the world. Yet, St Patrick's Day celebrations have been as sites of controversy and contestation over identity and representation as well as celebration and unity (Marston, 2002; Mulligan, 2008; Nagle, 2005). This makes it an ideal case in addressing processes of CSO and multicultural recognition within a celebratory event. The practice of holding a parade on St Patrick's Day originates with Irish diaspora communities in the United States in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and was introduced to Ireland itself much later, in the 1930s. The Dublin parade has generally been a low-key affair in comparison to its counterparts in North American cities such as Boston, New York and Chicago. However, reflecting the increasing prosperity of the Republic of Ireland through the 1990s, a more ambitious parade developed, funded through the Department for Tourism, Culture and Sport (Cronin and Adair, 2006). In part, this can be understood in terms of a desire to present a modern and progressive image of Ireland to an international audience. Indeed, people attending the event understand this to be part of its purpose (O'Donnell et al., 2012). The 2009 parade, which was the focus of our research, attracted an audience of approximately 675,000: A large event for a city of only around 500,000 residents. One section of the parade, 'City Fusion', aimed specifically to *"bring together Irish, non-Irish and inter-cultural groups to work with one another to create an artistic presentation for St Patrick's Festival Parade"*

and to “*celebrate the diversity of Dublin City's cultural landscape*”.<sup>1</sup> As well as the reflecting particular concerns about Ireland's reputation and standing in the world, this could also be seen in terms of a wider trend for Western European countries to integrate norms of cultural pluralism into the way they represent the nation. Thus, the event took place under a very overt theme of multiculturalism.

The complexity of meanings surrounding multiculturalism (Bowskill, Lyons & Coyle, 2007; Kymlicka, 1995, 2001; Modood, 2007) makes a ‘multicultural parade’ a useful vehicle for examining CSO in a setting that is ostensibly about celebration and unity rather than conflict. We can expect majority and minority groups, for example, to view multiculturalism differently (e.g. Verkuyten, 2005) and thus have different understandings about what enacting multiculturalism in a parade would actually entail. The experience of participation may be quite different depending on the extent to which these various understandings are successfully enacted in the event. Thus, we set out to examine the prior expectations and understandings of ethnic majority and minority participants in the St Patrick's Day parade, as well as subsequent accounts of their experiences in it. More specifically, we consider (a) whether there are different understandings of the identities and category relations relevant to the parade's multicultural theme; (b) the extent to which participants saw those understandings as successfully enacted in the event; and (c) the experiences of empowerment or disempowerment stemming from this.

## **Method**

### **Participants and interviews**

Ten participants in the 2009 St Patrick's Day parade were interviewed as part of a larger project on the transformation of Irish identities through collective events. Four of the

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<sup>1</sup> Retrieved from <http://www.stpatricksfestival.ie/>, March 2009

interviewees (Eamon, Brian, Noel and Ronan) were members of a community theatre workshop in a working-class area of Dublin.<sup>2</sup> They were male, white, and aged approximately between 45 and 65 years of age and identified as Irish. One interviewee (Anita) belonged to another Dublin theatrical group. She was female, identified herself as a 'white middle-class Irish girl' and was a recent university graduate in her early 20s. Five black women (Joelle, Jade, Kiori, Lora and Makisi) belonged to an organisation for Caribbean immigrants living in Dublin. All had been born outside of Ireland, although Jade and Kiori (aged 18 and 19) had spent most of their lives in Dublin. Makisi, in her 40s, had lived in Dublin for 16 years. When asked whether they were themselves Irish, these three women affirmed that they were. Joelle and Lora, were more recent arrivals to Ireland in their early 20s, and denied that they were Irish. All of the interviewees had been invited to perform in the 'City Fusion' section of the parade.

Each interviewee was interviewed twice: The first interview, lasting between 30 minutes and one hour, was conducted in the 10 days leading up to the parade. The second interview lasted between 20 minutes and one hour and was conducted during the two months following the parade. Interviews took place in a variety of locations, including the premises of the theatre workshop, interviewees' homes, and public places such as fast-food restaurants around Dublin. All interviews were done on a one-to-one basis in the absence of other parade participants and organisers, the only exception to this being a post-event interview with Jade and Kiori together. The first author was the interviewer.

Interviews began with an explanation of the general purpose of the research. Permission to record the interview and to use anonymous transcripts for the purposes of research and publication was obtained. The semi-structured interview was then carried out according to a schedule that covered, in the pre-event interview, the interviewees'

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<sup>2</sup> All names have been changed.

understanding of the purpose of St Patrick's Day, any significant memories that they had about the event from previous years, how they would organise the event if they were able to create their own ideal St Patrick's parade, and their expectations about their imminent performance in the parade. The post-event interviews focused on impressions of having been in the 2009 parade, areas of satisfaction and dissatisfaction, and so forth. Photographs of the event, including photographs of the interviewees taken during the performance where possible, were used as a memory aid and focus of conversation.

While the interview schedule specified the topics to be discussed in the interviews, it did not dictate a fixed series of questions. Rather, interviews took the form of natural conversations that were structured around certain topics and that allowed the interviewer to probe areas of interest, and to seek elaboration and/or clarification where appropriate. In order to avoid imposing categories and ways of talking about the main topic of interest, no direct questions were used to raise issues of diversity or multiculturalism with the interviewees. Rather, on account of the context to the event, these issues were invariably raised by the interviewees themselves and were then explored further in conversation.

### **Analytic strategy**

Thematic analysis was carried out to explore the understandings of identity definitions and category relations that interviewees saw as relevant, the extent of their success in enacting these understandings, and the possible experiences of empowerment or disempowerment that they associated with their participation. Thematic analysis is a flexible method that can aim either to provide a full description of an entire dataset or focus on a particular aspect, can be either inductive or theoretical, and can follow either a realist/essentialist or constructionist epistemology (Braun & Clark, 2006). Accordingly, our approach was focussed, theoretical

and realist. It was focussed in the sense that we were specifically interested in participants' accounts of their own experience of the event in terms of the social categories and category relations they saw as relevant, enactment and empowerment. Other topics, such as early memories of St Patrick's Day, the details they gave about the preparation and creative aspects of the performances and so forth were of interest only in so far as they informed these key concerns. The analysis was theoretical in that our account is informed by the developments in social identity research as explained above. Finally, the approach was realist in the sense that we interpret the participants' accounts in terms of impressions and experiences that we assume them to have had of the event, and of the sense they made of it. Our realist stance, however, does not extend to the ontological status of social categories themselves, which we see as necessarily contestable and fluid. The relevance and meaning of national, ethnic and other categories are actively interpreted and reworked by our participants as they make sense of their experience. Indeed, we see the parade itself as a practice aimed at 'constructing' a social category (Irish people) in certain ways. Our analysis could therefore be seen as constructionist in that broader sense.

The interviews were transcribed verbatim. Given the type of analysis, it was not necessary to transcribe non-linguistic features of the talk such as pauses or overlapping speech. Transcripts were then read through several times and discussed among members of the research team. Sections of the interviews that touched on the broad topics of multiculturalism and diversity were then extracted from the transcripts. These sections were then read with close attention to both direct and indirect construal of social categories (in the pre-event interviews) and evidence of claims of identity enactment, or lack thereof, as well as understandings of power relationships (in the post-event accounts). Themes were developed within each of these three topics aiming to capture the patterning of the meaning that interviewees themselves brought to their experience.

## Analysis

### Construal of social relations

We begin by considering what kind of social categories and relationships interviewees saw as being relevant in the context of the parade, using the pre-event material. In line with the overt multicultural theme of the parade, the event was widely understood by interviewees as representing something important about a 'multicultural' Ireland and, more specifically, about relations between groups defined in terms of 'race' or 'culture'. All interviewees saw the event in terms of identity enactment in one way or another, in that they saw it as a deliberate display of something pertaining to their identity as Irish people or people living in Ireland, to be witnessed by an audience. Despite this commonality, however, members of the ethnic majority and minority groups talked about categories and category relations quite differently.

#### *Extract 1*

Brian: But I don't know, I just love the multicultural thing because I am anything but racist and I hate racism. [...] It would be my aim to say "look, Ireland is welcoming you and this is how welcome we are making you". Like that you can be part of what we are doing and we can be part of what you are doing.

#### *Extract 2*

Noel: It's to show we're not racist or anything like that, you know, let everyone come in, you know.

White majority Irish interviewees constructed multiculturalism principally in terms of Irish tolerance of difference. In other words, it is about Irish people having the characteristic of being tolerant and welcoming to those who are seen as different. In this version of multicultural Ireland, minority groups themselves play a secondary and passive role as objects to be tolerated. A multicultural St Patrick's Day parade is therefore an opportunity for Irish people to show everybody else how tolerant they are. The concern, then, is not about improving the position of minorities in Ireland but of enhancing the image of Ireland in the world.

*Extract 3*

Lora: [Last year] I saw the Trinity [College] group had, this kind of locks and I can affiliate [with] it because I have locks myself and I think I felt great warmth because although it was an African-Caribbean society in Trinity it showed a lot of the Caribbean in it by them wearing the locks and so I just wanted to be a part of it this year [...] I could see the respect of being recognised in what they showed on St. Patrick's Day last year. I think it was great to see that because in some ways you feel like you belong. In some sort of way you feel like, yes, they are portraying something that is from the Caribbean or something that is relating to the Caribbean, so it was good to see.

While the interviewees from minority ethnic groups also saw the multicultural theme as being relevant to their presence and their relationship to others in Ireland more broadly, their construal of what this meant was quite different. In extract 3, we see that when Lora relates a memory of a previous year's parade, she mentions the appearance of something specifically familiar and meaningful to her – the dreadlocks of the performers – and that what

she takes from this is a sense that, as a person from the Caribbean living in Ireland, her identity is being acknowledged in a way that makes her feel that she belongs. Rather than being tolerated, the relationship between themselves and the wider society is that of 'respect' and 'being recognised'. Indeed, she says that this is why she decided to participate herself.

*Extract 4*

Lora: The uniqueness of each group came out and I think people who are going to be on the side seeing the groups pass by will in some way recognise something. The Lithuanian group, the group from Cyprus the group from France I mean they will see themselves represented in some sort of way.

*Extract 5*

Jade: I think more people will come and see "oh Irish Jamaicans here" you know, seeing all these different cultures that's actually representing them.

Extracts 4 and 5 highlight the importance these participants place on groups being recognised in their specificity. Talking about the preparations for the parade, Lora notes the 'uniqueness' of each group and again speaks of recognition. Similarly, in extract 5, Jade emphasises the recognisability of a particular group to the audience, rather than tolerance of some diffuse sense of difference. It is noteworthy that she mentions '*Irish Jamaicans*', because it suggests she does not see the parade's multicultural theme as an alternative to its role as a celebration of Irishness but rather as a way of casting Irishness in such a way that it can be represented by minority groups as well as the majority. By 'different cultures that's actually representing them', she may mean that an Irish audience will see Irishness represented by these diverse performers.

*Extract 6*

Jade: There's a lot of friendship in that way and they kind of realise oh she's Irish but she's a different colour. So people, it doesn't come as a surprise anymore you know that kind of way (unclear) so yeah.

Interviewer: So it's not just that they would accept that there are black people in the parade but that they would actually see that as being Irish?

Jade: Yeah they would see you as being Irish yeah.

Extract 6 makes it particularly clear that the concern with being recognised as a distinct group is not in contradiction with the idea of St Patrick's Day being about representing Irishness. Rather, the parade is a context in which one can be recognised as Irish irrespective of, in this case, one's skin colour. We also saw this in extract 3 where Lora links group recognition to a sense that 'you feel like you belong'. Being seen as different, then, is not an alternative to been seen as Irish. Rather, having one's difference acknowledged and respected in the context of a St Patrick's Parade indicates that it is not a basis for exclusion from the category of 'Irish'.

To summarise, for majority group performers, the performative aspect of the parade is about representing Ireland and Irishness in a positive light, particularly to an international audience. The multicultural theme is relevant to this agenda because it demonstrates how tolerant and welcoming Ireland and the Irish are. For the minority performers, it is about being recognised on their own terms in their uniqueness but also as Irish: that what they are in their specificity can also be part of Irishness. Thus, on the one hand we have a concern with enacting tolerance, while on the other it is about enacting uniqueness and recognition.

**Extent of enactment**

When we examine the post-event accounts for evidence of whether the participants saw the parade as having successfully enacted the relevant categories and relationships or not, we again find quite different kinds of accounts depending on majority or minority status. For white Irish interviewees, the parade was unanimously seen as having lived up to its aim of being a multicultural event, and they cited the visible diversity among the people present as evidence of this.

*Extract 7*

Brian: Ah there were a lot of foreign people. It was multicultural. I think that's how we won the last year because we do multicultural you know. And you're going along. Multicultural people. And funny though it's them that's more into it than our own.

In extract 7, Brian implies that the event was multicultural because there were 'foreigners' around. The relations between the parade participants are still characterised in terms of a distinction between 'our own' and 'them', the 'multicultural people'.

*Extract 8*

Anita: Definitely a sense of like a multicultural community because like there wasn't more than two or three people in a row that would have been the same colour or would have been the same like nationality. You can hear it and you can see it like there is a lot of Americans and just hugely different being the entire way down like I would have said it was massively multicultural which is fantastic.

Extract 8 does not show such overt othering as extract 7, and the speaker's characterisation of the event in terms of a 'multicultural community' certainly suggests a more inclusive categorisation than that of 'a lot of foreign people'. Nonetheless, the broader equation of multiculturalism with the mere presence of others who are a different 'colour' or 'like, nationality' is constant across extracts 6 and 7. At the same time, neither extract shows any evidence of interviewees rendering the presence of minorities as a problem (as an obstacle to the expression of Irishness, for example), and there is certainly no hostility towards minority groups. Indeed this general positivity about the cultural diversity among the parade participants and audience was constant throughout all of the interviews. However, examining the accounts of participants from the Caribbean group reveals quite different impressions of the same event.

*Extract 9*

Joelle: Here, you had people I think really wondering "who the hell are these guys?" you know what I mean?

Looking at a photograph from the event showing her group's performance in the parade, Joelle remarks on the facial expressions of the audience members who are visible in the background (extract 9). Her suggestion that the audience reaction to their performance was to wonder "who the hell are these guys?" highlights her concern that not only was there a lack of recognition in the sense of not knowing who the group were and what they were trying to represent, but also that they were out of place in a celebration of Irishness.

*Extract 10*

Interviewer: The audience, when they saw your group, would they have known that you were Jamaican?

Makisi: No. That's another thing (unclear). Here we are, passing with this big arse sticking out the back and the peacock. How would they know we are Jamaican?

Interviewer: Do you think it would be better if they did know?

Makisi: It would be better they know.

Interviewer: Yes? Why is that?

Makisi: To see what country that, you know, who are these people that are representing this country? Who are they?

Similarly, in extract 10, Makisi is clear that she does not think the audience would have known that her group was Jamaican because of the design of the costume. The costumes, provided by the organisers, attempted to link the overall 2009 parade theme of 'Sky's the Limit!' with Jamaica by depicting the Red-billed Streamertail, Jamaica's national bird. Costumes comprised coloured dresses, feather boas and costume beaks. While this may sound appropriate to the enactment of a Jamaican identity, it is clear that the participants did not treat it as such. Unlike the performance from a previous year that was described in extracts 3 and 4, these costumes evidently fail to connote anything recognisable or meaningful about the identity that the performers wish to enact. This is seen as unfortunate because the audience did not get to know 'who is representing this country' (extract 10). By 'this country' the speaker seems to mean Ireland, so her concern is that the audience should have been aware that Jamaicans were participating a celebration of Irishness, and therefore enacting their sense of belonging in Ireland. The issue of the costumes is something that we will return to in the following section.

*Extract 11*

Lora: What I noticed as well that all the groups from the African continents [sic] or the black groups were together. We were all, either one behind the other. I don't know why they did that because I think if this should have been a multicultural event why were we all stuck together? I think we should have been distinct with, there should have been other groups in between us which I can't say why they did it but I think, that's what I think. They should have spread us out in some sort of way so people see that group going, that group coming.

In addition to the costumes, the structuring of the groups within the parade was also experienced as an impediment to group recognition. Specifically, some interviews described segregation in the ordering of the various groups, in that 'the black groups were all together'. This is voiced in by Lora extract 11. In her view, such structuring of the parade was not appropriate for a multicultural event because the distinctiveness of each group was lost. There is a concern that the audience would not have recognised each group in terms of the identities that they saw themselves as enacting, instead simply seeing them all as 'black'. Her suggestion that it should have been structured in such a way that people see 'that group going, that group coming' again suggests recognition of specificity was important but not realised.

Taken together, these points on the extent of enactment suggest two quite different perspectives. From the perspective of the majority group, the parade was evidently multicultural because of the diversity of the people present. For the minority, it was not multicultural because the distinct groups could not be recognised by the audience. The aim of representing a tolerant and progressive Ireland was successful; the aim of minorities being recognised as part of Ireland in their difference was unsuccessful.

### **Subjective power and effects of enactment**

Following the argument that experiences of empowerment follow from the imposition of identity onto events while experiences of disempowerment follow from the failure to do this (Drury et al., 2005), we turn now to evidence of how interviewees understood the relations of power at work in the parade.

#### *Extract 12*

Noel: It's a great feeling for me anyhow you know looking at them enjoying themselves. In our parade (laugh). Look at it that way. Like I still call it... Because it's ours. I'm Irish you know. Like if I was in a Brazilian parade, it'd be me being in a Brazilian parade, do you understand what I'm saying? Like they're in the Irish parade. At the end of the day, it's the Irish one (laugh).

Both majority and minority speakers seem to share an understanding that common participation within the parade is not the same as equal entitlement and ownership over it. In extract 12, for example, Noel makes an explicit distinction between participation and ownership, stating that, while various groups take part, the parade is 'ours'. Although it is not made explicit who is and isn't included as Irish, it is at least clear that all participants are not equal: the parade is a possession of the Irish that others are welcome to enjoy. Thus, while the participation of recognisable minority groups might signify a broader sense of belonging to some observers (as in extract 3), it can also be construed in such a way that they remain non-Irish others. However, this distinction between common participation on the one hand and unequal entitlement on the other was not articulated only by white Irish interviewees.

*Extract 13*

Joelle: I think we have to bear one thing in mind is that, is that the parade is not about Jamaica or the Caribbean. It's about celebrating St. Patrick's Day, the Irish heritage you know [...] So I think you have to work with whatever you're given and under the theme we represent what we're trying to bring forward you know.

In extract 13, a member of the Caribbean group describes St Patrick's Day as being about 'the Irish heritage' as opposed to being 'about Jamaica or the Caribbean'. This understanding, emphasising 'heritage' rather than simply Ireland or Irishness, privileges the majority ethnic group's ownership of the event, as custodians of this heritage. Thus, the aim of her own group's participation and performance to be recognised as a distinct group is not a primary purpose of the parade, and they are not entitled to insist on the matter: 'you have to work with whatever you're given'.

*Extract 14*

Joelle: I don't think a lot of people got the chance to know that there's Caribbean people in the outfits. (unclear). But when saying that [...] it isn't really our event.

In extract 14, the same speaker articulates the same observation presented in the preceding section, that the audience probably failed to recognise who her group were or what they represented, before qualifying this by noting that in any case it is not their event.

*Extract 15*

Jade: No I wouldn't be in it and I wouldn't, I probably wouldn't advise anyone who's planning to kind of come be in a multicultural parade, to be in it because it makes you feel really frustrated and you think like it's almost like if I was like proper Jamaican and going out there I'm like "woo" to represent my country and you give me that dress? No chance. If you put me you were in a segregated group I'd be like oh you know, you feel, you don't show it because you're there to do something else but you kind of like feel down, you're like I'm not representing my country, it's not a multicultural parade, I'm in a middle of a parade, that's totally different, totally odd, we're a different colour and everybody can notice that that day.

While Joelle appears to accept having a lesser claim over the event than the majority, Jade (extract 15) expresses a stronger sense of disillusionment, feeling 'frustrated' and 'down'. When asked whether she would participate in the event again the future, she states that she would not, and that she would also discourage others. Both the costume and the segregation are again mentioned as causes as frustration because they obstruct the aim of enacting the relevant social identity and, from her perspective, prevent the event from being genuinely multicultural: 'I'm not representing my country, it's not a multicultural parade'. The expectation of being in a multicultural parade is contrasted with being 'in the middle of a parade', which implies being physically present but not really part of it, and which is 'totally odd'. In both cases, that there is a lack of identification with the event, either because 'it isn't really our[s]' (extract 14), or because it was not the opportunity for identity performance that it was expected to be (extract 15). The negative emotion expressed in this extract contrasts strongly with the cheerful of the majority group interviewees.

Experiences of empowerment and disempowerment followed from the pattern of success and failure of enactment noted in the previous session. The majority group apparently

treat the parade as belonging to them: it is 'our' day, even if others are welcome.

The minority group, post-event, do not have this sense of ownership or identification, though there are differences as to whether this is treated as appropriate or not.

### **Discussion**

We have seen that participants in the St Patrick's Day parade saw the enactment of their social identities and of relationships between social categories as being a relevant part of their involvement in the event. However, the particular kinds of enactment that were sought varied between participants belonging to the white Irish majority and those belonging to an ethnic minority. For the majority, the 'multicultural' theme of the parade was a way of presenting Irish people as being tolerant and non-racist. For the minority, their participation in the parade was an opportunity for them to be seen and recognised as a group, rather than simply for the majority to demonstrate tolerance. As Klein et al. (2007) have argued, identities can be unsustainable if not recognised by others. Thus, we can see the concern for recognition among our participants here in terms of an attempt to consolidate the compatibility between their belonging in Ireland and their identities as Jamaican or Caribbean. Thus, they expressed a wish to create a visual impression within the parade that they could recognize as authentically representative of their group. This understanding of what it means for the event to be multicultural shifts the role of minorities from a passive to an active one, inasmuch as minorities are engaged in enacting a valid identity definition rather than merely being tolerated.

Majority and minority groups also differed in the extent to which they saw identity enactment as having been successful, with the majority group generally praising the multicultural credentials of the event on the grounds that there were people from many different backgrounds present. Minority participants, on the hand, experienced the event as

more problematic because of their sense that the audience would probably not have recognised them as a group in the way they would have liked (i.e., as Caribbean or Jamaican people in Ireland, or as Irish Jamaicans). They blamed two key material factors in the practice of the parade for this: the design of the costumes and segregation in the structure of the parade itself, both of which were in the hands of the event organisers rather than the participants. Thus, a version of multiculturalism that gave no space for minorities to attain visibility on their own terms was built into the way in which the parade was practiced. While the majority were facilitated in living out their preferred understanding of multiculturalism, the minority were obstructed from living out theirs.

We set out to explore how success or failure of collective-self objectification would relate to parade participants' experience of participation, feelings of empowerment or disempowerment and sense of the relationships of power involved. Imposition of a collective self onto events is experienced as empowering because being able to bring reality into line with the group's norms gives rise to a sense of the group as an agentic force in the world (Drury & Reicher, 2005). In this case, the Caribbean group did not succeed in creating the kind of visibility within the event that they had envisaged. The way in which the audience perceived them was, from their perspective, determined by others rather than themselves and accordingly we find experiences of frustration rather than empowerment. It is therefore not only in settings of overtly antagonist encounters that one finds attempts to enact collective identities and such attempts being thwarted by the practice of others. Scratching below the surface of a relatively scripted or ritualised event like the St Patrick's Day parade, in which roles are performed in such a way as to give the impression of consensus about the meanings that are being enacted, one finds multiple agendas to structure the event according to different identity definitions. Where not all of these agendas can be actualised, one also finds participants alienated from their roles. We suggest that attending to this potentially

problematic relationship between participants and their performed roles is especially crucial as the social psychology of crowds expands from its usual focus on protest and riots to include ritualized events.

The notion of CSO and social identity enactment are therefore valuable explanatory constructs in the study of collective events that are not ostensibly conflictual, as well as those that are. Participants in such events may approach them with the purpose of enacting particular identity definitions, which will shape their understandings of how the event should actually be practiced, including who should be included, how people should be physically situated and organised and, in our case here, what they should be wearing. The extent to which this is successful will shape what sort of experience participants have, whether it is one of empowerment, joy and unity on the one hand, or disempowerment, dejection and detachment from the event on the other. The applicability of CSO to these types of event extends the scope of the construct because of the role such events play in the public enactment and representation of national identity, not only in Ireland but in any context in which national celebrations navigate a tension between differing conceptions of nationhood (Stevenson & Abell, 2011).

The methodology of the current study does not allow us to demonstrate causal effects of such experiences on outcomes such as future commitment to the group as so forth, which need to be pursued through alternative methods. Similarly, the small sample size means that we cannot claim these experiences were typical or widespread at the parade, but only that they were present. Notwithstanding these shortcomings, the data do demonstrate stark qualitative difference between majority and minority concerns and experiences.

More broadly, our findings enrich existing work dual identities by considering their performative dimension. If identity was a matter of private cognition alone, then perhaps it would not matter that majority and minority groups have contrasting expectations and

preferences about subgroup and superordinate identities (Dovidio et al., 2009).

However, this is not the case. As such, the ability of a minority group to participate in a national day (or, for that matter, in national life more generally) without compromising the authenticity of their dual identity depends on the majority as well. If, as was the case here, the inclusion of minority groups is done primarily to demonstrate the majority group's tolerance, then it is unlikely that they will experience it as an authentic enactment of their identity. Of course, the performative side of social identity is not limited to overt performances like parades but is integral to all aspects of social life (Klein et al., 2007). We can therefore understand multiculturalism more generally in these terms: as practices that enable equal citizenship without forcing minorities to conform to an image of themselves that is imposed by more powerful others. Given the theoretical and political dilemmas associated with the fine line between recognition and essentialism, which has provoked considerable debate in the literature on multiculturalism (Modood, 2007), as well as anti-racist critiques of multiculturalism being insufficiently concerned with power relationships (Sivanandan, 2008), social psychological contributions of this sort are vital.

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