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**Preschool Children’s Awareness of and Attitudes Toward Difference:  
A Study of 3- and 4-Year-Old Children in Northern Ireland**

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*This paper presents the findings of a large-scale survey (n = 1,049) of the ethnic awareness and attitudes of 3-4 year old children in Northern Ireland. In drawing upon and applying Bourdieu’s notion of habitus, the paper demonstrates how even at this age, the children are already beginning to embody and internalize the cultural habits and dispositions of their respective ethnic groups. This was found in relation to the children’s: friendships choices; preferences for particular national flags; and dispositions towards specific sports associated with their respective communities. Informed by the work of Bourdieu, the paper concludes by arguing for the need for greater use of quantitative methods employing multivariate and multilevel statistical analyses and for these to be based on a more open and meaningful engagement with the findings of in-depth qualitative and ethnographic research in this area.*

**Introduction**

The development of young children’s racial and ethnic attitudes has been an issue that has attracted significant research interest for many years. Since the early 1920s, psychologists have been concerned with attempting to identify and measure the ways in which children first become aware of racial differences, in particular, and the attitudes they ascribe to these and how these develop with age (see, for example: Lasker, 1929; Moreno, 1934; Horowitz, 1936; Blake and Dennis, 1943; Clark and Clark, 1947). The clear message arising from this body of research has been that children tend to begin recognizing racial differences from about the age of two and are capable of ascribing meaning to these differences (including negative attitudes) from around the age of three onwards (for overviews see: Milner, 1983; Aboud, 1988).

This body of work has been extremely important in terms of providing clear evidence of how race and ethnicity can impact upon the lives of very young children and thus making possible discussions concerning the need to address such issues in early childhood programs. More recently, research in this tradition has provided important insights into the cognitive processes and complexities of racial attitude formation. It has, for example, drawn attention to: the need to distinguish between in-group favouritism and out-group prejudice; how in-group favouritism can develop in young children without the need for their subjective identification with the in-group; and how racial attitudes are informed by exposure to diversity as well as how those attitudes

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impact upon friendship choices and the quality and nature of the relationships that develop (Bennett *et al.*, 1998; Doyle and Aboud, 1995, 2003; Kowalski, 1998, 2003; Aboud, *et al.*, 2003).

Inevitably, however, in the search for broader patterns and trends in the development of racial and ethnic attitudes among young children, there is something lost in terms of understanding the context-specific nature of young children's racial attitudes and their contingent and contradictory nature as they arise out of and then, in turn, inform the complex sets of social interactions between young children. Indeed the limitations of some of the earlier research in this area that was felt to encourage a de-contextualized and static understanding of young children's racial and ethnic attitudes and identities have been well-rehearsed elsewhere (Billig, 1985, 1987; Reicher, 1986; Potter and Wetherall, 1987; Condor, 1988; Troyna, 1991; Connolly, 1996, 2001).

It is in recognition of such limitations that an equally important body of qualitative (and largely sociological) research has begun to emerge more recently that has been concerned with understanding and documenting young children's experiences and perspectives (see, for example: Troyna and Hatcher, 1992; Connolly, 1994, 1998, 2000; Van Ausdale and Feagin, 2001; MacNaughton, 2001a, 2001b; MacNaughton and Davies, 2001; Lewis, 2003; Rosshott, 2006). What has been of a particular concern for much of this work has been the importance of developing naturalistic accounts of how race and ethnicity operate in young children's social worlds and the complex sets of inter-relations and wider social processes and forces that underpin this. This, in turn, has drawn attention to the complex and contradictory nature of race and ethnicity as they are recognized and reproduced in young children's lives and the agency of the children themselves in terms of the key role they can play in appropriating, re-working and reproducing discourses on race and ethnicity (Connolly, 1998, 2008; Van Ausdale and Feagin, 2001).

One of the ways in which attempts have been made to make sense of how race and ethnicity impact upon children's perspectives and identities has been through the use of Bourdieu's notion of habitus (Reay, 1995; Connolly, 1998). The habitus represents a set of predispositions and taken-for-granted ways of thinking and acting that an individual gradually develops over time and that is reflective of their day-to-day experiences and the routine sets of social relationships that they are embedded within. As such, the habitus can therefore be regarded as the internalization or embodiment in an individual of the environment within which they are located. Put simply, the way people think and behave is ultimately a reflection of their previous experiences and is therefore constrained to the extent that their immediate social worlds are constrained. As Bourdieu (1993: 86) has explained:

The habitus, as the word implies, is that which one has acquired, but which has become durably incorporated in the body in the form of permanent dispositions. So the term constantly reminds us that it refers to something historical, linked to individual history, and that it belongs to a genetic mode of thought, as opposed to essentialist modes of thought.

Such a concept is potentially useful in exploring how discourses on race and ethnicity, as manifest in the media and popular culture and more specifically in local social structures and neighborhoods, come to be progressively internalized by young children as taken-for-granted ways of thinking and acting. As such, a focus on habitus therefore requires us to understand young children's racial and ethnic attitudes and identities within particular social contexts (or what Bourdieu's refers to as 'fields'). In a quotation that bears more than a passing resemblance to Vygotsky's (1978) notion of internalization, Bourdieu explains the importance of social context or fields of relations and how they are inextricably related to the habitus as follows:

The relation between habitus and field operates in two ways. On one side, it is a relation of *conditioning*; the field structures the habitus ... On the other side, it is a relation of

knowledge or *cognitive construction*. Habitus contributes to constituting the field as a meaningful world, a world endowed with sense and value ... Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents.

(Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992: 127, original emphasis)

Given this it can be understood why, methodologically, much of the work that has attempted to use and apply the notion of habitus to young children's lives, including in relation to issues of race and ethnicity, have tended to be qualitative and often ethnographic in approach. However, and this provides the starting point for this paper, there is something that is lost by restricting our methodological focus to qualitative, ethnographic research. If the habitus does represent the internalisation of broader social structures and represents a set of predispositions that are manifest, to some extent, in the regularisation of particular ways of thinking and behaving then these wider patterns should be discernible and thus ultimately measurable to at least some degree.

This last point was clearly one recognised by Bourdieu himself and underpins one of his classic works – *Distinction* – that attempts to use quantitative methods to gain insights into the effects of social class on people's cultural habits and dispositions (Bourdieu, 1984). However, while recognising the importance of quantitative research, Bourdieu (1984: 40) is also clear about its limitations:

Statistical enquiry is indispensable in order to establish beyond dispute the social conditions of possibility (which will have to be made more explicit) of the “pure” disposition. However, because it inevitably looks like a scholastic test intended to measure the respondents against a norm tacitly regarded as absolute, it may fail to capture the meanings which this disposition and the whole attitude to the world expressed in it have for the different social classes.

Beyond this, Bourdieu is also critical of crude approaches to quantitative research that tend to seek simplistic notions of cause and effect that are often characterised, in turn, by an examination of the effects of one solitary variable on another as if such variables can be isolated in this way. As Bourdieu (1984: 106-7) goes on to argue:

When, as often happens, the analysis is conducted variable by variable, there is a danger of attributing to one of the variables (such as sex or age, each of which may express in its own way the whole situation or trend of a class) the effect of the *set* of variables (an error which is encouraged by the conscious or unconscious tendency to substitute generic alienations, e.g., those linked to sex or age, for specific alienations, linked to class). Economic and social condition, as identified by occupation, gives a specific form to all the properties of sex and age, so that it is the efficacy of the whole structure of factors associated with a position in social space which is manifested in the correlations between age or sex and practices.

For Bourdieu, therefore, while quantitative research represents one important way in which to uncover and understand the habitus as it is manifest through regular forms of predispositions and cultural habits, it is important to recognise and address as best one can the complex ways in which differing variables tend to relate to one another. In this sense, Bourdieu's (1984: 103) work can be taken as a call for more complex, multivariate approaches to the quantitative study of particular forms of habitus:

The particular relations between a dependent variable (such as political opinion) and so-called independent variables such as sex, age and religion, or even educational level,

income and occupation tend to mask the complete system of relationships which constitutes the true principle of the specific strength and form of the effects registered in any particular correlation. The most independent of “independent” variables conceals a whole network of statistical relationships which are present, implicitly, in its relationship with any given opinion or practice. Here too, instead of asking statistical technology to solve a problem which it can only displace, it is necessary to analyze the divisions and variations which the different secondary variables (sex, age etc.) bring into the class defined by the main variable, and consider everything which, though present in the real definition of the class, is not consciously taken into account in the nominal definition, the one summed up in the name used to designate it, or therefore in interpreting the relationship in which it is placed.

It is this recognition of the potential and importance of quantitative research in helping to understand the habitus that provides the rationale for this present paper that argues for a more open dialogue between the type of quantitative and psychological methods that have tended to underpin much of the early research on children’s racial attitudes with the more recent work based around indepth qualitative and sociological methods. The paper takes as its focus a particular case study – the development of ethnic identities among 3-4 year old children in Northern Ireland –and reports the findings of a large-scale survey (n=1,049) of their attitudes and awareness with the aim of exploring some of the ways in which ethnicity is beginning to emerge as part of the children’s habitus. In making use of multilevel statistical modeling the paper also represents a first attempt to begin to explore the intervening inter-relationships of differing factors, including individual factors such as a child’s age, gender and ethnicity as well as wider neighbourhood-level factors such as levels of deprivation and ethnic segregation.

The paper begins with a brief description of the social and political context of Northern Ireland before then describing the methods used for the survey. The findings of the survey are then presented before the paper concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for understanding the nature of ethnicity in young children’s lives and also provides some reflection upon the methodological approach taken and the potential, as well as the limitations, of further quantitative research in this area.

### **Ethnic Divisions and Northern Ireland**

Northern Ireland provides a particularly interesting case study given that it is a society emerging out of armed conflict and remains highly divided and socially and politically segregated along ethno-religious lines. It therefore not only provides a rare opportunity to study the effects of ethnic segregation on young children’s habitus but it also provides a rare opportunity to explore how young children’s ethnic identities develop in the context where ethnicity is not marked by physical cues (i.e. skin color) but by cultural cues.

In this sense, the two majority ethnic groups in Northern Ireland – that provide the principle focus for this study – are Protestants and Catholics. Protestants constitute the majority (53%) and Catholics the minority (44%) with just 3 per cent of the population coming from other minority ethnic groups. While religion has become one of the key markers of difference between these two groups, the conflict itself is not about religion *per se* but nationality with Protestants tending to regard themselves as British and wanting to maintain the position of Northern Ireland as part of the UK whereas Catholics tend to see themselves as Irish and want Northern Ireland to become part of a united Ireland.

While the state of Northern Ireland was only created relatively recently in the early 1920s, the history of these divisions can be traced back some 800 years and originate from Britain’s colonisation of Ireland. Much of this history has been marked by periods of conflict and violence with the most recent manifestation of armed conflict in Northern Ireland – euphemistically known

as ‘The Troubles’ – spanning a 25 year period between the late 1960s and mid-1990s. During this period, and with paramilitary organisations operating on both sides of the ethnic divide and with British troops deployed on the streets of Northern Ireland, over 3,600 people were killed and well over 40,000 injured in the region (Morrissey and Smyth, 2002).

The early 1970s was a particularly violent period in Northern Ireland with 479 people killed directly as a result of the conflict in 1972 alone and between 250 and 300 deaths per annum for the following few years. Much of the violence at this time was indiscriminant including bombs being detonated in towns and city centres with little or no warning and also a significant number of ‘doorstep killings’ taking place where victims were often shot dead at point-blank range when simply answering their front door (Fay *et al.*, 1999). It was also relatively common in certain areas for individuals to be viciously attacked or shot while walking home because of their perceived religious identity.

Not surprisingly, given the levels of fear that existed locally during this period, significant population shifts occurred with families and at times whole communities either moving to neighborhoods where they felt safe and/or being terrorized and forced to move out of particular areas by others. Smyth (1998: 15) for example has estimated that during 1969-1972 alone, between 8,000 and 15,000 families were forced to leave their homes and live elsewhere due to the conflict. Moreover, Boal (1999) has identified an underlying ‘ratchet effect’ in relation to these populations shifts whereby levels of segregation have tended to increase at times of intense violence but then never returning to their previous levels during times of relative peace.

Overall, while this period of conflict has all but ended with the paramilitary ceasefires of the mid-1990s, the cumulative effects of the violence has left its legacy in Northern Ireland. The 2001 UK Census for example reveals that a quarter of all wards (25 per cent) in Northern Ireland have a population that is at least 90 per cent Catholic or Protestant and, beyond this, well over half of all wards in Northern Ireland (58 per cent) have a population that is at least 75 per cent Catholic or Protestant. While patterns of segregation can be found in middle class (Smyth, 1998) and rural areas (Murtagh, 2003), the highest levels of segregation are to be found in the urban, economically deprived areas of Belfast and Derry/Londonderry where the violence has also been most intense (Fay *et al.*, 1999; Morrissey and Smyth, 2002; Smyth and Hamilton, 2003). There are a number of ‘peacelines’ running through these areas where high, reinforced walls have been built to keep neighbouring communities apart. Many of these areas are also clearly marked out politically as either Catholic or Protestant by the existence of such things as: painted kerbstones (red, white and blue to signify Protestant/British neighbourhoods and green, white and orange to signify Catholic/Irish neighbourhoods); the flying of the respective national flags; and painted wall murals and graffiti carrying explicit political (and sometimes sectarian) messages.

Such levels of segregation are not just manifest spatially however but are also evident in many other areas of life in Northern Ireland. There is *de facto* segregation in the education system, for example, with 95 per cent of children attending either Catholic maintained schools or state controlled schools (that are, by default, Protestant schools). In addition, and as the findings of a recent large-scale survey of a random sample of 9-10 year olds conducted in 2007 found, Protestant and Catholic children tend to: follow and play different sports; visit different places on holiday; have access to different newspapers at home and are more likely to be exposed to and show awareness of the political parties associated with their own community (Connolly *et al.*, 2007).

## **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to explore young children’s cultural attitudes and awareness and to assess the extent to which these are being influenced by, and are becoming reflective of, these wider levels of ethnic segregation. To do this, children were accessed via preschool nurseries and playgroups across Northern Ireland. With the help and support of *Early Years – The Organization*

for *Young Children*<sup>2</sup>, a total of 1,049 children aged 3-4 years took part in the survey from 56 different settings. The key characteristics of the sample are summarized in Table 1. As can be seen, the final sample was fairly balanced in relation to gender and ethnicity. In terms of age, the mean age of the children was 4 years and 1 month (or mean = 49.1 months, sd=5.5).

Data collection was undertaken with each child individually. Signed parental consent was gained for each child before they were approached and the children's own consent was also sought at two levels. First, each child was given the option of whether to take part in the research or not and, second, it was made clear to them that they could stop and go back to what they were doing in the nursery/playgroup at any point during the interview. In addition, the interviewers were asked specifically to monitor the children's body language and to stop and ask them if they wanted to carry on if, at any time, they appeared to become restless or in any way distressed.

Data collection was undertaken by a designated early childhood practitioner working in each of the nurseries/playgroups. They were all provided with training and were asked to follow a highly structured research instrument that standardised the way the children were approached, what each practitioner said to the child and the order and manner in which the interviews were conducted. A copy of the final research instrument used is available from the author on request.

The actual interview with each child lasted for about 10 minutes in total and consisted of a number of tasks that the children were asked to complete. The tasks represented a first attempt to begin to explore the ways in which ethnic segregation in Northern Ireland was impacting upon and thus coming to be expressed through the habitus of the young children. In this sense the tasks aimed to assess the degree to which the children were already beginning to internalise the cultural dispositions of their respective communities. To do this, three particular tasks were undertaken that attempted to examine children's dispositions in relation to: friendship choices; preferences for national flags; and preferences for different sports. To avoid repetition, further details on each of these tasks are provided below when reporting the findings arising from them.

In addition to the data gained from the interviews, some contextual data were gathered and used in the analysis in relation to the neighbourhoods within which the nurseries/playgroups were located. These data were derived from the 2001 Census and represented three variables that are most commonly assumed to relate to the incidence of sectarian conflict and violence in Northern Ireland: levels of deprivation; the degree to which an area is rural or urban; and the degree to which it is ethnically segregated. The first was an overall measure of multiple deprivation that represented a weighted, composite measure consisting on a number of domains of deprivation: income; employment; health and disability; education, skills and training; proximity to services; living environment; and crime and disorder (see NISRA, 2001). The second represented a proxy measure for whether a nursery/playgroup was located in neighbourhood that was rural or urban

*Table 1.* Characteristics of the Sample by Gender and Ethnicity

		n	%
Gender	Boys	528	50.3
	Girls	521	49.7
	Total	1049	100.0
Ethnicity	Catholic	535	51.0
	Protestant	479	45.7
	Other	33	3.1
	Missing	2	0.2
	Total	1049	100.0

<sup>2</sup> See: [www.early-years.org](http://www.early-years.org)

and was simply the population density of the local area, measured as the number of persons per hectare). Third, two dummy measures were used to represent the degree to which each particular neighbourhood was either ethnically mixed or segregated. One measure ('Catholic Majority') consisted simply of the percentage of the population in that neighbourhood that was Catholic. It was coded such that the actual percentage was recorded if Catholics were in the majority in that area and was coded zero otherwise. The other measure ('Protestant Majority') was coded in the same way but this time only the percentage figures were recorded where Protestants were in the majority.

## **Findings**

### *Friendship Choices*

This first task aimed to assess the extent to which these young children may be already beginning to internalise predispositions in terms of friendship choices in relation to race, ethnicity and disability. The task involved presenting each child with five photographs that were placed in front of her/him in random sequence. Each photograph was of a child pictured from the waist up and of these children: one was wearing a Celtic soccer shirt (widely associated with the Catholic community in Northern Ireland<sup>3</sup>); one a Rangers soccer shirt (widely associated with the Protestant community in Northern Ireland); one of the children was Chinese; one was wearing a corrective eyepatch representing a form of disability; and the fifth child was white but with no other distinguishable features. Within this, and in order to prevent gender from confounding the task, five photographs of boys were used with the boys in the sample and five photographs of girls were used with the girls in the sample.

Each child was asked to have a good look at the five photographs and was then asked to point to the child they 'would like to play with the best'. That choice was then removed and the child was then asked to pick the child they would now like to play with the best from the remaining four. This process was continued until there were no more choices to be made. If a child said they could not or did not want to make a choice then the researcher stopped the task and discretely moved onto the next one.

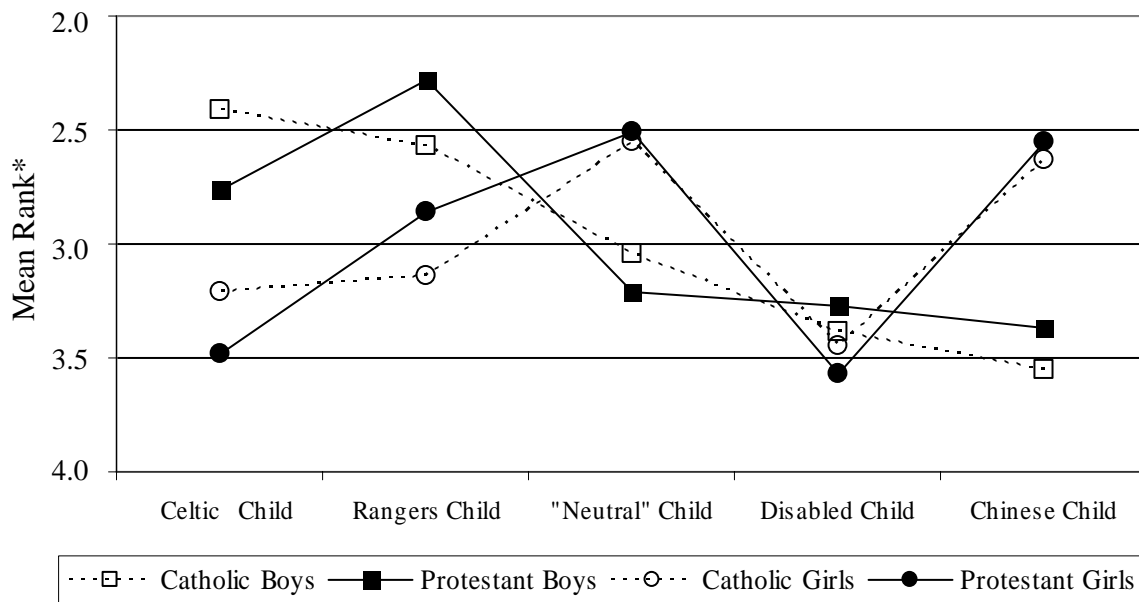
Figure 1 compares the friendship choices of the four main subgroups of children (i.e. Catholic boys; Protestant boys; Catholic girls; and Protestant girls) and their average ranking of each of the five photographs. In interpreting the findings it should be noted that if a photograph was chosen first then it was scored as '1' and if it was chosen second it was scored as '2' and so on. Thus the average scores for each of the photographs potentially ranged from 1.0 (meaning that all children chose that child first) to 5.0 (meaning that all children chose that child last). As can be seen, the average ranking of the photographs tended to range somewhere between around 2.5 and 3.5.

There are three key findings to draw out from these data. First, and in relation to the Celtic and Rangers shirts, the children's friendship choices are clearly influenced by the cross-cutting effects of gender and ethnicity. As can be seen, the boys were more likely to rank the two children wearing the soccer shirts higher than the girls. However, and within this, while the boys

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<sup>3</sup> Celtic and Rangers are two soccer teams based in Glasgow, Scotland. They both dominate the Scottish premier league and there is an intense rivalry between them. Part of this rivalry is sectarian in nature with Celtic supporters tending to be Catholic and Rangers supporters tending to be Protestant. Given the close links between Scotland and Northern Ireland, there is strong support among the Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland for these two teams. Moreover, it is quite common to see children and young people especially wearing Celtic and Rangers soccer shirts and the wearing of these shirts is often as much about the expression of ethnic identity as it is about support for the respective teams. As such, the wearing of these soccer shirts is one of the principle ways that children of this age would be able to 'tell' whether a child is Protestant or Catholic.

Figure 1. Children's ranking of five photographs of individual children in terms of who they would like to play with the best, by sex and religion



\*Mean rankings range from 1.0 (that would indicate that all of the children chose that particular child first) to 5.0 (that would indicate that all of the children chose that particular child last).

tended to rank both of these children the highest there was a clear tendency for them to then order these so that the Catholic boys ranked the Celtic child higher than the Protestant boys did and, conversely, the Protestant boys ranked the Rangers child higher than the Catholic boys did. Interestingly, this same pattern was also evident for the girls. Thus even though they tended to rank the two children wearing soccer shirts less highly, the same distinction still tended to then be made within this so that Catholic girls tended to rank the Celtic child higher than Protestant girls and Protestant girls the Rangers child higher than their Catholic counterparts.

These tendencies can be confirmed formally and explored further through statistical modelling. Table 2 presents the findings of two multilevel binary logistic regression models used to explore the influence of gender, ethnicity and other key variables on the children's tendency to pick the Ranger child as their first choice.<sup>4</sup> Model 1 simply includes the key variables of gender and ethnicity with the age of the children added in as well to control for any age-related differences. As can be seen, the basic picture found in Figure 1 is confirmed by this model. In particular, the findings suggest that boys in general were nearly three times (2.812 times) more likely to select the Rangers child as their first choice of friend compared to girls. Similarly, Protestant children were nearly twice as likely (1.941 times more likely) to choose the Rangers child first compared to Catholic children.

Interestingly these effects of gender and ethnicity were found to operate independently of one another. In other words, being Protestant tended to double a child's likelihood of picking the Rangers child as their first choice compared to Catholics, whether they were boys or girls. Similarly, being a boy tended to nearly triple a child's likelihood of picking the Rangers child

<sup>4</sup> The most appropriate model would have been a multilevel, ordered multinomial regression model. However problems were encountered trying to fit such a model using the software package MLwiN 2.02 with either the model failing to converge or MLwiN reporting errors and stopping.



Table 2. Variables Associated with 3-4 Year Old Children's Choice of the Rangers Child as the Person They Would Like to Play with the Best (Multilevel Binary Logistic Regression\*)

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Child-Level Variables				
Boy (Girl = Ref)	1.034 (0.155)	2.812	1.066 (0.157)	2.904
Protestant (Catholic =Ref)	0.663 (0.152)	1.941	0.489 (0.178)	1.631
Age (in Months)	0.023 (0.014)	1.023	0.021 (0.014)	1.021
Neighbourhood-Level Variables**				
Multiple Deprivation			-0.087 (0.092)	0.917
Population Density			-0.037 (0.086)	0.964
Catholic Majority			-0.006 (0.003)	0.994
Protestant Majority			-0.002 (0.004)	0.998
Constant	-3.052 (0.705)		-2.648 (0.738)	
U <sub>0j</sub> (Neighbourhood Level Variance)	0.003 (0.050)		<0.001 (<0.001)	
VPC (Neighbourhood)	0.1%		<0.1%	
% Variance Explained by Model***			7.9%	

\* Random Intercepts Model. Dependent variable: whether the children can correctly identify the sport hockey (coded '1') or not (coded '0').

\*\* See discussion of methodology for an explanation of these neighbourhood-level variables.

\*\*\* Calculated simply from the correlation between the actual observed values and the predicted values calculated from the model.

first compared to girls regardless of whether they were Protestant or Catholic.<sup>5</sup> In interpreting these findings, however, it is important to note that they simply represent broad tendencies and dispositions among the children rather than absolute positions. This can be noted from Table 2 which reports that the combined effects of gender and ethnicity can only account for just under 8 per cent of the total variation in the children's preferences towards the child wearing the Rangers shirt. This, in turn, suggests that there is thus considerable variation within each of the four sub-groups of children identified here and much overlap in their responses. This, more than anything, should warn against the generation and promotion of simplistic generalisations about *all* Protestant girls or *all* Catholic boys.

Very similar findings were evident when modelling the children's rankings of the Celtic child as summarised in Table 3. In this case it can be seen that boys were nearly four times more likely to select the Celtic child as their first choice compared to girls. In addition, Catholic children were just over twice as likely to pick the Celtic child as their first choice compared to Protestant children. As before, these effects of gender and ethnicity tended to operate independently of one another<sup>6</sup> and the combined effects of both factors tended only to account for just over 8 per cent of the total variation in the children's preferences.

The second key finding to emerge from these data, and particularly from Tables 2 and 3, is the largely insignificant effect of neighbourhood factors on the children's choices. Given the highly segregated nature of Northern Ireland society as described earlier and also the tendency for ongoing sectarian tensions and conflict to be highly localised, it would be reasonable to hypothesise that some level of neighbourhood effect is likely. However, and as can be seen from

<sup>5</sup> This was tested formally by adding an interaction term of gender\*ethnicity to Model 1. In this case the coefficient and its associated standard error were found to be 0.043 (0.312) indicating that it added nothing significantly to the model.

<sup>6</sup> In this case the coefficient and its associated standard error for the interaction term added to Model 1 was 0.578 (0.367). When tested formally it was found not to be statistically significant (p=0.115, Chi-Square=2.482, df=1).

Table 3. Variables Associated with 3-4 Year Old Children's Choice of the Celtic Child as the Person They Would Like to Play with the Best (Multilevel Binary Logistic Regression\*)

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
<b>Child-Level Variables</b>				
Boy (Girl = Ref)	1.357 (0.184)	3.885	1.352 (0.185)	3.865
Catholic (Protestant =Ref)	0.700 (0.178)	2.014	0.689 (0.215)	1.992
Age (in Months)	-0.022 (0.015)	0.978	-0.020 (0.015)	0.980
<b>Neighbourhood-Level Variables**</b>				
Multiple Deprivation			0.110 (0.107)	1.116
Population Density			0.108 (0.095)	1.114
Catholic Majority			0.002 (0.003)	1.002
Protestant Majority			0.005 (0.004)	1.005
Constant	-1.523 (0.767)		-1.823 (0.816)	
$U_{0j}$ (Neighbourhood Level Variance)	0.021 (0.068)		<0.001 (<0.001)	
VPC (Neighbourhood)	0.6%		<0.1%	
% Variance Explained by Model***			8.5%	

\* Random Intercepts Model. Dependent variable: whether the children can correctly identify the sport hockey (coded '1') or not (coded '0').

\*\* See discussion of methodology for an explanation of these neighbourhood-level variables.

\*\*\* Calculated simply from the correlation between the actual observed values and the predicted values calculated from the model.

Model 1, the amount of variability in the children's choices that can be explained by the effects of the neighbourhoods they are in is negligible (less than 1% in both cases).

Moreover, none of the neighbourhood-level variables included in Model 2 were found not to have any significant effect either in relation to the children's preferences for the Rangers or the Celtic child. This is particularly interesting given that one would reasonably expect children's attitudes to be stronger in areas that have traditionally been associated with violence i.e. those that are multiply deprived, densely populated and characterised by high levels of segregation. However, and as shown in Tables 2 and 3, none of these factors was found to have a significant influence on the children's friendship choices.

The third and final key finding from the data presented in Figure 1 relates to the children's attitudes towards other forms of difference; namely, in this case, attitudes towards race (Chinese child) and disability (child wearing a corrective eyepatch). It can be seen that for all four subgroups, the child with an eyepatch tended to be rated lowest suggesting that this child was the least popular in terms of friendship choices. Given the consistency of the responses across the four sub-groups it is therefore reasonable to infer from this that the children in this study do seem to have recognised one aspect of disability (in this case the wearing of a corrective eyepatch) and have tended to evaluate it less favourably. This is evident when looking at the sample of children as a whole and their tendency to give a lower overall mean ranking to the child with an eyepatch (mean=3.42) compared to the white, 'neutral' child (mean=2.82) ( $p < 0.0005$ , Wilcoxon Test,  $Z = 8.683$ , effect size=0.272).

The picture in relation to race is more complex however and some caution must be taken when interpreting these findings. At one level the findings illustrated in Figure 1 would seem to suggest that there is a strong gender effect with girls (whether Protestant or Catholic) tending to rate the Chinese child very highly as a friendship choice compared to the boys (whether Protestant or Catholic) who tended to rate the Chinese child very lowly. However, the extent of these differences is likely to be partly an artefact of the particular method used. More specifically, it needs to be remembered that each of the five photographs was not rated independently of one

another by the children but rather their ratings were highly dependent. Thus, for the boys, the low position of the Chinese child may possibly reflect the popularity of soccer among the boys and thus the popularity of the Celtic and Rangers children rather than a negative attitude towards Chinese children *per se*. In other words, once the boys had selected the two soccer children as their first and second choices then, by default, there is no choice other than to rate the Chinese child among the remaining lower categories. Similarly, the high rating of the Chinese child among the girls may possibly reflect their disinterest and/or even dislike of soccer. In this case, if the girls are not keen to choose friends wearing soccer shirts and also a friend with a disability then this will, by default, push the remaining two children (that includes the Chinese child) into the top two positions.

However, while it may be misleading simply to compare the mean rankings for the Chinese child given by the boys and girls in this way, it is possible to infer something about the children's dispositions towards race by comparing their rankings of the Chinese child with the other white child who was dressed neutrally, with no other distinguishing features. If race did not feature in the children's friendship choices then one would expect the children's rankings of these two photographs to be similar. As can be seen from Figure 1, this was the case with the girls where no evidence was found of a difference in their ranking of the Chinese child (mean=2.59) compared to the white, neutral child (mean=2.52) ( $p=0.618$ , Wilcoxon Test,  $Z=0.499$ ). However, and as can also be seen from Figure 1, there is evidence that the boys did rank the Chinese child (mean=3.46) slightly lower than the white child (mean=3.12) ( $p<0.0005$ , Wilcoxon Test,  $Z=3.725$ , effect size=0.166).

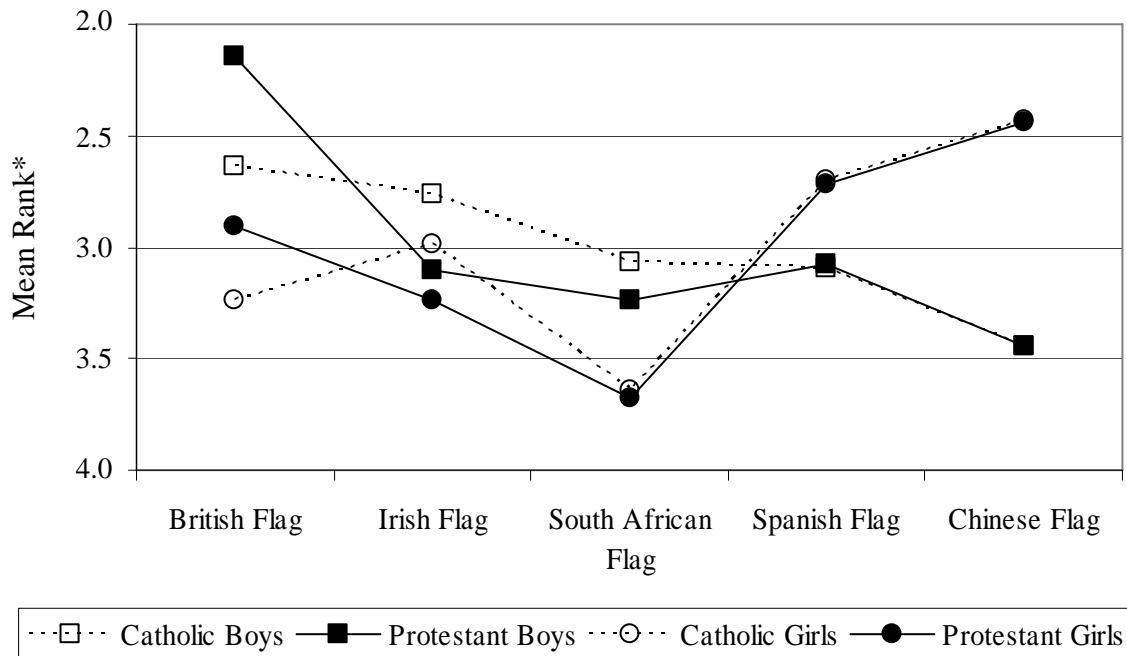
#### *Preferences for National Flags*

A very similar task was used with the children in relation to gaining an insight into whether they were developing a disposition towards certain national flags compared to others. This time the children were presented with five national flags that were placed in front of them in random order: the British Union flag; the Irish tricolor flag; the Spanish flag; the Chinese flag; and the South African flag. As before, the children were asked to look carefully at all five flags and then to point to the one they 'liked the best'. That flag was removed and then they were asked to consider the remaining four flags and point to the one they liked the best. The process was repeated until all flags had been selected and/or the child said that they could not or did not want to choose any more.

The interest on this occasion was simply whether there was a tendency for Catholic children to display a preference for the Irish flag (that tends to be associated with the Catholic community in Northern Ireland) and, similarly, for Protestant children to display a preference for the British flag (that tends to be associated with the Protestant community in Northern Ireland). Interestingly, and as illustrated in Figure 2, a similar picture emerged as with the soccer shirts. As can be seen, the general tendency is evident again in terms of boys tending to rate the Irish and British flags higher than the girls and, within this, for the Protestant children to rate the British flag higher than the Catholic children and, conversely, for the Catholic children to rate the Irish flag more highly than the Protestant children.

As with the ranking of the soccer shirts, these findings were confirmed formally by modelling the data (see Tables 4 and 5). Thus, and as reported in Table 4 in relation to the British flag, boys were nearly three times more likely (2.918 times more likely) to select the British flag as their first choice than the girls. In addition, and on top of this, Protestant children were just over twice as likely (2.075 times more likely) to pick the British flag as their first choice compared to Catholic children. Further analysis in relation to Model 1 in Table 4 showed that these two

Figure 2. Children's ranking of five national flags in terms of which ones they liked the best, by sex and religion



tendencies were also independent of one another just as with the soccer shirts.<sup>7</sup> Also, and just as before, the proportion of the total variation in the children's preferences for the British flag that could be explained by the combined effects of gender and ethnicity was only just over 8 per cent.

Table 4. Variables Associated with 3-4 Year Old Children's Choice of the British National Flag as their Favourite (Multilevel Binary Logistic Regression\*)

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
<b>Child-Level Variables</b>				
Boy (Girl = Ref)	1.071 (0.147)	2.918	1.067 (0.148)	2.907
Protestant (Catholic =Ref)	0.730 (0.144)	2.075	0.750 (0.172)	2.117
Age (in Months)	0.007 (0.013)	1.007	0.006 (0.013)	1.006
<b>Neighbourhood-Level Variables**</b>				
Multiple Deprivation			0.060 (0.087)	1.062
Population Density			0.049 (0.081)	1.050
Catholic Majority			-0.002 (0.003)	0.998
Protestant Majority			-0.001 (0.003)	0.999
Constant	-2.088 (0.663)		-1.995 (0.695)	
$U_{0i}$ (Neighbourhood Level Variance)	<0.001 (<0.001)		).001 (<0.001)	
VPC (Neighbourhood)	<0.1%		<0.1%	
% Variance Explained by Model***			8.3%	

\* Random Intercepts Model. Dependent variable: whether the children can correctly identify the sport hockey (coded '1') or not (coded '0').

\*\* See discussion of methodology for an explanation of these neighbourhood-level variables.

\*\*\* Calculated simply from the correlation between observed values and predicted values from the model.

<sup>7</sup> The coefficient and its associated standard error for the interaction term of gender\*religion added to Model 1 was -0.046 (0.295).

Table 5. Variables Associated with 3-4 Year Old Children's Choice of the Irish National Flag as their Favourite (Multilevel Binary Logistic Regression \*)

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
<b>Child-Level Variables</b>				
Boy (Girl = Ref)	0.398 (0.174)	1.489	0.391 (0.174)	1.478
Catholic (Protestant =Ref)	0.806 (0.190)	2.239	0.811 (0.218)	2.250
Age (in Months)	0.006 (0.016)	1.006	0.007 (0.016)	1.007
<b>Neighbourhood-Level Variables**</b>				
Multiple Deprivation			-0.088 (0.108)	0.916
Population Density			0.123 (0.094)	1.131
Catholic Majority			0.003 (0.003)	1.003
Protestant Majority			0.002 (0.004)	1.002
Constant	-2.546 (0.799)		-2.705 (0.841)	
$U_{0j}$ (Neighbourhood Level Variance)	0.053 (0.079)		<0.001 (<0.001)	
VPC (Neighbourhood)			<0.1%	
% Variance Explained by Model***			3.2%	

\* Random Intercepts Model. Dependent variable: whether the children can correctly identify the sport hockey (coded '1') or not (coded '0').

\*\* See discussion of methodology for an explanation of these neighbourhood-level variables.

\*\*\* Calculated simply from the correlation between the actual observed values and the predicted values calculated from the model.

The same basic picture was also evident in relation to the children's preferences for the Irish flag. As shown in Table 5, boys were around one and a half times more likely (1.489 times more likely) to select the Irish flag as their first choice than girls and, in addition, Catholic children were over two times more likely (2.239 times more likely) to do this than Protestant children. Again, these two tendencies were found to operate independently of one another<sup>8</sup> and, this time, the combined effects of both variables were only able to account for a little over 3 per cent of the variation in the children's preferences.

In addition, and as also clearly evident from Tables 4 and 5, no evidence was found of any noticeable neighbourhood effect in relation to these preferences. This is particularly interesting given the way in which flags have tended to be used in Northern Ireland to mark territory and local neighbourhoods, particularly those that have a history of sectarian tensions and violence and that tend to be in deprived and highly segregated areas. However, and as shown here, the general tendency for Protestant and Catholic children to choose their own flags first was likely to occur to a similar degree whatever the local neighbourhood.

### *Preferences for Sports*

The third key task that the children were asked to do was to look at a photograph of adults playing hockey (a sport that tends to be associated more with the Protestant rather than the Catholic community). They were then asked: 'Can you tell me what game these men are playing?' and then a follow up question: 'Would you like to play this game?' In relation to this second question, if the children said yes then they were asked whether they would like to play it 'a little or a lot?'

<sup>8</sup> The coefficient and its associated standard error for the interaction term of gender\*religion added to Model 1 was -0.325 (0.365).

The same task was then repeated in relation to a photograph of adults playing hurling (a Gaelic sport that is more strongly associated with the Catholic community in Northern Ireland).

The responses of the children in relation to the hockey photograph are shown in Table 6. As can be seen, the Protestant children were more likely to recognise and name the sport compared to Catholic children. However, much less of a difference was found in terms of the children's interest in playing hockey. The general pattern from Table 6 suggests that boys were more likely to want to play the game than girls (possibly reflecting the fact that the photograph featured men) and, within this, while there was some evidence of Protestant boys being more interested in playing the game than Catholic boys, no evidence was found of any differences between the Catholic and Protestant girls.

In relation to the children's ability to recognise and correctly name hockey, their responses were further analyzed as previously with a multilevel, binary logistic regression model. As can be seen from Table 7, the findings tend to confirm the descriptive statistics reported in Table 6. Thus boys were a little under two times more likely (1.817 times more likely) to want to play hockey than the girls while the Protestant children were just under two and a half times more likely (2.430 times more likely) to want to play hockey than their Catholic counterparts. Consistent with the other findings reported so far, these two effects tended to operate independently of one another<sup>9</sup> and the combined effects of both variables tended only to account for 10 per cent of the total variation in children's ability to recognise the sport.

Interestingly, while relatively small and only approaching statistical significance, a neighbourhood effect was also evident that could account for about 7% of the variation in the children's ability to recognise and name the sport. However, the findings from this analysis do not help explain what underpins this effect. As Model 2 indicates, the neighbourhood effect is not associated with levels of deprivation, with whether the neighbourhood is urban or rural and/or with how segregated it is.

Table 6. Children's knowledge of and attitudes towards hockey by sex and religion

<i>Correctly Identified the Sport?</i>	Catholic Boys*		Protestant Boys*		Catholic Girls**		Protestant Girls**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	26	10.2	55	22.4	15	5.6	33	14.7
No	230	89.8	191	77.6	252	94.4	192	85.3
Total	256	100.0	246	100.0	267	100.0	225	100.0
<i>Liked to play hockey?</i>								
Yes, Lots	136	53.8	161	66.0	90	34.0	82	36.9
Yes, A Little	66	26.1	47	19.3	72	27.2	55	24.8
No	51	20.2	36	14.8	103	38.9	85	38.3
Total	253	100.0	244	100.0	265	100.0	222	100.0

\*Differences between boys' ability to correctly identify the flag are statistically significant ( $p < 0.0005$ , Chi-Square=13.802,  $df=1$ ,  $ES=0.166$ ). Differences in the boys' liking of hockey are approaching statistical significance ( $p=0.021$ , Chi-Square=7.725,  $df=2$ ,  $ES=0.125$ ). Due to multiple tests (4 in total) a Bonferroni correction was applied to these findings giving a significance level of  $0.05/4 = 0.013$ .

\*\*Differences between girls' ability to correctly identify the flag are statistically significant ( $p=0.001$ , Chi-Square=11.355,  $df=1$ ,  $ES=0.152$ ). Differences in the girls' liking of hockey are not statistically significant ( $p=0.749$ , Chi-Square=0.579,  $df=2$ ,  $ES=0.034$ ). Due to multiple tests (4 in total) a Bonferroni correction was applied to these findings giving a significance level of  $0.05/4 = 0.013$ .

<sup>9</sup> The coefficient and its associated standard error for the interaction term of gender\*religion added to Model 1 was -0.219 (0.433).

Table 7. Variables Associated with 3-4 Year Old Children's Ability to Correctly Identify Hockey (Multilevel Binary Logistic Regression\*)

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
Child-Level Variables				
Boy (Girl = Ref)	0.597 (0.208)	1.817	0.613 (0.209)	1.846
Protestant (Catholic =Ref)	0.888 (0.239)	2.430	0.750 (0.270)	2.117
Age (in Months)	0.105 (0.021)	1.111	0.105 (0.021)	1.111
Setting-Level Variables**				
Multiple Deprivation <sup>2</sup>			-0.067 (0.144)	0.935
Population Density <sup>3</sup>			0.129 (0.140)	1.138
Catholic Majority <sup>4</sup>			-0.003 (0.006)	0.997
Protestant Majority <sup>4</sup>			0.002 (0.006)	1.002
Constant	-8.114 (1.102)		-8.017 (1.146)	
U <sub>0j</sub> (Setting Level Variance)	0.246 (0.155)		0.210 (0.145)	
Variance Partition Coefficient	7.0%***		6.0%****	
% Variance Explained by Model*****			10.0%	

\* Random Intercepts Model. Dependent variable: whether the children can correctly identify the sport hockey (coded '1') or not (coded '0').

\*\* See discussion of methodology for an explanation of these neighbourhood-level variables.

\*\*\* p=0.112, Chi-Square=2.526, df=1.

\*\*\*\* p=0.146, Chi-Square=2.112, df=1.

\*\*\*\*\* Calculated simply from the correlation between the actual observed values and the predicted values calculated from the model.

In a similar vein, Table 8 summarises the findings in relation to the children's ability to recognise and correctly name hurling. As can be seen, a much stronger difference was found between the Protestant and Catholic children. Overall, while 16.4% of Catholic children were able to correctly identify the sport, only 2 out of 462 Protestant children (0.4%) were able to do so. However, and beyond this, it is interesting to note that in terms of an interest in playing the sport, while boys were more likely to express an interest than girls, no discernible differences were found between Protestant and Catholic children.

In relation to the children's ability to correctly identify and name hurling as a sport, this can be further statistically modelled as previously as summarised in Table 9. As can be seen, both models tend to confirm the picture emerging from the descriptive statistics in Table 8. Thus boys tended to be a little under two times more likely (1.704 times more likely) to be able to identify hurling than girls. However, and in addition, Catholic children were over 44 times more likely (44.301 times more likely) to be able to identify the sport compared to their Protestant counterparts. As before, these two effects of gender and ethnicity tended to operate independently of one another.<sup>10</sup> This time, however, and given the larger differences that exist, it is not surprising to note that the combined effects of individual and neighbourhood-level variables were able to account for just under 20 per cent of the total variation in the children's responses.

Beyond this it is interesting to note from Model 1 that there is a relatively strong neighbourhood effect on this occasion with 38.1% of the variation in the children's ability to recognise and correctly name hurling being accounted for by the neighbourhoods they come from. As Model 2 further illustrates, some of this variation would seem to be explained by the neighbourhood level variables added into the model. While none of these is statistically

<sup>10</sup> The coefficient and its associated standard error for the interaction term of gender\*religion added to Model 1 was 10.257 (86.547).

Table 8. Children's knowledge of and attitudes towards hurling by sex and religion

<i>Correctly Identified the Flag?</i>	Catholic Boys*		Protestant Boys*		Catholic Girls**		Protestant Girls**	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Yes	50	19.7	0	0	35	13.2	2	0.9
No	204	80.3	240	100.0	230	86.8	220	99.1
Total	254	100.0	240	100.0	265	100.0	222	100.0
<i>Liked the Flag?</i>								
Yes, Lots	139	55.4	131	54.8	100	37.3	74	34.1
Yes, A Little	74	29.5	64	26.8	67	25.0	58	26.7
No	38	15.1	44	18.4	101	37.7	85	39.2
Total	251	100.0	239	100.0	268	100.0	217	100.0

\*Differences between boys' ability to correctly identify hurling are statistically significant ( $p < 0.0005$ , Chi-Square=52.564,  $df=1$ ,  $ES=0.326$ ). Differences in the boys' liking to play hurling are not statistically significant ( $p=0.575$ , Chi-Square=1.107,  $df=2$ ,  $ES=0.048$ ). Due to multiple tests (4 in total) a Bonferroni correction was applied to these findings giving a significance level of  $0.05/4 = 0.013$ .

\*\*Differences between girls' ability to correctly identify hurling are statistically significant ( $p < 0.0005$ , Chi-Square=26.061,  $df=1$ ,  $ES=0.231$ ). Differences in the girls' liking to play hurling are not statistically significant ( $p=0.759$ , Chi-Square=0.553,  $df=2$ ,  $ES=0.034$ ). Due to multiple tests (4 in total) a Bonferroni correction was applied to these findings giving a significance level of  $0.05/4 = 0.013$ .

significant, both the effects of multiple deprivation ( $p=0.160$ , Chi-Square=1.971,  $df=1$ ) and population density ( $p=0.161$ , Chi-Square=1.962,  $df=1$ ) were approaching statistical significance. As the nature of the coefficients indicate, a very slight tendency may be apparent for children to be less likely to recognise hurling if they come from neighbourhoods that are more deprived and/or also more densely populated.

Table 9. Variables Associated with 3-4 Year Old Children's Ability to Correctly Identify Hurling (Multilevel Binary Logistic Regression\*)

Independent Variables	Model 1		Model 2	
	B (SE)	Exp(B)	B (SE)	Exp(B)
<i>Child-Level Variables</i>				
Boy (Girl = Ref)	0.533 (0.283)	1.704	0.541 (0.285)	1.718
Catholic (Protestant =Ref)	3.791 (0.915)	44.301	3.702 (0.920)	40.528
Age (in Months)	0.039 (0.027)	1.04	0.039 (0.028)	1.04
<i>Setting-Level Variables*</i>				
Multiple Deprivation			-0.591 (0.421)	0.554
Population Density			-0.465 (0.332)	0.628
Catholic Majority			0.003 (0.010)	1.003
Protestant Majority			-0.012 (0.015)	0.988
Constant	-8.262 (1.670)		-8.105 (1.820)	
$U_{0j}$ (Setting Level Variance)	2.025 (0.743)		1.542 (0.617)	
Variance Partition Coefficient	38.1%***		31.9%****	
% Variance Explained by Model*****			19.7%	

\*Random Intercepts Model. Dependent variable: whether the children can correctly identify the sport hockey (coded '1') or not (coded '0').

\*\* See discussion of methodology for an explanation of these neighbourhood-level variables.

\*\*\*  $p=0.006$ , Chi-Square=7.445,  $df=1$ .

\*\*\*\*  $p=0.013$ , Chi-Square=6.236,  $df=1$ .

\*\*\*\*\* Calculated simply from the correlation between the actual observed values and the predicted values calculated from the model.



## Discussion and Conclusions

There are three key points to draw out from the findings reported above. Perhaps the main point is that there is clear evidence that children as young as 3 and 4 are beginning to internalise and reflect in their attitudes and behaviour the cultural dispositions of their respective communities. As has been seen, there is arguably an ethnic habitus emerging among the Catholic and Protestant children that is manifest in relation to their respective dispositions towards favouring children from their own ethnic group as friends and also towards some of the symbols (in this case flags) and sports associated with their own group.

Second, it is also evident that the particular forms of ethnic habitus becoming embodied by the children are mediated by gender. The general pattern evident across all of the tasks is that while there are differences in the cultural dispositions of Protestant and Catholic children and these differences are similar in magnitude for boys and girls, the actual salience of the markers of ethnicity (soccer shirts, flags, sports) seem to be greater for boys than girls. It is possible that ethnicity could be equally significant for boys and girls but that we have just used ethnic markers that tend to be more attractive to boys on this occasion. Had we used alternative markers of ethnic differences that girls tend to be more likely to associate with then it could be argued that these gender differences may have disappeared and/or been reversed.

However, while it is important to explore this possibility further, it is difficult to identify many ethnic markers and symbols that are likely to appeal more explicitly to girls than boys. Given the nature of the ethnic divisions that exist in Northern Ireland that are based around conflict and struggles over territory and belonging then it could be argued that these forms of ethnicity are inherently gendered and masculinised and therefore more likely to involve and thus appeal to boys. This, however, is where further research is needed to begin to look beneath the surface of these broader dispositions and tendencies to begin to understand the meanings and experiences that underpin these.

Also, while statistically it has been possible to separate out the effects of ethnicity and gender and to view their respective contribution in the form of a simple additive model, it is important not to interpret this as if ethnicity and gender are therefore independent of one another in social practice. As Bourdieu (1984: 107-8) has argued with regard to the relationship between gender and social class:

Sexual properties are as inseparable from class properties as the yellowness of a lemon is from its acidity: a class is defined in an essential respect by the place and value it gives to the two sexes and to their socially constituted dispositions. This is why there are as many ways of realizing femininity as there are classes and class fractions, and the division of labour between the sexes takes quite different forms, both in practices and in representations, in the different social classes. So the true nature of a class or class fraction is expressed in its distribution by sex and age, and perhaps even more, since its future is then at stake, by the trend of this distribution over time.

It is in this sense that while the differences between Catholic and Protestant children in terms of their attitudes remain similar when looking at boys or girls, it cannot be assumed that the social processes, understandings and meanings that structure and inform these differences are the same. Rather, there is a need for qualitative research to help understand the particular ways in which gender comes to mediate the ethnic identities of being Protestant and Catholic.

The third key point to draw out from these findings is how little effect the neighbourhood has had in terms of informing and shaping the children's habitus. This can be seen in two ways. The first is the lack of any significant relationships between some of the key neighbourhood variables that are known to be associated with sectarian tensions and violence in Northern Ireland (such as

multiple deprivation, population density and levels of ethnic segregation) and the children's ethnic attitudes and awareness. Of course one possible explanation for this could be the limitations of the measures used. Thus while the measures of multiple deprivation, population density and ethnic segregation can be regarded as reliable and valid in themselves, they do relate to fixed political wards whose boundaries may well not accurately reflect the catchment areas of each of the nurseries and playgroups. However, while imperfect, if such factors were associated with children's ethnic attitudes and awareness then one would have expected at least some level of relationship to have emerged given the size of the sample.

Moreover, even if these measures were poor, one would have still expected a much greater level of variation in the children's attitudes to have been accounted for by differences between the nurseries/playgroups. However, and as reported above, the influence of the local area and/or nursery/playgroup tends to have been minimal with nearly all of the variation found between children in the sample tending to be due to individual differences between the children. Again, further research is required in order to understand this finding further. It may well be that there are other factors that do tend to be associated with children's ethnic attitudes and identities. However the evidence suggested here would indicate that these are unlikely to coincide with and/or be captured by differences between different nurseries and playgroups. Whatever these factors are, the findings of the multilevel analysis reported above would suggest that they are likely to be present to similar degrees across different nurseries and playgroups. If this was not the case, and such factors were to be found to be more prominent in some nurseries/playgroups than others, then this would have been picked up in the multilevel analysis where a larger proportion of the variation in children's attitudes would have been found to be associated with nurseries/playgroups, albeit that the source of this variation would have remained unexplained.

Overall, while these findings relate to one particular form of ethnicity, it can be argued that they have much wider relevance for our understanding of the ways in which race and ethnicity impact upon young children's attitudes and behaviour more broadly. In this sense, the findings suggest that it is important for research on race, ethnicity and young children to look beyond children's recognition of and attitudes towards physical differences (most notably racial differences) to also explore the deeper and more diffuse effects of ethnicity in terms of its structuring of young children's cultural dispositions and their taken-for-granted attitudes and forms of behaviour. Research is now beginning to emerge to suggest that young children are capable of developing in-group favouritism without the need to subjectively and explicitly identify with that group (Bennett *et al.*, 1998; Connolly, 2003) It is here that the notion of the ethnic habitus – as a set of unconscious and taken-for-granted cultural habits and dispositions – is potentially very useful in helping to make sense of this.

One final point worth returning to in conclusion is the role of quantitative methods in relation to research on young children's ethnic habitus. It is hoped that this present paper has at least demonstrated the potential role that quantitative methods can play in helping to identify and begin framing our understandings of the different forms of ethnic habitus that can be found among young children and how they are mediated by (or not mediated by) particular factors. In particular, it is hoped that the paper can contribute towards a more open and constructive dialogue between researchers who tend presently to be encamped within either a broadly quantitative (and psychological) or qualitative (and sociological) paradigm. There remains little meaningful dialogue between the two bodies of work and yet, as this paper has hopefully demonstrated, a critical engagement between these two approaches is necessary in order to more fully understand the impact of race and ethnicity on young children's experiences and perspectives.

In relation to quantitative research, for example, much can be learnt from the situated and contextual analyses provided by naturalistic, qualitative research. In this sense greater engagement with the findings of qualitative research in this area would help to better frame the design of quantitative research and, in particular, the choice of variables and the specific research questions that inform the analysis. Having a better appreciation of the context-specific and

contingent nature of young children's racial and ethnic attitudes and the active role they play in negotiating and reproducing such attitudes would also help in the interpretation of the findings of quantitative research and, in particular, would protect against the making of grand and universal claims about young children's attitudinal development.

Similarly, qualitative research would benefit greatly from engaging with and learning from the findings of quantitative studies. Just as quantitative research runs the risk of promoting universalist claims about the impact of race and ethnicity in young children's lives, so qualitative research equally has the tendency to generate and promote grand claims based on the generalisation from a small number of children to whole groups. It is therefore not uncommon to find qualitative research working unproblematically with such sweeping categories as 'boys' or 'girls' or 'working class children' or 'white children'.

However, this tendency to create and reproduce universalistic claims about large sub-sections of the childhood population can be guarded against by the appropriate and sensitive use of quantitative methods. 'Appropriate' in this sense means an effort to move away from simple, descriptive statistical analysis and towards an emphasis on the variation that exists within and between the particular sub-groups identified. It is telling, for example, that in all of the statistical models fitted in this paper, the combined effects of gender and ethnicity only ever tended to account for between around 8 to 10 per cent of the total variation in young children's ethnic awareness and dispositions. It is information like this that often tends to go unreported in statistical modelling and yet it should act as a major 'health warning' in terms of how such models are to be interpreted and what their theoretical and practical reach is.

It is in this sense that the findings of quantitative research such as those reported in this paper need to be reported and interpreted more appropriately, not as absolutely and fixed differences between particular sub-groups of children but as only establishing 'the social conditions of possibility ... of the "pure" disposition' (Bourdieu, 1984: 40). Ultimately, they only represent underlying tendencies or dispositions for certain groups to think and act in particular ways. The complex, multilayered and dynamic nature of the social condition will always mean that there will be significant variation in how the 'pure dispositions' (in this case the Protestant and Catholic children's respective forms of ethnic habitus) are played out in practice.

Also, and relatedly, it is important to realize that there is a danger that the variables and categories we have at hand to make our analyses possible (whether qualitative or quantitative) can also tend to be reified into explanations in themselves. As Bourdieu (1984: 106) has argued:

When, as often happens, the analysis is conducted variable by variable, there is a danger of attributing to one of the variables (such as sex or age, each of which may express in its own way the whole situation or trend of a class) the effect of the *set* of variables (an error which is encouraged by the conscious or unconscious tendency to substitute generic alienations, e.g., those linked to sex or age, for specific alienations, linked to class). Economic and social condition, as identified by occupation, gives a specific form to all the properties of sex and age, so that it is the efficacy of the whole structure of factors associated with a position in social space which is manifested in the correlations between age or sex and practices.

Perhaps the key point to derive from this is that if we are to respond to the call for the use of more quantitative methods in the study of the differing forms of ethnic habitus that exist among young children then we need to use more advanced statistical techniques to do this. If the factors impacting upon young children's lives are complex, multiple and multilayered in nature then, ultimately, we need to use statistical techniques that recognize this (Goldstein, 2003). This present article only represents an initial attempt to respond to this with a dataset that is relatively large but is also limited in terms of the variables at hand. Just as Bourdieu (1984) recognized in his use of multivariate techniques such as correspondence analysis in his own work for

*Distinction*, there is a need for more exploratory multivariate and multilevel analysis that can help to move beyond the confines of individual variables and begin to identify and explore the complex relationships between sets of variables and the underlying, latent factors that these relationships represent.

While, nowadays, it is almost *de rigueur* in academic circles to talk of the need for mixed methods, there is still very little evidence on the ground of methodological approaches that can move with ease between, and meaningfully draw together, indepth qualitative and ethnographic research with large scale surveys making use of advanced, multivariate and multilevel statistical analyses. This is, ultimately, what underlies the spirit of Bourdieu's own methodological approach and what is required if we are truly to begin understanding the impact of racial and ethnic divisions on young children's lives.

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