HELPING KIDS! NEWSLETTER

Edited by: Ciara Durand

Member Spotlight

Meet Izzy!

Hi there! My name is Isabelle (Izzy) Nic Craith and I am a Taighde Éireann - Research Ireland funded PhD Researcher in the *Helping Kids!* Lab, University College Dublin.

I am an award-winning social-developmental psychologist with over four years of experience in different research roles. In my current research, I am exploring how children think about what it means to be Irish and European, how these identities relate to their inclusion of immigrants, and how to promote more inclusive ideas about what it means to be Irish and European. Beyond conducting my research, I spend my time travelling all over the world to speak at academic conferences, and teaching, supervising and mentoring undergraduate and master's students in UCD.



Receiving the International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) 2025 Sigel Award for best paper lead by an early career scholar.

What have I done so far?

Summarising the scientific literature

At the beginning of my PhD, I examined what we as scientists know so far about identity and inclusion through a systematic review. I found that there are lots of ways to think about what it means to be a member of a national group (e.g., Irish, Dutch, etc.). Different ways of thinking about national identity were associated with different attitudes and behaviours towards immigrants across a variety of different countries. Specifically, narratives about ethnicity, blood, and protecting the national culture were associated with more exclusion, whilst narratives about citizenship and multiculturalism were associated with more inclusion.

However, that there have been very few studies in this area conducted with children, and even less in the Irish context. This is an important gap to fill, because children can create social change. Through helping people from different groups, making friends with those people, and questioning the world around them, children can help create a more inclusive society. Additionally, when we intervene early, we can stop biases and prejudices from becoming deeply rooted in children's thinking.



Presenting research findings at the International Society of Political Psychology (ISPP) 2024 conference.

What is a PhD?

A PhD is the highest possible degree. It requires conducting several years of original research- typically, 3-4 scientific studies that must contribute to new knowledge.

What is a Systematic Review?

A systematic review is a structured review of existing literature and research, which aims to minimise bias and provide a comprehensive and reliable overview of a topic.

Focus Groups with 5th class children

For my second study, I travelled to Irish primary schools to chat to children in 5th class about what it means to be Irish and European, using interactive activities and stories. I am still analysing this data, but so far I have found that:

- Children can and do think about what it means to be Irish and European.
- The different ideas explored in the systematic review (e.g., ethnicity, blood, citizenship) were observed among children for both Irish and European identities.
- Which ideas children perceived as fundamental to being Irish and European varied – and these ideas had implications for who they were willing to include in the Irish and European groups.
- Children reported learning about what it means to be Irish and European from lots of different sources, but most often talked about learning from school, their parents, and their own experiences.



Some happy Child Scientists after taking part in my research!

What are Focus Groups?

In focus groups, a small group of people discuss and explore their attitudes, opinions, and experiences in a moderated setting.

What is an Ethical Review?

Before any data are collected, the research plan must be reviewed by an ethics committee, who ensure that children's safety, rights and wellbeing are protected at all times.

What is an Experimental Study?

An experimental study is a method of gathering information by seeing if certain variables (e.g., attitudes) change when other variables (e.g., narratives) are changed.

What am I doing next?

In Autumn 2025, I will be conducting an experiment to see if it is possible to promote more inclusive identities. This will involve fun and interactive activities for children in 4th, 5th and 6th class in schools across Ireland. I hope these findings will influence and inform school curricula and educational interventions, and promote scientific knowledge.

CALLING ALL TEACHERS !

Are you a 4th , 5th , or 6th class teacher who is interested in having your class participate in scientific research by playing fun and educational games together? Email me at isabelle.niccraith@ucdconnect.ie.

I would like to say a huge thank you to schools, parents, and participants for their time, colleagues for their feedback, and Research Ireland for funding this project.



Receiving a UCD ReClaim award for research culture with Dr Laura Foley (left), Pat Mulvaney (right) and Dr Glen Jankowski (not pictured)



Some fun activities from my research with children in 5th class .

Taighde Éireann Research Ireland

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