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A Difficult Dialogue:
Educating Citizens in a Divided Society

John T. King

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

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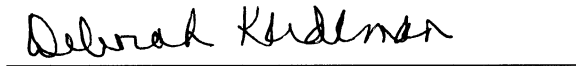
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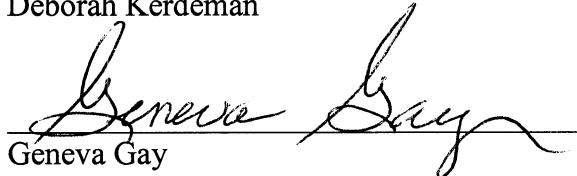
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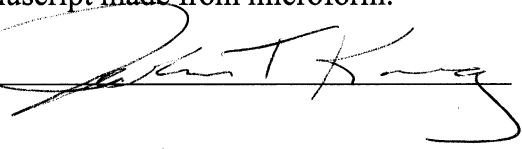

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Abstract

A Difficult Dialogue: Educating Citizens in a Divided Society

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Peace within pluralistic societies requires citizens capable of and committed to engaging non-violently in conflicts that will invariably arise due to differences in the interests, values, and commitments of diverse individuals and groups. Citizenship and peace educators suggest that this capacity can be cultivated by engaging students in a process of intergroup dialogue. In this qualitative case study, I investigated how a group of twenty-two Protestant and Catholic students in Northern Ireland participated in a series of dialogues concerning questions of national and cultural identity. Employing an ethnographic approach, I collected data by means of participant observation, interviews with students and staff, and document analysis. Data were analyzed according to a constant comparative process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and a participant feedback procedure (Bibace et al, 1999) was used to strengthen the accuracy and representativeness of my findings.

Throughout the four-month program, students employed a variety of response strategies through which they consistently minimized the controversial nature of knowledge or value claims presented by others. Through the use of demystification and liminal subject matters, program staff occasionally succeeded in sustaining students' consideration of perspectives that challenged their own and initiating critical reflection concerning students' assumptions, behaviors, and commitments. I discuss what this case reveals about how dialogue can be employed to educate citizens capable of and committed to promoting peace and democracy in pluralistic societies.

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Chapter One: Introduction

It is raining heavily the afternoon that I approach five young people huddling under the awning of a three-story rowhouse attempting to stay dry. The three boys stand cradling cigarettes in cupped hands while the two girls sit on suitcases conversing in quiet tones. "Are you all waiting for the Corrymeela bus?" I ask in what strikes me as a harsh American accent. "Aye" the tallest of the boys replies; the girls nod their assent. "It should be here soon so we can all get warm," I say. "I'm John, one of the volunteers." "So are you a Yank?" the same boy asks. I answer that I am and we make small talk while we wait. The girls are particularly interested to hear that I come from Seattle; they wonder if I ever saw Kurt Cobain in concert. They explain that they are classmates, good friends who live in a "nice, mixed neighborhood" in the south of the city. The boys have arrived by train from a town about an hour away, a "rough place" as they put it. All five, I learn later, are Catholic. We are soon joined by six more girls, dropped off by parents who help unload luggage before quickly returning to the warmth of their cars. Two of the new arrivals approach the boys asking for smokes while the others remain in the comfort of their parents' cars. These six, it turns out later, are Protestant. It is dark, and cold, and wet. It is winter in Belfast.

Eventually the bus arrives, we embark, and ninety minutes later we arrive at Corrymeela, a sprawling complex set in pastureland high above the rugged coastline, overlooking the churning Irish Sea. "The Center" has been a focal point for peace and reconciliation efforts in Northern Ireland since 1965, originally serving as neutral ground for hosting political conferences and later branching out to offer a wide range of

educational and support programs for those affected by the Troubles. Here we meet four boys and one girl from “across the border” in the Republic, as well as six more girls who have arrived from various towns throughout the North. This group will spend the next two days, as well as three additional weekends over the following four months, taking part in a series of activities designed to help them learn more about each other and the “issues, experiences, and influences that have shaped who they are” (Close Encounters, 2003). For many, these weekends will mark the first time they have spent in conversation with members of the “other” community; for all, they will be an opportunity to share something of their own backgrounds and to confront and respond to the images and attitudes others have formed about them.

The Close Encounters program provides an opportunity for cross-cultural dialogue in an attempt to foster friendship, trust, and understanding across political and religious boundaries that are both highly salient and contentious. Over the course of several weekends, a group of twenty-two Catholic and Protestant students participate in a series of dialogues in which they share information and question one another regarding their personal and cultural backgrounds. Throughout this process, students are constantly challenged to listen to and learn from those whose experiences, beliefs, and commitments differ radically from their own and to reflect upon their own assumptions in light of what others reveal. Recognizing that conflict is a recurrent facet of personal and public life in Northern Ireland, program organizers hope that such a process will help students learn to interact peacefully and productively with those with whom they disagree deeply.

This study investigated how this diverse group of students perceived and responded to the experience of having their own perspectives called into question and how educators facilitated their interactions in an attempt to promote friendship and learning across deep divisions. The current chapter situates the Close Encounters program within the broader context of efforts to prepare students to live within an increasingly pluralistic society and interconnected world. It begins by examining how dialogue may serve as a means for cultivating students' ability to respond constructively to encounters with difference and disagreement. Next, it addresses how various social and psychological factors may subvert this process in such a way that the occasion of dialogue engenders resistance and the entrenchment of existing assumptions rather than growth or learning. Finally, it presents the research questions guiding this study and explains how they may contribute to understanding this resistance and how educators may mitigate or circumvent it.

Chapter Two presents the conceptual framework upon which the study is premised. Reviewing literatures in the fields of Peace Education, Intergroup Dialogue, and Citizenship Education, it examines various conceptions regarding the requirements of democratic citizenship within pluralistic societies, identifies a series of civic capacities conducive to the peaceful interaction between individuals and groups, and explores how these traits may be fostered through dialogue. The third chapter explains the research design and describes the methodologies by which data were collected and analyzed. Research findings are presented in Chapter Four, and Chapter Five discusses the

implications of these findings for how we conceive of and promote dialogue, citizenship, and reconciliation in divided societies.

Educating Citizens in Divided Societies

Embarking upon the 21st century, a wide array of educationalists are increasingly cognizant of the need to help cultivate a citizenry capable of responding peacefully and constructively to experiences of conflict. In numerous settings around the world, efforts are underway to deploy educational institutions to promote peaceful coexistence, mutual understanding, and closer relations between formerly estranged groups. In many instances, these efforts employ one or both of the following approaches: a) facilitating intergroup contact in order to decrease negative stereotypes, personalize relationships, or encourage the development of more inclusive identities, or b) utilizing dialogue to confront past grievances and enhance understanding of the perspectives of others. Within Israel, for example, reconciliation workshops (Maoz, 2000) and school leadership partnerships (Lazarowitz & Eden, 2002) promote sharing, collaboration, and joint action between Jewish and Arab students and educators. In South Africa, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission has served not only as a forum for contact between victims and perpetrators, but also as a curricular vehicle for establishing a common historical record concerning the litany of wrongs committed during apartheid and for fostering dialogue concerning the relationship between reconciliation, justice, and the need to redress structural inequalities (Enslin, 2002). In Northern Ireland, the nationally adopted policy of Education for Mutual Understanding sponsors integrated schooling, cross-

cultural curriculum, and extra-curricular contact programs designed to foster more peaceful relationships between the highly segregated Protestant and Catholic communities.

The need for schools to promote reconciliation and dialogue is perhaps less evident, though still urgently present, within societies where intergroup conflicts are less apparent. Belying the veneer of purported tranquility, intergroup tensions arise from a multitude of sources: from past instances of injustice or aggression (particularly where these remain unacknowledged); from lingering structural inequalities and the political, economic, or educational marginalization of minority groups; and from the anxiety of dominant groups threatened with a loss of privilege, power, or security. Where such conditions persist, ideologies may flourish which equate diversity with danger (Aboulmagd, et al, 2001) and emergent disputes quickly expose the depth of simmering insecurities and antagonisms: French officials attempt to “defend” national identity by introducing legislation to ban religious symbols such as Muslim headscarves from public spaces; the adoption of textbooks containing secularized histories foments controversy between cultural monists and pluralists in India (Oommen, 2004); and in the United States, proponents of “solid American history” denounce multicultural education on the grounds that it will “undermine prospects for national survival” (Saxe, 2003, p. 108).

Within pluralistic societies, such controversies emerge from legitimate differences between the interests, values, and commitments of diverse individuals and groups. Furthermore, the conditions that cause many to apprehend such conflicts with fear and resentment are being exacerbated by recent political, economic, and cultural trends

associated with globalization. Increasingly transnational flows of people, ideas, and resources spur the frequency of intercultural encounters while simultaneously engendering high levels of uncertainty, instability, and displacement. Meanwhile, the growth of supranational institutions and continuing integration of global financial, communicative, and productive processes coexist with, and in many ways inspire, efforts to defend or re-assert local identities and institutions based on ethnic, linguistic, or territorial distinctions (Burbules & Torres, 2000). So, too, global economic processes that widen disparities in access to resources and decision-making processes frustrate mounting claims for democratic participation based, at least in part, on the spread of liberal political ideals.

In light of such contradictory impulses, growing attention is being given to the need for educational institutions to help prepare citizens capable of engaging with conflicts creatively and non-violently. While identifying just what knowledge, skills, and dispositions underlie this ability remains a continuous project, civic educators generally speak to the need to nurture students' willingness to tolerate, listen to, and respect diverse viewpoints (Hahn, 1996). Advocates of global education assert the desirability of fostering a sense of empathy and cosmopolitanism (Nussbaum, 1997) so that students both recognize and respect local affiliations and yet are willing to transcend such distinctions in order to promote peace (Harris, 2000) and defend equal rights (Guttman, 2003). Acknowledging the legitimacy of different groups holding different beliefs, commitments, and perspectives, critical theorists further assert the need to combat moral and social exclusivism (McCarthy & Dimitriades, 2001) by enhancing students' ability to

tolerate ambiguity (Anzaldua, 1987) and understand identity as fluid and multifaceted rather than essential or fixed (Mouffe, 1992; Young, 1996). In pluralistic settings in which disagreements are likely to emerge due to social, cultural, or political differences, traits and abilities such as these constitute civic capacities (Hess, 1998) that equip individuals to function peacefully as members of a diverse citizenry.

The Call for Dialogue

Where differing perspectives are fairly represented, the process of dialogue can serve as a powerful tool for cultivating these capacities. In diverse settings, participants encounter assumptions, claims, and arguments advanced by others that may conflict with their own. When dialogues proceed in such a way that integrates these conflicts rather than attempting to eliminate or suppress them, such encounters may promote myriad social and intellectual outcomes that enhance students' ability to engage constructively with difference and disagreement.

Cognitive psychologists have long regarded the effort to reconcile apparently contradictory information or experiences as integral to the process of intellectual development. In encountering discrepancies between what they expect or believe to be true and what they actually perceive, students experience a state of confusion, frustration, or cognitive dissonance through which they are motivated to expand their current mental structures to accommodate new information. As Piaget (1985) explains, "disequilibrium alone forces the subject to go beyond his current state and strike out in new directions" (p. 10). In a similar fashion, Scheffler (1991) describes the learning process as an

experience involving “surprise” in which students, through encountering the possibility of being wrong, become capable of “acknowledging the inadequacies of [their] initial beliefs and recognizing the need for their improvement” (p. 12).

Democratic deliberation theorists further suggest that disagreeing over the knowledge claims advanced by those occupying different social and cultural positions provide fertile opportunities for students to develop knowledge, skills, and dispositions that enable them to participate fairly and effectively in democratic public life. Avery and Johnson (1999) suggest that conflicts, when managed constructively, “have many positive outcomes such as increasing the motivation and energy to solve problems, increasing achievement and productivity, clarifying one’s identity and values, and increasing one’s understanding of other perspectives” (p. 261). Encountering conflicting perspectives expands students’ knowledge base because it provides them access to information, claims, and judgments beyond those associated with their own social position and personal experiences (Parker, 2003). Further, by considering competing interpretations of current social conditions, students have a greater opportunity to become aware of existing social inequalities and of the oftentimes subtle ways in which social group memberships both enable and circumscribe the experiences of individuals (Nagda et al, 2001).

Attempting to communicate across differences may also contribute to the development of interpersonal skills such as listening attentively and disagreeing respectfully. In order to be persuasive and accountable to those with whom they disagree, students are pressured to provide reasons for their claims and to base their

arguments on appeals to justice and the common good rather than their own self-interest (Young, 1996). Through analyzing the reasoning and personal experiences behind positions being advanced, students may begin to understand the reasons behind group differences and to develop less stereotypical views of members of different groups (Schoem et al, 2001). Such experiences provide opportunities for students to develop “communicative virtues” such as patience, self-restraint, tolerance of dissent, the willingness to suspend judgment, and the courage to change one’s mind in light of evidence (Burbules & Rice, 1991, p. 405).

Although the encounter with difference and disagreement holds the potential for students to develop capacities conducive to democratic citizenship, such outcomes are not assured. The assumptions of participants toward each other and toward conflict itself, the norms governing their interactions, and the structures made available for resolving their conflicts will each help determine the extent to which constructive outcomes are realized. Particularly where participants include members from groups with a history of hostility or suspicion, the possibility exists that dialogue may actually reinforce rather than reduce negative perceptions, attitudes, and relations. Recognizing this danger, intergroup relations theorists (Pettigrew, 1998; Allport, 1954; Sherrif, 1951) highlight the need for participants’ interactions to be supported by each members’ wider community, sustained long enough to promote the development of personal attachments and group identity, and structured in pursuit of cooperative rather than competitive goals (such as the attainment of mutual understanding rather than persuasion or conversion of the other). Additionally, participants must be of equal status in order for the perspectives of all to be afforded

equal consideration. During the course of dialogue, this accordance of equal consideration may be reflected in the extent to which all participants are free and equal in their ability to introduce topics into conversation, state their opinions and challenge those of others, and access to information and other relevant resources (Habermas, 1982; Fishkin, 1991). In order to provide a common basis for judging the credibility of the opinions being expressed, participants must further be willing to recognize rational argument as a legitimate means for stating and evaluating claims (Gutmann, 1999). Each of these procedural norms is premised upon an expectation of mutual respect in which all participants recognize one another's right to speak and be heard and therefore prove willing to listen to and consider each other's claims, experiences, and interests. To the extent that such conditions are present, it is presumed possible for participants to reach consensus through the force of the better argument (Habermas, 1982) and for new, shared meanings to emerge.

Problematizing Identity: The Critical Perspective

Critical scholars question whether the deliberative norms and procedures described above are ever fully realizable where participants occupy different positions within existing social and cultural hierarchies. Collins (2000) argues that these pre-existing relationships impact the course of deliberation because "the amount of privilege granted to a particular standpoint lies less in its internal criteria of being truthful... and more in the power of a group in making its standpoint prevail over other equally plausible perspectives" (p. 48). This power to speak and be heard resides in the ability of

individuals or groups to speak freely without fear of recrimination or the need to continually justify themselves in the face of hostile skepticism, to propagate purportedly commonsense rules that justify inequitable treatment, to deny positions of authority to members of historically marginalized groups, and to determine what counts as adequate justification or credible evidence.

To enter conversation, then, is to invoke already established subject-object relations that, in turn, regulate the ability both to speak and to listen. As Haraway (1991) states, “there is no innocent position”—individuals never embark upon dialogues free from assumptions regarding the legitimacy of either their own knowledge claims or those of others, assumptions that are based on participants’ status as social actors as much as upon any inherent attributes of their claims themselves. In this sense, conversation can be regarded as a performative, an act that produces that which it names (Butler, 1993): where knowledge claims are awarded privilege based on one’s social standing, that standing is itself reinforced through asserting the power to define the terms upon which privilege is granted. Conversely, deliberation may serve to further marginalize those whose knowledge and credibility are systematically impugned for, as hooks (1989) explains, “as objects, one’s reality is defined by others, one’s identity created by others, one’s history named only in ways that define one’s relationship to those who are subject” (p. 42).

Young (1996) provides an explanation of how this process unfolds within a deliberative setting. Even where the conditions under which deliberation takes place give it the appearance of being free and equal, Young notes that “the norms of deliberation are

culturally specific and often operate as forms of power that silence or devalue the speech of some people” (p. 123). Specifically, dominant forms of public and academic discourse serve to privilege the perspectives of those accustomed to assertive and confrontational speech patterns while marginalizing those of others who employ different forms of speech. According to Harding (1998), the presumption that all participants must enter conversation free and equal in their ability to speak is not only disingenuous but is itself part of the very process of systematically privileging the perspectives of certain groups while marginalizing those of others. When inequalities already present within current conditions remain unacknowledged, efforts to rectify them may be denounced as ‘special interest’ concerns whose supposed legitimacy pales in comparison to a ‘fair and impartial’ concern for the ‘common good.’ In a similar fashion, Code (1990) argues that the assumption inherent within Western empiricism that knowledge is the rightful product of the abstract, solitary activity of individual knowers serves to discredit knowledge claims based on lived experience or ‘tainted’ by emotional appeal or personal investment.

Power inequalities undermine the deliberative process because they systematically distort the ability of all participants to present or attend to the perspectives of subjugated groups. The more effectively power relations operate, the more completely dominant standards for credibility and the legitimization of knowledge are acceded to, the more invisible they become. The solution presented to this dilemma by feminist scholars is to challenge and modify the rules by which deliberation proceeds so as to grant access to a greater, more inclusive range of social, cultural, and political perspectives. Young (1996)

suggests that deliberative norms typically favor assertive and confrontational speech patterns and should be amended to accord more credibility to relational discourses such as greeting, rhetoric, and storytelling. Narayan (1988) argues that dominant group members should exercise methodological humility and caution when listening to members of historically oppressed groups by acknowledging that claims they perceive as incorrect or irrational may only appear so because they themselves lack the experiences that lend credence to such claims. Similarly, Harding (1993) suggests that deliberations should “start off thought from the lives of marginalized peoples” (p. 56) on the grounds that their perspectives are likely to be excluded from the mainstream and thus provide fertile grounds for generating critical awareness about what is hidden or taken for granted within the dominant culture. While rejecting Habermas’ claim that deliberative processes can and should achieve consensus, these theorists nevertheless agree that, when such strategies are employed to make deliberations more inclusive and egalitarian, participants may attain an increased understanding of why different groups value what they value and hold the positions that they do (Young, 1996).

Research Questions

Both deliberation and critical theorists suggest that dialogues between those occupying different social and cultural positions may enhance students’ understanding of both self and other. The deliberative perspective relies upon the strict observance of relational and procedural norms to ensure that fair consideration is given to all relevant perspectives on an issue. Though feminist critics question whether procedural

requirements can truly deliver on the promise of granting fair hearing to all, they, too, rely upon relational norms to grant the possibility of attaining a more modest degree of understanding. As Benhabib (2002) explains:

Norms of universal respect and egalitarian reciprocity *already undergird* practices of discursive argumentation: they *must be presupposed* in some form for practical discourses... Moral and political dialogues *begin with* the presumption of respect, equality, and reciprocity between the participants. We engage in discourses with an assumed background, and we understand that these norms apply to all participants (p. 11, italics added).

This insistence that certain foundational requirements must be presupposed for deliberation to begin is problematic for two reasons. First, because it establishes a simplistic duality in which norms such as respect and reciprocity are treated as static and binary conditions. Either they are present, in which case deliberation may proceed with some reasonable expectation of success, however defined; or they are absent, in which case any semblance of deliberation is doomed to dissolve into incommensurable differences or, worse, to further marginalize already subordinated groups. Such a dichotomy fails to provide any consideration of the degree to which these norms may or may not be present in any particular circumstance. While it may be possible to argue that dialogues undertaken in the absence of mutual respect and reciprocity fail to qualify as ideal type or prototypical deliberations, such an offhand dismissal admits no possibility of investigating how these norms may be cultivated through the very process of dialogue

even under imperfect conditions or of how other dimensions of the deliberative process may act to promote or inhibit such development.

A second difficulty derives from how these norms are to be operationalized in concrete situations. Both feminist and deliberation theorists develop sophisticated arguments for what mutual respect and reciprocity require: that participants listen to and recognize one another's moral right to take part in the deliberation (Benhabib, 1996) and that they aspire to provide mutually justifiable reasons for their positions (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). Such definitions, however, while logically coherent and persuasive, provide little indication of how individuals will experience and enact these requirements in concrete social and historical contexts. Recognizing this, Benhabib (2002) argues that actual dialogues serve as a form of recursive validation through which the precise meaning of these norms is determined in the case of each particular dialogue. Such an assertion, however, simply acknowledges the problem without providing any guidance as to what difficulties participants might be expected to experience during this process nor of how facilitators may help mitigate them.

This study investigates the experiences of students participating in dialogue within a context where the presence of these presumed prerequisites cannot be taken for granted. Specifically, it examines how Protestant and Catholic students participating in cross-cultural reconciliation efforts within Northern listen to the perspectives of those whom they have been socialized to distrust, demean, or dehumanize. In order to explore whether and how the willingness to listen can be fostered even in situations where it is not found pre-existent, the study addresses two research questions:

- 1) How do these students perceive and respond to perspectives that conflict with their own? and
- 2) How are these perceptions and responses affected by the conditions under which conflicting perspectives are encountered?

The first question seeks to capture the complexity of the experience of listening that the deliberative literature commonly fails to address. Civic educators assert that “conflicts should occur frequently because when they are managed constructively they have many positive outcomes” (Avery & Johnson, 1999, p. 261). Within deliberative settings, students experience conflicts arising from differences between diverse social and cultural perspectives. For such encounters to promote positive outcomes, students must be willing to respect and listen to those whose perspectives conflict with their own. What this entails, however, is more complex and difficult than commonly assumed. The insistence that participants be willing to listen to one another may appear unproblematic so long as the act of listening is reduced to externally observable behaviors such as inviting contributions from others, asking for clarification, or refraining from monopolizing conversation, interrupting, or making personal attacks (Harris, 2002). Where listening is so conceived, the simple binary discussed earlier seems to hold: either participants exhibit such behaviors or they don’t. Florio-Ruane (2001), however, suggests that this depiction seriously misrepresents the choices individuals confront as they engage in listening. Drawing upon Elbow (1986), she argues that the act of listening requires a constant choice about whether to doubt or to believe the claims of others. Remaining skeptical of others’ claims, listeners’ own convictions remain unchallenged

and unchanged. In choosing to believe, on the other hand, listeners temporarily assent to the claims of others in order that they may understand and experience a claim “as the others see it.” Conceived of in this manner, listening is both “a powerful tool for transforming thought” and also one that “poses challenges and risks to the listener” (Florio-Ruane, 2001, p. 99).

Speaking to each of these prospects, Gadamer (1993) explains that “to reach an understanding in dialogue is not merely a matter of putting oneself forward and successfully asserting one’s own point of view, but being transformed in a communion in which we do not remain what we were” (p. 379). The risk in “choosing to believe” the claims of those whose experiences, interests, or values may be different from one’s own lies in the possibility that one’s own perspectives will be challenged and revealed as incomplete, incorrect, or even illegitimate. “Openness to the other,” explains Gadamer, “involves recognizing that I myself must accept some things that are against me” (p. 361).

Both the deliberative and critical perspectives fail to acknowledge that where listening is so construed, it is an experience likely to be perceived as difficult and dangerous and, therefore, resisted. Bruns (1992) likens the experience of reaching understanding with another to that of a tragic occurrence, an experience that is inevitably painful because it confronts us with the possible negation of what we previously held to be true:

In understanding one encounters the other in its otherness, not as an object in a different time and place but as that which resists the grasp of my

knowledge or which requires me to loosen my hold or open my fist. It is that which will not be objectified before me... What happens in understanding is that I always experience the refusal of the other to be contained in the conceptual apparatus that I have prepared for it or that my own time and place have prepared for it; and of course this alters my own relation to this framework, not to say my own self-relation or my own standing (p. 180).

For Code (1990), this refusal of the other evokes a fear reminiscent of what Bernstein (1983) terms Cartesian Anxiety, an “overwhelming awareness of human finitude and fallibility” that occasions a desperate desire for certainty and control. By willfully insisting upon the objective and self-evident nature of cherished beliefs and assumptions, it becomes possible to maintain the fiction of secure, unassailable knowledge. This is the “fortress of certainty erected to alleviate Cartesian Anxiety” (Code, 1990, p. 51) that is threatened when individuals enter into conversation ready to “believe” claims and perspectives that challenge their own.

In psychoanalytic terms, such an experience can be likened to an existential crisis in which current modes of making meaning are revealed as inadequate (Lear, 2000). Such experiences open the possibility for psychic development, but they also engender a profound state of vulnerability arising from the risk that current beliefs and behaviors may need to be modified or abandoned in light of what is revealed. According to Scheffler (1991), this risk may be easily borne “where the relevant beliefs are weakly held, or relatively segregated, or of peripheral significance for one’s basic orientation” (p.

13). Where, however, the existing beliefs occupy a more central or integrative position in one's sense of self (Markus & Wurf, 1987), it is a risk likely to be perceived as both difficult and dangerous. This experience of epistemic distress (Scheffler, 1991) may evoke a dogmatic response characterized by an uncompromising insistence upon the validity of current beliefs and an abject denial of any contradictory evidence or experience. Honig (1996) explains this process by employing the metaphor of "home" as a place of psychic comfort and security in which individuals are freed from the constant need to renegotiate reality in light of the challenge posed by conflict and difference. Yearning for such an imaginary, ultimately unattainable place, individuals are led "either to withdraw from conflicts or to conquer them" (p. 270) by avoiding potentially controversial issues or impugning the motives or legitimacy of those whose perspectives challenge their own.

To what extent do students participating in Close Encounters manifest such responses? The first research question: how do students perceive and respond to perspectives that conflict with their own, investigates how these students confront the unsettling and potentially painful prospect of having the accuracy or legitimacy of their own claims, beliefs, and assumptions called into question. To what extent do they experience tension, uncertainty, vulnerability, or doubt? In what ways do they avoid or minimize controversy, impugn the motives, accuracy, or legitimacy of others' perspectives, or, conversely, allow diverse perspectives to infiltrate, expand, or transform their own prior assumptions?

The second research question addresses whether these responses are influenced by the conditions under which conflicting perspectives are encountered. The deliberation and inter-group dialogue literatures recognize the significance of the social context and procedural norms governing participants' interactions during the course of dialogue. As previously noted, these theorists specify a series of contact conditions (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) and procedural requirements (Habermas, 1982; Fishkin, 1991) conducive to providing fair consideration for all participants' perspectives. Less attention, however, is given to how these various conditions may interact so as to render the provision of other requirements more or less problematic. A particular concern of the present investigation lies in discovering whether and how either the substantive content of deliberations or the prior relationship of participants may impact students' willingness to assume the risks associated with listening to diverse perspectives.

Within contexts of intergroup conflict, a shared history of distrust, antagonism, and violence may undermine the willingness or ability of participants to grant fair and equal consideration to all perspectives. Particularly where participants identify themselves or their group as victims of another's unwarranted violence, the perspectives of the purported perpetrators may be de-legitimized or excluded on the basis of being stigmatized as terrorists (Munck, 2000). In such situations, even when nominally egalitarian norms grant the inclusion of such perspectives, participants may implicitly denounce them as illegitimate or irrational and thus prove less willing to listen with any semblance of "choosing to believe." These dialogues are likely to be accompanied by

feelings and expressions of fear, vulnerability, or anger that may lessen students' ability to listen with empathy and understanding (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004).

The difficulty of granting fair hearing to certain perspectives may be compounded when the substantive content of disagreements relate to issues central to participants' sense of identity. As noted previously, the risk in choosing to believe the perspectives of others lies in the possibility that one's own claims, beliefs, or assumptions may need to be modified or abandoned in light of what is revealed. Brandhorst (2004) argues that the magnitude of this risk, and the degree to which students are willing to assume it, are directly related to the type of belief being threatened. Employing Rokeach's (1972) belief type structure, he distinguishes between inconsequential beliefs that are matters of personal taste and those derived from personal experience or established authorities. Because inconsequential beliefs are relatively segregated and independent of other beliefs, their abandonment necessitates little readjustment of other beliefs and thus causes little anxiety. Authority beliefs, however, are highly interconnected in the sense that "if an authority is reliable in relation to one belief, then other beliefs attributed to that authority are also accepted" (p. 14). Thus, accepting claims that challenge an authority type belief not only threatens that particular belief but all others dependent upon the assumed credibility of that source. The intellectual and emotional investment in maintaining such beliefs is thus far greater than in the case of inconsequential beliefs, making students less receptive to perspectives that call them into question.

In the case of Close Encounters, students participate in a number of dialogues centered upon a topics ranging from sharing personal interests to discussing controversial

issues related to national and cultural identity. To what extent do their listening behaviors change in relation to the content of their discussions? And, where conversations raise questions about sectarian violence with which students have direct personal experience, how, if at all, is space created to allow students to express and respond to feelings of fear, vulnerability, and anger directed against groups to which other participants belong? In such situations, how are certain perspectives silenced or excluded, or, where conflicting perspectives are voiced, how do students make sense of and respond to them?

Summary

Within an increasingly pluralistic society and interconnected world, conflicts will invariably arise due to legitimate differences in interests, values, and commitments (Kymlica, 2000; Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Mouffe, 1992). A central goal of civic education must, therefore, be to teach students “how to sustain working relationships in contexts of sometimes powerful distrust and disagreement” (Narayan, 1988, p. 33) or, more ambitiously, how to transform distrust and animosity such that conflicts become dynamic opportunities for enlarged understanding and creative problem solving. Civic and multicultural educators suggest that these capacities may be developed through dialogue across differences (Parker, 2003; Avery & Johnson 1999; Banks, 1996; Nieto, 1996; Burbules & Rice, 1991). The conditions most frequently cited as encouraging constructive outcomes, however, most notably mutual respect and the willingness to listen, are themselves problematic. From a hermeneutic perspective, the act of listening requires allowing the claims of another to reflect back upon and call into question one’s

own—that is, “to accept some things that are against me” (Gadamer, 1993). Because the choice to do so entails both emotional and intellectual risks for the listener, it is an experience likely to be perceived as difficult and dangerous. It cannot, therefore, be assumed that students enter into deliberations ready and willing to assume these risks. Because both the political/religious affiliations of students and the substantive content of deliberations are highly salient and contentious, the Close Encounters program provides an opportunity to investigate how students perceive and respond to the risks associated with listening to perspectives that conflict with their own. Further, because it examines these behaviors over time and across a variety of instructional settings, this study should help identify conditions that either promote or inhibit openness, listening, and critical self-reflection.

Chapter Two: Review of Literature

The Close Encounters program aspires to build trust and mutual understanding among students belonging to historically antagonized groups by engaging them in a series of dialogues concerning controversial issues of national and cultural identity. As discussed in Chapter One, reason exists to expect this to be a difficult process—both in the provision of procedural norms intended to ensure fair consideration of all perspectives and in the experience of students confronted with the challenge of listening to claims, beliefs, and assumptions that conflict with their own. This chapter introduces and develops the concept of *difficult dialogues* as a theoretical resource for better understanding the challenges and possibilities of such a process.

Consistent with the methods and goals of Close Encounters, difficult dialogues are initially defined here as *conversations between members of antagonized groups that broach differences in values, interest, and experiences in an attempt to understand and transform conflicts*. As depicted in Figure 2.1, they are conceived of as emerging at the convergence of three fields: Intergroup Dialogue, Peace Education, and Citizenship Education. As instances of intergroup dialogue, difficult dialogues acknowledge and provide a forum for expressing the differences that exist among participants stemming from their belonging to diverse social, cultural, or political groups. In accordance with the goals of peace education, they recognize that these differences give rise to potential conflicts in interests, values, and commitments and seek to enhance students' ability and commitment to resolve these conflicts non-violently. Finally, as preparation for democratic citizenship, they aim to cultivate a sense of shared community and a

commitment to protect equal rights and pursue mutually acceptable solutions to matters of common concern.

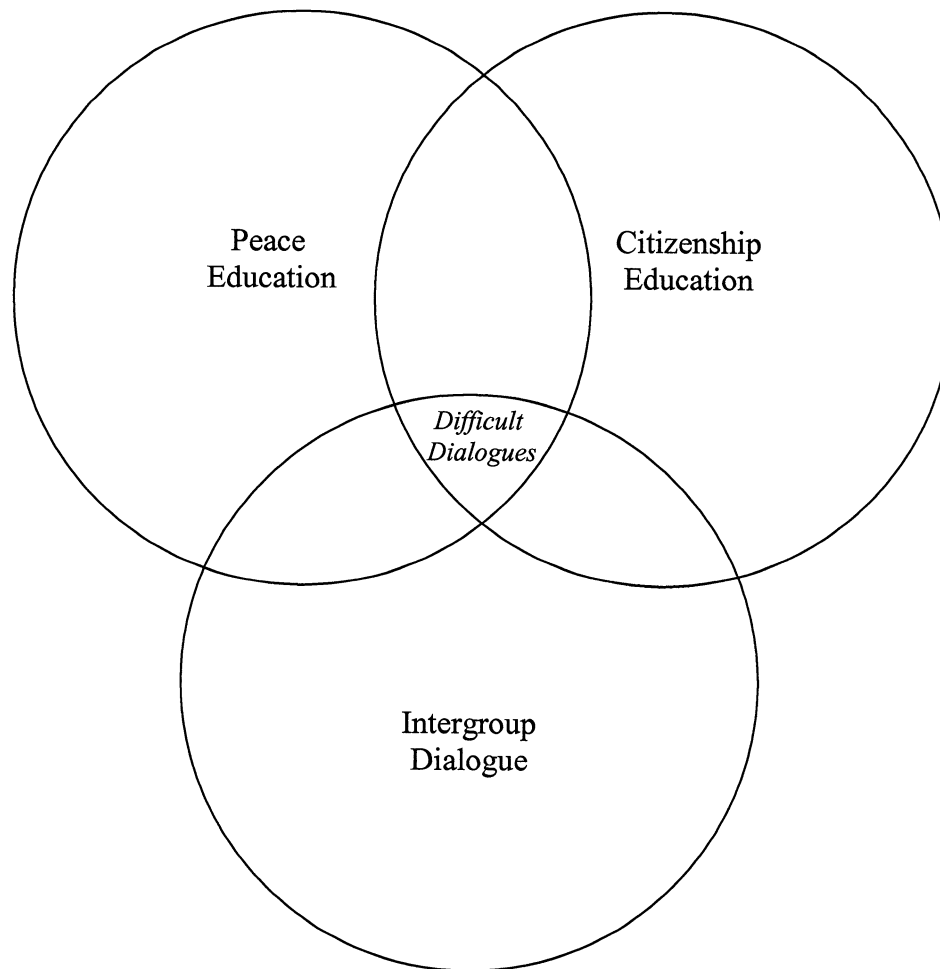


Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework

In the following sections, I review each of these bodies of literature and explicate the central goals, questions, and tensions within each. Then, synthesizing this material, I develop a more nuanced definition of difficult dialogues as conversations among members of different groups that: a) integrate and seek to understand conflicts rather than

eliminate or evade them, b) acknowledge that conflicts exist between groups rather than individuals only, c) aspire to build norms of mutual respect and listening rather than presume their pre-existence, d) invite a critical examination of participants' own perspectives rather than, or at least prior to, critiquing those of others, and e) acquaint students with the prospect that tension, uncertainty, and disagreement are constitutive features of democratic life rather than opposed to it. The chapter concludes by examining how each of these dimensions of difficult dialogues subjects participants to the social, emotional, and intellectual risks described in Chapter One and, finally, by discussing how the research questions directing this study may contribute to our understanding of how to support students in assuming these risks in order to be better able to listen to and learn from diverse perspectives.

Educating for Peace

Peace education begins with the premise that, whereas conflict is natural and inevitable, violence is not. Conflict, a state of opposition arising from the pursuit of or desire for seemingly contradictory outcomes, stems from the basic fact of human individuality and diversity (Boulding, 1996). Because diverse individuals and groups will have different experiences, perceptions, and aspirations, conflict and disagreement are not only unavoidable but also legitimate and not altogether undesirable. Peace, then, requires not the absence or evasion of conflicts but the means and commitment to resolve them without recourse to the use of physical or psychological force. Of course, the absence of overt violence, a condition typically referred to as negative peace (Galtung,

1980), may be achieved through a variety of means, many of which may mask or even enforce a state of inequity or repression: using the threat of violence to ensure compliance, denying others' the means to voice or mount resistance to perceived injustices, having already employed force to achieve one's ends or vanquish one's opponents. Thus, while minimizing the resort to violence remains a priority, peace educators seek to promote an understanding of and commitment to a state of "positive peace" characterized by a respect for the dignity, human rights, and basic needs of all. More than the absence of violence, peace thus conceived is a process dependent upon the presence and utilization of cooperative mechanisms, attitudes, relations, and institutions to resolve the conflicts that arise during the course of interactions between individuals, groups, or states.

Education that supports the development of positive peace may be oriented either locally or globally. Typically focusing upon interstate or intercultural relations, global peace education emphasizes such transnational concerns as global citizenship, intercultural awareness, militarism and disarmament, and ecological interdependence. Locally oriented peace education, meanwhile, places greater emphasis upon developing interpersonal relationships, communicative skills, caring and inclusive school climates, and prejudice reduction. Uniting each of these approaches is a commitment to fostering such values as a respect for life, social justice, tolerance, and non-violence.

Such a vision of comprehensive peace education (Reardon, 1988) entails cognitive, behavioral, and relational dimensions. It involves the transmission of knowledge about the sources, consequences, and alternatives to violence, and also the

cultivation of students' capacities for criticality (Bjerstedt, 1993) and social imagination (Boulding, 1988) through which they become capable of recognizing current injustices and working towards creating new and better futures. It seeks to model, through classroom and schoolhouse practices, as well as teach and practice skills for handling conflict nonviolently, inclusively, justly, and effectively (Bickmore, 2004). Finally, it aims to transform fearful, intolerant, or antagonistic attitudes and relations through promoting intercultural awareness in an attempt to "get students to think of themselves as concerned global citizens willing to transcend national and ethnic differences in order to promote peace (Harris & Morrison, 2003, p. 18). In pursuit of these goals, peace educators employ a variety of curricular and extra-curricular approaches including teaching peace studies curricula, implementing conflict management programs, and facilitating intergroup contact.

Peace studies curricula. As an academic field, peace studies provides opportunities for students to learn about the causes of conflict, violence, and war, about particular conflict situations, and about alternative institutions and procedures for resolving interpersonal, intergroup, or interstate disputes. Inherently interdisciplinary in nature, peace studies may employ psychological or anthropological perspectives to investigate questions related to the a) the tendency to differentiate and devalue others, b) the role of played by authority, bystanders, and basic human needs in instigating or perpetuating violence, c) distinguishing between constructive and destructive means for dealing with conflict d) and the processes available for healing past wounds and dealing with personal or historical trauma (Staub, 2002). Additionally, historical or international

relations perspectives may be utilized to provide a counter-balance to the traditional emphasis upon war and violence (Boulding, 2000) by enhancing students' understanding of the philosophy and practice of non-violence as well as of the role of international or cooperative institutions and processes in averting, containing, or ending violence. Such an approach often incorporates courses, units, or lessons on such topics as human rights, sustainable development, ecology, non-violence, and restorative justice (Harris & Morrison, 2003).

Because it seeks to disrupt students' taken-for-granted assumptions regarding the inevitability of war and violence, peace studies employs an inherently critical pedagogy. Regarding an unquestioning conformity to authority as a leading contributor to violence (Arendt, 1968), peace educators seek to foster students' critical capacity and strengthen their commitment to resist unjust or dehumanizing dogmas and demands (Shapiro, 2002). Further, by calling attention to events, perspectives, and possibilities often neglected within mainstream histories, peace studies aims to counter the implicit suggestion that violence and war are instinctual outgrowths of human nature and inevitable outcomes of historical conflicts. Trained to acknowledge the indeterminacy of social phenomena, students become capable of questioning current assumptions, imagining alternative explanations and possibilities, and engaging in social action aimed at transforming rather than replicating current conditions.

Conflict management programs. Because students learn by what they experience as well as by what they are told, peace education concerned with building peaceful attitudes and relations among students must attend to the physical and emotional

environments in which students live and learn. Accordingly, curricular approaches to learning about the problems of war and violence are severely limited unless accompanied by efforts to provide safe and secure learning environments, to teach conflict resolution skills, and to model democratic relations. In order to provide safe and secure learning environments, violence prevention programs employ strict discipline and codes of conduct to control and punish violent behavior, teasing, harassment, and bullying (Bickmore, 2004). But while such measures may deter violent episodes, research evidence reveals the extent to which they are increasingly beset by racial, class, and gender biases (Gay, 2000). Additionally, they largely fail to address the social exclusions and inequities that engender frustrations and resentments that often lead to violence. A conflict management approach attempts to strengthen students' capacity to deal with these underlying factors by teaching anger management, problem-solving, and communication skills or by employing peer mediation initiatives to facilitate collaborative decision-making in the face of conflicting needs or desires (Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Bickmore (2004) and Reardon (1988) suggest that how teachers and schools model democratic relations will have a direct bearing upon the extent to which students internalize peaceful norms and roles. Arguing that the core values of schooling should be care, concern, and commitment, Reardon suggests that these values are reflected in the degree to which teachers and administrators model humane relationships, provide opportunities for democratic governance, and afford equitable treatment in the administration of discipline and the provision of opportunities for recognition and

success. Classroom practice reflects such values when teachers and students demonstrate moral sensitivity, practice democratic community, engage in cooperative learning, and promote self-esteem and critical thinking (Harris & Morrison, 2003). Thus, irrespective of the formal curriculum being taught, peace education will be either promoted or impeded by “the actual, regularized practice of norms, roles, relationships, and processes [employed by schools] in the management of diversity and conflict” (Bickmore, 2004, p. 8).

Intergroup contact. A third strand of peace education often closely resembles a conflict management approach in practice and yet remains conceptually distinct in terms of purpose. Where conflict management programs aim to build individuals’ capacity to respond creatively and non-violently to situations of conflict, intergroup contact seeks to transform negative attitudes and relations among individuals belonging to different social, ethnic, or racial groups. Such an approach attempts to facilitate constructive interactions between participants in order to reduce misperceptions, suspicion, or animosity directed against those belonging to another group.

Building upon Allport’s (1954) seminal work, intergroup relations theory suggests a number of strategies through which such an outcome might be accomplished. First, by constructing opportunities for students to interact and develop common experiences, interests, or concerns, students may be encouraged to regard one another as members of a single, more inclusive in-group. Second, by drawing attention to common characteristics between members of different groups, students may come to define their interactions in interpersonal rather than inter-group terms and group boundaries may begin to dissipate

(Dovidio et al, 1998). Pettigrew (1998) combines both approaches to suggest an “optimal contact sequence” in which students are first provided opportunities to develop relationships and regard one another as individuals, then encouraged to acknowledge their group memberships so as to recognize their commonalities, and finally to develop a more inclusive group identity through pursuing joint goals and experiences.

Investigating a series of contact programs between Jewish and Arab students in Israel, Maoz (2002) suggests that the various approaches suggested by intergroup theorists reflect not only different methods but also fundamental ambiguities in how peace education is conceived and implemented. On the one hand, coexistence models aim to foster tolerance and reduce stereotypes among individuals by stressing the similarities between participants and helping them get to know one another as individuals. Confrontational models, meanwhile, attempt to deconstruct and transform participants’ polarized identities by addressing the conflicts and asymmetries existing between them by virtue of their group memberships. Rather than assuming that conflicts emerge from a lack of accurate information about members of another group and can, therefore, be corrected through encouraging contact and empathy, confrontational models assume that there is “a basis in reality for the conflict” (Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004, p. 374) resulting from concrete differences in goals and interests among groups. Although such differences are grounded in political and economic processes that cannot be solved through intergroup contact, by confronting those differences participants may increase their awareness of the complexity of those realities and thus prove less susceptible to misperceptions, deliberate distortions, and false promises.

While he finds evidence of programs employing this confrontational approach in practice, Maoz (2002) argues that the “scientific literature” has largely appropriated intergroup relations theories pertinent to the coexistence model and, as a result, “theory lags after practice” (p. 262) concerning the means and effectiveness by which confrontation promotes outcomes conducive to peace education. In particular, a greater understanding is needed regarding how the interpersonal and intergroup dimensions of a confrontational process interact to either promote or impede meaningful communication among participants.

In summary, peace education recognizes that conflict is a recurrent and legitimate facet of human social life and seeks to promote the development of cognitive, behavioral, and relational resources whereby students may learn to engage with conflicts creatively and non-violently. Whether through curricular, conflict management, or intergroup contact approaches, peace educators attempt to enhance students’ understanding of the causes and alternatives to violence and to foster their commitment to non-violence as well as their capacity to critique current conditions and imagine more peaceful futures. In addition, they aim to cultivate students’ communicative, anger management, and problem solving skills and to foster both institutional and interpersonal climates characterized by norms of civility, collaboration, and mutual respect. Finally, they strive to transform negative attitudes and relations by promoting a de-essentialized conception of group membership in which students are capable of perceiving and respecting both the similarities and differences between themselves and others.

Particularly where contact between members of historically antagonized groups is involved, peace educators face a choice concerning the relative emphasis to be placed upon nurturing interpersonal relationships in hopes of fostering peaceful coexistence and encouraging students to confront their differences in order to transform their understanding of the bases for their disagreements. In the following section, I review the literature on intergroup dialogue in order to explore how the process of confronting conflicting perspectives may promote the outcomes to which peace educators aspire.

Intergroup Dialogue

At its most basic, intergroup dialogue involves an “opportunity for serious engagement with people from various social identity groups” (Schoem, 2003, p. 220) through conducting face-to-face discussions regarding matters of common concern. At its most elevated, such dialogue serves as both a microcosm of pluralistic society and a model of and training for the highest aspirations of democratic community. Several qualifications, however, are necessary in order to clarify the requirements of the phrase “serious engagement” and to distinguish it from casual conversations among diverse individuals. As shall be seen, intergroup dialogues are distinct in terms of their content, process, and the outcomes to which they aspire.

The intergroup nature of a dialogue emerges not only from the diverse composition of participants but also from their attention to questions, issues, and concerns arising from the relationships between the groups to which they belong. As Schoem et al (2001) explain, “a definitive feature of intergroup dialogue is its occurrence

among people who are trying to see and speak of themselves as members of their groups rather than as sole individuals” (p. 11). Whether discussing current or past occasions of exclusion, social inequalities, or violent or otherwise hurtful episodes, participants are, by virtue of their belonging to different social identity groups, able to share different experiences and perspectives concerning the issues that precipitated the occasion for dialogue. This is not to suggest that the uniqueness of individuals’ experiences is denied, but that, by analyzing the similarities and differences in what is shared by group members, it becomes possible to recognize how group membership both shapes and constrains the experiences of individuals. In so doing, the focus of attention during a dialogue naturally shifts from the sharing of personal stories to an examination of collective realities and conflicts.

Because they raise potentially divisive issues, intergroup dialogues must constantly negotiate between the coexistence and confrontational poles of the intergroup contact spectrum discussed previously. Concerned with building and maintaining group cohesion, it is necessary for dialogues to proceed in a just and democratic fashion. This requires that the equal status of all participants be strictly protected through the observance of groundrules affording all an equal opportunity to speak, listen, and question one another. Equally important, space must be created in which for participants to express feelings of fear, frustration, and anger (Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004; Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004) in the face of continuing states of oppression and injustice towards which other participants appear either oblivious or indifferent. In this fashion, initial efforts to foster trust and empathy between participants act not only as means for

nurturing interpersonal relationships but also as a bridge for enabling participants to confront difficult issues concerning the political, economic, and social relations between groups.

Through facilitating communication about difficult issues, intergroup dialogues aim to both deepen participants' understanding of particular issues and also build a more inclusive sense of shared community. An open exchange of information presented from different perspectives enhances the prospects that stereotypes and misinformation will be detected and countered. So, too, it exposes participants to information beyond their own personal experiences and provides insight into the differences within as well as between groups. By addressing issues on both a personal and social level, participants are helped to recognize the ways in which their own experience has been shaped by their group memberships as well as the role of power differentials and structural inequities in shaping collective experiences and perceptions.

An empirical view. To what extent do such outcomes ensue in practice? Recent research on intergroup dialogues within educational settings both within and outside the United States provides an opportunity to assess the effectiveness of such efforts in generating an increased understanding of and commitment to democratic community. A review of this literature, including programs operating at the middle school, high school, and collegiate levels, indicates that engaging diverse groups of students in discussing questions of social and cultural identity promotes cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes.

Investigating the effects of intergroup dialogues among middle and high school students, McKenna & Saucedo (2001) reported that students participating in conversations about race one class period a week for eight consecutive weeks indicated a greater awareness of diversity and recognition of the benefits of non-violent conflict resolution as well as interracial respect and tolerance. Other studies document that students participating in intergroup dialogues reveal increased knowledge about social or cultural groups other than their own and about the presence and effects of racial discrimination (Gurin et al, 1999). Among college students, such discussions prompted increased knowledge about the perspectives and experiences of other social groups, an awareness of social inequalities, and an acknowledgement of the importance of social group membership upon an individual's personal identity (Nagda et al, 1999). At the level of affective change, students participating in dialogues with members of other social and cultural groups demonstrated a reduced level of anxiety when dealing with questions of diversity as well as an increased level of tolerance (Hurtado, 2001) and willingness to consider multiple perspectives (Lopez et al, 1998). Further, Fernandez's (2001) survey of middle school students participating in school based retreats focusing on promoting intergroup relations at their school revealed an increased willingness to make friends with diverse groups of students.

Reporting on the effects of a program in which middle and high school students were trained to lead peer workshops on diversity within their schools, Tiven (2001) reports that these students developed increased communication skills as well as heightened confidence in their ability to effect social change. Though these results can

be interpreted as resulting from their leadership role rather than their participation in the dialogues themselves, a common characteristic within such programs was an emphasis upon exploring and developing the leadership potential of all participants to take personal action in response to the issues raised during the dialogue (Adair & Howell, 1997). Such an increased commitment to take action to address perceived social injustices has also been reported among college students participating in intergroup dialogues (Thompson et al, 2001; Nagda et al, 1999). Findings further indicate that the understandings and commitments fostered by participation in intergroup dialogues include a critical dimension that encompasses both social structures and personal beliefs. This critical capacity is reflected in such outcomes as an increased acknowledgment of the structural factors associated with existing inequalities (Thompson et al, 2001) and the heightened willingness of students to challenge their own beliefs (Pascarella et al, 1996) and critically reflect upon complex social issues (Tiven, 2001).

Taking context into consideration. Though the programs reported on above span the range of grade levels from middle school through university and may thus encompass developmental differences among students, they all occur within a social and historical context particular to the United States. Because, however, existing power relations, current attitudes, and historical understandings all impact how participants interpret and relate to one another, the goals, methods, and effectiveness of intergroup dialogues will be highly sensitive to the broader contexts in which they are set (Salomon, 2002). In particular, where grave inequalities exist between the groups to which participants belong and where shared memories add a painful, historical dimension to the conflicts being

addressed, both the prospects for and definition of successful dialogue will be severely curtailed. Because equal status is considered a foundational requirement for dialogue, marked inequalities outside the setting of dialogue may controvert any pretence of equality within it. So, too, the depth of emotion with which historical conflicts are infused may lead facilitators to de-emphasize the group dimension of a dialogue and instead concentrate upon orchestrating interpersonal interactions and building positive relationships among participants present in the room.

Maoz (2002) suggests that this is, in fact, the case. Investigating forty-seven programs facilitating dialogue between Jewish and Arab students in Israel, he found that program organizers were over four times more likely to stress helping students get to know one another as individuals than to encourage them to confront historical, political, and economic relations between the Jewish and Arab populations. But while such an approach may prove expeditious in terms of promoting the basic functioning and continued survival of the program, Halabi & Sonnenschein (2004) argue that it is misguided and largely ineffectual. Discussing their own long-term association with the School for Peace in Israel, they report having gradually come to recognize the frustration and dissatisfaction engendered by their efforts to encourage students to think of and address one another as individuals. Particularly among those who regarded themselves victims of oppressive social relations, this focus upon interpersonal relationships was viewed as artificial or, worse, as a disingenuous attempt to “sweep problems under the rug and preserve existing inequalities” (p. 60). Because the root causes of the conflict were perceived by these participants and, eventually, the facilitators, as issuing from

differences between national groups rather than individuals, so too must efforts to improve their relations. Accordingly, over the course of several years, school personnel reexamined their approach and redirected their efforts to help participants analyze their collective identities and address the social, historical, and political dimensions of the conflict.

In a context of intractable conflict, aspiring to a state of non-violent coexistence is certainly a worthwhile goal, particularly when compared to the all too frequent alternative of open hostility. However, trust, empathy, and friendship developed on an interpersonal level may prove tenuous when social or political events cause group identifications to reassert themselves. Particularly at times of crisis, the erstwhile accomplishments of coexistence programs are apt to “collapse in light of new political reality” (Halabi & Sonnenschein, 2004, p. 373). Recalling that peace education aims not to avert conflicts but to enhance students’ ability and commitment to resolve them non-violently, it is precisely at such moments that the measure of its effectiveness becomes apparent. Even within contexts where group conflicts are less apt to erupt into open violence, high levels of political cynicism, social alienation, and economic disparity indicate the fragility of democracy (Schoem, 2003; West, 1994) when citizens prove unwilling or incapable of confronting persistent divisions, exclusions, inequities, and unresolved tensions. Intergroup dialogues that foster personal outcomes which fail to sustain in times of conflict do little to prepare students for the challenges and possibilities of citizenship within pluralistic societies. Of course, just what these challenges and possibilities are, as well as what knowledge, skills, and dispositions help prepare citizens

to meet them, is subject to multiple interpretations. The following section reviews literature in the fields of political philosophy and citizenship education in order to identify capacities conducive to democratic citizenship within pluralistic societies and explore how these capacities may be fostered through education.

Educating Citizens in Diverse Societies

Philosophers and educators have long argued that how a society conceives of the roles and responsibilities of citizenship will have a direct bearing on the nature of education it provides and the type of citizenry it produces. In ancient Athens, Socrates' controversial proposition that students should be taught to question conventional beliefs and practices was rooted in his assumption that, whereas an aristocracy may prosper with citizens conditioned to adhere to established authority, a democracy requires citizens capable of critical self-examination, distinguishing good arguments from bad, and engaging in deliberative judgment about the overall good (Nussbaum, 1997). While the relative merits of educating for democracy versus aristocracy may lack contemporary resonance, current debates continue to revolve around the substance and form of education most conducive to preparing students capable of assuming the mantle of citizenship within a democracy: What political and historical knowledge should inform students' civic engagement? Should students be engaged in deliberation, self-governance, and political action whether in or outside the classroom? To what extent should students be taught to revere or critique existing practices and institutions (Gagnon, 1996; Patrick, 1999; Saxe, 2003)? Though the various positions assumed by educators

regarding such issues carry important consequences for how teaching and learning takes place within the classroom, these differences are not rooted in purely pedagogical assumptions. Rather, just as Socrates' novel approach to education was premised upon a revised notion of what traits were desirable in citizens of a democracy, so, too, are today's controversies grounded in competing conceptions concerning the nature of democratic citizenship itself.

Deconstructing democratic citizenship. Building upon the western Classical and Enlightenment traditions, political discourse within the United States has historically been dominated by two competing characterizations of democratic citizenship. These traditions, referred to here as classical/liberal and communitarian/republican, are premised upon differing understandings of the nature of the individual, community, and political action. According to the classical/liberal view, the individual exists as a solitary subject possessing an inherent right to pursue her own private interests, values, and beliefs (Carter & Stokes, 1998). Because their self-interest may conflict with those of others, individuals make the rational decision to cede certain of their liberties in order to create a government better equipped to ensure a maximal degree of freedom and protection of property. While political authority exists to protect individual interests, however, classical liberalism remains deeply suspicious of the ability of individuals to exercise political power for anything beyond their personal gain. As a result, only minimal demands for political action are expected of the individual citizen, principally the obligation to vote for elected officials and abide by legitimately enacted laws. With these public obligations fulfilled, citizens are free to seek their individual happiness and

fulfillment in the private sphere while relying upon institutionalized factors such as the rule of law and a system of checks and balances to limit possible excesses of government power.

By contrast, the communitarian/republican tradition views the individual as a less atomistic, more social entity for whom it is natural to associate and form common bonds of affect and interest. As such, no rigid distinction between public and private spheres exists and citizenship consists of actively pursuing the common good of the community. Far from ceding political responsibility to elected representatives, it is through participating in public life, what Arendt (1958) terms authentic political activity, that individuals learn to transcend their narrow self interest, discern the common good, and reach their fullest human potential. Furthermore, a vigilant public actively engaged in difficult political activities (Niemi & Junn, 1998) ranging from attending public meeting to taking part in campaigns, is viewed as the most effective check on the potential abuse of governmental power.

A second point of departure between the liberal and republican conceptions of democracy lies in whether citizenship is primarily treated as a status or as a role. From a classical/liberal perspective, individuals within a polity can be regarded as a repository or bearer of certain legal rights (Cater & Stokes, 1998), rights to which they are accorded by virtue of their status as citizens. Marshall (1964) provides a system for classifying such rights as either civil, political, or social depending upon the types of benefits they confer upon the individual. Civil rights specify the legal protections afforded citizens within a democracy (such as freedom of speech, religion, assembly, and so on) and presumably

place them upon equal footing before the law. Political rights enable citizens to participate in the process of collective self-governance, though the manner and extent of their participation will vary according to how they are able to influence the decision making process through voting, lobbying, and collective action. Finally, social rights enable citizens to gain access to societal resources through access to health care, education, redistributive policies, or even state sanctioned employment. Building from Marshall's framework, both Turner (1997) and Benhabib (2002) further suggest that citizenship may also serve as a source of collective identity for either individuals or groups. Particularly in pluralistic settings where ethnic, cultural, or linguistic similarities fail to provide a common source of identity for all members of a society, the status of citizen can serve as a claim to membership within the imagined community (Anderson, 1983) that unites diverse groups within a single collectivity.

It is significant that the civil, political, and social rights discussed above are conferred upon individuals by political institutions and processes: civil rights may be codified in a constitution or elsewhere in the law, political or social rights may be extended or restricted by legislative action. In each case, the individual is the recipient of rights granted them by virtue of their status as citizen. Of course, citizens may also act to lay claim to such rights by exerting influence over those systems through which these rights are granted. Mouffe (1992) suggests that it is through asserting their status as citizens, and thereby gaining inclusion within the democratic promise of civic equality and popular sovereignty, that individuals and groups have historically been able to gain access to rights previously denied to them. When citizens act in such a way, a more

active dimension of citizenship becomes apparent. Seen in this light, citizenship is not simply a status determined and conferred at a structural level but is also shaped by the actions of citizens themselves. That is to say, the very meaning of citizenship is, at least in part, being constantly constructed as individuals and groups choose how to define and exercise the role of citizen.

Ichilov (1990) deconstructs the role dimensions of citizenship by mapping the various perceptions, attitudes, and commitments that affect how individuals understand and exercise their role as citizen. According to Ichilov, citizenship can be construed as a passive or an active role, requiring either verbal support or actual behavior in support of principles, and those commitments can be either affectively or cognitively inspired. In addition, civic participation may be voluntary and internally motivated or regarded as compulsory, the substance of participation may be to express either consent or dissent, take the form of conventional or unconventional means, and occur in either the political or social spheres. Finally, relationships with fellow citizens understood as either instrumental or as valuable in and of themselves, and the object of one's loyalties and commitments may be particularistic and bounded by ethnic or territorial divisions or based on universalistic principles.

Such a framework is perhaps overly dichotomous in that it obscures the possibility that while some political commitments may be affective, others may be cognitive and many are likely both, as well as the likelihood of interrelationships between the various dimensions described (some theorists, for example suggest that an inverse relationship exists between the degree of universality of commitments and the strength of

our affective attachments to them (Barber, 1996)). Despite these shortcomings, it clearly conveys the fluid and constructed nature of citizenship, revealing that “many aspects of citizenship are voluntary and based on self-selection rather than being rigidly structured and defined” (Ichilov, 1990, p. 13). In so doing, it provides conceptual means for exposing and moving beyond the limitations of the liberal-republican conceptualizations of democratic citizenship.

Difference and democracy. If citizenship is not fully determined by impersonal social structures, then the beliefs, commitments, and experiences of individuals matter, not only in shaping the possible ends of political action but in how the very role of citizen is conceived and enacted. This recognition is reflected in the growing attention given to questions of identity within contemporary discussions of democratic political philosophy (Behnabib, 2002; Gutmann, 2003; Honig, 2001; Kymlica, 2000; Nussbaum, 1996). It is in part spurred by what Banks (2004) calls a demographic imperative driven by increasing racial and ethnic diversity within democratic societies and the increasing flow of citizens across national boundaries. Within the United States, for example, Takaki (1993) suggests that ethnic minority groups are growing at far greater rates than majority population to the effect that minority groups will comprise a majority of the population within a matter of decades. Simultaneously, Castles (2004) reports that technological and economic globalization has contributed to the formation of transnational communities that contradict traditional conceptions of citizenship as a territorially bounded membership by “undermining the idea of the person who belongs to just one nation-state”

(p. 27). In each case, these demographic trends challenge the presumed bases for national unity that have historically undergirded traditional notions of citizenship.

Challenges to a unitary conception of citizenship stem not only from changes in the demographic composition of national populations but also arise from how citizens choose to identify as members of the political community. Belying the classical/liberal conception of the individual as an atomistic entity, democratic theorists have increasingly recognized the proclivity of individuals to identify with others based upon ethnic, racial, religious, or other perceived commonalities to the extent that many now understand community as constitutive of identity (Mouffe, 1992). What is more, because membership within collectivities afford members of group a range of political and social benefits, ranging from enhancing the efficacy of political action to providing a source of mutual support, Gutmann (2003) argues that we should regard the formation of identity groups as an “inevitable byproduct of according citizens the right to freedom of association” (p. 4). According to Benhabib (2002), the formation of such identity groups are inspired in part by struggles to “negate their status of otherness” (p. 8) and therefore comprise an important strategy by which individuals and groups may gain access to the rights afforded citizens within the democratic polity. Young (1990) suggests that such claims for recognition may aim at a broad spectrum of political outcomes, ranging from increased inclusion within the political process to demands for self-determination or outright independence.

Taken in concert with the aforementioned demographic trends, some theorists view the existence of identity commitments on bases other than that of national

citizenship as a threat to the sustained health of democracy. Because democracies rely upon the voluntary participation of citizens in collective problem solving and decision-making, some degree of shared sense of moral responsibility is essential for the collective well-being (Ichilov, 1998). When identity is construed as a zero-sum game, any increase in the salience of group based characteristics such as ethnicity is assumed to detract from the strength of commitment to other identities such as that of citizen. In such a view, recognizing group differences as legitimate sources of political identity fosters fear, competition, and antagonism between groups and diminishes “national unity and rightful patriotism” (Saxe, 2003, p. 108). Particularly where democratic civic identity is considered a fulfillment of universalistic values such freedom and equality, any departures from or challenges to that identity will be regarded with apprehension and viewed as a retreat from the achievements of modernity (Barber, 1995).

Current understandings of identity as multiple and fluid suggest that this characterization is inadequate. Because every individual holds multiple and even competing identities (whether ethnic, political, professional, religious, or so on), our understanding of citizenship and national unity must recognize that tensions, ambiguities, and conflicts reside within as well as between individuals and groups. As Mouffe (1992) explains, we must learn to “conceive of the social agent not as a unitary subject but as the articulation of an ensemble of subject positions... and requires abandoning the reductionism and essentialism dominant in liberal interpretations of pluralism and acknowledging the contingency and ambiguity of every identity” (p. 10). Where identity is considered contingent and ambiguous, tensions and conflicts will never be fully or

finally resolved but will, instead, comprise a continuous feature of both individual and political life. So, too, in a political community, pluralism is not so much a demographic fact to be accommodated nor a threat to be countered but a persistent condition of struggle to clarify and expand access to democratic principles such as freedom and equality. What is needed, therefore, are mechanisms not for dissolving the very real differences that exist within as well as between us but for learning to live peacefully and productively with the tensions that such differences evoke. As Guarasci & Cornwell (1997) assert, what is needed is “a wholly different ideal of the democratic community in which both difference and connection can be held together yet understood to be at times necessarily separate, paradoxical, and in contradiction to one another” (p. 3).

What would such a “wholly different ideal of the democratic community” entail? What skills, commitments, and behaviors would it require of its citizens? Given the realities of a diverse citizenry and the multiplicity of identity, Guarasci & Cornwell (1997) argue that presumed commonalities (whether in terms of shared background or inherited values) can no longer be regarded as the basis of forging a common political community. Rather, building upon Dewey’s (1916) depiction of democracy as “a mode of associated living” in which individuals “break down the barriers of class, race, and national territory” (p. 101) by actively participating with one another in discovering and creating areas of shared concern, they suggest that new bases of commonality must be actively constructed through constant negotiation and shared experience. This negotiation, made necessary by virtue of the contradictions and ambiguities that exist within and between the array of values, identities, and commitments present within the

democratic community, occurs through “dialogue, communication, and social experience” (Guarasci & Cornwell, 1997, p. 19).

Gutmann & Thompson’s (1996) model of deliberative democracy provides both a compelling justification and a procedural guide for how such a process may transpire in such a way that a diverse citizenry develops shared experience and expertise through engaging in joint dialogue about matters of common concern. This process, they argue, must be governed by a principle of reciprocity in which all parties attempt to “seek fair terms of social cooperation” (p. 53) and find “mutually acceptable ways of resolving moral disagreements” (p. 2). Where citizens advance their own positions in mutually justifiable terms and grant the reasonableness and moral standing of others’ objections and counter-positions, and attempt to reach mutually acceptable outcomes, they both increase the likelihood that outcomes will reflect the common good and also develop a sense of civility and shared community that promote the fair resolution of future disagreements. A unique advantage of this deliberative conception of democracy, over and above both the liberal and republican models, is that it nurtures the very skills and commitments Gutmann (1999) considers vital to democratic citizenship: the “capacities for criticism, rational argument, and decision making that come from being taught how to think logically, to argue coherently and fairly, and to consider relevant alternatives before coming to a conclusion” (p. 50). Conversely, when citizens abdicate responsibility for resolving disagreements to public officials, they “lose a vital part of the training in responsibility and self-control that citizenship should bring” (Macedo, 1999, p. 3).

This model of deliberative democracy is well suited to respond to the disagreements that will invariably arise in pluralistic societies as a result differences in values, interests, and commitments between individuals and groups. By acknowledging the presence of questions about which it is both reasonable and morally justifiable for citizens to hold different positions, they are able to treat the persistence of moral disagreement as a condition of democratic public life rather than a threat to it. However, Petit (1999) calls attention to the danger that even decisions that have been formulated through such a process of democratic deliberation may still have undemocratic outcomes. Gutmann & Thompson (1996) argue that democratic deliberation enhances the legitimacy of public decisions because even those individuals and groups that may disagree with an eventual decision can feel that their interests and arguments have been afforded fair and equal consideration. Such legitimacy, however, is seriously compromised if the same groups find that decisions continuously fail to support their preferred outcome. In such instances, even though the appearance of procedural fairness remains, the deliberative process may still contribute to the effective marginalization and domination of certain groups. To guard against such a possibility, more than equal access to participate in the decision making process is needed. What is required is the right and ability to contest and possibly reverse deliberatively arrived at decisions. Petit (1999) offers a number of mechanisms by which such contestatory democracy may proceed, ranging from outright veto power to the ability to instigate reviews of collective decisions by bodies with different compositions and incentives than those who arrived at the original decision.

A further limitation of deliberative democracy lies in its requirement that all parties recognize each other's moral standing and seek, therefore, to advance mutually acceptable reasons and outcomes. Benhabib (2002) suggests that this acknowledgement of equal moral standing is, at times, precisely what is at issue within pluralistic societies. For individuals or groups seeking to gain inclusion within the democratic community, their struggles amount to an effort to "negate their status of otherness" (p. 8) through which they are denied access to the status and privileges of equal citizenship. This line of argument is reflected in Mouffe's (1992) assertion that the extension of democratic rights has usually been achieved either through new groups claiming access to existing rights or by insisting that presumably hierarchical relations (such as race or gender) be subject to equal rights. Each of these strategies entail an effective "reconstitution of the boundaries of the polity through a recognition of the claims of those whose suffering and exclusion have been constitutive of the seemingly unitary identity of the "we" who constitutes the polity" (Benhabib, 2002, p. 70).

Such reconstitution can only take place where existing assumptions and practices regarding the meaning and extent of democratic rights and political community are subjected to public debate. It is the critical nature of this dialogue that distinguishes it from the deliberative democracy depicted by Gutmann & Thompson (1996). Speaking to this, Mouffe (1992) calls for a "radicalization of the modern democratic tradition" to be achieved "through an immanent critique, by employing the symbolic resources of that very tradition" (p. 1). For Mouffe, these "symbolic resources" include the democratic commitment to such values as equality, freedom, and pluralism, and they comprise both

the content and the means of critique. By exposing and exploring the tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions inherent within as well as between these values, democracies create the possibility for clarifying, advancing, and extending the rights of all citizens and also for fostering radical citizenship as a form of political identity in which citizens form a common attachment to and identification with the persistent struggle to achieve those values in practice. Within this conception of citizenship, conflict, contestation, and struggle are no longer sources of threat to the political community but vital resources through which “future collectivities [continuously] reconstitute themselves through the democratic re-signification of their cultural legacies in which all those affected can participate” (Benhabib, 2002, p. 188).

Implications for citizenship education. This discussion has, thus far, centered on exploring the nature of citizenship in democratic, pluralistic societies. It has been argued that neither the classical/liberal nor the communitarian/republican conceptions of citizenship adequately address the complexities of difference and identity within a democracy. Because it principally conceives of the individual as the bearer of legal rights, the liberal tradition fails to address the role of citizens as interacting with issues of identity and difference and instead portrays such questions as structural matters determined by political institutions and processes. The republican tradition allows for greater participation of citizens in forging the political community through their interaction with those who differ, though, by continuing to portray the individual as a unitary subject, it fails to adequately address the challenges experienced by citizens confronted with contradictions and ambiguities arising from holding multiple and, at

times, competing identities, values, and commitments. Within a pluralistic society composed of individuals with multiple identities and committed to ideals that are sometimes in tension, democratic citizenship requires a willingness and ability to engage with both internal and external conflicts. It requires that citizens develop the skills and dispositions necessary to peacefully and constructively engage in deliberative disagreements with those whose experiences, interests, and values differ from their own. Further, it requires the courage to acknowledge where current practices fall short of stated ideals and to accept that tensions and ambiguities are constitutive of democratic public life and never to be finally and fully resolved. How might these skills, abilities, and dispositions be cultivated? More specifically, given the role of education as a vehicle for conscious social reproduction (Gutmann, 1999) how can schools help prepare citizens capable of engaging in both deliberative disagreement and critical reflection?

To begin with, Gutmann (2004) suggests that education should “both express and develop” (p. 71) the capacities required for citizenship. Rather than merely learning “about” or “preparing for” citizenship as though for a “remote and distant future” (Dewey, 1916, p. 93), students should be exposed to the same conditions and engaged in the same activities as citizens. This implies that, where conflict is considered to be an inherent facet of democratic life, students should be provided structured opportunities to experience conflicts within the classroom setting.

Hahn (1996) identifies two avenues through which this may take place: by way of controversial content that confronts students with competing interpretations of matters they consider significant, or through conflictual pedagogy in which teachers and students

question and challenge one another's claims and perspectives. When these occur within a classroom climate characterized by mutual trust and respect, students engage in many of the behaviors required for democratic citizenship. Deliberating about questions that are of real and immediate concern, students seek to first understand and then evaluate a variety of claims and proposed solutions (Schoem, 1997). Where diverse perspectives are fairly represented and equally privileged, they encounter the prospect that both problems and solutions may differently impact those occupying different social or cultural positions and that there exist reasonable bases for moral disagreement (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996). Sharing information about their own experiences (Hurtado, 2001), students encounter the limits of their own perspectives (Giroux, 1988) through being exposed to claims and judgments beyond those associated with their own social position and personal experiences (Parker, 2003). In this way, student deliberations may foster a deeper understanding of the differences that exist between groups as well as a better appreciation of the reasons why some disagreements may remain unresolved. Throughout such processes, opportunities and incentives exist for students to practice patience, listening attentively, disagreeing respectfully, tolerating dissent, and basing arguments upon appeals to justice and the common good rather than self-interest (Burbules & Rice, 1991; Hess, 1998; Young, 1996).

As has been argued previously, each of these traits is highly desirable in pluralistic, democratic societies. It has also been suggested, however, that conflicts exist not only between groups but also within and among individuals' own identities and commitments. Thus, for education to both express and develop the capacities of

democratic citizenship, students must not only engage in deliberating about their differences but also in exploring the tensions, ambiguities, and contradictions embedded within their own claims and assumptions.

Far from inviting students to explore these tensions, however, Cherryholmes (1980) suggests that much educational practice serves to deny the very legitimacy of doing so. Where curriculum is regarded as an existing body of knowledge to be transmitted from teacher to student, claims about the social world that are embedded within that curriculum take on the “false appearance of certainty and objectivity” (p. 137). Because such claims are assumed to either correspond with empirical reality or to be historically and culturally validated, students are subtly conditioned to accept that truth is unitary and taught to reject the ambiguous as meaningless or unacceptable (Bateson, 1994). Confronted with such a prospect, Cherryholmes (1980) argues in favor of the need for a critical dimension to citizenship education based upon a “well-articulated, philosophically grounded methodology that allows individuals to gain a critical perspectives on solutions for which they and others strive” (p. 136). Such a methodology would focus upon countering the positivistic assumptions regarding truth and knowledge reflected in traditional educational practice by calling attention to “the complex relations between facts and values, knowledge and interests, and social phenomenon and ideology” (p. 136).

What would such an approach entail within the classroom? One example is provided by Parker’s (2004) calls for a metacognitive approach to studying history that focuses upon “teaching students that historical narratives are constructions written by

historically situated humans engaged in representation and interpretation” (p. 436). By analyzing the biographies and decision-making processes of those historians involved in constructing received historical accounts presented within the curriculum, students can be made aware of the connection between the values, purposes, and interests of those researchers and the knowledge that they produced. Beyond an emphasis upon historiography, Goncaleves e Silva (2004) suggests that choosing to focus upon certain substantive issues within the study of history may also help foster a critical awareness of the complex interrelationships of power, knowledge, and citizenship. In particular, learning about the struggles of indigenous peoples for citizenship rights can help draw attention to the ways in which denigrating stereotypes are propagated and reinforced, how socially significant constructs such as race are constructed and vested with power, and how purely institutional means of redress (such as the abolition of slavery) are inadequate to ensure the promise of equal citizenship. Emphasizing such subject matters within the study of history may help all students recognize that “the struggle for rights does not pertain only to those confronted with obstacles to enjoying these rights but that these are problems that affect all people, and all of society should become involved in resolving them” (p. 197).

Parker (2004) describes a range of curricular subject matters that might prove capable of fostering a more critical and inclusive understanding of both diversity and democracy. Comparative constitutional, ethnic, and poverty studies counter the positivistic insistence that knowledge and truth are unitary by emphasizing the multiplicity of ways in which different societies conceive and manifest ostensibly similar

dimensions of social and political life. Because they acquaint students with alternative ways of defining the political community, such curricula help students recognize that ethnic boundaries and political institutions are socially constructed rather than naturally occurring. Further, they facilitate critique by engaging students in “comparing competing discourses about the meaning of democracy” (p. 446), about who “we” are as a people, and about how different groups can “live together with our differences” (p. 447).

From the perspective of discourse analysis, it is by functioning as secondary discourses that the alternate conceptualizations of democracy and inclusion made available through a comparative studies approach enable students to critique those espoused by their own society or by themselves personally. According to Gee (1990), discourses are “socially acceptable associations among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting” (p. 143) that enable individuals to identify and function effectively as members of a social group. Primary discourses are those that students acquire through their early socialization into the family and provide them with a coherent, normative account of how the world is and ought to be. In contrast to this early-formed, largely subconscious “world view,” secondary discourses develop through a person’s engagement in diverse social institutions and networks (such as school, clubs, peer groups, etc.) which require new and different ways of acting in and making sense of the world. Any individual may thus have access to multiple secondary discourses, each of which may stand either be consistent or contrast with their primary discourse. Further, as individuals develop powerful literacy (Gee, 1992) within a discourse, they are able not

only to use it to function effectively within a particular social setting, but to identify the values and assumptions undergirding that discourse and, finally, to critique and choose among possible alternative discourses.

Applied to the case of a comparative studies curricula, we see how, as students gain a deeper understanding of the alternative conceptualizations of democracy to which they are exposed, this understanding can be used to expose the taken for granted assumptions about democracy and difference embedded within a students' primary discourse. Developing such a "powerful" understanding of democracy is not simply an intellectual accomplishment but an essential capacity of citizenship which Arthur et al. (2000) term criticality—an ability "to question, critique, and debate the workings and processes of society" and "to envision and propose alternative models of the structures and processes of democracy" (p. 27).

Of course, comparative studies are not the only curricular vehicle for fostering this critical capacity. Alternative discourses may be leveraged to critique other secondary as well as primary discourses. Banks (1996) draws attention to the prevalence of "dominant canons, paradigms, and theories that are accepted by the community of mainstream academic scholars and researchers" (p. 14) and embedded within the school curriculum. Confronted with such an uncritical transmission of meta-narratives such as the belief in American exceptionalism (Appleby, 1992) or the democratizing influence of the western frontier, Banks asserts the need for transformative academic knowledge that challenges mainstream accounts of historical, social, or cultural phenomena. By providing alternative descriptions and explanations of phenomena encountered elsewhere

in the curriculum, transformative knowledge raises the unsettling question of why these different accounts may vary. In so doing, works such as Loewen (1995), Takaki (1993) and Zinn (1995) not only serve as important correctives to the omissions or distortions present within mainstream curriculum but may also disrupt students' easy acceptance of the positivist claim that knowledge is objective and universal, free of any influence of human interests or values.

As an alternative secondary discourse, transformative curriculum may also reveal and facilitate critique of assumptions regarding democracy, citizenship, and national identity embedded within students' primary discourses. Employing the concept of collective memory, Zerubavel (1995) draws attention to the role played by newspaper articles, television and radio programs, popular songs, jokes, children's stories, plays, and novels in shaping individuals' and groups' identity as citizens and conception of the democratic polity. Building upon the histories represented within school textbooks but also transcending them, the "history people carry around in their heads... constantly negotiates between available historical records and current social and political agendas by selectively emphasizing, suppressing, and elaborating different aspect of that record" (p. 5). Transmitted through these various print and media forms, as well as through various public acts of commemoration such as festivals and holidays, this collective memory highlights particularly salient moments within a groups' history that explain its emergence, values, and defining characteristics. In doing so, however, it also necessarily ignores, minimizes, or covers over other aspects of the groups' history. By focusing upon these other, neglected aspects of the historical record, or by challenging accepted

interpretations of the “defining moments” that are emphasized, counter-histories reveal the gaps and fissures present within the collective memory and call attention to the constructed and contingent nature of dominant narratives. Where students are engaged in constructing and analyzing counter-history, where they analyze the ways in which dominant narratives are perpetuated and reconstructed through constant acts of commemoration (including the study of history within the classroom), both history and identity are experienced as fluid, indeterminate, and contestable.

Applied to the case of democratic citizenship, this acknowledgement that history and identity are fluid rather than fixed suggests that democracy, likewise, is, by necessity, constantly actualized and reconstructed. Where the study of history is of something static, a collection of mutually agreed upon facts and story lines, democracy itself may be regarded as an already accomplished feat concretized long ago in the structures of political institutions and processes. In such a case, the purpose of citizenship education appears to be one of promoting an “embracing love of our land and our liberties” grounded in a “respect for our national heroes” and “solid American history” (Saxe, 2003, p107-8). Under such circumstances, critical inquiry into the inconsistencies, exclusions, and failures of democracies may be denounced or actively resisted as “antithetical to patriotism and American nationalism, wholly incompatible with our Constitution, and undermines the prospects of our national survival” (p. 109). Conversely, where history itself is understood to be always in process of unfolding, the admission that “democracy often disappoints” (Shapiro, 1999, p. 1) becomes an invitation to further reflection upon and commitment to the highest aspirations of democracy. In

such a case, acknowledging and even denouncing the persistence of discrimination against vulnerable minorities, extreme poverty in the midst of great wealth, and the lack of transparency and accountability among public officials will be regarded as deepening rather than damaging the democratic project. When democracy is thus understood, critique may be no longer resisted as a rejection of democracy but embraced and encouraged as essential to the very meaning of citizenship committed to the “ongoing, creative struggle to work out a way of living together fairly, freely, and equally” (Parker, 2001, p. 109).

To review, democratic citizenship within pluralistic societies requires the willingness and ability to engage peacefully and productively with those with whom we disagree. This, in turn, requires that citizens recognize the existence of legitimate bases for moral disagreement and exhibit a willingness to engage in deliberative efforts to find mutually acceptable solutions to matters of common concern. Further, where the democratic ideals of freedom and equality are recognized to be at times in conflict and always imperfectly realized, the right to contest decisions and critique current practices must be protected, valued, and actively encouraged as part of a common struggle to actualize the democratic promise for all citizens. Schools can promote these characteristics by actively engaging students in the very practices expected of them as citizens. By participating in deliberation within the classroom, students can learn to appreciate, understand, and evaluate the differences and commonalities between diverse perspectives and also develop attributes conducive to reaching common decisions and disagreeing respectfully. Through engaging in historiography, comparative studies, and

counter-history, students may gain a critical perspective on their own assumptions and learn to accept that tension, ambiguity, and incompleteness are constitutive of knowledge and identity rather than a denial of either. Taken in concert, such curricular and methodological approaches comprise essential elements of education for democratic citizenship aimed at helping students recognize that democracy is always in a process of becoming and that this is a process in which they have both the potential and responsibility to participate as citizens.

Difficult Dialogues

Intergroup dialogue can serve as a powerful means by which educators can help contribute to cultivating a more democratic citizenry and a more peaceful society. By facilitating an exchange of stories and perspectives across social and cultural divisions, such dialogues may help promote friendships and reduce negative stereotypes and misconceptions among students belonging to different social identity groups. When proceeding in a fair and inclusive manner, they provide opportunities for students to develop communicative skills, deepen their understanding of the reasons behind disagreements, and practice creative problem solving and non-violent conflict resolution. Further, by exposing students to alternate political and historical narratives, dialogues may help students recognize the contingent and socially constructed nature of their own perspectives and thus foster their capacity for social critique and imagination. In each of these ways, intergroup dialogues contribute to the health of democracy by modeling

democratic deliberation in which all participants seek to craft mutually acceptable solutions to shared problems rather than ceding such responsibility to a select few.

Not all dialogues, however, will achieve these ends equally. In the absence of mutual respect and equal status among participants, dialogues may exacerbate rather than diminish prejudice, distrust, and misunderstanding. Even when these conditions are satisfied, dialogues may still fail to prepare students to respond peacefully and creatively to conflicts arising during the course of democratic public life. Where discussions and interactions are couched solely in interpersonal terms, or when difficult and contentious issues are avoided, whatever learning and positive attitudes are developed may fail to transfer to other settings or sustain during crises when group identifications become salient once more. Further, dialogues that assume students' willingness to listen to one another or that aim to resolve all conflicts and arrive at consensus agreements fail to acknowledge that legitimate reasons may exist for participants to distrust or disagree with one another and risk alienating or further marginalizing dissenting voices. Thus, for dialogues to prepare students to meet the challenges and possibilities of citizenship within pluralistic societies, they must: a) integrate and seek to understand conflicts rather than eliminate or evade them, b) acknowledge that conflicts exist between groups rather than individuals only, c) aspire to build norms of mutual respect and listening rather than presume their pre-existence, d) invite a critical examination of participants' own perspectives rather than, or at least prior to, critiquing those of others, and e) acquaint students with the prospect that tension, uncertainty, and disagreement are inherent to the democratic project rather than opposed to it.

Dialogues that satisfy these conditions will advance the goals of both peace and citizenship education. They will also, however, expose students to a variety of intellectual and emotional risks that may be experienced as difficult or even painful. To integrate and seek to understand conflicts requires that students grant the legitimacy of claims and arguments that conflict with their own. Acknowledging that conflicts exist between groups entails recognizing that individuals' claims and interests are influenced by and, therefore, partially constrained by their group memberships rather than universally and self-evidentially valid. Building norms of mutual respect implies granting that others may have legitimate reasons to suspect one's credibility and good intentions. Critiquing one's own perspectives involves entertaining the possibility that they may be (either factually or normatively) in error. Finally, accepting that tension, uncertainty, and disagreement are inherent to democracy demands accepting also that the democratic promise has and will always be imperfectly realized and that they may, therefore, be constantly called upon to question and potentially modify current understandings and practices.

As discussed in Chapter One, many reasons exist to suspect students' inherent readiness to assume the intellectual and emotional risks associated with such propositions. In each case, students are asked to confront the possibility that the accuracy or legitimacy of beliefs and assumptions they have been conditioned to accept as true may be called into question. Such a prospect is likely to be perceived as particularly difficult when the beliefs and assumptions being put at risk are integral to students' sense of identity (Brandhorst, 2004) or accompanied by feelings of fear, vulnerability, or anger

(Elbaz-Luwisch, 2004). Where dialogue is used as a tool for helping diverse groups of students confront their differences and learn to respond peacefully and creatively to the tensions they evoke, these are precisely the risks students must be encouraged to take. Understanding how one group of educators attempts to do so, and to what effect, is the subject of this investigation.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This is a qualitative case study of a cross-cultural reconciliation program in Northern Ireland. Investigating how a group of twenty-two Protestant and Catholic students engage in a series of dialogues concerning controversial questions of national and cultural identity, it seeks to address two primary research questions: 1) How do these students perceive and respond to perspectives that conflict with their own? and 2) How are these perceptions and responses affected by changes in the instructional conditions under which conflicting perspectives are encountered? This chapter presents the rationale for my case selection, research design, and methodological approach. In addition, it describes the techniques I used to collect and analyze data and discusses the strategies I employed to strengthen the validity of the study and minimize the distortions arising from my status as a cultural outsider to the phenomenon being investigated.

Case Selection

The Close Encounters program was selected for study because it provides a relatively severe test (Hammersely & Atkinson, 1995) of efforts to engage students in intergroup dialogue. Group identities in Northern Ireland are highly polarized along religious, political, and national lines such that one community identifies as some combination of Catholic, Republican, and Irish while another identifies in varying degrees as Protestant, Loyalist, and British (Trew & Cox, 1996). Because these identifications are arrayed along a set of binary oppositions, they have contributed to the development of what Dijkstra and Peschar (1996) define as a pillarized society, “a

process resulting in parallel, segregated organizational complexes, structured along religious lines and active in the secular domains of life” (p. 50). Under such conditions, fostering cross-cultural communication is particularly difficult because the groups in question “have different socio-historical legacies steeped in inter-group antagonisms due to unequal social relations, hold stereotypical views of each others’ behaviors and values, and question whether they are members of the same community,” (Schoem et al, 2001, p. 4).

The program also qualifies as a case of both peace and citizenship education. Sponsored by the Corrymeela Community, the largest non-governmental organization committed to promoting reconciliation in Northern Ireland, the Close Encounters program exemplifies the nationally adopted policy of Education for Mutual Understanding aimed at “helping students learn to understand and respect each other and preparing them to live together in harmony in adult life” (DENI, 1982). Because this effort is complicated by the long history of intergroup suspicion, animosity, and violence that exists within Northern Ireland, the “relatively severe test” criterion again applies. This is particularly so in the case of Close Encounters, where both the identity of the participants and the substantive content of discussions, national and cultural identity, are highly salient and contentious.

Methodological Approach

A qualitative case study approach was chosen because of the nature of the research questions. According to Goetz & LeCompte (1991), qualitative research yields

insight into the relationship existing between human environments, beliefs, and behaviors. This is precisely the relationship that this study seeks to uncover by investigating whether and how the social and instructional conditions under which students encounter conflicting perspectives impact how they perceive and respond to those perspectives. Further, it examines how students' prior beliefs impact their perceptions and how these, in turn, have been shaped by environmental factors such as educational, political, and historical conditions.

The study employs an embedded case study design (Yin, 1994) because it examines the interaction of several units of analysis. In this case, I attempt to discover how students perceive and respond to situations encountered during the course of the program. This necessitates accessing intra-personal (students' thoughts and emotions), interpersonal (students' conversations and behaviors), as well as environmental (program activities and curricula) phenomena. Further, the impact of conditions far beyond the parameters of the program upon students' perceptions and responses is investigated. Given the segregated nature of social and educational life in Northern Ireland, broader educational, cultural, and political processes all impact the knowledge, skills, and attitudes with which students enter the program and, hence, influence their interpretations and responses to the situations they encounter once there. Therefore, in order to provide a "more comprehensive and possibly more accurate explanation of the phenomena" (Bray & Thomas, 1995, p. 484), my observations are contextualized within a number of different levels of analysis, as depicted in Figure 3.1. Specifically, I attempt to describe

the relationship between: a) students' thoughts and behaviors during the program, b) the programmatic conditions they encounter at different points throughout Close Encounters, c) the institutional factors shaping students' prior educational experiences, and d) the cultural and historical context of intergroup relations in Northern Ireland.

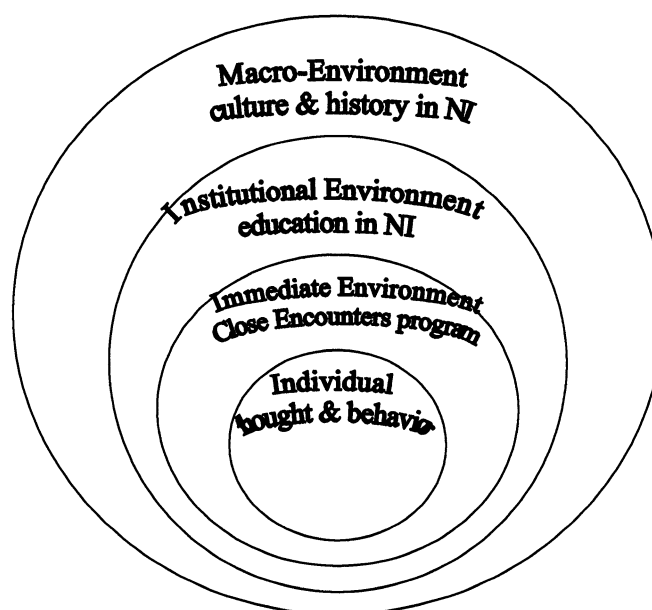


Figure 3.1: Levels of Analysis

A case study approach enables me to investigate these relationships in a way that is particularistic, descriptive, heuristic, and inductive (Merriam, 1998). It is particularistic because it focuses on understanding the relationship between the environment, beliefs, and behaviors as experienced by a particular set of students in a particular setting, in this case, the students participating in Close Encounters. It is descriptive because it provides a detailed picture of who students are, of their actions and conversations, and of the exercises in which they take part during the course of the program. In this sense, the case study is “strong on reality” (Cohen & Manion, 1989, p. 150) because it enables the reader to “recreate” the experiences being described and to judge the quality of subsequent interpretations. It is heuristic because it provides a means for readers to envision citizenship education and intergroup dialogue in ways that are

both recognizable and yet surpass their own experiences and expectations. Finally, it is inductive because concepts and hypotheses emerge out of the data being described.

I employed ethnographic techniques to collect data because Erickson (1986) suggests that such an approach is particularly well suited to uncovering the relationship between the “meaning perspectives of actors and the ecological circumstances of action in which they find themselves” (p. 127). In the case of Close Encounters, the “ecological circumstances of action” refer to the various levels of context described above, while the “meaning perspectives” I am interested in uncovering are students’ perceptions and responses to one another, to the substance of their conversations, and to the experience of conflict and disagreement. Acting as a participant-observer during the entire lifecycle of the Close Encounters program, I served as one of three volunteer staff members, helping to facilitate small group activities and providing general support to the students and to the professional youth worker who led the program. During this time, I recorded extensive field notes, conducted interviews with key informants including both students and program staff, and collected curriculum artifacts used during the program. When the program was not in session, I observed social studies instruction in the various schools attended by the students participating in Close Encounters and interviewed teachers regarding what and how they taught regarding national and cultural identity. In addition, I conducted extensive document analyses of policy directives, curriculum guides, and inspection reports compiled by the Department of Education related to the implementation of Education for Mutual Understanding.

As recommended by Patton, (1990), these multiple sources of data enabled me to “validate and cross check findings” (p. 244). My observations provided opportunities to witness students’ behaviors and conversations and to identify the interpersonal and instructional conditions that prompted particular responses. Interviews enabled me to access individual students’ various interpretations of and emotional responses to the events and interactions I observed. The document analyses, curriculum artifacts, and school based observations and interviews assisted me in formulating better questions and identifying relationships between students’ experiences at the program and their prior educational backgrounds.

The sample. Twenty-two students participated in the Close Encounters program. Participation was voluntary and students were generally selected on a first come, first served basis (though exceptions were made in an attempt to compile a balanced group as will be discussed in the following chapter). The composition of the group in terms of religion, gender, and class is presented in Table 3.1. Recognizing that religious and

Table 3.1: Sample by Religion, Gender, and Class

Religion	Gender		Working Class	Middle Class	Total
Protestant	female	9	5	4	9
	male	0	0	0	
Catholic	female	6	0	6	13
	male	7	7	0	

political identity are complex and interrelated constructs in Northern Ireland, I employ Catholic and Protestant as general terms for delineating students’ community affiliations for the sake of clarity. Where students themselves indicated the need for more sensitive differentiations (as for those who declared themselves Republicans but disavowed

affiliation with Catholicism as a religious identity), such distinctions are noted in the findings chapter. Similarly, although the category of class lacks clearly definable attributes since data such as family income and occupation were unavailable, the classification here reflects its usage among students regarding how they characterized one another or, where individual students elected to do so, how they self-identified.

Recruitment. All programs at Corrymeela are staffed by professional community-relations workers as well as by a number of domestic and international volunteers. As a result, my status as an American was not considered unusual, although it did serve as an impetus to discussions concerning my background in athletics, my taste in music, and my political position regarding the ongoing war in Iraq. Throughout the program, both I and the other volunteers established rapport with students by using first names, playing soccer together, hanging out (Reynolds, 1999) during free time, and interacting with students as peers as much as possible rather than as adult authority figures (Mandell, 1988).

At the beginning of the first weekend session, I introduced myself as a former teacher from the United States who was interested in learning about education in Northern Ireland and, in particular, about reconciliation efforts between Protestant and Catholic students. After the second session, I explained that I was interested in talking with students about their experiences both at school and during the program. I sent students home with letters to their parents that explained the purpose and nature of the research and asked for permission to interview their children (see Appendix A). Of the twenty-two students originally participating in the program, four stopped attending after either the first or second weekend and were not interviewed. Of the remaining eighteen

students, only ten returned signed consent forms and were interviewed. These included six Catholics (three male and three female) and four Protestants (all female). For those students whose parents did not return consent forms, I sent an additional letter home with the student after the third session and, after the fourth, called home to check whether they would consent to an interview with the student at their home. The parents of two students granted this permission but, when I called to confirm the interview the evening before it was to occur, the students explained that they had to work and cancelled.

Potential reasons for the low rate of consent are discussed later in this chapter.

Data Collection

Data was collected for this study using participant observation, observation, interviews, and document analysis. Because I employed an embedded case study design, different methods were appropriate for collecting data associated with the various levels of analysis. These are depicted in Table 3.2 and discussed in the following sections.

Table 3.2: Methods of Data Collection by Level of Analysis

Level of Analysis	Data Collection Methods			
	participant observation	observation	interviews	document analysis
Individual thought and behavior	x		x	
Immediate Environment Close Encounters context	x		x	x
Institutional Environment Education in NI		x	x	x
Macro-Environment Culture & History in N.I.			x	x

Participant observation. As a volunteer staff member at Close Encounters I was present for the entire duration of the program, a total of 180 hours. Much of this time was spent in informal discussion and recreation: traveling to and from the retreat center on a bus owned by the sponsoring organization with anywhere from eight to thirteen students (about an hour and a half ride from Belfast), walking along the beach after lunch, and talking, playing cards, or watching rented movies in the late evenings until lights out at 3 a.m. Formally scheduled program activities totaled 88 hours. During this time, I took detailed field-notes concerning my observations of program activities, physical settings, social interactions between students or between students and staff, and informal conversations between students or staff and myself. I endeavored to make these notes detailed and concrete (Patton, 1990) enough to permit me to re-create the experiences as I read and analyzed my records in the subsequent months. Beyond recording observed behaviors, conversations, and program activities, my field notes also included my personal insights and interpretations regarding what I had observed, and these were kept distinct from observations through the use of question marks or parentheses.

Although students were aware that I was conducting research concerning the program, I attempted to be as unobtrusive as possible in recording field notes in order to maximize students' perception of me as a fellow-participant. Most notes were therefore written in private during the "free time" between scheduled activities. When I desired a more detailed record of specific conversations or interactions than I judged this could provide, I took notes as these occurred using the back of the daily schedules frequently

used by the volunteers to direct program activities. All field notes were typed and elaborated upon as soon as possible following the conclusion of each weekend session.

Observation. During the days and weeks when the program was not in session, I observed classroom instruction in schools attended by program participants. In order to protect the confidentiality of students participating in the program, I did not reveal to school personnel the identities of the specific students. Instead, I sent a letter to the school principal explaining that I was conducting research on a reconciliation program in which students from their school were attending and requesting permission to interview teachers and observe classrooms in which students were involved in discussions concerning controversial issues of national or cultural identity (see Appendix B for letter of introduction). Principals were asked to nominate specific teachers who I then contacted in order to arrange observations. As a result, I did not observe classes attended by Close Encounters participants. This was not required, however, given that the purpose of these observations was not to compare the behavior of the students between the two settings but, rather, to understand how their schools provided opportunities to encounter curriculum or engage in discussions related to national or cultural identity. I attempted to validate the information gathered from these observations by asking the students attending those schools to comment upon my impressions during interviews conducted at the conclusion of the program.

Of the eight schools attended by students participating in Close Encounters, four granted me permission to observe instruction. These included two Catholic, one Protestant, and one Integrated school (those denying permission included two Protestant

and two Integrated schools). I was able to observe seven different teachers within these schools, three of whom taught History, two English, one Politics, and one Religion. Classroom observations totaled twenty-four hours. During these classes, I acted strictly as an observer and openly recorded field notes relating to classroom activities, curricular materials, student and teacher behaviors, interactions, and conversations. As at Close Encounters, I also recorded my own reactions, impressions, and insights and clearly marked these with parentheses.

Interviews. Individual interviews were conducted with all consenting students participating in the Close Encounters program, the program leader and volunteers, the teachers whom I observed at students' schools, and the Department of Education administrator responsible for developing and implementing citizenship education. All interviews were conducted in confidential settings, semi-structured in nature, tape-recorded, and later transcribed. Interviews ranged in length from one-half to two and a half hours.

Because I was interested in how participants lent meaning to their experiences, all interviews utilized a general interview guide as recommended by Patton (1990) rather than adhering to a rigid, pre-determined protocol. I entered the interviews with a series of questions to address but allowed the interview to unfold in a conversational manner exploring the issues and experiences that participants themselves identified as significant. Student interviews occurred during the third and fourth weekend sessions, in between or after the end of scheduled activities. These focused on identifying students' interpretations of specific activities or conversations during the course of the program and

of their prior educational experiences and attitudes concerning national and cultural identity in Northern Ireland (see Appendix C). Interviews with Close Encounters staff occurred on site and focused on identifying their goals and preparation for the program as well as their interpretation of student conversations and interactions during program (see Appendix D). Teacher interviews took place immediately following classroom observations and focused upon identifying their goals for instruction and interpretation of conversations and interactions observed during the instructional period (see Appendix E). Particular attention was also given to how the lesson fit within the wider context of teaching about national and cultural identity within the specific school.

Document analysis. During both the Close Encounters program and my observations at students' schools, I collected artifacts of the curriculum used to facilitate conversations regarding national and cultural identity. These included lesson plans used by teachers or staff to lead student activities and also primary and secondary source data that was used as the substantive focus of discussions (such as the United Nations Covenant on the Rights of the Child or a description of the seventeenth century Battle of Drogheda). When matched with particular student behaviors and conversations recorded in my field notes, these sources enabled me to identify content and activities that students found particularly controversial. In addition, I analyzed official policy directives, curriculum guidance materials, and inspection reports produced by the Northern Ireland Department of Education in order to identify the goals for and methods of implementing Education for Mutual Understanding. Finally, I conducted document based research concerning the respective cultures and histories of the Protestant and Catholic

communities in Northern Ireland in order to better understand the historical roots and contemporary manifestations of “the Troubles.” Much of the information garnered from these analyses provided a basis for formulating interview questions and also helped me to understand observations or interview responses within the context of broader historical, sociological, political, and religious dimensions of conflict and identity in Northern Ireland.

Data Analysis

Analysis of field notes, interview transcriptions, and documents was performed on a continuous basis. As data were collected, I recorded my initial interpretations, insights, and additional questions in the margins of my field notes and interview guides.

Questions were then used to highlight the need for the subsequent collection of additional data, while tentative interpretations and insights were “tried out on subjects” (Merriam, 1984, p. 125) in order to identify where my own understandings were either consistent with or divergent from those of the subjects themselves. As interviews were completed, tapes were transcribed manually and compiled along with field notes and curriculum artifacts into a case record (Patton, 1980) with each section arranged chronologically.

As data were collected, I attempted to identify emerging themes and trends by looking for regularities within the gradually increasing body of evidence. Because I employed an embedded case study design, I initially coded data according to the different levels of context to which they referred (depicted previously in Figure 3.1). My conceptual framework, specifically Hahn’s (1996) distinction between climate, content,

and pedagogy, provided the broad categories that I used to code data within each level of context. Refinements of these categories, as well as subcategories within each, emerged through employing a constant comparative process (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Allowing for a continuous interplay of theory and data, I treated my original conceptualizations of these categories as working hypotheses that were continuously reexamined and revised in light of the data. For example, my understanding of what contexts were relevant to how students perceived and responded to situations at Close Encounters, the relevant divisions among students, and what constituted conflictual pedagogy were all constantly informed, expanded, and redirected on the basis of additional interview responses, observations, and document analyses. As additional data was assigned to a particular category, I compared it to the other evidence previously assigned to that category. Through constantly looking for the similarities and differences between the data within a particular category, I eventually came to identify the theoretical properties of each category.

Though I initially included some data within multiple categories, as the properties of the various categories became more clear I was able to categorize data within distinct categories. In addition, I continuously sought disconfirming evidence that challenged and forced me to revise my categories or develop new ones. This was particularly the case when differences were noted in how various students experienced particular episodes or when students' interpretations differed from those of teachers or program staff members.

Clarifying the properties of categories also enabled me to begin to recognize possible relationships between the different categories. For example, I gradually began to

hypothesize about the relationship between how controversial an issue was (the content category) and how willing students or teachers were to discuss it or question one another directly (the pedagogy category). As categories became more clear and distinct, I constructed a series of narrative vignettes that I believed illustrated the properties of the categories. Instituting a participant feedback procedure (Bibace et al. 1999), I shared these vignettes with teachers and program staff so that they could comment on the accuracy and representativeness of my emerging understandings. Partly as a response to this feedback, I developed an additional methodological code identifying where I had misinterpreted culturally encoded data or had revised my initial working hypotheses based on new information provided by participants. All coding and analysis was performed manually.

Validity

As with all research, this study is concerned with ensuring both internal and external validity. Internal validity refers to the trustworthiness of the data and interpretations presented and the extent to which they accurately reflect the reality of what I observed. However, because conditions and events are experienced in different ways by the multiple subjects taking part in them, I lay no claim to having captured their “reality” as though that were something fixed and singular. Instead, the validity to which I aspire lies in representing this multiplicity of experiences and perspectives in a way that is credible to those who took part in it (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Merriam (1998) suggests six strategies by which this may be accomplished: through triangulation, performing

member checks, conducting long-term observation, peer examination, participatory research, and clarifying researchers' biases.

The fact that I the researcher served as the primary instrument for collecting and analyzing data (Wolcott, 1997) meant that my own experiences, perspectives, and biases affected my perceptions and interpretations of the phenomena I observed. Because of this, I included and analyzed my own experiences as part of the research data (Merriam, 1998). As a Catholic growing up in the United States, I have long experienced complex feelings regarding the conflict in Northern Ireland. As a secularized American, I have tended to discount the religious dimensions of the Troubles and to interpret the conflict primarily as an anti-colonial struggle. Though as a pacifist I have always opposed the violent actions of the British military as well as of the paramilitaries on both sides of the conflict, I have simultaneously viewed the nationalist aspirations of the Catholic population with a degree of sympathy. As a result, I entered this investigation with a greater predisposition to understand and identify with the perspectives voiced by Catholic students than with those espoused by Protestants. Recognizing this, I sought to gain a greater understanding and empathy for the Unionist perspective by researching literary and historical works produced by Protestants in Northern Ireland as well as by Catholic scholars critical of the nationalist position. This research helped me gain a greater appreciation of the legitimacy of the fears and complaints voiced by the Protestant community towards both the Catholic Church in Ireland and also towards the political expediency historically displayed by the British government. In addition, I consistently sought out Protestant informants among students, staff, and teachers in order to verify or

challenge my interpretations of issues and events encountered during the course of this investigation.

An extended length of stay in the field was particularly necessary given the cross-cultural nature of this project. Remaining on site for six months enhanced the validity of my findings by enabling me to conduct repeated observations of similar phenomena in both similar and diverse settings. Where observations were consistent across time and place, greater confidence could be placed in their accuracy. At the same time, this repetition of observations enhanced the likelihood that I would observe slight differences that would challenge and expand my emerging understandings. An extended length of stay also provided an opportunity to become familiarized with the multiple meanings and oftentimes emotionally laden subtexts subjects attached to different events and behaviors, as well as subtle nuances in their speech patterns. Despite an enhanced sensitivity to the particularities of the setting built up over time, however, I remained susceptible to a debilitating tendency common to all cross-cultural research of failing to recognize when I did not understand something by assuming that the meaning of observed phenomena corresponded to my own expectations (Becker & Geer, 1969). In order to guard against possible misinterpretations, I employed regular member checks whereby I shared my observations with subjects and asked them to comment upon their plausibility. For example, when a student suggested that “we” had an obligation to protest against a burgeoning war, my initial interpretation was that he was suggesting that “we” who opposed the war should voice their opposition rather than remaining silently passive. When I later shared this interpretation with the student who made the comment, he

informed me that the “we” actually referred to Irish nationalists who should oppose another instance of British imperialism.

Throughout the project, I frequently utilized students and staff as cultural brokers (Reynolds, 1999) to help interpret culturally inscribed behaviors. This practice ranged from informally asking a student to interpret instructions during the course of icebreakers (as when I was told to introduce myself to someone wearing blue “trainers”) to asking students to explain the political overtones to what struck me as apparently innocuous comments or actions (such as cheering for a particular soccer team). Recognizing that the meaning of any cultural phenomenon is far from singular, I consulted informants drawn from different strata (Protestants as well as Catholics, students as well as adults) rather than relying on any one person or perspective as the definitive authority on any matter. For example, when asked to describe the level of trust among participants, numerous Catholic students commented that they felt they could say anything without being judged, while some Protestant students indicated that they felt isolated and vulnerable at certain times. Because these groups of students were also distinguished by differences in social class, it was further necessary to consult a cross-section of social classes within each religious grouping in order to determine the extent to which the differences in perceptions was primarily related to class or religion.

Throughout the project, I held regular meetings with the staff members responsible for planning and leading the program. Meeting prior to as well as immediately following each weekend meeting, and also several times during the weekends, we discussed our plans for each activity and also shared our observations

about what had transpired. This provided an opportunity for us to call attention to events others' may not have witnessed and also discuss our various interpretations of what we had observed. Beyond their pragmatic function, these meetings also served an ethical purpose. Taking part in the planning meetings helped to legitimize my participation in the program by demonstrating that I was personally invested in contributing to the experience of students and committed to the success of the program. Further, the meetings helped establish a collegial tone regarding the research project so that program staff felt that they were participants in the research rather than simply subjects of it.

Ethical considerations also arose as a result of working with children within a societal context marred by violent conflict. In this respect, my two overriding concerns were to ensure confidentiality and protect against re-traumatizing students. Because of the ongoing nature of the conflict, being suspected of expressing sympathy for perceived enemies or of making revelations about paramilitary activities may expose students, teachers, or staff to the risk of censure or even violent reprisal. Consequently, I refused to reveal the identity of the students participating in Close Encounters when arranging observations within their schools and, as a result, was unable to guarantee access to observe instruction within those students' classrooms. A second concern emerged where students had previously experienced personal loss as a result of the conflict. In these cases, pressing students to discuss such experiences could risk re-opening past wounds that they might still be in the process of healing from (Straker, 1996). Accordingly, I asked only open-ended questions regarding student's "prior contact with members of the

opposite community” (see Appendix C) so as to allow students to choose whether and to what extent to discuss violent or painful experiences.

External validity. External validity refers to having "established the domain to which a study's findings can be generalized" (Yin, 1994, p. 34). Because of the particularistic and naturalistic nature of the qualitative case study, the domain in question is conceptual rather than spatial or demographic. That is, it aims at conveying a deep understanding of a particular phenomenon rather than attempting to generalize findings to other situations or populations. As Patton (1990) explains, qualitative research seeks to “provide perspective than truth, empirical assessment of local decision makers’ theories of action rather than generation and verification of universal theories, and context-bound extrapolations rather than generalizations” (p. 491). By providing a thick description (Geertz, 1973) of the context in which events and behaviors occur, I hope to enable readers to recognize similarities to their own situations and to judge the extent to which the interpretations offered are helpful in explaining their own experiences (what Merriam (1998) terms reader generalizability). In this way, the goal of this case study is to provide a useful guide to action rather than to predict occurrences in other settings.

Limitations. A significant limitation of the study arose from the difficulty of equally accessing all relevant perspectives. As previously mentioned, no Protestant males were among the students participating in the Close Encounters program. Despite repeated efforts to recruit them, the self-selected nature of the program meant that this absence could not be rectified. It did, however, serve as an impetus for opening an additional line of inquiry into why this population proved particularly reluctant to

participate. According to the program administrator, the persistent difficulty in attracting Protestant males was primarily due to a conception of masculinity within working class Protestant communities that viewed dialogue and reconciliation as weak and unmanly.

This explanation was both confirmed and augmented by cultural brokers (Reynolds, 1999) who were themselves Protestant males. One volunteer, a young professional who had previously attended the program as a student participant, suggested that being associated with Corrymeela “just wasn’t cool” according to his working class friends at the time. Another youth worker who was a former member of a Protestant paramilitary put the matter in a broader socio-political perspective. Offered the hypothesis that the superior position of the Protestant community might cause them to regard any movement towards equality or reconciliation as a loss of privilege, he suggested that, despite objective measures pointing to the dominance of Protestants in Northern Ireland, the community perceived itself as being the more vulnerable. This interpretation may, in part, help explain the greater rate of absenteeism and declarations of feeling isolated among Protestant students. It may also help account for the subsequent reluctance of working class Protestant parents to allow their children to be interviewed, particularly given that consent was first granted and then apparently revoked at a time when political tensions were increasing due to ongoing negotiations about whether or not to set a deadline for holding national elections. While the absence of first-hand reports concerning significant perspectives remains a liability, I attempted to compensate for this limitation by employing cultural brokers and triangulating the insights they provided with interview data and observed behaviors.

Summary

This chapter describes the methods I used to investigate how a group of twenty-two students participated in cross-cultural dialogue under difficult circumstances. I employed a qualitative case study approach because I was interested in both how students interacted with one another and in how they themselves perceived their interactions. Acting as a participant-observer, I gathered multiple sets of data: field notes based on my observations of student dialogues, interviews with students, staff, and teachers, and curriculum artifacts and policy documents. Data were analyzed using a constant comparative procedure through which hypotheses were formulated and continuously revised in light of accumulating data. Triangulation, participant feedback, and cultural brokers were employed to enhance validity and convey the multiple and contextualized nature of the events and experiences described in the following chapter.

Chapter Four: Findings

This chapter presents a record of the observations and conversations I conducted over the course of the Close Encounters program. The organization of the chapter reflects both a theoretical and a chronological rationale. Theoretically, it employs Hahn's (1996) distinction between climate, content, and pedagogy; it addresses, in turn, a) the interpersonal climate that developed among participants, b) the substantive content of students' discussions, and c) the manner in which participants questioned or challenged one another. This progression also reflects the basic chronology of the program during which staff members focused upon establishing a climate of trust and support before launching into potentially divisive issues and only later structuring discussions so as to provide increased opportunities for students to question and disagree with each other.

The first section, "Building trust, learning to listen," explores the development of interpersonal relationships among program participants. In it, I discuss students' prior socialization as it relates to their initial attitudes towards one another, and describe the processes by which program leaders sought to encourage team building, communication, and listening skills. "Introducing controversy, addressing identity" discusses the gradual move made during the second and third weekends to acknowledge the differences among participants by examining their diverse political and religious traditions. This section explores the controversial nature of the symbols of national and cultural identity to which students were exposed and describes how they interpreted and responded to these symbols. Finally, "Getting to dialogue" addresses how students engaged with one another regarding controversial content. It describes the techniques employed by leaders

to facilitate critical dialogue and examines the extent of students' willingness to challenge one another's claims and to question their own prior assumptions, attitudes, or behaviors.

Each of these sections follows a similar pattern of contextualizing students' interactions within a range of different levels of analysis. Just as students did not arrive at Close Encounters as blank slates, so, too, their experiences during the course of the program cannot be understood in isolation from the broader contexts that have influenced the knowledge, attitudes, and skills with which they came equipped. For instance, to understand the meanings students attach to a story about cheering for a cousin marching in a 12th of July Parade, it is necessary not only to comprehend the story itself, but also to appreciate the historical significance of the Battle of the Boyne, the contentious tradition of marching season within Northern Ireland, the opportunities students have had to learn about the original event and to consider others' perspectives regarding it, the relationship students have with the person telling the story, and the occasion for the telling of the story. Accordingly, as each section describes students' thoughts and behaviors at various points throughout the program, it does so in relation to a) the immediate social and pedagogical environment constructed during Close Encounters, b) institutional considerations shaping students' prior educational experiences, and c) the broader cultural and historical dynamics contributing to sectarianism and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Each of these contexts will be considered in turn, for each will influence to varying degrees how students perceive and respond to each other, to the substance of their conversations, and to the experience of conflict and disagreement.

Building Trust, Learning to Listen

It is Saturday afternoon of the second session of Close Encounters. Students sit in three groups of seven around large rectangular tables upon which are spread long sheets of white butcher paper and a scattering of pens and colored markers. The posters they are in the process of creating are to be a collective representation of their group. Each group leader has been provided five questions that students are to reflect upon and then illustrate on the butcher paper. The finished poster is to be an amalgamation of their individual responses. Students have already responded to questions concerning where they live, what special holidays their families celebrate, which newspapers they read, and how a typical Sunday is spent in their homes. Now, the final question: "When did you first realize that there were important differences between groups in Northern Ireland?"

Roan, a Catholic student from a town half an hour's drive from Belfast, has drawn two figures: one wearing a green and white jersey, the other a sweatshirt with a drawn hood covering most of its face and carrying what appears to be a club or bat. "Where I come from, it's really bad," he says in a hushed monotone. "I remember three or four years ago we used to go into town wearing our Celtic jerseys and everyone got on. But then a couple of years ago it picked up so now there's these groups that would chase you if you were wearing any Celtics stuff. There's these boys that come up behind our school and put bricks through our windows and no one walks home anymore because if you do you just get beat because you're wearing a St. Malachy's uniform. There's these lads that wait for us everyday after school down on the road and they're carrying

all sorts of hammers and bats just waiting to chase us and give us a beating.” Roan points to his drawing of the hooded figure: “That’s how they cover themselves up so no one knows who they are. It’s got so bad that [the teachers] won’t let us walk home anymore; we’ve got to take the bus or get a ride. It’s got bad, so it has.”

Like most students in Northern Ireland, Roan attends school almost exclusively with those who come from the same religious background as himself. As of 2003, 93% of Protestant students attended schools whose total enrollment included less than 6% Catholics. Conversely, 91% of Catholics attended schools where the Protestant enrollment failed to reach 1%. Only 5 % of students attended schools formally designated as integrated (DENI, 2003). This pattern of segregation is formally institutionalized within the official administrative structures of education within Northern Ireland where there are, in fact, three separate public school systems: “controlled” schools whose enrollment is primarily Protestant, Catholic “maintained schools,” and a small sector of integrated schools. Although the Department of Education of Northern Ireland (DENI) officially provides support and oversight to each of these systems, schools within the Catholic and Integrated sectors report separately to their own administrative bodies: the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education. While each sector receives public funding, both the Catholic and the Protestant schools defy easy categorization as “public” in the sense typically connoted in the United States. Both systems are characterized by high degree of denominationalism as indicated by such factors as the prevalence of religious

education requirements, the frequency of communal worship during school hours, and the direct involvement of clergy in school governance (Darby, et. al, 1977).

The nature of schooling in Northern Ireland reflects a broader pattern of social, occupational, and residential separation that divides the society at most every level. Throughout the country, 71% of Protestants live in neighborhoods they characterize as “majority” or “nearly all” Protestant, while the converse (majority or nearly all Catholic) is true for 61% of Catholics (Smith & Chambers, 1991, p. 101). These figures become even more striking in certain locations (where the corresponding percentages are 85% and 77% respectively) and for certain socio-economic groups (78% and 65% for those classified as unskilled manual laborers) (p. 102-3). Overall, a substantial minority of people, thirty eight percent, live in highly segregated neighborhoods that are “nearly all” either Protestant or Catholic. That this separation extends through various dimensions of social life is indicated by the few official statistics that are available, such as the small incidence of intermarriage between Catholics and Protestants (9%) and of children whose parents are “mixed” (2%) (Bruce & Alderdice, 1993).

These statistics reveal the degree of separation that continues to exist between the Protestant and Catholic communities, a state that both reflects and contributes to the mutual suspicion, animosity, and periodic violence that have characterized the long conflict known, in its most recent manifestation, as The Troubles. The persistence of such figures suggests the continued precariousness of community relations within Northern Ireland despite the significant progress made in recent years towards

establishing peace and joint governance. Together with a lack of resolution concerning particularly contentious issues such as weapons decommissioning, job discrimination, representation within the police force, and collusion between police and paramilitaries, they help account for the lingering tensions that continue to manifest in a politics of brinksmanship and recurrent flare-ups of overt violence. And, as Roan's story recounted at the beginning of this section indicates, the climate of fear and brazen intimidation this situation engenders is one from which schools are far from immune.

The institutional context: Education for Mutual Understanding. It was within this context of institutionalized segregation, mutual recrimination, and widespread violence that the Northern Ireland Department of Education committed itself to taking active steps towards reducing tensions and curbing partisan violence by promoting inter-community contact and learning. As early as 1982, an official circular was disseminated to all school employees stating that "everyone in the educational system has a responsibility for helping children learn to understand and respect each other and for preparing them to live together in harmony in adult life" (DENI, 1982). After a decade of gradual progress towards this goal, Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) was introduced as a statutory requirement for all schools in 1992. The emphasis of this initiative was twofold. First, it sought to increase direct contact between Protestant and Catholic students through promoting a series of inter-school links and extracurricular contact programs. Second, EMU was introduced as a cross-curricular theme that was to provide students in

all subject areas the opportunity to engage in “joint exploration and dialogue of both shared and diverse cultural traditions” (Richardson, 1992, p. 3).

In subsequent years, implementation of EMU themes and objectives significantly reshaped the educational experiences of students throughout Northern Ireland. All schools were required to appoint a faculty or staff coordinator with responsibility for documenting the extent to which EMU themes were integrated into the programs of study within all subjects, and school governors were required to issue annual reports documenting the steps taken to promote EMU within their schools. By 1999, one-third of all primary schools and one-half of all secondary schools involved their students in some form of inter-community contact (Smith, 1999). Further, official inspectorate reports documented significant progress in creating “open and caring” school climates where students of all backgrounds were “respected and valued” (DENI, 2000, p. 9). The same reports, however, found significant resistance to EMU that resulted in many schools adopting a “minimalist approach” towards its implementation. Inspectors reported encountering high levels of resentment arising from the perception that EMU had been externally imposed upon the schools and motivated by an implicit political agenda, as well as a lack of confidence among teachers in their own capacity to respond to potentially controversial issues. The cumulative result has been that “very few opportunities exist for pupils to consider issues such as prejudice, stereotyping, and sectarianism and the extent to which these are the seed beds for community conflict” (DENI, 2000, p. 18).

As a result, it has fallen largely to non-governmental organizations within Northern Ireland to address the stated goal of preparing students and educators for “learning to deal with the controversial issues relevant to this society” (CCEA, 2003, p. 8). Of these, the Corrymeela Community has been the most prolific, offering a myriad of programs in which over 9,000 individuals participate annually (Love, 1995). Originating as an ecumenical retreat center, Corrymeela has been a focal point for peace and reconciliation efforts in Northern Ireland since the outbreak of the Troubles in 1968. During the 1970’s and 80’s it served as neutral ground for hosting political conferences as well as a safe haven for those who had lost family members or had been “displaced” as a result of partisan violence. More recently, it has expanded to offer a wide range of both residential and school-based dialogue and training opportunities for youth, educators, and families. Evoking comparisons to the goals of Education for Mutual Understanding, the guiding mission uniting these disparate enterprises is an abiding commitment to “providing opportunities for meeting, dialogue, and learning in communities to dispel ignorance, prejudice, and fear and to promote mutual respect, trust, and co-operation” (Corrymeela, 2003).

Close Encounters. One of these programs, Close Encounters, serves youth between the ages of fourteen and seventeen. Close Encounters brings Catholic and Protestant students together one weekend a month for four consecutive months with the goal of “getting to know other people and learning more about yourself and about some of the issues affecting [Northern Ireland]” (Corrymeela, 2003). Participation in the program is voluntary, with students applying from all over Northern Ireland as well as

from across the border in the South. In selecting participants from this pool of applicants, program staff employ a “first come, first served” policy with the provision that exceptions can be made in order to assemble a group balanced along religious, gender, and class lines. This year’s group is composed of nine Protestants and thirteen Catholics, seven males and fifteen females, and twelve students self-identifying as working class. Notably lacking are any Protestant males, this despite specific efforts to recruit them by extending invitations through youth workers serving Protestant communities.

For many participants, the weekends spent at the Corrymeela retreat center will mark the first time they have spent in conversation with members of the “other” community. Evelyn, a fourteen year-old Catholic, reflects that “there’s Protestants all over Newry, but you wouldn’t really talk to them or anything, so this is really the first time I’ve had to sit down and talk with them” (personal communication, May 2003). Evelyn is not alone in this regard. While the proportion of participants attending integrated schools is far higher than is customary (30% within Close Encounters as opposed to 5% for the population in general), the majority of the program’s participants have had little prior interaction across the religious, social, and cultural boundaries that separate the two communities in Northern Ireland. Telling in its tokenism, one girl recalls the solitary Protestant girl in her primary school, while another proudly mentions the “friend of a friend” who’s from the other community as evidence of the inclusiveness of her social circle. For a number of students, the prior contact they have had has been decidedly negative: four had family members killed in inter-community violence, three

others have been personally attacked, and four others recount stories of friends and family members who were driven from their homes under the threat of harm.

This is the backdrop against which Sean, the program leader, explains his hopes for the weekend sessions: “It’s all about enabling young people in Ireland to engage with each other across lines of difference. Not so much about resolving the conflict necessarily, but just opening that door to where they are able to share information and see where those other young people are coming from” (personal communication, March 2003).

Early in the program, these “lines of difference” remained purposefully obscure. Indeed, it wasn’t until the second day of the second weekend that students were asked to share any information having to do with their cultural or religious background. By this time, students had spent over sixty hours in each other’s company, participating in ice-breakers and team-building exercises, sharing personally significant information, and spending long hours in informal conversation and play. The explicit focus of these early sessions, on the part of both program staff and students, was upon getting to know one another as individuals rather than as members of any particular group.

Entering the meeting hall the first night, students were invited to play a series of games in which they learned each other’s names: lining up alphabetically according to one’s first name, tossing a ball from one to another while calling out the name of the intended recipient, and playing “personal bingo” by circulating and attempting to identify which participants matched certain categories (such as having a sister or having traveled outside the country). The next morning’s session invited students to construct personal

posters in which they drew representations of their favorite possession, activity, and accomplishment and then presented these within small groups of five or six students. In responding to these prompts, students studiously avoided any mention of experiences or activities that might identify their political or religious affiliation, choosing instead to respond in innocuous and oftentimes humorous fashion: listing fags (cigarettes), hip flasks, or music albums as prized possessions, and sleeping in and boy hunting among their favored activities. Later sessions continued to provide a forum for students to share personally relevant information, display individual talents, and simply grow comfortable in one another's presence.

Over eleven hours of the first weekend were given to unstructured social time including long walks along the beach, playing soccer, and late night dancing and movies. As Sean explains, the success of the program requires that priority be given to building personal relationships between participants:

The group comes together on that Friday night on the first weekend and some people know each other and some people don't, and some people maybe don't know a single other person in that group. Right there, you're in a very vulnerable position at that age. I remember being in that position when I was 18 and it scared the living daylights out of me. So I think that whole first weekend is just simply about trying to lay the groundwork in terms of developing the relationship in the group, making sure that was strong and positive. We're relying on that group being together for four weekends so we need to make sure that they're committed to coming back

and that they want to stay solid with it, and the reason they're going to do that is to meet people that they had a really good connection with and maybe even that they consider friends now in a way (personal communication, May 2003).

This emphasis upon building personal relationships served to diminish the salience of group animosities and established a climate in which students felt comfortable and secure. At the end of the program, students indicated that they had indeed come to view one another other as individuals rather than members of political or religious groups. Said one: "To be honest, I don't really know who's Protestant or Catholic. We don't talk about it much because you're just here at the weekend to enjoy yourself. People here are coming more or less new and they don't know each other and everyone's just trying to get on with each other" (Aaron, March 2003). According to another, "When you're here you sort of forget about what other people's backgrounds are and what other people's religions are. That's just something that most of the people here seem to forget about it the minute they come in. It's just the environment and the people who work here, they really help you realize that those other things aren't that important" (Niamh, May 2003).

While students regarded forming personal friendships as a goal in itself, program staff felt that it served a pedagogical purpose as well, stating that, at Corrymeela, relationship is considered the "Fourth R." Two early sessions, in particular, were devoted to building a sense of trust and teamwork that would serve as a foundation from which controversial conversations could later be entered into in confidence. The first of these

was an “adventure learning” exercise in which students were broken into small groups of five or six and presented a series of physical challenges to be solved, ranging from passing through a web of rope hanging high above the ground to traversing a course of tree stumps spaced too far apart for members to reach on their own. One staff member paralleled the objective of these exercises with that of the entire early part of the program:

If they’re going to be successful, they’re all going to have work together.

It doesn’t work any other way. They have to communicate and listen to each other in order to find some way of overcoming these obstacles. And at the end of the day, what’s important is that they have this sense of having accomplished this thing, together (William, June 2003).

A second session focused specifically on teaching attentive listening. In a series of playful exercises, students’ foreheads were first adorned with a varying number of adhesive pink dots and then asked to reply verbatim to a prompt stating how many pink dots they had on their forehead and asking how many pink dots another student had, at which time the student they named would reply with the same statement. Any inaccurate responses or deviation from the script would result in another dot being placed on a student’s forehead and the cycle would begin again. This was followed by a game of “cacophony” in which students sat in two separate groups and then paired with a member of the opposite group. Members of one group were given brief newspaper clippings to read aloud simultaneously, while each reader’s partner was asked to attend to their partner’s voice and identify what their particular clipping referred to. Finally, students

were arranged in two concentric circles facing one another. Members of the inner circle were asked to briefly discuss a number of subjects while those in the outer circle were given directions on how to “respond” to their partners, first feigning boredom, then engaging someone else in conversation, and so forth. In debriefing these exercises, students were asked to describe how they felt during the various games (responses ranged from bored or silly to angry and irrelevant) and then devised a set of ground rules for how they wished to conduct future conversations during the program.

Reflecting upon their experiences during the program, students credited these early sessions with helping establish a climate that made future conversations possible:

I think they helped me be more at ease about people’s backgrounds and be comfortable about sitting down with someone and not be like, first are you Catholic or Protestant and that means we can’t talk about such and such. Doing all those games where we got to know each other and then sitting down and having conversations, that’s really what’s done it (Alin, May 2003).

Comparing the amount of trust and support among students at Close Encounters with what she is accustomed to at school, another student remarked that: “This is so much better. Nobody will judge you on what you say but in school there’s always going to be the one person that will judge you so when I’m in school I hate speaking out” (Nuala, May 2003). A third student concurred:

I feel like I could talk about anything because when we have those conversations no one feels embarrassed or shy. No one really worries

about what other people are thinking of them, and no one still feels under any pressure to say certain things. Everyone seems really open and no one is trying to hide away, no one's afraid that someone is going to argue or get really offended or angry at you for saying something (Niamh, May 2003).

Learning to view one another as individuals helped dispel or at least suspend negative stereotypes that some students had been brought up with concerning those from different religious backgrounds: "I never really met any Protestants before I came here, but when you're in Boncranagh all you hear is people saying they don't like them. It's been a pretty good experience because now I'm getting to know what they're like and its not like they say it is" (Reilly, May 2003). Remembering the impression she derived from watching television and seeing Protestants crowds threaten young Catholic girls on their way to school, Alin remarks that "like with the Holy Cross thing, the news conveyed this message that they're all really bitter and angry. But it's not really like that, it's just a minority" (personal communication, May 2003). For some students, this increasing capacity to transcend stereotypes and achieve a more differentiated perception of a group impacted their understanding of not only the "other" community, but their own as well: "I noticed that there weren't many people who went to mass on Sundays which I thought was interesting. My family doesn't do it but its nice to realize that there are other people who don't either" (Siobahn, May 2003).

Lingering divisions. The great majority of student comments and personal observations collected over the course of the program reinforce this image of a supportive

and trusting climate in which most students viewed each other as individuals and felt that they could “talk about anything.” There were, however, rare occurrences suggesting that group divisions remained present, if latent. While no overt sectarianism comments were observed or reported throughout the 180 hours that program participants were in contact with one another, occasionally, couched within students’ generally playful banter were remarks edged with derogatory overtones. The most striking of these occurred midway through the third weekend meeting, during a session in which students were discussing the origin and meaning of the various symbols contained within the flags of Ireland, Great Britain, and Northern Ireland. Reminiscing about this session after the program had ended, a Catholic student reported that “During that flag exercise, it’s stupid really, but when they were asking what the colors on the flag stood for, Julie said the green was for money. I think she was half-joking, but it still made me feel different” (Bea, May 2003). That the two students who mentioned overhearing this remark, each of whom was Catholic, both discounted it as an isolated incident borne of carelessness rather than ill-will suggests that, from their perspective, a climate of mutual respect was indeed the norm and good-will assumed of all participants. From the perspective of the student uttering the joke, however, this moment of apparent thoughtlessness may be indicative of a deeper sense of insecurity concerning the status of Protestants within the program. Other students reported that Julie had earlier expressed concern that Catholics far outnumbered Protestants in the program: “I’ve been told there are only three Protestants here: me, Julie and Alice. That’s what I got told by Julie, and I was like we’re not, I told her there’s more people here and she said well no, there’s not” (Nuala, May 2003).

Though technically inaccurate, Protestants were in the minority but the proportion was far less imbalanced than Julie suggested (nine to thirteen rather than three to nineteen), this perception may have contributed to the higher absentee rate among Protestant students than Catholic. In fact, two Protestant students participated in only two of the four sessions, and Julie herself (along with her best friend, also Protestant) failed to attend the final weekend of the program, the meeting immediately subsequent to the one during which the remark was made. Perhaps reflecting this sense of marginalization, the parents of all four of these students refused to give consent for their daughters to be interviewed.

While Julie's was the only remark with sectarian overtones reported or overheard during the program, a far more common form of "barbed joke" targeted distinctions based on class. During the final weekend in which Julie and Alice were absent along with Roan and Aaron, two working class Catholic boys, Niamh's remark that "the milli-boys and spidy-girls aren't here" was greeted by laughter among the five girls sharing her table. These terms, originally associated with workers in the textile industry (the males working the mill and the females spinning fabric like spiders at their web), have since become used to refer more generally to members of the working class. For Niamh, the terms seemed an appropriate descriptor of the students who "you know, wear those short skirts and skimpy tops, and the lads dressing in sports jerseys and sweats" (personal communication, May 2003). Throughout the program, while students generally concurred that sectarian remarks were inappropriate, comments making fun of someone's class appeared readily acceptable. Such jokes were most frequently directed at the four

boys who were from rural backgrounds who came to be teasingly known as the “sheep shaggers.” These boys assumed a cavalier attitude toward these jokes, even adopting the name themselves and incorporating it into a drama skit when asked to act out a scene that depicted their home community. Once again, however, other comments suggested that a deeper sense of discomfort underlay this apparent bravado. When asked during the “adventure learning” exercises if they had any ropes courses near where he lived, Kieran replied: “Aye, but they’re not for the likes of us” (personal communication, February 2003). Asked specifically about the “sheep shaggers” label, Kieran surmised: “There’s a lot of jokes about us being farmers and all, but I guess it’s mostly us making them. I guess maybe it’s our way of making it okay and saying it doesn’t matter, showing everyone that we don’t care.”

These subtle though significant divisions along the lines of both class and religion intersected in the sexual dynamics that manifested at different points in the program. At the outset, with the very first bus ride out to Corrymeela, class proved a stronger sense of affiliation than religion. Seeking shelter from the rain under an awning while waiting for the bus to arrive, the five students from working class backgrounds (three boys and two girls) had huddled together smoking cigarettes, while the six remaining students (all girls, and all comfortably middle class) sat quietly upon their suitcases. For much of the first two weekends, the five smokers were joined by three other girls from “working neighborhoods” and could be found sitting together, smoking, singing, and flirting. That the boys were Catholic and the girls Protestant appeared to matter little as the girls would seek out one of the boys’ laps to sit on or as they excitedly put on makeup and sleek

skirts before setting out to see if “the boys” were already at the dance. Meanwhile, the girls who explained that they were from the “nice neighborhoods” showed little interest in either the three boys or the “rough girls,” forming instead a close knit circle of friends despite their different religious backgrounds.

It wasn't until midway through the second weekend that two of the middle class girls (who happened to be Catholic) transgressed this class boundary and began to show interest in the three boys, spending an afternoon's free time walking along the beach with them and then sitting up together in the meeting hall until three in the morning. After this, and after probing the program volunteers who had stayed up in the meeting hall the night before for information about what they had seen and heard, the seemingly discarded working class girls increasingly withdrew from the rest of the group and spent most of their free time on their own or conversing with the volunteers.

This saga of sexual attraction and tension can be viewed as a microcosm of the intricate intersections of religion and class through which students' experience of the Close Encounters program was filtered. It is instructive to note that the most ardent expressions of confidence in the supportive climate pervading the program, the feeling that “I feel like I could talk about anything” and “everyone speaks openly,” came from students in the privileged position of being both middle class and, at least in the case of Close Encounters, the majority religion. Similar sentiments were echoed also by Protestant middle class students—“here, nobody will judge you on what you say,” and by Catholic working class students—“there's no sectarianism here, everyone listens and gives their opinion and everyone is just trying to get on with each other.” In the case of

Protestant working class students, however, judged by their higher rate of absenteeism and social withdrawal, an increasing sense of isolation appears to have set in. Determining the sources of this marginalization remains a matter of conjecture, particularly given the parents' refusal to give consent for them to be interviewed. Nevertheless, it appears telling that Julie's remark about the green on the Irish flag came after she was apparently rejected by Catholic boys in favor of Catholic girls, and, in asserting that there were only three Protestants present at the weekend, Julie clearly failed to identify with any of the four middle class girls as fellow Protestants.

Guidance materials provided to educators in Northern Ireland who wished to engage students in controversial discussions stress the importance of "providing a gradual introduction to sharp issues, building up trust between pupils through a well thought-out and professional approach including training in discussion techniques" (CCEA, 2003). The Close Encounters program provided students this gradual introduction—before launching into potentially controversial discussions, students and staff devoted one-third of the program, approximately sixty hours, to developing team building and communication skills and, more importantly, building interpersonal relationships. The effectiveness of these efforts varied for different groups of students: while most felt welcomed, supported, and listened to, some students apparently felt less so. In either instance, the relationships and climate established during these early sessions provided the foundation from which later difficult conversations were entered into.

Introducing Controversy, Addressing Identity

Students are sitting on the floor, grouped in circles of five or six. High above them, various flags adorn the walls of the room: the British Union Jack, the Irish Tricolor, and the flag of Northern Ireland. It is Thursday morning, the second day of the third session of Close Encounters. These students have spent 110 hours in each other's company since the start of the program and are now sitting in mixed identity groups comprised of both Catholics and Protestants. They've been like this for half an hour discussing the origin and meaning of the symbols found upon each flag when Sean, the session leader, directs their attention to the Union Jack, a series of white and red crosses overlaid against a blue backdrop: "So what did you decide was on this flag?"

One student, a Catholic from the South, says that there's crosses on it, another offers that the crosses are for different saints, and a third suggests that they're the patron saints of the different countries that make up Great Britain. "Aye" says Sean, "you're dead-on." Walking up to the flag, he traces out the different crosses: "There's St. George's cross, that stands for England; here's St. Andrew's cross, he's the patron saint of Scotland; and here's St. Patrick for Ireland. Can you all see them there?"

Now Sean poses his second question: "and where would you come across this flag? Where would you expect to see it hanging?" Students from around the room call out: "Buckingham Palace," "Stormont," "army barracks," "hanging over streets." "Which streets?" asks Sean. "Protestant ones" says Roan, a Catholic. "And why would they be hanging there?" "To say who belongs there," "to say what religion the area is,"

“to tell people who don’t belong to keep out” are offered as explanations before an anonymous voice blurts out: “I think it’s a rubbish flag.”

In Northern Ireland, apparently innocuous words, actions, and symbols are frequently employed as weapons, used to designate and enforce group boundaries. What street someone lives on, whether they read *The Guardian* or *The Times*, which soccer team they support, Celtic or Rangers, are all interpreted as tokens of a person’s religious background and political affiliation. More ominously, the celebration of holidays, the painting of curbstones, the flying of flags, and the creation of murals all identify who is welcome and safe in a particular neighborhood and who is not. Active political arguments (Kenney, 1998) are waged via these various assertions of cultural identity: nationalist graffiti proclaims their solidarity with liberation movements in Palestine, Turkey, and Africa, while ubiquitous murals employ religious imagery to portray the innocent suffering of IRA detainees and the justice and freedom to which they aspire. Loyalist images, meanwhile, shout warnings of imminent threat while commemorating the valor and sacrifice of those who fight to defend Queen and country.

Whether in the case of murals, parades, or flags, each assertion of cultural identity effects a twofold purpose: it inspires one’s own community and intimidates the other. In the first instance, the approximately 2,500 Unionist parades each year (Bryan, 1998) celebrate events that are fundamental to the Unionist identity such as the victory of Protestant King William of Orange over his Catholic rival King James that secured the ascendancy of Protestant power in Ireland, or the Siege of Derry that proved vital in

stalling James' troops and allowing William time to advance. These acts of commemoration are in fact more than simply celebratory, they are active steps in "inventing" the very traditions they purportedly evoke (Hobsbaum & Ranger, 1983). For example, recalling the Siege of Derry not only affirms its significance in contributing to William's victory, it also rekindles the feeling of being "under siege" that undergirds the Unionist identity and political agenda: a persistent fear of being outnumbered and cut off from outside aid. Each of these claims is clearly debatable: Protestants continue to comprise over 50% of the population in Northern Ireland, and ongoing investigations such as the Seville and Stevens Inquiries document a long history of collusion between the British in Northern Ireland and Unionist political and paramilitary organizations. However, by constantly reaffirming their continuity with a past during which these fears may have had more basis in fact, contemporary Unionists are able to affirm the legitimacy of "defending themselves" by resorting to tactics that might otherwise be regarded as reprehensible.

Such affirmations of cultural heritage, however, whether on the part of nationalists and unionists, are not directed only towards members of their own community. Rather, each mural, flag, and parade is also an expression of power: the power to maintain or deface a mural or to parade when and where one pleases or to prevent others from doing so. Each of these actions asserts a particular interpretation of national and cultural identity in opposition to other competing interpretations. They also have the more tangible effect of "creating space" (Buckley, 1998) by maintaining or

contesting boundaries that signify who is welcome and safe in a particular location and by reinforcing the segregation between communities despite their physical proximity. The recurring tensions surrounding parade routes illustrate the degree to which fear and intimidation are implicitly entwined with this issue, particularly when routes encircle or even penetrate previously embattled enclaves. Occasionally, the deliberately provocative nature of these power displays become particularly evident, as when Unionist paraders incorporate a five fingered salute into their march along a street where five Catholic youth were killed the previous year or begin goose-stepping along the street where two local youth were kicked to death.

Central to these symbolic debates within Northern Ireland (debates with very physical, oftentimes destructive, consequences) are rival claims to the identity of native dweller versus settler. Historically, Irish Nationalists have laid claim to the mantle of being the native dwellers of the island of Ireland, pointing to their Gaelic origins as precursors to the Norman incursions and portraying the plantation policy of awarding confiscated land to Protestant settlers as a usurpation of ownership rights from rightful claimants. From this perspective, the nationalist cause represents legitimate aspirations for self-determination seeking to return control over Ireland to its original inhabitants.

Traditionally, Unionists have granted much of the historical accuracy of this Nationalist account but questioned its moral relevance to the modern situation. Portraying their settler ancestors as unwitting pawns in the contest between English and Irish, Unionists regard themselves as a beleaguered community cut adrift from their

Scottish origins and left with no choice but to endure and prosper in their adopted homeland. Closely identifying with the Afrikaners, they define their identity not with respect to origins but to a long history of loyalty and endurance under adverse conditions, a history they interpret as establishing their right to the land they were given (McCaughey, 1993). More recently, populist scholars have gone further in contesting the very accuracy of the Nationalist claims of historic antecedence. Using geological evidence to hypothesize the existence of ice bridges connecting Scotland and Ireland during the Ice Ages, these scholars posit the presence of the Cruthlin, a pre-Gaelic peoples purportedly driven from Ireland by the Celts (McBride, 1996). Claiming linguistic and ethnic ties to this tribe, these Unionists argue for a revival of an “Ulster Scots” identity as a means of asserting their own status as the native inhabitants of Ireland.

Given this backdrop, discussions concerning symbols of national and cultural identity are far from academic, particularly in cross-cultural settings. The historic and political stakes each community has invested in asserting competing and often contradictory interpretations of these symbols are great. Also at stake are concerns of a more immediate nature: the ability to feel welcome and walk safely, to be secure in one’s own home, even to cheer for a favorite soccer team. Given this background, it is not surprising that the critical examination of symbols such as a national flag is regarded as a dangerous enterprise, one often avoided in public settings and, once engaged, likely to evoke powerful, visceral responses such as “I think it’s a rubbish flag.”

Experiencing controversy in education. Guidance materials provided to teachers by the Northern Irish Department of Education state that EMU should provide students the “opportunity to study aspects of the past and present from a variety of perspectives and to deal with controversial issues relevant to this society” (CCEA, 2003). Directly countering the pervasive tendency to avoid broaching potentially divisive issues, EMU recommends embedding such discussions within all subject areas of the curriculum. In so doing, the hope is that students will:

Develop an awareness of the many dimensions of events and developments and that these can be viewed and interpreted from a range of standpoints, learn to respect themselves and others, to appreciate interdependence of people, to know about and understand what is shared within a society as well as what is different about their cultural traditions, and appreciate how conflict may be handled in non-violent ways (CCEA, 2003).

Despite the widespread failure of schools to fully implement EMU (Smith, 1999), recent changes in the official curriculum do provide numerous opportunities to examine issues central to the sectarian conflict in Northern Ireland. Within Northern Ireland, the precise content of each subject area is established by statutory orders that not only prescribe required courses for each grade level but also detail “programs of study” that specify the content to be covered within each class. A comprehensive revision of the curriculum was completed in 1999 and placed a greater emphasis upon examining the

sources of the current conflict. For example, the syllabus for Stage Three (conforming approximately to American grades 8-10) provided modules on “Union to Partition” and “Rivalry and Conflict” while the Stage Four syllabus (approximating to grades 11 and 12) created modules entitled “Reform to Rebellion in Ireland: 1775-1800” and “Nationalism and Union in Ireland: 1800-1900.” Likewise, the syllabus for Politics established “Northern Ireland: Past and Present” as one of three required modules.

These changes marked a significant departure from the previous curriculum. As one senior teacher explained, “before the change in the syllabus, you could actually study A-level politics without touching Northern Ireland which was incredible. And, likewise, you could study history without touching on anything dealing with Northern Ireland” (personal communication, March 2003). Contrasting the current curriculum to her own experience as a student, another teacher recalled that “in the past, some schools could be very selective in what topics were chosen. I know, for example, when I was in school, and I went to a Catholic school, I had never heard of some of the Protestant political leaders of the late 19th early 20th century, never knew they existed because it was just glossed over” (personal communication, April 2003). In contrast, the new syllabus not only provides “lots of opportunities to discuss issues where there would be a nationalist-unionist debate” but also ensures that teachers “look at these issues in a balanced way where, for example, when we’re looking at things like the Home Rule movement we’re also looking at unionist opposition to it or, if we’re looking at nationalist gun running in

1914 we're also looking at unionist gun running and trying to have balance there” (personal communication, April 2003).

In addition to inserting controversial content into existing courses, pilot programs are currently under development introducing students to themes in Human Rights Education and Citizenship. Each of these initiatives seeks to develop students' background knowledge and commitments in order to place discussions of controversial issues within a wider theoretical framework “underpinned by concepts of pluralism, social justice, democracy, and human rights” (DENI, 2002, p. 21). Responding to commitments associated with the European Convention on Human Rights as well as the Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement, these programs were launched in 1999 by offering a year's training in human rights and discussion facilitation to faculty representatives from twenty-five schools across the country. These teachers were then responsible for replicating this training for fellow teachers within their schools, with whom they would then plan and deliver relevant curriculum starting with Year Eight and progressing upwards until it would be required of all grade levels by 2006.

A number of scholarly and administrative resources have been developed to support teachers in learning to modify their teaching in accordance with these new curricular demands. The Council for Curriculum, Examinations, and Assessment (CCEA), a quasi-governmental agency closely affiliated with the Department of Education, publishes an annual report providing case studies in good practice and curricular case studies for use as resources in implementing EMU themes in the

classroom. The University of Ulster, meanwhile, maintains a sprawling website, the Conflict Archives on the Internet (CAIN), that provides source material on the background, statistics, and chronology of the Troubles and Peace Process as well as historical and cultural information on Northern Irish society. A number of teachers asserted that such resources have proven invaluable tools since most teachers have themselves had little academic or professional preparation for teaching about controversial issues: “I definitely use the CAIN website to prepare for my classes, not so much for the students to use themselves but to get the resources for them to use” (personal communication, April 2003). Equally significant as the increased availability of curricular resources has been the evolution of an increasingly open and supportive climate in which teachers feel secure in broaching controversial subjects with students:

I definitely think it has become easier, definitely. There’s been a change in the mindset of the parents and a change in the mindset of the students coming up that they have witnessed a degree of peace and the euphoria of the referendum. Certainly there’s still extremists on both sides and a degree of violence there as a backdrop, but I think people are more prepared to empathize now and accept the revisionism that has gone on within nationalism and republicanism (personal communication, April 2003).

Despite this progress, significant sources of resistance remain to reshaping the curriculum in a fashion more inclusive of controversial content. Chief among these is a

long history of antipathy within Great Britain towards any curricular reforms regarded as having political overtones or motivations. Among critics on both the right and left wings of the political spectrum, concepts such as education for citizenship, civics, and political education have long been regarded as deeply suspect, simultaneously accused of masking a subversive liberal agenda breeding social critique and discontent by some and of promulgating inherently conservative values of deference and docility by others (Frazier, 2000). Perhaps as a result, inspection reports commissioned by the Department of Education suggest that, while most heads of school are publicly supportive of EMU, very few are personally involved in its implementation in any significant way. Reflecting this lack of investment, within many schools the legally mandated position of EMU Coordinator often remains vacant or ill-defined, little or no planning for EMU occurs on a whole school level, and assessment of either student or institutional progress towards its goals remains infrequent (DENI, 2000).

Many teachers expressed a growing sense of frustration, not with the content or intent of EMU, with which most sympathized, but with being asked to respond to yet one more in a dizzying array of educational reforms: “There is maybe a wee bit of cynicism about this latest initiative because there’s been so many curriculum initiatives and teachers have had to deal with so many changes that I think some are actually quite weary and wary about anything new that comes up. They’re thinking, oh what’s next” (personal communication, March 2003). Confronted with balancing myriad responsibilities, some teachers felt that the attempt to incorporate EMU themes into the curriculum “required an

inordinate amount of time and effort for nothing because at the end of the day it was not examined and you were already doing much of it naturally in many subjects. It was such a paper exercise just to keep track of it that it became a nonsense” (personal communication, April 2003).

Such concerns may be symptomatic of a teaching profession that is increasingly held accountable to an array of external pressure groups, but they are also exacerbated by factors internal to the educational system. In particular, the institutionalized commitment to high stakes testing covering a broad range of factual knowledge increases the perceived opportunity costs associated with considering issues or concerns not included on those assessments. For teachers, students, parents, and administrators, the decision to devote time to anything not tested can appear a high-risk gamble, regardless of the social, ethical, or academic merits of what is being taught:

From a teachers point of view you have to teach for the examination because at the end of the day, your children have to pass. We’re trying to do our best for them so that they will succeed and get their university placements. It’s very stressful for the pupils and for the teacher, and it’s a grave responsibility. So it does restrict you, it effects the time we have in terms of teacher-pupil contact and just the luxury of perhaps deviating just a little. Exams affect everything from the breadth and depth of what we cover to how much room there is for discussion. You have to keep focused on the specifications and delivering those. It’s just what’s going

to be tested that is what we're going to teach (personal communication, March 2003).

The picture painted by educators was one in which opportunities for students to encounter controversial issues nominally existed within the revamped curriculum but were severely circumscribed by institutionalized constraints. Teachers readily acknowledged recent efforts to introduce more of a focus upon the social, historical, and political dimensions of the current conflict within the official curriculum, although they noted that most of this content was concentrated within higher level history and politics courses that many students may opt not to take. More critically, they lamented that the emphasis placed upon transmitting and assessing a broad swath of factual knowledge limited their ability to employ participative methods such as discussion to enhance students' understanding of the controversial issues they did encounter.

In discussing their prior educational experiences, students participating in the Close Encounters program echoed many of the observations and concerns related by teachers. Though many students recalled having learned about the roots of the conflict in history courses, most pointed out that they had completed their requirements in history years ago and thus were able to recollect little of what they had been taught: "You learn some of it in history, about how it all started hundreds of years ago. I'm in fifth year now so I'm done taking history," and, "Let's see, when did I last do history? It was, like, years ago so I don't know much. I'm all done with that now" (personal communications, May 2003). Students also supported teachers' claims of being constrained in the

pedagogies they were able to employ: “We didn’t have any student discussions; it was all just teachers and textbooks” (Nuala, April 2003). Reinforcing the perception that the emphasis upon examinations stifles the ability of teachers and students to indulge in discussions, Alin suggested that “because I’m not taking honor’s and exams we have a lot more time to just talk about the issues” (personal communication, April 2003). Further, despite the recent emergence of a variety of issues critical to the future of community relations in Northern Ireland (the suspension of the Northern Ireland Assembly and resumption of British direct rule, popular campaigns both enticing and resisting Catholic participation in the police force, Seville and Steven’s Inquiries uncovering evidence of collusion, as well as highly publicized international incidents associated with alleged IRA espionage and gun running), teachers apparently felt compelled to adhere to prescribed subject matter rather than addressing contemporary issues: “We don’t talk about the current situation at all: paramilitaries, violence, the Good Friday Accord, none of that. That just isn’t taught” (Siobahn, May 2003).

Where opportunities to learn about the Troubles were presented, they were notable both for their rarity and because they were generally perceived as resulting from some unusual circumstance. Some students went so far as to suggest that such opportunities arose in spite of rather than because of the officially prescribed curriculum: “The other day we were having a really interesting discussion about Protestants and Catholics but it had nothing to do with the subject. It was like a free period because we had a sub teacher. It’s not like it’s really in the curriculum” (Niamh, May 2003). In fact,

less than twenty percent of students spontaneously mentioned school when asked where they had learned about the Troubles, their history, or about “the other” community. Instead, most students attributed what knowledge they did possess to sources such as their friends, parents, church, and watching the news: “I think I know quite a lot. I’ve hung around with enough people to know the basics. I’ve learned some in history class, but it’s more like from just hanging out with friends mostly (Alin, April 2003). While Evelyn also claimed to know quite a lot, “because the news really fills you in on what’s important” (personal communication, May 2003), most students complained about the limited information that was made available to them, suggesting that “things are sort of kept from us” (Siobahn, May 2003) by both teachers and parents. Speculating on the reasons for this, students surmised that others wanted to “keep them away from the troubles some people have” (Siobahn, May 2003), just “didn’t really care about politics” (Leila, May 2003), or simply assumed a level of knowledge that students’ didn’t possess:

You’ve heard of all these paramilitary groups but no one actually knows much about them. Well, people do, but they take it for granted that you understand all about it but you actually don’t because it’s not talked about openly. You get the general drift of what’s going on but then they tend to steer off the subject and won’t discuss it too much (Niamh, May 2003).

For Aaron and Roan, this reluctance to examine controversial issues associated with the Troubles was typified by their school’s response to being constantly menaced by a group of sectarian youth. Over a period of years, local youth had repeatedly hurled

bricks through classroom windows during school hours while threatening and occasionally attacking students with hammers and bats both before and after school. One teacher explained that “it got to points last year where there were four or five police land-rovers down the bottom of the road every evening when you were going home from school, so you were just trying to get out of there as quick as possible” (personal communication, April 2003). As a result, students were no longer allowed to walk home anymore “because you just get beat if you do” (Aaron, April 2003). Acting under the assumption that the attackers are students from a neighboring school, administrators also began patrolling the wooded areas between the two schools and altered their release time to allow students more time to escape before the other school lets out.

Beyond these administrative changes, however, the response of school personnel to this ongoing situation has been largely muted despite the recommendation that “teachers should take advantage of opportunities [to pursue EMU themes] arising from current events, local incidents and initiatives, and reactions to events which touch the lives of individuals and the community” (CCEA, 2003, p. 11). According to Aaron, “The teachers don’t really say anything. They just say get the bus, but they’re not really supportive at all. The school doesn’t mention the other groups or the paramilitaries. You would talk about it among yourselves but not with the teachers” (personal communication, April 2003). Despite the fact that this state of affairs has persisted for over two years, teachers have yet to meet as a faculty to formulate an appropriate response or to discuss how, or whether, to discuss the situation with students. Instead, teachers expressed the opinion that, where students’ questions, concerns, or fears arising

from the situation did impinge upon their classroom learning, they were more a cause for maintaining discipline than fostering reflection or inquiry:

I suppose to a certain extent problems do come into school because at the beginning of class those conversations are going on as they're coming in but I try to quell it as soon as possible. I feel that they shouldn't be allowing it to come into their schoolwork because they don't really understand what they're talking about. I don't instigate any of those sort of conversations because the curriculum that I'm following doesn't bring in an opportunity for these discussions. They know when they come in here, they're going to do the work that I set them to do, that once you come into this room all conversations are done and it's your turn to work on what I'm asking you to do (personal communication, April 2003).

Though the situation to which "St. Joseph's" is responding is extreme, it is by no means anomalous. Across Northern Ireland, Department of Education inspection reports reveal that teachers are generally uncomfortable with and unwilling to teach about controversial issues, particularly those that deal with sectarian conflict (DENI, 2000). As a result, though curricular resources dealing with the conflict are readily available, they are rarely utilized despite the fact that approximately 80% of secondary students wish they knew more about the conflict and politics in Northern Ireland (Democratic Dialogue, 1997). For the students participating in Close Encounters, the overarching effect of this perceived pattern of indifference, avoidance, and obfuscation regarding matters that

immediately impact their daily existence was that they felt both uninformed and disempowered:

I don't know anything that's really going on in Northern Ireland or in Ireland and I'd like to know because then I wouldn't feel so smothered. Smothered, because there's so much violence on T.V. that I don't like watching it and I don't like reading the newspapers for the same reason. I don't know much about the modern day stuff that's going on and I'd like to (Siobahn, May 2003).

The Close Encounters context. The very issues typically avoided within the schools are those used by the Close Encounters program to instigate dialogue and reconciliation. Sean, the program leader, explains that bringing students' conflicts and disagreements into the open is necessary in order to counter what he regards an insidious tendency to ignore the very real differences that exist between groups in Northern Ireland:

One of the difficulties that we have in this society is that people have not been willing to engage around the issue of difference. People have always tried to reinforce in this society that we're all the same—why can't we just get on with each other, and one of the harsh realities of this society for a long time is that we're not all the same. We live in a society where there are fundamental lines of difference and people are coming from very different perspectives and backgrounds. I think the first step is that we need to acknowledge that that's there and that the conflict just doesn't

come out of the blue because there are bad people around. It happened because we have here two groups that are different from each other, almost diametrically opposed to each other in some ways, wanting very different things, and we need to address that. And that's what this program is all about, enabling young people to engage with each other along those lines of difference so that they learn something more about people that are different from themselves and about their background and perspectives (personal communication, May 2003).

Accordingly, after having spent over sixty hours attempting to create a climate of mutual trust and respect, the program presented students with numerous opportunities to share representations of their cultural backgrounds, to explain their understanding of and attachment to these symbols, and to discuss their reactions to one another's stories.

While early sessions of the program provided opportunities for students to disclose information about themselves as individuals, they studiously avoided potentially contentious issues in an attempt to build a climate of trust and respect. In a marked departure from this previous trend, an afternoon session on the second day of the second weekend provided students an opening to reveal something of their cultural identities. Entering the meeting hall after lunch, students were divided into small groups and instructed to trace the body of a group member upon a long sheet of white butcher paper. Once the tracing was completed, they were then asked to write or draw individual responses to a series of prompts upon the poster: i) Where do you live? ii) What special holidays does your family celebrate? iii) Which newspapers are read in your home? iv)

How does your family spend a typical Sunday? and v) When did you first realize that there were important differences between groups in Northern Ireland? Though superficially non-controversial, in Northern Ireland each of these subjects can be interpreted as a cultural marker that identifies a person's religious and political affiliations. Consequently, they are subjects usually avoided in "mixed company."

For the students at Close Encounters, the "identity poster" exercise confronted them with a choice of how much of their cultural backgrounds to reveal to one another. In the group to which I was attached, student responses revealed a range of comfort levels with doing so. Alin, a student with a history of integrated schooling, was clearly comfortable with disclosing her Catholic background and nationalist sympathies, declaring St. Patrick's Day her favorite holiday and the murder of a family friend by the UVF (a Protestant paramilitary) as a seminal moment in her political development. Niamh, another Catholic, was more circumspect, emphasizing regional characteristics in her responses: drawing a picture of the beach to represent where she was from and describing the annual Duck Dive, a tradition of jumping into the sea fully clothed, as her family's principle holiday. Notably, none of the Protestant students mentioned the highly divisive 12th of July among the holidays celebrated by their families despite the fact that it is regarded a defining moment in the Unionist calendar and several students specifically referred to it in describing the cultural backgrounds during individual interviews conducted later in the program. Exhibiting a similar reticence, Kieran, a Catholic, chose not to reveal that he had lost a cousin in the Omagh bombing five years

earlier, simply stating “never really, I guess” when asked when he had first realized there were significant differences in Northern Ireland.

Clearly, not all students were equally ready to “engage across those lines of difference” at this point. However, despite the continued caution exercised by a number of students, there was indication of a progressively increased comfort level even within this single exercise, particularly once students began discussing their responses. With the very first prompt students had been asked to respond to, Kieran represented “where he lived” by drawing a set of genitals upon the tracing of the body, continuing a pattern of using off-color humor to express his apparent disinterest in the formal sessions during the program. As the exercise continued, his responses were increasingly relevant to the given prompts (with the previously noted exception of the last question dealing with noticing differences among groups). Once students began explaining their responses, Kieran remained detached yet attentive to the discussion, offering little but maintaining eye contact with the speakers and refraining from the off color interruptions that he had previously been accustomed to make. During his concluding interview two months later, Kieran recalled being intrigued by “that session where we had to write down on the body because it showed what different people did on special days and the like. It was interesting because we don’t really talk about any of that in school where I come from” (personal communication, May 2003). For other students, questions such as what their families did on Sundays were significant both because of the content of the responses (Siobahn recalled being reassured to learn hers was not the only Catholic family that

didn't regularly attend mass) and because it helped to legitimize sharing culturally sensitive information such as religion as an acceptable topic of conversation:

The session where we were doing the drawing the pictures of people seemed boring at times but then you actually realized that you were learning loads about each other. People started off just drawing things but then when we started discussing it as well we got into all sorts of things. Our group started off just drawing the pictures but then everyone started talking about going to church and then that led onto loads of things like whether if you were Catholic that meant you had to call yourself Irish and if you were Protestant did you have to call yourself British. We just got on that way and nobody was like embarrassed by it (Niamh, May 2003).

Later sessions continued to invite students to share information about their backgrounds. Midway through the third weekend, students living in or near the same towns were formed into groups and given twenty minutes to construct "body sculptures" depicting their town. In describing their town to the rest of the students, group members were not to move or speak but use only their bodies to present a still picture of scenes they felt were representative of where they lived. After groups held their pose for approximately a minute, the audience was then invited to describe what they saw in each scene, and only afterwards was the group permitted to explain their intended meaning.

Of the six groups that presented, two in particular illustrate the range of responses. In one group of three boys from an industrial town north of Belfast, one student held another around the neck while the third member held a closed fist near his

head. Interpreting this scene, the audience was unanimous in declaring that a fight was taking place in which two boys were ganging up on the other. The boys confirmed this explanation, but added the further clarification that the boy was being beaten up by two Ranger supporters because he was wearing a Celtic jersey. No further explanation was given, as all students readily understood the nature of the rivalry between the supporters of the two perennial powerhouses from the Scottish soccer league, with Rangers traditionally supported by Protestants and Celtic by Catholics to the rest of the students (the team was originally sponsored by a Catholic owned textile mill in Glasgow and historically had been one of the only teams to sign Catholic players). The last group to present was comprised of three girls from Portrush, a beach town along the northern coast. One of these girls stood with her hands raised in front of her face, another crouched with bended knees nearby, and the third lay on her back with her arms by her side. This time, the audience offered a wide array of interpretations, with some suggesting that the first girl was hiding, smoking, or reading something, while the second girl was relieving herself or getting ready to pounce on someone, and the third girl was either sleeping or dead. Laughing and shaking their heads, the girls explained that all were wrong and that they had been, in order, a tourist taking a photograph, someone surfing, and a sun-bather.

While all the students found great humor in both the constructing and interpreting the various scenes, both students and staff suggested that the exercise had helped highlight important dynamics within the group. Much as discussing their family's activities on Sundays during the previous session served to legitimize religion as a topic

of conversation among students, the boys' portrayal of the fight between soccer fans signaled that it was safe to broach uncomfortable subjects. This, in turn, set an important precedent that other students subsequently followed:

I actually think that discomfort is actually quite good in this situation because if people feel challenged by the image of a Celtic jersey or whatever, than that's a good indicator of where people are at and let's get that into the open and see what the issues are. After the lads showed that image, later on the next weekend I heard Julia and Aileen talking about being Rangers supporters so now it was like okay to do that whereas maybe they were a wee bit uncomfortable with that beforehand (Sean, May 2003).

Beyond legitimizing the discussion of controversial content, the exercise also served to draw attention to class distinctions among students. The stark contrast between the scenes described by the three boys and the three girls not only reflected differences between the towns in which they live, but also differences in how they perceive their own relation to the sectarian conflict. Reflecting upon the activity, Sean observed that "people from very safe or middle class backgrounds were not sharing the same types of images as people from working class backgrounds. The images of conflict were in there because of the people from working class backgrounds" (personal communication, May 2003). At one level, this activity provided an opportunity for students such as Leila gain access to realities beyond their own immediate experience:

When we had to shape ourselves into an image of our community, some people were showing bad areas and it was like horrible stuff. Roan and Declan said that they were lucky to be at Corrymeela because where they were from some people were going around beating up Catholics just because they were going about town. There isn't really anything bad that happens in Portrush, just a lot of people on dope, that's about it (personal communication, May 2003).

More importantly, particularly for those students who regarded themselves as uninvolved in or even unaffected by the conflict, the images shared by students such as Roan and Declan helped interject an element of controversial content into discussions from which it might otherwise have remained absent.

Later in the same weekend, another session confronted students with the contentious issue of national identification. The "flag exercise" described in the opening vignette of this section invited students to discuss the various symbols found on the flags of Great Britain, Ireland, and Northern Ireland. Admonished not to make negative comments about the flags, students were placed in mixed identity groups of five or six and asked initially to name each flag and the country represented by it. Directed next to name the colors on the Irish flag, students were unanimous in naming green and white as two of the three colors, though both orange and gold were offered to describe the third color. Of those who described the flag as green, white, and gold, one suggested that it couldn't be orange because "that's the color of Protestants" (Roan, April 2003).

Countering this, Julia retorted that the green didn't stand for Ireland but for money. At

this point, Sean reasserted the ground rule not to use negative language, adding that “each flag means something to someone here and what you say could be hurtful.” Reflecting upon the use of the flags in this activity and the strong responses they evoked, Sean explained:

The thing about using the flags is that they challenge all of us in terms of highlighting the fact that that piece of material still does something emotionally to each of us. On one hand we glibly say its just a piece of cloth and its ridiculous that all these people are always getting on about flags, but then we produce a flag in a room and you can sense the atmosphere just changing. So that exercise maybe takes away a wee bit of that complacency that maybe some of us feel about ourselves and the way we are (personal communication, May 2003).

In part because of the very fact that students failed to adhere to the ground-rule about refraining from negative language, the flag exercise helped call attention to the emotional attachments that students felt towards one or the other of the flags hanging within the room. Following upon earlier activities that touched upon class and religion, it explicitly placed the question of political difference upon students’ agenda for discussion and further eroded the complacency of students inclined to consider themselves untouched by such issues.

Interpreting controversial content. Constructing an identity poster out of culturally inscribed symbols, forming body sculptures depicting their community, discussing the meaning of different flags—each of these sessions exposed students to

different conflicting perspectives within a supportive climate in the manner prescribed by inter-group contact theorists. The objective for doing so, according to the program leader, was to help students reflect upon assumptions that they had been socialized to accept uncritically: “What we’re doing here is asking students to engage with some issues so that maybe they’ll start asking some hard questions, and by asking those questions of themselves, what they’re really doing is asking them of their family and their community in a way that might ruffle some feathers” (Sean, June, 2003). However, as the following vignette illustrates, students frequently failed to engage with provocative claims that could have instigated such a process.

Pieces of poster paper are taped together on the floor of a large room, arranged in the shape of a spiral. Areas of open space are left for students to sit within the circling prongs. Pens, markers, crayons, paints and brushes are scattered along the paper. Twenty students sit in silence as they concentrate on the various symbols and illustrations they are creating upon the paper. They’ve been asked to draw three images: the first portraying how a stranger who had never been there before would picture the community in which the students live, the second illustrating what impression they would like that visitor to have, and the third depicting a hope for the future. Each prompt is followed by five minutes of silent drawing, after which the next prompt is given.

When the last prompt is completed, each student is invited to explain the images they have created. “I’m from Belfast,” says a girl of fifteen, pointing to a dark picture of high buildings. “It’s pretty dirty and there’s junkies down on the corner near where I

live.” “Do they actually shoot up right there?” “Wow, where I come from there’s nothing but sheep,” “Lucky you don’t have to go far,” the questions, comments, and jokes ring out. When it comes to Declan’s turn, he points out a map of Ireland, North and South, that he has outlined and shaded in green, white, and orange—the colors of the flag of the Republic (see Figure 4.2). Above the drawing the caption reads: United Ireland. “It’s just what I want,” exclaims Declan. No one responds or asks a question. A hushed five seconds go by before the next student points to an image of sand and sun and cheerfully remarks, “Where I come from there’s lots of beaches and everyone comes to have a lot of fun on holiday.” Asked later about her reaction to Declan’s drawing, Alice, a Protestant, shrugs: “that’s just Declan; he didn’t mean anything by it.”

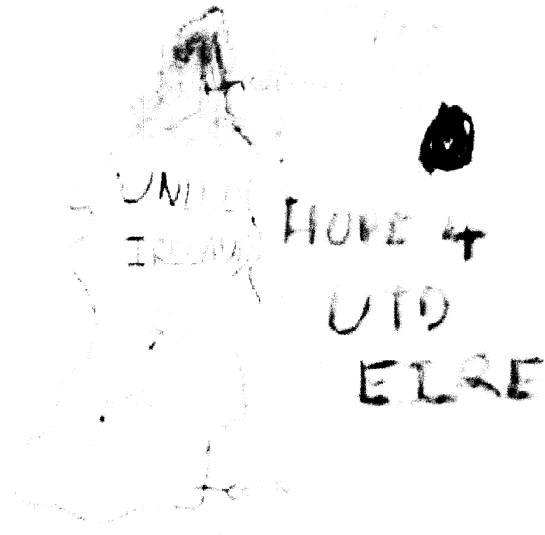


Figure 4.2: United Ireland

Throughout the Close Encounters program, students employed a variety of response strategies through which they diminished the controversial nature of value and knowledge claims that conflicted with their own. By discounting the accuracy of information presented by other students or denying its relevance to their own personal situations, students limited the risk that other perspectives might cause them to reconsider their prior assumptions. In the case of the identity posters exercise, Roan’s story about

being chased after school by bat wielding Protestant youth was met with skepticism by Nuala. Attending an exclusive grammar school located miles from Roan's school, the story was quite possibly well outside her own personal experience. However, given her own background as a Protestant and a resident of the same town, Roan's story held the potential to disrupt her comfortable self-concept on a number of levels. In discussing her cultural socialization during an interview near the end of the program, Nuala described her family's involvement in the 12th of July parades: "Last year I went to the parade and I thought it was brilliant because my uncle was marching in it because he's in the flute band" (personal communication, April 2003). Nuala clearly considered her involvement in the parade as an expression of family and cultural pride rather than an act of intimidation directed against the Catholics community. Acknowledging that many Protestants view the event as a fervent assertion of their Unionist aspirations, however, Nuala's support for the parade could well have implicated her and her family, albeit indirectly, in contributing to the sectarian passions motivating the youth threatening Roan and his classmates. Her response to Roan's story helped insulate her against such a possibility: "I thought it was a bit over the top. We don't get on in our town, but it's not as bad as all that" (personal communication, April 2003).

Confronted with the same story, other students also moved to distance themselves from its implications. Evelyn, a middle class Catholic from a town far to the south, granted that the story may have been accurate but suggested it was a product of unique circumstances that bore no relation to her own: "It wouldn't really impact me at all; there's not that much trouble where I live. In Newry, there's mostly Catholics and only a

few Protestants, so it's not really an issue. I know all about it, the news really fills you in on what's important, but it's really just Belfast that they're showing you." Evelyn's father had been killed four years earlier in a paramilitary attack.

For Nuala and Evelyn, discounting the relevance and accuracy of Roan's story served to protect self-understandings with which they were comfortable. For other students, the reluctance to engage with controversial content arose from a more conscious motivation. The desire to preserve the interpersonal friendships that had been formed during the early parts of the program caused some students to resist efforts to engage one another's group identifications. One student expressed the fear that "if we were to sit down and talk about our problems with the other side, I would find it extremely awkward. I mean, it does have to be talked about at some time but I think I'd end up not taking part because I wouldn't want to hurt other people's feelings" (Alin, April 2003).

Even when students did engage with questions of national or cultural identity, many consistently sought to minimize the wider implications of controversial statements by interpreting them in interpersonal rather than inter-group terms. During the course of the art spiral described in the preceding vignette, Declan's declaration of his support for a United Ireland espoused a profoundly political position commonly considered a denial of the legitimacy of the Unionist perspective (English, 1996). For Alice, a Protestant given to wearing a Union Jack pendant in her belly button, even such a provocative statement failed to provoke her own Unionist commitments because she viewed it as stating a personal preference rather than professing of a political position: "Aye, that's just Declan. I didn't have a reaction to it because that's just what he's like; he's just proud to

be Catholic” (personal communication, May 2003). Despite the programmatic intent to employ various exercises to instigate dialogue concerning controversial questions of nationality, class, and religion, students often engaged only superficially with these issues during the sessions and dispensed with them altogether once the sessions were over. As one student explained, “It’s just irrelevant what religion you are. When the sessions stop, we stop talking about that sort of thing and just move to more personal kinds of things” (Siobahn, April 2003). On such occasions, students’ commitment to maintain their personal relationships proved more salient than either their political or religious identifications.

Getting to Dialogue: Conflictual Pedagogy in Practice

The group of five students is nearing the end of its discussion concerning the “identity poster” students have recently created. Sharon, a twenty-year-old volunteer who is currently a participant of Corrymeela’s young adults program, facilitates the discussion. Coming to the final question, she asks: “What about this one, when did you first realize there were differences in Northern Ireland?”

Four students take turns explaining the stories that inspired their drawings: Alin recounts the time a family friend was shot by a Protestant paramilitary, while Roan describes being chased by a group of boys because he was wearing a Celtic jersey. Rather than discussing their own drawings, Eileen and Niamh say how shocked they are by Roan’s story and ask him to provide more details. Finally, Sharon completes the

circle by asking: "What about you Kieran, you didn't really draw anything. When did you first realize there were differences between groups in Northern Ireland?"

"Never really, I guess."

"Oh come on, really?"

"Well, over in Boncranagh, we're in Ireland so everyone's basically the same."

"Well, what about the Omagh bomb" prompts Sharon, having learned earlier that Kieran's cousin was among those killed. "Weren't there some lads from Boncranagh killed in that?"

"Yeah, I guess so."

"That must have had some impact?"

"No, not really."

Under the mantle of Education for Mutual Understanding, educators within Northern Ireland have constructed a wide range of opportunities for students to explore questions of identity, culture, and conflict both within the statutory curriculum and through various contact programs such as those offered by Corrymeela. At the heart of these efforts is a conviction that inter-community contact and dialogue are conducive to creating a more peaceful future in Northern Ireland and that "if we explore our histories together with people who have experienced the opposite side of the fear relationship, a new history may eventually flourish" (Morrow, et al, 1991, p. 30). For such a result to obtain, however, this shared exploration must be conducted with "great sensitivity and skill" such that all participants are encouraged and willing to listen to, appreciate, and

question the perspectives of others concerning potentially “sensitive issues” (DENI, 2000). Within Northern Ireland, such willingness on the part of students and teachers is frequently not in evidence. To the contrary, official inspection reports indicate that the actual practice of EMU is often “characterized by class discussions which remained at a superficial level, missed opportunities to promote understanding of other points of view, and failure to challenge stereotypical views” (DENI, 2000, p. 18).

Hindering the full realization of EMU objectives are a multitude of cultural, institutional, and sociological factors. Because the two communities in Northern Ireland are so deeply divided along religious and political lines and yet so similar in terms of language and physical appearance, most inhabitants are socialized to exercise extreme caution in broaching potentially controversial issues in public. Learning to navigate differences that are simultaneously difficult to detect and potentially explosive, both children and adults become adept at looking for subtle clues ranging from a person’s family name, neighborhood, or school as an indication of their religious and political affiliation. Until a person’s identity has been established, however, it is often perceived as a matter of personal safety to refrain from revealing too much about oneself or entering into too candid a conversation. Although this observance of “ritual politeness” operates effectively as a personal defense, it does so at a price:

Everyday life is kept normal by avoiding all political subjects in mixed company... And yet, the experience of listening to other people telling about their own experiences, of learning to cope with the feeling this evokes, and of being listened to without having what we say argued away,

are what polite avoidance usually stops. It means we have little chance to see how things look to the other or to cope with the fears and anxieties such things expose” (Morrow & Wright, 1991, p. 11).

For both teachers and students, the habit of avoidance and the lack of experience with dealing with discomfort can inhibit the very conversations EMU seeks to instigate.

Directed to teach students how to understand and respond positively to conflict (EMU Objective #2), a majority of teachers in Northern Ireland report lacking confidence in their own ability to direct conversations that they have been habituated to avoid (DENI, 2000). Further, given that their own personal and professional socialization has been characterized a propensity to evade contentious issues, teachers suggest that they have not been provided adequate professional development opportunities to acquire the skills and confidence to handle such issues in the classroom. While both principle teacher education programs in Belfast now offer workshops in conducting controversial issues, the workshops are optional rather than required and tend to be sparsely attended. Similarly, teachers interested in attaining such skills indicate that the in-service programs offered by the Department of Education are often cancelled due to lack of interest.

Yet another obstacle facing teachers engaged in EMU arises from a frequent disconnect between the values and practices encouraged by schools and those embraced within students’ homes. Particularly where schools are located in neighborhoods characterized by a high degree of sectarianism, “teachers have to exercise considerable sensitivity in promoting non-violent approaches to the resolution of differences when the values of the school and the local community clash” (DENI, 2000, p. 18). This may also

hold true within communities self-identifying as respectable, middle class neighborhoods that choose to depict sectarianism as a problem confined to working class areas such as the notoriously partisan Shankill or the Falls. In such instances, this self-perception may serve to mask community members' own prejudices behind a thin veneer of self-proclaimed tolerance while also reinforcing their sense of personal security by portraying the threat of sectarian violence as "someone else's problem" (Morrow, et al, 1991). As a result, teachers, parents, as well as students within such communities often express ambivalence or even active resistance towards efforts to introduce controversial issues into the curriculum because they threaten to expose the fragility of both these claims.

Many of the concerns just discussed were reiterated by teachers working at schools attended by students participating in Close Encounters. Teachers in both middle and working class communities, integrated as well as segregated settings, expressed considerable sensitivity to the part played within their own classroom by the attitude of the local community towards community relations. At "Smith College," an exclusive grammar school attended predominantly by Protestant students, Ms. Mallory took pains to distinguish her students from those for whom discussing controversial issues might prove difficult: "Middle class children just are not political animals. We are very fortunate that we're not in a ghetto area. Our children are coming from generally middle class backgrounds and we are very fortunate that it's generally a fairly moderate audience that you're teaching to" (personal communication, April 2003). Asked about how she conducted discussions concerning issues connected with the sectarian conflict, she suggested that no distinction was made between these discussions and those regarding

any other subject, adding that: “We don’t teach discussion as such—the students are already very good at it.” Believing that her “fairly moderate” students took no particular interest in or exception to issues or events that might be politically sensitive, Ms. Mallory felt that such issues warranted no particular emphasis and needed no special preparation.

Among teachers at St. Joseph’s, the lack of interest in pursuing controversial discussions arose from a very different motivation. Confronted with a situation in which students were under the constantly threat of sectarian violence, these teachers were afraid that permitting students to discuss even the immediate situation would only inflame the potential for violence:

You don’t want people encouraging others to get involved in things that really they shouldn’t be getting into the middle of. I suppose you’d be worried even for yourself about what might happen. But in terms of the classes there are just a few pupils who are in school to heat up the situation and really make it worse than it should ever be. Mostly, they’re showing off because they want to think that they’re real hard men
(personal communication, May 2003).

Suspecting that some students within the classroom may have connections or aspirations concerning the local paramilitaries, Ms. Malone attempted to squelch potentially heated discussions out of concern for both her own personal safety and the fear that more students would be encouraged or inspired to take part in the conflict.

At a third school, teachers who were attempting to instigate discussions concerning “politically sensitive issues” expressed frustration at students’ reluctance to

participate. Teaching history at an integrated school drawing students whose parents are committed to improving intercommunity relations, Ms. Garrity lamented that:

You're unlikely to get much in the way of controversial discussions in this school simply because as an integrated school I think you're going to find that people are more sensitive to the fact that there are others in the classroom and they'll almost bend over backwards not to say anything. There are lots of opportunities to discuss issues where there would be a nationalist unionist debate, and all the time you're simply saying look, I want opinions here and we're going to respect everyone else's. But the problem is you don't often get them, you just get a bland reply (personal communication, March 2003).

Despite her belief that students stood to benefit from discussing sensitive issues and hearing from the diversity of perspectives that were present within their classroom, Ms. Garrity empathized with her students' reluctance and recognized that she, too, found it difficult to be candid within such a setting:

I think for myself I tend probably to go too much middle of the road when I'm teaching. I think at times I excessively bend over backwards in order to not give offense because of the fact that I'm aware of the possibility that something could be taken the wrong way. But I think that would be my failing, that I have kind of a lack of courage when it comes to discussing some issues just because I'm not sure where its will go or that I might give offense (personal communication, March 2003).

Although she found it personally challenging, Ms. Garrity expressed a desire to forge ahead with discussing difficult issues as part of her continued commitment to EMU. She felt stymied in this desire, however, by a lack of professional support: “I would like to be able to push the boundaries a little bit more in our discussions but I don’t want to start something that I can’t resolve in the end, and I don’t think I’ve got the skills to do that” (personal communication, March 2003). Asked what training opportunities exist to develop these skills, she laughed “oh nothing. It would be very nice to have assistance with that but no, there’s nothing.” Teachers at other schools echoed these sentiments. Working within the Catholic school system, Mr. Connelly remarked: “I would love if there was more in-service training on this sort of thing but unfortunately there isn’t. Any training you can do is self-initiated basically at the minute” (personal communication, March 2003). Reflecting upon her own pre-service preparation, she recalled that “the teacher qualifications provide you more with a subject based training as opposed to actually dealing with controversial issues. There was a module on citizenship that I opted to do within the masters of education program, but there wasn’t a big demand so it was cancelled.” In these teachers’ views, neither their pre-service nor in-service professional development provided sufficient opportunities to gain experience and comfort in handling a task requiring great skill and sensitivity.

Beyond a lack of training, several teachers also identified a sense of isolation from their peers feeling as a major inhibition against pursuing EMU. One senior teacher asserted that she felt secure enough in her standing to proceed despite the “reluctance on the part of some of the older teachers to even touch this. They don’t want to touch it,

they don't feel comfortable with it, they feel we should stick to the subject based teaching and that's it" (personal communication, March 2003). For a newer teacher, the prospect of proceeding with a difficult and unpopular task appeared more daunting:

This is my first year here and I was asked in September if I would be willing to take on the EMU program even though I haven't had any role like that before. There hasn't been any sort of training for that though; it was more like nobody else wants to do this so will you do it, that sort of thing. I suppose I find it difficult that there are only a couple of teachers who deal with cross-community issues and not many of the other teachers are involved (personal communication, May 2003).

Nominally charged with coordinating EMU programs in their separate schools, each of these teachers felt that their efforts received little institutional support and were generally ignored or even demeaned by their fellow teachers.

Observing conflictual pedagogy in the schools. Habituated to avoid controversial issues, lacking confidence in their own ability to direct difficult conversations, feeling isolated from their peers, and unable to secure training that might improve their level of skill and comfort, these teachers confronted an array of disincentives against pursuing their mandate to help students learn to understand conflict and how to respond positively to it. Despite these obstacles, many educators exhibited considerable resolve in sustaining in their commitment to implementing EMU. In doing so, they employed a variety of methods to introduce or elicit conflicting perspectives and to encourage

students to engage with those perspectives. As the following examples illustrate, many of the factors discussed previously impacted the effectiveness of these efforts.

At one school attended by three Close Encounters participants, a history teacher attempted to condition her students to consider multiple perspectives. Working in an integrated setting in which Protestant and Catholic students were equally represented, Ms. Garrity developed a case study regarding the highly contentious question of Cromwell's invasion of Ireland. In one lesson, she covertly distributed two separate accounts of Cromwell's activities at Drogheda in 1649: each agreeing on the actions taken by Cromwell in subduing the town, but varying in how those actions are interpreted and justified. After having students read a short description of the event (under the mistaken belief that they were all reading the same version), students were given a series of questions and, working independently, asked to highlight passages of the story relevant to each question. She then proceeded to ask for volunteers to answer each question and cite pertinent evidence to support their conclusions. As at the previous school, students were orderly, focused on the task at hand, and quietly waited with raised hands to be called upon:

Ms Garrity: "So when did Cromwell come to Ireland?" (Both versions agreed on the basic facts such as the date).

Student 1: "1649."

Ms. Garrity: "And why did he come?" (Both accounts agreed that he came to put down a Catholic rebellion, though version A simply said he wanted to reward his

supporters with land while version B noted that he took land from the Catholics in order to do so).

Student 2: "To help put down the rebellion."

Ms. Garrity: "Does everyone agree with that? Yes? Alright, so why were the Catholics rebelling?" (Version A claimed they fought in support of the Charles I, while version B claimed it was to protest their suffering as a result of the having their land confiscated in order to establish Protestant plantations).

Student 3: "To help Charles."

Ms. Garrity: "Is that it? Is there anything more?"

Student 4: "Yes miss, because they were angry at the Plantations, that he'd taken away their land." (Although this was not stated on version A, no students objected to this student suggesting this answer).

Ms. Garrity: "And so what actually happened at Drogheda?" (Both accounts stated that the Catholics surrendered, but Version A stated that Cromwell killed every 10th man and that the rest were taken as slaves while version B claimed everyone was slaughtered).

Student 5: "The Catholics surrendered but he killed them all anyways."

Ms. Garrity: "Do we all agree with that? Yes?" Several heads nod in agreement. "Alright then, so what does the passage say Cromwell will be remembered for after Drogheda?"

Student 6: "For murdering Charles."

Ms. Garrity: "And what else?"

Student 7: "That he wanted to be king."

Ms. Garrity: "Is that so? Where does it say that?"

Student 7: "Right here: it says he secretly wanted to be king but he knew the people wouldn't have it."

Ms. Garrity: "Is that so?"

Student 8: "No he didn't, he could have been king but he didn't want to."

Student 7: "Yes he did, it says so right here."

Student 8: "No it doesn't. Where?"

Student 7: Standing up and pointing repeatedly at her paper, "Right here."

Student 8: "No it doesn't." Stands up and crosses the room to show the other student where the passage indicates that Cromwell didn't want to be king. "Here it is, right here. Hey, that's not right. Miss..."

At the conclusion of this exercise, Ms. Garrity explained the significance of comparing the passages in terms of calling attention to the presence of bias within historical sources. Her primary objective in doing so was to highlight the need for historians, and students, to seek out diverse perspectives, explaining to the students that "if you'd just come across one of those stories in a textbook, you'd just accept it as true" (personal communication, April 2003). Despite this objective, Ms. Garrity worried afterwards that the problem was more complicated for her students because they were so habituated to avoid confrontation that they tended to agree even claims that clearly conflicted with what they thought to be true:

It didn't work as well as I wanted because, you know, even when someone realized that their story didn't tally up with some of the things they were hearing, instead of the response I wanted which was: "Hey, what are you talking about?" it was "I mustn't have read this properly" and agreeing to things they hadn't actually read (personal communication, April 2003).

This semblance of agreement did not appear to be the result of a lack of care or interest—students were clearly engaged throughout the lesson: they quietly read and highlighted their passages, numerous hands were raised at each question, and students' attended to one another's responses and often signaled their agreement with nods of assent. Further, once the differences between the passages were exposed, the strength of students' reactions indicated the sincerity of their surprise: a radical transformation occurred in student behaviors, from students sitting in orderly rows, raising hands and quietly waiting to be called upon to a classroom abuzz with side conversations, interruptions, and students leaving their seats to inspect one another's passages. In this lesson, it required constant and explicit prodding from the teacher to disrupt students' habitual agreement and bring them to recognize the conflicting nature of the perspectives with which they were provided.

At a second school, attended by two students participating in Close Encounters, an English teacher attempted to confront students with conflicting perspectives by inviting local political figures into the school as guest speakers. In one instance, a panel discussion was organized in advance of elections that were due to be held once the British government devolved power back to the Northern Ireland Assembly. This panel

comprised of a representative from the UUP (the Ulster Unionist Party representing moderate Protestant supporting the Good Friday Agreement), the Women's Coalition (a cross-community party also supporting the agreement), and the DUP (the fiercely sectarian Democratic Unionist Party opposed to any semblance of power sharing). Neither of the Catholic parties was present: the SDLP representative because of a scheduling conflict, and Sein Fein because members of the Democratic Unionist Party refuse to sit in the same room as Sein Fein. Confronted with a choice between the two, the teacher organizing this event opted for the DUP, reasoning that since this was a Catholic school students stood to learn more by being exposed to their alternative perspective.

Students from the entire school were invited to attend this panel discussion during their lunch hour, and about 75 elected to do so. As the panel opened, each of the three speakers was introduced by the teacher and asked to provide a brief explanation of the platform upon which they would be running. After the first two speakers described their support for the peace agreement and the benefits that all communities had accrued since the cease-fire, the DUP representative delivered a provocative indictment of the Good Friday Agreement:

I am implacably against the Agreement which has proven to be nothing but a one-way path of concession after concession on the part of Unionists. Sein Fein has given up absolutely nothing over the last five years. They have offered nothing but slogan after slogan and haven't followed through on a single one of their commitments, and yet have

managed to use the Agreement to extract maximum concessions from weak, gullible Unionists for having murdered 2,800 innocent men, women, and children. We were the only party opposed to the Agreement in 1998 and our position has been totally vindicated since then (personal communication, March 2003).

Once these opening presentations were completed, the floor was opened for students to pose questions of particular speakers. Initially, students' questions were well articulated, addressed specific points made by the speakers, and students' politely attended to the responses of speakers. This was particularly the case when students interacted with representatives from the UUP and the Women's Coalition, speakers whose positions they largely agreed with (consistent with their attending a Catholic school, students' questions generally reflected a nationalist, pro-agreement perspective). Questions posed of the DUP representative also exhibited a high degree of thoughtfulness and civility at first, but soon deteriorated to the level of accusation and personal attack:

Question #1: "You say that the Agreement has resulted in the destruction of the police force, but how is replacing the RUC (Royal Ulster Constabulary) with something that is more inclusive of both communities destructive?"

Question #2: "You say that you're opposed to the Good Friday Agreement, that we should rip it up, but you never say what you'd replace it with."

Question #3: "You keep using decommissioning as the reason for why you don't trust Sein Fein, but isn't that just an excuse because they could always just get more weapons later?"

Question #4: “How are all the problems with the Agreement are the fault of the Republicans? Aren’t you responsible for anything?”

Question #5: “Well, you take the money that comes from being an MP (member of parliament) but you refuse to work with MP’s from Sein Fein. Doesn’t that make you a thief?”

In organizing this panel, Ms. Donahue conscientiously attempted to ensure that diverse perspectives were represented. Committed to the ideal of helping students learn to deal with conflict by constructing opportunities for them to experience it within the schoolhouse, she made the conscious decision to invite the DUP to participate in the panel rather than Sein Fein. However, in describing how she prepared students to participate in these discussions, Ms. Donahue made no distinction between engaging with “politically sensitive issues” and discussing any other topic:

It’s really just the kind of management that you’d normally have in a classroom. First of all, for a good discussion the children would be guided by the teacher in terms of facing the front, speaking to the person you’re addressing, making eye contact, and so on. We’re fortunate in this school that we’re dealing with a lot of articulate young people who want to talk and their peer group listens intently to what they are saying (personal communication, March 2003).

In the case of the speakers’ panel previously described, students were evidently well schooled in these discussion behaviors but had difficulty maintaining them when confronted with a perspective they strongly disagreed with. No follow up debriefing

occurred either at the close of the panel or in Ms. Donahue's class in the following morning.

At another school attended by two Close Encounters participants, an English teacher had volunteered to pilot a Human Rights Education curriculum that was being developed by the Department of Education. This four-day lesson involved students in examining existing human rights conventions as a basis for discussing a proposed Bill of Rights currently being developed in Northern Ireland. During one session, students were placed in groups of three and asked to study the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, select what they regarded as the four most important rights, and identify recent issues or events in which those rights were either protected or violated. Each group then presented their examples to the whole class, after which students were invited to offer comments.

Extended discussions followed the first two presentations, with class members expressing support for the principles that refugee children should be extended the same rights as native born and that rich countries should help poor countries implement environmental protection. After the third presentation, however, one student questioned the principle that all children should have the right to have their personality and talents developed, suggesting that this could potentially prove quite costly and should be considered more of a privilege than a right. Where the teacher had previously permitted the discussion to flow freely among the students, she responded immediately to this point, explaining that:

What this means is that it takes more than simply eating and having a roof over your head in order to be happy, and it shouldn't matter where you happen to live whether you get the chance to learn to play music or sports or become a doctor or whatever you choose to be. It's actually rather a powerful point I think.

After this explanation, no response was asked for or offered on the part of the students, and the class proceeded to discuss the next presentation. For the student who offered the comment, this exchange marked the last word spoken for the remaining half hour of the lesson, a drastic change from the preceding forty-five minutes during she had actively participated in both small and large group discussions. Approached afterwards about the teacher's response to her question, this student replied that she assumed she had misinterpreted the principle and that there was no point in pressing her point further since "it's just factual information she's giving you, so you can't really argue against it because it's just facts" (personal communication, April 2003).

Much like Sharon, the Close Encounters volunteer attempting to encourage Kieran to discuss his association with the Omagh bomb, teachers in these three schools were conscientiously attempting to engage students in discussing "sensitive issues" despite their own lack of training, comfort, and support. In each case, educators employed conflictual pedagogy to challenge students' perspectives by either directly questioning their claims or by exposing them to perspectives that conflicted with their own. These efforts met with limited success, however, as both teachers and students exhibited behaviors that served impede rather than facilitate discussion: disguising

opinion as fact, expressing disagreement by resorting to personal attacks, and masking disagreements by habitually agreeing with suspect claims.

Each of the educators observed above experienced difficulties while pursuing the objective of helping students learn to understand and deal positively with conflict. Some of these teachers failed to acknowledge the difficulties they encountered, as was the case with those who felt no need to teach discussion because they believed students already knew how to discuss or that discussions concerning controversial content were no different from those regarding any other topic. Others, however, recognized the obstacles they faced and were able to articulate strategies by which they attempted to circumvent them. For Ms. Garrity, this was most evident in her explanation of her lesson regarding the massacre at Drogheda. Though she had earlier expressed concern that her “lack of courage” led her to “bend over backwards” to avoid discussions that might cause students to take offense, here she had been able to engage students in exploring a highly controversial event by framing the lesson in terms of an issue regarding which she felt both competent and comfortable—recognizing bias in historical sources. Similarly, Ms. Connelly employed “more of a clinical point of view” (personal communication, April 2003) to help her students discuss the harassment endured by young girls as they attempted to enter their local Catholic school within a predominantly Protestant neighborhood. Framing their discussion in terms of journalistic ethics and the power of the press, students analyzed locally published photographs and were asked to explore the emotions aroused by such images and the tendency to equate all Protestants with the “rabid” crowd of protestors.

For Ms. Lynch, a former teacher now serving as the coordinator of the Citizenship Education pilot, the goal of these lessons was to provide students conceptual instruments through which to critically engage with controversial issues without directly implicating themselves or exposing their own views. “The first thing we need to realize is that as a teacher of any subject in Northern Ireland, we’re asking pupils to deal with very difficult issues, and pupils have said that this makes them feel very exposed and vulnerable” (personal communication, May 2003). This vulnerability may be particularly acute in integrated settings where, for instance, Ms. Lynch could recall holding discussions regarding policing in a class comprised of students whose family members included members of the police force, others that had been shot by the police, and still others in jail for killing a police officer. The risks in segregated settings, though different, is no less real. In such situations, the homogeneity of students’ perspectives when discussing controversial issues may simply reinforce existing stereotypes or, where teachers are relied on to provide conflicting perspectives, their efforts to do so may be either dismissed or attacked as motivated by a politically suspect agenda. Reflecting upon her own experience introducing human rights education to a school located within a highly sectarian Catholic neighborhood, Ms. Lynch suggested that:

A human rights framework gives you a safe way of dealing with some fairly sensitive issues because it objectifies them by using international standards so you’re not just talking about this local issue that everyone has a very strong opinions on, you’re talking about international principles that our government has already agreed upon. This way, human rights are

introduced as promises, commitments made by the government to their citizens, so when you look at whether those rights are being protected it's not that you're being critical of the state, it's just that you're checking to see that they're keeping the promises they've already made (personal communication, May, 2003).

Recognizing the multitude of obstacles discouraging both students and teachers from engaging with controversial content, each of these teachers described approaches whose goal was to provide students access to information and the freedom to question their assumptions in such a way that "they're not so apt to feel vulnerable or defensive" (Ms. Connelly, April 2003).

Conflictual pedagogy at close encounters. Throughout the course of the Close Encounters program, there were numerous instances in which contentious statements and symbols failed to provoke disagreement among students of different cultural backgrounds. During the latter stages of the program, staff members attempted to instigate controversial discussions on such occasions by exposing the differences in opinion and experience that existed between students. As the opening vignette of this section demonstrates, these efforts often met with limited success. Knowing that Kieran's cousin had been killed by the Omagh bomb five years earlier, Sharon refers directly to that event in an attempt to provoke a response concerning when he came to acknowledge the severity of differences among groups in Northern Ireland. Rather than disclosing his close personal association with the bombing as Sharon intended, however, Kieran continued to disavow any interest in or connection with the event. During a

private interview conducted at the conclusion of the program, Kieran reflected upon his response to Sharon's questioning: "With Sharon, I just didn't feel comfortable talking about it and just kind of backed away. I just got embarrassed because I don't really know anything about it so I couldn't really say very much" (personal communication, May 2003). This reticence was not a unique product of Sharon's insistent prodding—Kieran explained having similar reactions during memorials to the slain students at school during which "I don't really say anything and just sit in the corner." But though his response certainly had a deep basis in his own experience of personal grief, Sharon's direct questioning was clearly ineffectual as a tactic for instigating personal sharing and group dialogue.

At other times, staff members demonstrated greater sensitivity to students' lack of comfort in promoting potentially difficult discussions. Much like many of the teachers discussed previously, Sean attempted to construct ways for students to approach sectarianism through examining issues that they considered less personally threatening. In an afternoon session on the final weekend, students were shown a short documentary in which young people of various racial and ethnic backgrounds described their experiences of discrimination in Northern Ireland. After the film, Sean asked students to name the various ethnic minorities present within their own schools and neighborhoods and describe any instances in which they were singled out for negative treatment because of their differences. While all students were able to mention the presence of at least one ethnic minority within their community, few were aware of any instances in which discrimination occurred (the only minority group students identified as suffering from

discrimination was the Travelers, nomadic families living in tent or caravan parks on public lands that students equated to “gypsies”). Next, students were formed into four groups and asked to assume the role of different populations that wanted to discriminate against a targeted minority that had just moved into their neighborhood. Pretending that they were either administrators in a school, a coalition of parents, members of the local police force, or elders in a church, groups were told to devise a series of subtle actions through which they could make the minority group feel unwelcome and drive them from the neighborhood. Here, students had little difficulty, quickly compiling lists of anywhere from six to eleven discriminatory actions ranging from intimidating graffiti and hate mail to enforcing rules that singularly applied to the selected group. After groups shared their lists, the session ended with Sean pointing out how subtle many of these proposed actions were and suggesting that as a reason why so few students identified racism as a problem in Northern Ireland. Without ever mentioning sectarianism directly, Sean further suggested that the ease and ingenuity with which they devised their lists showed they all had a great deal of experience with prejudice upon which to draw.

From Sean’s perspective, the session was primarily directed at increasing students’ awareness of racism as a growing problem in Northern Ireland regarding which many young people remained ignorant. Recalling an earlier experience in which a student had called out a bus window “Hey Paki bastard, go home,” he suggested that, while sectarian comments were generally acknowledged as socially unacceptable, no such consensus existed as of yet in Northern Ireland concerning racism. Beyond raising students’ awareness of racial discrimination as a growing problem, a further goal of the

session was to draw upon students' experiences with sectarianism and encourage them to draw parallels between racism and sectarianism as different forms of prejudice. Sean, however, was cautious about making the connection between the two issues too explicit:

All those things that they come up with aren't just from their imagination—they're sitting in there somewhere. The thing is, I know if I would've done that exercise using Protestants and Catholics that would have been a very difficult exercise for those young people to do because they're a part of that. Hopefully people go away from that weekend and say 'Okay, we did that work on racism' and maybe somewhere along the way the penny will drop and they say 'Okay, so what's happening there to the Chinese community is what has happened to the Protestant community there or the Catholic community there' (Sean, May 2003).

By only vaguely referring to sectarianism during the session, Sean hoped that students would be able to make the connections themselves without feeling personally exposed or attacked.

Reflecting back upon the session, some students had difficulty making this connection. When asked about her thoughts and feelings during the exercise, Niamh framed the activity entirely in terms of racism: "The thing about discrimination was eye opening because I didn't know racism was such a big problem here" (personal communication, May 2003). Pressed about whether she saw any similarities to sectarianism, she responded: "When we were filling out our sheets we weren't really getting our ideas from past experience. There may have been some people who were

thinking about something that happened to their friends or something, but I wasn't." For other students, the connection between the two forms of prejudice was more readily apparent: "Sure there were parallels. When we were watching the video and the girl was saying stuff about people writing Wogs on her wall, well, they spray stuff like that for sectarianism all over the place. So yeah, they are connected" (Leila, May 2003).

According to Kieran, thinking about how the Travelers are perceived and discriminated against proved a particularly effective point of comparison. Considering how Travelers are often scapegoated and targeted for abuse brought to mind a number of similarities to how Catholics are treated in the North:

Yesterday at the discrimination session I brought up about the Travelers because they get blamed for a lot of the stuff that happens down there.

Some of the stuff they talked about would have to do with the Catholics too, like the negative graffiti and all, you see a lot of that around Derry (personal communication, May 2003).

While discussing the Travelers, students had related a number of negative opinions regarding this group, stating that they were dirty, thieves, and that any negative treatment they receive was because "they bring it on themselves." For Sean, the discussion presented an opportunity to challenge the preconceptions upon which such opinions were based. Taking the issue of "being dirty" as an example, he explained how the practice of disposing of waste on the ground outside might well be a sanitary practice when living in a mobile home while accumulating garbage inside might induce rodents into their homes in search of food. In a similar fashion, Sean viewed the flag exercise

described in the opening vignette of the previous section as a chance to expose and dispel a number of misconceptions students had formed regarding each of the flags. That session continued as follows:

Students are sitting in mixed identity groups comprised of both Catholics and Protestants. One volunteer sits with each group, and I am sitting with three girls and two boys as they discuss the symbols found on the various flags draped across the walls. We have just finished discussing the crosses on the Union Jack when Sean directs our attention to what students have labeled the Ulster flag, the flag of Northern Ireland, or, simply, the Red Hand (see Figure 4.3). It depicts a red cross against a white backdrop

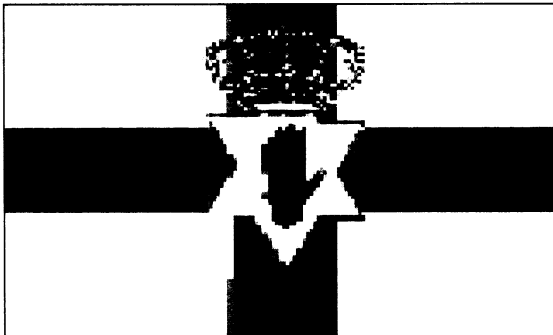


Figure 4.3: Flag of Northern Ireland

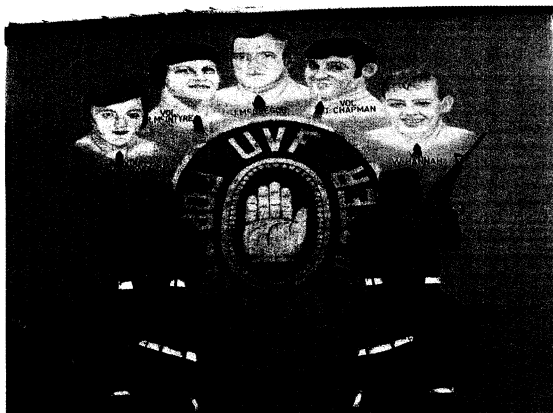


Figure 4.4: Ulster Volunteer Force mural

and overlaid in the center are a crown, a star, and an open-faced palm in red.

“What about this one?” Sean asks, “there’s a number of different symbols on this one. What’s this one mean?” pointing to the red hand.

“That’s for the U.V.F.” Roan explains, referencing a Protestant paramilitary. “It’s red because it’s got blood all over it.” “Yeah” says Alin, “but there’s a story that goes with it. It’s about two giants who were fighting

over land.” “I heard it was two kings” interrupts Gerald, “and they were always fighting and neither could win, so they decided to have a swimming race and whoever lost would have to be the winner’s servant. And one was about to lose so he cut off his hand and threw it across the finish line so he’d be the winner.” “I think it was a horse race actually” counters Caylin, “if they were swimming, then why’d they have swords? They were always fighting and everyone was getting killed so they finally decided to have a race and that way one would be in charge.” “So was one Protestant and that’s why they own everything now?” asks Roan.

“Well, you’ve all got a piece of it right” interjects Sean. “It’s actually from an old Gaelic legend, though, from way before the British came to Ireland. It’s an ancient symbol of Irish clans from this part of the island and it’s got nothing to do with the troubles between Catholics and Protestants.”

Throughout this exercise, students expressed visceral reactions to each of the flags hanging on the walls. Asked where they would be likely to see the Union Jack flying, Catholic students indicated a series of sites they identified with British oppression: army barracks, Shankill Road, Stormont, Buckingham Palace; “I think it’s a rubbish flag,” muttered one student. Later, in discussing the colors on the Irish flag, a number of students described it as green, white, and gold, concluding that it couldn’t be orange because “that’s the color of Protestants.” Another student, a Protestant, retorted by suggesting that “the green stands for money.” For Sean, the session provided an opportunity to challenge the assumptions upon which such responses were premised:

The flag exercise is interesting because we've built up this kind of mystique around the different flags here in Northern Ireland and we use them in a very exclusive way. We use them as weapons in order to attach each other, to say this is who I am and this is what I represent and you're not a part of it so keep away. And we do that because they mean something to us; but the thing is, that something can be a whole load of myths and misconceptions. For myself, I remember for years looking at that Ulster flag as a nationalist and I never saw myself in it. I just saw it and said that's not my flag, just dismissed it. But our flags aren't as straight forward as that. They're not about being exclusive; they're actually quite inclusive. Once you start to break down the colors on the flag and what the symbols mean it becomes very clear straight away that, hey, this flag isn't what I thought it was (Sean, June, 2003).

For those students convinced that the Irish flag couldn't include orange because that was a color identified with Protestantism, "breaking down the colors" quickly revealed a lack of understanding concerning the meaning of flag and, by extension, the Irish Republic. At issue was not whether or not the color represented Protestantism but whether students were correct in assuming, as Sean suggested many members of both communities in Northern Ireland do, that "because that's their symbol it can't be mine and if it belongs to them then its got nothing to do with me" (personal communication, May 2003). Contrary to what these students believed, it was precisely because it was identified with Protestants that the color orange was included in the flag: the green was to

represent Catholics, orange the Protestants, and white the peaceful coexistence between the two (CAIN, 2003). In a similar fashion, the small group discussion concerning the Red Hand conveyed a series of partial understandings culminating in at least one student mistakenly identifying it with the conflict between Protestants and Catholics. Despite recent attempts by protestant paramilitaries to co-opt the symbol, the Red Hand incorporated in the Northern Ireland flag is actually the crest the O'Neill clan, the most resilient of all the Irish Gaelic clans in resisting the English invasion, and is intended as a balance to the unequivocally British symbols such as the crown and St. George's cross (CAIN, 2003). Taken in concert with the earlier discussion concerning the Irish Tricolor, learning that these symbols and flags "are actually about representing and including the two traditions on this island" (Sean, May 2003) provided a vehicle for challenging students' perception that symbols, flags, and identity were simple dichotomies requiring a choice between British and Irish, Protestant and Catholic.

For the students participating in Close Encounters, this was the session most frequently referred to in their exit interviews. Beyond claiming to have learned something new about the meaning of the flags themselves, several students described having come to new understandings through questioning their own attitudes and actions. During the session, after discussing their various perceptions concerning the meaning of the different flags, students had been asked to move about the room and indicate which flag they felt closest to by standing next to it. Fourteen students moved to the Irish Tricolor, five stood by the Union Jack, and none by the flag of Northern Ireland. Alin recalled how her decision to join her friends by the Irish flag led her reflect upon her own

sense of identity: “I did feel at one point that I should be standing at another flag because the Irish flag wasn’t that good at representing who I am. I just thought that I feel more Northern Irish—not British, not Irish, but just Northern Irish” (personal communication, April 2003). Niamh, trying to make sense of her decision not to stand by the flag of Northern Ireland, remembered that:

I felt really bad because we were all going to the Tricolor. I started thinking that maybe we should be going to the actual Northern Irish flag, and I thought, “Why aren’t we standing over there?” But we didn’t even know why, we just got drawn over to the Tricolor. I guess it’s sort of like you need to prove to people what your views on nationalism and unionism are because if we had stood by the Northern Irish flag people wouldn’t have known which view we had. Even though there’s no point in it, I guess we all feel like we need to show people what we are (personal communication, June 2003).

Earlier in the interview, Niamh had voiced criticisms of students at schools who espoused political positions “simply because that’s what they were brought up to say even though they didn’t actually understand why they were saying it.” Here, she considers that her own decision of which flag to stand by represents a similarly unreflective stance and comes to a new understanding of subtle dynamics contributing to the polarization of Northern Irish society. It is in Niamh and Alin’s ability to reconsider their own assumptions about identity and difference in Northern Ireland that Sean finds a realization of his objectives, not only for the exercise, but the program as a whole:

When a young person acknowledges that there are questions that need to be asked here, that there are things that need to be sorted out and, hey, this isn't what I thought it was at all and now something needs to happen, that's a real positive thing because if they go away and there's no questions, then there sure as hell aren't going to be any answers (personal communication, June 2003).

Summary

Throughout Close Encounters, students were constantly exposed to information that called into question their own preexisting beliefs and assumptions. Assembling a socially and culturally diverse group of students, program staff constructed numerous opportunities for students to share stories and symbols of their personal, religious, and political backgrounds. Emotionally invested in maintaining their newly formed friendships and acculturated to avoid contentious issues, students frequently resisted engaging with this information by framing their discussions in interpersonal rather than inter-group terms or by denying the accuracy and relevance of provocative claims. Staff members, committed to building relationships capable of withstanding conflict, persisted in their attempts to entice controversial discussions by exposing the differences of opinion and experience that existed between students. At times, staff members' approach in doing so reflected their own lack of comfort and training in dealing with conflict and served only to reinforce students' determination to avoid potential confrontations. On rare occasions, however, controversial information was presented in such a way that led

students to question one another's claims and critically reflect upon their own. Through connecting with issues that students found less threatening and demystifying beliefs central to their conceptions of their own political and cultural identities, students proved more willing and able to listen to diverse perspectives in such a way that put their own prior assumptions at risk.

Chapter Five: Discussion

Acknowledging the magnitude of the task confronting educators concerned with fostering peace in contexts of intractable conflict, Farrell (2004) introduces a journal issue devoted to the theme of peace education by posing the question: “what ultimately is the possibility or power of this institutional system we call ‘school’ and the people who work within it to ‘do’ anything for the broader society in relation to the kinds of deep-seated differences and, often, hatreds, that are a reality among our groups of students” (p.2)? As discussed in Chapter Two, theorists and practitioners in the fields of citizenship education, peace education, and intergroup relations place great store in the power of dialogue to “do something” by helping students develop the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to transcend divisions characterized by a lack of understanding and trust. Speaking to this faith in the transformative potential of dialogue, Aboulmagd et al. (2001) describe dialogue as “the first step in providing a sense of belonging, for by communicating and listening we take the first step toward recognizing our own commonality” (p.37).

Such potential, however, is contingent upon the willingness of participants to abide by norms and procedures granting equal respect to all competing perspectives. Chapter One presented social, emotional, and intellectual reasons to suspect students’ ability and willingness to do so. Particularly in contexts of intergroup conflicts, Elbaz-Luwisch (2004) suggests that “to ask students and ourselves to remain calm, to listen attentively, to respond with empathy and understanding—in short, to engage in a disembodied and disinterested dialogue—when virtually everyone feels that his or her

physical safety may be at stake, or indeed our very existence as a group seems threatened, is not reasonable” (p.21). Consequently, rather than insisting that participants converse dispassionately or feign amiability, Elbaz-Luwisch asserts that dialogue requires that space be made for “feelings and expressions of fear, vulnerability, and anger” (p.13).

Close Encounters aimed to create such a space, both literally and figuratively. Transporting a group of Protestant and Catholic students to a setting far removed from their daily experiences of “the Troubles,” the program engaged students in building knowledge, trust, and friendships across the cultural and political divides common within Northern Irish society. After nurturing the development of personal relationships, students were invited to participate in dialogues concerning emotionally charged and politically contested issues related to national and cultural identity. The resulting discussions were clearly situated in the conceptual space described I have characterized as difficult dialogues. Consistent with aims and methodologies of peace education, citizenship education, and intergroup relations, these dialogues aimed to contribute to the creation of a more peaceful and democratic future by fostering students’ understanding of diverse perspectives, tolerance for difference and disagreement, and commitment to resolving conflicts non-violently. They were likely to be experienced as difficult because, in pursuant of these goals, students were asked to critically examine the legitimacy of their own claims and assumptions in light of those advanced by others belonging to social identity groups different from their own.

Chapter Four described how one group of students perceived and responded to this challenge. In the current chapter, I explain what has been learned from these

students' experiences relative to the two research questions directing this study: 1) how do students perceive and respond to perspectives that conflicted with their own? and 2) how are these behaviors affected by the conditions under which conflicting perspectives are encountered? Next, establishing a dialectic between these empirical findings and my conceptual framework, I discuss how the case of Close Encounters exemplifies, extends, qualifies, or contradicts the claims about difficult dialogues advanced in Chapter Two. I end the chapter by revisiting the question posed by Farrell at the opening of this chapter and explore what this case reveals about the power of "school" to "do anything" about the hatreds and divisions confronting deeply conflicted societies. Arguing that there is indeed a positive and proactive role to be played by educators in fostering peace in divided societies, I derive implications from this study for the practice and future study of intergroup dialogue, citizenship education, and peace education.

Experiencing Difficult Dialogues: Research Questions Revisited

By assembling a socially, religiously, and politically diverse group of students and orchestrating activities in which those students shared their differing experiences, understandings, and commitments, Close Encounters constructed numerous opportunities for students to encounter perspectives that conflicted with their own. In this section, I analyze the findings of this study for similarities and differences in how students perceived and responded to those moments when conflicting perspectives were made available to them (my first research question). In particular, I identify recurrent strategies through which students denied the challenge posed by the knowledge and value claims

advanced by others. On occasions when conflicting perspectives were acknowledged, I explain how this process led some students to critically reflect upon their prior beliefs and behaviors while others responded in such a way that enabled them to protect the continued viability of their current understandings. Transitioning from a descriptive to a more interpretive mode (Wolcott, 1997), I also explore how each of these responses were affected by the environmental conditions encountered by students (the second research question). Consistent with my multilevel methodological approach (Yin, 1994), I examine the effect of both the immediate environment orchestrated by program organizers as well as the more distal social, educational, and cultural conditions that shaped the knowledge, skills, and dispositions with which students entered the program.

Integrating and evading conflicting perspectives. Throughout the Close Encounters program, activities such as the identity posters, body statues, and flag exercise all invited students to examine the conflicts that existed between them and the social identity groups to which they belonged. Some students seized these opportunities to present to another their feelings and experiences concerning highly controversial matters: the boys from Antrim portrayed a scene in which one of them being beaten by a gang of Protestants simply for wearing the sports jersey of a particular soccer team, Roan described how his school was being terrorized by bat-wielding thugs, Declan revealed his republican sentiments by drawing a picture in which Northern Ireland was decorated in the colors of the Irish flag. Other students, however, proved more reticent about presenting images that might provoke disapproval or disagreement among their peers. During the identity posters, for example, while many students listed St. Patrick's Day as

among the special holidays celebrated by their families, not a single student mentioned the 12th of July despite its being the most widely and passionately celebrated holiday within the Protestant community. Later, during the session in which the Antrim boys portrayed violent scenes of sectarian conflict, other groups elected to depict more benign images of their own communities as places where people relax, sun-bathe, and “nothing bad ever happens.”

In instances such as these, students elected to respond to session prompts in ways that minimized their potential for causing discomfort or discord. In a similar fashion, when certain students did elect to present stories and images that might have proved controversial, other students frequently failed to respond to their more contentious implications because they perceived them as inaccurate, irrelevant, or insignificant. In the case of Roan’s story about being chased home from school each day by boys carrying bats and hammers, Nuala, herself a Protestant attending an exclusive and segregated grammar school in the same town, denigrated the credibility of his account as being “a bit over the top.” For Evelyn, a Catholic from a town two hours distant, Roan’s story was perceived as a distant and isolated event with little bearing on her own life in much the same way as she habitually dismissed the relevance of sectarian incidents reported in the news because “it’s really just Belfast they’re showing you.” Even such an overtly provocative statement as Declan’s declaring his support for a United Ireland proved susceptible to being cast as non-controversial by fellow students. Alice, an avowed Unionist, claimed not find his statement offensive or upsetting because she viewed it as

simply expressing a personal preference rather than an affiliation with a political cause dedicated to a goal necessitating the demise of her own political commitments.

At times, the failure of students to embrace opportunities to engage with images and questions of conflict can be interpreted as individual choices motivated by a desire to avoid personal discomfort. Such was likely the case when Kieran consistently refused to reveal his cousin's death despite Sharon's persistent questioning regarding whether the Omagh bombing had led him to realize the importance of communal divisions within Northern Ireland. Privately confessing to "backing away because I didn't feel comfortable talking about it" and being "embarrassed because I don't really know anything about it," Kieran's evasions can be well explained in terms of intrapersonal motivations (whether by the pain he felt at recalling his cousin's death five years or by anxiety, confusion, or shame resulting from not feeling or knowing more). Similarly, Evelyn and Nuala's responses to Roan's story about being chased by a Protestant gang served to minimize their own potential distress. For Evelyn, the insistence that scenes of sectarian conflict had little relation to her own life deftly defused the prospect of having to divulge or discuss her father's death during a paramilitary bombing years prior. For Nuala, disparaging the credibility of the story helped assuage any need to feel personally complicit due to her and her family's participation in the local Orange Parades notorious for igniting sectarian passions, particularly among young Protestant males.

Just as Nuala's response to Roan's story enabled her to protect a self-image with which she was comfortable (that of the proud yet peaceable Unionist), the body statue created by the girls from Portrush allowed them to do the same. During their individual

interviews, as throughout the program, each of these girls made consistent efforts to disassociate themselves from any interest or involvement in sectarian concerns: Leila declared that she “doesn’t even go to church” and finds “[that sectarian stuff] all a bit stupid,” while Niamh proudly stated that all her siblings attend integrated schools and that her parents were “mixed” and relocated away from Belfast “to get away from all that.” Given this desire to be regarded (and to regard themselves) as non-religious, non-extremist, and, in essence, “beyond all that,” depicting Portrush as a playful resort town unencumbered by the sectarian conceits afflicting other areas of Northern Ireland presented an opportunity for these girls to project an image of themselves that reinforced their apparent self concepts.

Presented with opportunities to discuss issues, events, or images related to the cultural and political divisions that existed among them, students such as Leila, Niamh, Nuala, Alice, and Kieran frequently evaded potential conflicts by responding to session prompts, and to the images and stories shared by fellow students, in decidedly non-controversial ways. While these responses can, in part, be attributed to individual motivations such as the desire to avoid painful remembrances or to protect or project a favorable self image, to depict them as solely the result of individual choice would be both mistaken and misleading. Rather, the ways in which students engaged with questions of conflict were both conditioned and constrained by environmental factors as well.

The body statue created by the girls from Portrush, for example, certainly reinforced the positive self concept held by Leila and Niamh. Given the setting in which

it was presented, however, the girls also had good reason to expect that the image they presented, of themselves and their town, would be met with acceptance and approval. Each with past familial ties to Corrymeela programs, both girls were well acquainted with the reputation of the Center, which bills itself as a safe haven from the sectarian conflicts afflicting the broader society in much the same way that the girls depicted Portrush. Because it was a voluntary program, they also had reason to trust that other students opting to participate in Close Encounters would likewise be familiar with and supportive of the non-sectarian vision promulgated by the Center. Whether it was a primary motivating factor or simply one that enhanced the perceived safety of presenting such an image, the girls' decision about how to respond to the prompt to "describe the town in which you live" was clearly made easier due to its social desirability. This desirability was itself clearly context specific, with the specific content of what was being conveyed (support for a non-sectarian secularism) likely receiving far less approval among a different group of peers or within a different geographical context (in Antrim, for example, or among the "bat wielding thugs" giving chase to Roan and his friends). Similarly, support for such a message, and for reconciliation work more generally, was also contingent upon wider political and historical developments, facilitated in particular by the current movement towards cross-cultural rapprochement within Northern Ireland compared to the bitter divisiveness of the preceding decades.

Kieran's response to Sharon's questioning can be similarly contextualized. Again, his personal emotions and experiences certainly play a role in explaining his determined evasions, but Sharon's mode of questioning is a factor as well. For her part,

Sharon's direct and persistent style of posing her questions reflects, in part, the programmatic commitment of Close Encounters to unearth students' differences and to instigate discussion concerning matters related to the Troubles. The lack of sensitivity with which she broached the subject and persisted in a way that put Kieran instantly on the defensive, however, was itself indicative of the general lack of training and experience in discussing controversial issues common within Northern Ireland. Recall that many educators charged with conducting such discussions within the schools associated with Education for Mutual Understanding reported lacking confidence in their ability to do so and lamented that neither their own experience as students nor their professional training had provided sufficient preparation for them to develop the necessary skills or comfort level.

As with many educators, Sharon's ineffective approach to engaging Kieran in discussing difficult subject matter can, at least in part, be attributed to institutional factors ranging from the traditional lack of controversial curriculum to the paucity of pre- or in-service professional development opportunities for teachers. It is also reflective of cultural practices and discourse patterns that similarly deprive Sharon and other students, citizens, and educators from the opportunity to develop such skills and comfort. Developed at a young age, the habit of avoiding potentially contentious issues reflects the social and political realities of living in a deeply polarized society such that such avoidance operates as both a system for carrying out cordial social interactions and a strategy for self-preservation.

Against such a backdrop, Nuala's decision to refrain from disclosing her family's celebration of the 12th of July can be interpreted as a manifestation of "ritual politeness" calculated to avoid provoking a negative backlash among her fellow participants. Coupled with other students' willingness to list St. Patrick's Day among their significant holidays, her decision not to mention the 12th is indicative of broader sociological realities, namely the fact that the manner in which the 12th is celebrated is considered far more contentious than that of St. Patrick's Day. Symbolic of and made possible by the dominant position of the Protestant community, the 12th of July highlights "marching season" during which bands of the Orange Order march defiantly, and occasionally violently, through catholic communities. Nuala's response to the prompt to describe a significant family holiday (she stated "the last day of school") can thus be regarded as arising from a complex interplay of different factors, ranging from interpersonal (her desire not to think of herself as complicit in the victimization of Roan and his classmates) to cultural (the habit of ritual politeness) and sociological (an acknowledgment of the power of the militant Protestant community to choose parade routes designed to intimidate particularly vulnerable Catholic enclaves).

Given the preceding discussion of ritual politeness and the relative power of the Protestant community, Declan's willingness to dramatically divulge his support for a United Ireland would appear problematic. If ritual politeness is indeed a cultural attribute, why would he not to abide by it in this case? Three factors might account for this apparent anomaly. First, because the goals of the program included helping students learn to discuss controversial issues, both the session prompts and the program staff

members actively encouraged all students to overcome this habitual avoidance and to share information and question one another about their cultural backgrounds, experiences, and commitments. Thus, while not directly sanctioning the potentially offensive content of Declan's drawing, the program itself lent explicitly endorsed his willingness to disclose the sentiments it expressed.

The same principle held true, of course, for Nuala regarding her participation in the 12th of July parades, and so that alone cannot sufficiently explain the discrepancy between their decisions. A second factor, therefore, may have been the fact that Declan and Nuala represented different religious communities. While Protestants comprise a majority within Northern Ireland, at Close Encounters the positions were reversed with thirteen Catholics taking part compared to nine Protestants. Although during interviews students consistently voiced the belief that the climate was open and egalitarian, that "you can talk about anything here," most of these statements emanated from Catholics and at least some Protestant students perceived the discrepancy between the numbers as significant: recall that Nuala reported having been told by Alice at one point that "there were only three of us here." It is certainly possible, therefore, that Declan, as a Catholic, experienced the peer environment as more supportive and a safer climate in which to reveal political views that a majority of his fellow participants might share or at least find sympathetic.

Demographic factors may also have influenced Declan and Nuala's varied responses. At first glance, gender differences might seem to offer a plausible explanation, with males perhaps expected to be more assertive, individualistic, and more

willing to violate social mores such as ritual politeness. Such an explanation would be consistent with evidence from elsewhere in the program such as when boys from Antrim interjected images of violent conflict and girls from Portrush elected to portray a more tranquil image of their home town. However, there were also instances to the contrary in which girls deviated from the expectation of ritual politeness and boys complied with it: Kieran's refusal to divulge his cousin's death and Julia's statement that the green of the Irish flag "stood for money."

Based upon the accumulation of observations, gender appears less likely a factor than class. In this case, it is significant that Declan and the boys from Antrim were also from working class neighborhoods, as was Alice, while Nuala and the girls from Portrush were middle class. Sean's observations at the end of the program tended to corroborate this explanation: "People from very safe or middle class backgrounds were not sharing the same types of images as people from working class backgrounds. The images of conflict were in there because of the people from working class backgrounds." The theoretical rationale for such being the case is significantly more compelling than the speculations concerning gender stereotypes offered previously. Recall that residential segregation is largely concentrated within working class neighborhoods and that ritual politeness serves primarily as a means for conducting polite social interactions in "mixed" company. Given these realities, the observance of ritual politeness is considerably more functional within integrated middle class neighborhoods and thus middle class children are more likely to be socialized into the practice.

Despite Close Encounters' aim of helping students learn to respond to conflicts constructively by encouraging them to confront their differences and disagreements within a safe and supportive environment, such confrontations were a rare occurrence. Presented with numerous opportunities to engage with stories and images of conflict, students frequently interpreted or responded to such information in ways that diminished its controversial nature. The reasons for their doing so were complex and varied: occasionally motivated by the desire to avoid emotional discomfort and at other times manifesting behaviors to which they had become habituated as a result of institutionalized practices, cultural norms, or sociological realities. But while students regularly resisted engaging one another as members of opposing social identity groups, they proved more willing to examine, and even critique, representations and assumptions related to their own political and cultural identities. In the following section, I explain how this was achieved and what effect it had upon students.

Engaging and resisting critical reflection. Rather than directing students to examine or discuss the differences that existed between them, sessions such as the flag exercise and, to a lesser extent, the session focusing on racial discrimination, prompted students to explore their own identity. During the flag activity, program staff concentrated upon deconstructing myths and misconceptions upon which students' current understandings of what it meant to be Irish or British were premised. Framing the discussion of the various flags in an historical perspective, they provided students access to information that directly contradicted their prior assumptions regarding the exclusionary nature of the colors and symbols found upon the flags with which they

identified. Explaining that orange was included in the Irish Tricolor in order to signify the inclusion of the Protestant community, for example, controverted the conviction of those students referring to it as gold that one's political identity as Irish or British necessitated a corresponding polarity between being Catholic or Protestant. In a similar fashion, learning that the Red Hand on the flag of Northern Ireland symbolized an ancient Gaelic myth rather than a loyalist paramilitary helped Alin to feel a closer attachment not only to the flag, but to Northern Ireland itself: "I just thought that I feel more Northern Irish—not British, not Irish, but just Northern Irish."

For Niamh, the session initiated a process of critical reflection concerning her own motivations about which flag to stand by and about how her actions might impact and be perceived by others: "I felt really bad afterwards because we were all going over to the Tricolor and there were just the few of them standing alone over by the Union Jack... I guess it's sort of like you need to prove to people what your views on nationalism and unionism are." Having earlier been critical of students who adopted positions without understanding why they did so, Niamh also became aware of inconsistencies between her own claims and behaviors and came to implicate herself in the very process she criticized in others: "We didn't even know why [we were standing there], we just got drawn over to the Tricolor."

At other times, the program was less explicit about inviting students to reflect upon information that challenged their current understandings. On these occasions, staff members were content to trust that students' own attempt to reconcile discrepant information would cause them to modify their existing assumptions in order to better

account for observed realities. Simply assembling a diverse group of participants, for example, provided students numerous opportunities to gain first-hand knowledge about fellow participants that contrasted with negative stereotypes they held concerning the communities to which those individuals belonged. In the case of Reilly, a Catholic from “across the border” whose prior impression of Protestants derived from “people saying they don’t like them,” Close Encounters was an opportunity to find out that “it’s not like they say it is.” Similarly, Alin recalled having recently viewed news reports of Protestant crowds demonstrating against the opening of a Catholic school in their neighborhood and forming the impression that Protestants “were all bitter and angry.” After getting to know Protestant students at Close Encounters who deviated from this image, Alin surmised that “it’s just a minority” who are like that.

As was the case during the flag exercise, it was through functioning as a secondary discourse that Close Encounters prompted Alin and Reilly to question and transform their prior conceptions of the Protestant community. Recall that for Gee (1990), primary discourses are those largely subconscious accounts of how the world does and should operate that individuals acquire through their early socialization into the family and wider cultural community. Such a discourse serves as an interpretive window onto the world by providing a coherent “world view” in which observed phenomenon take on meaning. In the case of Northern Ireland, this often entails a clear definition of the two communities in such a way that inter-group conflict can be readily explained in simple and consistent terms: violent actions carried out by “the other community” are instances of unwarranted terrorism (for Protestants) or imperialistic oppression (for

Catholics), while those initiated by one's own community are either self-defense or just reprisals. For members of both communities, these "facts" are learned at an early age and generally reinforced by daily experience lived within the confines of segregated social networks and institutions (Morrow, et al, 1991).

Close Encounters served as a secondary discourse because it confronted students with experiences, information, and explanations that countered those to which they were exposed elsewhere in their lives. In the case of Reilly and Alin, the new information was simply firsthand knowledge of what Protestants were like that contradicted the impression conveyed by family or and or, for Alin, by the television news. In a similar fashion, the flag exercise presented students with new information regarding the origin and significance of symbols they regarded as central to their own sense of cultural and political identity. Based upon their everyday usage within Northern Ireland, the meaning and exclusionary nature of the Red Hand or the color orange was assumed by many students to be self-evident. By challenging students' assumptions regarding the meaning and, more generally, the self-evident nature of these symbols, Close Encounters enabled students to develop understandings (of the flags and of themselves) beyond those they had been habituated to accept by their primary discourses. For Roan, this was as simple as learning that the Red Hand was not necessarily a symbol of the Ulster Volunteer Force and, thus, that its presence on the flag of Northern Ireland was not a tacit endorsement of the Protestant paramilitary group or of violence directed against the Catholic community. For Alin, this resulted in re-examining the extent to which she identified with the Irish

Tricolor and considering the possibility that she felt better represented by the flag of Northern Ireland.

There is some evidence that this exposure to a secondary discourse also served to promote the development of “powerful literacy” (Gee, 1992) in that students were able to recognize and critique assumptions and dynamics operating within their primary discourses. Reilly reflected that his impression of Protestants had been based upon the perspectives of members of his community who themselves had very little experience with Protestants and, confronted with evidence that contradicted their claims, began questioning the validity of what “they say.” Alin became more aware that her perception of Protestants had been informed by the images conveyed by the media and that these images were selectively chosen rather than fully representative of the Protestant community. For Niamh, recognizing that her unreflective actions about which flag to stand by contradicted her stated ideals elicited a deeper understanding of the subtle ways in which the dynamics of difference operate within Northern Ireland: “I guess it’s sort of like you need to prove to people what your views on nationalism and unionism are because if we had stood by the Northern Irish flag then people wouldn’t have known... I guess we all feel like we need to show people what we are.” In each case, by acknowledging the inconsistencies between what they had assumed to be true and what they experienced in particular instances, these students became capable of envisioning alternative ways of thinking or acting in the world: of holding a less stereotypical view of members of a different community or of developing a more inclusive sense of identity as a citizen of Northern Ireland.

This was not, however, the case for all students. Instead, many managed to preserve the perceived viability of their current understandings by covering over apparent inconsistencies and disassociating themselves from troubling aspects of their own identifications. In the case of Nuala, this consisted of disavowing any potential connection between her own activities and those of the students who terrorized Roan and his classmates. Despite her support for the Orange Parades, some of whose participants were likely the same youth who participated in the attacks on Roan's school, Nuala avoided exploring any connections between the two by adopting a "here and now" orientation (Bar-On, 2002) in which she framed each event: her support for the parades, the supposed attacks, and Roan's telling of his story, as attributable to immediate causes and individual motivations. Denying any sense of collective agency or responsibility, there was no need to question either her involvement in the parades or the possibility that they contributed to the sectarian passions motivating the attacks because, after all, Roan was exaggerating his claims, the supposed thugs weren't "as bad as all that," and her participation in the parades was simply showing support for her cousin.

The girls from Portrush similarly insulated themselves against any need to engage in critical self-reflection, but they did so in a very different manner. Rather than denying any sense of collective agency, these girls eliminated the need to question their own involvement in the conflicts between Protestants and Catholics by positioning themselves within a divergent collective narrative that stood in opposition to, or at least distinct from, the Troubles. Portraying Portrush as a playful vacation resort and explaining that their parents had moved there to "get away from all that [conflict]," the girls considered

themselves, as a result of both geography and lineage, clearly absolved them from any connection to the sectarian affiliations and tensions afflicting the rest of the country. While their disdain for sectarianism was quite likely genuine, the selectivity of their identifications (as members of a geographical rather than a political or cultural community) prevented these students from exploring the possibility that their latent political and cultural identities might ignite unacknowledged antagonisms once provoked. Instead, they proved capable of maintaining a casual sense of superiority at being “already converted” even while laughing at the admission that “bigoted Protestants really, really, really annoy me and I just want to kick their heads in” (Leila, May 2003).

Summary of major conclusions. The current chapter opened by reiterating Farrell’s (2004) question about whether educators can do anything about the divisions and hatreds present within many of today’s societies. This study demonstrates the difficulty of this task, exposing both personal motivations and contextual influences that compromised students’ ability to engage in many of the practices educators suggest can help promote knowledge, skills, and dispositions conducive to living peacefully and productively as members of pluralistic societies. In particular, it revealed a range of strategies through which students reduced their opportunity to learn from conflicting perspectives: by discounting the accuracy or relevance of knowledge and value claims that conflict with their own, by framing issues and interactions in interpersonal rather than intergroup terms, and by disclaiming any personal involvement in collective conflicts through positioning themselves within divergent narratives or adopting a “here and now” orientation.

The study also demonstrates, however, that students' willingness to confront conflicts and engage in critical self-reflection was, at least in part, responsive to the strategies and content employed by program staff. By exploring the ambiguities present within students' current identifications and providing them access to information that countered myths and misconceptions embedded within their primary discourses, Close Encounters prompted some students to acknowledge and begin to question the more problematic aspects of their own assumptions about themselves and others.

Orchestrating Difficult Dialogues: Contributions to the Literature

Recall that Chapter Two identified five conditions necessary for intergroup dialogue to advance the common goals of peace and citizenship education. These required that dialogues: a) integrate and seek to understand conflicts rather than eliminate or evade them, b) acknowledge that conflicts exist between groups rather than individuals only, c) aspire to build norms of mutual respect and listening rather than presume their pre-existence, d) invite a critical examination of participants' own perspectives rather than, or at least prior to, critiquing those of others, and e) acquaint students with the prospect that tension, uncertainty, and disagreement are inherent to the democratic project rather than opposed to it. In this section, I explain what can be learned from the case of Close Encounters relative to the central claims, questions, and tensions within the three literatures that inform my conceptualization of difficult dialogues.

Intergroup dialogue: Balancing coexistence and confrontation. Research on intergroup relations suggests that dialogues between members of diverse social and

cultural groups can increase participants' knowledge about the perspectives and experiences of other social groups (Gurin et al, 1999) and enhance their awareness of how structural factors contribute to existing inequalities and how events might effect or be perceived differently by dominant and subordinate groups (Thompson et al, 2001). For such learning to occur, participants must approach dialogue "trying to see and speak of themselves as members of their groups rather than as sole individuals" (Schoem et al, 2001, p.11). Doing so, however, requires that participants subscribe to collective identifications in such a way that they themselves may become implicated in contemporary or historical grievances and be forced to confront the fear, anger, and resentments with which group relations have become infused over time. Accordingly, many theorists and practitioners recommend that it is necessary to cultivate a caring and supportive climate (Nagda, et al, 199; Hahn, 1996) characterized by norms of trust and equal respect among participants before embarking upon potentially contentious discussions. Pettigrew (1998) suggests that this is best accomplished through first framing participants' interactions in interpersonal terms and developing a common in-group identity prior to reasserting participants' diverse social group identifications.

The case of Close Encounters supports, extends, and challenges several different assumptions and recommendations found within the literature on intergroup dialogue. First, as indicated by outbursts such as "I think it's a rubbish flag" or the claim that the green on the Irish Tricolor "stands for money," the study supports the need to acknowledge that participants in dialogue bring with them the legacy of the socio-historical relations between the groups to which they belong. Where this history is

marred by perceived wrong doing, the experience of students at Close Encounters demonstrates that participants confront significant challenges as a result of finding themselves implicated in collective transgressions and that this may motivate them to resist assuming group identifications. In the case of Nuala, framing her involvement in the Orange parades as a personal expression of cultural pride precluded the need to explore the potentially troubling implications of viewing the parades as collective actions connected with the attacks on Roan's school. The girls from Portrush demonstrated a second means by which participants may resist group identifications in such a way that diminishes the intergroup nature of a dialogue. Selectively choosing from among their multiple identities, these girls elected to apply a collective identification that was unassociated with the points of contention among those participating in the dialogue and effectively isolated themselves from the discussion concerning sectarian conflict.

According to the literature, establishing a caring climate facilitates intergroup dialogue by helping participants feel more secure about sharing and questioning one another about their group identities and confronting the conflicts that exist between them (Hahn, 1996). Devoting over sixty hours to helping students get to know and trust one another as individuals through a variety of both formal and informal activities, Close Encounters staff were largely successful in developing an atmosphere of trust and support among program participants. From a diverse collection of students, many of whom had been socialized to despise and distrust members of the opposite community and had little or no positive prior interaction across group boundaries, emerged a common in-group (Pettigrew, 1998) whose members "sort of forgot what others people's backgrounds are,"

“didn’t really know who was Protestant or Catholic,” and whose primary motivation for returning to the program was “the chance to see one another again.”

While the approach employed by Close Encounters proved quite successful in helping students come to know and trust one another as individuals, its effectiveness in facilitating dialogue was more equivocal. With the exception of the previously mentioned comments such as the Union Jack being “a rubbish flag,” discussions during Close Encounters were generally respectful of students’ varied experiences and commitments, and students did at times prove willing to trust one another enough to share information about their political and cultural backgrounds. However, the climate that promoted such behaviors also served to inhibit dialogue in two ways generally unaccounted for in the literature.

First, the very success of the program in fostering a common in-group identity premised upon trust and mutual respect became a powerful regulator of students’ ability to examine ways in which they might fall short of that ideal. Through the early emphasis upon building personal relationships and learning to trust another, students came to take pride in the exceptionalism of Corrymeela, expressing self-satisfaction that, unlike elsewhere in Northern Ireland, “nobody judges you here,” “everyone just tries to get on,” and “I feel like I can talk about anything.” In order to maintain this self-conception, students assumed such sentiments to be true of all participants and casually explained away evidence to the contrary: jokes about the Boncranagh boys “sheep shagging” symbolized that students were friendly enough to tease one another rather than thinly veiled class snobbery; and the reticence of Alice and Julia was due to their having been

beaten out for the boy's affection rather than a sense of isolation at being in the minority in terms of both class and religion. In much the same way that the girls from Portrush assumed that they were "above all that" and thus had no need to question how they might be subject certain sectarian dynamics, so the groups' assumption that their presence at Corrymeela was evidence that they cared for and trusted one another constrained students' ability to perceive or present evidence to the contrary.

Second, even where students did genuinely come to care for and respect one another, its effect was not always to promote open dialogue. Invited initially to frame their interactions in interpersonal terms so as to get to know, trust, and like one another as individuals, students demonstrated difficulty in sustaining the transition back to an intergroup frame. While they often proved willing to share information about their cultural and political backgrounds, they were generally reluctant to question or challenge one another's claims even when these were likely perceived as erroneous or offensive. Field notes from the third weekend of the program include a notation indicating surprise at the dawning realization that "NO ONE HAS DISAGREED ABOUT ANYTHING YET" (field notes, April 24, 2003). Even such a nominally objectionable expression as Declan's support for a United Ireland was greeted by a passive acquiescence.

This lack of disagreement could indicate that the program was only superficially successful at fostering caring relationships and that students lacked sufficient trust in one another to engage in potentially divisive discussions. Student interviews, however, suggest that the reluctance to question or challenge fellow students may have been indicative of a discongruity between the goals of the program and those of the students

themselves. Where program staff viewed the process of nurturing interpersonal relationships in part as an instrumental means for fostering dialogue, students such as Siobahn viewed building and maintaining these relationships as ends in themselves: “when the sessions stop, we stop talking about that sort of thing and just move to more personal kinds of things.” Viewed in this perspective, the remarkable paucity of conflictual pedagogy originated not from the perceived weakness of students’ interpersonal relationships but from their strength. As evidenced by Alin’s remark that “if we were to sit down and talk about our problems... I think I’d end up not taking part because I wouldn’t want to hurt other people’s feelings,” students’ concern on such occasions appeared to be less a question of whether they themselves would be hurt should others respond in anger than a desire to avoid causing distress to those whom they had come to care for. In this respect, the caring climate considered to be a prerequisite to engaging in conflictual pedagogy (Hahn, 1996) served, instead, to inhibit it.

Recognizing the need to establish a safe and trusting climate where one does not already exist, Pettigrew (1998) recommends that inter-group contact follow an “optimal contact sequence.” Similar to the process employed by Close Encounters, Pettigrew suggests that participants first be encouraged to frame their interactions in interpersonal terms, then to establish a common in-group identification based upon shared experiences, and finally to reintroduce their social group identities so as to examine the bases for conflict between the groups to which they belong. The experience of students in Close Encounters suggests that this process may prove difficult to operationalize. Encouraged initially to relate to one another as individuals rather than as members of opposing

political or religious identity groups, students found this interpersonal framing to be stubbornly resilient. Not only does Siobahn assert that “when the sessions stop, we stop talking about that sort of thing and just move to more personal kinds of things,” but Alice is able to casually dismiss Declan’s support for a United Ireland because “that’s just Declan...that’s just what he’s like.” Throughout the program, students regularly resisted engaging one another as Protestants or Catholics, Nationalists or Unionists. By downplaying the significance of controversial information and constantly affirming rather than challenging opposing perspectives, students consistently repositioned their interactions back to the safe ground of inter-personal rather than inter-group dialogue.

Because one of the primary goals of the Close Encounters was to prepare students to act peacefully and inclusively as citizens within a divided society, the reluctance of students to engage one another as members of opposing social identity groups was, to a certain extent, problematic. Relating to one another as individuals served to insulate students’ budding relationships from potential disturbances arising from the differing values and interests between the social, cultural, or political groups to which they belonged. Fostering such cross-cultural friendships certainly served valuable personal and societal interests, particularly within a society where such boundaries are rarely crossed. However, by framing their interactions almost exclusively in interpersonal terms, students limited their opportunity to learn how to respond constructively to those conflicts likely to be encountered once they left Corrymeela and returned to contexts where group differences would become salient once more. Where the goal of educators includes preparing students to meet the challenges awaiting them as citizens within a

deeply polarized society, this study suggests that dialogue alone may be insufficient for teaching students how to confront conflicts in a peaceful and productive manner.

Education for democratic citizenship: Radical citizenship, demystification, and liminality. The literature on democratic citizenship is quickly evolving to reflect current understandings of how the multiple and fluid nature of identity impacts how the role of citizen is conceived and enacted within increasingly permeable and pluralistic societies (Benhabib, 2002; Kymlica, 2000; Guarasci & Cornwell, 1997). This changing conception of citizenship has profound implications for both the substance and form of citizenship education. Where the citizen was considered to be an atomistic entity whose individual rights were paramount (Carter & Stokes, 1998), citizenship education accordingly emphasized the acquisition of knowledge regarding the rights of individuals and an appreciation for the process through which these rights were attained (Gagnon, 1996). Where, however, citizenship is seen to involve a constant process of negotiation among diverse and oftentimes conflicting interests, commitments, and values (Young, 1990; Mouffe, 1992), both the substance and form of citizenship education must be decidedly different. In preparation for more deliberative, contestatory, or radical modes of citizenship, students must be taught how to deliberate and disagree respectfully (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996), to question and critique current conditions and commitments (Arthur et al, 2000; Cherryholmes, 1988), and to participate in the “ongoing, creative struggle to work out a way of living together fairly, freely, and equally” (Parker, 2002, p.109).

There are few places in the world where this “ongoing, creative struggle” is more evident than in Northern Ireland today. Clearly exemplifying the agonistic nature of the democratic polity, both elected officials and ordinary citizens are currently embroiled in a prolonged effort to construct a shared sense of political community capable of accommodating the presence of persistent conflicts among individuals and groups whose political and cultural identities are deeply conflated (Trew and Cox, 1996). Given this context, Sean’s description of his goals for the program indicated that the citizenship for which Close Encounters seeks to prepare students is clearly situated towards the deliberative/radical pole described above. Teaching students to “discuss the issues that separate them,” to “communicate and listen to each other in order to find some way of overcoming obstacles,” and to “acknowledge that there are questions that need to be asked and that things aren’t what they thought and something needs to happen,” Close Encounters sought to equip students with knowledge, skills, and commitment with which to actively participate in the ongoing process of achieving democracy within a pluralistic society.

The literature on citizenship education indicates both methodologies and curriculum that might prove effective in this endeavor. First, deliberation theorists suggest that where heterogeneous groups of students attempt to make decisions regarding matters that are of real and immediate concern, they have occasion to practice and become more skilled in many of the behaviors desired of citizens within pluralistic societies (Hess, 1998; Schoem, 1997). Second, critical scholars recommend that by countering positivistic assumptions regarding the certainty and objectivity of supposed

truths, educators can call attention to the complex relationships between knowledge, power, and experience (Cherryholmes, 1980) and help students to question, debate, and envision alternatives to the current workings of society (Arthur et al, 2000). Parker (2004), Goncalves e Silva (2004), and Zerubavel (1995) each proposes particular subject matters that might prove particularly conducive to this task, recommending that educators involve students in examining competing discourses about the meaning and extent of democracy and exploring liminal moments during which dominant narratives were galvanized, called into question, or transformed.

The case of Close Encounters indicates the potential efficacy, limitations, and possible extensions of each of these approaches. Though students did not aim to make decisions as a result of the discussions in which they participated throughout the program, those discussions did provide occasions in which for them to practice and develop deliberative skills such as attentive listening, tolerance, and self-restraint. In addition, students clearly grew in their knowledge of and, generally, their respect for the diverse experiences and perspectives of those belonging to different social identity groups as a result of such discussions. However, as discussed in the preceding section, these discussions were often characterized by a virtual absence of disagreement as a result of students' reluctance to challenge or engage with the more controversial implications of one another's claims. Consequently, the extent to which these discussions provided training for participating in deliberative democracy was severely constrained. While students adhered admirably to norms of civility and reciprocity, their reluctance to express disagreement meant that they had little opportunity to become more proficient in

the difficult process of resolving, negotiating, or accommodating moral disagreements in the attempt to arrive at mutually acceptable decisions.

Students' reticence to address their conflicts also limited the potential of their deliberations to serve as an impetus for critical reflection concerning either their differing experiences of democracy within Northern Ireland or the positivist assumptions implicit within their conceptions of history and identity. Recognizing that democratic public life requires that citizens learn to critically examine their own interests and commitments in light of the legitimate claims and entitlements of those who differ, Giroux (1988) asserts the need for educators to teach students "to both locate themselves in their particular histories and *simultaneously confront the limits of their own perspectives* as part of a broader engagement with democratic public life" (p.165, italics added). Where deliberation is viewed as a means of preparing for civic life, the value of having students challenge as well as affirm one another's perspectives lies, most significantly, in providing students opportunities to experience having their own perspective called into question. Such an experience is desirable because it provides occasion for students to reflect upon the reasons why they think, believe, and act the way they do and, in so doing, recognize the ways in which their current assumptions, beliefs, and commitments are simultaneously influenced and constrained by their own particular experiences and positionality. Where students prove reluctant to challenge one another, an important opportunity to "confront the limits of their own perspectives" is seriously compromised.

The case of Close Encounters illustrates such a result. It also indicates an approach through which this reluctance may be circumvented. Where deliberation lies

upon the consideration of another's perspective to expose the limits of one's own, the process of demystification directs students' towards a deeper consideration of their own perspectives. During the course of the flags exercise, students at Close Encounters did come to critically reflect upon their own assumptions regarding the meaning of the various flags, how the symbols in each related to their own sense of identity, and what their own actions and attitudes revealed about the dynamics of difference in Northern Ireland. The task in which students in that room were immersed was one of attempting to better understand representations of their own identity as embodied in the various flags. Deconstructing those representations, and the myths with which they were infused, was a process that exposed students to the risk of finding the validity of their prior attitudes, assumptions, or behaviors called into question: Alin came to question her feelings of affiliation with the Tricolor and Niamh her own hypocrisy in exhibiting the same behaviors that she criticized in others. In this case, however, the caring climate established earlier in the program worked to facilitate rather than retard the process of critical questioning, primarily because the questions students were asking were of themselves rather than of each other.

The selection of national flags as the subject matter upon which to center this process of demystification was also significant and proved particularly effective in provoking critical reflection for two reasons. First, because the flags themselves were closely associated with students' understanding of national history and identity, issues regarding which students had been conditioned, both by their socialization within a highly polarized society and, in some cases, by their schooling (Barton & McCully,

2005), to view in certain and partisan terms. As a result, exposing students to the possibility that their meanings were less certain and exclusive than they previously assumed meant challenging as well the positivist assumptions inherent in how they had been taught to regard them.

Second, because the flags raised questions of national identity that were both central to collective narratives present within Northern Ireland and also subject to multiple and competing interpretations, they occupied a liminal role (Huber et al, 2003) in students' understandings of themselves, their history, and their society. Because the Tricolor and Union Jack were often used as means of exclusion despite their original intent to signify inclusion, just as the Red Hand symbolized a founding Gaelic myth but had also come to signify sectarian violence, examining the flags afforded an opportunity to expose the ambiguities present within how they were conceived and presented fertile grounds in which for new meanings to take hold. How these students (or any citizen of Northern Ireland) resolve these apparent contradictions holds profound implications for the direction of their future self-definitions as citizens of Northern Ireland, influencing such matters as the extent to which they assume their society to be inherently exclusionary or inclusive and whether they consider religious and political identities to be necessarily conflated and oppositional. Precisely because their meanings are indeterminate and contested, liminal subject matters are fertile grounds for stimulating critical reflection and profoundly transforming students' conceptions of themselves in relation to others.

Promoting peace in divided societies: Legitimizing and critiquing collective narratives. The peace education literature suggests that educators concerned with fostering peace face a choice between fostering coexistence or confrontation between members of diverse social identity groups. According to Maoz (2002), coexistence models aim to reduce the likelihood of conflict by building friendships and trust across cultural barriers while confrontational models encourage students to address their conflicts in order to enhance their understanding and appreciation of one another's experiences and perspectives.

In contexts of seemingly intractable conflicts, coexistence may appear a more attainable and appropriate goal in light of structural inequalities and mutual animosities (Bar-Tal, 1996) that are likely to undermine the norms of equal status deemed necessary for the success of both intergroup contact (Allport, 1954) and dialogue (Fishkin, 1991). Halabi and Sonnenschein (2004), however, argue that such an approach inadequately prepares students for citizenship within conflicted societies because it fails to equip them to address the structural and relational dysfunctions that imbue conflicts with such vehemence. Instead, where educators aspire to promote a state of positive peace (Galtung, 1980), students must be taught how to engage conflicts in an inclusive, creative, and non-violent manner. Where inequality and animosity persist, Salomon (2002) suggests that this requires altering participants' negative evaluations of the collective narratives through which their erstwhile enemies develop and communicate their understanding of the conflict in which they are embroiled. As depicted in Figure 5.1, Salomon proposes a fourfold process through which this might be accomplished by

a) helping participants accept the legitimacy of the others' understanding of the conflict, b) critically examining the assumptions and actions of their own group, c) developing empathy for the others' suffering, and d) engaging in non-violent interactions with members of the other group.

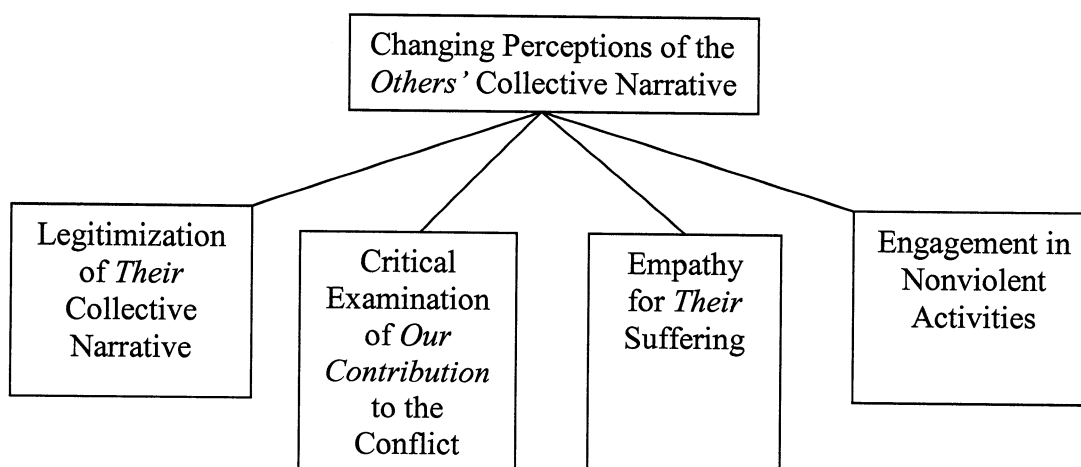


Figure 5.1: Peace Education in the Context of Intractable Conflict (Salomon, 2002, p.9)

The case of Close Encounters provides support for the claim that a tension exists between the goals of coexistence and confrontation. As indicated by both the comments of the program leader and the extent to which program activities broached controversial issues, Close Encounters sought to promote positive peace by helping students learn to confront their differences and disagreements. In practice, however, students frequently proved reluctant to engage with the conflictual nature of information they were presented because they were invested in maintaining the friendships they had formed with those belonging to different social identity groups. As a result, they generally resisted confronting the conflicts that existed among them and instead gravitated toward a coexistence model of interaction.

Despite this tendency, the case also indicates methods by which program staff occasionally succeeded in overcoming students' reluctance and engaging them in each of the four elements of the process recommended by Salomon, though the manner in which each element interacted and contributed to changing students' perceptions of one another's collective narratives is unclear. Through employing an experiential approach, the early sessions of the program succeeded in constructing numerous and varied opportunities in which students interacted with one another in a cooperative and non-violent fashion. As a result, students grew to care for and trust one another as individuals and demonstrated an interest in and concern for one another's experiences and points of view.

The stories to which students listened with evident interest and respect, however, were generally presented or interpreted in terms of individual rather than collective experiences. As a result, it is difficult to discern whether the receptivity they exhibited indicated that a sense of legitimacy was being accorded to others' collective narratives rather than simply their personal experiences. In addition, while the process of demystification did occasionally succeed in provoking critical reflection concerning the validity of students' own actions, attitudes, and assumptions, the program afforded little opportunity for students to demonstrate whether this effected any change in how they perceived the collective narratives of others. Further research is necessary in order to investigate this and other questions that were raised by this dissertation but beyond its scope to address. In the following section, I recommend three directions for future

research, explain how they emerge out of the findings of this study, and identify potential research questions and methodological approaches appropriate to each.

Directions for further research. Given that one of the primary goals of the program was to prepare students to act peacefully as citizens in a polarized society, further research should explore whether the behaviors and attitudes exhibited at Close Encounters transferred into other settings. In order to protect the confidentiality of students, this study was unable to observe program participants in settings outside of the Corrymeela retreat center. While cross-cultural empathy and criticality were socially sanctioned at Close Encounters, such qualities may prove difficult to sustain in school, peer, or home environments where they are often denounced as signs of weakness or even collaboration. To investigate whether this is the case, further case studies might follow individual students through a variety of settings and compare their participation and responses to discussions concerning national and cultural identity in different environments. Additionally, longitudinal research could compare students' future involvement in civic activities such as voting, participation in sectarian activities or organizations, or maintaining cross-cultural relationships with that of a control group drawn of students' siblings or classmates who did not attend Close Encounters.

Because many of the findings reported in this study were influenced by cultural, sociological, and institutional conditions specific to Northern Ireland, further research is also necessary to investigate the extent to which the responses manifested by students in Close Encounters operate in other national contexts. Given the reported tendency towards ritual politeness in Northern Ireland, it is reasonable to suspect that the avoidance

mechanisms employed by students may be a unique product of their specific cultural context. However, a closer examination of the specific strategies they employed to minimize their potential for causing or experiencing personal discomfort evokes comparisons to behaviors reported in other contexts. The tendency to disavow collective responsibility by framing issues in interpersonal rather than intergroup terms, for example, is reminiscent of both the here and now orientation that Bar-On (2002) reported among Israelis discussing the Intifada and, second, the absence of structural factors from discussions concerning the achievement gap among pre-service teachers in the United States (Boyle-Baise, 1998). Accordingly, future research could examine controversial issues discussions in other national contexts to determine how or if students exhibit any of the other response strategies reported in this study.

Of particular interest is the question of whether the need to alter students' perceptions of their own as well as others' collective narratives holds true where intergroup antagonisms are less pronounced. In the case of Close Encounters, this need was demonstrated, on the one hand, by the manner in which the Portrush girls' understanding of themselves as "already converted" and "beyond sectarianism" served to diminish their ability to critically reflect upon how they were nonetheless affected by or subject to sectarian dynamics. Conversely, statements such as "it's a rubbish flag" and "the green stands for money" demonstrated the tendency to denigrate the collective understandings of others. Future research should investigate how students' understandings of themselves and others may, in other contexts as well, form a powerful combination that serves to rigidify group boundaries, sustain stereotypes and

misconceptions, or diminish the perceived need to engage in critical reflection. For example, to what extent do students or teachers within the United States manifest the tendency to depict their own social or political group as more enlightened, rational, or morally justified, or to denigrate the experience or claims of others by labeling them as irrational, backward, or terrorist? And, where such practices are found to occur, what effect do they have upon the perceived value in attempting to understand the perspectives of others or in investigating one's own individual or collective culpability in fomenting suffering or injustice?

Given the effectiveness of the flag exercise in promoting critical self reflection, future research might also fruitfully explore how and to what effect liminal subject matters are utilized within other educational contexts. At Close Encounters, the flag exercise prompted critical reflection because it exposed the myths and misconceptions present within students' current understandings of symbols that were integral to their sense of national history and identity. Similarly, at one of the integrated schools attended by students participating in Close Encounters, one history teacher devoted a full week of lessons was devoted to the battle of Drogheda. This teacher accentuated the liminal nature of this event by engaging students in exploring competing claims regarding whether the incident should properly be referred to as a massacre or a battle, whether Charles was a usurper or a protector, and what implications these choices held for how the relationship between British and Irish evolved over time. How might the treatment given to this event and its liminal qualities differ within segregated Protestant or Catholic schools? In other national contexts, which issues or events occupy a similarly liminal

role in so far as they are potentially disruptive of dominant narratives? And, when liminal moments are included in the curriculum, how are ambiguities and contradictions covered over (Zerubavel, 1995) in order to preserve and protect master narratives or, conversely, how is attention given to divergent interpretations and experiences so as to challenge those narratives and create space for counter-histories to emerge?

Implications for practice: Educating citizens in divided societies.

This study can be used to inform the practice of program staff at Close Encounters, teacher educators in Northern Ireland, and citizenship educators in the United States and other pluralistic democracies.

The study findings could be shared with Close Encounters staff members to assist in their reflective practice; that is, in thinking about how and where program activities achieve or fall short of their desired outcomes. In particular, recognizing students' strategies for evading or minimizing conflict could help staff members clarify and prioritize their goals for the program. If their overarching aim is to foster empathy, caring, and personal relationships across cultural boundaries, students' tendency to frame issues in interpersonal terms and disassociate themselves from collective conflicts should not be considered problematic. To the extent that they desire to help prepare students for conflicts that they will encounter as citizens of a deeply polarized society, learning to recognize such responses could prompt staff members to reflect on the need to encourage more students to confront the disagreements between the groups to which they belong.

Should they decide on the desirability of encouraging students to confront conflicts, program staff should utilize the process of demystification as a precursor to dialogue rather than a substitute for it. By challenging students' misconceptions regarding the national flags, the flag exercise enabled students such as Niamh and Alin to acknowledge inconsistencies in their current assumptions regarding national identity. However, no subsequent attempt was made to engage students in discussing what implications their new understandings of the flags held for how they envisioned contemporary relations between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland. Should such discussions have taken place, perhaps the same avoidance strategies manifested in previous discussions would have recurred. However, by helping students acknowledge the partiality of their current perspectives, the process of demystification may have prepared students to engage in dialogue more open to conflicting perspectives and capable of "accepting some things that are against them." If Close Encounters aims to help students learn to confront their conflicts, the opportunity should be given to discover whether this is the case.

Second, given that learning to confront conflicts peacefully features prominently in the goals of Education for Mutual Understanding, teacher educators in Northern Ireland need to address the reasons why classroom practice frequently fails to provide opportunities for students to do so. Although the Department of Education and local universities have created extensive curricular resources for investigating the religious and political conflict in Northern Ireland (most notably the CAIN website), teacher interviews indicated that these resources are rarely used (a claim corroborated by the students at

Close Encounters). The reasons given by teachers focused upon their fear of losing control over discussions about issues related to the conflict because of their own lack of experience, comfort, and skill in facilitating or even participating in such discussions. More than compiling curricular resources, then, teacher educators in Northern Ireland should focus upon providing training in discussing controversial issues and using instructional techniques that reduce the perceived emotional and intellectual risks of doing so. As an exemplar, teachers could be taught to help students examine controversial issues indirectly by drawing parallels to issues in which students are less emotionally invested (examples reported in this study included racial discrimination, the civil rights movement in the United States, international human rights accords).

Finally, promoting critical self reflection should be regarded as a prominent goal of citizenship education in the United States and other pluralistic societies. In Northern Ireland, EMU emerged out of an accepted need to help students acknowledge their misconceptions and partial understandings as part of an effort to forge more democratic institutions and relations between formerly estranged groups. In nations where intergroup relations are less violent, the temptation exists to regard democracy as already achieved and to conflate citizenship education with the acquisition of knowledge and respect for existing political institutions and processes. In all pluralistic societies, however, particularly in an era of increasing global interconnectedness, critical self reflection is a vital capacity of democratic citizenship. Wherever social, cultural, and political groups possess divergent experiences, interests, or values, all citizens should be

taught to acknowledge the partiality of their own perspective and recognize where current practices fall short of stated ideals.

In order to promote this critical capacity, liminal subject matters should be developed and incorporated into the social studies curriculum. By this I mean that particular attention should be given to issues, events, and collective experiences that threaten to disrupt the apparent continuity of master narratives such as American exceptionalism (Appleby, 1992), the steady advance of rights, or the universal accessibility of the American Dream (Zinn, 2003). Where such issues and events are already embedded within the curriculum, teachers need to be taught and encouraged to help students explore how hegemonic conceptions of national identity have been galvanized by means of excluding divergent experiences and counter-interpretations. The process of demystification employed by Close Encounters could be presented as one approach for engaging students in this exploration. In the case of the flag exercise, this would involve following up the discussion of the Red Hand with an examination of how this ancient symbol of Gaelic identity came to be included in the flag of Northern Ireland and later appropriated by a Loyalist paramilitary. In other national contexts, the process would resemble a form of critical historiography that calls attention to the contradictions and ambiguities that have been covered over in order to sustain national myths.

Conclusion

Embarking upon this dissertation, my goal was to examine how the conditions under which students encountered conflict within educational settings helped prepare

them for democratic citizenship in a diverse and contentious society. The study was to investigate both phenomenological and pedagogical issues: how students perceived and responded to having cherished assumptions about national and cultural identity called into question and also the strategies that educators used to present opportunities for these challenges to occur. My fieldwork was therefore conducted at a site where there existed a strong likelihood of disagreement emerging, namely, a program involving sustained cross-cultural dialogue between Protestant and Catholic students in Northern Ireland.

As the fieldwork progressed, however, I was struck by the virtual absence of disagreement and the passive acquiescence with which students greeted images and claims that were of an overtly contentious nature. As this discovery gradually dawned upon me and I let go of the lingering expectation that simmering disagreements were soon to emerge, I came to suspect that my initial conceptualization of why students were likely to experience these dialogues as “difficult” was too narrowly upon individual, psychological factors. While students’ own intellectual and emotional investment in maintaining the viability of their current assumptions might partially explain what I was (or was not) observing, the manner and consistency with which students avoided discussing controversial issues led me to suspect that pervasive cultural and institutional factors played a greater role than reflected within my initial formulation of the problem. As a result, I came to reformulate my original research plan in order to better explore the personal, cultural, and institutional processes at work in “manufacturing” this apparent consent and, second, to identify the subtle cracks and fissures through which unspoken disagreements could be glimpsed.

As a result of this revised approach, I was initially discouraged to consider that many of the factors that seemed to quell the potential benefits of participating in dialogue were beyond the control of individual educators. Influences such as the cultural observance of ritual politeness and the institutionalized constraints against teaching with controversial content appeared to confirm Farrell's (2004) concerns about the inability of schools to "do anything" about the divisions and hatreds that many students brought with them into the classroom. At the same time, however, this made the rare occasions in which educators did succeed in sustaining students' consideration of difficult issues all the more remarkable. Given the magnitude of the challenges they succeeded, at least in part, in overcoming, I leave this study impressed by the apparent power of demystification and liminal subject matters to provoke critical reflection, and convinced of the need to explore their potential applicability within other contexts.

Within all pluralistic societies, citizens face an ever-increasing likelihood of becoming embroiled in disagreements arising from the differing experiences, values, and beliefs of diverse individuals and groups. Confronted with such conflicts, citizens may respond, either individually or collectively, in several ways. First, they may insist upon the unconditional validity of their own current understandings and behaviors and the corresponding illegitimacy of claims to the contrary. At the level of interpersonal interactions, this may manifest in mutual recriminations in which participants resolutely deny or denigrate the experiences or perspectives of others. On a more macro level, such a response contributes to entrenched animosities and intergroup violence as citizens collectively attempt to assert their will and interests over and against those of others.

Alternately, citizens may seek to withdraw from potential conflicts by separating from those who differ and surrounding themselves by the like-minded. Within interpersonal contexts, such a response can be seen in discursive strategies such as “ritual politeness” or a superficial readiness to “agree to disagree.” On a societal level, it is embodied by the retreat into the perceived safety and comfort of gated communities, ethnic enclaves, a state of amoral familialism or, more aggressively, by the enforcement of compulsory segregation or population transfers.

Yet a third approach, that signified by the aspirations of positive peace, involves attempting to acknowledge and resolve conflicts within the framework of a continually evolving yet shared sense of relationship and common future. On either an interpersonal or intergroup level, this requires that citizens possess both the skills and commitment to engage in respectful and courageous dialogues about difficult matters: respectful, because all participants must be prepared to accord legitimacy to the varied experiences, perspectives, and commitments of diverse others; and courageous, because in so doing they must also be prepared to “accept some things that are against them” in order to construct a more inclusive understanding of both the past and present. By contributing to educators’ understanding of methods and subject matters that may be particularly effective in cultivating these capacities, it is my hope that the work of this dissertation and the experience of those working for reconciliation within Northern Ireland may contribute to the ongoing effort to educate citizens capable of and committed to promoting peace and democracy within pluralistic societies.

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Appendix A: Parents' Letter of Introduction

28 February, 2003

Dear Parent,

Hello, my name is John King. I am one of the volunteer leaders at the Close Encounter program your child is currently participating in. I am also a graduate student in the College of Education at the University of Washington in the U.S. and am writing to tell you about a study that I would like to conduct at the Close Encounter program while your child is involved there. I am interested in learning about how educators in Northern Ireland help students take part in cross-community dialogue. I think this information would help teachers here and in the United States better teach students how to listen to and learn from diverse perspectives.

I am asking your permission to interview your child about his or her experiences in the Close Encounter program. I would like to talk with your child for about forty-five minutes before or after one of their Close Encounter meetings. Participating in this study is entirely voluntary. Your child's answers are for the purposes of the study only and all the information from this study will be confidential. Your child's name will not be used in any publication or presentation.

Attached to this letter is a permission form that explains the study in more detail. If you would like to give permission for your child to be included in this study, please sign the form and return it with him or her to the next Close Encounter meeting. Thank you.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have. You can reach me at 02890 22 0364 or by e-mail at jtking@u.washington.edu. If you'd prefer, you can also call John Doherty at 02890 50 8080.

Sincerely,

John T. King
College of Education
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.

Appendix B: Schools' Letter of Introduction

9 March, 2003

Principal McHugh,

Hello, my name is John King. I am a graduate student in the College of Education at the University of Washington and am currently conducting research into Education for Mutual Understanding here in Northern Ireland. A piece of this research focuses on a group of students participating in an cross-cultural dialogue program sponsored by the Corrymeela Community, three of whom are students at Lagan College. Since part of my analysis involves comparing the curriculum and instructional techniques utilized by the Corrymeela staff with those employed in the students' schools, I am writing to request your permission to carry out limited research at Lagan College. Specifically, I would hope to:

- interview a teacher whose classes address questions of citizenship and national identity in some form, and
- observe 1 or 2 sessions of that teachers' class during which students are engaged in discussing controversial issues related to national or cultural identity.

This study is being sponsored by the U.S. Institute of Peace with the goal of identifying effective practices through which educators assist students in listening to and learning from diverse perspectives. The confidentiality of all students and teachers will be strictly protected, and no names or other identifiers will be used in any public presentation or publication of findings.

Upon your approval, I would greatly appreciate if you or the EMU coordinator could nominate a teacher you feel would be appropriate and willing to be interviewed for the purpose of this study. A reply form and self-addressed stamped envelope are included for this purpose. Or, if you have further questions or concerns before making a final determination, please contact me either by e-mail at jtking@u.washington.edu or by phone at 9022 0364. Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

John T. King
College of Education
University of Washington
Seattle, Washington, U.S.A.

Appendix C: Student Interview Guide

Re: Prior Socialization

- 1) Before taking part in Close Encounters, what sort of prior contact have you had with members of the opposite community?
- 2) Where did your knowledge/impression about what Protestants/Catholics are like (history, culture) come from?
- 3) How credible do you feel each of these sources of knowledge are? Why?
- 4) Do you or any of your friends or family take part in any civic organizations/activities? (political, cultural, athletic, demonstrations, parades, etc)

Re: School

- 1) In school, how much do you discuss these sorts of issues (history or culture of the opposite community)? Like what?
- 2) Do you ever discuss the Troubles directly? What events?
- 3) Do you feel your teachers / fellow students often present more than one perspective on these issues?
- 4) Are there events or issues you would like more of a chance to discuss?
- 5) Do you feel your education would be any different if you attended a different kind of school (Protestant/Catholic/Integrated)?
- 6) Who made the choice for you to attend an integrated school? Why?

Re: Close Encounters

- 1) How does Close Encounters program compare to your school in terms of giving you a chance to discuss these issues and to hear opposing perspectives?
- 2) How do you feel about being in an integrated setting here?
- 3) Have you learned anything new about the other community?
- 4) Why did you choose to take part in the program? Have you or your family or friends had any prior involvement in Corrymeela?
- 5) Do you feel that people here really listen to and respect what you have to say? Examples? What have the leaders done to help accomplish this?
- 6) Are there issues that you still find hard to discuss here?
- 7) What do you think the value of this program will have for you once it finishes?

Appendix D: Teachers and Staff Interview Guide

Re: Teaching Background

- 1) Subject/grade level/length teaching/what schools?

Re: Curriculum

- 1) What do you teach about citizenship and national identity in Northern Ireland?
- 2) What curriculum do you use to teach about issues related to citizenship and national identity? Where does this curriculum come from?
- 3) How much autonomy do you have in terms of selecting this curriculum?
- 4) What factors influence your choices of curriculum?
- 5) How has any of this (curriculum/influences upon it) changed over time (esp. since 1998)?
- 6) In your classroom, do you often discuss controversial political, social, economic or religious issues? What are your objectives for/what value do you see in these discussions?
- 7) What issues tend to cause the most controversy? Are there issues that tend not to be discussed?

Re: Pedagogy

- 1) To what extent do you feel comfortable challenging students opinions/perspectives on controversial issues? To what extent do students challenge one another? Are there times or issues regarding which you don't feel comfortable doing so?
- 2) What type of support or training is available to you in terms of preparing you to facilitate controversial discussions?
- 3) Do you perceive obstacles or resistance to discussing controversial issues? If so, from what sources?
- 4) How have you constructed a climate in which students feel safe and supported in taking the risks associated with advancing or critically reflecting upon their own perspectives or those of others?
- 5) Has EMU had any impact on your classroom or your teaching?
- 6) Does the fact that your school tends to be (single/mixed) identity affect at all how or what you teach? Does it affect what role you find yourself in when teaching about national or cultural identity? (impartial facilitator, devil's advocate, where do contrasting perspectives come from?)
- 7) How did you come to be teaching at a Prot/Cath/Int. school? Do you perceive any positives or negatives attached to teaching at such a school?

Appendix E: Parent Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
COLLEGE EDUCATIONEDUCATING FOR MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY
PARENTAL CONSENT FORM

Investigator: John T. King, graduate student, Curriculum & Instruction, 028 9022 0364
jtking@u.washington.edu

Investigator's Statement

I am asking your permission to include your child in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to allow your child to be in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask your child to do, the possible risks and benefits, your child's rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want your child to be in this study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.'

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

I would like to know how teachers can help students listen to and learn from diverse perspectives. Specifically, I am interested in how different teaching strategies affect how children respond when their own assumptions are called into question. I will interview students who are participating in the Close Encounter Program and ask them to discuss their thoughts and feelings about the program. I hope to help teachers learn how to better support students in listening to perspectives that challenge their own. The students interviewed may not directly benefit from this study.

PROCEDURES

If you choose to allow your child to participate in this study, I would like to interview him or her for about forty-five minutes to discuss their experiences during the Close Encounter Program. The questions will focus on whether they felt supported and successful in listening to diverse perspectives. For example, I will ask "Were there opinions that were difficult for you to listen to because they were different from yours?" and "What did the teachers do that made it easier for you to listen to different opinions?" Your child DOES NOT have to answer every question.

I would like to audiotape the interview so that I have an accurate record of what was said. Only I will have access to the audiotapes. I will transcribe the tapes, code the transcripts, and destroy the tapes within 4 months of their interview. Please indicate whether or not

you give your permission for me to audiotape your child's interview:

- _____ I give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my child's interview.
 _____ I do not give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my child's interview.

I may want to re-contact your child to clarify information they provide. Please indicate below whether or not you give your permission for me to re-contact your child for that purpose:

- _____ I give my permission for the researcher to re-contact my child in order to clarify information.
 _____ I do not give my permission for the researcher to re-contact my child in order to clarify information.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. Sometimes students feel self-conscious when they are audio-taped.

OTHER INFORMATION

Being in this study is voluntary. Your child may stop participating at any time. Information your child provides will be kept confidential. The audiotapes will be transcribed, the transcripts coded, and then the tapes destroyed within 4 months of the interview. Only I will have the master list of students' names and codes. This list will be destroyed within one year. If the results of this study are published or presented, your child's name will not be used.

Signature of investigator

Typed name

Date

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I give my permission for my child to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have a question later on, I can ask the investigator listed above. I understand that if I have future questions about the research or my child's rights as a subject, I may call the University of Washington Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Signature of parent

Printed name of student

Date

Copies to: Parent
 Investigator's file

Appendix F: Student Assent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
COLLEGE EDUCATIONEDUCATING FOR MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY
STUDENT ASSENT FORM

Investigator: John T. King, graduate student, Curriculum & Instruction, 028 9022 0364
jtking@u.washington.edu

Investigator's Statement

I am asking you to be in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to participate in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.'

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

I would like to know how teachers can help students listen to and learn from diverse perspectives. Specifically, I am interested in how different teaching strategies affect how children respond when their own assumptions are called into question. I will interview students who are participating in the Close Encounter Program and ask them to discuss their thoughts and feelings about the program. I hope to help teachers learn how to better support students in listening to perspectives that challenge their own. The students interviewed may not directly benefit from this study.

PROCEDURES

If you choose to participate in this study, I would like to interview you for about forty-five minutes to discuss your experiences during the Close Encounter Program. The questions will focus on whether you felt supported and successful in listening to diverse perspectives. For example, I will ask "Were there opinions that were difficult for you to listen to because they were different from yours?" and "What did the teachers do that made it easier for you to listen to different opinions?" You DO NOT have to answer every question.

I would like to audiotape the interview so that I have an accurate record of what was said. Only I will have access to the audiotapes. I will transcribe the tapes, code the transcripts, and destroy the tapes within 4 months of their interview. Please indicate whether or not you give your permission for me to audiotape the interview:

- _____ I give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my interview.
 _____ I do not give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my interview.

I may want to re-contact you to clarify information you provided. Please indicate below whether or not you give your permission for me to re-contact you for that purpose:

- _____ I give my permission for the researcher to re-contact me in order to clarify information.
 _____ I do not give my permission for the researcher to re-contact me in order to clarify information.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. Sometimes students feel self-conscious when they are audio-taped.

OTHER INFORMATION

Being in this study is voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. Information you provide will be kept confidential. The audiotapes will be transcribed, the transcripts coded, and then the tapes destroyed within 4 months of the interview. Only I will have the master list of students' names and codes. This list will be destroyed within one year. If the results of this study are published or presented, your name will not be used.

Signature of investigator

Typed name

Date

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have a question later on, I can ask the investigator listed above. I understand that if I have future questions about the research or my rights as a subject, I may call the University of Washington Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant

Printed name of participant

Date

Copies to: Student
 Investigator's file

Appendix G: Teacher Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
COLLEGE EDUCATIONEDUCATING FOR MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY
TEACHER CONSENT FORM

Investigator: John T. King, graduate student, Curriculum & Instruction, 028 9022 0364
jtking@u.washington.edu

Investigator's Statement

I am asking you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to be in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.'

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

I would like to know how teachers can help students listen to and learn from diverse perspectives. Specifically, I am interested in how different teaching strategies affect how children respond when their own assumptions are called into question. I will interview teachers of students who are participating in the Close Encounter Program and ask them to discuss how they and their students discuss controversial issues related to national identity. I hope to help teachers learn how to better support students in listening to perspectives that challenge their own. The participants interviewed may not directly benefit from this study.

PROCEDURES

If you choose to participate in this study, I would like to interview you for about forty-five minutes to discuss what and how you teach concerning national identity. The questions will focus on whether and how you encourage students to engage with diverse perspectives in your classroom. For example, I will ask "What do you teach about what it means to be a citizen of Northern Ireland?" and "Are there specific steps you take to help students listen to and engage with perspectives that might conflict with their own?" You DO NOT have to answer every question.

I would like to audiotape the interview so that I have an accurate record of what was said. Only I will have access to the audiotapes. I will transcribe the tapes, code the transcripts, and destroy the tapes within 4 months of their interview. Please indicate whether or not

you give your permission for me to audiotape the interview:

_____ I give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my interview.

_____ I do not give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my interview.

I would also like to observe your classroom to see how students discuss and listen to different perspectives. Ideally, I would hope to observe a total of three class sessions between March and June during times at which students are involved in discussing controversial issues related to national or cultural identity. Please indicate whether or not you give your permission for me to observe your classroom:

_____ I give my permission for the researcher to observe my classroom.

_____ I do not give my permission for the researcher to observe my classroom.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. Sometimes people feel self-conscious when they are audio-taped.

OTHER INFORMATION

Being in this study is voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. Information you provide will be kept confidential. The audiotapes will be transcribed, the transcripts coded, and then the tapes destroyed within 4 months of the interview. Only I will have the master list of teachers' names and codes. This list will be destroyed within one year. If the results of this study are published or presented, your name will not be used.

Signature of investigator

Typed name

Date

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have a question later on, I can ask the investigator listed above. I understand that if I have future questions about the research or my rights as a subject, I may call the University of Washington Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant

Printed name of participant

Date

Copies to: Teacher
 Investigator's file

Appendix H: Staff Member Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WASHINGTON
COLLEGE EDUCATIONEDUCATING FOR MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING IN A DIVIDED SOCIETY
STAFF MEMBER CONSENT FORM

Investigator: John T. King, graduate student, Curriculum & Instruction, 028 9022 0364
jtking@u.washington.edu

Investigator's Statement

I am asking you to participate in a research study. The purpose of this consent form is to give you the information you will need to help you decide whether or not to be in the study. Please read the form carefully. You may ask questions about the purpose of the research, what I would ask you to do, the possible risks and benefits, your rights as a volunteer, and anything else about the research or this form that is not clear. When all your questions have been answered, you can decide if you want to be in this study or not. This process is called 'informed consent.'

PURPOSE AND BENEFITS

I would like to know how teachers can help students listen to and learn from diverse perspectives. Specifically, I am interested in how different teaching strategies affect how children respond when their own assumptions are called into question. I will interview students and staff members who are participating in the Close Encounter Program and ask them to discuss their thoughts and feelings about the program. I hope to help teachers learn how to better support students in listening to perspectives that challenge their own. The participants interviewed may not directly benefit from this study.

PROCEDURES

If you choose to participate in this study, I would like to interview you for about forty-five minutes to discuss what and how you facilitate conversations concerning national identity. The questions will focus on whether and how you encourage students to engage with diverse perspectives. For example, I will ask "Are there specific steps you take to help students listen to and engage with perspectives that might conflict with their own?" and "What issues tend to be the most difficult for students to discuss?" You DO NOT have to answer every question.

I would like to audiotape the interview so that I have an accurate record of what was said. Only I will have access to the audiotapes. I will transcribe the tapes, code the transcripts, and destroy the tapes within 4 months of their interview. Please indicate whether or not you give your permission for me to audiotape the interview:

- _____ I give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my interview.
 _____ I do not give my permission for the researcher to audiotape my interview.

I may want to re-contact you to clarify information you provide. Please indicate below whether or not you give your permission for me to re-contact you for that purpose:

- _____ I give my permission for the researcher to re-contact me in order to clarify information.
 _____ I do not give my permission for the researcher to re-contact me in order to clarify information.

RISKS, STRESS, OR DISCOMFORT

Some people feel that providing information for research is an invasion of privacy. Sometimes people feel self-conscious when they are audio-taped.

OTHER INFORMATION

Being in this study is voluntary. You may stop participating at any time. Information you provide will be kept confidential. The audiotapes will be transcribed, the transcripts coded, and then the tapes destroyed within 4 months of the interview. Only I will have the master list of participants' names and codes. This list will be destroyed within one year. If the results of this study are published or presented, your name will not be used.

Signature of investigator

Typed name

Date

Subject's statement

This study has been explained to me. I volunteer to take part in this research. I have had a chance to ask questions. If I have a question later on, I can ask the investigator listed above. I understand that if I have future questions about the research or my rights as a subject, I may call the University of Washington Human Subjects Division at (206) 543-0098. I will receive a copy of this consent form.

Signature of participant

Printed name of participant

Date

Copies to: Staff member
 Investigator's file

VITA

John T. King

Ph.D. in Education, University of Washington, March 2005

Masters in Teaching, Seattle University, 1996

B.A. in History and Economics, Seattle University, summa cum laude, 1992

Professional Experience

Lecturer, School of Education, Seattle University, Seattle, WA, 2004-present

- Teach graduate courses in Secondary Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment.

Consultant, Consortium for Manufacturing Excellence, Shoreline, WA, 2003-present

- Develop modularized curriculum to align with student performance standards.
- Provide professional development workshops for in-service teachers.

Social Studies Teacher, Eastside Catholic High School, Bellevue, WA, 1996-2000

- Taught World & U.S. History.
- Developed school-wide social justice curriculum and service learning programs.

Publications & Presentations

King, J. (2005). *A difficult dialogue: Reconciling students in a divided society*. Paper to be presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Conference: Montreal.

King, J. (2005). *Teaching and learning about controversial issues in Northern Ireland*. Paper to be presented at the American Educational Research Association Annual Conference: Montreal.

King, J. (2004). Leaving home behind: Learning to negotiate borderlands in the classroom. *Intercultural Education*, 15 (2), 139-149.

King, J. (2004). Service learning as a site for critical pedagogy. *Journal of Experiential Education*, 26 (3), 121-138.

King, J. (2003). *Getting to dialogue: Educating for mutual understanding in a divided society*. Paper presented at the International Conference for Civic Education Research: New Orleans, LA.

Honors & Awards

Peace Scholar Dissertation Fellowship, United States Institute of Peace, 2003

School of Education Honorary Fellowship, University of Washington, 2000

President's Award, Seattle University, 1992

Professional Memberships

American Educational Research Association

National Council for the Social Studies