

Fall 2011

# Still Separate and Still Unequal: Community Relations' Policy in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland

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## Recommended Citation

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**Still Separate and Still Unequal:  
Community Relations' Policy in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland**



**Wilma Metcalf**

**SIT Ireland, Fall 2011**

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**Acknowledgements**

I would most like to thank my advisor, Elizabeth Welty, for spending so much time with me in Belfast and for providing me with so much information and access to so many contacts. I would also like to thank the SIT: Ireland Project Director, Aeven Kerrisk, for being so understanding and supportive throughout the field-study and writing period. Also, many thanks to Dr. Lesley Emerson for meeting with me twice and challenging me. Furthermore, I would like to thank Ray Mullan of the Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, Paula McIlwaine of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Conall McDevitt MLA, Kate Turner of Healing through Remembering, and Robin Wilson, Policy Analyst, for taking time out of their schedules to speak with me. I also want to recognize the people of Belfast that shared their opinions and stories with me, helping me to better understand their lives.

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## **Introduction**

Community relations' policy is the only reconciliation policy in Northern Ireland. With this being said, this paper is an exploration of community relations' policy in Northern Ireland and its efficacy in terms of Contact Theory, identity, and education. I begin by describing my methodology, challenges of doing the fieldwork, and overview of sources used. Then, I define the issue the policies are meant to address: Northern Ireland's segregated society. Then, I present a description of the approaches, both political and organizational, to address segregation and improve community relations. Here, I look at the Northern Ireland Act (1998), Sharing over Separation, A Shared Future, Cohesion, Sharing, and Integration (CSI), Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage (CH), the Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland (CRC) and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE). Following, I conduct an analysis of the themes that arose from the above two sections, which are: the separation of equality and community relations policies after the Northern Ireland Act, where I emphasize the importance of the equality of identities; education's role in community relations' policy and practice; and, lastly, the use of Contact Theory as the theoretical framework for community relations' policies.

However, my background and why I chose this topic is necessary first. Back in the United States, I attend Duke University as a junior where I study Public Policy. It is because of this interest in policy that I chose to research community relations' policy. However, other interests dictated the rest of my project. I took a class at Duke called, "Ethics in an Unjust World" and in which we looked at different ways service can be done, the most intriguing being a contact model where having a

relationship with someone is more helpful than anything you can do for them. Therefore, when I discovered that Contact Theory was the theoretical framework behind community relations' work in Northern Ireland, it peaked my interest. I also discovered another underlying motivation during the writing period of the independent study. I am from the South and the Appalachian mountains and with that comes location stereotypes like the people from there are "bible-thumping, stupid, backward, and ignorant hillbillies." In elitist environments like Duke and the rest of world in general, it is publically unacceptable to be proud of the Southern Appalachian area because of these stereotypes. From the time I left the area to attend university I constantly felt the weight of having to hide my identity in order to prevent being stereotyped and, therefore, not being taken seriously. Consequently, when I read further into the identity debates in Northern Ireland, I felt empathy with those who feel oppressed by the societal expectation to deny your own identity.

## **Methodology**

### **Background**

I came into this project wanting to know about how citizenship education was being used to prevent the regression to violence in Northern Ireland. However, upon arriving in Belfast, I met with my advisor, Elizabeth Welty, and my project began to take a community relations turn, meaning that I began to think about how storytelling could help create and maintain positive community relations. She pointed me to an article called, "Reconciliation as a Dirty Word: Conflict, Community Relations, and Education in Northern Ireland," written by Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten

McConnachie. Once I read this article, I knew I wanted to know more about the community relations' policies in Northern Ireland. This, along with further reading on community relations' policy and the rescheduling of a program that was key to my original project, caused me to change my project for the last time to the topic is it now.

Coming into the project, I assumed the community relations' policies were flawed and did not target the fundamental problems causing community relations' issues in the first place. I also assumed that the resistance of some community members on both sides to meet at a middle ground was only breeding anger and elongating the conflict, I never considered the identity side of the issue. Finally, I came to Northern Ireland with a belief that the two communities being in contact with each other would automatically decrease prejudice because the problem was simply that everyone lived in a culture of intolerance. These assumptions were challenged and many outright disproved throughout the course of the project, which I explain later in the paper.

### **Literature Review**

Along the way, I read a wide variety of articles. The most helpful was of course, "Reconciliation as a Dirty Word" because it created the spark for my final project. I also all of the policies I discussed, including both the "A Shared Future" and "Northern Ireland Act of 1998" policies which laid the framework for my understanding of how the government approaches Community Relations. I also read several responses to policies, like "From a Shared Future to Cohesion, Sharing and Integration: Developments in Good Relations Policy," a briefing note from the Northern Ireland Assembly's Research and Library Services. This helped my understanding of the slow evolution of community relations' policy.

However, when I discovered the article, “Intergroup Contact, Forgiveness, and Experience of ‘The Troubles’ in Northern Ireland” by Miles Hewstone, Ed Cairns, Alberto Voci, Juergen Hamberger, and Ulrike Niens, three of whom are from Northern Ireland, I realized I had to incorporate Contact Theory into my project because both policies and educational initiatives are based on this hypothesis. This article is also good for empirical data supporting the use of Contact Theory in Northern Ireland. Following, I also found “Conflict, Contact, and Education in Northern Ireland” also by Ulrike Niens and Ed Cairns incredibly helpful as a proponent of Contact Theory. Following on Contact Theory, Thomas F. Pettigrew’s “Intergroup Contact Theory” was perhaps one of the most helpful because he analyzes the theory through a critical and realistic lens.

In the educational realm, I found many of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education’s publications very helpful. Also, “Integrated Education, Intergroup Relations, and Political Identities in Northern Ireland” by Bernadette C. Hayes, University of Aberdeen; Ian McAllister Australian National University; and Lizanne Dowds, University of Ulster is interesting to see an argument for a middle ground identity.

As far as unhelpful resources, I did not experience that many on the subject. However, “Integrating education: case studies of good practice in response to cultural diversity” by Dr Claire McGlynn of Queen’s University was quite boring and did not provide any new arguments. Also, “Personalization and the Promise of Contact Theory” by Norman Miller failed to objectively analyze Contact Theory and made the paper too neat.

### **Primary Sources**



I did a series of semi-formal interviews with organizations, academics, and a politician. All but one of my interviews went incredibly well and proved to be useful. At the Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland (CRC) where I spoke with Ray Mullan, the Director of Communications (see Appendix D for interview), who has been with the CRC for about 2 years. I was unable to record the interview, but I did take detailed notes of paraphrases and direct quotes. He was very friendly and we spoke in a quiet, open space, which made for a nice rapport and facilitated a discussion rather than an interview. I spoke with him because I knew the CRC could give me a solid foundation upon which to build an understanding of community relations in Northern Ireland.

Then, at the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), I spoke with Paula McIlwaine, the Professional Development Officer (see Appendix C). I wanted to speak with NICIE because I wanted to gain a better understanding of the integrated school system in Northern Ireland, as well as how integrated schools dealt with community relations' issues. We immediately connected and even talked about topics outside of integrated education. I felt incredibly comfortable with her, so much so that I forgot to turn on the recorder. She even forwarded me more information about topics that came up during our meeting.

I met with Lesley Emerson two times, one informally over dinner and one formal interview (see Appendix A). At first, I was incredibly intimidated by her confidence and passion, but I grew to have a high regard and respect for it. My main motivation for speaking to Lesley was to learn about an education resource she helped create, but after reading her "Reconciliation as a Dirty Word" article, my questions became focused on community relations. While she has a larger background in education, she was able to

provide insight into Contact Theory in schools because she is an avid critic of it. Also, she was very honest with me about my project and my questions. She challenged my way of thinking about the conflict, consociationalism, and the peace process, especially about identities and the need to accept all of them. While I am usually very sensitive to critique, I was not as bothered with hers. I actually really appreciated it because after speaking with her, she made me feel less like an alien and closer to an insider.

I met with Conall McDevitt, a MLA of the SDLP party (see Appendix B), on the last day I was in Belfast. I wish I had spoken with him sooner because he is part of the new committee forming a new policy on community relations. His involvement in this committee is why I attempted to make an appointment with him early on but failed. He also made an interesting point about Sinn Fein that I wish I had heard earlier so I could have attempted to contact them. As far as Mr. McDevitt is concerned, he is one of the younger members of Stormont and is very passionate, articulate, and concise. I appreciated his honesty about what needs to be done in Stormont to decrease tensions in the wider Northern Ireland community. I found myself getting lost in what he was saying and not wanting to interrupt with questions. He provided me with great insight into the future of community relations, however I was somewhat uncomfortable because I knew how fortunate I was to get to be able to speak with him and I cracked under the pressure and I wish I had asked more and better questions in hindsight.

I also got the chance to speak with Kate Turner, the Director of Healing through Remembering (HTR) (see Appendix E). Initially, I was unsure as to why I need to speak with HTR because they do not deal directly with community relations, but I am glad I continued pursuing a meeting with them because it was one of the best of my experience.

Again, I feel like I immediately clicked with Kate. She was very warm and inviting and despite her very busy schedule, she made time to talk to me. We had gone through a long process of trying to set up an interview, which almost spanning the entire three-week period. The best thing about speaking with Kate was hearing a real-life success story of the Contact Theory because HTR was formed on it.

However, the final interview I will speak about did not go as well. It was with Dr. Robin Wilson, a policy analyst and proponent of the use of Contact Theory in policy making. I was excited about the interview because my interests lie in policy and he invited me to his home/office, so I was expecting a very laid-back, enjoyable interview. However, when I arrived, he immediately made it clear that he only had exactly thirty minutes because he was very busy. For some reason this threw me off. Then, during the interview I could not follow what he was saying because it seemed like he was using a lot of words and not saying much. He was a very nice man, but I got more from reading his articles than talking to him, so I learned a lot about my sensitivities and about the difficulties of fieldwork.

My time in Belfast was not solely interviews and reading, I spent a good amount of time exploring the city. While my experiences are very subjective and cannot hold much validity because of my own personal biases, I feel like I have experienced some of what I am writing about, to the degree that an outsider is able. I spent a lot of time exploring neighborhoods in Belfast and informally speaking to the locals and taxi drivers. There were times when I felt too uncomfortable to wear my cross necklace in public and times when I saw conflict between members of the two communities. However, I will discuss more of these experiences later in the paper.

## **The Issue**

The thirty-year conflict in and around Northern Ireland left scars in practically every area of life and in the time since the peace agreement was signed, many of those wounds have begun to heal, but many still remain. Northern Ireland's society has become more segregated than it was at the end of the conflict in 1998. Since this time, there have been several policies and organizations developed in an attempt to decrease this segregation. The policies have evolved over time, starting with "Sharing over Separation" in 2001, when Northern Ireland was under direct rule by Britain for two months, and ending with "Cohesion, Sharing, and Integration" in 2010. All of the policies have been seen as failures because Northern Ireland is still an incredibly divided society, especially in working class areas.<sup>1</sup> However, some strides do seem to have been made since the violence has ended and there has been a rising interest in integrated education the past few years.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper, I will map the approaches to segregation in Northern Ireland through the evolution of governmental policies and the creation of two councils, the Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland and the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education. Then I will enter into a discussion of the themes that arise when looking at community relations' policy and its efficacy.

## **Approaches**

### **Northern Ireland Act- Section 75**

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<sup>1</sup> Conall McDevitt MLA, interview with Wilma Metcalf, personal interview, Belfast, Northern Ireland Assembly, 22 November 2011.

<sup>2</sup> Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, "About Us," Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, <http://www.nicie.org/aboutus> (accessed November 10, 2011).

The Good Friday Agreement (GFA) of 1998 is the policy that officially ended the violent conflict in and around Northern Ireland. However, it was the Northern Ireland Act, also of 1998, that legislatively enforced the GFA.<sup>3</sup> While both the GFA and the Northern Ireland Act are immensely complicated and very rich, this paper will only focus on section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act. This particular section addresses the issues of equality and good/community relations between the Catholic and Protestant communities.<sup>4</sup> The section states:

75. Statutory duty on public authorities

(1) A public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity-

- a) between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- b) between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and
- c) between persons with dependents and persons without.

(2) Without prejudice to its obligations under subsection (1), a public authority shall in carrying out its functions relating to Northern Ireland have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.<sup>5</sup>

This section has been the basis for the proceeding community relations and equality policies, however these policies have addressed either good relations or equality, never

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<sup>3</sup> Lesley Emerson, interview with Wilma Metcalf, personal interview, Belfast, French Village Café, 14 November 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly, 1998, *Northern Ireland Act 1998*, accessed 16 November 2011; available from the United Kingdom National Archives.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

both together.<sup>6</sup> It has been the opinion of the Northern Ireland Assembly that the two issues are unrelated and should be addressed separately.<sup>7</sup>

### **Sharing over Separation**

The “Sharing over Separation” policy was enacted in Northern Ireland during a short direct rule period in August and September of 2001.<sup>8</sup> The framework for this policy came from the reports done on the race riots in Britain during the summer of the same year.<sup>9</sup> Prior to the riots, “the policy in England had been to ensure ethnic minorities rights by promoting their cultures [by] facilitating ethnic neighborhoods, and separate schools.”<sup>10</sup> However, the Cattle Report, an inquiry conducted to look into the causes of the riots, showed that this policy enabled communities to isolate themselves and have little contact of the rest of the population.<sup>11</sup> From this, the British government concluded that their policy towards ethnic minorities created sentiments of mistrust in both communities and alienation within the minority group.<sup>12</sup> The government decided it must take action to build a more cohesive and inclusive society because, as the new “Sharing over Separation” policy said, “Separate but equal is not an option. Parallel living and the provision of parallel services are unsustainable both morally and economically.”<sup>13</sup> This goal would be accomplished through the promotion of cross-community work done in the

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<sup>6</sup> Conall McDevitt MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly, 22 November 2011

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Library Service, *From a Shared Future to Cohesion, Sharing, and Integration: Developments in Good Relations Policy*, accessed 10 November 2011.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

areas of education, healthcare, economic and social regeneration, culture and sport.<sup>14</sup>

While this policy never took legitimate hold in Northern Ireland, it's framework set the stage for the bigger, more encompassing policy, "A Shared Future," four years later.<sup>15</sup>

### **A Shared Future**

The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister released "A Shared Future" in March of 2005 to address the increasing community relations issues in Northern Ireland.<sup>16</sup> The policy arose out of a 2003 consultation paper, "A Shared Future: A Consultation Paper on Improving Relations in Northern Ireland," which surveyed the Northern Ireland population and organized various focus groups across the country to look into ways of improving relations.<sup>17</sup> From these inputs, the government learned that there was "overwhelming support for a shared society. Specifically, three public policy areas attracted most attention during the consultation: security and law and order, education, and housing."<sup>18</sup> As this data was being collected, the government also found further justification to implement a community relations' policy when research came out about the economic toll of a segregated society.<sup>19</sup> Numerous services were being duplicated because of the segregation, namely the under population of many schools, costing Northern Ireland about £1.5 Billion.<sup>20</sup> This policy attempted to address the same

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister, *A Shared Future 2005*, accessed 4 November 2011; available from [www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk](http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk).

<sup>17</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Library Service, *From a Shared Future to Cohesion, Sharing, and Integration: Developments in Good Relations Policy*, accessed 10 November 2011; available from Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Library Services database.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

issues as “Sharing over Separation,” since they share the same foundation, but it also attempted to address “the fear that a policy to build Good Relations could mean that some parts of society were helped more than others.”<sup>21</sup> The policy emphasized the importance of inter-community respect and diversity in Northern Ireland, as well as the need to progress towards a more shared society.<sup>22</sup>

This was a valiant effort to tackle these issues, but ultimately it was a “goals and aspirations” policy because little was done to implement the policy’s suggestions.<sup>23</sup>

While some of the suggestions of “A Shared Future” have been implemented, the majority of the policy is thought to have failed because segregation remains in Northern Ireland.

### **Cohesion, Sharing, and Integration (CSI)**

The Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister put forth another policy in May of 2007 called, “Cohesion, Sharing, and Integration” (CSI).<sup>24</sup> This policy is meant to combine community relations and race strategies in the increasingly diversifying Northern Ireland society.<sup>25</sup> The aim, again, was to create a “shared and better future, based on tolerance and respect for cultural diversity...[because] if we do not take this opportunity now there is a very real risk that the divisions of our past will be

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<sup>21</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Library Service, *From a Shared Future to Cohesion, Sharing, and Integration: Developments in Good Relations Policy*, accessed 10 November 2011; available from Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Library Services database.

<sup>22</sup> Ray Mullan, Belfast, Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, 11 November 2011.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Library Service, *From a Shared Future to Cohesion, Sharing, and Integration: Developments in Good Relations Policy*, accessed 10 November 2011

<sup>25</sup> Ray Mullan, Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, Belfast, November 11, 2011.



replicated in the new communities that have come here to live and work among us.<sup>26</sup>

Interestingly, there is no mention of community relations in the CSI document, because the society of Northern Ireland has grown to be more than solely Catholic/Republican and Protestant/Loyalist, but rather rhetoric “of cohesion and integration for a shared and better future for all.”<sup>27</sup>

The former policy, “A Shared Future,” was to be implemented by governmental departments, not on local and community levels, whereas the CSI document encourages the involvement of local and community organizations alongside the district councils.<sup>28</sup> This shift to a local emphasis was meant to cater to the individual local needs more than any previous legislation on community relations or race issues.<sup>29</sup>

However, as was the case with the former community relations’ policies, CSI is seen to have been unsuccessful in its goals.<sup>30</sup> All of these policies have been widely criticized and called “goals and aspirations” policies with little effect, however they gain new strengths with each try.<sup>31</sup> There is currently a committee formulating a new policy in the Northern Ireland Assembly.<sup>32</sup> They are attempting to incorporate all of the strong points of former policies to better address current societal issues.<sup>33</sup> According to Mr. McDevitt, a member of this committee, the new policy will “address the fundamental

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<sup>26</sup> Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Library Service, *From a Shared Future to Cohesion, Sharing, and Integration: Developments in Good Relations Policy*, accessed 10 November 2011

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Conall McDevitt MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly, Belfast, 22 November 2011.

<sup>31</sup> Ray Mullan, Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, Belfast, 11 November 2011.

<sup>32</sup> Conall McDevitt MLA, Belfast, Northern Ireland Assembly, Belfast, 22 November 2011.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

issues within the society” by also incorporating more substantial and legitimate equality clauses into the legislation.

### **Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage (CH)**

In 1989, the Northern Ireland government released the Government’s Education Reform Order that contained six mandatory educational topics.<sup>34</sup> Two of these topics were Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage (CH), which are intimately connected and compliment each other, so they are rarely referred to separately.<sup>35</sup> However, these programs did not become statues until September 1992.<sup>36</sup> EMU is an “umbrella title” given to cover and organize the various cross-community projects that were being conducted by individual teachers and non-profit organizations in Northern Ireland’s schools.<sup>37</sup>

There are four objectives of this policy that Richardson summarizes well: “fostering respect for Self and Others and building relationships, understanding and dealing creatively with conflict, awareness of interdependence, and understanding [of] cultural diversity.”<sup>38</sup> While EMU and CH are compulsory topics in the educational system, there is some flexibility in their application. The teaching of EMU and CH related subjects in classrooms is mandatory in every level of schooling, but there is also an option component. In 1987, the Department of Education for Northern Ireland, DENI, “introduced a voluntary inter-school Cross Contact Scheme which provides funds to

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<sup>34</sup> Norman L Richardson, “Education for Mutual Understanding and Cultural Heritage,” CAIN Webservices, <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/emu/emuback.htm> (accessed on 27 November 2011).

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

support planned and long-term contact programmes between controlled and maintained schools.”<sup>39</sup> The government and schools realize that the road to a truly shared society is long, but they see programs such as these small steps on that road.

## **Organizations**

### **Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland**

On the grassroots level, the Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland (CRC) is an entity that was founded to oversee community relations’ work and advise on other policy issues.<sup>40</sup> The idea of the council stemmed out of an attempt at a Northern Ireland assembly in the mid-1980s after the hunger strike in 1981.<sup>41</sup> Several hunger strikers were voted into office in 1981 under Sinn Fein.<sup>42</sup> These successes allowed Sinn Fein into the spotlight, giving them their opportunity to become one of the major political forces in Northern Ireland.<sup>43</sup> Although, during the temporary assembly no one elected under Sinn Fein or the SDLP would take up his or her seats in Stormont.<sup>44</sup> The failure of the assembly was blamed on the non-cooperation and distrust between both communities, which prompted the British to look further into community relations’ issues in Northern Ireland.<sup>45</sup>

So following from this, in 1986, the Northern Ireland Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights commissioned a report, which proposed a two-part agency

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Ray Mullan, Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, Belfast, 11 November 2011.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Wilma Metcalf, “The 1981 H-Block Hunger Strikes: Unexpected Outcomes,” 2011.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books 2002), 143.

<sup>45</sup> Ray Mullan, Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, Belfast, 11 November 2011.

on community relations.<sup>46</sup> One part would be governmental, which would write and dictate policy relating to community relations and the other would be funded by the government, but would be an independent charity, i.e. the council.<sup>47</sup> In the beginning, the British government wanted to control the council, but the leaders knew this would not work.<sup>48</sup> The council “had to work with both sides at the street level, if the government were in charge, the program would shut down.”<sup>49</sup> To the Republicans, and even into the wider Nationalist community, community relations was not the issue, but rights, equality, and oppression by the British state.<sup>50</sup> On the other hand, Loyalists held no trust in their Republican and Nationalist counterparts because their issue was with security and having to be constantly “on guard to be kept from unwillingly becoming a united Ireland.”<sup>51</sup>

From the perspective of the British, community relations’ policy, stems from their number one focus during the conflict: security.<sup>52</sup> They saw the conflict as tribal, rather than something in which they were part of.<sup>53</sup> This can be seen in the proceedings leading up to the ceasefires, like their approach to the Hunger Strikes.<sup>54</sup> The British government “practically told the loyalists, especially Rev. Dr. Ian Paisley, if they did not build bridges between the two communities they would have no power.”<sup>55</sup> The government also said

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid.

that if there was a failure to “build bridges,” Westminster would do it for them through a stronger relationship with Dublin.”<sup>56</sup>

To bring the direction back to the current CRC and their purpose, the “aim is to promote a peaceful and fair society based on reconciliation and mutual trust.”<sup>57</sup> To do this, they provide support to local groups and organizations in the form of a financial, consulting, and informational entity; they “provide opportunities for cross-community understanding; increased public awareness of community relations work; [and] encouraging constructive debate throughout Northern Ireland.”<sup>58</sup> Their work includes three main areas: “encouraging other organisations, both voluntary and statutory, to develop a community relations aspect to their policies and practices; working with churches and groups which have a primary community relations focus; encouraging greater acceptance of and respect for cultural diversity.”<sup>59</sup>

The CRC focuses on local programmes that pertain to “culture, economic regeneration, youth, and some peace programs.”<sup>60</sup> There are many “anti-sectarian flavour themes” in the CRC because they believe “peace is the responsibility of everybody, not just peace groups.”<sup>61</sup> This is why they fund and work with more groups that are not primarily peace projects.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

<sup>57</sup> Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, “About Us,” <http://www.community-relations.org.uk/about-us/> (accessed 9 November 2011).

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ray Mullan, Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, Belfast, 11 November 2011.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

Upon asking about what the council considered to be diversity, Ray answered that the whole point of diversity to have many different people with many different beliefs.<sup>63</sup> Their main goal is to spread the understanding of all perspectives and hope that it facilitates discussion and acceptance of other's ideas.<sup>64</sup> There is an emphasis on many identities and the hope is that the discussions will enable others to accept others, even those with the most extreme beliefs.<sup>65</sup>

### **Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education**

The first integrated school was begun in 1981 by a group of middle class parents, All Children Together (ACT), which pooled their money to integrate the first school, Lagan College in Belfast.<sup>66</sup> The system has evolved into having sixty-one integrated schools, educating 6% of the school population.<sup>67</sup> Each school's primary aim is equality between Protestant, Catholic, and other classifications, so ideally a 40% Catholic, 40% Protestant, and 20% other student and teacher population distribution.<sup>68</sup> However, the reality of the distribution is varied depending on the community the schools is in and how long it was been integrated.<sup>69</sup> Integrated schools are "organic," in that they reflect the communities they serve.<sup>70</sup>

However, before the distribution can be the main focus, a school has to first become integrated. The process through which schools become integrated is called

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<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, "About Us," Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, accessed November 10, 2011.

<sup>67</sup> Paula McIlwaine, interview by Wilma Metcalf, personal interview, Belfast, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, 21 November 2011.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

transformation.<sup>71</sup> Transformation is a long process that is tedious and requires the support of both the community and the parents.<sup>72</sup> Firstly, only controlled, or state, schools can become integrated and the process has to start by the parents, teachers, and leaders of the school voicing their desire to become integrated.<sup>73</sup> Then, there is a vote in which 50% of the parent body has to vote and then 50% of those voting have to vote in favor of integration.<sup>74</sup> Secondly, a development proposal is created for the school, outlining the criteria necessary to become integrated, such as having to have at least a 10% minority population in the beginning a plan for attracting more minority students over a ten-year period.<sup>75</sup> Due to the difficulty and rigor of this process for secondary schools, primary schools are the most commonly the ones that decide to integrate.<sup>76</sup>

The council then oversees these transformations and also functions as a support for already integrated schools.<sup>77</sup> They provide the curriculum and guidelines for education, as well as resources to the teachers in adapting to an integrated school environment.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, NICIE has created core principles to guide the schools and these are: equality, faith and values, parental involvement, and social responsibility.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, "Statement of Principles," Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, <http://www.nicie.org/aboutus/default.asp?id=27> (accessed on November 10, 2011).

The schools are ideally organic institutions that give students a “strong voice and have an emphasis on equality.”<sup>80</sup>

The NICIE developed a resource to assist teachers in working in an integrated curriculum, called the Anti- Bias approach.<sup>81</sup> This resource focuses on the personal development of teachers to help them recognize and be aware of their own biases so they know how they seem to the students.<sup>82</sup> However, the teachers are not asked to deny their personal beliefs, but rather be proud and recognize and respect the diversity of the school environment.<sup>83</sup> Therefore, the teachers are also encouraged not to avoid the difficult questions and topics in their classrooms, but rather set an example for the students by facing the issues with openness and understanding.<sup>84</sup> This resource provides the teachers with the skills they need to facilitate meaningful discussions on difficult issues in the classroom.<sup>85</sup>

Due to the increase in demand for integrated schools, there is planning going on for a system called “Area Based Planning.”<sup>86</sup> This system would be composed of representatives from all forms of education (Catholic, Controlled, and Integrated) and the panel would look at areas that are in need of provisional change.<sup>87</sup> Then, each form represented would prepare a presentation to explain why the changing school should be

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<sup>80</sup> Paula McIlwaine, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Belfast, 21 November 2011.

<sup>81</sup> Ibid.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid.

<sup>83</sup> Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, “ABC: Promoting an Anti-Bias Approach to Education in Northern Ireland,” 2008.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Paula McIlwaine, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, Belfast, 21 November 2011.

<sup>86</sup> Ibid.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.



Catholic, Controlled, or integrated respectively.<sup>88</sup> While this is a system relatively far in the future, the NICIE considers it a step in the direction of opening more integrated schools.<sup>89</sup>

## Discussion

### **Contact Theory in Community Relations**

In Northern Ireland, the main policies aimed at conflict transformation have been focused on bringing the Catholic and Protestant communities into contact with each other. This philosophy has its roots in Dr. Gordon Allport's Contact Theory or Hypothesis. Dr. Allport put forth his theory in 1954 after sociologists began to wonder about "intergroup contact" after World War II.<sup>90</sup> Contact Theory "provides both an intervention and a theoretical framework" for dealing with prejudices.<sup>91</sup> The theory suggests that through increased personal contact between players in an ethnic conflict, the amount of conflict, i.e. prejudice, discrimination, etc., will be decreased.<sup>92</sup> However, Dr. Allport's contributions "proved the most influential by specifying the critical situational conditions for intergroup contact."<sup>93</sup> The conditions that Dr. Allport finds most effective are: "equal group status within the situation; common goals; intergroup cooperation; and

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<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory," *Annual Review of Psychology* 49 (1998): 66.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid.

<sup>92</sup> H.D. Forbes, "Ethnic Conflict and the Contact Hypothesis," in *Ethnic Conflict Commerce, Culture, and the Contact Hypothesis*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010).

<sup>93</sup> Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory," 66.

the support of authorities, law, or custom.”<sup>94</sup> This theory has endured the years as one of the leading practices in conflict transformation, but it has not been without its opponents.

When looking at Contact Theory and policy in Northern Ireland, it is important to understand that the separation of people is not the cause of the conflict but it rather plays “a major role in establishing and maintaining conflict between two communities.”<sup>95</sup> This is the reason there has been a governmental focus on community relations in Northern Ireland since the 1980’s.<sup>96</sup> However, the community relations’ policy is the only reconciliation policy that exists in Northern Ireland and therein lays one of the largest critiques of community relations’ policies and a leading theory as to why the policies are relatively ineffective.<sup>97</sup> Since the cause of the conflict was not the actual segregation of the Protestants and Catholics, the policies are not addressing the root causes of the conflict, but rather the outcomes or consequences of it.<sup>98</sup>

When applying Contact Theory in Northern Ireland, Thomas Pettigrew adds a constraint on the practice in his 1998 publication: the shape of the society impacts the effects of inter-group contact.<sup>99</sup> So when he discusses Northern Ireland, he says that “implicit in Allport’s equal-status condition is equivalent group power in the situation. This is difficult to achieve when a struggle over power fuels the larger inter- group

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<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Miles Hewstone et al., “Intergroup Contact, Forgiveness, and Experience of “The Troubles” in Northern Ireland,” *Journal of Social Issues* 62 (2006): 101-102.

<sup>96</sup> Ray Mullan, Belfast, Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, 11 November 2011.

<sup>97</sup> Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie, “Reconciliation as a Dirty Word: Conflict, Community Relations and Education in Northern Ireland,” *Journal of International Affairs* (2006).

<sup>98</sup> Lesley Emerson, Belfast, French Village Café, 14 November 2011.

<sup>99</sup> Thomas F. Pettigrew, “Intergroup Contact Theory,” 78.

conflict.”<sup>100</sup> This struggle continues today in the Northern Ireland Assembly as Sinn Fein and the DUP are constantly striving for a higher political status and more power than the other.<sup>101</sup> There appears to be a disconnect between the foundation of the policies, i.e. Contact Theory, and the issues they are addressing when one of the main conditions for meaningful contact cannot be met.

Furthermore, I have a personal experiential example that questions the efficacy of Contact Theory, not just in Northern Ireland. The SIT groups went on a weekend getaway to Corrymeela, a reconciliation center based on Contact Theory. Prior to this trip, the group dynamic was terrible, as it had been since close to the beginning of the semester. We were in constant contact with each other, but instead of bringing us closer, it took us farther apart. We had spilt into two to three cliques, the number varied depending on the day and how we felt. However, in Corrymeela, we participated in team building activities in which we were presented with super-ordinate or common goals, a principle Dr. Allport highlights. The games worked, but only temporarily. Once we left Corrymeela, the dynamic spiraled backward and we were again in constant tension and discord. People touched by the conflict go to Corrymeela and participate in similar activities as our good with other people from all different backgrounds. While Contact Theory is wonderful for the short-term, it has lack-luster long-term benefits without meaningful discourse and bonding over the issues that caused the divide among groups in the beginning.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Conall McDevitt MLA, Northern Ireland Assembly, 22 November 2011.

<sup>102</sup> Roz Goldie, “Law and the Politics of Promoting Equality and Good Relations in the Northern Ireland peace process,” *Quest Proceedings of the Queens University Belfast AHSS Conference*, Issue 6, 2008.

On the other hand, I was be mistaken in solely providing negative examples of Contact Theory's use in Northern Ireland because the Belfast based organization, Healing through Remembering (HTR), was formed through an experiment in Contact Theory.<sup>103</sup> I spoke with Kate Turner, Director of HTR, and she provided me with the history of the organization. The first board of HTR was comprised of a diverse group of individuals from many different backgrounds.<sup>104</sup> There was no preparatory work done with this group before their first meeting, but when they were approached to be on the board, they agreed under the understanding they would be working with a diverse group.<sup>105</sup> They were then placed into a room and given a goal: implement a truth recovery process proposal.<sup>106</sup> They rallied together in pursuit of their common goal and accomplished a now successful project that continues in the search for truth in the conflict.<sup>107</sup> Furthermore, the most of the board members continue to be active and continue to keep in touch with their fellow members.<sup>108</sup>

However, a caveat mentioned by Thomas Pettigrew must be discussed here. He says that the effects of inter-group contact depend on the individual because "prior attitudes and experiences influence whether people seek or avoid inter- group contact"

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<sup>103</sup> While I realize that these examples are not policy sanctioned, but these two organizations do receive some government endorsement. I think it is important to include them because they are working, real-life examples of the application of Contact Theory. I included them to provide a critique of the use of Contact Theory without meaningful contact or the acknowledgment of the autonomy of the individual in reconciliation processes.

<sup>104</sup> Kate Turner, interview with Wilma Metcalf, personal interview, Belfast, Healing through Remembering, 18 November 2011.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Healing through Remembering, "The Healing through Remembering Project," [http://www.healingthroughremembering.org/about\\_us/history](http://www.healingthroughremembering.org/about_us/history) (accessed November, 21 2011).

<sup>107</sup> Kate Turner, Belfast, Healing through Remembering, 18 November 2011.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid.

and, therefore, what the results will be.<sup>109</sup> The members of the board elected to be there and were not forced, so I propose that Contact Theory does not effective as a basis for community relations policy. There is too much resting on societal pressures and the attitudes of individuals. Governments cannot force people to be around each other if they do not feel safe and/or they lack the motivation.

### **Equality and Community Relations**

The conflict in and around Northern Ireland began as a movement against government oppression of the Catholic community, which meant a struggle for equality with their Protestant counterparts. So, to the Catholic community, the conflict in and around Northern Ireland began and remains to be a political struggle.<sup>110</sup> However, in the minds of the Protestant/Loyalist/Unionist mindset, the conflict was solely about security, as did the British government.<sup>111</sup> The British also saw the conflict as tribal, between the Protestant and Catholic communities; because once the Loyalist paramilitaries became involved, the conflict became sectarian.<sup>112</sup> In the tit-for-tat strategy that both paramilitaries used, the Loyalist paramilitaries targeted any Catholic person, while the Irish Republican Army (IRA) targeted members of the opposing paramilitaries and the British Army, making the conflict sectarian to the Protestants and political to the Catholics.<sup>113</sup> With this being said, viewing community relations as the only issue, as the

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<sup>109</sup> Thomas F. Pettigrew, "Intergroup Contact Theory," 77-78.

<sup>110</sup> Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie, "Reconciliation as a Dirty Word: Conflict, Community Relations and Education in Northern Ireland," *Journal of International Affairs* (2006).

<sup>111</sup> Ray Mullan, Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland, 11 November 2011.

<sup>112</sup> Lesley Emerson, Belfast, French Village Cafe, 14 November 2011.

<sup>113</sup> David McKittrick and David McVea, *Making Sense of the Troubles: The Story of Conflict in Northern Ireland* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books 2002).

government is doing, undermines and ignores the primary cause of the conflict: equality.<sup>114</sup>

As I described above, there is no policy incorporating both equality and community relations and the government has so far seemed to find the two clauses of Section 75 unrelated. However, when I spoke with Conall McDevitt, a Member of the Legislative Assembly and part of the Social Democratic and Labour Party, he provided some insight into this interpretation of the section. From his perspective, it is Sinn Fein that does not allow the two aspects to be related in policy.<sup>115</sup> For the reasons I described above, Sinn Fein sees equality and community relations completely separate.<sup>116</sup> Their number one priority is the equality of opportunities for Catholics and community relations' issues take a second seat.<sup>117</sup> However, many people feel that Sinn Fein's view of Section 75 is unproductive and why the community relations' policies have been unsuccessful.

The issue of identity has become a very intense and popular topic of debate in Northern Ireland. While it is not immediately obvious why identity is important when discussing equality and community relations, allow me to explain. Despite how community relations' work is supposed to end, "far too often, the first step in creating cross-community harmony [is] to promote a depoliticised environment."<sup>118</sup> This attempts

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<sup>114</sup> Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie, "Reconciliation as a Dirty Word: Conflict, Community Relations and Education in Northern Ireland."

<sup>115</sup> Conall McDevitt, Belfast, Northern Ireland Assembly, 21 November 2011.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., Unfortunately I was unable to schedule an interview with Sinn Fein while I was in Belfast, so this is solely Mr. McDevitt's opinion.

<sup>118</sup> Morrow, D; Eyben, K; and Wilson, D "From the Margin to the Middle: Taking Equality, Diversity and Interdependence seriously," in Hargie, Owen and Dickson,

to uphold one of Allport's principles of equal status in the situation, but, again, it ignores one of the main causes of the conflict and denies the legitimacy of one's political identity in an effort to create and sustain peace. It is through this denial that inequalities of identity emerge.<sup>119</sup> Due to the fact that Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom, it has become insensitive and inappropriate for Republican/Nationalists to express their own identities, thus making their identity inferior to the Loyalist/Unionist identity.<sup>120</sup> In a study by Caitlin Donnelly, she "noted that the minority Catholic group of children within one integrated school played down their identity while the majority Protestant group were more inclined to be assertive in the expression of their cultural identity."<sup>121</sup> Furthermore, in Loyalist communities, former paramilitary combatants have been shunned for their extreme political beliefs and past actions.<sup>122</sup>

Absent the ability to discuss difficult issues because said issues are directly related to certain identities, "it is unsurprising that community relations [has become] associated with superficial engagement which [acts] to disguise underlying tensions rather than to heal them."<sup>123</sup> Going back to the discussion of contact theory and how bringing people together can reinforce prejudices or create a temporary state of harmony, the same applies to this. If the real issues are not discussed and addressed and peace becomes a charade, the inter-community contact becomes superficial and useless, further

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David, (Eds) "*Researching the Troubles*" Mainstream Publishing, Edinburgh and London, 2003, 168.

<sup>119</sup> Lesley McEvoy, Kieran McEvoy and Kirsten McConnachie, "Reconciliation as a Dirty Word: Conflict, Community Relations and Education in Northern Ireland."

<sup>120</sup> Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>122</sup> Lesley Emerson, Belfast, French Village Cafe, 14 November 2011.

<sup>123</sup> Morrow, D; Eyben, K; and Wilson, D "*From the Margin to the Middle: Taking Equality, Diversity and Interdependence seriously,*" 168.

aggravating previous frustrations because no progress was made.<sup>124</sup> Consequently, without the acknowledgment of equality of identities and recognition of even the most “extreme,” there will continue to be a feeling of oppression and resistance to enter into any meaningful discourse around the real issues.

### **Education and Community Relations**

While in Belfast, I did not have the opportunity to visit a school and experience the educational climate myself, but the significance of it is enough to merit a discussion. Education in Northern Ireland is an expansive subject so I am only focusing on two aspects of the educational system that tie together identity, equality, and Contact Theory: the Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage (CH) policies and integrated schools. Both have been legislatively sanctioned, their theoretical framework is in Contact Theory and both theoretically emphasize the importance of identity and equality in the classroom even if this is not directly translated to the classroom.

Many critiques have been made of EMU and CH being used as a community relations’ policy. One of the leading issues is with the training of teachers. The majority of teacher training schools are segregated, so very few teachers have had to opportunity to interact with the other community.<sup>125</sup> The majority of teachers have always attended segregated schools, so when they enter teaching they are expected to teach about cross-community issues, but have no experience to provide a solid foundation for their lessons,

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<sup>124</sup> Roz Goldie, “Law and the Politics of Promoting Equality and Good Relations in the Northern Ireland peace process,” *Quest Proceedings of the Queens University Belfast AHSS Conference*, Issue 6, 2008.

<sup>125</sup> Paula McIlwaine, interview by Wilma Metcalf, personal Interview, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, 21 November 2011.



so what usually happens is that there is no discussion of diversity and no understanding of others identities.<sup>126</sup>

Furthermore, there are contentions over the efficacy of the inter-school Cross Contact Scheme. In many instances, the reason for the trips were not fully covered with the students, so the “children [viewed] the programs as little more than trips out of school.”<sup>127</sup> This is not the aim of the program, but it was implemented incorrectly. However, the true failure was in the inadequate training of the teachers and schools in dealing with real, controversial, and sensitive issues that is necessary to make experiences like this worthwhile. Policy must address these issues if it is to fulfill its own goals.

Integrated schools were founded on the basis of inter-community contact and have since been mentioned and accepted in almost every policy written pertaining to community relations. Integrated education combines all of the themes discussed in this paper: equality, importance of identity, and Contact Theory. To begin with an example, on Remembrance Day of this year, integrated schools faced the questions of whether to celebrate the day and if so, are students allowed to wear poppies at school.<sup>128</sup> After surveying the parents, they ultimately decided this was allowed on two conditions: 1) Remembrance Day will not be about only the British wars, but any conflict the students and staff feel is important to them and 2) White lilies are allowed to be worn too.<sup>129</sup> Then,

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Lesley McEvoy et al., “Reconciliation as a Dirty Word: Conflict, Community Relations and Education in Northern Ireland,” *Journal of International Affairs* (Fall/Winter 2006): 96.

<sup>128</sup> Paula McIlwaine, Belfast, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, 21 November 2011.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

the children were given the opportunity to explain why they chose to wear that particular flower.<sup>130</sup>

In this example, the students were considered equal because neither identity overrode the other and by allowing them to express why they wore their chosen flower, they were able to enter into a meaningful dialogue that allows them to better understand themselves and each other. However, while this was the main policy of the schools, undeniably the implementation of it varied from classroom to classroom depending on the teacher and the students.<sup>131</sup> Nothing will ever eliminate this variation between schools and teachers. However, if more resources were devoted to training teachers in how to deal with issues like this one, the likelihood of them engaging the students would increase because they would have the confidence and the skills to do so.

While at an interview with Lesley Emerson, who created a resource for teachers that help them to broach sensitive issues<sup>132</sup>, we were talking about integrated schools and the way children respond to talking about their identities, and my advisor, Elizabeth Welty Ph.D. candidate, made a poignant comment. She said that during one of her experiences in schools the children were unwilling to talk about their own identities for fear of hurting their friend's feelings. Even though the children were in a safe environment to talk openly, they were unwilling. So again, here we are at Pettigrew's point of the ability for contact to work lies with the individual.

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<sup>130</sup> Ibid.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> See "From Prison to Peace" resource from the Community Foundation of Northern Ireland's website:  
<http://www.communityfoundationni.org/download/files/CFNI%20PRISON%20to%20PEACE.pdf>

Following, there are several other criticisms of the integrated schools system. One of them being a fear that the schools promote a middle ground identity and aim to make all students believe in the same things, however, according to the school's guidelines, they should emphasize identity, not neutralize it.<sup>133</sup> Furthermore, there is a belief that the integrated schools are for middle class families and working class students do not attend, however there is a diverse student body from working class and middle class families.<sup>134</sup> Finally, there is disappointment that the schools fell short of everyone's expectations.<sup>135</sup> According to Paula, while it is true that some schools do a better job at maintaining the core principles than others, educate together schools are still in high demand.<sup>136</sup>

### **Conclusion**

From the above discussion about the importance of identity, equality and community relations, the ineffective uses of Contact Theory, and the promise of education in community relations' work, I conclude that from the current community relations' policies in Northern Ireland are ultimately ineffective in terms of these areas. While I agree that the definition of success in community relations' policy is too narrowly defined, there remains more segregation in Northern Ireland than when the conflict ended.<sup>137</sup> It is incredible that the violence has ceased and life has reached a point of normalcy, but better can and will be achieved. The scars of the conflict are deep and still festering, but they are slowly healing. I propose that if more resources were invested

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<sup>133</sup> Paula McIlwaine, Belfast, Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education, 21 November 2011.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> Ibid.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid.

in integrated schools, allowing them the funding and ability to effectively train their teachers, more of the potential promised from the schools can be exacted.

I also conclude that without equality between the communities, their relations will not improve and with the growing diversity of Northern Ireland, this will have to be addressed sooner rather than later. I am speaking of the equality of identities, beliefs, and political standings. While these rights are guaranteed legislatively, there has not been large-scale societal acceptance. There remains a fear of a re-escalation of violence if the sensitive subjects are discussed, as a black taxi driver told me, “what happened back then is best left alone. We don’t want to starting fighting again.” Paradoxically, if the issues of the past are not dealt with, history will be doomed to repeat itself.

My final conclusion is that Contact Theory, how it is being used now, is not sustainable in the long run. Without the core issues of the conflict sorted, being in contact will have little impact, or it will only be temporary. The focus should be on equality and education, not in bringing people into meaningless contact.

If someone were to want to continue this study, continue looking into the ways in which policy has been implemented. I have only touched on a few small areas here, so more work needs to be done, especially on integrated schools. Looking at the way in which contact with children from different communities impacts them and how and if their identities change. It would also be helpful to go into the housing portion of community relations’ work.

Prior to completing this project, I believed that community relations were separate from equality. I saw it similarly to Sinn Fein in that equality was the goal of the Republicans and community relations was the concern of Loyalists. While this is still

somewhat true in reality, I now see the importance of the two to be addressed together and not separately. Without equal standing between the communities, the relations will not improve. I also gained a larger respect for all of the identities, not just of Northern Ireland. I was always of the mindset that I am always right and if someone disagrees with me, they are obviously wrong, however this is not still the case. While I may sympathize more with one community does not mean the other is the “bad guy.” Up until this point, I had not been of this belief.

In the larger realm, I see parallels between the identity issues of Northern Ireland and the homosexual identity oppression of the rest of the world. While there is no organized violent campaign against homosexuals, but everyday people are beaten and killed because of their sexual orientation, their identity. Many are afraid to express their true selves for fear of the consequences. While the Northern Ireland society has moved forward from this, the oppression of political identity still exists.

I also draw parallels between racial issues in United States and identity issues in Northern Ireland. We are centuries on from the Civil War, but race issues still remains an issue in the States. While there is legislation guaranteeing equality in all aspects of life, it is not guaranteed. I am curious to see the future of Northern Ireland because their differences are not physical, but ideological.

My aim in doing this project was to explore community relations’ policies and their effectiveness and for this purpose my project has succeeded. I do not claim to have all of the answers because I have more questions now that answers and wish I had more time to explore. However, I do feel confident in the information and evidence I have provided for my part

Another aim I had was to experience the community relations' issues and this was not as successful. I gained insight into these issues and sometimes felt the effects of those issues, but I was never able to actually become an "insider" to them. There were times when I felt uncomfortable wearing my cross necklace in certain areas and nothing brings you into the community relations' debate like walking through a gate in the Peace Wall. After talking with locals about it, they still do not feel safe enough on the interfaces to bring down the wall, which makes someone think that comes from a place where they always feel safe. With this being said, this paper does justice to community relations' policies and their efficacy. The strengths and weaknesses of the policies are highlighted as well as suggestions for how I would look at the policies differently.

I attempted to include everything that I learned because everything weaves together like a web, however for simplicity's sake, I omitted a larger discussion of integrated schools and education in general. As I have mentioned before, I was limited by my inability to actually feel like I could experience the community relations' issues. I was also constrained by my selection of only looking at policies because I had to limit how much of the integrated education information I included. I also did not have the time or the space in the paper to explore the housing issues in community relations' policy or to adequately explore integrated education's promise. In conclusion, this was the largest academic endeavor I have ever undertaken, but the lessons I learned about community relations' policy will be carried with me far into the future and into other areas that are coming out of conflict.

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## Appendix A

Dr. Lesley Emerson

Queen's University Belfast School of Education

Co-Founder "From Prison to Peace", co-author "Reconciliation as a Dirty Word"

14 November 2011- 10am at French Village Café in Belfast

Lesley is one of the authors of the controversial and popular paper entitled "Reconciliation as a Dirty Word" and from her work in this paper helped to create an educational program and resource called "From Prison to Peace."

There is no reconciliation policy in Northern Ireland, only Community Relations policy. This policy is then applied in the education system and through local community councils, which have good relations officers. While the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement is considered the peace papers, there is little mention of community relations in the actual document. The only mention is in section 75, which has two parts: Part 1 is about equality legislation and outlaws discrimination in Northern Ireland and part 2 says that all public authorities have a responsibility to community relations. Despite these two parts making up the same section, part 1 is often ignored and the focus is put on part 2. According to Lesley, the common opinion of equality and its opposite, discrimination, being disconnected from community relations is false. She believes they are intimately connected. The very definition of discrimination is "the unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things (Webster). By prejudicially treating one group differently than another is presupposing one group is being treated better than another, so in the case of Northern Ireland, the Loyalist community has been treated better by the government than the Republican community. This makes the idea of community relations very important when thinking about equality. However, human rights is always a contentious and controversial issue in every government, not just in Northern Ireland, so it very hard to address the issue. For this reason, human rights topics were taken out of the citizenship education curriculum.

Furthermore, when asked about the consociational government of Northern Ireland and if it adds to the divisions within Northern Ireland, she became indignant. She answered by asking me what it would feel like as an American if people came in and told us we had to disband the Republican Party because it was too "extreme." She finds it irrelevant to speak about the "extremes" in Northern Ireland politics because those extremes exist everywhere. Furthermore, she said that the GFA and the consociational government "essentialized extremes," which is fine. She thinks the government was set up for Sinn Fein and the DUP. While she admits the set-up slows things down, she does not think it is any slower than other transforming governments. Following, she also does not believe that the government needs an opposition because it already has one, the committees. The committees act as the opposition to the ministers, which does cause a lag, but that is the nature of having oppositions. Furthermore, Lesley thinks the GFA made equality synonymous with equality of Protestants and Catholics.

One of the premises of her program, "From Prison to Peace," is the maintenance and celebration of identities and the equal value of all differences. She

believes that the current community relation's policy isolates and discourages people from embracing and being proud of their own political identities. The policy agenda is aimed at celebrating those in the middle ground of the conflict and silencing or ignoring the extremes. Ironically, the extremes are often the former combatants that, ironically, carry the brunt of the load in the reconciliation process.

Furthermore, the community relations policy rests on a contact theory framework, meaning that if the schools can engage both communities by exposing the children to the "other," they will form relationships and therefore improve community relations. However, Lesley believes that this is not the most beneficial practice. By putting people in relationships, you make them less likely to voice their opinions for fear of hurting their friend. While this is not necessarily a bad thing, it does nothing to foster discussion and acceptance of all identities.

## Appendix B

Conall McDevitt

Member of Legislative Assembly- Northern Ireland Assembly

Social Democratic and Labor Party (SDLP)

22 November 2011- 8:45am at Stormont Parliament Building

- Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act (1998) discusses equality and good relations
- Sinn Fein thinks that good relations and equality are separate and will not accept policy combining them
- Building a Shared Future is unacceptable to Sinn Fein and DUP
- Cohesion, Sharing, and Integration has been dismissed and critiqued by everyone from politicians to academics
- Policy is now trying to get back to “A Shared Future,” but Sinn Fein only recognized equality as the issue and they need to shift in position and there is now a working group/committee formed to draft a new policy comprised of representative from every political party.
- Direct Quotes: “This policy will address the fundamental issues within the society.”
- The political culture in Northern Ireland is the conflict in a different form because Sinn Fein and the DUP are always trying out do each other politically
- Failure of the policies in Northern Ireland is defined by the amount of segregation still present
- There is an emerging sense of region in the DUP
  - Peter Robinson has said he wants Catholics to being to join the DUP, but it is probably only small talk
- Policing is the only evidence of improved community relation

## Appendix C

Paula McIlwaine

Professional Development Officer

Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE)

21 November 2011- 2:30pm at the NICIE Office in Belfast

- Segregated schools are Catholic or Controlled, which have become the schools for Protestant children
- There are 61 integrated schools and educated 6% of the children in Northern Ireland
- The goal percentage of each classification is 40% Catholic, 40% Protestant, and 20% other
- Integrated schools are based on equality between students, teachers, and governors and more parent representatives as governors.
- Integrated schools live out equality, social responsibility, and values
- They are criticized because no two schools are the same and there is no uniformity. However, this is because the schools reflect the communities they serve
- NICIE created an Anti-Bias resource for the personal development of teachers and to help them see how their biases impact the children. It gives them the tool to facilitate discussions that could be difficult and controversial. It also allows the teachers to have pride in their own identity and recognize difference and then teach that to their students.
- Integrated schools are supposed to be organic, meaning a strong student voice and having an emphasis on equality
- Teacher training colleges are segregated and training teachers are not able to engage with different people and then they are expected to teach their students to do this.
- Catholic teachers can work in any schools, but Protestant teachers cannot work in Catholic schools because they do not have the training in Catholic education needed.
- 91% of children go to segregated schools
- Integrated schools are socio-economically diverse and they use the measure of free meals to track this
- Middle class families began first schools
- There is the 11+ in Northern Ireland, but if a child attends an integrated school, there is no stigma attached to a child not going to grammar school because everyone wears the same uniform and no one from the outside can tell.
- Only controlled schools can be transformed into integrated schools and the transformation has to be elected by the teachers, leaders, and parents of the school. 50% of the parent body has to vote and then 50% of that group has to vote to transform. Then, a development proposal is made outlining the criteria to become integrated. They must have a 10% the next year and explain how they are going to attract more minorities in the next 10 years. This is a long and arduous process, so mainly primary schools elect to transform.

- The issues against a school transforming are protectionism and being territorial by the community.
- The schools aim to emphasize and not to neutralize identities.
- A new program called Area Based Planning is being worked on. With it, all educational methods are represented (Catholic, Controlled, and Integrated) and they committee looks are areas that need provisional change. Then, each type of education makes an argument for why the new schools should be Catholic, Controlled, or Integrated and then it is voted on. This is a developing and growing idea, but should be implemented in the next year.
- Northern Ireland is more sectarian now that it was at the end of the conflict
- Remembrance day 2011- The schools needed to decide if it should be celebrated and if students could wear poppies, so they surveyed the parents and they approved it. However, it was decided that the commemoration service would not honor only British soldiers, but any fatalities in any conflict important to the student. Also, the lily was approved to be worn and then the children should have been given the opportunity to explain why they were wearing the flower they chose.

## Appendix D

Ray Mullan  
Director of Communications  
Community Relations Council of Northern Ireland  
6 Murray Street  
Belfast BT1 6DN, Northern Ireland  
November 11, 2011  
10:30-11:30 am

When Ray was prompted to be recorded during the interview, he did not feel comfortable being recorded, but was comfortable with me taking notes. He began by telling the origins and history of the Community Relations Council. The idea of the council stemmed out of an attempt at a Northern Ireland assembly in the mid-1980s after the hunger strike in 1981. (The hunger strike allowed the political party Sinn Fein to take hold in Northern Ireland because the election of three of the strikers in the Republic in 1981. This gave Sinn Fein the support in the North they needed to take root and they then became the political wing of the IRA. My paper and part of Ray's opinion). However, during the attempt at an assembly, no one elected under Sinn Fein or the SDLP would take up his or her seats in Stormont. So, the failure of this attempt was blamed on the non-cooperation and distrust of both sides, which prompted the British to look into community relations in Northern Ireland.

In 1986, the Northern Ireland Standing Advisory Committee on Human Rights commissioned a report, which proposed a two-part agency on community relations. One part would be governmental, which would write and dictate policy relating to community relations and the other would be funded by the government, but would be an independent charity, i.e. the council. However, in the beginning, the British government wanted to control the council, but the leaders at the time knew this would not work. The council "had to work with both sides at the street level, if the government were in charge, the program would shut down." To the Republicans, and even into the wider Nationalists, community relations was not the issue, but oppression by the British state. On the other hand, loyalists held no trust in their Republican and Nationalist counterparts because their issue was with security and being constantly "on guard to be kept from unwillingly becoming a united Ireland."

Ray also gave perspective to the British community relation's policy, including their intentions for the council. Their emphasis on community relations stems from their number one objective during the conflict being security first and foremost. They saw the conflict as a tribal conflict, rather than something in which they were involved. This can also be seen in the proceedings leading up and after the Good Friday Agreement. The British government "practically told the loyalists, especially Rev. Dr. Ian Paisley, if they did not build bridges between the two communities they would have no power." They also said that if they failed to "build bridges," Westminster would do it for them through a stronger relationship with Dublin."

The CRC's "aim is to promote a peaceful and fair society based on reconciliation and mutual trust." (CRC website). To do this, they provide support to local groups and organizations in the form of financial, advising, and informational; "provide opportunities for cross-community understanding; increased public awareness of community relations work; [and] encouraging constructive debate throughout Northern Ireland." Their work includes three main areas: "encouraging other organisations, both voluntary and statutory, to develop a community relations aspect to their policies and practices; working with churches and groups which have a primary community relations focus; encouraging greater acceptance of and respect for cultural diversity."

Upon being asked about what the council considered to be diversity, as in does it allow people to maintain their identity or expect them to come into a more mainstream belief system, he answered that the whole point of diversity to have many different people with many different beliefs. Their main goal is to spread the understanding of all perspectives and hope that it facilitates discussion and acceptance of other's ideas.

Following from this philosophy, CRC has undertaken several projects to progress this mission and influence policy makers, one of these being, "Sharing over Separation" in 2006. This report was directed at areas of public life, such as "mixed housing, race relations, shared education, young people, interfaces, community development, flags and emblems and outline approaches to monitoring and evaluating progress in these areas." (CRC Website) Mr. Mullan also offered numbers that inspired this report. The cost of Northern Ireland being segregated is said to be about £1.5 Billion mainly because of the "inefficiencies within the school system." Some of the inefficiencies he highlighted are the under and over population of schools and different curricula between the state and catholic schools impacting the students.

Another one of these reports that preceded "Sharing over Separation" is "A Shared Future" created in 2005. The main focus of this report was to emphasise the importance of inter-community respect and diversity in Northern Ireland. This was more of a "goals and aspirations" policy because there were few recommendations about how to actually attain these ideals. There is much rhetoric about community relations being the core of the reconciliation process. The report offers suggestions about integrated housing and education."

However, little was done politically after this report, so in 2010 another report was issued that created the Programme for Cohesion, Sharing, and Integration (CSI). This document outlines ways that policy can address equality and community relation's issues in Northern Ireland. This document in particular outlines the importance of economics in reconciliation work because of the recession that has recently hit the world. It is much more cost-effective to live in a un-segregated society than in one as divided as Northern Ireland.

Following this document, the focus of the CRC support for local programmes has been on projects pertaining to "culture, economic regeneration, youth, and some peace programs." There are a many "anti-sectarian flavour themes" in the CRC because they believe "peace is the responsibility of everybody, not just peace

groups.” This is why they fund and work with more groups that are not primarily peace projects that ones that are.

Following “A Shared Future,” there was little done on the policy side of the arrangement, so in 2006, CRC created a report called, “Sharing over Separation” in This report was directed at areas of public life, such as “mixed housing, race relations, shared education, young people, interfaces, community development, flags and emblems and outline approaches to monitoring and evaluating progress in these areas.” (CRC Website) Mr. Mullan also offered numbers that inspired this report. The cost of Northern Ireland being segregated is said to be about £1.5 Billion mainly because of the “inefficiencies within the school system.” Some of the inefficiencies he highlighted are the under and over population of schools and different curricula between the state and catholic schools impacting the students.

Community relations’ work and the peace process is a long road and according to Ray, there is not framework in the government to support a sustainable peace because of the divisions within Stormont. He believes that eventually there will a framework in place, but as long as the “bickering” continues amongst the politicians, there will be little effectual policy made.



## Appendix E

Kate Turner

Director of Healing through Remembering (HTR)

18 November 2011- 12:30 pm at the HTR office, Belfast

- Healing through Remembering began from a board set up in 2001. The members were from diverse backgrounds and there was no preparation before they were put together. They were given a super-ordinate goal by being asked to implement a truth recovery process together.
- In the meetings, everyone was there as an individual and they created the Chatham House Rule where if they talked about the meeting outside of the room, they could not disclose the identities of the people they were talking about.
- After the board disbanded and the subgroups were formed, the original members remained in touch with each other and the organization.
- This was all about bringing people together and allowing them to understand each other's points of view and finding a common ground of agreed differences.
- In 2004, sub-groups were created to implement the plan made by the original group. The people enlisted for this did have a 1-to-1 meeting with the HTR director before they meet all together.
- In these meetings, differences had to be heard; even if what was said was really hard. Respect was the number one issue in the room and even though the Chatham House Rule no longer applied, respect of everyone was still expected.