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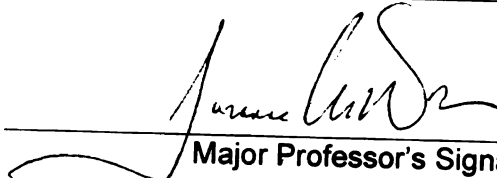
MORE THAN WAR: TEACHERS' STORIES FROM ISRAEL  
AND NORTHERN IRELAND

presented by

STEFANIE KARIN KENDALL

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EDUCATIONAL POLICY

  
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**MORE THAN WAR: TEACHERS' STORIES FROM ISRAEL AND NORTHERN  
IRELAND**

**By**

**Stefanie Karin Kendall**

**A DISSERTATION**

**Submitted to  
Michigan State University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of**

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

**Curriculum, Teaching, and Educational Policy**

**2010**

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## ABSTRACT

### MORE THAN WAR: TEACHERS' STORIES FROM ISRAEL AND NORTHERN IRELAND

By

Stefanie Karin Kendall

Increasingly, the effects of war – threat towards health, socio-economic stability, and social trust – are felt on the streets of cities and towns in conflict zones. Teachers in two locations, one a conflict zone, one post conflict, talk about the ways they respond to violent conflict in their community. Sderot, Israel, sits two kilometers from Gaza. Over ten months in 2009, it endured the rain of 10,000 missiles. Belfast, Northern Ireland, is fourteen years into a post-conflict era, yet sectarian violence and – more recently – violence towards immigrants has emerged along with other side effects of transition from conflict to peace. In 2009, teachers at a school in each location spoke about the ways they teach mandated curriculum, design activities to address events in the community, and care for students. While their contexts are different, their practices bore strong similarities: the casting back over their own background to explain pedagogical decisions, tweaking curriculum to integrate students' experiences, and exhibiting care for their students that extends beyond the classroom. This study investigates the ways the teachers in Sderot, Israel, and Belfast, Northern Ireland, discuss their work. We find that they enact a pedagogy that is not only contextually relevant, but also builds social networks and trust. The dissertation not only considers the pedagogy described by the teachers, but

also the ways

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also the ways that violence – whether it takes place in a conflict zone or a post-conflict zone – affects teachers' work.

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## DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to teachers living and working in conflict zones, to those who are working steadily towards peaceful days, and to those who are working to sustain dignity for their students. I have been inspired by your grace, eloquence, stamina, and humor.



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## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

At the core of this study are teachers and students living in areas where violence interrupts learning. I must acknowledge the grace and courage with which the participants shared what they have lived. My hope is that they are revealed to be creative and resilient professionals who care deeply about their students under difficult circumstances.

This study was three years in the making. I came to the participants through Dr. Zvi Beckerman and Dr. Claire McGlynn, two professors whom I met at the Comparative International Education Society Conference in New York City. Without their help, I would not have walked into schools in Belfast and Sderot. Without the generosity of Dr. Karen Klomparens at The Graduate School and Dr. Michael Sedlak at the College of Education at Michigan State University, I would not have been able to fund the data collection – nor have had the luxury of time to finish the project.

Peers at Michigan State University helped me not only navigate academic waters, but also provided soulful support and laughter. Among them are Andrea Friedus, Lisa Jilk, Nils Kauffman, Sandra Schmidt, David McLaughlin, Jamie Mikeska, Jeff Rozelle, Robyn Carlson, Jim Garrett, and Marini Lee. Friends far and away -- Emily, Kristie, Ellen, Lance, Kerry, Deborah -- reminded me why I began this journey and why I remained.

My mother inspires me with her stamina, drive, and playfulness. This study is partly her story. Her iteration of her childhood in World War II Germany gave me a glimpse into the lives of children in conflict zones who will one day become mothers and

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fathers -- children who deserve joyful play along with an education. My father inspires me with his focus and determination. That I sat down and wrote each day is a testament to his dedication to hard work and adventure that he ingrained in his children. My nephews blow wind into my sails, moving me to laughter and easy vigor, and keep the wellbeing of children at the forefront of my mind.

My committee, Avner Segall, Susan Melnick, and Colleen Tremonte – chaired by Suzanne Wilson – are more than inspiring scholars. They have shown constant concern for my progress and intellectual development, allowing me to take flights of fancy and explore theoretical cul-de-sacs. I hold them up as role models and consider them long term mentors, colleagues, and friends. The thoughtful challenges they posed will be invaluable to my intellectual development and rigor in the future.

I come to Suzanne Wilson and Philip Cusick. Their friendship and guidance, constant and clear, is more than I could have imagined encountering as I drove from Maine to Michigan in 2005. At my most tired, they urged me onwards. When nothing was funny, they brought their humor, wisdom, and light. They understand. They are generous with their caring. ‘Thanks’ is not enough, but I suppose on this page it will have to suffice. I look forward to blueberry buckle, crosswords, and wrecking septics from here on out, no matter where we are.

Suzanne exemplifies that teaching and learning are acts of love. Her dedication to this project, the weekly meetings (which I will dearly miss), and constant challenges (that I am honored to have received from her) taught me not only the value and integrity of scholarship and research, but also their discipline. All this was dealt with steady hand and

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sparkling eye that saw this path far more clearly than I. I am so very grateful for our friendship, and for her strength and faith.

The people mentioned here are in my heart because I have learned from them, and because of what I can teach from knowing them. I can look forwards because of their kindness, integrity, time, and care. I am grateful to know them, angels all.

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## CHAPTER 1

### CONFLICT: ROOTS, EFFECTS, MANAGEMENT AND SCHOOLS

On September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, I was preparing for parent-teacher night at an American high school in Kuwait. One hour before the evening started, a group of US and Canadian expats watched the towers crumble. One American parent walked into my classroom that night, the rest were on lock-down on their compounds. The student body was comprised of Arab and Western students, tension between the groups grew over following days as the news emerged that Al Qaeda was responsible for the attack. Students from the US defended their country, Arab students defended Islam – saying that such violence is not true to the spirit of Islam.

US military bases are located in Kuwait. As personnel arrived to prepare for war, their children enrolled mid-year. Other children were summarily pulled out of school as parents fled for safer ground. We were situated at the near edges of war, yet it ignited heated classroom conversation. Armed security guards stood at the school gate and the entrance of our compound. Despite that level of security, the context affected the students and my teaching. I was ill-prepared to respond to angry and defensive students and to infuse a mandated curriculum with meaning. Eventually, we were all evacuated. What do teachers do who are living in conflict zones, who endure violent conflict? This study focuses on that question.

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Teachers in Israel and Northern Ireland speak about the ways conflict affect their teaching, and how they nAavigate through its pervasive unpredictability. First, however, we will learn about the effects of conflict writ large. We will see that violent conflict negatively affects health, socio-economic development, and social trust in countries as far flung as Kenya and Kosovo. I use these examples to underscore that the effects of conflict on community wellbeing are consistent and insidious regardless of where it occurs. In this way, conflict is framed as a global syndrome, rather than one nation's dysfunction. Throughout the chapter, I connect conflict's effects in nations around the world to Israeli and Northern Irish historical and social contexts. Then, narrowing our look at conflict, we will turn to its effects on education, and discover ways communities and individuals respond to it.

The literature on education and conflict is emerging. Voices of parents and children in the field are powerful (Bush and Salterelli 2000, de Berry et al. 2003). Less present in the literature are the voices of teachers (Nicolai 2009). By discussing the testimonies of teachers in Sderot, Israel, and Belfast, Northern Ireland, this study lends them voice, expanding literature on teaching in conflict. As a result, this is a modest study: Teachers discuss their practice and tell us about the ways they care for their students. Certainly, it can be argued that good teachers everywhere care for their students. Yet, what is remarkable here is even when sirens blare, houses are destroyed, and riots take to the streets teachers hunker around their students to buffer them from violence, ultimately sharing with them more than war on the streets. With that, we turn to the ways conflict affects communities across the globe.

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In the last century, war has moved from battlefields to city streets, tearing into social fabric (Maynard 2005). Those violent disputes include civil conflict, internal insurgencies, or international conflict. At the start of 2009, there were forty-one countries around the world experiencing violent conflict, leaving cities, towns, and neighborhoods in tatters. Regardless of its nature, war interrupts the safety and freedom of civilians and tenderness of childhood while it diminishes the capacity of a society to commit to its members (Arendt 1958;Maynard 1999).

As the largest social institution of our age, schools are affected by mass violence.

Education, to be sure, is a mammoth sector in any nation, involving entire communities and their recognized or defacto government in a potentially uplifting endeavor during times of profound stress, uncertainty, and tragedy. The work of education also keeps children and their teachers busy on useful activities. (Sommers 2004:81)

Teachers protect children and keep them active, and they provide valuable information with regard to conflict's emergence and frequency, the needs of the community at large, and the types of reform and curriculum development that would positively effect children and learning. Essentially, teachers -- since they spend so much time on a weekly basis with the children -- are frontline witnesses, "making them the most critical resources in education reconstruction" (Buckland 2005:49 as cited in Nicolai 2002:64). This study asks how teachers respond to the intrusion of war into school. What we can learn from teachers' testimonies about conflict's effects on schooling?

Not only are teachers positioned to inform us about conflict's effects, but they are also set up to help mediate relief: "People living through a time of crisis can sometimes be the first to see windows of opportunity for education. They see this opportunity

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because it will change their lives for the better” (Sinclair 2009:37). Thinking about school as civic centers means that in times of crisis they

can and should help ensure the rights to life and health. Schools can disseminate life saving messages to the community regarding particular health threats, sanitary arrangements, protection of the environment and so on – messages which can be passed to students, parents, and participants in youth programmes. (Nicolai 2009:48)

As such, schools become gathering places not only for teachers, students, and administrators, but also for families and community stakeholders. Further, schools and classrooms have been considered potential and fertile loci for peace building since the 1970s (e.g.: ACCORD 1999, Lazarus 2002, Reardon 2002). There is literature that considers conflict from the learners’ perspectives (Dicum 2008), and from parents’ perspectives (de Berry et al 2003). However, there is little literature that documents conflict and its effects from teachers’ perspectives.

This study hopes to contribute to the field of peace building and peace education by exploring teachers’ experiences in post/conflict communities. Another aspect of the research is seeking out viable policies and best practices in the field of peace building and conflict management. Teachers in Sderot, Israel, and Belfast, Northern Ireland, spoke about the ways that post/conflict affects their practice and pedagogy. When considering teaching in a post/conflict context, they discuss relationships with their peers and students, their personal histories and perspectives on the conflict, and altering and adding to curriculum. As actors with agency, teachers consider the larger context in order to accomplish their work, in the school and for the students. Socio-political background, the purposes of schooling, sustaining a consistent teacher practice, community building, and peace education are intrinsic in the teachers’ testimonies.

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As socio-politics shift, so too do schools' purposes and teachers' perceptions of their roles since, as Mazawi (1996) suggests, teachers' roles are related to the broader sociopolitical landscape they live and work within. Mandates and policies do not keep pace with sociopolitical shifts as quickly as teachers have to. Here we will learn how teachers respond and move with the changes wrought by conflict. We find out how they create a stable school environment for students. In part, they do this in the classroom, connecting mandated curriculum to students' lives through discussion. Largely, however, they create stability and curricular relevance through their actions inside and outside of classrooms. Those acts will be the central focus of the analysis.

First, we will examine conflict writ large by learning about its root causes and its effects on community. Attention will be paid to struggles over nationhood and the ways clashes occur along ethno-religious lines. Next, I consider how conflict is managed and the ways that peace is negotiated and sustained, both in and out of schools.

## BACKGROUND

Teaching in war-torn situations is multidimensional, and can be informed by scholarship on conflict resolution, violence and its effects on people and schools, crisis management, human rights application and monitoring, peace education, and the anthropology of warfare (Nicolai 2009; Sinclair 2002; Sommers 2004). Scholarship on political science, anthropology, sociology, and peace studies is also relevant. Thus the work is inherently interdisciplinary. Further, statistical reports conducted by NGOs about war and the effects on children inform this work (UNESCO, Innocenti Research Center), as well as technical guides developed by research institutes (AIR). As discussed, the purposes of schooling and the roles of teachers are implicated in this study too, since its

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framework conceptualizes schools as civic centers that can help a community transition from war to stability to peace. Those purposes shift from context to context, as “one culture may teach humility, another a focus on the self” (Staub 2003:4).

Here, these literatures are portioned into three libraries: those that consider the underlying causes of contemporary warfare (Azar 1978; Hastings 1996; Maynard 1999), those that explore the effects of war on a community (e.g., ACCORD 1999, Nicolai 2009; Maynard 1999; UNICEF 2003), and those that suggest routes for crisis management and peace building (e.g., Lederach 2005; Maynard 1999; Reardon 1995; Sommers 2004; Sinclair: 2002).

### *The Roots of Modern Conflict*

Violent outbursts and war have roots. These roots tend to germinate in social dynamics and perceived ethnic hierarchies and social affiliations. Among the issues related to war are scarce resources, corroded communitarian trust, and devastated economies (Azar 1978; Maynard 1999; Sen 2006). This section will focus on the broad causes for war. More detailed histories on Northern Ireland and Israel can be found in subsequent chapters.

Many contemporary conflicts are fought by identity groups – divided by ethnicity, religion, and language -- asserting themselves in the wake of political and economic instability resulting from decentralization and decolonization. Those violent clashes are often catalyzed by sweeping socio-political developments, specifically the violent struggle for nationhood that ultimately create volatile social dynamics (Hastings 1996).

Ethnic groups are shaped by language, religion, or race. Religion specifically “contributes powerfully to nation construction and nationalism” (Hastings 1996:185).

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Hastings (1996) argues that “the Bible provided, for the Christian world at least, the original model of the nation” (4). Language and religion are linked in that as

a literature [develops] with a popular impact, particularly a religious and legal literature, the more it seems to push its speakers from the category of an ethnicity towards that of a nation. (Hastings 1996:20)

The link, then, between ethnicity, language and religion, and nation-building are explained thus

The sort of ethnicity which is likely to develop nationalism in self-defence is one with control of a clear territorial core, one sufficient in size of population and local economy to be able to avoid economic strangulation; one with something of a literary vernacular of its own; and one that possesses a religion or historical tradition markedly different from that of the majority of the state of which it has been a part. (Hastings 1996:30)

We will see in the reviews of Northern Irish and Israeli history that religion has become the line along which the battle has been fought. While groups aligned according to sectarian group, the battle line was drawn in the quest for land and power not over differences in religious belief and ritual. Religion provided a structure around which to build community. Religious celebrations mark the calendar year, and holy books consider ways we might behave towards one another. Religious practice can regularly bring community members together, and religious communities support their members through education, charity, a place to rest, or to find sanctuary. So, religion plays a powerful role in community development, and also in building support for a side in turf or resource wars.

Battles for land and nationalism occur along sectarian and ethnic lines. This is the case in both Israel and Northern Ireland. The sort of ethnicity which is likely to develop nationalism in self-defense is one with control of a clear territorial core. Israel/Palestinian conflict has been referred to as a war of land-grabbing, where one party defends itself

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against the other. Newly formed nation-states grapple for independence, land, and resources. this is the case in both locations. Once Northern Ireland split from the Republic, the 'guerilla' fighting between Sinn Fein and the IRA picked up. War between Arab states and Israel began the very day Israel gained independence as a nation.

On the street level, religious affiliation can stabilize families and individuals by providing a place to take shelter and to contribute to a cause, or by providing a sense of belonging. Examples of this occur through out history, and will be more deeply discussed in chapters 3 and which cover the histories of Northern Ireland and Israel. For now, we consider that which causes instability, particularly grand scale political and economic shifts that might cause enclaves of families to come together to support one another, or to resist change, hegemony, or another perceived threat.

One phenomenon that has led to instability on national and community levels is the long arm of over-hasty decentralization and decolonization, which can be seen in the recent repercussions of the fall of the Soviet Bloc more than 20 years ago and the independence of sub-Saharan African nations that occurred in the 1950s and 60s. Examples in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda suggest that, as Rosenau (1982) states, “the more rapid the rate of social change, the greater the likelihood of intra-societal violence” (as quoted in Maynard 1999:6). Consider the effects of decentralization in Kosovo when, after a decades-long and consistently violent struggle, the nation asserted its autonomy from Serbia in February of 2008 with aggressive protest. That struggle for independence had been raging since 1999 when an estimated 10,000 Kosovars were presumed dead across 529 grave sites after a three month campaign waged by Serb forces was cut short by NATO forces (Bird 1999). As we shall see, the torrent of immigrants

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over a short period of time to Israel caused a panic grab for land in the territory. That rapid rise in population led to intra-social violence. Surely, that is a gross oversimplification of the Israeli context, yet rapid increase in population, limited territory, and arable land have played a significant role in the conflict in Israel/Palestine.

Similarly, ethnic groups in Sierra Leone and Rwanda grappled for power and resources in the vacuum left by colonial governments, culminating in two of the most ruthless and violent civil wars in recent history (Maynard 2005). Sierra Leone's guerilla warfare, which lasted from 1991 to 2002, ended with an estimated death toll of 200,000 civilians (Tran 2002). The Rwandan genocide saw the brutal deaths of 800,000 Tutsis at the hands of Hutus over the course of 100 days. The shocking murders only stopped when Tutsi rebel forces entered Rwanda from neighboring countries (UHR 2009).

According to political science and conflict theory, a common effect of decolonization and decentralization are rapid and corrupt nation building, which contributes to the volatility of community identity crises. This means that nations not only spar with one another, but they begin to break out in civil war as a result of economic and political instability. Let us return to the example of Serbia and Kosovo. The collapse of Soviet power into the newly formed nation-states led to decades of grappling for independence, land, and resources within the states of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia. Unstable leadership and constantly shifting national lines contributed to mounting tension between ethnic factions (Jansen 2008; Maynard 1999:65). While newly rallied nation-states pointed firearms at their perceived adversaries, ethnic groups within these nations blamed one another for their economic and social demise. The conflict became a regional issue as families migrated, either by choice to eke out a living or stable

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future for their children, or by force because their homes and towns were burned, as in the case of Muslims in Kosovo.

The loss of life and socio-political upheaval in nations of Sub-Saharan Africa offer further examples of the chaos hasty decolonization yields. It is important to note that national borders were drawn by colonial powers and do not follow tribal lines. Thus, as an example, a national of Sierra Leone whose tribe was divided by the border between Sierra Leone and Liberia can find more allies in that neighboring country than in her own. Ultimately, it is the tribes who battle for control and carry out abuses against one another fueled by retribution and desperate economic times (Maynard 1999:5, 210). National lines become blurred to the point of irrelevance, and international protocols for embargo and negotiation are ineffective in stemming or ceasing tribal violence (ibid.). These grand-scale transitions are not without consequence at the street level. In Israel and Northern Ireland we will see how boundary lines drawn through the territory ignite conflict. In the case of Israel, they reignite as lines are redrawn. As new lines are drawn, factions realign along them. In Northern Ireland, the border line drawn between it and the Republic of Ireland spurred paramilitary groups into action.

The events of 2007 in Kenya are an example of the long reach and complexities of decolonization's fall-out. The Mungiki, a rebel group that rallied violently against British rule in the 1950s (also known as the Mau-Mau) was responsible for violent reaction in and around Nairobi during the presidential election in June 2007. That outburst was generated by the perception that another tribe, the Kikuyu, had possessed control of the government since independence (Wikipedia 2007). Headless bodies of the Kikuyu tribe members were found in Nairobi's city center, an act of resistance claimed

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by the Mau Mau, sparking a wave of violence across Nairobi leaving over 2,000 people dead. The crises in Sierra Leone and Kenya illustrate that political allegiances are fiercely drawn along ethnic ones. Because ethnic factions existed long before colonization, and were invisible or disregarded by colonial power, crisis intervention in those regions cannot necessarily follow any kind of western template.

Violence as described above seems extreme, yet unfortunately it is not. It is the sort of shocking and senseless killing of that sort that often erupts into full blown conflict. We will see in Israel how the attack on villages and individuals on both sides of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict spurred on military action and then heavier reprisals. In Northern Ireland, the killing of individuals in the streets in apparent set ups and the infamous murder of protesters lead to violent responses on the part of paramilitary groups. In these ways, violence lives on in the form of action and reaction, no matter the scale.

As tensions grow out of scarce resources and pressure to keep up with a changing political climate, factions assert their identity more and more aggressively. It is important to note that as war moves into cities, ethnic groups expand their network and strategies for violent powerplays. In the case of Bosnia-Kosovo, rapidly shifting government control and an unemployment rate of 70% has resulted in violent action and reaction (Chossudovsky 1997). With access to income via underground arms trading and an anger fueled by lack of options, individuals become involved in contemporary social conflict in the form of kidnappings and random shootings. Gaining control of and meting out resources – such as running water, health care, and food – is another tactic to weaken an ethnic group (de Berry et al. 2003).

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The human rights agreements and military protocols that originally served as tools for ameliorating these tensions are summarily ignored because those agreements were not designed for such contexts (Azar 1978; US Foreign Policy Agenda 1996). In past conflicts that involved heads of states and followed military protocol, leaders would gather together to discuss possible ways to end hostility, or prepare for the type of warfare that would take place, most specifically evacuating and protecting the most vulnerable community members. However, leaders of ethno-centric militant groups are not likely to negotiate with leaders of nations, nor are they likely to announce an attack (Maynard 1999). Since ethnic warfare occurs in and across the grassroots, so that all members of a community are vulnerable, it might follow that negotiations for peace must occur at the grassroots where community members' input is valued (ACCORD 1999; Lederach 2005). That communitarian approach to peace-building is considered in the third section of this review.

Regardless of how sudden and brief violent civic outbursts may be, the conflict is rarely over when violence stops. The conflict attaches to ethno-religious differences, making it likely that even in a post-conflict context violence will spark again. The most volatile time in a post-conflict era is in the first decade after a peace agreement (Nicolai 2009). More often than not, violence has simply gone underground until the next outburst. Protracted social conflict, as defined by Azar (1978), is characterized by,

hostile interactions which extend over long periods of time with sporadic outbreaks of open warfare fluctuating in frequency and intensity. While they may exhibit some breakpoints during which there is a cessation of overt violence, they linger on in time and have no distinguishable point of termination...Protracted conflicts, that is to say, are not specific events or even clusters of events at a point in time; they are processes. (P. 50)

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Essentially, protracted conflicts do not create social instability, but are a violent symptom that emerges from already existing instability, contributing to a destructive cycle that can last for generations. As we shall see in the next section, violent protracted conflict corrodes the community's health and psychic well-being, its economic balance, and social trust.

While root causes for conflict can be generalized across nations, it is important to bear in mind that each ethnic conflict has its own dynamics, and cultures and tribes have different approaches to negotiation and means for resolution. A major political event contributing to civic violence is the decentralization of government. By considering the examples of the eradication of the Iron Curtain which fractured the Soviet bloc and reorganized its satellite nations, as well as ethnic clashes in the sub-Saharan nations of Sierra Leone, Rwanda, and Kenya, we can see how political events in the last century have emerged in the form of protracted social violence, which affects general health and well being, economy, and community trust.

### *Effects of Conflict*

Sommers (2004) refers to an "African Adage...: When elephants fight, the grass suffers" (18). This section will explain the effects of violent conflict on communities' institutions and interpersonal ties. Scholars describe three complex effects of conflict on families and communities. First, violence reorganizes the routines of social life, such as access to public transportation, health care, work, and education. Second, tension between ethnic groups strains social cohesion and communitarian trust vital to a community's workings. Third, depleted economics force families to make difficult

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choices. Attending to conflict's ramifications in a viable and sustainable way is complicated and requires a steady hand.

Ethnic conflicts frequently deteriorate into complex emergencies, "so termed because of the breadth of variables involved and their complicated pattern of interactions" (Maynard 1999:7). Those situations, not easily resolved, become long-range, grand-scale problems: (1) regional socio-political instability increases as populations migrate across borders away from war; (2) economic devastation expands as businesses close in the wake of conflict and migration, and trade is cut off due to ruined routes and embargos; and (3) humanitarian crisis relief becomes crucial, placing pressure on the international community to quickly respond to lives at risk in war zones (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; de Berry et al. 2003; Maynard 1999). Social and economic volatility -- not to mention the psychological effects of social violence -- press heavily on children.

To illustrate those points, let us consider conflicts in Afghanistan and the former Yugoslavia, where children's physical and psychic well being, their parents' livelihood, and communitarian trust vital to psycho-social development are undermined and potentially destroyed by ongoing violence. The effects of modern violent conflict permeate all levels of society, negatively affecting children's development. A project supported by Save the Children in which 430 children and their parents were interviewed in Afghanistan over the course of twelve months states,

war has an impact on children's lives in the following ways: destruction of the physical surroundings in which children play, work and grow up; increased economic hardship and the difficulties of protecting and caring for children with reduced circumstances and resources; exposure to death and injury; increasing children's fear and affecting their courage; reducing their opportunities for education; influencing children's patterns of play; disrupting the proper mourning rituals with negative effects on children. (de Berry et al. 2003:23)

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Conflict profoundly ruptures livelihood, routine, and social trust. That rupture damages a child's whole development, "because the child's physical, cognitive, emotional, social and mental development is inextricably tied to the social environment" (Kamel 2008:5). More deeply, a child's desire to survive and capacity to find the resources to do so are negatively affected by violent conflict: "basic protective systems which characterize resilience are severely hindered or damaged by war, and that, lacking protective factors, children become more vulnerable" (ibid.).

For instance, a child in a war zone will have lost touch with the routines that construct an active social network. School occurs randomly, or is cancelled altogether. Resources, both economic and social, dwindle and disappear as community members find their livelihood destroyed and their neighbors migrating away from conflict, or – worst -- perishing. One ethnic group might exploit another's children, as in Sierra Leone and Rwanda where children were forced into soldiering (Bush and Salterelli 2000). Children caught in violent social conflict are dragged deeply into a vicious cycle; the most defenseless members of society become even more vulnerable as a result of ethnic groups scrambling for human resources.

According to Kamel (2008), infants and toddlers are the most vulnerable members of a community in conflict: "Increased mortality and morbidity rate for under-5s in emergencies may be as much as 20 times higher than the usual level" (2008:7). Not only are deaths high for children under five, malnutrition for them has long-reaching effects:

the prevalence...of acute malnutrition among children under 5 years in internally displaced and conflict affected populations was 31% and was as high as 80% in Sudan in 1993. This is particularly significant as a large body of evidence demonstrates that underweight and stunting by age 2 or 3 years are associated with later cognitive deficits, school achievement, and drop out. (P. 7)

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Conflict shatters the ecology necessary for a brain's development during those early years, adding profound stress from shocking and violent sights and sounds, the loss of loved ones, and the quality of community relationships (Kamel 2008:6). As well as the psycho-social devastation wrought by war, children's health is affected. Emergency relief cannot gain entry to war zones easily and children age 0 to 3 are most drastically affected by, "disease and disruption" (ibid.). Once they reach school age, these children challenge teachers unprepared to work with them.

Collateral to conflict's effects on child development are the economic issues pressing on a family's morale. Parents express feelings of inadequacy in providing for their children, and have very little sense of empowerment to improve matters. In the Save the Children (2003) report previously noted, one father stated, "Poverty has made us careless; we send our children for bread and water, and we don't care about what is happening to them on the street" (de Berry et al. 2003:28). An Afghan mother said, "I find Eid<sup>1</sup> so hard because I can't buy clothes for my children and I get disappointed with myself and think, 'What kind of mother am I?'" (ibid.). These feelings of inadequacy tend to result in frustrations observable across generations. A grandfather testified:

These days no one has any time to advise their children. Fathers get up early in the morning when the children are asleep and they return late at night when the children are asleep. Then they have no time for them and to see about their *tarbia*<sup>2</sup>. (ibid.)

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<sup>1</sup> Eid is a Muslim holiday that takes place twice during the lunar year, once after Ramadan and once in the spring.

<sup>2</sup> "Tarbia" is an Afghan word referring to the well being of children as it is exhibited in their appearance and behavior. For example, "good and clean language, respect for elders and parents, bodily cleanliness, and hospitality" (de Berry et al. 2003:8) displays good tarbia, while bad tarbia is exhibited by disrespecting elders, commenting on women's bodies, drug use, and foul language. The difference between good and bad tarbia can be compared to the difference between a "complete house and a destroyed house" (ibid.).

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A son states, “A bad father says, ‘Go anywhere and anyhow and get money. What good is school? Just get money’” (ibid.). Dire economic situations that grow out of protracted social conflict overwhelm the importance of education and concern for a child’s development.

In the testimonies of the teachers in Northern Ireland, we learn that fatherless boys are a special focus. One teacher in particular focuses on ensuring that the boys in his classes receive attention with regard to their behavior and motivation. The current global economic crisis affects families in Belfast, Northern Ireland, the closing of the local shipyard has rendered hundreds of families without an income. One focus of the school in Belfast is to ensure that the socio-economic strain does not affect the children’s capacity to succeed in school, just as a focus of the school in Sderot, Israel, is to ensure that the constant violence does not affect the children’s capacity to envision a future free of conflict.

Violent social conflicts affect all levels of society, thus schools as social institutions are implicated. As Azar points out, conflicts, “act as agents for defining the scope of national identity and social solidarity” (1978:50). When investigating education systems in a conflict zone, essential questions emerge about schools: “Is it a locus for change? Resistant to change? Inertia? Innovation? Is the position itself changing? Is it accountable to the state, the community, or both?” (Nicolai 2009:45). Schools, teachers, and curricula arguably are positioned as agents defining those very same things, identity and social solidarity (Freire 1998; Rury 2005). In order to engage the dialogue between school and war, it would be worth attending to the effects conflict has on schools and teaching.

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In Kabul, for example, school represents a place where the community comes together, and exclusion from it can be stressful. Children are kept out of school due to lack of documentation, lack of money to buy supplies, and the need to generate income or take care of younger siblings in the wake of a caregiver's death or injury. Children are sometimes kept at home by parents too worried to allow their children to cross identity lines on the way to school. Despite these obstacles, "supportive words from teachers" comes in second after those from parents and before peace in a chart titled, "What the Children of Kabul Say is Good for Their Hearts and for Healing Bad Feelings" (de Berry et al. 2003:57). Further, school and education were listed as the number one opportunity recognized as good for children by the parents of Kabul's children (p. 60). Even though families struggle to send children to school, and sometimes keep them at home out of harm's way or send them to work instead, parents recognize the importance of education.

Still, even when children are able to attend school, they do not always see it as a safe place:

Much as children and parents recognized the importance of school in children's well-being, children also talked about school as a place of risk. The challenges posed by school are twofold and contradictory: first, the impact of exclusion from school and second, problems that occur within [it]. (de Berry et al. 2003:32)

A 2000 UNICEF report, *The Two Faces of Education in Ethnic Conflict*, considers the negative effects of school and education during social protracted conflict. The authors assert that, "If it is true that education can have a socially constructive impact on intergroup relations, then it is equally evident that it can have a socially destructive impact" (Bush and Saltarelli 2000:9). In the Soviet era, as an example of how schools can toe a political ideological line, classrooms were painted red to inspire study of communism. In many countries, pictures of leaders are placed on walls indicating support

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for the prevailing political agenda (Dicum 2008). School is not only affected by conflict but can contribute to citizens' worries, exacerbating ethnic exclusion and violence that students experience during school hours. While Afghani parents were afraid to send their children to school because of what might happen to them on the way, the UNICEF report authors suggest that in extreme cases, particularly in sub-Saharan nations like Sierra Leone and Rwanda, "schools have been used as sites for press-ganging child soldiers and attacking teachers" (2000:10).

Because they work in civic centers, school personnel are among the first to experience or notice symptoms of socio-political change heralding violent conflict. Class sizes increase or decrease as populations migrate. What is taught – the history of a nation or its language – changes, and curricular foci shift. In some cases, even the language of instruction is affected as nations and regions reconstitute their identities in the wake of decolonization (Achebe 1986). Teachers' obligations may expand as they attend to the students' emotional lives and learning under the duress of social violence: "Teachers in conflict situations can take on many roles, helping learners in and out of schools and in establishing alternative learning spaces" (DAVies and Talbot 2008:514).

Conversely, ethnic tension can be borne out when institutions and teachers themselves utilize exclusionary and/or punitive practices. Rwandan Catholic missionary schools, for example, "openly favored the Tutsi minority and actively discriminated against the Hutu from the late 1800s" (Bush and Saltarelli 2000:10). Those Catholic schools taught from a European colonial curriculum, "many school children attending missionary school...were not even aware of the existence of the mwami...their king" (2000:11). A similar situation exists in Turkey, where the Kurdish language has been

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banned and “professors at university have been imprisoned for conducting research on Kurdish issues” (ibid.). In these cases, educational institutions perpetuate and intensify social tension by repressing the voices and histories of ethnic populations. In this study, we learn how teachers in two schools – one in Israel and one in Northern Ireland -- work to relieve social tension by designing classroom curriculum and activities that consider the similarities between historical warring factions.

Violent conflict can pool in schools, manifesting itself in corporal punishment. Reports from students in Afghanistan and in World War II Germany verified corporal punishment as a default behavior management technique by teachers (Dicum 2008:626). Dicum explains that violence in schools as well as frustration about resource shortages and teacher quality result in high rates of student absenteeism (p. 629). This leads to one last insidious ramification of war and conflict: the erosion of social networks. Understanding how violence and war affect civic institutions offers insight about the corrosion of the social network, since:

[A]ll social institutions become drawn into the conflict. The impartiality not only of civil government, the military, and any form of authority structure, but also of school systems, health facilities, civic welfare agencies, and all other institutions is now called into question. (Maynard 1999:110)

Institutional mistrust is exemplified in the Afghan parents’ fear of sending their children to school mentioned in the previous section (de Berry et al. 2003), and in the documentation that Hutu children were excluded from educational opportunities in Rwanda prior to the genocide (Bush and Saltarelli 2000).

According to Sommers (2004), “A long-standing belief about education during humanitarian emergencies is that it is inappropriate” (p. 51). He offers reasons about why this belief is misguided. One is that emergencies, specifically the protracted conflicts

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described in this chapter, can continue for many years, even generations. Children will miss years of learning if emergencies shut school gates. Further, Talbot (2002) states

People have only one life. Children need quality education whether they are living in peaceful or conflicted societies. A more realistic approach [to education in emergencies] is to consider socio-economic development as a single process that *includes* catastrophes, responses to them and recovery from them. (4 as cited in Sommers 2003:51)

Yet another reason is presented

All possible steps should be taken to alleviate human suffering that arises out of conflict and calamity, and...those affected by a disaster have the right to a life with dignity. (Sphere 2000:1 as cited in Sommers 2003:55)

The final reason is that “providing education to children and youth ‘offers a structure that can potentially guard against abuse, neglect and exploitation on into adulthood’” (Nicolai and Triplehorn 2003:25 as cited in Sommers 2003:56). Ultimately, education is a human right, as delineated by the United Nation’s Declaration of Human Rights (1948), “Everyone has a right to education”(Article 26). Sinclair (2002) tells us, The United Nations’ Millennium Development Goals – under the Education For All act – extends that statement to, “The rights of access to education, recreations and related activities must be ensured, even in crisis situations”(p. 33). As we shall see, teachers in Sderot and Belfast do indeed – to the best of their ability – ensure access to education despite violence in their contexts by accompanying children to and from their homes, and going to their houses if they do not come to school for an extended period.

During sustained conflict, social mistrust quickly filters from the national level into the community, coming to rest between neighbors. A Rwandan man who refuses medical help for fear the doctor will mistreat him is one indication that social trust has been severed (Maynard 1999:110). The different ways that families respond to conflict in

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Afghanistan can divide them: A father who sends his son to work instead of school will be judged as giving his son bad *tarbia* in the eyes of parents who send their children to school or to the mullah for guidance (de Berry et al. 2003). Members of a community rely on one another in order to function. But when conflict and abuses -- specifically along identity lines -- take place community trust is shattered:

the divisiveness within society disrupts normal operations, potentially seriously damaging community viability. The effects are presumably all the more ruinous in communities that have had close inter-group ties, including mixed marriages, neighborhoods, business associations, church membership, and academic fellowship. (Maynard 1999:115)

Re-establishing community cohesion is a central goal of conflict management and peace building. While community members across ethnic groups might share the same goals-- bridging differences and creating economic and social stability -- there exists an array of attitudes and approaches, not to mention overwhelming challenges to linking community members productively after violent conflict. It is to those peace-making efforts I now turn.

### *Conflict Management and Building Towards Peace*

Complex emergencies are so termed because of the multitude of human miseries they entail, including the loss of loved ones, of livelihood, of health, and of a supportive social structure. Attempts to ease those miseries and move a community towards peace requires myriad skill sets custom designed for specific locales and challenges. While fall-out from social violence can be generalized from one context to another -- for example, the fear and low morale of citizens, the reconfiguring of priorities to the point where children need jobs before an education, the slump in crucial health care -- a response must be appropriate for the setting. Teachers' testimonies in Israel and Northern Ireland

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indicate a commitment to a pedagogy that is relevant to the context. A guidance counselor in Belfast speaks about the ways she refers to the city's statistics to learn about rates of teenaged pregnancy and alcoholism. In both locations, the teachers work to develop classroom practices that are contextually relevant and that create ties across the school community and the community at large. We will explore their practices in Chapters 7 and 8.

Conflict management and peace building are complex processes situated in the specific details of devastated contexts combined with an optimistic vision for the future (Bush and Salterelli, 2000; de Berry et al. 2003; Dicum 2008; Kamel 2008; Lederach 2005; Maynard 1999; Winthrop and Kirk 2008). The challenge of repairing social confidence and mutual obligation involves connecting the devastated now with the goal of sustained peace for the future. Peace building takes place along a continuum. Once the humanitarian crisis has been averted, reparation of community trust can begin.

Means to repair civic ties are a complicated mix of addressing very real hostilities and creating an envisioned, and therefore hypothetical, peace. The literature about peace building moves between those two poles, citing examples of effective peace building efforts and then explaining why a certain practice should, or should have, worked. Maynard (1999) outlines two processes commonly used by relief workers: the leadership and relationship approaches. Both methods are process-based but operate from different vantage points. The leadership approach begins at the higher levels of a community, bringing together major stakeholders for negotiation to break cycles of violence and establish trust (1999:127). While negotiations for peace-keeping laws and agreements between leaders of warring ethnic groups are vital, and can signal the start of peace

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building efforts to the international community, they often do not attend to the network of social relationships which have eroded. Security is primary, “there may be special measures to increase the protection and security of students and teachers, such as accompaniment to and from school, identity cards or teacher codes of conduct” (Nicolai 2009:39). Efforts to keep members of the civic community safe begin the process of building trust. Sommers (2004) warns

Teachers often comprise the largest corps of non-military civil servants in a government. Leaving these and other fundamental concerns uncoordinated constitutes a tragically overlooked opportunity to bind people together across war zones and border, to unify people thought to be separate by ethnicity, region, or religion by using the very same education system. (P. 81)

The relationship approach tackles trust-building at society’s grassroots, which Maynard describes as considering, “conflict as a function of deep-seated patterns rather than a technical problem, and takes place in a domain outside the heart of government” (1999:128). In a post-conflict zone, when a “conflict is thought to be over, it is rarely the end of the story...when active conflict does not re-erupt, tensions can linger” (Nicolai 2009:40). As a result, post-conflict relationship building is complicated and delicate. Yet, from case studies culled from global violent crises, examples exist of community building after war. One trust-building exercise is the practice of envisioning peace, which has not only been recommended by theorists (Lazarus 2002; Lederach 2005; Reardon 1996) but has also been implemented successfully by practitioners (ACCORD 1999; Maynard 1999). Envisioning peace is the practice of collaboratively formulating a picture of a peaceful community and systematically working towards that vision. The ACCORD (1999) report, which documents the process of training workshops for women in Khartoum, Sudan, described peace as “fairness between parties, we address ...

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recognize the rights of other people, good relations continue and we can visit each other, there is a relief from worries, there is co-operation and one's rights are satisfied and when fears are gone, there is peace" (p.17) In Belfast, teachers explained the ways they envision peace with students, while in Sderot, they guide students to consider the tensions of their situation from the perspective of the Arab minority. More profoundly, teachers in both locations ask their students to consider the lives of the "other."

In the wake of ethnic violence, activities as simple as safely visiting neighbors are indicators of peace, indeed, "an important source of healing, and probably of altruism born of suffering, is the experience of loving connection and support" (Staub 1996:10). In this sense, peace is built from modest changes within and across relationships and social networks.

With regard to supporting those relationships in post-conflict contexts, in "the years 1989 to 2005, 26 of 37 publicly available peace agreements mandated some type of education reform" (Save the Children 2008c:8 as cited in Nicolai 2009:42). The urge to reform has become a priority in crisis situations and in developing countries for two reasons: "first, an educated workforce has been shown to aid international economic competitiveness; second, that domestic constituencies increasingly saw quality education as a key component of higher hiring standards" (Nicolai 2009:44). Teachers are in a unique position to enact leadership and relational approaches to mitigate peace. By leading students through curriculum and establishing relationships with their students' families, they help can help knit community during and after violence.

Just as education can be used to perpetuate violence, it can also be used to foster peace. Peace education, writ large, "is understood to offer opportunities to develop skills,

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knowledge and values required for the practice of conflict resolution, communication and cooperation in relations to issues of peace, war, violence, conflict, and injustice” (Haber and Sakade 2009:174).

Peace education can refer to education of peace and education about peace (Haavelsrud 2008; Haber and Sakade 2009). Education about peace includes the study of peace movements and can include understanding conflict theory. The locus for education about peace is “in the context of intra-personal or interpersonal relationships” (Haber and Sakade 2009:180). Conversely, “education for peace would have to occur outside of the school, through the actions of the adult population” (Haavelsrud 2008:65). Bajaj (2008) explains a critical view of peace education that emerged from the Frankfurt School of Social Research and expands the locus of peace education from the personal to the societal by calling for a critique of “the societal conditions of peace education” (p. 137). She cites Wulf (1974), who describes a critical peace education “that stems from an explicit understanding of peace education as a criticism of society” (p. 138). In this way, peace education becomes a type of watch dog for structural violence, socio-economic inequity, gender bias, etc. Peace education’s reach, then, extends from conflict to post-conflict to zones of relative peace where schools might be “failing to tackle violence” seen through “hatred and bullying” (Haber and Sakade 2009:171).

With or without educational reform, in the process of envisioning peace, community members might understand the role they play in achieving it. Since ethnic conflict affects social institutions, schools and teachers – existing at the center of civic life – find themselves implicated in reconstruction efforts, with parents and government officials turning to schools as loci for peace-building and restoring civil ties. Further,

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teacher input on methods for community unification and collaboration has proved effective (Maynard 1999; Winthrop and Kirk 2008). Teachers in Sierra Leone and Ethiopia explained their perceived post-conflict obligation as helping re-build society by stressing to their students the importance of education for a community's future. To that end, they called themselves community leaders (Winthrop and Kirk 2008:647).

Bajaj (2008) suggests looking at “local struggles for human rights as a framework for critical peace education” (p. 139). Human rights are deeply tied to education for and about peace. They set a standard of for human dignity, and inherent in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights (UNDHR 1948) is the idea that those standards will be supported by society (Tibbetts 2008). That support is predicated on communitarian trust, which can be built in the micro-society of a school through collegiality, role-modeling and mentoring, while student-student friendships encourage learning and willingness to attend school (Winthrop and Kirk 2008:651). Teachers in Afghanistan, World War II Germany, and Lithuania were perceived by learners as taking “action outside the scope of their classroom and teaching duties to help students and their families in various capacities” (Dicum 2008:629).

We will read about a locally devised civic education curriculum in Israel that is a perfect example of Reardon's proposed practice of envisioning peace. Further, the recommendation that peace education happen through the actions of the adult population is active in Israel and Ireland -- in Israel the teachers speak consistently with students about the conflict and use the civic ed curriculum to guide that conversation. In Belfast, we will see that the teachers collaborate with other NGO's in the community to create peace education and respond to events in the community. Bajaj suggests that peace

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educators look for local struggles for human rights as a frame for critical peace education, a teacher in Israel does this as he looks for tension between the democratic and Zionist state, citing as an example the Right to Travel and the Right to Return, both of which are disallowed by the Zionist state, but obviously permitted by a democratic one. In these ways, teachers are intrinsically operating a peace education in Israel and Belfast, working at both the leadership and relational levels. In the context of the classroom, we will see how teachers in Israel lead students through literature and towards empathy for the 'other.' In Belfast, teachers and administrators work at the relationship level by encouraging dialogue between sectarian groups through structured events.

Once a balance has been struck between the leadership and relationship levels, action towards conflict transformation can begin. Recall that community trust is destroyed during conflict due to literal destruction of the institutions that support it. Social institutions are often targeted during war, such as places of worship as in the destructions of mosques and Hindu temples in India, or attacks on schools and hospitals in Afghanistan and Rwanda. In the process of rebuilding, attending to the institutions that had supported social development and interaction prior to violence can remind communities of the ways they begin to rebuild trust in the wake of it. An example of repairing rifts includes community members coming together to rebuild and dedicate public areas in the form of, "joint reconstruction projects, whether of individual houses or community structures. A public ritual might officially give homage to a symbol of reunification...blessing a new or surviving structure representing peace, or the dedication of an area for peacemaking" (Maynard 1999:131).

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Those projects extend beyond physical building, and underscore the possibility of collaboration between separate factions within a community, and, “address those inequalities – political, social, economic and gender – which together were the root causes of the humanitarian emergency” (Sollis 1994, as cited in Maynard 1999:11). Rebuilding homes and civic centers rebuilds ruptured relationships. These practices are a reification of what peace educators would label unity, thought to be the opposite of conflict and

Defined as a conscious and purposeful condition of convergence of two or more unique entities in a state of harmony, integration, and cooperation to create a new evolving entity, usually of a same or a higher level of integration and complexity. (Danesh 2009:149)

Danesh (2009) goes on to explain how a specific worldview can affect attempts to unite social groups. Identity-based worldview in particular includes an “individualistic view of human nature with a focus on individualism and group-identities – ethnicity, nationality, race, religion, and so forth” (p. 151). Other worldviews, in particular unity worldview, “is based on the consciousness of the oneness of humanity” (p. 151). In extreme circumstances, survival based worldview evolves which provide “dichotomous views of human nature as either bad (weak) or (good) and human beings are viewed as good or evil” (p. 151). Realizing various types of worldview exist, we might turn to religion, which can both unite and divide.

While religious difference can become a line along which identity groups fight, in many places, religious institutions form a grassroots network across a society. In Turkey, for example, the mosque will offer childcare, education, entrepreneurial support for new businesses, and charity for its most needy members (White 2005). In that case, like identity binds with like. Modes of grassroots support are specific to each community, and

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styles of communication are specific to each region. Those norms for communication can be observed in community schools and classrooms, themselves grassroots systems with the potential to support children and families. Religion binds like identity group with like. Previously in this chapter we considered religion as a line along which violence rages, yet it can also act in unifying ways – acts of charity and as support for communities in need can be inclusive.

Policy can support partnerships between schools, community organizations, local and international NGOs and INGOs, and higher education. Those help to “scale up innovation to achieve a wider impact on education” (Nicolai 2009:67). According to a UNESCO report, “Raising the quality of education requires a broad systematic approach sustained by political support and back by sufficient investment” (2005:181).

To review, violent ethnic conflict often arises out of rapidly changing government control. In the wake of decolonization and decentralization, ethnic groups jostle for control over government and economy, creating instability and social hostility. As tension mounts, violence initially erupts on a scale that can be contained. If root causes for those violent events are not attended to, for example, ensuring the equitable allocation of food and energy resources or equal education, and access to health care and livelihood, ethnic groups are likely to attack one another first with accusations of violating another group’s access and then through physical attack. Ultimately, the well being, economy, and trust of a community are undermined by ongoing violence and hostility.

While conflict takes center stage, schools and the children who attend them are caught either on the sidelines or in the crossfire. Either way they are deeply affected by it. As social institutions, schools are established locales for citizens to assemble, and

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teachers and administrators are, for all intents and purposes, trusted members of a community. In the peace-building process, schools can provide neutral territory for difficult negotiations and personnel can act as emissaries to stitch together the social fabric. The transition from conflict to post-conflict is volatile and fraught with tensions, “the need for quick wins versus sustainable change, quality small-scale innovation versus adoption of a lesser quality, and building on the familiar versus introducing new approaches and methodologies” (Nicolai 2009:81). This study hopes to find a space between those tensions where teachers who build trust within school grounds can find support.

This introductory chapter constitutes a literature review of the ways conflict affects civic life, and how schools can be used to galvanize communities in the face of conflict or further divide communities by excluding children based on political or religious affiliation, ethnic heritage, and race. Throughout the study, literature will illuminate the historical and socio-political tableaux of each context. In the cross-case analysis, we will find that teachers’ push through the frontlines of their communities by confronting their own biases, strengthening relationships with their colleagues and students, and implementing their own curricular and pedagogical changes to address daily tensions in their contexts.

The narratives of teachers illuminate how violent conflict, and repairing from it, affects teaching and learning. In other words, learning about how teachers respond to conflict was gleaned only from interviews. Teachers in Sderot, Israel, and Belfast, Northern Ireland, explain how living and working in conflict and post-conflict affects *their* practice and expands their role as educator. Sinclair (2009) reminds us that the

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United Nations' *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1986) recommends educational programming "should be designed in the light of local conditions and cultures to meet the needs of crisis affected young people in through formal and non-formal education, recreational and cultural activities" (p. 64). We learn from the teachers in each locale the ways they respond to conflict, but to conflict *in their contexts*. So, at this point, we can presume that the teachers' practices are contextualized. Yet a question remains: What is it they are contextualizing? A frame to structure the narratives' explanation suggests that teachers develop a pedagogy entirely dependent on their contexts that focuses on building relationships and developing relevant curriculum. To accomplish those two tasks, they consider their own childhoods during times of peace as well as conflict, integrating their own experiences to refine their roles as educators in post/conflict contexts (Staub 2003).

While the schools in Sderot and Belfast are discussed together, it is crucial to state at the outset – and underscore consistently throughout the study – that the contexts are located at vastly different points on the conflict/post conflict continuum. For that reason, the contexts and teachers' actions are not comparable, *per se*. Rather, we will learn the ways that teachers respond to their environments as they integrate their experiences as they build relationships in the school and develop curriculum that is relevant to the students' lives. With that, please find an overview of the dissertation below.

### *An Overview of the Dissertation*

Eight chapters structure the study.

Chapter 1 offers a background into the literature the causes of conflict, the effects of violent conflict on a community, and the ways schools are affected by violent conflict.

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Chapter 2 explains research methods. This includes an explanation of the development of the research question, choice of sites, background into the purpose of implementing qualitative research methods, and the process of data analysis.

Chapter 3 offers an overview of the socio-political conflict in Northern Ireland. This chapter will also explain the development of the integrated schools movement. Following a description of the school and its environment, in Chapter 4 teachers in Belfast, Northern Ireland, explain their work at Ravenbrook Integrated College. Chapter 5 is an overview of the conflict in Israel is offered here, giving background with regard to why the territory is of international interest and effects of migration and immigration. Following a description of Sderot and its context, in Chapter 6 teachers at Avi College explain their work.

The cross-case analysis in Chapter 7 looks across both sites to consider the ways teachers build relationships with students, construct curriculum, and consider their personal backgrounds. The ways these three themes interlace constructs a pedagogy specific to the context, and that uses the context – both past and present – as its content matter. The dissertation concludes with a discussion of the research, in Chapter 8, focusing on unanswered and emerging questions, and the ramifications this research may have on my future work.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHOD

Scientific experiments start with a hypothesis. In seventh grade science class, before computers could sit on our laps, I constantly sharpened my pencil and neatly underlined headings with a ruler: hypothesis, methods, results, and conclusions. Reports were complete with drawings of Bunsen burners and replicating the color of some chemical under heat. It was all very tidy, written on graph paper, little boxes keeping slope straight. Not quite so linear, research involving narrative does have a structure of its own: a coming to the research question, deciding on design, and analyzing results. This chapter explains those processes of this study. Finally, I position myself in the research because – like the scientist despite sterile laboratory using tongs, test tubes, and milligram weights – we humans skew results in social science research (Weber, 2003). In an attempt at full disclosure, I explain what of myself – experiences, values, and beliefs, personality even -- I could and could not set aside during the process, from the posing of the problem to the interpretations of the teachers' testimonies.

The methods begin with an explanation of how I came to the research question. It includes a little about my teaching background as well as the evolution of the question I came to graduate school with. I then move to research method design, where I explain narrative research and the structure of the interview protocol. The next section describes the data sites and participants, after which I explore the process of coding and analyzing

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the data – linking the data to theories to illuminate the teachers’ responses. Finally, I position myself and explain some challenges I encountered in each site, as well as explain the anticipated reach of the research study. Now we turn to the experience that led me to wonder about violent conflict, teaching, and learning.

### COMING TO THE RESEARCH QUESTION

In 2001, parent-teacher night at the American School of Kuwait was scheduled on September 11th. Two hours before it began, my colleagues and I had watched the Twin Towers fall. The police were at the school when we arrived. Only a few parents of American children showed up since most of the U.S. community was on lockdown. Kuwaiti parents offered kind words of support. Mostly, everyone was confused and in shock. We spoke little about the school year. We talked about what would likely happen as a result of the events on that day. The one U.S. parent who showed up cried and cried in my classroom when we were alone.

On September 12th, only Arab students came to school. Westerners were advised to stay home. The children in my classes said that the death of innocent people is not Islam. One asked what would happen if it turned out to be fundamentalist Muslims who had committed the act, could I still be his teacher? To me, my role as a teacher changed drastically on that day. Yes, I would teach students literature, but the edges of my teacher identity had been frayed. I had never felt more vulnerable in the classroom; I knew very little about what to say to students who were confused and frightened and so angry. I did not know how to create a sense of safety and security for the students under those circumstances, and the U.S. students were not even in the building yet. I leaned heavily on routine and the official curriculum.

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War – and all its trappings -- became part of our world. The attacks in Afghanistan in October, then gearing up for war in Iraq, brought soldiers to our streets, and heavily armed security guards to our work and home. Bomb scares brought the military to school and teachers attended seminars on how to travel to school safely, to have three or four different routes, to not keep a predictable routine, to store water, carry our passports, and have a “go bag” ready, just in case we had make a hasty departure. Teachers alternatively bonded and fought over the politics of war. Everything was affected. A cacophony of questions arose as the Towers fell, some broad: Why? Others pertained to teaching: How could I support my students during that time, and during the build up to war in Iraq? How did teachers in Iraq support their students?

This question came into relief one mid-morning sophomore English class. My students and I paused in the middle of a class on Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. We couldn’t hear each other since a helicopter flew so low the windows shook and pens bounced across tabletops. Sand in the parking lot eddied. The propeller’s beat punched my sternum. What was happening in classrooms in Iraq if we were so distracted by a single helicopter? It wasn’t just the helicopter, it was what the helicopter signified that brought the momentary silence. Strangely, we were unified in our reaction, we all stopped moving and looked up, not out the windows – but up, at where the noise was located. The school sent us home during Shock and Awe, we returned before the toppling of Saddam at the center of Baghdad. School gave us all a sense of normalcy at the strangest of times. Yet, how did normalcy return for children and teachers who were in the middle of it? What happened to them? These questions did not settle as I grew “used” to the jagged rhythm of life in Kuwait.

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I came to graduate school to find out how to teach in a conflict zone. This quickly shifted as professors and peers at Michigan State University pushed my thinking. What kind of conflict, where, to what end, which teachers, what school age? Then the imperative suggestions: Define conflict. Define teaching. Narrow your study. I ran into a dilemma, how to narrow a study as my own understanding was expanding?

I read that teachers could contribute to conflict resolution (ACCORD 1999; Reardon 2002; Ropers 2003), that education in conflict zones can perpetuate and mitigate the horrors of war (Bush and Saltarelli 2000; Maynard 1999), that teaching can be an act of liberation for those in despair (Freire 2009). Conflict triggers mass migration (Maynard 1999), as a result of that movement, its timing not linked to the academic year, children come to classes with differing knowledge bases creating an uneven terrain for teachers to walk through, what do students know? What do they not know? How can they be equitably challenged or caught up (Levinson 2001)? Broken support systems, missing parents, shattered school days, physical harm, trauma, little to no safe passage to school, unpredictable learning time, limited resources were the detritus of war (Winthrop and Kirk 2008; de Berry et al. 2003). I began to understand factors that shaped children and their teachers, teaching and learning, but I knew little the realities that those teachers and their students faced.

So what do teachers do in the face of these awful outcroppings of war? There seemed to be little literature that gave voice to those teachers who had experienced war, which was confirmed by Nicolai (2009), who stated that often ministry officials, parents, and children are given voice and attention, yet teachers were somehow elided. An



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Certainly there are polemics in the field of peace education (Lederach 2005; Reardon 2002) but I wanted to hear what teachers had to say. De Berry et al. (2003) stated that – after parents – children in Afghanistan trusted teachers the most, so I wondered how teachers speak about their work in a conflict zone? Most of the research on teaching in conflict zones was not located in scholarly journals, but in reports conducted through the U.N. Education, Science, and Culture Organization, the World Bank, and the U. N. Children's Fund (Nicolai 2009; Ropers 2003; Sommers 2004; Sinclair 2002). These reports describe conflict zones and offers guides to protecting and insulating children from conflict's effects. Yet the voices of teachers seemed to be missing, or marginalized. My research question became: What do teachers themselves say about teaching in conflict zones?

While reading and mulling, I conducted a pilot study in Turkey. The teachers there spoke about the challenges of integrating the International Baccalaureate with the national curriculum – both rigorous and long courses of study. The teachers spoke about how they often fielded questions from students when there appeared to be a tension between the two curricula. While teachers in Turkey had not experienced full-blown conflict, the ethnic tensions in the region between Turks and Kurds (a large bomb had exploded in Ankara -- the capitol city -- while I was there), between a growing expatriate community and locals that brought socio-economic differences into stark relief.

My work continued to underscore the absence of teachers' voice in the dialogue of conflict and schooling. Thus, I envisioned a study that would give teachers a central

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voice. The study might reveal challenges they face, frustrations they feel, how they perceive effects of violence on students, their responses to those effects, what sustains them when life becomes unpredictable and frightening, how they speak about violent conflict with students, the types of support they might crave, the curricular pressures they experience.

## DESIGNING A STUDY

Interpretive research was – from the very start – the route the project would take. It carries with it a set of validities: contextual, dialogic, and self-reflexive (Saukko 2005). Contextual validity “refers to an analysis of social and historical processes, and the worth or validity of the project depends on how thoroughly and defensibly or correctly this has been done” (346). Dialogic validity involves “understanding local realities,” including those between “Self and Other” (2005:349). Saukko (2005) defines self-reflexive validity as “an out-ward directed exploration of what kinds of concrete realities our research, for its big or small part, helps create” (p.352).

These validities help structure a system of checks and balances for this study’s methodology. How could I attend to each in my data gathering, analysis, and discussion?

My interest in teachers’ stories required methods that allow for listening, witnessing, testimony. I was specifically interested in the reconstruction of civic life, because schools are located at the center of it and violent conflict tears into it. Because “the stories people tell about their lives are never simply individual, but are told in specific times and settings” (Maynes et al. 2008: 3), teachers’ stories had the potential for helping me understand that reconstruction of civic life, albeit through the eyes and lives of teachers. I would design an interview that enabled teacher testimonies, and that

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invited them to “give voice to experiences that have [potentially] been neglected by mainstream society” (Saukko 2005:350). Further, because my understanding was historical and contextualized, I planned to live in the community in which the interviews were being conducted. I would shop, walk, take pictures, ride public transportation. This brief and limited immersion in the teachers’ communities was intended to further extend my capacity to hear their testimonies.

I went into the research positioning teachers at the center of a dynamic civic life, and so sought out a frame to structure the interview protocol. I turned to Hannah Arendt’s (1958) work on *Vita Activa* – a perspective on civics that describes a life fully engaged with respect to labor, work, and action across the public, political, and private realms. Based on research, I hypothesized that teachers operate at the nexus of these realms, and war affects the realms in many and various ways: threatening human life and health, tearing into homes, and corroding social networks. To learn how conflict affects teachers’ lives and work, the interview protocol was constructed according to *vita activa*’s frame.

*Vita activa* consists of labor, work, and action. Labor encompasses the workings of the human body: growth, sleep, metabolism, death, etc., and is an individual undertaking. Labor is functional biological life and is crucial to work and action. This section of the protocol asked about the ways teachers might see students’ health being compromised as a result of the conflict. Work refers to the production of objects that serve some intermediary function between individuals. For example, the assembly-line worker’s product – nut, bolt or other tool – is similar to the writer’s book, or scholar’s treatise. The products of work are not “imbedded in...the species ever-recurring life cycle” (Arendt 1958:7). Presumably, the nut, bolt, book and treatise will outlast the

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assembly-line worker, writer, and reader. Work and its products connect individuals with the world, since that is where their products are to be found. This section of the protocol investigated teachers' attitude towards curriculum development and adhering to a mandated curriculum. It also included the materials and practices teachers develop and how those tools are shaped by the context.

Finally, action occurs directly between human beings. This aspect of *vita activa* can be observed in acts of charity and creation, as well as hostility and destruction. Action "corresponds to the human condition of plurality, the fact that men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world" (ibid). For Arendt, the realm of action is the locus of political life, characterized by speech and the possibility to act. This section of the protocol asked teachers to consider whether the conflict affects their interactions with the students in and out of the classroom, and their relationships with their colleagues.

Arendt (1958) summarizes:

Labor assures not only individual survival, but the life of the species. Work and its product, the human artifact, bestow a measure of permanence and durability upon the futility of mortal life and the fleeting character of human time. Action, in so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, that is, for history. (PP. 8-9)

Labor, work, and action parallel conflict's three major effects and thus underscore the ways that war can disrupt a full and active social life. Labor's realm – that of biological life - is affected by violent conflict's negative effects on physical health, well being, and development. Work's realm is affected as war disrupts routine and economic production. Action, which occurs directly between community members, is subverted as ethnic conflict eviscerates the social network. I used this tripartite frame to create a semistructured interview protocol (see Appendix A).



“Stories arise out of human plurality, out of what Arendt calls the web of human relationships... because of this, stories are not the work of an individual person. She says they have no author. Rather, stories reveal an agent” (Johnson, 2001: 56). Maynes et al. (2008) argue that narrative research “pushes the investigator to move beyond the distinctions between what sociologists call the macro and micro levels of analysis (or, put differently, between the social and individual realms of experience):

Individual life stories are very much embedded in social relationships and structures and they are expressed in culturally specific forms; read carefully, they provide unique insights into the connections between individual life trajectories and collective forces and institutions beyond the individual. They thus offer a methodologically privileged position from which to comprehend human agency. (P. 3)

Teachers’ personal narratives were the meat of the project, and narrative research resonates with Arendt’s assumptions about civic life and the individual. This research, then, hopes to offer a perspective of teachers as key players in socio-political transition from war to peace, with the capacity to offer unique perspectives on the state of their communities. The teachers’ narratives are “attached to cultural and institutional formation larger than the single individual, to interpretive networks or institutions, however local or grand, micro or macro” (Maynes 2006:43). This is what Sommers and Gibson (1994) term “public narratives” (2006:43). It is to these public narratives that I refer when I use the term testimony in the study. Testimony is often affiliated witness and admission. Indeed, the teachers spoke about what they witness during conflict and in their classrooms. Further, they admitted private aspects of their lives when expressing how and why they reacted to a particular event. This aspect of the narratives is like testimony because it involves recollection and memory. The teachers’ memories may not reflect some universal truth, but they do relate their perception of past events. Their perception

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fuels their interaction with the social world. This study is interested in teachers' perception of the world around them and then their responses to it – it is less concerned with the accuracy of their stories.

Attending to the manner in which the teachers discuss their role within the institution might get at supports and obstacles that could be mitigated by policy reform or professional development – in other words, it is possible that teachers could be supported by controllable means. These details also deepen contextual understanding of the teachers' circumstances, and connect as well to the historical context. Further, when teachers do not feel supported by institutions, what do they do to support themselves and/or their students?

## RESEARCH SITES

The next task was deciding on research sites. There are hundreds of communities around the world in which I might have conducted this research. My goal with this project was not to select sites that were representative of the breadth of conflict-ridden communities in which teachers work. Instead, I conceptualized this study as the first in a series of communities that I might visit – perhaps even work within – in my career. Thus, the selection of sites was pragmatic; with limited resources and a limited network (as an emergent scholar), I set about locating two defensible sites. In addition, teaching is *local* work, and accessing teachers is challenging, complicated further when one wishes to *locate* teachers in other countries. I used networks of educators who had similar *interests*. I had presented the research findings from the Turkey project at a Comparative *International* Education Society conference one year before I intended to gather data. *While* there, I connected with two professors – one from Israel and one from Northern

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Ireland. I emailed them asking if they knew of schools where I could speak to teachers, and they connected me to the two schools presented in the following chapters.

There are several risks associated with conducting international fieldwork. One makes arrangements long distance, which highlights the interdependence of any researcher on locals who are helping with the research. Time and money can be wasted if things do not go according to plan. No part of the travel was planned until I had committed participants in both places.

In Israel, I rented an apartment in a town about 25 kilometers north of Sderot. I cooked almost all my meals. In Belfast, I stayed in Queen's University student housing and cooked in the dorms. In both places I rented a car for one weekend. This gave me the chance to explore the country, and absorb as much as I could of the surrounds. Otherwise, I traveled to and from the schools in buses. The bus system meant I could listen to the radio that played, see highways and urban streets, and casually observe the people traveling with me, from young soldiers in Israel with styled hair and polished nails to grandmothers gossiping and school children texting in Belfast. The bus system provided alternative routes, I could skip my stop and carry on to the end of the line or get off early and walk the rest of the way.

I took field notes each day and during the interviews. I wrote down what I saw: what people were wearing, what the room looked like, the weather, the view, the light. In between interviews, I found a place in the school to perch, a different spot each day – in the playground or courtyard, in the staffroom, in a corridor of classrooms, outside the door of the school, in the main office -- and noted the workings of those places. In some areas, I filmed video using a Flip camera, which is small enough so as not to be intrusive.

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The video footage and field notes helped reconstruct the contexts, and served as reminders about sights, sounds, temperature, light, and smells. Brief descriptions of the locations and participants follows. These descriptions are extended in later chapters.

### *Sderot*

Sderot, Israel, is located 2 kilometers from Gaza City and has endured over one thousand Qassam missiles lobbed from Gaza since 1999. The city has been in the cross-hairs of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Sha'ar Negev – the desert region leading to Sinai, the Red Sea and Egypt. The war is infamously long fought, from the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century -- when Israel became the thrice promised land: once to the Arab population, once to the Jewish settlers with an eye to creating a Zionist nation, and once to the British and French who would occupy it in the wake of World War II – to Operation Cast Lead in 2008.

Sderot's community is in close range not only of Gaza's attacks on Israel, but also of Israel's attacks on Gaza, which occur as frequently as the town is bombarded, and with greater intensity. Operation Cast Lead, a carpet bombing of Gaza City that began in December 2008 and ended in January 2009 following a torrent of over 1,000 missiles in a ten month period. During Operation Cast Lead, the school evacuated for eight weeks. The research took place in May, 2009. Teachers would be able to speak directly to their experience before, during, and after Operation Cast Lead.

The site and participants in Israel were found through a contact at Hebrew University who is an international scholar interested in peace education. This contact knew the principal of Avi High School whom I spoke with by phone. He emailed me the names and contacts of six teachers, whom I contacted with information about my study

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and an invitation to participate. They all sent email confirmation that they would be willing to speak with me once I arrived in Sderot. Once there, and milling about the school, I managed to speak with four more teachers. Interviews lasted from one hour to three hours, with two participants – both of the administrators – being interviewed twice. All told, I conducted 16 hours of recorded interviews in Israel. Of the participants, three are men, and seven are female.

### *Belfast*

Northern Ireland's history of conflict dates back to 1107, with the invasion of Ireland by England's Henry II. Bloody violence and death on Loyalist and Republican sides pepper the next 800 years. The Troubles began in 1916 and ended in 1998. This was a period of time when conflict between the two groups raged in Northern Ireland and England. 1998 saw the signing of the Good Friday Peace Agreement. Since that time, sectarian violence has been sporadic, and Northern Ireland is in a period of post-conflict. Remnants of the troubles still exist in the form of murals and Peace Walls that separate Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods. Belfast's rugged peace provided a contrast to Sderot's actively violent context.

A professor at the Queen's University in Belfast connected me with an administrator at the Northern Ireland Council on Integrated Education. She e-introduced me to a teacher named Colin. I set up an appointment to meet with Colin and visit the school. He introduced me to teachers in the staffroom who were willing to talk over their experiences regarding teaching in the shadow of a Peace Wall. I spoke with 12 teachers in Belfast, four male and six female. Five are Catholic, four Protestant, and 3 come from mixed backgrounds. Interviews in Ireland lasted between one to two hours, though the

administrator at NICIE and I spoke for three hours, and Colin was kind enough to be interviewed several times during the visit. I left Belfast with 19 hours of recorded interview in total.

## DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS

The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended. Once I had met the teacher, we squirreled away in a quiet place to talk. In some cases, that place was an airy classroom, empty for an hour or so before the children returned. In other cases, it was – quite literally – a broom cupboard with a couple of desks and chairs in it. In Israel, the meeting place was always the staff room. By the second day, most teachers scurrying in and out greeted me as if I worked there. One in particular kept his distance and would watch me closely from a corner of the room. Slightly disconcerted, I thought perhaps this was because I perceived as some kind of unwelcome scavenger. But with some excellent advice from my dissertation chair, I approached him, and he agreed to be interviewed “for half an hour,” he said as he laid his watch before him. Three hours later we shook hands and jovially parted ways. Across the two sites, I never met the teachers off-campus.

All of the conversations were digitally recorded. I followed the protocol described in the previous section, and the participants largely addressed the questions. Frequently, they would start to speak about their personal backgrounds in relation to their present day *life*. Some evenings, in both Belfast and Sderot, I would listen to the interviews while *cooking*.

Sometimes the teachers asked me questions, either about my research or about my own *teaching* experience. In those cases, I responded fully and engaged the conversation,

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Figure 2.1.

reasoning that the more participants knew about me, the more they might be willing to share. I return to my own role in the research later in this chapter.

Upon return to the U.S., I transcribed all interviews and began coding them. One playful step after the transcription process was to create a word cloud of each interview using a piece of software that arranges words according to frequency with which they occur. The largest word is the one most often spoken. This helped me – to some extent – anticipate what I would find in the coding process.

While analyzing the data, I bore in mind Maynes' (2008) point,

the value of personal narrative analyses lies in their potential to see people and their actions as both individual and social, and to understand human lives as governed simultaneously according to the dynamics and temporalities of the individual life course and of collective histories. (P. 69)

This meant that I would not only look for aspects of the teachers' work that was relevant in the classroom, but I would also pay attention to the ways they interacted with peers, their families, and – in the telling of their past – the ways they interacted with historical events.

Coding consisted of reading the data from each site straight through. Then, for each site, I created a chart with the interview number listed across the top. As I read, I listed the themes that emerged and indicated where in the data they could be referenced. I also created frequency tables for identified themes (see, for example, Figure 2.1).

Theme	Frequency
Personal Background	16
National Curriculum vs. School Curriculum	14
Teacher Preparation	14
Building School Community	20
Economics as a factor in Teaching	10
Student Morale	10

**Figure 2.1. Frequency of Top Six Themes in Belfast, Northern Ireland, Data.**

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While these frequencies helped me “see” the interviews in a new way, another level of analysis lead me to the identification of a small number of roles that teachers identified as central to their work in conflict zones. These are discussed in chapters 4 and 6. In addition to coding, I constructed analytic memos for discussions with my dissertation director. These memos allowed me to synthesize what I thought I was learning through the coding. Discussions about those memos sent me back to my coding and further analysis with new ideas.

At the same time that I was sifting through data, I also drafted essays concerning the history of each country and its conflict. Recall that my method of using personal narratives presumes that individual teachers’ stories are both about the micro and macro. Writing histories of each conflict while analyzing data increased the chances of an interactive analysis process: reading about the Troubles might help me hear what my interviewees were saying about the Troubles, learning about Qassam missiles might help me listen to the teachers in the Avi School interviews.

Given that the protocol was structured according to Arendt’s (1958) *vita activa*, I expected to see that emerge as a framework. However, there were aspects of the framework that were irrelevant in many interviews. As an example, the *physical* health of students was only a concern for one teacher in each site. Still, since the interviews were semi-structured, participants could move to topics they wanted to speak about, and it *allowed* me to press issues that seemed interesting but that hadn’t emerged in the *protocol*, such as humor as a stress relief.

Not wanting to “stuff” teachers’ testimonies into the boxes of my protocol’s *frame*, I worked from the testimonies to learn what the teachers were actually saying.

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From there, I decided, I would construct a frame that accounted from these emergent themes. At the core of the analyses were two questions: (1) How could I make sense of the testimonies? (2) What kind of knowledge was being produced from the analysis of the testimonies? (Nagar and Geiger 2007: 183 as cited in Maynes 2008:114). Would the study illuminate fine points in the data, would it bring to the fore a set of practices that teachers use in contexts where violence and conflict are prevalent? What questions would the study offer for further research and to support teachers in the field?

### LINKING DATA TO THEORY

Once the themes had been coded and stories were written about both contexts, a framework had to be constructed to explain the descriptions. Since the topic at hand – teaching in post/conflict zones – is multidisciplinary, theories from various fields converged to illuminate what is happening for the teachers in both contexts. Ultimately, a frame for the cases emerged out of political science (Azar 1978; Hastings 1976; White 2006), current affairs (Appiah 2006; Sen 2006), sociology (Arendt 1958; Maynard 1999), and teaching and learning (Ball and Wilson 1996; Freire 2009). These theories construct a pedagogy that is contextually based and involves creating and sustaining social ties in context where trust is consistently threatened.

As is the case with all interpretive work, the data are bound by time and place. Convenience sampling is both the most prevalent form of sampling and arguably the most problematic. My sample was non-probabilistic. If I had interviewed these teachers at another time, or other educators in another place, I may very well have identified other results. Teachers were volunteers, which may have led to a selection bias. Moreover, since I relied solely on teacher interviews and did not witness the teachers engaging in



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the behaviors they describe here, the research also suffers from the weaknesses of all self report data, which include the possibility that participants said what they thought I wanted them to (Cook and Campbell 1979), that they report positively on their own behavior (Cook and Campbell 1979) and that the data are dependent on the quality of the teachers' memories and are as such fallible (Schacter 1999).

### POSITIONING MYSELF AS RESEARCHER

In interpretive work, one acknowledges and accounts for the self as an agent and actor in the research. In many ways, I influenced the course and results of this study. I made every effort to keep track of potential effects. Here I reflect briefly on some of those effects. First I note that I am a white woman, who grew up in England, went to British and U.S. schools, with a noticeable English accent. This is only relevant because in every grade, or form, Britain's colonial history was covered in some way, from the rising empire to the setting sun of it. The historical details relevant to this research project – that the British twice promised Israel to Zion and to Arabs, and Britain's role in the Northern Irish violence – stressed the “white man's burden.”

My biggest fear with regard to this project was that I would be perceived as yet another white person with an accent stepping down to mess things up. What if I misinterpreted the data, what if I didn't use the most important parts because of my past – some kind of selective deafness that I am not aware of. Perhaps, though, this is unavoidable and trying to be extremely objective or painfully polite would backfire on me as it did for Portelli (1991), who had “been playing the ‘objective’ researcher, and was rewarded with biased data” (30-31 as cited in Maynes et al. 2008:120).

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This was hard to overcome. I was painfully aware of the time the teachers were giving me, I didn't want to hassle them in anyway. I also felt like a thief or tomb raider – I was after their personal experience and I would make off with it. I wanted to just listen. I wanted to observe them while they spoke, and for some reason that meant not making a ripple. Mostly, that stillness worked. There were times I wasn't sure if the participant realized I was in the room. They answered the question and followed their line of thinking. As a teacher, I had found no response – silence – would invite students to speak. I tried this here, allowed silence to sink between us, and the participant would lift the silence back up again. In a way, silence pushed the participants to speak about their experiences more than a prod from me could have done.

Silence was effective, too, because I would sometimes have a noticeable emotional response to their stories. One refrain that I heard a few times in Israel was, "it's quiet now," referring to the fact that there had not been a Qassam missile for months and said after a description of Operation Cast Lead. Typically it would be accompanied by a shrug of a shoulder, which I initially interpreted as a nonchalant way of saying that Gaza had been charred. I would become still, not look away from the teacher, not write anything, not move a muscle. And I would wait. Inevitably, a description of what they see through the fence would come up. Again, I would react as motionlessly as possible. It took some time for me to piece together these discussions to realize that while the teachers agreed with the causes of the war – they had endured Qassam after Qassam for months, if not years. Yet they were troubled by its effects. Their clarity, their commitment to the children, and efforts to feel for the Other through the fence became *strong* reminiscences of the interviews in Israel.

Early on in the interviews in Israel (it was the first site I went to), I struggled with my own interpretations of and reactions to the interviews. Listening to and transcribing interviews helped; re-listening led hearing them in a different way. In addition to transcribing interviews during fieldwork, I also corresponded with my dissertation director several times. In one email, I had written

I'm just practicing putting my own thoughts and knowledge aside to obfuscate her testimony as little as possible. Writing this to you now, I can see a way to listen to her without judging her position or it's seemingly paradoxical aspects.

Our exchanges sent me back to interviews with ways to listen and not judge, thus hear better with her advice, which became a mantra, "it is your job to understand why their world makes sense to them."

Journaling and listening to the interviews as if it were a radio broadcast all helped gain some distance – perhaps these were attempts to distance myself from the stories. Even so, it took some time, a few very long walks along the sea and laps in the pool back in East Lansing to understand that while the teachers agree with the causes for the operation – the constant bombardment of their homes by Qassam missiles – they had difficulty living with the effects, for example, seeing charred Gaza through the fence, hearing from colleagues in Gaza who struggle to accomplish mundane tasks.

In Belfast, I was struck with how very similar the landscape was to the landscape of my childhood. The architecture, double-decker buses, red brick semi-detached houses made red brick, the Union Jack hanging from lamp posts, children eating chocolates that I used to eat as a school-aged child. Children in rumpled school uniforms waiting at bus stops mucking about with one another, the drizzle and rolling hills, the sun setting at 10:30 p.m. These details settled me in to the environment quickly, yet some things were

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strange: the peace walls, the larger than life faces on buildings, the twenty foot poles with video cameras at the top of them, the headlines in the paper about the Irish Republican Army laying down their weapons. These things were strange even though my earliest childhood memories living in London in the '70s meant that the IRA was part of our everyday lives. When Bobby Sands died, we talked about it in school with our teachers.

I had to be careful not to presume that I saw what the teachers saw because I had a level of familiarity with the environment. I had to make sure not to fill in gaps, answer questions yet unanswered by the participants. Checking my reactions in that way – listening not only to the narratives that came fast and furious, but also listening to the ways I was listening --was challenging. I found, again, that remaining still at least gave them the chance to dominate our conversations, allowed them to connect personal background with school and student and peace and war, to testify in ways less shaped by my own background and presence.

After returning to the U.S., my beliefs and opinions intruded again as I tried to make sense of the interview data. Again things that teachers would say were confusing. Alternatively, I would find my admiration for their work blinding me. I often found myself overinterpreting a comment and hanging much significance on one singular interpretation of what someone meant. I became concerned about generalizations and found grounding in Maynes (2006) discussion of “sociological generalizations” which “often rest on a number of stories, but they can also be based on just a few or even one particular story” (p. 129). Sociological generalizations differ from quantitative generalizations in that they are interpretive rather than predictive; specifically, sociological interpretations “are claims that a given personal narrative illuminates a

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particular social position or social-structural location in a society or institution or social process and that it illustrates how agency can operate at this locus” (p. 129).

Reading books about method (especially the use of personal testimony in research) and discussions with my advisor led me to question my initial interpretations. In the end, I was able to discipline the intrusion of my own views – both during fieldwork and data analysis – by reminding myself of the study’s purpose: to give voice to the teachers in each school.

### LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Although qualitative research processes have an arc described at the start of this chapter, there are pieces of the process that suffer from the bounds of time, access, and an inability to adequately express the nuances of the interviews. One limitation of the data gathering was time. I had a set and short amount of time in each locale – three weeks. This meant that the contacts had to be set up prior to landing in the region so I could start interviews as soon as possible. Given travel time, losing a day in transit, figuring out public transportation I had to be sure to arrange as much as feasibly possible from the United States.

I had arranged my initial contacts via email, a convenience sampling. This caused concern with regard to the who the participants would be: were the teachers to whom I was referred going to toe a ‘company line,’ were they darlings of administration, was I only speaking to them because they could speak fluent English, because they held positions of administrative power themselves? Would three weeks give me enough time to seek out and speak with participants who had not originally volunteered? How much

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would I have to rely on the kindness of strangers in order to get enough data to string together a dissertation? These are limitations associated with convenience sampling.

Further, that the participants were located only in one school, it could be that their experience can not be extended to other teachers in the region, or anywhere else. This study, then, focuses only on what teachers say about their work in that school and context. The conclusions drawn are then limited to that time and place.

In the analysis, I wanted to try to portray the participants in as ‘whole’ as way as possible. Woven into the testimonies were hopes, fears, attitudes, sharing of vulnerable moments as well as the ways they practice teaching in their contexts. At times during the analysis, I wished that it were possible to duplicate the sound of the participants voices, so rich with images and clear. Something about the lyrical quality of their testimony was missing from placing their words on the printed page, a musicality that when I read it back was lacking. I wished I could more accurately document their thoughtful pauses, the way they’d look away as they sought the right word. Conversely, their readiness with words about missiles, shootings, and burning buildings is also hard to duplicate. There are limits then to turning an oral testimony into a written analysis -- bringing the participants voices, efforts, and strength in vivo to vitro.

To that point, perhaps as someone coming from overseas I was more taken by their turns of phrase and humor, and therefore less critical of the content of their testimonies, than someone who shared the participants’ cultural background. “The culture of people is an ensemble of texts, themselves ensembles, which the [researcher] strains to read over the shoulders of those to whom they properly belong” (Geertz 1973:453). As I strained, what could I not see, or catch? The surroundings were unfamiliar – what was I

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missing as I became acclimated to each site? Conversely, what story was I being told that was geared towards me as a visitor rather than as a person native to their culture, was it simplified, was I told some aspects of their life that they would not share with someone from their context? In Israel, after two interviews, the participant asked rhetorically why an Israeli was not asking them about their experience on the front line.

The study is constructed from interviews and archival resources. The archival resources clarified certain issues that teachers referred to – for instance, when teachers in Belfast spoke about local non-governmental organizations, I researched their ethos to explain the role the NGO played with regard to education. When teachers in Israel referred to the ways they did or did not feel supported by their government, I researched the verity of these statements via discussion with a professor in Jerusalem and through a search on Human Rights Watch. However, the archival information largely helped contextualize the narratives of the teachers; the data itself was constructed solely from interviews. This might be regarded as a limitation of the study, since the teachers' perspective is the crux of the findings, not verified through discussion with policy makers, etc.

This is the story of teachers' experiences in conflict and post-conflict zones. I acknowledge that the study is limited, then, to the teachers' narratives. The study gives teachers voice, and provides a platform for further study with regard to teaching during and after violent conflict and to bridging communities through pedagogies that include guiding classroom discussion, building curriculum, and caring for students in ways that are culturally specific.

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CHAPTER 3  
NORTHERN IRISH HISTORY:  
BLOODY DAYS AND GRASSROOTS

Tracing Northern Ireland's past, we see the complex and violent interplay of contemporary culture and politics. Remnants of the island's tumultuous history can be seen in ancient footprints of castles and fortresses and in contemporary civic life: the peace walls in Belfast that separate Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods, the June '09 newspaper headlines<sup>3</sup> that declare Loyalists are laying down their weapons, the sectarian violence that broke out after a football match in March, '09, killing a man renowned for his efforts to build peace. Here I offer a brief historical backdrop for the testimonies of nine teachers working at a flashpoint in Belfast, where Protestant and Catholic neighborhood's streets intersect and where violence often erupts. In particular, I locate the development of the integrated schools movement in this story, as the teachers work in one such school.

*The conflict's early days*

The political, social, and religious tug-of-war between the Irish and British is long and complicated. Ask about the conflict Northern Ireland and you'll hear about a time in 1107, when Henry II of England marched his troops up through the island from the south, overpowering Norman and Irish forces along the way. Centuries of social collision

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1194079/Four-years-IRA-Loyalists-dump-arms.html>, retrieved August 19, 2009.

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between Normans, Celtic Irish, and English ensued, creating a legacy rife with strategic marriages, gruesome battles, assassination plots, and tribal uprisings.

1609 brought English forces the defeat of Ulster – the last, tenacious resisters to English rule in the northern-most province. English colonists began to populate the area, which came to be known as the Plantation of Ulster. The colonists were Protestant; the defeated, indigenous Irish were Catholic. Mutual animosity grew as the “protestant camp [felt] that it was constantly under threat of expulsion; and the Catholic faction believing that its country had been usurped” (Gidron 2002:47).

Penal codes attempted to contain and restrain the Catholic population by preventing the possession of fire arms, limiting the education of their children, excluding them from health care, and offering no relief after natural disaster. By 1801, England had dissolved the Irish Parliament and took over administration of the entire island and for the rest of the 1800s, resistance to that dissolution was often violent (Gidron 2002). This is where the ‘Troubles’ began: a century of violent uprisings and constitutional amendments starting in 1916, during which time 3,600 people died (McKittrick and McVea 2002). The violence of that period occurs in sine waves, years of peaking brutality leveling into a trough of relative peace. Starting in 1827, almost all national schools in NI were publicly funded denominational schools controlled by the respective churches.

### *The ‘Troubles’*

On April 24<sup>th</sup>, 1916, Irish republican leaders met at Liberty Hall in Dublin’s city center and set out to gain control of the post office and government buildings. Sandbagging entrances, they prepared to defend themselves with arms sent from sympathizers in Britain, the U.S., and run in through an underground network from

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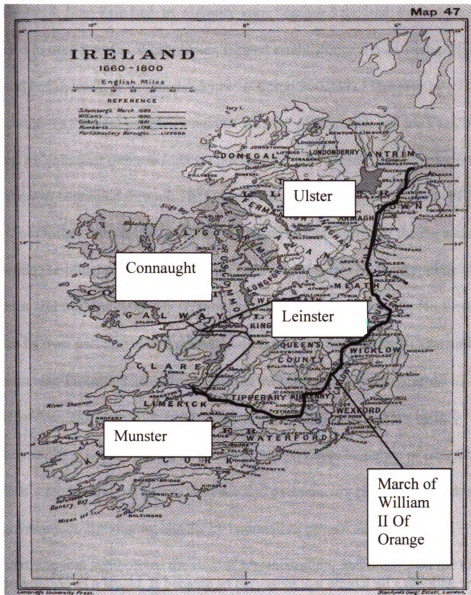
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Germany (Annaidh 2003: 242). They had not, however, entered the telephone offices, from which communiqués were sent to the British. Within 24 hours, Britain's army barricaded streets and its navy sailed into the harbor, laying waste to the city's buildings.



**Figure 3.1. Ireland in 1680.**

Five hundred civilians lost their lives during the six-day siege (Annaidh 2003:248); fifteen men were identified as designers of the siege and were captured and subsequently

executed by the British (McKittrick and McVea 2002). Backlash to the military reaction and executions --regarded as disproportionate -- created a surge in republican support and the formal organization of Sinn Fein, the political arm of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

By 1918, Sinn Fein had, by majority vote, “defeated the Irish Parliamentary Party and refused to take a seat at Westminster, instead establishing its own Irish parliament in Dublin and began the War of Independence” (Gidron 2002:48). The War of Independence – a “violent campaign against Britain” (McKittrick and McVea 2002:4). Supported by volunteer defense forces, underground gunrunning, and international fund-raising, the war continued through 1921, when a treaty creating the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland was ratified: Northern Ireland would consist of the six counties of Ulster, while the remaining 26 southern counties would comprise the Republic (McKittrick and McVea 2002:48). Although it was still part of the UK, Northern Ireland developed its own parliament and government; it was not until about 20 years after the partition that the Protestant schools transferred their schools to state control.

However, Northern Irish republicans would be assuaged neither by this separation, nor by a government established for the southern Republic of Ireland. The early 1920s were fraught with civic violence and exclusionary policies enacted by the British government. Retaliating attacks by nationalists ensued against

anything that symbolized the British administration, and often used the civilian population as a shield. It became so pervasive that almost all Catholics, even those who opposed violence but supported the tradition of constitutional nationalism, came to be identified with the IRA. (Gidron 2002: 49)

During this time Britain invested in Northern Ireland, building industry such as shipyards and manufacturing plants for machinery and furniture. These industries, specifically the

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shipyards, notoriously employed only Protestants, leaving Catholics out of a particular wage-earning bracket, and with far less certainty for gainful employment (Gidron 2002: 50).

In response to the inequities, Catholics voluntarily provided support their unemployed and poor, and began to tentatively lobby the British parliament for equal rights. The Education Act of 1947 was passed after heavy lobbying from both the Catholic and Protestant sides, the longest lasting benefit of this was to “[provide] increased access to secondary and further education” (Gidron 2002:49). Not only that, but the Act provided funding for all new elementary schools, teacher remuneration, and books – regardless of sectarian affiliation, including private Catholic schools<sup>4</sup>. With increased access to education for all, Catholic parties became more eloquent about attacks on their civil rights as they were not only “debated on housing estates and in public houses” but also in universities (Annaidh 2002: 300).

The 1950s and early ‘60s were a fairly quiet time, not because of any deliberate reconciliation, but because attacks between Protestants and Catholics had quieted down and the country was experiencing fairly stable economic period. However, in the late 1960s, violence broke out again. Catholics were closely watching the civil rights movement in the United States, and took to the streets in peaceful demonstrations. Protestants viewed these as a subversive attack on their position and the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the B-Specials violently broke up these marches (Annaidh 2002). By 1967, the violence had escalated and the British deployed the army to keep the peace.

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[http://www.direct2communications.com/downloads/education\\_history\\_northern\\_ireland.pdf](http://www.direct2communications.com/downloads/education_history_northern_ireland.pdf), retrieved April 1, 2010.

Protestant mobs were burning Catholics out of their homes; the IRA retaliated. Catholic citizens believed the army would protect them from the violence, as many were not associated with the IRA. However, under pressure from the Protestant right, the army indefinitely held Catholics arrested under suspicion of colluding with the IRA (a policy known as “internment without trial”) (Anniadh 2002: 305).

Catholic civic opposition to the internments could not be kept down. On January 30, 1972, an anti-internment march in Derry policed by the Protestant British degenerated into a stone-throwing riot. The police moved into the crowds, towards the speech center, and – claiming they had been shot at first – fired into the crowd killing thirteen on site and injuring one who died later (Annaidh 2002:306). Known as Bloody Sunday, the repercussions of the event led to – among other things – direct rule from Britain. The goal was to clamp down on civic violence, but instead gave the IRA a “target – British Imperialism” (Gidron 2002:52).

Meanwhile, the UK economy floundered throughout the ‘70s. Hoping to offset any more sectarian tension as a result of sinking economics, Westminster passed the Fair Employment Act to appease the Catholic working classes. However, since jobs were scant, Protestants perceived “every job that went to a Catholic as one that didn’t go to a Protestant” (Gidron 2002:52). As economic resources became leaner, moderate politics became unpopular and extremist support grew. Moderate supporters --with no place for venting their concerns -- developed their own venues for debate and social reform in the voluntary sector, which had already gained a foothold in communities during the civil rights era (Gidron 2002). It was during this time that the integrated schools’ movement began, a story I tell briefly here.

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## INTEGRATED SCHOOLS

The Troubles affected all of Northern Ireland's society and, as such, were reflected in every social and religious organization and their policies. As fundamental social institutions, schools were places where the Troubles both walked through the door and places where parents and teachers tried to have a voice and take a stand. One such movement involved the idea that Protestant and Catholic children could be educated together.

As noted previously, historically Catholic children in NI had attended Catholic maintained schools and Protestant children attended Protestant schools. A letter by Ms. Cecil Linehan to the Belfast Telegraph editor in March, 1972, set the integrated schools movement into motion (NICIE 2006):

Dear Sir,

Most people intending to 'stick it out' in Northern Ireland must be wondering in what way we can help our children. One solution often put forward is to integrate the schools. While I do not regard integrated education as anything like a panacea for our ills, I do think it should be encouraged where possible. For a variety of reasons, I as a Catholic parent will not be sending my children to a Catholic school. This leaves my husband and myself with the responsibility for the religious education of our children. (We do not have Sunday schools as most protestant schools do). I suggest therefore that the setting up of parish-based centres of religion staffed by trained catechists would be a great help to Catholic parents who feel as we do. No Catholic parent takes the decision to send his or her child to non-Catholic school without some degree of soul-searching. I would be most grateful therefore to hear from any other interested parents, on the premise that a problem shared is a problem halved.

Signed, Cecil F. Linehan, Holywood, Co. Down. (NICIE 2006)

A handful of parents contacted Ms. Linehan, and began investigating the viability of integrated education. The group adopted the name, All Children Together (ACT). This was a time of considerable violence. The Shankill Butchers – a brutal paramilitary arm of

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the Ulster Volunteer Forces -- increased their activity abducting, killing, and torturing. This led to tragic Bloody Friday, the IRA retaliation for Bloody Sunday. By the end of 1972, 467 people were dead as a result of sectarian clashes (NICIE 2006). In spite of the violence, or perhaps because of it, ACT forged on, including sponsoring a conference on the “Interdenominational School: How? Why? The Way Ahead” in 1974 (NICIE 2006). The conference drew national attention and international support.

In 1978, Westminster passed another education act (drafted by ACT members), which would “enable schools to transform to integrated status” (NICIE 2006). The first integrated school would not open until 1981, the same year that Bobby Sands, a leader of the IRA, died after 66 days of starvation as part of a hunger strike.

In the early days, founding parents were responsible for the development and financial support of the schools. Now, parents interested in starting an integrated school can receive financial support from the start. In 1987, a group of parents and supporters founded the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE), and ensured integrated schools sustained the ethos of integrated education and provided services, such as locating start-up funds for new schools, along with its sister organizations, the Integrated Education Fund and the Belfast Trust for Integrated Education. After three years, a school is vested, proving its sustainability. Then the British government treats it as it does any other school, providing funding for buildings, for teacher and administrator salaries, for professional development, and the like.

#### FROM THE ‘TROUBLES’ TO A PEACE AGREEMENT

Despite efforts like the integrated schools movement, the late 1970s and early ‘80s would be the most violent of the Troubles. The IRA gathered momentum, bombing

16 cities in the space of 10 days in December, 1978 (McKittrick and McVea 2002). In 1979, one of the most supportive members of the Royal family for Northern Irish peace, Lord Mountbatten was killed, along with 18 British soldiers. 1980 saw the first hunger strike of Northern Irish prisoners held in British prisons. The following year prisoners participated in a second fast; this one ended in the deaths of ten strikers, including Bobby Sands, fomenting an already irate Republican population in Northern Ireland. 10,000 people lined the streets of Belfast for Sands' funeral, who -- while in prison -- had been voted into parliament and for 66 days had fasted for the rights of interned IRA prisoners held by the British (McVitrack and McVea 2002).

Margaret Thatcher, who decided not to bend to the prisoners' demands and, even after the deaths of the ten men, expressed no remorse, earning her the title "The Iron Lady". The standoff between the IRA prisoners and the Prime Minister of Great Britain caused deep fissures in Northern Irish communities. And integrated schools were a welcomed counterpoint to some when the political problems seemed intractable (McVitrack & McVea 2002).

The 1980s in both England and Northern Ireland were characterized by violence and economic uncertainty. The IRA planted bombs in London – killing 11 soldiers in one day, Sinn Fein went public with their armalite and ballot box policy.<sup>5</sup> When IRA prisoners escaped from Maze prison, the Maze Prison Deputy Director was shot and killed by the IRA, and a thousand pound bomb planted by the IRA caused extensive damage in Belfast. The damage was not only physical:

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<sup>5</sup> Armalite and ballot box policy instituted by Sinn Fein in which the IRA's political party challenged the votes in Northern Ireland and the Republic while the paramilitary continued to "pursue a military struggle against the British Army, the Royal Ulster Constabulary and loyalist paramilitary groups" ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armalite\\_and\\_ballot\\_box\\_strategy](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Armalite_and_ballot_box_strategy), retrieved August 26, 2009).

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extended trauma of the months of confrontation seared deep into the psyches of large numbers of people, stirring deep and troubling emotions. Community divisions had been deep but now they had a new rawness (McVittrick and McVea 2002:146).

The 1990s were characterized by repeated efforts to find resolution, with frameworks for peace being drawn up by both sides. In 1998, the Good Friday agreement was signed in April. Unfortunately, violence continued and peace was hard won. One of the worst bomb attacks occurred in 1998: the IRA planted the Omagh bomb; 29 people were killed and 700 critically injured. The violence did not waylay the peace process, however. Instead, it galvanized both Westminster and the government of the Republic of Ireland to implement new security measures and leaders of both sides to meet in September of that year (ibid). The push for peace in communities also continued, including the integrated schools movement. By the end of 1998, 34 integrated schools and colleges had been created.

One of the oldest of these schools, Ravenbrook Integrated College, was the site of my interviews with teachers, to which I now turn.

## CHAPTER 4

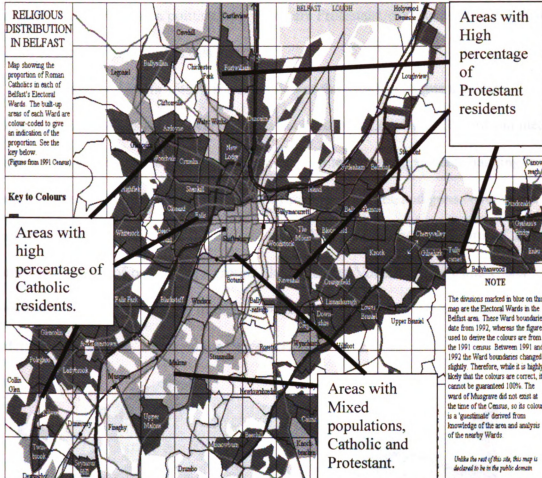
### “UNPECKING THE THREADS OF HISTORY”:

#### RAVENBROOK INTEGRATED COLLEGE

The story of Northern Ireland is a continuous narrative, the ever-increasing story. There are parts of the story that we hold sacred and sacrosanct, and there are parts that color how we see others, it's our frame of reference. As much as everyone is different, we are all tied into the story because we are here. (Colin, June, 2009)

Teachers and administrators at Ravenbrook Integrated College respond every day – in little and large ways -- to Northern Ireland's long history of violent conflict and economic woe, its struggles for equity, mortal protests against the British government, shooting in the streets, and bombings of public buildings. The narratives of eight teachers and two administrators who work at Ravenbrook, an integrated school in Belfast, explain how they create practices and an education relevant to not only Northern Ireland's history, but also to its present post-conflict period. Teachers discuss ways they reify the ideal of an integrated education, as well as explain the socio-cultural, political and economic challenges they face. They speak about their personal backgrounds, the ways they care about students, and alter curriculum to suit the shifting context.

I begin with an overview of Belfast, that is, its urban design and street life. Then, I explain some of the ways that conflict still simmers on in a post-conflict context. After a brief review of British education in Northern Ireland, we turn to the teachers' stories and their work at a flashpoint in Belfast.



**Figure 4.1. Belfast, Northern Ireland, with attention given to religious distribution across the city.**

## BELFAST

### *Urban Design and Street Life*

Cupped by mountains, Belfast sits nestled on the east coast of Northern Ireland and straddles the River Lagan. The inner city population, as of 2001, is 276,459, while 580,000 people live in the Great Metropolitan Area. Belfast's city center – with its City Hall, vibrant shopping district, and offices and Georgian- styled educational institutions - is a “neutral hub,” that is, it is regarded as neither Catholic nor Protestant, but as a shared space. Main roads run from that hub like spokes of a wheel. Walking around



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Belfast, it isn't difficult to discern which areas are Catholic (mainly in western Belfast), associated with Republican politics, and which are Protestant, or associated with Loyalist politics (generally in the city's east end).

The layout of Belfast itself is a reflection of the Troubles. Some areas are integrated, while others are still very much associated with Loyalist or Republican ideals (Figure 4.1). Those associations are explicit, represented through pennants hanging from lamp posts and murals: icons of contemporary martyrs, flowers, and guns cover entire sides of buildings and are hard to miss while traveling the bus line to the north of the city. Some relay mottos of paramilitary groups like the Ulster Volunteer Force and Ulster Freedom Fighters: giant images of men in balaclavas and helmets tote machine guns underneath the words, "Prepared for Peace, Ready for War."



**Figure 4.2. A mural in Belfast, June 2009.**

Others memorialize martyrs for the Irish republican liberation, like Bobby Sands, their faces drawn larger than life, full of optimism and grit. Yet another mural on Shankhill Road pays homage to young Northern Irish soldiers lost at the Battle of the Somme in

World War I. The murals serve as reminders that Belfast's history is a complex tangle of economic, social, and political tensions.

*Economics and Legacies of Conflict*

Before the peace agreement, when you left school, you would either go to the paramilitaries or the shipyard. I think some young people don't have any idea how important education is because the parents haven't been educated.  
(Angie, June 2009)

At the turn of the century, Belfast was a shipbuilding giant, famous for launching the Titanic from Harland and Wolff's docks in 1912. The shipyards reputedly largely hired Protestants, providing a sure livelihood for those families of Belfast. Generally speaking, Catholic families realized that their children needed a good education to compete for jobs. More recently, Harland and Wolff fell victim to the economic hardship and engaged in massive layoffs in 2000, cutting its workforce by half. Now, young generations of Protestant breadwinners face a far less secure future than their parents. Meanwhile, Catholic families had not only been ensuring their children receive strong educations, but also had modeled resourcefulness and tenacity with regard to finding or creating a livelihood. For example, young adults will move to England or the United States to seek gainful employment and then typically return to build families with money to invest in business or property.

The Troubles created both jobs and purpose for young men on both sides of the conflict. Young Protestant men might join a paramilitary group like the Ulster Volunteer Force, one of the largest and most visible groups in Belfast, while Catholic men might become active with the Irish Republican Army. Positions in those paramilitary groups not only offered an income – albeit unsteady – from protection money collected in



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paramilitary neighborhoods<sup>6</sup>, but also gave the youth social status and attachment to a deeply rooted political rift. Those roots creep along today, more than a decade after the Good Friday Agreement.

One such manifestation is the March of the Orange Order, which takes place – every year -- in cities and towns across Northern Ireland on the 12<sup>th</sup> of July. On that day, military-styled bands, complete with sheep-skin bass drums and bagpipes, march through the streets commemorating Protestant William of Orange’s defeat of Catholic James II at the Battle of the Boyne. In Protestant neighborhoods, bunting of the Union Jack and the Red Hand of Ulster is strung from lamppost to lamppost, across the street and up the road. Roaring bonfires light up the night, boys will have piled wooden palettes in preparation for months. The day is positioned as purely a cultural celebration, yet shop owners roll down their metal shutters and half of Belfast empties out to avoid any spontaneous altercations. These can provoke violence. For example, police stations, “which are really mini-barracks, will have petrol bombs and paint bombs thrown at them,” says one teacher. The murals, the palettes gathered for festival bonfires, the celebration of the March of the Orange Order are “competing visualities, multiple sites of narrative struggle expressed symbolically” (Santino 2001:80).

*Post-conflict society: A composite of peace and violence*

Belfast is a post-conflict society. While this means it is in a period of rebuilding community ties and constructing equitable policies, it also means that violence can still

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<sup>6</sup> Lisa, a young Roman Catholic teacher at Ravenbrook explains, “My classmates would have to collect protection money from the neighbors on the weekends. They would go around asking for money, if you didn’t give then you wouldn’t be protected. They’d go and ask families to collect on weekends. It was so that if the police came, they could attack them, but that rarely happened. It was really coercion.”

assert itself. Before the Good Friday Agreement, the conflict involved bombs and guns, now it is fought by the Catholic and Protestant football teams, respectively the Celtics and the Rangers, and by hanging the Union Jack in the streets for weeks before the marches, as one teacher put it, “rubbing everyone else’s faces in it and then letting those flags get torn to shreds by the weather.”

In 2008, one man – a respected graduate of the school – had been told his girlfriend was ill in an apparent set up, and was shot on the street as he left work to see her. In another case, Protestants beat a Catholic man to death after a football game in Colerain, May 2009. As a result, the Orange Order in Colerain rerouted its march to steer clear of grieving neighborhoods and to indicate that they did not condone the killing. That kind of sensitivity, which teachers described as out of character, illustrates an effort towards peaceful co-existence.

Other uprisings occur at flashpoints, marked by a closed-circuit video camera that constantly rotates atop a twenty-foot metal pole. The images feed without pause to local constabularies. Ideally, if riotous crowds begin to gather, then policemen head to the scene to keep violence at bay. Since these locations are notorious for violence, the cost of housing there is low. In recent years – with the rise in immigration – families from Eastern Europe as well as Muslim or Hindu nations have settled around flashpoints, and search for schools to send their children. These immigrant children often land at integrated schools

Maggie at NICIE explains why that might be

we’re [not] watering down identities – quite the opposite – it’s about young people becoming stronger in their pride and having a sense of that in other people. Sometimes people think we’re about neutralizing, but we’re not about that.

But this identity work is not without its challenges. Central to these challenges is the fact that although Belfast is in post-conflict, the school and its surrounds are not without conflict. The integrated school movement recognizes this: “Communities now find themselves in transition, feeling their way cautiously towards equality and sharing but still troubled by old loyalties and beliefs” (NICIE 2006). For Angie, shifting identities in families is attached to gender:

Men throughout the Troubles thought they were the powerful ones, they could protect their families and their community. Now there's a peace process, they have no skills and no training, they don't know how to read or write. They wonder, “What's my role in society, I can't provide money, I can't provide for my family.” I think that has an effect on the men and the family and maybe the children. I think the women in the Troubles kept their families together. Some of the men were in jail for 20, 30 years and the women had to keep the families together.

Whatever the root causes, teachers work with students who themselves are living through a protracted transition from conflict to post-conflict.

## STRUCTURES FOR EDUCATION

### *A Brief Overview of British Education in Northern Ireland*

The British school system is divided into public, grammar, and comprehensive streams. Public schools are elite and expensive, and groom students for the Oxford-Cambridge (Oxbridge) exam. The government subsidizes grammar schools, and students who excel academically are also university bound. Comprehensive schools are also government funded, though students in these schools aren't necessarily university bound. They may be interested in the vocational arts and enter the workforce after secondary school or attend a technical college. Some might go on to university.

Students in the United Kingdom are externally tested three times throughout their school-aged years. At the age of 11, the students take the Eleven Plus, the results of

which sort children into public, grammar, or comprehensive streams. The Eleven Plus has come under fire in recent years as an unrealistic gauge of a child's capability. One critique has been that the test is biased with regard to socio-economics and the types of access students have to education.

At the age of sixteen, students take the General Certificate of Secondary Education exam (GCSE). Not only is this a point where students interested in a vocational art can enter the workforce, but it also tracks university bound or vocational students. These exams are high-stakes. Some students end their high school education and go on to a technical college to focus on some kind of trade, like plumbing, electricity, or computer repair. Others remain in school to prepare for the Advanced level (A-level) exam taken at age 18. Students choose their courses and prepare for the exams for two years. Their entrance to university is entirely dependent on their A-level performance.

As well as these academic streams and tests, schools in Northern Ireland are further stratified into Catholic-maintained, controlled, or integrated schools. The Catholic Church -- as one would expect -- runs the Catholic-maintained schools and teach children Catholic interpretations of the bible. As there is no Sunday school in the Catholic Church, this means week-day school provides the only locus for learning about Catholic beliefs. Controlled schools, run by a board of community members and the local library. While all are welcomed at the controlled schools, Protestant families largely attend them, and thus they are considered by many de facto Protestant schools. Integrated schools are mixed Protestant and Catholic, and welcome all.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Catholic-maintained, controlled, and integrated schools could either be grammar or comprehensive schools, though integrated schools tend to be comprehensive by default.



This research data was gathered at Ravenbrook Integrated College, founded in 1985. A small groups of parents committed to integrated education began the school with limited funding, taking out loans to buy trailers for classrooms. Without enough resources for textbooks, teachers would create curriculum, for example,

you [teachers] felt that you could take it upon yourself and teach what you wanted. If you only had a set of books – like fifteen texts on volcanoes and three on earthquakes, well, then you'd do volcanoes. We'd go up to Cavehill and call it a geography lesson. There was a stage in the beginning when you really felt you were a part of history.

Claire continues, “there was a lovely relaxed atmosphere at the school.” The essential goal of integrated education is laid out in NICIE’s (2009) Declaration of Ethos:

To provide a learning environment where children and young people from Catholic and Protestant backgrounds, as well as those from other faiths, and one can learn with, from and about each other. The promotion of equality and good relations extends to everyone in the [integrated] school and to their families regardless of their religious, cultural or social background. Integrated education is value-driven and child-centered. It is delivered through a holistic approach with an emphasis on developing every aspect of a child’s or young person’s potential.

That ethos is rooted in four core principles: equality, faith and values, parental involvement, and social responsibility. At the outset, Catholic priests advised against the creation of integrated school from pulpits, and Protestant politicians railed against them in campaigns. Teachers and parents risked being shunned by their communities. Claire, a guidance counselor at Ravenbrook Integrated College, explains

It was a huge deal for families to send their children here for several reasons. One, because they’re breaking with family tradition; two, it’s hard on the children, they might be the only ones in their neighborhood coming to this school and that’s quite hard on them; three, there was pressure from the church and if they were religious they might feel like they’re breaking the law here. There’s a lot of pressure to stay in the fold.

What we find is that a new ‘fold’ was coming together in the integrated schools.

## RAVENBROOK INTEGRATED COLLEGE

### *Background*

Ravenbrook, whose motto – *facta non verba* – suggests deeds speak louder than words, was the second integrated school to be opened in Northern Ireland. As previously mentioned, the school is located by a flashpoint north of Belfast. Colin, the head of Diversity and Religious Education at Ravenbrook, tells me,

Less than half a mile up the road from the secondary school there has been sectarian tension. The students we are pulling in are very aware of sectarianism. Some of them have probably been involved in some kind of rioting. Sometimes kids on either side know each other, they text each other ahead of time, “Hey, there’s going to be a riot.”

The primary school, however, is located directly at the flashpoint, Colin explains,

It had to be caged, literally a nine or ten meter fence has been put up all the way around the school. The youth would be running across the playground to attack houses on the other side. It’s disappointing to see in terms of the symbolism, it’s a very powerful visual image. It says that while there’s been a lot of change in Ireland, we still have a long way to go.

Maggie also commented on Ravenbrook’s proximity to a flashpoint,

The latest peace wall was erected behind the [secondary] school. There are still problems within the area and when they go home, some of the young people go to their various communities and may still be engaged in violent things.

While the primary school is encircled by a fence and there is a dividing wall behind the secondary school, Ravenbrook is situated on an old manor’s lush and rolling grounds. The grey stone manor is tucked slightly up Cavehill’s slope behind contemporary brick school buildings. Its entrance is classical: black and white tiled foyer, steps that descend from both the left and the right and come together into a broad staircase, doors are so tall and wide it’s easy to imagine the gowns that swooped through them. Located in the main house are administrative offices, the staffroom, a kitchen for

making tea and heating lunches, and a resource room for students who require extra support – 26% of the student body are on the special needs register.

The thick doors might block some sound, but the building hums the entire day with students walking swiftly here or there, teachers spontaneously planning on the staircase, and assistants checking on students in other classrooms. I arrived to meet Colin, and waited in the brisk front office after signing in. I could hear the tapping of fingers on keyboards, and the phone rang once. It was raining that day, so I took the time to dry off a bit and had a moment to look at a school prospectus. Colin burst into the large office, vigorously shook my hand and took me to his empty classroom to begin.

While the main house is an old Georgian manor, the rest of the campus architecture is modern -- brick and glass -- and houses the dining hall, arts and sciences, technology, and a classroom for students of English as a Foreign Language. Colin's classroom is in one of these buildings, looking rather like a bunker from the outside, modern and clean with long banks of windows in classrooms on the inside. Colin's classroom is kitted out with technology for powerpoints. Student work hangs everywhere in his room, paintings of castles and maps are on the walls and hang down from the ceiling like mobiles.

The headmistress explains that Ravenbrook is a comprehensive school. Teachers and administrators make every effort for students from all socio-economic backgrounds and with diverse interests and talents to have access to an excellent education and the brightest future possible. Currently, 34% of the students are on free lunches that, the vice principal notes, "is a clear indice of poverty and social deprivation at the school." While some students take three or four A-levels to study engineering, veterinary science, law or

medicine, the vice principal states “getting some to 16 years of age with Maths and English so they can read, write, and count -- and become employed and useful members of society -- is a major achievement for us.”

Remarkably, Ravenbrook – in its efforts to compete with the grammar schools in the area – has broken ground with regard to the subjects it offers at the GCSE level, including a digital arts course. The school’s success in this area has earned it specialist school status in Creativity and Digital Arts, which means that the program receives an added £500,000 over the next four years, resources that will hopefully place Ravenbrook at the forefront of creative technological teaching and learning. The teacher who heads up the Digital Arts department had been a trainer with Apple, she was so inspired when she would come to Ravenbrook – and they so impressed with her -- that she was offered and took a job working with the students and bringing in the latest technology. Her next project is to build a television studio adjacent to her room filled with computers.

The school also offers a GCSE in motor vehicle studies. One sunny afternoon, I arrived on campus to find a line of teenage boys eagerly waiting to ride a motorbike a teacher had brought in. They stood in a relaxed queue, white shirts partially untucked, sleeves rolled up, ties askew, laughing with their teacher who -- from a distance -- could be mistaken for one of the lanky teenagers himself. As I crossed the courtyard to the main house, a grinning boy steadily buzzed by, tie flapping, shirt billowing.

### *The teachers and their roles*

Here we meet some of the teachers. In these miniature portraits, the teachers share their past, aspects of their upbringing and schooling, and illuminate some of the roles they enact. Colin reflects on his past, and his commitment to his position as diversity

coordinator. Angie, as guidance counselor, works to fight cycles of depression and alcoholism in the community based on her own personal loss. Liam was taught by his father to keep away from violence, and describes cold relationships with his own teachers. Lisa recalls being a teen during the Troubles, and explains why she enjoys the open discussions at Ravenbrook. Rufus connects sports with community building, while Allan corrals delinquent boys and supports teachers as they practice the integrated ethos.

Eleven participants contributed to this study, eight teachers, two school administrators, and one NICIE administrator. Four are men, seven women. Of the men, one is Catholic, one Protestant, one was raised by a Protestant mother and Catholic father, and one is a Protestant man married to a Catholic woman. All were born and raised in Northern Ireland, three in Belfast, and one on the outskirts of Londonderry. Of the women, four are Catholic and three are protestant. Six were born and raised in Northern Ireland, and one was raised in England and migrated here with her husband.

### *Colin*

Colin is Ravenbrook's Diversity and Religion Director. He's a sturdy man in his mid-thirties who was my first contact at the school. He greeted me with a broad smile, and moved us briskly from the main office to his classroom. He has a low, lilting, easy tone to his voice and sits comfortably in canvas trousers, a light blue shirt and tie. He's grippingly eloquent, vivid in his descriptions of the school, Northern Ireland, and the emotional toll of conflict and peace-building. He is kind and keen to share his thoughts and experiences. Behind him, in his empty classroom, are student projects – hand-drawn pictures of castles, flags, and pennants of football teams, and a map of Belfast. The day we met, clouds hung low and rain spit down. His classroom has a long bank of windows

facing the sea, the lights were off and soft misty morning light contributed to the timbre of his narrative: eloquent, spare, and slightly hypnotic.

Colin grew up in North Belfast and vividly remembers the effect of the Troubles on his school days

I feel I was very aware of growing up in Belfast and the Troubles and the hunger strikes were very prevalent when I was in school. It was clear -- the turmoil and impact it had on education. The call would come that the buses wouldn't run and that the school is closing, so we'd walk home through the streets and you could feel the tension, the fear and suspicion. At night, Belfast would shut down.

A Catholic, Colin married a Protestant divorcée; he speaks openly about the difficulty of telling his own family that he had fallen in love: "I felt guilty because I was seen as letting the family down, sullyng the family name somehow -- bringing it into disrepute. In a sense, I excluded myself from my family by living the life I wanted to live."

It took time for Colin and his wife to be accepted by his family. However, acceptance came with the birth of Callum, their young son.

Mum had her own preconceptions, me marrying a divorced Protestant...it would all end in tears. Since Callum was born, that's pushed the granny button. Mum loves Callum to bits and that's made it all worthwhile, she has a healthy respect for me and Daisy now. It could have gone terribly wrong, but it hasn't.

Colin made a deliberate choice to stay in integrated education: "I've had the opportunity to go a completely different direction, but I didn't. I've chosen to stay here -- working on diversity issues -- because it's where my heart is." That he himself lives an integrated life gives him insight into the value of an integrated education and was recognized by the administrators that hired him: "I told the interviewers I was a Catholic man married to a Protestant woman. They said that's what swung it."

## *Angie*

Angie is a 25-year-old guidance counselor. Her office is located in what might have been the guardhouse when the place was a working manor – a small building with a few rooms halfway down the driveway. There's a comfortable couch, pillows, a room with a few computers, a bathroom, and two small offices. It's bright and quiet, and it seems to be a place for students to get away from the mainstream of the school day. She wears clean, trendily-ripped jeans and a casual shirt, and listens intently to questions. She answers without pause as she takes me through her past, asking rhetorical questions and filling in answers with stories about her family and childhood. She herself is a graduate of Ravenbrook, "I've spent the last 13 years of my life at Ravenbrook." She has worked with other community organizations during summers and on weekends and says,

I found myself either working with Protestants *or* with Catholics and I found that a bit frustrating. No, not frustrating, but limited. Here at Ravenbrook, everyone wants to share their space and their life, it's so much easier working with everyone together. They're willing to get involved in different projects.

Angie's parents enrolled her in Ravenbrook when she was twelve. Her memories are of her friends and going where they lived, where she wouldn't have gone otherwise. "I was able to see life not just as a Catholic young woman, but as a young woman living in Belfast, and go where I wanted to go, hang around in Catholic or Protestant places."

Angie doesn't drink, a deeply personal decision:

On St. Patrick's Day in 2001, my brother died of alcohol. He was born in '70, the year after the Troubles. He was very intelligent, but easily led. He got in with the wrong people, and went to jail for petty theft when he was in the grammar school. He was so intelligent but got depressed, though, and started drinking. He got beaten up because he was a Catholic, so he didn't leave his own area for fear of an attack, he was in intensive care – really badly beaten. It had a major effect on him. Maybe if he had had counseling, he never would have had those issues.

She continues,

I was only a young girl, so I wasn't able to analyze it or ask why, but now when I look back I can see the cycle of the criminal justice system, the depression, the staying in your own area, not having opportunities, unemployment, all those factors, all that led to alcohol abuse.

She runs small classes on social issues such as cyber-bullying, abstinence and family planning, and career preparation, and works with students one-on-one as issues emerge.

### *Liam*

Liam runs the resource room for special needs children in the school, "the children who have no confidence at all because they have literacy problems and communication difficulties." His classroom is located in the main house on the second floor at the top of the sweeping staircase. The room has high ceiling and long windows, it's painted a dark blue, and has a large work table in the middle of it and computers along two walls. There's a cubby for individual work, bookshelves, and a table long another wall. Liam has several assistants, cheery and talkative, oozing competence while they set limits with teenaged boys while offering me cups of tea. Tall with dark hair, Liam has a wry smile. He confides that he likes to keep a tough exterior, but is actually a softie underneath the surface. Liam is in his early 30s and has a young daughter with a wife who also works with special needs children. He leans on her at times for insight and professional support.

Liam went to a grammar school near Londonderry, where "the Catholic ethos was drummed into you morning, noon, and night." Relationships with teachers were limited:

I didn't relate to any of my teachers at school. Well, perhaps the PE teachers because I was quite sporty. But really, I had no relationships with any of them, though. We were all robots, we did our work and then left.



Craigan, the small town in which he was raised

has been notoriously violent over the past 30 or 40 years. I thought it was an easy transition coming here, I'm sort of used to it, if you can be used to it. Perhaps I'm more immunized, it's not alien to me, the idea of violence and riots – though it doesn't happen now as often as it did.

When Liam compares Londonderry to Belfast,

People are still trying to get through the problems that the Troubles have caused – it's like a sort of hangover. There are socioeconomic and psychological factors to get over. Both have an effect on how the people view themselves and the city. Belfast has kicked on, but Derry is still sort of dragging its heels. It contributes to people's mentality if you can't see any light in the future.

But when he speaks about why he didn't get involved in the violence around him, he speaks about home,

Basically fear of my dad is why I never got involved, nor the three other boys. He told us, "Don't ever get near." I was at the grammar school with the posh kids, but we lived on an estate. So I missed all the meetings with the estate kids when they were planning rioting during the school day. I was playing football. I had other outlets.

With his characteristic self-deprecating humor, he chuckles, "I was probably too lazy as well to get involved [in the violence]."

*Lisa*

Lisa is fresh out of her teacher education program. She's a cheerful, soft-spoken young Catholic woman who prepared in England at a comprehensive school. She was hoping to come to Ravenbrook because it, too, is a comprehensive school, "I wanted to get into teaching kids with more disadvantaged backgrounds." Lisa is just old enough to remember life before the Good Friday Peace Agreement, and has siblings who were born after it.

I can remember having to get my bag checked every time I went into town, or the car checked before going to market, there'd be bomb scares when we went shopping. There was also a mistrust between communities as well. As a teenager,

you'd go out for a night and want to know which side someone was on, so you'd know if they had an agenda. My wee sisters have grown up in a time without that – but she and her friends still have the attitude where they want to mark themselves out as being part of certain groups even though they have very little reason to do that at all now.

Lisa explains her background and perception of economic disparities between the Protestant and Catholics, and her own family's financial ebb and flow depending on the ruling power,

I would be from a Roman Catholic background and there would be the assumption that Protestants were more wealthy, and from what I've heard from my parents, my dad found it difficult to find a job. At some point in Northern Irish history, Northern Ireland ruled itself for a little while and at that time he couldn't get a job. But when London would rule again, he was able to get one. So it's little things like that would build up to maybe a preconception that Protestants are more wealthy.

Lisa was educated in a Catholic-maintained school:

When we had history lessons, it was always one-sided. We always had the Irish point of view on things and wouldn't have had the opportunity to learn how the other side would have felt about the conflict. Teachers would say, "Can you imagine having this discussion in a mixed school?" Saying it's good to be separated so we can have a chat about things. At the time, I thought they had a point there, but now I think, what's the point in having a discussion when you can't hear someone else's point of view? There isn't any way of moving forwards on that.

*Rufus*

Rufus teaches mathematics. He is in his mid-twenties, coaches soccer, and is the school's union representative. The day we spoke, the sky was clear and blue as far as the eye could see. The school day had ended and mid-way through our conversation one of the caretakers, a stout woman with raucous energy, came in to sweep and told us the story of how she'd made a fool of herself for a man. Rufus' classroom has a view of Cavehill, which, on that sunny day and with the complexities of love in the room, pushed up from the earth more magnificently than it seemed to on grey foggy days. Rufus sometimes

can't believe how beautiful the mountain is, "I want to stop the car on the way up the driveway, and say to the kids, 'Hey! Do you ever look at that there? Get in the car, I'll drive you to a school that looks like a prison.'"

Rufus has three sisters with whom he is very close, but he says regardless of having these women in his life, he felt very awkward teaching girls as he'd been in all boys schools his whole life. He grew up in Belfast, raised by his Catholic mother and Protestant father. "My mother and father come from the two divides in Northern Ireland. They met in the 60s and got married in '69, right when the Troubles started." Integrated education started in 1981, "They regret not sending their children to integrated college, they just weren't brave enough – that's what they regret. They are both very proud that they have a son working in an integrated school."

In 2008, Rufus had the chance to go to India, to attend a series of workshops with Play for Peace, a US-based organization that "pinpoints areas of conflict or post-conflict and highlights the importance of play." About football, he says, "it's such a common denominator between people, especially men, " which hints at his dedication to supporting the growth of boys into men to be discussed later.

### *Allan*

Allan is well-over six foot tall, very lean, and constantly moving. He was born in "a working class ghetto two miles from here, a tough working class neighborhood called Tiger's Bay." He has been teaching for 30 years, 18 at Ravenbrook. Before coming to Ravenbrook, he taught first at one of the most prestigious grammar schools in Belfast. "It was a completely different country," he says of the place, "you'd have had the staffroom five minutes before class started, you could have a smoke, you'd have played a game of

snooker, you'd have had a coffee for 20 minutes." His next job was at one of the toughest protestant schools in Northern Ireland. "There were 1100 protestant boys in that school from 11 to 18 years of age, from working class areas largely controlled by paramilitaries. It was a tough school, very well run, but a tough school." We sit in his little windowless office, he has teachers' dossiers piled high to his left, the daily schedule in front of him, teaching standards behind him. He reaches easily for all of these as he explains his work at the school, his desk a very organized chaos.

As vice-principal, Allan's job is to mentor new teachers,

I'm responsible for every young teacher in the school, I'm a teacher tutor. My job is to go through all their work and provide quality assurance so that their paperwork can go to the Teacher's Branch in Derry and they can get their raise.

Allan is also the final stop for students who don't behave. One of his primary concerns is helping teachers manage diverse classrooms. "If you confront them [the students], if you shout, you're making it worse. There's no long-term gain in that, you must try to develop good relationships with the children. You must gain their respect." When Allan walked me through the crowded halls, he heard two boys swearing. He didn't do anything in that moment. The next time we met, he told me that he'd gone back to pull them aside and asked them why they would want to embarrass him in front of a visitor.

On the last day, as I left Ravenbrook to walk to the bus stop down the hill, Allan came running behind me. He shook my hand, asked that I stay in touch, and then kept running. I realized he was chasing two boys ahead of me, who themselves began running and dove into a six-foot hedge with Allan in hot pursuit.

Across the testimonies, teachers identify three issues that shape their roles as teachers in this post-conflict zone: dealing with bullying, pastoral care, and practicing peace. The school is clear on its core goal. In their narratives, the teachers identified three domains in which lay out their roles.

### *Bullying*

Violence still exists, although clashes and outbursts are less frequent. The underlying tension walks through the school doors with the children. Teachers talked extensively about bullying, and the implications for their work.

For Allan, bullying “is not a trend, it’s a massive epidemic: Boys don’t have active positive role models in their lives. By the time they get to secondary school, perhaps it’s too late.” Sarah, a mathematics teacher from England who’s been at Ravenbrook for ten years, explains a type of bullying that persists in her classroom,

I see the kids who aren’t achieving, who don’t have aspirations, making much fun of the kids who are doing well. It tends to drag them down because they don’t want to be seen as the geek or the studious one. It’s almost a societal thing, it’s almost frowned upon to be pushing yourself and making the best of yourself. At the school level, the kids can be really nasty about it.

Angie describes schoolyard bullying, “there may be an ongoing catfight, sort of like just bitching between women – in most cases it’s not a physical fight. The boys might get physical, or resort to foul language and hassling someone.” The fighting, however, is not limited to the schoolyard or the classroom,

We find a lot of conflict going on over the Internet, maybe a fight has started in class and people are sms-ing at night. It becomes exaggerated then. They don’t have the consequence of seeing someone’s face and knowing you’ve hurt their feelings – they don’t realize what they’ve actually said.

The tensions are exacerbated by, as Alice noted, a “mass influx of immigrants in the last 16 months that has been overwhelming,”<sup>8</sup> Many of the immigrating students at the school are from Eastern Europe, and signs in the school are translated into Polish, Romanian, and Russian. This accommodation does not quell tensions between students, Ella explains

When there is a majority of kids from one language, it isolates children who speak other languages. Behavior problems crop up from frustration – they can’t communicate, if a kid looks at another the wrong way, and laughs and they can’t understand what’s going on, they become scared and defensive.

Ella thinks of this as “me-land, when the students take everything personally. At the same time they’re trying to preserve their uniqueness versus making sure they aren’t marked for an attack.” She speaks about the prejudices and threats that emerged when the influx began,

There is a lot of anxiety over the wave of immigrants. Belfast is really just a big village, so imagine a neighborhood and all of a sudden 100 families from Romania live on your road. Northern Ireland has a tradition of sending out immigrants, not receiving them.

Ultimately, the combination of the Trouble’s repercussions and waves of immigrants create tensions that erupt into fights and bullying. Sarah explains the fallout from mean words:

You end up seeing the ones who could do brilliantly for themselves start to hold back because they don’t want to get all the banter that goes with it. As a teacher, I do what I can, try to stem the bullies and turn it around. It’s really difficult to have the positive attitude stick.

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<sup>8</sup> The 2008 School Census shows that two per cent of children in primary schools list a “language other than English as their ‘first’ language...for secondary school children, the increase has been from 1,700 to 2,100 pupils (1% of the secondary school population)” (Ruane 2009:2). That increase shows no signs of slowing as “annual immigration flows in 2008 exceed 1 in 20 of the resident population” (2009:2). The report states that a “total of 27,500 people came to live in Northern Ireland in the year to June 2008” (2009:1).

She is at a loss for how to respond:

It's really difficult to know what to say, what works with one group of kids doesn't work with another group of kids. I don't know how you can address it effectively. I think it has to come from outside of a school to a certain extent, you have to re-educate the adults and re-set society.

Allan explains the school's system in place to handle bullying,

If a child is bullying or is sectarian or racist or uses foul language towards a teacher, they get sent straight to the principal and have suspension or expulsion if it's bad. We have a system in place, but it's not like other schools – we don't have automatic detention or copying out of a book. The school doesn't put importance in that – and I agree, detention doesn't actually change the behavior.

Rufus, the young math teacher, works with students on a restorative justice panel,

If there's bullying or a physical attack we have a restorative justice panel that's led by six students. They get the victim and the perpetrator and they talk about how they both felt when such and such happened. Their peers decide further consequences after the principal...nine times out of ten, the child will stop aggression when he sees how it affects others.

As the teachers and the school learn to respond to the tensions underlying the bullying they find their roles as teachers expanding. In addition to teaching content, for example, many of them find themselves taking on pastoral duties.

### *Pastoral duty*

With the closing of Harland and Wolff, Angie created after-school seminars for students whose demographic places them at risk of unemployment. With the rise in alcoholism, teen pregnancy, and suicide, she and Claire created information meetings on well-being and the dangers of alcoholism, on ways to practice safe sex, and on spotting the symptoms of depression. She coordinates with the Public Initiative for the Prevention of Suicide and Self-Harm (PIPS), a community organization dedicated to suicide

prevention. PIPS provides speakers and workshops for youth in crisis, or who are bereaved after the death of a loved one.

Rufus offers another example. From his perspective, “A lot of the problem is – especially for boys – just a lack of male role models. It’s a real problem. You see the backgrounds the boys are coming from and there’s no daddy, there’s no daddy at all.”<sup>9</sup> When interviewing for his job, Rufus examined the school’s referral statistics, “For the year nines, there were 455 behavior referrals, 91% of those were for boys. I tallied them up.”

In response, Rufus tried to be a role model: “I get the most disgruntled boys and I put expectations on them.” He encourages

working hard, just like you would for French and English. And while we’re at it, don’t swear, don’t be disrespectful. We’re preparing them for work, for their social lives. I say, “When I’m in work mode, I don’t swear. When you’re in school – don’t swear.” And they say, “Right, right, right,” and get on with it.

The efforts of Rufus, Angie, and Claire can be seen as taking on a pastoral duty, a role urged on teachers by the country’s Department of Education:

The ‘Master’ was popularly seen as an authoritarian, often repressive, disciplinarian figure. In today’s society, by contrast, the teacher is one who attempts to foster and maintain acceptable standards of behavior by encouraging in the pupils self-respect, self-discipline, co-operation and respect for other, and setting them an example in this regard. (Department of Education 2001:13).

Rufus is committed to the pastoral aspect of his work, modeling positive behavior, responding to personal needs, and preparing students for their future. Recall that he brought in the motorbike for the boys to ride around the parking lot, “It’s very

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<sup>9</sup> According to statistics on lone – or single -- parenting in Northern Ireland, 50,933 out of 54, 245 lone parents in Northern Ireland are female ([http://www.nisranew.nisra.gov.uk/census/Census2001Output/commissioned\\_output.html](http://www.nisranew.nisra.gov.uk/census/Census2001Output/commissioned_output.html)).



empowering and inspiring as a teacher to see those boys involved and excited.”

Referring to his promotion to class advisor, he says,

The role I have next year is pastoral, that’s the route I’m going, it’s part of my profession. I think teachers are full of empathy, but we need to ask *why* a student is behaving a certain way, all these backgrounds and stories that explain where a person is coming from.

Allan speaks about driving students to their grandmother’s house after school, knowing the neighborhoods they come from. He explains his “duty to Care,” as the Department of Education (2001: 12) has called it (“the pupils’ confidence and self-esteem are promoted; they are encouraged to value one another; and they show a strong sense of belonging to the school as a community”), like so,

We have some very difficult, confrontational children, all the indices of social deprivation and this school takes them and develops them as much as possible. But I come from here, so I drive them to their houses, tell them I was born on the road over from theirs. If I can be successful, perhaps they’ll see that they can be successful as well.

Liam works with many of the teachers as he runs the resource room.

One thing anyone can see is that the teachers have a real sort of, um, love for the kids. There’s no punitive tone, it can take a person a couple of years to get to that stage, but it makes you a better teacher and person as well.

During the school day up to 40 students come in and out of his room,

Some of the kids will be taken out of the classroom because they’re having a moment, and then they’re brought up to me. I’ll sit them down, give them a quiet area to work, and then talk over what happened. I usually tell them I can understand why they did what they did, but that that doesn’t excuse it.

Liam realizes this moment of empathy and limit setting is part of a longer process, “I got a handle on some of the really tough kids this year. Next year -- hopefully -- I can build up their esteem a bit.” Building students’ esteem involves giving them pride in their heritage, enabling academic excellence, and developing relationships with and among

students that exemplify mutual respect. The curriculum and teachers' expansive practices are geared towards building esteem and a trusting community.

*Practicing and institutionalizing peace*

In addition to the expansion of their role as teachers to the pastoral care of individual students, teachers also spoke of institutionalizing peace. This is not surprising, given the fact that Ravenwood's focus is building a peaceful community and educating children to take that peace out into the world. To this end, teachers and administrators have instituted weekly peace assemblies, Speak Your Peace Day, sports events, and community events hosted at the school.

Each Friday, the whole school gathers for a Peace Assembly. The principal makes announcements, the central piece of the assembly is the Prayer for Peace:

For peace in your country  
For the victims of violence everywhere  
For those struggling for peace and justice  
For churches in conflict situations  
For a world without war and violence

Lead me from death to life  
From falsehood to truth.  
Lead me from despair to hope,  
From fear to trust.  
Lead me from hate to love,  
From war to peace.  
Let peace fill out beings,  
Our world and our universe. Amen.

Angie explains, "It's a time when everyone connects and we find out the positive things that are going on in the school, or in the community. It is nice to have a minute where you can say a prayer together, you're all in the same room praying for peace."

Colin – as diversity coordinator – is often in charge of these peace related activities. For instance, he organized the first Speak Your Peace Day in the wake of the killing of Danny McCaughlin. Danny had been a graduate of Ravenbrook, and “was told to come home as his girlfriend was ill. He was shot as he left his work at the sorting office. It was a set up and the tension was felt inside the school because the communities are tightly knit.” Colin and the principal decided to put together a full day event for year ten students.

On that day, pupils bring in symbols that represent their identity, each student presents a symbol and what it means to them. “We stipulated two rules: Nothing alive and nothing illegal,” Colin says, “and they brought in a wealth of symbols, orange sashes, paramilitary flags, Union Jacks, a whole clatter of stuff came in.” As an opening ceremony, teachers and administrators talked to students about their hopes and expectations for the day, “and eventually moved to the symbolism and it was very, very powerful. The kids get to know each other in a way that they never ordinarily would – more than ‘you’re a Protestant and you’re a Catholic.’”

Colin tells a story about a conversation he witnessed that first Speak Your Peace Day that moved him to institutionalize the event:

One girl produced a tri-color, and talked about it flying off a Peace Wall. A wee boy wanted to know what a Peace Wall was, so she explained that it was a tall concrete fence with barbed wire on the top of it. She said there was one at the bottom of her garden. The boy, obviously thinking about trenches and mud and Battle of the Somme types of images, said “So you can’t plant flowers in your garden?” Her reply chilled me, it still does, she said, “The sun never reaches my garden because of the fence, so nothing ever grows.”

Sarah, the math teacher from England, helped with Speak Your Peace Day for the first time in 2008.

I took away from it that the communities aren't that different at all. There are just years and years of mistrust built-up. The only way people seem to know how to deal with it is to be quite defensive, to keep to themselves and stay safe that way, I suppose. But that's definitely getting better.

Speak Your Peace Day is now a staple in the academic year at the secondary level, along with a once yearly peace assembly to which community and local dignitaries are invited.

Claire, the guidance counselor who has been at Ravenbrook since it opened, noted that students enjoy Speak Your Peace Day because it gives them a chance to say something about their own lives, which “of course leads to diversity with one girl bringing in a teddy bear, and another a fiddle, another a flag.” Claire makes the point that the students have to face each other when they listen or present their differences in this forum.

With the rise in immigration and overall enrolment in the school, learning about one another has extended into groups that meet regularly,

Angie has a multicultural group, I have a diversity group in terms of student interest, then there's an intergenerational group – we bring in parents and grand parents – so we get these cross border groups going on. There are three groups, really, across politics, interest, and age.

Angie and Claire, as counselors in the school, gauge the support that students need based on the issues children talk about. That immigrant students are bullied motivated Angie to start an after-school group to celebrate multi-culturalism. Angie and Claire also work with other teachers to help students build their future hopes and dreams. For example, if particular boys express an interest in mechanics, they will likely be taken under Rufus' wing to learn about cars and mechanics. Recall Angie's interest in gender roles, one group she began is for teenaged girls to talk about coming of age issues, birth control, abstinence, and learning to talk about sex. Ultimately, Angie's reasoning behind

the extra-curricular groups is to “try to break the cycles that still exist in this post-conflict era.”

Colin sums up the purpose of activities that build community and institutionalize peace as “unpecking the threads of history”:

The story of Northern Ireland is a continuous narrative, the ever-increasing story. There are parts of that story that we hold sacred and sacrosanct, and there are parts that color how we see others, it’s our frame of reference. As much as everyone is different, we are all tied into the story because we’re here.

Adding activities like Speak Your Peace Day, the peace assemblies, discussion groups that focus on future opportunities and wellbeing help “unpeck” and then re-stitch the story of teaching and learning in Belfast. Colin’s goals include working with young teachers to help them see their roles as broader than teaching a subject matter:

Not saying, “Well, this is my subject and that’s all I’m going to teach,” but to face up to the challenge of stretching themselves to be facilitators in peace-building, and identity formation. It’s a big ask, but I think anyone can see the value in that.

The activities that enrich Ravenbrook’s curriculum as described above are responses to events in the community and aim to repair social rifts still frayed since the peace agreement. Speak Your Peace grew out of the death of Danny McCaughlin, a Ravenbrook alumnus. The groups set up by the counselors grew out of the influx of immigrant children, the fact that more and more children are being raised by retired grandparents while parents either work nights or become absent, and further political tension between sectarian groups. The current principal instituted the yearly peace assembly to bring community in and underscore the seriousness and collaborative nature of Ravenbrook’s integrated ethos.

## SUMMARY

Belfast is in a post-conflict era. Peace walls snake in and around Belfast dividing Catholic and Protestant neighborhoods. The most highly visited ones are located on the Shankhill and Falls Road. Tourists come to take pictures and write messages on these walls: “Beer not Bombs,” and “How do you know when it’s over?” While the country is in a period of post-conflict, tension and violence die hard. The fence around the elementary school, the March of the Orange Order, the violence at Celtic-Ranger football matches, and discrimination towards immigrants indicate tension lies beneath the surface, even as many work to build a new society post conflict. The integrated education movement, and the work of Ravenbrook teachers in particular, has as its goal using schools both to model that post-conflict peaceful coexistence and to build the capacities of students to live in peaceful ways as citizens of Northern Ireland.

Many of the teachers at Ravenbrook had personal stories of growing up in conflict zones, and explained the difficulties and challenges of overcoming their own legacies. They speak about taking care of their students and finding purpose in the ethos of Ravenbrook. They build curriculum and activities to contribute positively to a post-conflict context.

Modeling and pastoral care are both implicit and explicit in the teaching at Ravenbrook. The teachers often used the term “firm but fair” to describe their stance, setting clear limits with regard to behavior and listening to the student to learn why the behavior exists. In caring for students and for their community, teachers undertake the hard work of teaching compassion. Further, teaching compassion takes the combined efforts of organizations in the community.

In considering their practice, teachers weave together support they receive from administration, community organizations, and refer to policies and standards especially designed for post-conflict teaching in Northern Ireland. An analysis of their testimonies, and the ways their practices enact a localized – or vernacular – pedagogy, will follow a visit to Sderot, Israel, where teachers discuss teaching and living in a conflict zone.

CHAPTER 5  
ISRAEL/PALESTINE HISTORY:  
SIFTING BATTLES ON SHIFTING SANDS

Israel's history is rife with violent dispute, described as "a border conflict, a colonial conflict, an ethnic conflict and religious struggle" (Azar 1978:41). All of these depictions, as we shall see, are accurate. Not only that, those conflicts and struggles run into and over one another, making their telling complex. Here, I seek to underscore the complexities of Israel's past not only in terms of its conflict – particularly that with Arabs in Gaza and the West Bank -- but also with regard to migration's effects on the people of Palestine and Israel and competing ideologies of Israel's destiny. Other nations' involvement runs throughout in Israel/Palestine's history. The purpose here is to provide backdrop for understanding the testimonies of teachers living along the border of Gaza. Although the story of Israel is ancient, I begin with the events that lead to the creation of modern Israel in 1948 and then discuss the effects of massive migration on socio-politics. We will end with Operation Cast Lead, the Israeli 22 day offensive of 2008 – 2009 in Gaza.

The territory is referred to as Thrice Promised since the British, who had control of the territory after the fall of the Ottoman Empire after World War I, had arranged for three outcomes for Palestine, all of which can be argued. We'll first consider the Balfour Declaration, which gave a swath of land to the Jews since they had been immigrating to



the area since the turn of the century and contributed to its development with the help of Baron Rothschild. Then we will consider the Hussein- McMahon correspondence which stated that the northern quarter of the territory be given to Lebanon, leaving the rest for international control. Finally, the Sykes-Picot Agreement was forged between the British and French, giving the territory to the control of those two allies and Russia. These agreements are contested, but what is at stake here is the land upon which families – regardless of ethnicity -- sustain a living and seek a place to safely call their own.

### *Thrice Promised Land*

Until 1917, Palestine<sup>10</sup> was part of the Ottoman Empire. When the Empire dissolved, the League of Nations handed the territory to the British, whose interest in the region focused on securing the Suez Canal, a main trade artery to colonized India (Herzog 1975:18). In 1917, the British Government issued the Balfour Declaration, named for James Arthur Balfour, the British Foreign Minister. The Declaration (Fig. 5.1) was a missive from Balfour to Baron Rothschild, a British Zionist who was to communicate the contents of the letter to the Zionist Federation of Great Britain and Ireland. It stated that Palestine would become “a national home for the Jewish people” (Keesing 1968:2). Further, the Balfour Declaration (Appendix II) iterated that “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine” (ibid).

Supporting a newly landed population in Palestine would secure an important ally for the British, particularly in terms of their trade route to India. Herbert Samuel, High Commissioner of Palestine from 1917 to 1925, wrote in his *Memoirs*,

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<sup>10</sup> Palestine was the name of the territory until the United Nation’s partition in 1947, at which point the land became Israel.

A Jewish state might come about in the course of events, but not so long as the great majority of the inhabitants were Arabs, it was out of the question...Jewish immigration, carefully regulated, would be given preference, so that in the course of time Jewish inhabitants, growing into a majority and settled in the land, may be conceded such degree of self-government as the conditions of that day might justify. (Cited in Herzog 1975:54)

The Balfour Declaration stated:

Dear Lord Rothschild,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspiration which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet

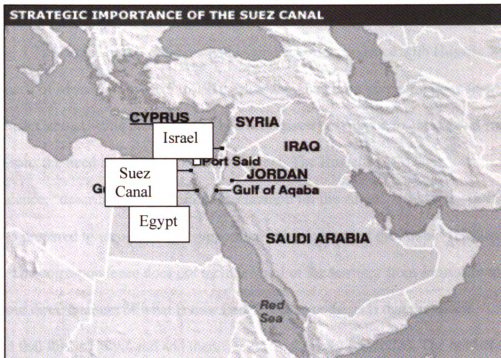
" His majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country"

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the knowledge of the Zionist Federation.

(signed)

Arthur James Balfour.

The above constitute one promise: the Balfour Declaration between the Zionist Federation and Britain offered Palestine as a Jewish State, stipulating that equal rights for all populations were to be observed. Further, a Jewish majority in the territory was not only anticipated, but supported by the British High Commissioner. Allying with such a majority would give Britain a stronghold against the Arabs, who had sided with Germany in World War I.



**Figure 5.1: Map of the Middle East showing the Suez Canal**

While the Balfour Declaration is largely considered the definitive document promising Palestine as a homeland for the Jewish people, two other statements emerged around the same time: The Hussein-McMahon Correspondence in 1916, and the Sykes-Picot Agreement in 1916, both constructed by the British. Britain's empire had been built on mercantilism. To understand Britain's interest in the area, I briefly explain an essential trade route.

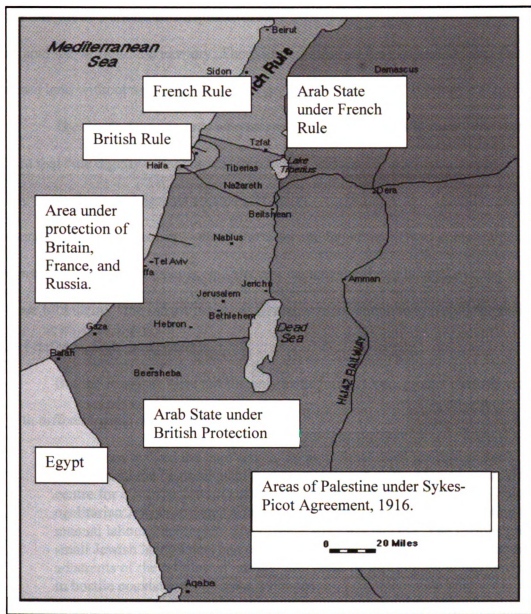
Previously, the British were fostering relations with Arab territories in the region for two reasons. First, when oil was discovered in 1908, good relations with Arab states became crucial to develop trade for the resource. Second, Egypt buffers the Suez, an artery to India, Britain's Jewel in the Crown. This leads us to the second promise that affects part of the territory of Israel/Palestine.

The British Cabinet gave Sir Henry McMahon, the British high Commissioner in

Egypt, impunity to act in the best interest of protecting a British buffer around the Suez Canal (Fig. 5.2). To that end, McMahon, had extended correspondence with Hussein Bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca, from 1915 to 1916. McMahon had been given impunity to act by the British Cabinet – this meant that he had been given permission to correspond with the Sharif sans the need to report back to the Cabinet. The Hussein-McMahon correspondence, “described as the Balfour Declaration for the Arabs” stated that “Great Britain was prepared to recognize and support the independence of the Arabs” (Herzog 1975:62). The correspondence does not include word of the territory from Jerusalem to Egypt, about three-quarters of what is now Israel. One hypothesis is that the Sharif recognized that this is Holy Land and therefore internationally controlled. The northern quarter of what is now Israel was to be given as Lebanese territory (Center for Online Judaic Studies 2010).

It was only after both missives had been sent and read that the British Cabinet (which was charged with monitoring the activities of both Balfour and McMahon) realized that the territory had been twice promised: once to the Jews and once to the Arabs. The attempts to untangle or take words back either with regard to a Jewish state or a land of Arab independence are far too complex to go into in this short description. It will have to suffice to say that such efforts failed.

Complicating things further, in 1916, the British and French entered into a secret agreement with the support of the Bolsheviks. Lieutenant Colonel Mark Sykes was charged with hammering out an agreement with French diplomat François George Picot that would divide the Arab region between the French and British at the end of World War I. With this, Palestine became a “thrice-promised land” by 1917 (Archer 1976).



**Fig. 5.2: The division of land according to the Sykes-Picot Agreement.**

### *Clashing Ideologies and Burgeoning Population*

Between 1881 and 1917, the Jewish population of the territory rose from twenty five thousand to eighty thousand (Keesing 1968:2). The Balfour Declaration, ratified by

the League of Nations, had begun to draw waves of Jewish immigrants (aliyah) from around the world to the territory. These immigrants had the “impression that Palestine was a land without a people, awaiting a people without a land” (Gidron 2002:54).

The Russian immigrants who arrived in the early 1900s brought with them the idea that “the dignity of labour was intertwined with that of auto-emancipation” (ibid.). In that spirit, many immigrants created kibbutzim -- cooperative agricultural organizations founded upon social equity -- along the coast and in Galilee. These communities constructed their own schools, and Hebrew became the living language of the land. With these kibbutzim, “the infrastructure of an autonomous community, [and] the rudiments of self-defence, were laid” (ibid.).

But the Russians were not the only immigrants. Other groups came as well, often with different goals and ideologies:

Visionaries stalked the land projecting new dimensions for Jewry: Rabbi Kook proclaiming the beginnings of a messianic period, Achad Ha'am searching for a centre for a secular Jewish culture, Berl Katznelson proclaiming the vision of an egalitarian Jewish society, A.D. Gordon calling for personal redemption through manual labour. Ideological divergences were not lacking. The various groupings – small Jewish landowners and extreme socialists, Ashkenazi and Sephardi, the adherents of the religion of eternity and those of the religion of labour – subsisted in hostile coexistence. (Herzog 1975:16)

Immigration expanded, and the late 1930s brought huge numbers of Jewish refugees. By 1937, they comprised a third of the Palestinian population, upwards of 400,000 from 80,000 in 1917 (Keesing 1968:2). The years during World War II were fairly peaceful in the territory, but shortly after it ended, the territory was saturated with new immigrants looking for space to live and work, largely due to the Holocaust. When American President, Harry S. Truman “publicly urged the British government to admit one hundred thousand Jewish refugees to Palestine at once...tensions soared” (ibid.) This

shift in the demographics and swelling populations set the stage for what was to come:

Palestinian demands for independence and resistance to Jewish immigration led to a rebellion in 1937, followed by continuing terrorism and violence from both sides during and immediately after the Second World War. Great Britain, as the Mandatory Power, tried to implement various formulas to bring independence to a land ravaged by violence. A partition scheme, a formula for provincial autonomy, a unified independent Palestine were all considered and abandoned, and in 1947, Great Britain in frustration turned the problem over to the United Nations. (UNISPAL 1990:1)

One thing the Arabs and Jews in the region could agree on was that the British had to go, reasoning that if the British left, they “could simply fight each other for control” (ibid). Attacks began on British stations by both groups.

### *The Creation of Israel*

By 1947, Britain admitted defeat in solving the Palestine dilemma: 80,000 British troops stationed in the area did nothing to assuage tensions, either within the state of Palestine or between it and surrounding Arab states (Howard 1967:3). The United Nations immediately “recommended that Palestine should be partitioned into a Jewish and an Arab State, with economic union and an international regime for the city of Jerusalem” (ibid.). This did not prove to be simple.

Meanwhile, as a United Nations report indicated “violence continued to spread in Palestine as Zionist terrorist groups, now on the offensive, stepped up their attacks and sabotage. Illegal immigration into Palestine increased sharply” (UNISPAL 1990:1). Conflicts were taking place on the ground between Arabs and Jews while the United Nations scrambled to find solutions to the cross-promises of the British. The United Nations Commission on the problem of then-Palestine was being heavily lobbied by both Arabs and Jews. Ultimately, the UN took a vote on the partition of Palestine, 33 were in favor, 13 were against, and ten abstained (ibid.).

The newly drawn boundaries (Fig 5.3) left Zionists – 33 percent of the population – with 56 percent of the territory, and Arabs – the remaining 67 percent of the population -- with 44 percent of the territory. As a result,

Fresh fighting broke out in Palestine. An exodus of Arabs began from areas allocated to the future state of Israel. Zionists claimed that the émigrés were ordered to leave temporarily by their absent leaders in broadcasts from Damascus, in order to give Arab armies free reign to attack, and also to prove to the world that Palestinians would not live under Israeli rule. The Arabs charged that the refugees had been expelled by the Zionists or frightened off by terrorism (Archer 1976:92).

Archer (1976) continues:

according to Palestinian records, [in 1948] Zionist[s]...killed or maimed over eleven hundred Arab men, women and children in market-places, cafés, hotels, apartment houses, villages, and on buses and trains...the panic in one village infected the next...until whole groups of villages were evacuated. (P. 92)

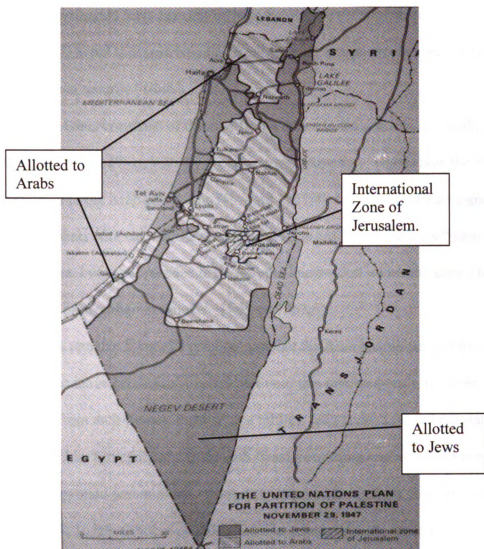
One particular massacre of Arabs civilians occurred on April 9, 1948.

Some two hundred and fifty unarmed civilians, including many women and children, were killed. Their bodies were thrown into the village well and captives were paraded in chains through . . . Jerusalem. The massacre at Deir Yassim intensified the Arab flight from Palestine, bringing to over three hundred thousand the number who had left their homes in the area designated for the future state of Israel. (Archer 1976:93)

The British Mandate ended on May 14<sup>th</sup>, 1948, and the Israeli declared independence on that day – with the signing of the Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel. The next day, Tel Aviv was bombed by an Egyptian plane, and

An Egyptian Army invaded Palestine [now Gaza] from the south, the Arab Legion from...the east, and Syrian and Lebanese forces from the north. Thirteen hours after Israel had been proclaimed a nation, an Arab world torn by rivalry had suddenly united to topple it. (Archer 1976:95)





**Figure 5.3. Map delineating the United Nations 1947 Partition**

The well organized Israeli Army fought back on all fronts, and ultimately won over 50 percent more land that had been allotted to them in the 1947 Partition and almost “a million Palestinians were now in full flight” (ibid.). Many refugees traveled to Jordan, the only Arab nation to give Palestinians full citizenship; others relocated to refugee camps in Syria, Jordan, Lebanon and the West Bank. Over 167,000 Arabs remained in Israel. In the meantime, more Jewish immigrants: “Declaring the land and homes of those Arabs abandoned, the Israeli government turned them over to the Jewish

newcomers. An estimated forty per cent of Arab holdings were confiscated in this manner” (Archer 1976:97). Repatriation of Arabs to their homes was denied “on the grounds of national security” (ibid.).

By 1949, Israel consisted of the area from Galilee in the north to the south, to Eilat at the tip of the Red Sea, with the Gaza strip and Samaria – what is now the West Bank – dedicated to the Arab population (Howard 1967:4). In that year, Israel signed armistice agreements with each of the neighboring Arab nations, these lines “were not territorial frontiers, but were intended to delimit the line beyond which the armed forces of the respective parties shall not move” (Howard 1967:6).

Bitterness remained. Israel’s position was that the Arab nations needed to absorb refugees forced to move because of the UN partition; this involved one million people being displaced from their homes. Further, one million Jews arrived from Arab states. In the 1950s, Egypt blocked economic trade with Israel, restricting access to the Suez, and the *fedayeen* – Egyptian paramilitary – frequently attacked Israel from Gaza and Jordan (Howard 1967:6). In late October of 1956, Israel attacked *fedayeen* bases in Sinai since Israel viewed the countries from whose border the “infiltrators” had come as responsible for the violence.

The British and French intervened, demanding that “the two sides should cease warlike actions and withdraw their troops from the immediate vicinity of the Suez Canal” (Howard 1967:6). Rejected by both Israel and Egypt, the battle ended with “almost the whole of the Sinai Peninsula, as well as the Gaza Strip, . . . under Israeli control” (ibid.). In March 1957 – at the urging of the United Nations -- Israel withdrew from Gaza and the Sinai Peninsula to the lines set in the 1949 armistice (Howard 1967). From 1956 until

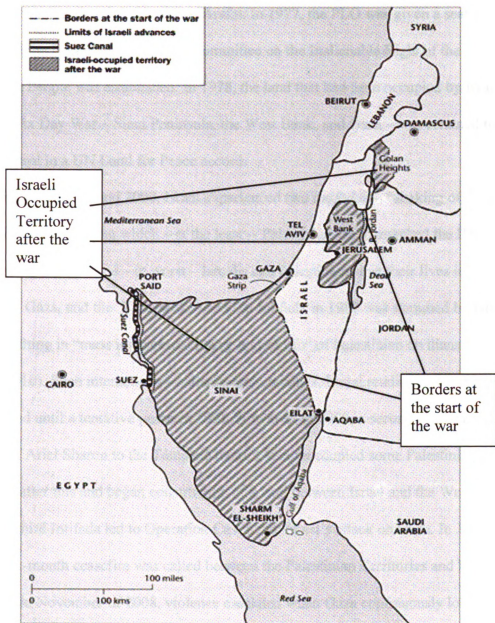
1964, relations between the Arab and Israeli populations were fairly peaceful, barring clashes along the border in Gaza that were waylaid by the presence of the UN (Howard 1967:8).

#### *The Six Day War 1967*

Syria had drawn pacts with Jordan and Egypt stating that an attack by the IDF on either Jordan or Egypt would constitute an attack on both. Skirmishes between the IDF and Syria caused Egypt to build up defenses along its border with Israel. Israel did the same. Tensions began to mount when Iraqi diplomats informed British and US leaders that support for Israel would mean an oil embargo, which was supported by Kuwaiti and Saudi Arabian leaders. Further, the source of arms that supported the Arab nations was not divulged, leading to speculation that Soviet armaments were mounting along the Jordanian-Israeli border (Howard 1967:22).

The Six Day War lasted from the June 5<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup>. Following an air attack by Egypt on Israeli villages in the south, Israeli forces stormed first into the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, then across Egypt's Sinai to the Suez Canal, and finally into Syria towards Damascus. At the end, the entire Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank and Gaza, and the westernmost corner of Syria were under Israeli occupation (Howard 1967; United Nations Security Council 1967). The loss of life was considerable: Israel lost 679, Egypt 5,000, and Jordan stated 6,094 were dead or missing (Howard 1967:41). In the war's wake, Israeli territory tripled, "and brought...new sources of revenue. Jerusalem would bring tourist dollars; there was oil in the Sinai desert; and the West Bank of the Jordan River was rich agricultural country" (Archer 1976:123). With the expansion of Israel, came an increased Palestinian population – many of whom resided in the Sinai and had

already fled Israel after the 1947 partition. Again, the assumption was that Palestinians should leave and be absorbed by surrounding countries.



**Figure 5.4. Territory occupied by Israel after the Six Day War of 1967**

In an attempt at reconciliation, the UN called for an exchange of the occupied territory for recognition of the state of Israel by Arab nations, but at a summit in Khartoum, Sudan, in 1967, the Arab nations rejected the offer outright. Meanwhile, Israel was

enjoying a wave of nationalist victory and Palestine was organizing itself politically. The Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) had emerged in 1964 as an organizing body for Palestinian statehood, led by Yasir Arafat. In 1977, the PLO was given a seat as observer at the United Nations and a Committee on the Inalienable Right of the Palestinian People was established. In 1978, the land that had been occupied by Israel since the Six Day War – Sinai Peninsula, the West Bank, and Gaza – was returned to Egypt control in a UN Land for Peace accord.

Between 1980 and 2000, Israel experienced two *intifadas* -- “shaking off”-- by the Palestinian people during which – at the least -- Palestinian youth attacked the IDF with stones, bottle rockets, and – at worst – Israelis and Palestinians lost their lives in Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank. The First Intifada in 1987 was stemmed by Israeli forces resulting in “mass injuries and heavy loss of life” of Palestinian civilians (UN History 2010). Such interactions -- attacks and uprisings, brutal retaliations, and reprisals -- continued until a tentative peace in 1991. However, in 2000, a second Intifada followed the visit of Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount. Israel reoccupied some Palestinian territories after this and began construction of a wall between Israel and the West Bank.

A third Intifada led to Operation Cast Lead, Israel’s attack on Gaza. In June of 2008, a six-month ceasefire was called between the Palestinian Territories and Israel. However, in November of 2008, violence escalated when Gaza continuously lobbed QASSAM missiles into Israel. Twenty two days of heavy bombing of Gaza followed.<sup>11</sup> The town most affected by the QASSAM missiles lobbed in retaliation by the Palestinians was Sderot, which sits barely two kilometers from the Israel-Gaza line.

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<sup>11</sup> See <http://unispal.un.org/unispal.nsf/59c118f065c4465b852572a500625fea/96b09e6adf40b141852575e7004eafe0?OpenDocument>. Retrieved March 16, 2010.



Between mid-June, 2007, and February, 2008, a total of 1,625 missiles and mortar bombs were directed at Sderot and its environs, numbering three to four per day.

### SUMMARY

The history of Israel is not tidy, nor is it tidy to tell. Israel's location is so strategic, buffering the Suez and nestled in the bosom of Arab territory, that foreign interests inevitably enter into its socio-political development.

Migration is central to the story of Israel, from the arrival of *aliyah* after *aliyah* to the wandering of well over one million Palestinians back and forth across Israel and into surrounding Arab nations. This study is rooted, ultimately, in civic life, and both the waves of migration and the swift and violent changes that occurred during Israel's history clearly affected civic life and education. In the next chapter, we will hear from teachers living in Sderot who explain how the ongoing conflict has shaped their teaching, their relationships with students, and their development of curriculum.

## CHAPTER 6

### “WHAT DO YOU DO WITH ALL THIS WRONG GOING ON?”

#### AVI COLLEGE, SDEROT, ISRAEL

Sderot is two kilometers away from Gaza, and the teachers at Avi College are within easy range of Qassam missiles. Mid-spring of 2009, eight teachers and two administrators shared their experience teaching at a school just outside of Sderot. The territory was beautiful: the golden sand, soft rolling hills that slip into the Mediterranean, arable land edged with pine and palm, constantly blue sky, and warm breezes. The beautiful belied the violent context: since January 2000, “over 10,000 rockets have been launched at Sderot and the western Negev” (sderotmedia 2010) Past and present violence affects teachers’ work and lives, including how they teach.

The chapter begins with an overview of Israeli education. We then move to a description of the context, including the territory that surrounds Sderot, the town itself, and the school grounds. Introductions of the teachers precede a description of the chaos that violence creates. Teachers then explain how they try to maximize learning in a place where mandated curriculum is rarely relevant, a week of uninterrupted days is worth celebration, and students are weary to the point of apathy. Finally, they tell us why they stay so close to mortal danger, committing to this school and living on kibbutzim that back onto the dividing line of Gaza and Israel.



## BACKGROUND

### *The Israeli Education System*

Schools in Israel are divided into state schools, state-religious schools, Agudat Yisreal (Jewish Orthodox) schools or Arab schools, which would also take Christian, Druze, and Islamic students. Avi College is a state school. Kindergarten might start as early as 2 years of age, but will more likely begin around the age of 3 or 4. Primary school runs between the ages of 6 and 13, at which point the children attend secondary school for the next four years. To ensure passage from secondary school, students must pass the *Bagrut* – a national, externally assessed, standardized exam in late spring of their last year in school. The *Bagrut* consists of three lower level subjects and one higher level -- focal -- subject of the students' choosing. Passing the *Bagrut* earns students a certificate of matriculation from secondary education.

At the age of 18, once secondary school is finished, compulsory military service for the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) begins. The IDF enlistment schedule is coordinated with the *Bagrut* schedule. For a young woman, service lasts two years, for a young man, three. Once IDF service is finished, young adults typically attend university to attain a Bachelor's degree after three years. Between service with the IDF and university study, many young people take a year off to travel the world and will then return for university study.

Starting in 1950, waves of immigrants to Israel, called *aliyah*, brought Jews from the West, Russia, Germany, Poland – Ashkenazi Jews -- and from the East, Morocco,

Iraq, Iran, Yemen, Tunisia – Sephardim Jews (Feuerverger 2001:58). While the religious and ethnic foundation of these peoples united them, they were deeply divided with regard to their socio-political beliefs, including their views on Israel. Recall that some saw Israel's fledgling existence as the dawn of a "new messianic period," others saw it as the "center for a secular Jewish culture," and others still as an "egalitarian Jewish society" (Yaacov 1975:16).

The mainstream educational system in Israel developed in response to that diversity of ideological thought and geographic origin. Essentially – with Hebrew as the language of instruction -- it was designed to ensure that "all citizens would become 'Israelis' as quickly as possible, and acknowledge the primacy of Hebrew regardless of their home culture and language" (Nakoma 1983, as cited in Feuerverger 2001:57). Thus, Hebrew is the language of instruction in all Jewish schools – state, state-religious, and Agudat Yisrael. Until recently, the cultural heritage of the Diaspora was not included in the curriculum, which was "in keeping with the official national (Zionist) policy of ...the consolidation of the Jewish people in Israel" (Feuerverger 2001:57). Since 1990, with *aliyah* coming from Ethiopia and the Soviet Union, new multi-cultural policy was devised that "addresses the three major dilemmas in Israeli society: the division between Oriental and Western Jewry, the division between religious and nonreligious Jewry, and the division between Israeli Arabs and Jews" (2001:58).

The new curriculum has not been without its critics. In 1999, when new history textbooks were introduced to high schools, for example, one commentator wrote:

The new textbooks endeavor to innovate regarding the Israeli-Arab conflict in the sense of presenting a more open and complex perspective than the previous curriculum. But the new textbooks, like the old ones, present a typical Zionist

narrative that aims to safe guard national-Zionist values...leaving no room for dealing with a Palestinian narrative (Al-Haj 2005:47).

The place of Palestine in the Israel story thus continues to evolve. In the cross-case analysis, Pinson (2008) considers the ways the Israeli Ministry of Education's civic education curriculum has integrated minority populations – including Palestinian Arabs – over the years.



**Figure 6.1. Location of Sderot with regard to the Gaza Strip and Egypt.**

Avi College is located on the outskirts of Sderot, two kilometers east of Gaza City, and 45 kilometers west of Beer Sheva in the middle of the Sha'ar Negev desert (see Figure 1). Sderot is an industrial city located in Sha'ar Negev, a desert region in the south of Israel, surrounded by wheat and sunflower fields. The area is a flashpoint for the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Over the past eight years, prior to the war in December of 2008, the school and its community has experienced nearly constant attacks of Qassam missiles lobbed across the Gaza-Israel dividing line. Since the war and at the time of this

writing, the town has experienced only one disturbance – a missile destroyed the storeroom of a house – on May 19, 2009.

Sderot is 99.8 percent Jewish, although Arab residents from Gaza who cooperated with Shin Bet – the Israeli Security Agency – have settled there since the war in 2008. Economically, the city is considered working class and poor; the main employer is Osem, which manufactures dried noodles and sauces. The other major employer – Hollandia (a mattress manufacturing plant) -- decided to relocate after aggressive missile attacks. The population of Sderot had decreased by 5,000 to 19,000 as a result of the attacks and house prices have dropped 50% in the last eight years. Since the Israeli government does not consider Sderot to be a war zone, it does not offer immediate payment for damage; rather, retroactive payments are given which can take over a year to receive (Bedein 2009). Hagar, one of the teachers at Avi College, will later share her story of filing for funds to rebuild after a Qassam missile struck her house.

### *The commute*

While collecting data, I stayed in Ashdod, 40 kilometers north of Sderot; my commute to the school took three hours and two buses. Walking along the Mediterranean at sunrise, most mornings I hear the sonic boom of the air force flying over the Gaza Strip. On the horizon, freight ships and tankers wait in line to access Ashdod's busy port. I took one bus to Ashkelon – about thirty minutes south. In Ashkelon, I wait with teenaged soldiers for the bus bound for the school. Young men and women in their dark green uniforms holding brightly colored backpacks or automatic rifles gaze out the window listening to music on iPods or talking on slick phones.



**Figure 6.2. Young men and women in Ashkelon crowding to board the bus bound for Sderot.**

Sderot is 21 kilometers of highways and farmland from Ashkelon. The highway into the Negev curves along wheat fields, and the bus stops at graffiti covered cement structures to pick up more passengers. The bus radio crackles in the background with news or music. The words *Israel* and *Philistine* come up constantly in the broadcasts. Sunflowers nod and wheat bows along the guard rail. Tall pine and palm line the rolling fields. On a few hilltops are the stark remains of shelled buildings. The sky is blue above, turning to dusty rose at the horizon.

Cement blocks and fences of corrugated iron mark the entrance to Sderot.

Opposite a bright, cheery sunflower field is a large park of trailers behind a chain link

fence. Dusty carpets hang on washing lines; rust and dust cling to everything. Then the bus turns onto a central avenue with streetlamps that arc over the road, broad sidewalks meander along playgrounds and groves of Cyprus trees. Beyond the sidewalk are parking lots and apartment buildings. The avenue leads to a roundabout at the center of which is a low cement building painted mostly sky blue. This is a bomb shelter. We lurch towards the Sderot bus stop passing by convenience stores that look dusty and rundown. In Sderot some passengers disembark, mostly young soldiers. Some climb aboard, mostly young bohemian-looking men and women. The bus leaves town and gets back on the highway for a short spell, passing again arable land.

#### AVI COLLEGE

Eventually, the bus stops at the sprawling campus of a college. At its entrance is a cement and glass security hut, inside of which is a table and metal detector. I wait in line, feeling like the out-of-place mother of all these relaxed chatty young people. One young female soldier asks for identification and another rummages through bags. By the third day, the young female security guards wave me through, smiling, "Have a good day."

Once through security, there are shaded pathways and large green areas that separate low broad buildings made of sandy stone. It is an undergraduate technical college, teeming with young men and women. I seem to have arrived on the same day as a welcoming fair. Young people mill about, music plays from a boom box in the open courtyard, stands are set up selling Crocs, hand made crafts, sunglasses, and tapestries. Cyprus trees, palms, and impressive magenta bougainvillea shade walkways. A coffee hut is nestled in a copse of shaggy pine and cyprus trees. Lounging college students smile at a passerby. Walking to the high school located at the northwest corner of the campus, I

pass a sculpture garden: Three stone people in stone chairs having tea, a metal man wrestling with a thick black metal mass that evokes Hercules, a metal birdbath on three thin legs with a metal bird perched on its rim.

The high school that is the focus of this chapter is behind the taller buildings of the college. On either side of the entrance are wrought iron benches with wooden slats. During recess, students lounge in the dappled morning sun, underneath bougainvillea and date palm trees. They are dressed casually, in jeans, t-shirts, and sneakers. Some hold cell phones with dangling Hello Kitty charms. There's a laid back, bohemian feel to the place. On boys, dark hair is a little disheveled and curls every which way; on the girls, hair falls in long relaxed ringlets.

Through the entrance, a hallway circles a courtyard where the sun spills in and a gentle breeze rustles trees. The hall is lit by sunshine, students mill around. I make my way to the left, towards the main office. Adults walk quickly in and out, casually dressed in loose shirts, blouses, sundresses, sandals, shorts, or jeans. I introduce myself to Malia who shuts her office door and lights a cigarette. The principal's secretary, she clicks rapidly through her computer files to find contacts for the teachers who had signed up to be interviewed. She punches numbers on her desk phone, hands the receiver to me, leans back in her chair, takes a drag, and waits to see what happens. One appointment to talk is fixed, and then another, then another, until five initial interviews are arranged. Malia stubs out her cigarette, and, smiling and laughing, leads me back along the airy hallway to the staffroom. She suggests I wait there.

This large, beige room is lit with fluorescent bulbs and filled with rectangular and round worktables. Instant coffee, tea, and milk along with a tin of biscuits sit on a counter

to the right; a bank of desktop computers run along the back wall, and large wooden square lockers line the left and front walls. The rhythm of the room is relaxed: papers rustling, people moving from their lockers to the desks and back again, what sounds like jovial Hebrew chatter of colleagues, and students poking their heads in looking for this or that teacher. While I wait, I can hear the fragile chirp of a bird in a tree just outside the window and I wonder if I have hyperbolized this context into a war zone.

While the atmosphere of the school is laidback and quiet – almost serene – the building itself shows small signs of disrepair, a broken chair here, one upended there. Classrooms don't have much on the walls, which are painted white and are – by and large – clean. Mostly, they are decorated with student art or world maps. The desks are simple small white tables with thin steel legs. Doors to classrooms are decorated with colorful letters and cutouts. The high school is two stories high and U-shaped. The courtyard leads to more buildings for the arts and to the undergraduate college that shares the campus. The school entrance is at the flat bottom of the U, classrooms located at the tips are called “blue rooms”. These are shelters with heavy, thick, iron doors that deadbolt and seal shut. Iron shutters darken the windows while fans that look like jumbo jet engines bring light through the thick walls. From the second floor, it's easy to make out iron girders that support an iron roof covering the entire school building. This structure is designed to protect the school from Qassam missiles.

The cafeteria is a bright and cheery place with a buffet of fresh vegetables and dishes one might expect of the region: couscous, hummus, chicken, lamb, pita bread. On the walls are inspirational messages written in English: *Know your way; Meet talk share love*. One day there is an informational fair on Islam held in the main courtyard of the



college. Young Muslim women wearing hijabs lounge on cushions on the lawn, there is live traditional music, a stand selling Arabic desserts, a table with flyers on Muslim community outreach. Both Arab and Israeli students mill around, talk, laugh, and then break for classes. I follow their lead and head back to the high school.

### *The School: Kibbutzim Origin and Ethos*

Avi College had been part of a kibbutz, and formerly served only the children of kibbutz members. Over the past eight years as Qassam attacks grew in frequency, the school requested shelters from the Israeli government. Although they were turned down by the Israeli government on the grounds that students would likely be at home during an attack, the International Court of Justice funded the construction of shelters. As the school became perceived as a safe place, children began to enroll from as far away as BeerSheva and Ashkelon. Now, the school needs to expand and just finished purchasing an adjacent field from the kibbutz association. The vice principal is helping to lead on the design of the new school, and excitedly pointed to the school's location and blueprints.

Despite the increasing enrollment from towns farther away, the school sustains the close-knit kibbutzim mentality of its roots, and a sense of collegiality – perhaps heightened by the surrounding conflict – is present everywhere. Teachers speak about how they lean on one another and forge tight relationships with the students, fostering friendships well beyond graduation. Almost all of the teachers interviewed live on kibbutzim located along the Gaza line. They know and teach one another's children, intensifying perhaps the trust and sense of security within the school. As one teacher put it, "When a bomb comes, my urge is to run to my child. I know he is with my friend – she is his teacher -- it makes it easier to pay attention to the children in my classroom."

## *The Teachers*

### *Ariel*

Ariel, a literature teacher at the high school, is in her early 40s who lives on a kibbutz that abuts the Gaza Strip. Her hair is sunkissed brown and she has a broad smile. She told me where journalists went to record the bombing of Gaza in December 2008, so that I could get a panoramic view of the city. She moved to the kibbutz with her husband and two children, an architect, about eight years ago. Ariel was the only person who mentioned the Holocaust to me: "If it weren't for the Holocaust, I would have nothing to read. It fascinates me to see extremes. In the Holocaust, extremes come together – it offers me insight into my life, understanding the people in Gaza, what they live on a daily basis. Primo Levi is my favorite."

### *Hagar*

Hagar has been a special needs and English language teacher at the high school for the last 20 years. She is tall and lean, and speaks emphatically for the entire two-hour interview. She used to live on the same kibbutz as Ariel for 17 years, and raised her three children there. In the last five years, the kibbutz started to privatize and she and her husband could not afford to buy the property their house was built on, so they moved to Sderot. A Qassam missile destroyed the house they were living in there,

This was a very hard time in our lives, half the house was open, and we lived in the other half. The hardest part was that we had to fight to have the house rebuilt. The authorities came and offered us a quarter of what it would take, we couldn't rebuild. Fighting with them almost drove my husband crazy. We ended up rebuilding with the worst people we could find, just a cheap price. We didn't know it could happen to us. You hear it happens -- to this house and that house -- and you know it can happen to you, too, but you don't *really* know.

### *Ahuv*

Ahuv is in his late 30s, wears glasses, and has an easy manner. He has a young family and is just finishing construction on a house on a kibbutz nearby. He is working on his PhD in educational philosophy, referencing Alistair MacIntyre and his work on moral education in open societies when we spoke. Ahuv compares the missiles to mosquitoes that disrupt his life and create a terrible excuse for poor rigor and academic performance among students. He would like to move to Beer Sheva at some point, where his parents live, and start his own school. Ahuv was heavily involved in the school's development of a civic education curriculum (referred to by many of the teachers as "the Hereford project") that redressed issues of Palestine and Israeli history and which is discussed later in this chapter. He has been at the school for seven years, teaching civics and literature.

### *Meir*

Meir has been at the school for almost 40 years. He wears a yarmulke daily and his salt and pepper hair curls around it. His eyes are keenly focused on me when I ask questions and then they rove around the room while he responds. Meir had not originally volunteered to be interviewed, but I noticed him hanging back and watching me speak informally with other teachers in the staff room. When I approached him for an interview, he readily agreed, explaining that he had only half an hour to meet. Three hours later, we said goodbye. He asked me about as many questions as I asked him.

Meir's parents came from the U.S. during the *aliyah* in the 1950s and opened a bookshop in Haifa. He first came to Sderot during his IDF service, and decided to return and settle on a kibbutz with his wife. His English is impeccable – though he doesn't think

so. He teaches civics and took the lead as the Israeli officer in the civic education curriculum project, which was done in collaboration with Hereford University. He is a representative for the non-profit organization One Voice, which focuses on repairing relationships with Palestinians. One annual event that they sponsor involves whitewashing disparaging graffiti in the area.

### *Zivah*

Zivah is the vice principal. She has been there for 29 years, having come as a young teacher. She speaks quickly about her divorce and second marriage, about not being able to stay away from the school during Operation Cast Lead, and coming back after three days. She was warm and inviting as she shared the story of her father's death during the War of Independence, "My father was killed by Arabs, it took me six years to be able to speak to Arabs. The Hereford project has helped me respect Arabs as people. I think this school, then teaches about respect for others and *also* respect for your own cause."

I was brought up to believe the country is right and the army is working rationally, and then I found out that they are working sometimes in a foolish way – it was a process of losing trust in the establishment, in what the government does for you.

Zivah fought hard with the government for the bomb shelters at the school, "In the end it was the Court of Justice, not the Israeli government that gave them to us."

### *Avital*

Avital is the principal. He and I had been in touch over email and on the telephone prior to my arrival, and he welcomed me enthusiastically with vigorous handshaking and much laughter. Dressed in a polo shirt and jeans, he said I should just walk into his office at any time, no need to knock. Avital looks straight at you while

speaking and listening, unflinching and jolly. He's a deeply philosophical man and talks about how Plato and Spinoza frame his work. "Platonic love," he says,

is when you don't know if you receive or if you give, and this is what the relationship between a teacher and student must be like. The teacher must learn from the students and teach them too. Spinoza says that freedom is defined only when you know your limits. So with the limits of education, of behavior there is a lot of freedom.

Avital works at the school in the same way he deals with his wife, "I have to come open to everything."

### CONFLICT'S CHAOS

I went to Avi College to hear educators' stories about how one teaches in a conflict-ridden place. Among the many things I learned was that violence is everywhere, and pervades the teachers' and students' work and home lives. Because it is omnipresent, it is both at the core, and simultaneously and paradoxically, at the periphery of teachers' work.

In the following sections, teachers describe conflict and violence in their community. They describe living with violence. We learn how what happens at Avi College the moment violence occurs. Next, teachers explain the stakes of violence -- how learning is disrupted and the emotional costs paid by students, including the ways violence seeps into school and an apathy among the students with regard to the Other. As well as explaining the shift they see in the student body to the political right, teachers explain concerns they have for students entering military duty. Next, teachers explain how they temper the chaos to turn the students into contributing citizens. We will see how they build community and reveal caring for the students, and develop curriculum that provides space to talk about the conflict. Routine is central to teaching at Avi

College, not only does it create structure for the mandated and created curriculum, but it also builds trust. Finally, teachers explain why they remain in Sderot despite the high frequency of violence.

Before doing so, a reminder about the ways in which I am using various terms. Recall Azar's (1978) claim that conflict refers to the protracted nature of the relationship between the two territories, including social violence (e.g., Qassam missiles), times of intermittent quiet, and all out war (e.g., Operation Cast Lead<sup>12</sup>). While violence can be perpetrated in many different ways, in this chapter, "violence" refers to the moment a missile, or other artillery disrupts life, for example, the moment a missile makes contact with the ground, halting the dailinesses of ordinary life, causing damage, sometimes death. In the schoolyard, violence refers to physical altercation, when one person causes pain to another through physical contact.

During the interviews, teachers used different words to refer to – or describe -- the conflict and violence. In the category of conflict, teachers used words such as "chaos," "mess," "balagan"<sup>13</sup>, "war," and "clash." When speaking of violence, teachers used words such as, "bomb," "bombarded," "bombing," "interruption," "under fire," "throw a bomb," "hit (as in 'when a missile hits')," and "shells." To refer to violence in the schoolyard, teachers use the word "fight."

"Peace" also emerged in the narratives, not only as a time when violence has ceased, but also to refer to a mentality of cooperation and acceptance. Teachers used words such as "quiet," "freedom" and "calm." To describe peace as a mentality or

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<sup>12</sup> Operation Cast Lead is the name given to the Israeli Defense Forces offensive in Gaza that began in December of 2008 and lasted into February of 2009.

<sup>13</sup> Balagan is a Hebrew term that roughly translates as "chaos into which mess creeps."

attitude, teachers used words such as “love,” “trust,” and “understanding,” and “free.”

With that, we turn to the ways teachers describe violence and their reaction to it.

### *Living with Violence*

The teachers live with violence. Ahuv recounts:

I was leaving the school and the siren started, so I stayed very close to the wall. And then zzzzz BOOM! It was about 50 meters from me and it was very scary. I followed the rules, wait a minute or two, wait ‘til it’s quiet and then move. I just ran to the car and got out. You know, ten kilometers from here it is quiet and they don’t hear anything.

Ahuv continued, “If you come to your house, you see chaos, *balagan*, but it’s chaos you can handle. There is a lot of *balagan* here, and the missiles make even more *balagan*. They change your routine, they prevent goals from being met, from even being made.” As Ahuv notes, the frequency and proximity of violence influenced teachers and their work. The closer and more frequent the bombs, the more teachers found themselves in irresolvable situations. Ariel notes:

If we have one missile fall in a week, this is considered the easy life: we let kindergartners walk around, you know what you’re doing. There have been weeks where there have been five hits every day. This is really bad.

Hagar explains her reaction:

If [a missile] falls very near, it ruins the day and maybe the next week. You become aware that the bomb has a strong kick, that you can be hurt. You become more careful, paranoid almost. But if it’s not next to you, it’s like hearing about accidents in the news; you say, “It doesn’t involve me.”

Proximity is a factor with regard to witnessing the fallout of violence on the other side of the Gaza-Israel fence. At the end of Ariel’s garden is the fence, through the fence she sees Gaza, “I hear the Call to Prayer and the wedding music at night. I drive home everyday and it’s like Sudan in front of me -- I see gangs of children picking through the trash.” Hagar explains the effects of being so close, “It’s not a matter of seeing kids in

Africa on TV, they are across the border. Some Arab kids come here for school for different reasons. They know those kids, they know what they are going through and they are here with us.” The closeness affects Ariel as well: “What are we going to tell our children if they ask, ‘what did you do with all this wrong going on?’”

### *A Missile Strike at Avi College*

A missile is signaled by Tzeva Adom -- the Color Red -- which is an early warning radar system sounded a few moments before a bomb drops. Hagar emphatically describes the drill that begins with the siren’s blare: “The scene goes like that: There is an alarm, and all the teachers are with their pupils in the classroom, or they are in the teachers’ room and all go to the same shelter.” Ariel describes it like so:

I put my windows down, I run in 20 seconds to a shelter. If you can’t get to a shelter, you have to lay on the ground, or hide behind a tree, or under a table for example. We used to have tables protecting us from the Qassam missiles. That was a joke.

She explains how students respond during Tzeva Adom, “They are good soldiers, our kids. They function unbelievably, they know where to hide, how to bend, where to run to. They know what to do.” In the shelter, “everybody is on edge”:

We’re 20 people in a blue room. Some even run back outside and collect the kids that are still roaming around. All we see is tense people waiting to see what’s next: “Do we hear a bomb? Is it going to be close?” They don’t talk too much, they don’t say too much.

Once the missile has fallen and there are a few minutes of quiet, students and teachers return to the classroom and resume their work. Hagar notes how easily the students return after an alarm, pick up their pencils, and complete the sentence they had begun, “They’ll be writing about Bialik, the alarm sounds, we run over and then we come back. They continue on exactly the same line.” Shir explains, “They know exactly what



to do when the alarm goes off. Sure, they don't like it, but most of them don't wet their bed, or not go to school, or not go out because of it. They are somehow functioning alongside of it."

But that is not to say the students are unaffected by the sirens. Zivah says,

You can hear the alarm, the students do what they have to do. After five minutes they go back and study, they got used to it. Most of the classrooms are protected but, if not, they are close to a protected room. Even so, the tension has made the children very edgy and sometimes it's difficult to teach them.

Ahuv notes:

Lessons are stopped in the middle. After the alarm, students have to ring their parents to say that everything is ok, parents call them. Students become tired, they say they cannot work, "We are tired, we cannot think of Raskolnikov or Chekhov while we are bombed" – and you can't deny it.

### *The Stakes of Violent Interruption*

The sound of the alarm, the hit of a missile, the disorder created by evacuating classroom and seeking shelter, resuming work after the alarm, and then re-organizing school life in the interim – between violent periods – subvert teachers' objectives, including developing classroom community, attending to a proscribed curriculum for the *Bagrut*, tuning that curriculum so students find it relevant and engaging, and setting a standard of academic rigor that is viable and achievable. The toll exacted by violent interruptions includes disrupted learning and emotional costs.

### *Disrupted Learning*

One effect of the violence is broken disrupted learning. Rigor is fragmented as momentum is difficult to sustain when missiles interrupt classes. Shortened classes and high rates of absenteeism frustrate and discourage teachers, who start to question how meaningful their work. This in turn makes them question the curriculum they are required

to teach for the matriculating exams, in particular, the content seems futile. While the government amends the exam for student caught in the war zone by shortening it, this satisfies neither the teachers' quest for deeper academic rigor nor for a relevant curriculum.

Ahuv notes: "I try to have an educational rigor, this is my focus, it's a bother when I come to school and am told that my class is dismissed today because there are only three children." Interrupted class time, absences due to sirens, and the time it takes for students and teachers to resume class work threaten the completion of the mandated curriculum needed to pass the *bagrut*.

Discussions are shortened and students frequently stay home or become apathetic towards schoolwork. As classes are cancelled, teachers become discouraged. When the upheaval of an attack subsides, teachers are left to sort out what has been left done and undone. They trace back to discussions that were cut short by an attack, and tend to students' emotional and physical reactions. They try to keep pace with the mandated curriculum, but making it relevant when everyone just came back from a shelter is a challenge. After a violent attack, the mere possibility of another missile slows things down. When one is tired and distraught, the meaningfulness of the academic pursuit comes in question. Ariel's expresses a futility in teaching the content of the *bagrut*, "I look at the students writing after we have had a bomb, and I think 'What is this?' You know? It's ridiculous, they are writing about Oedipus or Antigone, what's the use of this for them?"

Ahuv becomes impatient; the anticipatory dread gets in his way: "The missiles are an excuse for the unclear curricular goals, for the mess, for not being able to achieve,

for what we expect from the students, from ourselves, from this place. This is the main problem.”

Of particular concern are the effects of these disruptions on the teaching of the *bagrut*'s curriculum. During violent periods, covering the curriculum necessary to perform well on the matriculating exam is compromised. For example, in Winter 2009, the school was closed for six weeks due to the war in Gaza. Students and teachers left the area, and preparation for the *bagrut* fell by the wayside. When the students returned, they took the exam at the same time as the rest of Israeli students.

However, Hagar explains how the government made accommodations:

In these areas of the Gaza Strip, the government suggested that the student will receive the highest grade a teacher has given them up to the time of the exam. That score will be combined with the results of the national exam. The ministry said 'Tell the kids they don't have to do this and that.' They cut from the curriculum; they gave them an extra quarter of an hour on the test per kid. They did all kinds of these small things that would facilitate the condition of the kid.

Despite these efforts, Hagar expresses concern about what the students actually knew:

Obviously kids in other places have studied more than them, and are more proficient in the knowledge. But as far as what the kids here acquired? Nobody can compensate for the lack of information. The concern was not the education of the students, but points on the test. In the final analysis, they miss what they miss.

### *Emotional Costs*

Clearly the costs are not all academic. Although the students are generally good at bouncing back, all teachers describe one child who could not function alongside the violence and persistent conflict. Shir describes one young woman,

She just didn't come to school. No matter what I did, I went to her house, I talked to her mother, she just didn't come to school. Her mother's family lives in Holland, so she spent the last three months of last year there. Her way of handling

it was to leave. She came back this year, it was ok, as if she hadn't left. She even returned after the war.

Zivah explains what happens when teachers raise the conflict during class discussion,

Sometimes they say, 'No, let's think about something else.' They are tired, sometimes they want to forget about it. Some of them overcome the fear, and some of them don't. If you see them hear a loudspeaker, you would see them jump – the loudspeaker reminds them of the siren warning a bomb.

Hagar connects student reaction back to parents,

Kids with hysterical parents have a hard time, They are more hysterical than the rest. They are three times more hysterical than their parents even. If you heard a siren now, you would hear these students screaming and shouting and frightening everyone. The other kids behave normally, they don't think of the worst thing that can happen.

More generally, Hagar explains that after a period of violence, the students “study less, I see they are more hyperactive, more dependent on the teacher, more dependent on money.”

When I arrived on campus, outward appearances suggested that students are tender and affectionate with one another. They lounge on the benches in front of the school and casually throw a leg across another's lap, or toss an arm around a friends shoulder, boys with boys, girls with girls. Ariel confirms this observation, “There's a lot of affection, I come to school and I hug and kiss them. I think it's very Mediterranean, that happiness to see one another, they're very sweet with each other.” But there is a flip side to this tenderness, “it can switch like *this* to violence,” she snaps her fingers in the air, “they scream at each other, once or twice a year they have a fight, they curse. They say ‘fuck’ a lot, their language is full of it.” In general, the unpredictable violence appears to take an emotional toll on individual students and the school community more

generally, including perhaps a loss in empathy. Ariel, for example, noted a change in the students' feelings for with the residents of Gaza, "There are a lot who are mad. Not all of them, but a lot of them don't care anymore. They're tired of it: throw a bomb on Gaza and finish the problems."

In sum, the effects of living and earning in this conflict zone are considerable and varied. The curriculum is disrupted, and time is lost. But the emotional costs lead to more curricular disruption: Malaise, perhaps depression, tiredness sets in for some, who are left wondering why they need to study geometry or Proust. Ahuv reminds us that some of these costs might be imaginary, but many seem real plausible and real. To this outsider looking in, the school community looked like a loving, warm group, but insiders reported an undercurrent of anger easily inflamed. Zivah explained, "The situation here is very crowded, emotionally, socially, and politically."

Ariel says, "there is no such thing as a lesson without political issues coming up, and the class is immediately torn between left wing and right wing. I am very left wing, so the kids don't agree with me. It's a fight." She explains this divide:

The society that was here was kibbutzim, which is generally left wing, what we call "liberal humanitarian." Not anymore – kids are coming from city centers, Ashkelon and BeerSheva, the kids are moving right, right, right. They don't care that kids are being bombed – 'It's their problem, [not ours].' I find myself arguing more. Humanitarianism was a consensus when I came, but not anymore.

Meir sees these same phenomena,

Basically there is a shift to the right in the Israeli population, so this translates to the student population. It has to do with their backgrounds, with the homes they come from, they are more conservative with their opinions. The school doesn't shape their opinions, they have their own ideas from the media, their friends, and – to a greater extent – their families

The political shift in the student body, then, is to the right and leads to talk about the military service which students are obligated to fulfill. Hagar says to her students, “Listen, in six months, you will be holding a gun and making choices.’ The fact that we’re here under conflict makes them a bit more tough, ready for the military”:

The military is divided into combat or *orif*. They are the ones who take care of the military, the intelligence. Most of the work is done in intelligence. The kids in this high school go to combat, and a lot of them are broken along the way. It’s very hard to get out of combat.

Ariel expresses concern about this last piece,

It is hard to dropout, it’s like Catch-22, the only way you can come out is with a psychiatric review. I have one or two students a year who do this, meet with psychiatrists, tell family ‘I’m dropping out.’ I can always tell who would break. They just can’t do it, not because of the fighting, because of the harsh rules. They break down before they are anywhere with a gun. Not everyone can do it.

When asked what would tip her off that a kid would be challenged, she pauses and says,

You know just sensitive, gay, eh, can’t take any type of authority, no backing from home. In the army, everyone goes through low periods where you would rather just not be there, dead, or at home for sure. Some can do it, but there are many times you can’t believe this is the shit you have to deal with, this is your life.

In sum, the teachers in Avi College struggle with a fractured curriculum, the associated emotional, physical and psychosocial effects of violence on children and adults, in an environment in which there are significant population shifts. All of these forces shape how the teachers see their roles.

### TEMPERING CHAOS

We want the children to have high achievement, to learn a lot, to be educated and cultured. It’s not easy in this war zone. It takes a lot to turn them into *mensch*.<sup>14</sup> (Zivah)

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<sup>14</sup> “Mensch,” which translates into “person” in Yiddish, refers to a person with integrity and good character.

Helping young people to become responsible, educated members of their communities is made more difficult for the teachers and administrators in Sderot because of fragmented class time, decontextualized curriculum, the press to pass national tests despite violent interruptions, absentee students, and the academic and emotional toll on the students. Teachers had an array of ways they proactively and retroactively worked against the chaos and its aftereffects. Three responses were core: building community, connecting the curriculum to students' lives, and maintaining routines.

### *Building community*

Conflict can push people apart or together. The teachers and administrators proactively focus on community survival and morale building. Many are neighbors on the kibbutzim, they know one another's comings and goings, struggles, triumphs. They teach their neighbors' children, and protect them when the sirens blare. The conflict creates an intimacy on the kibbutz and in the school that transfers to the ways teachers interact with their students and support them during and after violence. Avital, the school principal, explains: "We aren't dealing with teaching, we're dealing with relationships. Teaching here is a byproduct of socializing the kids. If we focus on that we achieve a lot more."

For Shir, being emotionally honest enables community. She tells the students about how the conflict affects her, "I have been afraid after a night of bombing – I didn't hide that from the students. I think it would be wrong to say that I am not afraid." She explains how near and present danger affects her, "I have to be more responsible because I have to know where my students are. You become aware of where you are, where the students are, and what to do when the missiles come, the awareness here is intense." Shir also speaks about the way the conflict affects her collegial relationships,

We have a lot to share, sharing the same experience is helpful – people know how you feel. You don't have to apologize for crying, for not sleeping, for anything. People know what you're going through.

Ariel shares how she has chosen to deal with the conflict: "I had kids that I used to drive every morning to school because they were afraid to go out of the house. I pick them up in Sderot and drop them off because it's on my way. Is it normal? No." For Ariel, being "personal" is part of the schoolwide ethic:

I know where they are at all times and the principal knows where I am at all times. This is a community school – a place where both teachers, students, and administrators know each other on a personal basis. I call the kids in Sderot after an attack, they're all on my phone.

Ariel's concern for the students weighs heavily on her, she is especially worried about the toll that the war takes on them. "It's a really heavy price on the kids. They function unbelievably. I don't know when they'll laugh or cry. They'll be more sensitive, but they will know the world, they will have this perspective." As we will see, socio-politics seeps into all corners of teaching and learning at Avi College. To further invite students to 'know the world,' and to alleviate the ways war presses on the students, teachers create and amend curriculum that provides the space to address the conflict

### *Modifying and Adding Curriculum*

Because conflict pervades community and school life, teachers find they must address the context in class discussion; in fact, it seems unavoidable. Shir talks with her students not only about the texts they are reading, but also about the violence in their community. For her, context and literature are inseparable: "Even the most personal religious text, even the medieval poetry that we teach becomes political, you can't avoid it. I don't even like the word political, for them political is personal, that's what it means." She relates this to the fact that the students are adolescents and are "busy with



themselves – everything, each text is about their lives.” She also says that they see the connections between their lives and the text, “immediately and they voice it freely.”

Ahuv says that during violent periods, the students “are less committed, they want to stay at home. They don’t see the relevance of what they are doing.” Ahuv explains the inverse relationship between the conflict and the students’ attitude towards the curriculum “The higher the level of violence, the less they can see the relevance of the curriculum.” He tries to counter student ambivalence inductively: “Teaching Chekhov, I ask them, ‘What is important?’” He answers his rhetorical question,

School teaches you about the world. And we have many ways of looking at the world because the world is a complicated place. Maths gives you one prism, physics gives you another prism, and literature gives you another prism, and when you are reading a poem or a story or seeing a film, what is the reality reflected in this piece?

Referring to Raymond Carver’s short story, *A Small Good Thing*, he continues,

I ask them, “Why should I care about Scotty?” Art and literature reflect human situations, like a father’s grief. You can see a person divided in himself -- in a moral dilemma -- in a very clear way. And this is part of our world.

Beyond relevance to the social context, Ahuv connects these perspectives to character development, increased self-awareness and empathy in the students. He asks them,

How do you want to understand the world? You [the teacher] repeat all the stories, and repeat and repeat them, and you keep on asking them to find themselves within the shoes of the character. “Have you met a father grieving? Did you have a moral dilemma?” I constantly connect these stories and their lives.

By **p**ushing the students to connect with multiple characters in fiction, he hopes they will **s**ee **t**he dilemmas they face in their own lives from many perspectives.

Ariel believes that the Israeli poets “present different options for interpreting life. The **C**urriculum offers different ways to understand dilemmas not only in their society,

but also within themselves.” In her classes, Ariel pushes back on what she perceives as the futility of teaching *Oedipus* after a bomb scare. Literature, for her, is “a way to learn about the options in life”:

The main thing I say to them is that there are options, “You have to be aware of your choices all the time, so you don’t become numb.” I tell the students, “There are three perspectives in literature. The first one says take every moment and make it beautiful; the second one says reality is what it is, make choices according to what happened and move on, and the third one says there’s no reality and there’s no solution and there’s no comfort. You don’t have to choose one; you can choose a different one for every occasion.”

Ariel teaches writers like Bialik, Israel’s poet laureate who revived the Hebrew language, and Primo Levi, along with the western canon that includes Shakespeare and Chekhov. She admits that the curriculum jumps from era to era, but says that the students create meaning from texts because of the context in which they live, “The range of literature is not a problem, there’s so much going on here that it’s always relevant.” Using New Zealand as an example of a peaceful zone she states,

I have no idea how literature is taught in New Zealand. Even Dostoyevsky or Chekhov. Here we have problems all the time...social, political, and financial, it’s all here, so it’s not a problem to teach Chekhov. I just finished teaching *Macbeth*, in their final exam, I asked them, “What makes it relevant today?”

In their responses, students connected issues of power and suffering. “Scotland is crying out, it’s a suffering country...are we the suffering, or are they [the residents of Gaza]?”

Ahuv humorously explains how interested the students are in the mandated curriculum, “They say, ‘Please let a bomb come now! Stop talking and let it fall now!’ I *can see* when they are bored with Raskolnikov and the siren sounds and they say, ‘Ah! **Yeah!** Let’s go to the blue rooms!’” He also uses humor to invite students into the

curriculum. "Like a commercial, I say," Ahuv puts on the deep, cheesy voice of a television salesman,

"Literature -- the most important thing in the world!" I just entered the civic education class. I said "Civic education -- the second most important thing in the world...after literature!" Then I try to show them why they should care about Scottie or Raskolnikov.

Empathy, whether it is accessed through humor or canonical texts – or both -- is a core value in the school and a goal of the curriculum. Zivah explains,

The school is very heterogenous, socially, culturally, and rabbinically. There are many different children here, and they respect and accept others. We are proud of our children. Almost all of them go to the army, but we want all of them to be humanistic, we want humanism to be the leading value.

#### *Customizing Civic Education*

As mentioned previously, a special focus of the school has been the development of a civic education curriculum, which was written in collaboration with participants in a local university's collaboration X other organizations. In this project, teachers and administrators in Gaza, Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan collaborated to consider issues of civic responsibility. The educators emailed one another their notions of tolerance, identity, and justice to devise lessons and definitions they could agree upon. Professors from Hereford University moderated the email exchanges. The curriculum is organized around the themes of justice and rule of law, human equality, tolerance, human rights, and citizenship. Each theme comprises a unit; each unit is comprised of cases designed to enable and provoke educative discussions. For example, one discussion point regarding law and freedom asks, "If there are no laws against stealing or murdering that apply to everyone in society, can we feel safe or are we able to walk the streets without fear?"

The civic education curriculum presents a framework for teachers and students to consider their personal roles in community. Zivah, the vice principal, took a leadership role in the project, and attributes the project to a newfound openness: “I only became friendly with Palestinians then.” She explains her perspective:

My father was killed by Arabs, to me they were the bad guys, but over the course of getting to know them -- it's been five years already -- I found that they are very clever people, very emotional, they have their problems and I have to understand. It is a revolution in my life.

For Meir, the civics class pushes students to think about “what it is to be Jewish, the nature of the Jewish state, understanding the conflict and that being a Jewish state is deeply problematic for many people in our country, especially for minorities.” He offers an example:

In order to absorb Jewish immigrants from other places, sometimes land was confiscated from Arabs – to settle Jewish people within the state, I'm not talking about in the occupied territories where it is done by force. Anyway, you need a permit for everything and if people build illegally, the state would destroy the house. So there's a conflict between the authorities and the freedom of property and possession. We raise these issues to talk about in class.

Beyond the tensions in Jewish society, Meir says “I try to show the conflict in a wider context. How are we connected to the people in Gaza? Sometimes the students isolate a certain situation, a bombing. I try to show how things are connected.” Like Zivah, teaching the civics curriculum has helped Meir develop a different perspective about Arabs:

More than the requirements for the matriculating exam, it lets us teach about aspects of our society. I can understand the people in Gaza -- not that they throw rockets, of course – but I can understand their quest for independence, for freedom, against misery. Civics gives me a place to explain this to the students.

He **urges** the students to build relationships in much the same way he found himself **connecting** with Arab and Israeli colleagues,

I motivate them to go to these conferences with the Arabs. And then they come and they say, 'we met these lovely people and we discussed the conflict there, but in a civilized way, we keep listening to each other.' And the students talk about the hardships the Palestinian kids face.

Finally, for Meir, the project also helped teachers connect with one another:

"Close to 20 teachers were involved over the whole program. We have a lot of enrichment here. It's part of the spirit of the school: learning from others."

Avital believes that the curriculum helps to build relationships between the teachers and the students, and that he is "not able to promise a secure place but an education."

### *Maintaining Routines*

Beyond building relationships and adapting curriculum, teachers respond to conflict and support students by providing routine and consistency. Hagar explains, "keeping a routine gives the students confidence that life continues as usual." In her classes, she says she does not

change methods from one day to the next, I use the same methods. The story might be different, but I use the same routines. They like this consistency – vocabulary, understanding, interpretation. These are the things that give them confidence.

Meir's "basic approach is to go back to normal, making sure that they are careful. That's my responsibility here, to show empathy and understanding, but to keep going in the classes as well." Shir, too, emphasizes routine in her classroom in the wake of violence,

There are times when I think the students need a good lesson plan, a strong lesson. They don't need changes, they need their routine, they need their normal school day. Sure, there are times when we have to stop and talk about what's going on, but most of the time keeping on with the plans, having the regular hours is what they need. It doesn't fit all the kids, but most of them feel they need a regular routine and a regular school day.

The fortitude to keep routines going during violent periods comes from remaining in the present. Ahuv compares teaching in Sderot to climbing a very high ladder,

Don't look down at the past. Don't look up at the future and the dangers it can bring. Just concentrate on now, what you are doing and the best thing you can do to make *this* Middle East a comfortable place to live, now.

When I asked how a teacher maintains this type of focus when missiles are dropping,

Ahuv used the third person to explain:

The teacher must be very, very clear about his teaching, about what he wants to achieve in his lessons, knows why he is a teacher, is connected to the subject matter he's teaching. He has to believe the curriculum is important to his students. He must know that *this* lesson is relevant to their life and for their wellbeing.

This deliberate reflection on teaching practice extends to the thoughtful ways teachers explain why they stay in the conflict zone.

In sum, the teachers told of three pedagogical responses: maintaining routines, adjusting or inventing curricula, and building community. They kept their eyes on one another and on the children, and the line between care giver and educator was blurred often. They also strove to show students how the core ideas of a liberal education, as embodied in the expectations for the national examination, could help them interpret their daily lives. The glaring curricular hole – explicitly addressing Palestine in the curriculum – was filled with a curriculum, the development and content of which enabled them to see Gaza and each other differently.

### *"THIS IS MY GARDEN"*

In considering why educators stay in Sderot, one viable hypothesis is that they do *not* have the resources to relocate. Sderot's economy fragile – house prices have dropped 50 percent since 2003 and large industry has moved out of the area (Shrybman 2010).

The participants are professionals with skills that travel – they could teach in the north of the country or even emigrate. But they don't.

Recall Ariel's options: be romantic, be bleak, or be realistic and move on. To a person, the teachers were pragmatists who wasted little time mired in the crisis of the situation, though they openly acknowledged the challenges of teaching in Sderot. Instead, choosing from the options Ariel gives her students, they "made choices according to what happened and move[d] on." Why?

Ariel was characteristically practical: "I'm here because I'm engaged, my friends are here, my students, my kids are here. I like the smell in the morning." Siget agrees: "It's quiet here, there's no traffic, you don't have to worry where your kids are, there's green everywhere. It's a very calm and relaxing life...when there are no bombs."

For Hagar, the school community is magnetic:

To teach in conflict you have to want to be part of a team, which is very rewarding. It's hard to leave because of the teamwork, there's something addictive to it. There's a lot of appreciation, my colleagues are very important to me. It's very social.

Meir's stance is more overtly political:

I am sending a message to the rest of Israel, that there are people living in Sderot, teaching here. I stay because of the basic realization that this is my country, my home, Israel has the right to exist – so it's a message to the rest of the world also.

For Ahuv – who realizes that "there would be problems wherever I would go. It's *fantasy* to think it's better anywhere else" -- staying is a statement: "This is *also* my *place*, my language, my people, my family." He connects staying with what he believes to *be* a good education,

bringing a person to live a better life within their circumstances, to fulfill themselves. In a way, you can say it doesn't matter what your surroundings are, you can always lead the best life you can, as long as you make good decisions and

behave as you should. It doesn't matter what the surrounding, you can fulfill your potential to live a good life.

Ahuv frames his loyalty in terms of legacy,

We know *this* history and we know what our ancestors did. They gave us this ethos: you have to keep on doing what you're doing and be good at it. I think this is something that gives me strength. I think it's something that gives strength to all the teachers to live here and raise children here.

Ahuv can easily imagine living somewhere else. He grew up to the east of Sderot in Beer Sheva "far from the Gaza strip there isn't such a problem of missiles. Here, we are really in the front lines of the conflict. It's much more peaceful there." But he doesn't leave; in fact, he is in the final stages of building a house on a kibbutz near the school. He explains,

There would be other problems in Beer Sheva. I think of leaving Israel and then I say "No," since I know it is a fantasy because there are conflict and fears and unknown futures everywhere. It's not the Garden of Eden in Michigan or Stockholm. This is my garden and I should do my best here.



CHAPTER 7

BUILDING TRUST FROM THE INSIDE OUT:  
THE CREATION AND SUSTENANCE OF A VERNACULAR PEDAGOGY

Violence in communities -- the likes of which we see in Sderot -- interrupts the school day at least, and at worst causes trauma, devastation of homes, and mortal loss. These combine to create *balagan*, chaos. Issues rampant in a post-conflict society -- depression, socio-economic instability, alcoholism, a generation lost in transition -- create a turbulent civic life in Belfast. This study places teachers at the center of civic life. Here I discuss the ways they think about and respond to their contexts, and create a frame to include their personal histories, their relationships with the students and colleagues, and their efforts to develop curriculum and activities for students.

To begin, let us briefly review the data. In Israel, we learned about the civic education curriculum constructed with teachers in Gaza, about the ways teachers and administrators reach out to students and to each other, and carve into the mandated curriculum to discuss current events. Teachers in Sderot speak of their personal *backgrounds* and why they remain in the conflict zone. In Belfast, teachers create *activities* for students that address events in the community, they are concerned with *bullying* between the different groups of students, and they constantly seek out ways to *create* a practice relevant to students' experiences. They, too, peer back over their *personal* histories to explain their practice, and to locate themselves in the context. In

both locales, the role of teacher expands to meet needs of students who live within a particular socio-political and economic context.

Three dominant themes emerge across the testimonies: teachers' personal histories, relationship building and trust, and curriculum innovation and amendment. Those three themes create a composite pedagogy relevant to the context that builds relationships where social ties are otherwise threatened. That pedagogy blurs lines drawn between classroom and nonclassroom behaviors (Mazawi 1994) and formal and non-formal learning (Sinclair 2002). I begin this chapter with a discussion of these three themes in the testimonies that consistently emerge in the discussion of teachers' work and weave a pedagogy. Because the two research sites occupy different places on the post/conflict continuum, in the second part of the chapter I describe some differences, including efforts to institutionalize curriculum and pedagogy that directly address issues of teaching in conflict areas.

Education relevant to the context is recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights *Convention on the Rights of the Child*: “[educational] programmes should be designed in the light of local conditions and cultures to meet the needs of crisis-affected young people through formal and non-formal education, recreational and cultural activities” (Sinclair 2002:64). In keeping with that recommendation, we will explore what is contextualized according to the testimonies of participants in Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Sderot, Israel. The above reference to both formal and non-formal educational responses resonates with Mazawi's (1994) recommendation that consideration of “intricate relations between teachers' role and sociopolitical change...include classroom as well as nonclassroom behaviors” (p. 498).

While teachers' testimonies focused in part on what they did in classrooms -- discussing literature, maintaining routines, adhering to mandated curricula, creating new curriculum and activities relevant to the events in the socio-political context -- as often they spoke about what they did outside of classrooms -- their personal lives and histories with regard to the "other" and creating relationships with students and colleagues. Together, this mix of formal and informal efforts that occur inside and outside the classroom weave a pedagogy that evolves with the context and focuses on building relationships, here termed a *vernacular pedagogy*.

### VERNACULAR PEDAGOGY

The word "vernacular" refers to "the everyday language of the people in a particular country or region, as opposed to the official or formal language" (Encarta World English Dictionary). McNamara (1991) thinks of such a pedagogy

as one that carries with it connotations of belonging to a people, of being rooted within the local community and environment, of being concerned with the practical and having a sense of purpose, of having a sense of modest appropriateness, and not being dressed in ornamental language. (P. 305)

McNamara's study took place in Papua, New Guinea, in reference to the ways that teachers develop a practice in a territory where indigenous peoples are taught a curriculum drafted by a colonial power. Still, teachers are able to develop a pedagogy that *builds* community and is relevant to the lives of the students there. It needn't be stated *that* Belfast, Northern Ireland, and Sderot, Israel, are on a different point with regard to *development*, and it could be argued that neither locations had been colonized. To explain *how* a vernacular pedagogy observed in Papua can fit contexts in Northern Ireland and *Israel*, I refer to Foucault's (1998) notion that power organizes social interaction. As *colonial* structure organized learning inside Papuan schools, obfuscating indigenous

identity in mandated curriculum, I argue that violent conflict organizes learning inside Israeli and Northern Irish schools, pressing on identities and changing school days in both locations. In this study, we learn how the teachers develop a vernacular pedagogy not unlike the one McNamara defines here, but it is in response to violent conflict rather than to the colonizing force of a specific nation.

Building on McNamara's definition, we add White (2002), who coined the term, "vernacular politics" to refer to the bonds created by locals interacting within a complex network of specific social norms: "A history of such interactions builds up trust and mutual obligations that are a powerful form of social solidarity" (p. 22). These interactions take place on the street level, between individuals who rely on each other during conflict and transition, and who share a tumultuous past and present. Social bonds are at risk in volatile situations, like those of Sderot and Belfast. Trust is threatened. In Sderot, the day is fractured, preventing consistency – a key ingredient to establish social trust. In Belfast, the socio-economic climate, along with the struggles of laid-off families and hostilities towards immigrants, challenge teachers to inspire hope in their students.

Just as there might be vernacular politics, then, one might think of the work of teachers in both schools as the creation of a vernacular pedagogy. Like citizens in larger communities rebuilding collective trust, teachers at Ravenbrook and Avi Colleges aim to **build** trust and consistency within the school, as well as relationships and strengthen **social** ties. White (2002) speaks about the ways a "sense of community" can be recreated **in shifting** circumstances and contexts (p. 7). In order to understand how that happens, "**we** must look at processes, not static institutional models, at organizing, not **organizations**" (p. 7). The ways that teachers speak about their work that takes place

beyond the classroom evokes a process – moving from one’s own story, developing curriculum, and reaching out to students. As the context shifts with new (sometimes painful) developments, the teachers recreate a sense of community by phoning students and calling for school assemblies.

Just as Mazawi (1994) found in his study of Israeli educators, the teachers in this study developed their roles “in the *hic et nunc* of the social and political action” (p. 511). Three strands -- personal experiences, building relationships with students and colleagues, and developing curriculum -- weave and twist together to create a vernacular pedagogy, not only sustaining teachers’ work, but also building community.

By way of an outline, then, we will start with teachers’ backgrounds. Personal affiliation on the national and sectarian levels factor into that discussion since participants spoke about their personal backgrounds in the context of the conflict. Then we examine the ways teachers reach out to their students, extending themselves beyond the classroom. Their actions will be linked to theories on caring and we see that the teachers’ care evolves with events in the context and in student lives. Finally, the ways that teachers innovate and amend curriculum will be linked to theory on identity, community, and scholarship on curriculum development in Israel. What we find, perhaps, is that curriculum development and strong community ties – to a certain extent – alleviate *instability* in these contexts.

Good teachers in schools located in many contexts also peer back over their **personal** experience, develop curriculum relevant to the children’s lives outside of school, **and** care for their students beyond school walls. This study reveal that teachers working **under** the duress of post/conflict also review their personal histories to empathize, care

for their students, and develop relevant curriculum. We find here, too, that teachers' attention begins at the kernel of their personal experience, moves to focus on the well being of their students, and in the process they develop relevant curriculum to discuss with compassion the events in their surroundings.

We start with a look at the ways that teachers recall their personal backgrounds. These parts of the narratives felt most like I was bearing witness to their own struggles with the conflict and their context, while they bore witness to their past. As Maynes (2006) states, they are simultaneously at the center of the story and the narrator of it. Following a discussion about personal backgrounds, we turn to the theories that support caring and building relationships, after which we turn to the theories that illuminate curriculum development.

### *Personal Background*

In both locations, teachers spoke about and continually referred to their backgrounds. They identified moments when they gained insight into the “other,” they spoke about their childhood school days, avoiding riots, heeding parents' warnings, resisting parents' wishes. Many of the stories teachers shared involved some type of transformation, a shift in belief or development of their identity. In the context of peace education, “it is not enough to understand others; we must also understand ourselves. *This* is hard” (Noddings 2009). We will see here the ways teachers come to understand *themselves* – gaining perspective on deeply and long held beliefs about the other to *develop* their work as educators in post/conflict zones.

As she grew up, Zivah vehemently believed in the government's work in the wake *of her* father's death and expressed a palpable disdain for Arabs. Then, as an adult, she

lobbied for -- and was denied -- bomb shelters for the school by the government, her affiliation changed. As she came to know the educators living in Gaza through the civic education curriculum, she started to see the Other differently: “they are very clever people and very emotional sometimes, like us, and they have their problems. It is a revolution in my life [to learn this.]” She continues: “You are never settled. . . . You become a parent, a grandparent, you meet people who change your point of view. You find that your past point of view is very one-sided.”

Thus Zivah’s narrative involves her own “revolution,” from someone with little sympathy for Arabs to understanding that they also have problems. Sen (2006) calls this a “loyalty filter,” an experience that causes a person to reassess his or her values and that “powerfully influence[s] individual conduct as well as their interactions, which can then take richly divergent forms” (p. 22). Working with teachers in Gaza filtered Zivah’s existing loyalty, she found that Arabs are also emotional and have the their own problems.

In Belfast, Colin experienced a similar shift. Beginning as a devout Catholic (he planned to become a priest), he later married a Protestant divorcee. At first, he removed himself from his family:

I felt guilty because I would be seen as sullyng the family name, bringing it into disrepute. And that’s very much in the psyche of the people in Northern Ireland, be they Protestant or be they Catholic. Belonging to family is very, very important, so in a way I was excluding myself from the family by choosing to live the life that I wanted to live.

**Then** he came to accept his mother’s reaction to his marriage,

I could have spent a long time being bitter and angry and resentful at my mother’s lack of support and vision, but I came to understand her perspective – though I don’t think I ever fully will. I can accept that my mother has a valid point of view given her experiences growing up in Northern Ireland at the time that she did.

Finally, both he and his mother find common ground:

Mum recognizes that I'm a better person, that I'm happier because of who I'm married to, and the job I'm in. She had her own preconceptions that marrying a divorced protestant would all end in tears but ten years down the line it's going really, really well. Plus, the birth of our youngest pushed the granny button. I think she has a healthy respect for us because we did stand up to her.

Sen (2006) asserts that one's identity has many facets: gender, sexuality, religion, nationality, political affiliation, socio-economic background among them. This "plural identity" (p. 26), as he calls it, is marked by "plural affiliations." Sen (2006) explains that identities are constructed "in disparate contexts, in our own respective lives, arising from our background, or associations, or social activities" (p. 23). To hear him tell about his shift, Colin's identity is marked with an affiliation to his natal family, and to his own marriage, Catholic and Protestant respectively.

Colin connects his background and development -- from a young Catholic man headed for the church to a diversity teacher married to a Protestant woman -- to his work: "Because of my background, I don't have a fear of diversity. I feel that when I'm working with kids and problem-solving. I have never panicked about any tension that might arise." He connects his role as head of Diversity and Inclusion directly to his *identity*: "The job does filter back to me and growing up and I want to do the best for the *kids* here, I want to make a difference." Indeed, the job seemed a natural extension of his *personal* life: "Integrated education was a logical step for me. In the interview, I simply *said*, 'I'm a Catholic who's married to Daisy, a Protestant.' I had nothing to lose." **Colin's** identity is not monolithic, he introduces himself as a man who is literally married **to the** Other in Northern Ireland.



Sen (2006) warns against reductionism, particularly in zones of conflict, where identities are often boiled down to an “assumption of singular affiliation” (p. 23), thus the need to acknowledge our ability to be plural in our affiliations and identity. Davies (2008) reiterates this in a discussion of global citizenship, which “contains the idea that we have a number of cultural facets to our personal identities and, more importantly, loyalties” (p. 112). Plural identities and loyalties become complicated if they include competing ones. Yet, Colin manages his plural identities -- Catholic son, husband of Protestant Daisy, teacher at an integrated school. So, too does Zivah, a mother and kibbutzim member, whose father was killed in the 1967 War of Independence, and who builds curriculum with Arabs.

Other teachers also spoke of their backgrounds and how those merged with their professional lives. Meir explained the ways he navigates his role given his personal background, and the ways that background extends to his interaction with the students and his perspective of Palestinians living in Gaza. In 1949, Meir’s family moved to Israel from California (he was 4):

My father was a peace activist. There are aspects of my family that I grew up with, tolerance among people, being tolerant of minorities. We are minorities all through out our history as Jews. We have to understand other minority groups living within a dominant Jewish state.

Linking his background to his role as teacher, in particular with the students in his civic education classes, he says:

Paradoxically, my background doesn’t help me cope with the problems here because I can understand the other side, I can understand the people in Gaza...the quest against misery . . . my background taught me that, as Jews, we have been the minority in so many places. But here in this dominant state, it’s hard to explain this to the students. After this last war in Gaza, many students think they got what they deserved – not only Hamas, but also the people. I don’t know how to answer [when this comes up] because I come from a different background.

As a Zionist, Meir believes Israel belongs to the Jews. Yet his identity as a Zionist coexists with a sympathy and compassion for those living in Gaza – something his students -- who have experienced near constant shelling of Sderot over the past ten years -- have difficulty understanding. Meir's stance evokes Appiah's (2005) cosmopolitanism, "[tempering] a respect for difference with a respect for actual human beings" (p. 113). Meir frames Jews as a persecuted minority, his sympathies then lie with other persecuted minorities, in this case, with Arabs in Gaza.

Colin and Zivah also exhibit this cosmopolitanism. Colin says: "There are places that would have said, 'You do not go here. You're not welcome here' that I would have stayed clear of, now I find myself in these areas. And what I've found out is that they're no different than what I am." Zivah sees her development – coming to see Arabs as "people...like us" – extend to the students: She wants them to enter the army as humanists. As a result of coming to know Arabs and running into obstacles with the government regarding sheltering the students, Zivah is invested in speaking about tolerance: "This is the main topic with the children, we talk about tolerance, about peace, how we can get there – not to peace, this word is overused – but to co-existence."

In addition to a cosmopolitanism in their perspectives, the teachers' backgrounds bleed into the professional roles they play "in terms of the larger group" (Sen 2006:33). Colin lives in a diverse home and he is his school's diversity coordinator. Angie, the guidance counselor whose brother died of alcohol poisoning on St. Patrick's Day, counsels students about the warning signs for alcoholism and depression. Allan, the vice principal born in a ghetto in western Belfast, helps children living in ghettos imagine leaving them for greener pastures.

At Avi College, Shir sees the students she teaches on the kibbutz, she knows their mothers who, in turn, teach her own children. Recall that she states sharing the same intense experience is helpful to build collegiality among teachers and administrators: “People know how you feel. You don’t have to apologize for being afraid or...anything.” Ariel phones her students after a missile attack. She is friendly with her students long after they graduate. Avital, the principal, drives students to and from school: “We aren’t dealing with teaching, we’re dealing with relationships.”

In sum, when teachers spoke of their work in schools, their testimonies wove together stories of their past and present, stories of their lives inside and outside of school. The “personal” – their families, their friends, their homes – was not separate from the professional. Given this weaving of personal and professional, it is not surprising that another strand of their vernacular pedagogy was an emphasis on building relationships, trust, stability, and consistency.

### *Building Relationships and Trust*

Violent conflict shreds the social fabric of a community, tearing into trust between individuals. In Belfast, peace walls separate neighborhoods, long-standing bitterness towards one group or the other still manifests in violence after football games and during March of the Orange Lodge. Further, the conflict – even in its post-conflict form – still simmers. One sees it as it rears up against recent immigrants and in rising rates of depression and suicide. In Sderot, Ahuv described the effects of conflict on his inner and outer life as balagan.

Trust, relationships, consistency, and stability stave off the violence and its disease, allowing teachers and students to do their work. This work is an essential aspect of

vernacular pedagogy, the aim of which is to “build trust and mutual obligation . . . a powerful form of social solidarity” (White 2002:22). Teachers build trust by providing support for students beyond academics, by phoning them, driving them home, and focusing energies on students from socially deprived or fatherless backgrounds. They provide humorous outlets for one another, and understand why their colleagues cry or become afraid. They lean on each other while they support school’s routines when violence disrupts.

The ways that teachers support one another are specific to their locales, in response to particular events. In Belfast, teachers braced themselves for a heavy influx of Eastern European students, translating signs around the school into Russian and Polish and leaning on teachers of English as a Second Language. As the special needs population increases, they come to Liam to refer students with behavioral or academic difficulties. At Liam’s request, Allan runs after delinquent boys disappearing into hedges and Lisa walks around the campus looking into trees for boys smoking cigarettes. Humor creeps in when it can; the teachers rib each other in the staffroom about these escapades.

In Sderot, the teachers trade ideas about the civic education curriculum, and protect one another’s children. There are friendships born in the kibbutz and carried into school corridors. These friendships and obligations contribute to the web of trust that evolves in the school. First, I consider relationships between teachers and students, with colleagues, and the local community, and then how they reach out to the Other.

Staub (2003) explains that “to create a non-violent, caring world . . . it is essential to extend the boundaries of ‘us’” (p. 5). In both locations, we see the extension of boundaries from the teachers’ personal histories to caring for students. That care is not

only exemplified in the ways teachers talk about the students individually, but also in the protective and nurturing relationships they spin around them. These relationships involved a weaving together of the curriculum and the child. Teachers neither speak solely about their relationships nor their practice. Sentences would start with curriculum and end with caring for the students' future, or start with hoping to expand students' perspectives about the Other and end with a comment about Shakespeare or Primo Levi, or some other text from the mandated curriculum.

The participants did not easily separate their work from their caring, underscoring that the "moral and intellectual are – and ought to be – fused in teaching" (Ball & Wilson 1996:187). At both schools, they are also intertwined. Recall Allan, who teaches and disciplines children, and gets them home safely. Or Liz, who takes the public bus with her students to see that they get home safe and sound, "making travel to school easier and safer by providing escorts" (Sinclair 2002:95). Ariel's phonebook contains the contacts of her students who live in Sderot central so that she can call them if there's been an attack; Rufus is interested in being a positive role model for the young men in his classes because "there's no daddy, there's no daddy at all." Shir is relieved that her child's teacher is a close friend so she isn't as worried during a Qassam attack. Daily, in small ways, teachers create and sustain social trust in spite of – or because of -- conflict's divisive potential.

Teachers and administrators extend themselves beyond the school to create order from chaos and reach over shadowing peace walls. In Sderot, Avital's philosophy that teaching is a form of love that doesn't know "if you are giving or receiving," is reified in that he not only manages the school, but also phones teachers and students on weekends

and collects students who have been displaced by conflict. In Belfast, Angie's motivation to create after-school seminars and bring local organizations that focus on health and wellbeing into the school indicates her caring about students, and desire to put an end to the twin cycles of depression and alcoholism. Each of these actions is part of the teachers' pedagogies, all have the potential to create solidarity within the school and social networks beyond it (White 2006).

Teachers explain their work as relevant to the students' well being. Colin, for example, speaks about his work being related to his past, which causes him to "care about the students, because I know how they feel. I want their lives to be nothing like mine was as a kid, afraid to go out because of warnings on the radio, having to walk past fires." Lisman (1996), in his discussion of ethics in education, states that "caring requires some action on behalf of the cared for, caring involves the displacement of interest from my own reality to the reality of the other. A caring person acts to enhance the welfare of the cared for (p. 59).

Noddings (2008) points out two avenues teachers can follow to enact care: inference and dialogue. First, caring often presumes a need, what Noddings (2008) calls an "inferred need" (p. 89). For Noddings, teachers, like parents, can often provide the cared for with what's needed without dialogue. Zivah explained how she had to plead with the government for shelters for the school. She was consistently denied and ended up turning to the International Court of Justice for resources to create safe spaces for the students and staff. Her perseverance and tenacity in seeking out funding to keep her colleagues and students safe is another example of the caring that these teachers poured

into their community- and trust-building efforts. The act of caring was fueled by her perception of a need – no dialogue was required for her to see that a shelter was needed.

Colin states: “I think that if you can recognize that you care, there’s a lot of value in that. If people can say they care passionately, then a lot of this work comes naturally.” Talking about care explicitly and initiating dialogue about care – its focus and practice – is “crucial at every level of human interaction...it is through dialogue that we come to know one another, and it is in dialogue that needs are expressed” (Noddings 2009:89). Dialogue can be motivated in the classroom by asking students to consider the emotional lives of fictional characters, in assemblies where students learn the details of one another’s lives. It can also be motivated by action, giving care to students by accompanying them home and expressing concern for them beyond school time and space.

By reaching out to students, building trust, and caring, the teachers have at least two goals. First, recall that the trust and relationships allow teachers to shape schools as stable and safe places. The consistency and stability is essential if one expects students to learn. Without it, students will not be able to engage with the curriculum; they will do worse on the national examinations; they will use the interruptions as excuses not to engage in the hard work of learning.

Second, the care and trust that is built within the schools is a laboratory for extending that care and trust into building similar relationships outside of schools. In this sense, the teachers model for their students what it means to work together: “There should be an underlying message of working together to help the society recover from the

crisis, with themes such as peaceful resolution of conflicts, citizenship and human rights” (Sinclair 2000:54).

Meir finds ways to invite his students to empathize with the Arabs in Gaza; he invites them to attend conferences to learn about the Arab perspective. Zivah moved from complete disdain of Arabs to collaborating with them on a civic education curriculum. Ariel connects understanding the plight of those in Gaza through Holocaust literature. Staub (2003) states: “Inclusive caring – the extension of care to the “other,” ideally to all human beings – develops through words and images that humanize all people, through the examples of models...who show caring for people regardless of their group membership, and through one’s own experience of connection to carried people” (p. 5)

Thus, caring becomes part of a curriculum of citizenship, expanding in concentric circles from teachers’ own lives to that of their students to the lives of the Other. In that process, teachers and administrators attend to their personal backgrounds, extend their reach because they care about the students, and develop curriculum. It is to that building and enhancement of curriculum that we now turn.

### *Curricular Additions and Alterations*

[Curriculum reform takes two forms:] the integrative and the additive...changes in teaching, learning and content can either be integrated into existing curricula or added as extra-curricular...the former being farther reaching within the formal education system and the latter more flexible with its non-formal education design. (Nicolai 2009:63)

A third aspect of the teachers’ vernacular pedagogy involved their efforts to make curriculum local. This had both formal/informal, classroom/nonclassroom aspects to it. Teachers in Sderot and Belfast are operating in contexts that, regardless of their position on the post/conflict continuum, are fraught with division. Divided communities can lead



to divided curriculum (Al-Haj 2005:52). However, teachers in Sderot built bridges across such divides by developing curriculum with those across the divide to address issues of tolerance and justice. In Belfast, teachers add extra-curricular activities to bring students together.

In Belfast and Sderot, teachers and administrators confront protracted social conflict by developing curriculum relevant to the social contexts and creating a structure to speak about violence and war. Sometimes they used curriculum as a device – a barbed wire cutter -- to reach through the front lines. For example, Colin in Belfast held a position specifically designed to coordinate curriculum and professional development that responds to violence in the community. Ravenbrook's teachers and administrators, together with NICIE, designed special events. In fact, NICIE offers human and financial support to develop curricular ideas that bring students from both Catholic and Protestant backgrounds together. Thus, activities like Speak Your Peace Day and the weekly Peace Prayer were nonclassroom activities designed to directly help students living with conflict. Students and teachers alike listened to stories from the other side of the fence as well as pray together for a universal good.

Similarly, in Sderot, teachers use class discussion of literature to help students develop empathy for the other. The co-constructed civic education curriculum was a bridge to cross the crevasse created by missiles and war, and to place in the gap of a Jewish and democratic state. In developing the curriculum together, educators in Gaza and Israel (with the support of institutions in the United States and Germany) created a classroom-based curricular tool to help with conflict. The civic education curriculum supports Sinclair's (2002) principle that, "curriculum...should support the long-term

development of individual students and of the society” and suggests that “crisis is an opportunity to...develop a modernized and more unifying education programme (sic.) for the future” (p. 71).

Bekerman (2003) considers the ways that school activities bring diverse populations together can “reshape conflict” (p. 205). Ceremonies like the ones at Ravenbrook are “ritual events . . . that . . . shape individual and group perspectives and help overcome tensions and conflict” (p. 206). Bekerman offered an example of Hannukah and Eid al Fitr simultaneously celebrated at a school in Jerusalem where the celebration focused on the shared theme of light. The Prayer for Peace and Speak Your Peace Day in Belfast offers a similar space for children from both sides of the flashpoint to focus on shared themes of tolerance and peace. While those activities are not necessarily traditional curricula involving texts books and assignments, they are events that take place consistently and for which there is a rationale and pedagogy, albeit nonclassroom. The civic education curriculum at Avi College provides formal, classroom space in the school day for teachers to ask students to consider the Other, to actively contemplate the tension between a democratic and Jewish state. Inherent in the co-constructed curriculum is a “shared civility based on democratic values” (Al-Haj 2005:50). In both cases and places, these were efforts to reshape the conflict.

Sinclair (2002) further argues that “education programmes should be enriched to include education for health, safety, environmental awareness, peace/conflict resolution, human rights and citizenship” (74), and we see evidence of this in both Belfast and Sderot. The seminars, small groups, and after-school programs that Angie and Claire engineer are geared towards health and safety, particularly with regard to reproductive

health and the dangers of alcohol. Those seminars also fall into the category of life skills training – “how to say no to unwanted or unprotected sex” (Sinclair 2002:78). The civic education curriculum is predicated on human rights, in particular, tolerance is a central theme.

In sum, three themes arose across the two cases: (1) that teachers drew heavily on their personal histories to inform, motivate, and guide their work as teachers; (2) that they sought to build trust through caring for their students; and (3) that teachers used curricula in classroom and nonclassroom settings to directly confront the challenges they faced while teaching in these two settings. Of particular note are the permeable boundaries between the personal and professional, the curriculum and pedagogy. As Segall (2004) points out, teachers regularly trouble the imagined distinctions between content and pedagogy, contesting the notion that “pedagogy equates with school learning – restricted to the work of classroom teachers” (p. 450). Segall (2004) cites Giroux and Simon (1988) who recognize that pedagogy “organizes a view of, and specifies particular versions of what knowledge is of most worth (p. 10)” (p. 451). From this perspective, the worthwhile knowledge fronted by vernacular pedagogy is that which contributes to expansive care and the creation and sustenance of social ties.

Thus, in the ways in which their personal lives seep into their professional, in the ways that the caring they exhibit to students becomes a curriculum for students to learn to care for the Other, and in the ways that teachers develop formal curricula and informal occasions to help students learn to think about the conflicts they live in and with, teachers’ vernacular pedagogy is also a curriculum.

## INSTITUTIONALIZING THE VERNACULAR

Thus far in this chapter I have focused on commonalities in the two cases. But there were many differences as well. Here I focus on one: how extensive and rooted the teachers' vernacular pedagogy was. The two locales are at different points on the conflict/post-conflict continuum. Nicolai (2009) observes that,

innovations and reforms, such as piloting a new curriculum, introducing new approaches to girls' education or adoption of new teacher training models, may happen whether or not there has been a crisis and may prospectively be scaled up as part of education for an increasingly stable society. (P. 39)

That the sites are on different points on the post/conflict continuum is clear. In Belfast, teachers were part of a movement; indeed, there are even policies that address both a caring pedagogy and integrated schools. The British Government has institutionalized care in Northern Ireland, creating professional teaching standards that address a caring pedagogy. Twelve years post-conflict, Northern Ireland has already started "scaling up" both policies and curricula.

But in Sderot, the teachers and the school were largely on their own in dealing with helping students living in conflict. The teachers wrote a curriculum with the teachers in Gaza, funded by Hereford College in the U.S. and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation. That curriculum delineates discussion and ethical problem solving for the students living in Sderot. Thus, in Sderot, teachers are developing their own curricula and support systems to scaffold context with teaching and learning. Much less institutionalization has happened on a larger scale.

In both sites, teachers are considering "tough moral dilemmas, who the particular students are, and what it means to act in their best interests" (Ball & Wilson 1996:184). According to teachers in Belfast and Sderot, part of acting in the best interest of the

students involves seeking out pedagogies that increase tolerance and limit hostility towards the Other. The teachers have the choice to *not* phone, *not* drive students home, *not* mind that there's no positive male role model – yet they do, just as they choose, to enrich the lives of the students beyond content knowledge and book learning. The result is “more tolerant and positive attitudes between members of different . . . groups” (Hayes et al. 2007:461). One of the core conditions for the development of those positive attitudes is that “[the behaviors] be legitimized through institutional support” (p. 461).

Often, however, teachers in Sderot and Belfast face opposition from organizations and individuals. Rather than alter their course, teachers and administrators at Avi and Ravenbrook colleges exhibit a type of “moral courage”:

to express important values in words and actions. A positive sense of self and confidence in one's judgement are sources of strength to act according to one's values. People who are morally committed and courageous can help overcome the inertia of social systems, activate other bystanders, and work on creating societies and an international community that promote harmony and caring in human relations. (Staub 2003:6)

In Northern Ireland, the integrated schools movement prompted vicious criticism from priests and politicians, and still does. In Israel, Meir explains how his push to talk about the other, to humanize those living in Gaza, is met with opposition from his war-weary students. Those are examples of moral courage -- specific to a place and time -- that affects and inspires teaching and learning in both Belfast and Sderot. A core difference in the two cases is that, in Northern Ireland, that caring and courage is supported by a set of policies and standards. Let us now consider the Northern Ireland example in more detail.

*Policies that Support Teaching in Post-Conflict: The Case of NI*

Before the British Department of Education attended to institutionalizing support for caring, the British Department of Finance and Personnel and Her Majesty's Treasury supported community interaction and mutual respect – likely because a stable society leads to stable economics (World Bank 1999). In 1992, that department published policies meant to (1) ensure that everyone enjoys equality of opportunity and equity of treatment; (2) increase the level of cross-community contact; and (3) encourage greater mutual understanding and respect for different cultures and traditions (Knox 1994:596). The policies were enacted through various community initiatives prior to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, including initiatives entitled Targeting Social Need, Making Belfast Work, and the Londonderry Development Initiative (1994:596).

That community work bolstered the goal of integrated schools whose ethos is – not unlike the policies of the Department of Finance, Personnel and H.M. Treasury – focused on balancing equity, encouraging understanding, and deepening respect for cultures and traditions. Angie's job as school counselor is facilitated by these efforts: she brings in speakers from either side of the sectarian divide to inspire children to stay in school, veer away from drink and suicide, and to forge their way to higher education.

Education mandates in Northern Ireland encourage,

two cross-curricular themes covering education for mutual understanding (EMU) and cultural heritage which became mandatory in the teaching of most other subjects and areas of experience. EMU aims to help children learn to “respect themselves and others” and “to know about and understand what is shared as well as what is different about their cultural traditions.” (Knox and Hughes 1996:85)

At Ravenbrook College, Allan pointed me towards *The General Teaching Council of Northern Ireland, Teaching: The Reflective Profession* (2008). This document

provides benchmarks that consider “merging” caring and knowledge. The very first bullet to explain how the book is to be used, reads, “[To understand] moral purposes underpinning our work” (p. 2). The text then opens

The emergence of the knowledge economy and globalization is not without drawbacks...In a world characterized by change and uncertainty we run the risk of creating social instability where people are cash rich and time poor, and where there is less emphasis on community and civic well being. (P. 7)

Following this comes,

The concept of teachers in the service of both the individual and society situates our work within an ethical framework and resonates readily with the notion of moral purpose as a defining feature of professional endeavor. Education must contribute not just to the individual’s well being but also to the common good. (P. 8)

The introduction ends with the question, “How might we summarize our understanding of the teacher as an educator and moral agent?” The document responds to this in various ways, from the ability to teach diverse learners to stating, “when engaging in reflection, it is necessary that teachers examine the wider context of their teaching” (p. 12) and “engage with others in ongoing debate on the contemporary policy context for education in Northern Ireland” (p. 15).

#### *Civic Education Curricula: The Case of Israel*

Although the teachers in Sderot did not have a web of policies and school reform efforts supporting them in the same ways as the teachers in Belfast, they do receive support from beyond Israel’s shores. The Konrad Adenauer Foundation and Hereford University in the United States provided resources for the civic education curriculum to be developed in partnership with the teachers living in Gaza. These types of international partnership are intrinsic in supporting schools in conflict zones, and is not new practice. Nicolai (2009) explores “how positive change in education can be realized by conflict-

affected education systems and the agencies assisting them” (p. 28). The teachers referred to the civic education curriculum that they designed with the educators in Gaza positively, as a period of growth. Meir stated that he learned not only a great deal from the curriculum, but also from the process, and said that it gave him a forum to discuss critical issues regarding the conflict with his students.

With regard to education reform, Nicolai (2009) states,

Conflict affected governments are often not in a position to provide strong leadership and assistance in this task...In some countries, a multi-donor trust fund or another pooled funding mechanism has been put in place to...support education. (P.49)

The teachers in Sderot constructed a reformed civic education curriculum that is relevant to the experience of the students living next to Gaza. It challenges their notions of the Other and asks that they interrogate Israel’s role in the conflict, as well as explore the tensions of a Zionist and democratic state. This type of spontaneous curriculum development is welcomed by the Israeli government, whose own civic education policy acknowledges the tensions of living in a Zionist and democratic state (Pinson 2007). Given that latitude, the teachers in Sderot turned to international aid agencies for support to co-create the curriculum.

The curriculum was developed entirely in the context of the conflict, with educators traveling through the front line – literally – to devise new and constructive ways of talking about the conflict. Teachers developed relationships with the educators in Gaza. The curriculum is both a product of and a tool for vernacular pedagogy as it is built on events in the locale and aims to develop tolerance and coexistence. Further, it pushes students to consider the conflict from the perspective of the Other, that there are dilemmas both sides must puzzle through, and to realize that the answers to a particular



dilemma are various.

The teachers in Sderot do not have the same degree of support as the teachers in Belfast. This, again, is attributable to the places these two sites occupy on the post/conflict continuum. Northern Ireland, 14 years into a post-conflict era, has developed local organizations that are vested, have continuing and predictable financial support for seed money for new integrated schools, for professional development, for immediate support if a community is affected by sectarian violence. Further, policy reform in Northern Ireland is often bespoken by teachers. NICIE will speak with teachers to learn about the supports they need, from community liaising to funding for particular educational programs. There is a clear protocol with regard to the ways that integrated schools in Northern Ireland can receive support. Indeed, the integrated schools' movement, and government support for it, is indicative of the institutional support teachers at Ravenbrook receive. The organization, as well, of Colin's position as diversity director is indicator of a commitment at the institutional level to support teachers -- and so students -- attending school at this flashpoint.

The teachers in Sderot received support from international aid agencies. They spoke not one whit about support from the government. Rather, Tzila felt unsupported when she asked for bomb shelters for the school and the government turned her down on the premise that school would be cancelled, she expressed her disillusionment when she realized the government "acted in foolish ways." Ultimately, she turned to the International Court of Justice for funding for the shelters. Hagar expressed frustration with the government when it came to rebuilding her house after a Qassam attack. Teachers, regardless of the level of support they receive from the government,

spontaneously create curriculum that is relevant to the context and build relationships with students whether those practices are institutionalized or not. Perhaps the notion of collaboration and cooperation is institutionalized in the ethos of the kibbutzim, which may filter into the attitude of the teachers. Avital and Tzila also promote the aspects that comprise a vernacular pedagogy, reflection, relationships, and innovative curriculum development. They may benefit and feel relief with financial and policy support from their government.

A 2005 UNESCO report states

Innovation at local level will not itself give rise to more improvement in education. Raising the quality of education requires a broad, systemic approach sustained by political support and backed by sufficient investment to sustain key policy interventions, even if allocations to specific improvements are modest. (P. 181 as cited in Nicolai 2009:67)

In Belfast, those policies are already in play and constantly developing. The government, since the Good Friday Agreement, has committed to peace development. This means making explicit the development of positive community relations, as well as community building standards for teacher behavior, explicit ways to mentor, etc. In Sderot, still a hot conflict zone, the teachers are navigating their context by spontaneously building relationships and developing curriculum with the support of international agencies.

In sum, the contexts are at vastly different points on the post/conflict time continuum. Nowhere is that space more observable than in the institutionalization of policies supporting teachers' desire to care, to integrate knowledge they gained from their own background, and to extend and create new curricula inside and outside of their classrooms. Yet in both Israel and Northern Ireland, there existed centrally developed tools and policies to support teachers. In Northern Ireland, there were policies about

caring and a national effort to build schools that modeled what it means for Protestants and Catholics to co-exist and learn with and from one another. Teachers in Belfast enact those existing national policies in hopes of building social cohesion.

Teachers in Sderot created their own curricula to those ends with the support of international aid. They reformed a curriculum by adding lessons to it designed in collaboration with educators in Gaza, "Education reform typically represent a reaction to both a country's political and economic environment, as well as its existing education policies" (Nicolai 2009:43). The civic education curriculum supported by Hereford University and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation is a reaction to the conflict and to the fact that there was no room in the mandated curriculum to discuss the conflict with students. As Meir states, he uses the curriculum to get at difficult topics with regard to the ongoing violence. In this way, he is offering the students more than the war to contemplate. Meir is also inviting the students to think compassionately about the Other through the front lines.

## SUMMARY

White (2002) coined the term, "vernacular politics" to refer to bonds and relationships that "build up trust and mutual obligations . . . a powerful form of social solidarity" (p. 22). Similarly, teachers in both Sderot and Belfast, despite their differences, build up trust and mutual obligation through caring, through making their work personal, and through watching out for students and each other inside and outside of the classroom. In both places, teachers also use formal curricular activities to build those social ties and create spaces for all students to share their legacy – regardless of what that legacy is.

Social institutions -- in this case, schools -- run on trust. The public believes that a teacher will protect students, will educate them in reading, writing and arithmetic, will not harm the children. Trust is built and maintained, as White (2002) tells us, from interacting in ways that support one another. Violent conflict tears into trust. It divides neighbors, and the peace-keeping fences in post-conflict necessarily sustain that division. The teachers in Belfast and Sderot explain actions -- both small and great -- that push through those front lines. Giving a student a lift home, doggedly seeking out funding for bomb shelters, phoning students after a missile strike, and investing time and energy in overcoming one's own biases to create curricula build trust in -- and across -- communities.

While the teachers' vernacular pedagogy alone cannot create peace, it at least provides the opportunity. As Appiah (2005) notes, "Conversation doesn't have to lead to consensus . . . it's enough that it helps people get used to each other"(p. 85). In Israel, as noted in the discussion of the civic education curricula, teachers bridge the democratic and Jewish state paradox by co-constructing curriculum with Gazan educators, focusing on definitions of civic themes like justice, rule of law, and tolerance. As idealistic as that may seem, it's a complex task that grew out of participants' willingness to challenge their personal foundations and deepen their commitment to their community. In the next chapter, I conclude the study by discussing vernacular pedagogy, its strengths, weaknesses, and the ways it might be considered in teacher preparation and for future research.

CHAPTER 8  
MORE THAN WAR  
DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

*This is what language is:  
A habitable grief. A turn of speech  
For the everyday and ordinary abrasion  
Of losses such as this:  
Which hurts  
Just enough to be a scar.*

*And heals just enough to be a nation.*

*Eavan Boland (1998:32).*

*There I saw hope barbed as barbed wire.  
And I said to myself: That's true, hope needs to be  
Like barbed wire to keep out despair,  
Hope must be like a mine field.*

*Yehuda Amichai (2000:1).*

The Chapters that preceded this one explain a journey. The project was motivated by teaching in Kuwait after 9.11, I realized my deep connection to the effects of war when I interviewed my mother for a qualitative research class. Like Tzila, she also lost her father to war at the age of two. I have a photograph of my mother and her second grade classmates, shoeless and sitting pretty in front of a pock marked, broken glassed school building. Looking at these mischievous smiles all in a row, it was clear that more than war was happening in 1940's Stuttgart, Germany. Likewise, I found that more than war is occurring in Sderot, Israel, and Belfast, Northern Ireland.

The research process has involved several disciplines. Understanding conflict with regards to nationalist, ethnic, sectarian issues – as well as economics -- was a starting place to understand the work of teachers in post/conflict. Speaking with the teachers and taking in their individual accounts brought the research from the broad historical perspective to the moments lived by individuals. They told stories about caring, struggle, and transformation. And about more struggle as they continuously overcome – or navigate around -- new obstacles. I had hoped that this study would yield more of an integration of history, socio-politics, and teaching – a clean perspective on a messy enterprise. Yet, that turns out to be a naïve hope. Integration implies some kind of balance, yet I'm not certain at this point that balance and integration is possible where war is concerned.

#### TEACHING IN POST/CONFLICT: A REVIEW

I went to find out what teachers do in conflict zones. I found that they reflect on their own past, they extend themselves to the students beyond school hours, they bend and create curriculum to address the context. They build a practice relevant to events in the immediate environment, and that stitches and holds social trust at a time when it might tatter and fray. The teachers draw from their own past like a text to guide that pedagogy.

### *Conflict versus Post-Conflict Context*

It would be a flaw to conflate the two locations. I have emphasized throughout this document that the contexts are at different points on the post/conflict continuum. First, Belfast is in a post-conflict era while Sderot is still experiencing violent conflict, their effects and necessary responses are vastly different. Second, the capacity for change and supports for education are – needs be – different.

The teachers in Sderot work hard to give their students a well rounded education. The stressors of war bear down on them. The chaos of war fragments teachers' work. They have close calls with missiles, yet they come back to school. Their focus cannot remain on student learning, it must constantly soar to the immediacy of protecting their students and supporting one another. They personally formulate powerful insights and attitudes to stay motivated and centered. They lean on their colleagues and provide support for their students. They did not mention support from their government, but they spoke about the support they received from external sources. By collaborating with educators in Gaza, they experienced a professional development that gave them insight into the lives of the Other, as well as experience constructing community building curriculum. The teachers support one another, and their students, through violence. They are tightly knit.

Ravenbrook is over a decade into a post-conflict era. The Good Friday Agreement represents a social contract that supports citizens and social institutions' work towards peace. This means that government funding is available for this type of social work. Policies that recommend building community ties support teachers at Ravenbrook College. Colin is charged with coordinating school-community ties as well as staying

attuned to diversity issues with the help of counselors and other teachers. He works closely with NICIE, who locates funds, brings in specialists for professional development, and advocates for integrated education in the government and across communities. Professional development to move Northern Ireland further away from conflict – as much as that is possible -- is devised based on felt need, bespoken by teachers. Maggie at NICIE said their next professional development focus is forgiveness training.

With constant monitoring and collaboration, the possibly debilitating effects of transition to post-conflict on teaching and learning are buffered by policy, professional development, and curriculum development. The weight of post-conflict transition is shared between the government, teachers, administrators, and local non-profit organizations. As Cecil B. Linehan wrote in her letter to the newspaper in 1981, “A problem shared is a problem halved.”

### *Teachers' Reflections and Actions*

The teachers here reached into their past and out to one another so they can then support their students. The participants explained ways they support students. Liam provides support for his students that he did not feel during his own school days. Ariel phones students on the weekends to make sure they are faring well. Allan and Avital bring students to school and drop them off safely. Angie designs seminars on the dangers of drinking and symptoms of depression, while planning for students' futures with them.

Teachers add to the curriculum, or bend it, to further shore up student morale in times of violent conflict, and to present alternatives to war – with its narrow attention on hostilities and destruction – to the students. In Israel, teachers collaborated with teachers



in Gaza to define tolerance and justice for a civic education curriculum. That curriculum was designed for use on either side of the front line and is a flagstone in the pathway towards what Tzila reasonably prefers to call coexistence over peace. In Belfast, the teachers who participated in the study referred to Speak Your Peace Day, which was developed in response to the shooting of an alumni. Teachers and students gather to share a symbol of their heritage. Children explain what their life is like to one another. In both cases, they work to humanize the Other in socio-political contexts of violence and animosity.

Despite the differences in context and in terms of national and international support, the teachers in this study resort to similar methods to teach through violence. They reflect on their own past and identify moments when they experienced some kind of transformation. The teachers' reflections involved confronting their own biases, pushing through them, and finding words to express that process – which is ongoing. In this way, the teachers' reflection is a resource during times of violence. Colin states he learned Protestants were not different from him, Tzila spoke about discovering that the Arabs in Gaza had problems and emotional lives like Israeli folks she knows. Angie referred to the death of her brother as a catalyst for her own perspective on conflict: its effects must be monitored and work must be done to transform those. Their own past and development is the resource to which they refer while they teach in violent conflict. They create structures to guide students through violent conflict's ramifications and show students that life is more than war. However, that includes recognizing the Other through the fence and in their midst.

No teachers in this study expressed rejection of the Other, none felt vindicated or even protected by the violence. Some teachers in Israel may have said, 'it's quiet now,' but they struggled with what they saw each day in Gaza. Ariel reads Holocaust literature to understand what is happening for the Arabs in Gaza, Meir feels connected to those living there because Jews, too, have been persecuted.

The teachers in this study guide students through violent conflict by providing them with perspectives that indicate there is more to life than war. Examples include Ariel's poetry lessons, Ahuv's humor, Meir's compassion for those who are persecuted, Colin's love for his Protestant wife, Angie's dedication to teach her students to avoid her brother's fate. Teachers here model attitudes they believe will help their students move through social violence.

#### *Blurred Boundaries.*

The chaos of violence can shatter society. The teachers respond to this by making moves in and out of the classroom, across formal and informal types of teaching. They did not distinguish those boundaries in the testimonies. The teachers' reflections also blurred the bounds of Us and Them. In doing so, it seems, they create a space where there is more than war for the children.

Certainly, teachers in this study spoke about the pressure of the *bagrut*, A-levels and GCSE -- about sustaining academic rigor -- but largely their focus in the interviews was on steadying the effects of violence in the community. The teachers time and care in the students -- driving them home, acting as surrogate father and letting boys tootle around on a motor bike in the parking lot. In a place where caring is at a premium, where students experience bombs and bullets, these small acts are not so small. They are made

yet greater with consistency and constancy. The teachers I spoke to had years of experience with no plans of leaving.

In sum, the teachers studied accommodated the conflict situation by reflecting on their own situation, by reaching out to students and colleagues to support them and to receive support, and by bending the curriculum to acknowledge the context. The accommodations amount to a pedagogy that build ties between students and teachers, and is relevant to the socio-political context. That pedagogy is here termed a vernacular pedagogy.

### ELOQUENCE AND CONFLICT

Though unsure what to expect, I had not anticipated such powerful and eloquent explanations of violence and teaching. The language teachers used in the testimonies is noteworthy. At both Avi College and Ravenbrook, I heard how embedded conflict is in the stories teachers told. The names of those murdered, the violent responses to conflict that occur on the streets, the ways teachers spoke about their children's fear when bombs come. They spoke fluently and in great detail about war and grief. Yet participants constantly pushed forwards -- in language and in practice -- through conflict's debris.

This study positioned teachers at the center of civic life, they understand not only what their students' lives are like, but also what the contemporary history of the war has been. However, not only are they at the center of civic life they also reach out into it. Further, the teachers in this study look to the Other to develop their pedagogy, and revisit their past as they develop curriculum and ensure the security of the children.

## CONSIDERING TEACHER EDUCATION

What implications might this study have on teacher education? Here I find myself with more questions than clear answers. Across the testimonies there is a dedication to teaching and to children. Teachers are willing to consider their own experiences during painful times in order to teach children in their communities. Colin remembers walking through fiery streets, Zivah the animosity for Arabs that grew from her father's death. Angie speaks about the loss of her brother, Meir thinks of his peace activist father when speaking with students about the war. How does teacher education support reflection like this? Do teacher educators model reflection of this sort?

In the same way that Segall (2002) advocates "reading teacher education as a text," perhaps personal experience can also be discussed as text and mediated in teacher preparation classes (as cited in Korthagen 2006:1036). That level of objectivity on one's own reminiscences might be modeled by teacher educators. It is a risky business, one is vulnerable to judgement and bias in the process of sharing personal and transformative history.

Korthagan (2006) states, "Learning about ways in which experienced teachers and teacher educators take risks and develop new teaching approaches is one way for new teachers to understand when and how it is possible and essential to take professional risks" (1036). Sharing stories and testimonies of risk – personal and professional – models ways of interacting with colleagues and students. Teaching interns in their preparation programs have been advised to "recognize and challenge their assumptions, talk to their school experiences, consider alternatives" (Segall 2002 as cited in Korthagan

2006:1036). They might use this same reflective process with regard to their personal history, challenge assumptions about others in their community and consider alternatives.

Teacher education is not relegated to the young. For communities coming out of conflict or in that fragile space of transition, professional development for teachers is vital. In Belfast, a generation of teachers emerged from the conflict era, how could they come out of it and bring their students with them? NICIE is integral with regard to developing programs for teachers that address their needs. Teachers in communities coming out of conflict have likely been left behind in terms of support from the government, either for necessities to keep school open, like the bomb shelters at Avi College or for curriculum development. Links between teacher education programs, schools, and non-profit agencies might scaffold the work of teachers in fragile contexts. While to some degree this happens, it is worth reiterating. NICIE enters schools and listens to teachers' needs, developing programs that are, as Maggie said, bespoke.

In the future, I would like to work with teachers in post-conflict contexts. This study, while it has unearthed new areas for further inquiry, has also underscored the vitality of strengthening social ties to shore up the work of teachers. Liaising with local and national government, as well as with NGOs invested in the work of teachers, has proven crucial to the development of the integrated schools movement in Northern Ireland. At Avi College, collaboration among teachers and administrators, combined with reaching out for international support and to educators in Gaza, was central to the teachers' testimonies. These networks may provide the legs for school administrators and teachers to stand on, potentially creating networks that can be sustained. This last point is

one on which I would like to focus future research: what kind of social ties support – or detract from -- teachers' work in post/conflict contexts, from teachers' perspectives?

The study's findings might be applied to urban areas in the United States. But first, the issue regarding comparing some urban areas to conflict zones must be addressed. While, generally speaking, inner city areas and urban villages suffer the same effects of post/conflict zones – lingering hostility, outbreaks of violence, diminished hope, corroded educational standards – it's vital to point out that the same symptoms do not indicate the same disease. Therefore, urban areas ought not be conflated with ones coming out of conflict, or still enduring it. Likely, teachers in urban areas undertake the same actions to support their students: making curriculum relevant, checking up on students outside of school walls, and casting back over their own experiences to improve their practice. A charge offered to teacher education programs, then, might be to devise ways to support teachers in those processes, to make them meaningful. There are two modes I recommend here. One is to take a page out of the NICIE book, and ask teachers around which issues they feel helpless or unsupported. Professional development might focus on the ways that students learn in areas of economic instability – when homes are being foreclosed and it's likely that parents are searching for jobs or cobbling together a living with several jobs a day. Training regarding pastoral care and ways to provide consistency in the classroom would likely benefit teachers. Further, administrators and teachers speaking together about how students in the school can be supported, along with ways for teachers to be supported in offering children a stable place so that they might focus on a hopeful future could be an integral piece of teacher education in urban and unstable contexts.

With regard to teacher preparation, a study of the demographics of communities into which teaching interns are entering would help them prepare for general challenges they could face. As an example in the Fall of 2009, interns in a Masters' level class were asked to investigate the demographics of their schools' communities. They learned about immigration rates, socio-economic divides, foreclosure rates, and industry. From these, they could anticipate parents who might speak English as a Second Language, whether they might have homeless students, or students whose parents would be absent as they work several shifts in the day. Indeed, two interns faced challenges of communicating with a mother from Iraq and engaging a child from Sudan who suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder. Another learned that one of her students would be homeless for most of the year, surfing from couch to couch throughout the week. Another tried to keep up with a student who had transferred from a school in Europe when her engineer father can to work for the automotive industry. The capacity to anticipate these experiences might help steady new teachers as they are confronted with difficult or unusual situations, which in turn might keep teachers in the field.

I am not certain that care can be taught. The teachers all inherently seemed to care – were they taught it or is care a disposition? Perhaps *acts* of caring can be taught, by tracking students, raising awareness with regard to student well-being, covering the ramifications of not attending to students' needs, and reviewing methods to engage students in their own learning – indeed, inspiring them to be engaged in their own learning.

## CONCLUSION

During the research time, my understanding of conflict developed with regard to the tyrannical control it holds over communities. I had thought of it as a sharp knife or dagger ripping into societies. It cuts and takes lives. Having visited Israel and Northern Ireland, I see how conflict is more like water. It cannot be compressed, as Philip Cusick pointed out in a conversation in February. It seeps, it can wear down stone, it can submerge, it has surface tension. It slows movement and progress. And water can bring new life – there are arguments for possibilities of new growth after conflict (Coser 1956).

When I came to graduate school to learn how teachers operate in conflict zones, I was full of a revolutionary zeal fueled by the fundamental desire to protect kids. I still have that zeal, but the nature of that revolution has changed. Early on, my desire to contribute to the field of teaching in a conflict zone smacked of the French Revolution, wide ranging, systematic, intense. Now my zeal is more in keeping with the agricultural revolution. If I can turn over one stone to ease transition from conflict to peace in a context, I will be satisfied. This shift was validated by the teachers' testimonies.

They are steady in their dedication to teaching in their school located on front lines and flash points. The movements they make are not sudden, are not sweeping, but they create a powerful practice from the convergence of close self reflection, tending to student need in and out of the classroom, and bending curriculum to meet the context. These actions, I believe, are indicative of a hope that they can contribute to their communities for the better. The teachers operate below and above the conflict, offering hope and providing practical solutions to its effects. One question I leave with, perhaps the central one, is how to foster hope for teachers living in post/conflict and fragile states.



Certainly policy support plays a role and learning how to support one another, creating and sustaining ties across the community. For now, sharing stories – unpecking the tapestry of history together while together moving forwards, defending “hope like a minefield” (Amichai 2000:1) and healing wounds of war “just enough to be a nation” (Boland 1998:32).

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL  
*Background Questions About the Teacher*

1. How long have you been teaching?
2. Which age/grade level do you teach?
3. Where have you taught previous to this school?
4. How long have you lived here?
5. Where do you live in this community?
6. Could you tell me a little about how you identify with this community? What makes you want to stay here?
7. Are you a citizen of this country?
8. Do you affiliate with a particular political party or ethnic group?
9. Does that affiliation affect your professional life? If so, how? If not, why not?

*Questions Relating to the Physical Wellbeing of the Community, Teacher and Students*

10. Can you tell me about the community where you live in terms of its health? Do you find this a healthy place to live, why or why not? How easy or difficult would it be to amend the situation? What would be needed to amend the situation?
11. Are your students, by and large, physically healthy? Does the school, or do you, have any routines you adhere to that help maintain or improve the health of the students?
12. Do you find yourself role-modeling good health, or discussing it with your students?
13. How has living here affected your health? At what times do you feel strong, at what time weak? How do you protect your health?
14. Do you have easy access to health care? What is the health care system like here? Do you find it functional, or effective?

*Questions Relating to Teaching Experiences*

15. Could you tell me about one or two teaching experiences you remember especially vividly? What made it, or them, memorable?

16. Is there a teaching experience that was especially difficult? For what reason?

17. Have you ever been in a teaching situation where you did not know what to say to the students? What did you do to move forwards in that moment? What would you do in retrospect?

*Questions Relating to the Student Population*

18. Please describe a few of your students for me, their socio-economic situation, their likes and dislikes, their academic capability? How you saw them affected by conflict?

19. How do your students react to violence in the community? What do you do differently in the classroom in the wake of that, or to off-set it?

*Questions Relating to the Effects of Conflict on Teaching*

20. How have you responded to violence in the community through your teaching practice? Can you give me an example?

21. Can you give me an example of how you may have changed, or added to the curriculum in the wake of violence?

22. Has conflict changed the way you think about the role of a teacher? How? Can you give me an example from the classroom that illustrates that change?

23. How has conflict affected your socio-economic situation

24. What is your ethnic background? What is the ethnic background of your students?

25. Do you find yourself thinking about your ethnic background and theirs during the day? What might prompt that line of thinking?

26. Does the conflict affect your attitude towards individual students at all? Can you think of an example?

27. Can you give examples of how conflict has changed your teaching practice, or the way that you communicate with your students?

28. What do you wish you could do as a teacher that you aren't able to do?

*Questions Relating to School Response to Social Conflict*

29. What role does your school play in the community?

30. How can your school help galvanize your community?

*Questions Relating to Teacher, Student, and School Agency during Violent Conflict*

31. Do you believe you have the capability to off-set the instability violence in the community creates?

32. Do you think you have the capability to change the climate of conflict in your community?

33. Do you believe the students have the capability to change the climate of conflict in their community?

34. What, in your opinion, would it take to change the climate of violence in your community?

35. Has conflict altered the way you think about your role?

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