

To Mum, with love.

Declaration of Authenticity

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of Ed. D. is entirely my own work and has not been taken from the work of others save and to the extent that such work has been cited and acknowledged within the text of my own work.

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Abstract

Title: *E Pluribus Unum?* Maintaining Social Cohesion while Recognising Difference within Contemporary Irish Primary Education.

Author: Carol O'Sullivan

Key Words: *Irish education; Demographic and cultural change; Irish society; intratheoretical analysis; social cohesion; difference; policy development.*

This dissertation seeks to explore the manner in which Irish education has responded to recent demographic and cultural change. This will be undertaken through a comprehensive intratheoretical analysis of political philosophy with a view to identifying the difficulties that are commensurate with maintaining social cohesion while recognising difference in a meaningful and constructive manner. This analysis will then be applied to Irish educational thinking in order to locate the philosophical basis of Irish education and to determine its relevance to the cultural difference that is now becoming a defining feature of Irish society.

This dissertation is undertaken against the backdrop of an Ireland which still lacks a comprehensive immigration and integration policy and which is increasingly susceptible to market forces and neo-liberal politics. The expected outcomes are that while Irish education aspires towards the achievement of an intercultural society, there are still significant barriers to be overcome, both in the educational and political arenas. The dissertation will conclude with a series of observations that may help to inform the process and outcomes of future educational policy development.

Introduction

Philosophy and Irish Education

According to Drudy and Lynch (1993, p. 28) education is a central social institution in Ireland and in other societies because of its crucial ideological role. In addition, they observe that we can learn a lot about the aims and aspirations of Irish society, and especially about those of its most powerful interest groups, by examining the formal curriculum of the school. Drudy and Lynch's observations provide a succinct summary of what this dissertation is about. The task of the dissertation subdivides into two parts. The first part is concerned with the analysis of the writings of some major theorists with a view to determining how their deliberations may impact on Irish society in general, and on Irish educational policy in particular. The second part is concerned with using the ideas of these theorists to identify and discuss the underlying philosophy within Irish education through the analysis of a limited selection of curriculum documents. This analysis will be placed in the context of the rapidly changing demographic profile in Ireland today in order to determine whether the philosophical basis within Irish educational policy meets the needs of the many different cultures now represented in Irish schools.

Seery (2008, p. 133) observes that there is no single 'grand narrative' of education that secures its essence and guarantees permanence and shared understanding. On the other hand, he also observes that neither is any language of education neutral with respect to metaphysical and conceptual traditions, social and cultural influences or structures of power, surveillance and control. Seery's comments are apposite to the concerns that will be expressed in this dissertation and serve to unsettle any complacency in relation to either 'grand

narratives' or perceived neutrality in terms of the provision of education. Our evolving identity in the context of a multicultural society unsettles the likelihood of a 'grand narrative'; while the challenges posed by the pursuit of recognition serve to highlight the inadequacies of a neutral stance.

Irish Identity

Traditionally, Ireland was regarded as a homogenous, integrated and consensual society (O'Sullivan, 2005, p. 200) and the criteria applied to Irish identity tended to be quite exclusive. These criteria included being "Catholic and Gaelic" (Tovey and Share, 2000, p. 330) and having a "stubborn devotion to property" (Ardagh, 1994, p. 96). Haran and Tormey (2002, p. 14) observe that there are many who argue against this ethnocentric vision of Irish identity and who have sought to achieve a more inclusive vision of what it means to be Irish. MacLachlan and O'Connell (2000, p. 2) observe that the "historical hallmarks" of the Irish psyche are changing. These hallmarks include the experiences of colonialism, the civil war, the Catholic Church and Ireland being a small island on the fringes of Europe, yet achieving great literary and artistic fame. These hallmarks are gradually becoming less overtly significant to our identity, yet their influence should not be underestimated, even today. At the same time, despite these residual influences, Waldron's (2004, p. 209) observation that Irish identity is a "work-in-progress" is very relevant to the context of this dissertation. While a challenge to the more exclusive aspects of Irish identity could be deemed a welcome development, the uncertainty wrought by the ongoing displacement of the meaning of identity poses a dilemma for Irish society and for Irish education. In addition, Ireland's political status as a nation-state operating out of a liberal-

democratic perspective could be deemed to be under increasing challenge by the advent of a multicultural society. Also, the republican ideal, with its emphasis on active citizenship, becomes difficult to sustain in a society where the ‘common good’ becomes increasingly elusive.

Rationale

Although the Primary School Curriculum (DES, 1999) is a relatively recent publication, societal change in the intervening decade has called its relevance to current society into question. The terms ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘interculturalism’ were almost unknown and certainly unused in Ireland up to the new millennium. (These two terms are not without their own hermeneutical difficulties and I will endeavour to distinguish between them below). Lodge, Devine and Deegan (2004, p. 6) outline the need to bring to the fore the realities of living and learning in an increasingly diverse Ireland and the role of primary schooling in shaping and contributing to such change. O’Sullivan (2005, p. 104) observes, “the increasing uses of multiculturalism and interculturalism in education tend to be more by way of description, aspiration, advocacy and legitimation than as reflexive and analytical constructs”. These observations provide the rationale for this study.

O’Sullivan’s comments reflect an underlying difficulty in Irish educational policy and practice: namely that there is a lack of clarity in relation to its philosophical basis. The 1992 Green Paper became a focal point for this lacuna (Coolahan, 1994, p. 7). However, I believe that the difficulty is not unique to the Green Paper. Nor, despite a concerted effort by the 1995 White Paper to delineate a philosophical framework, has this difficulty been resolved. There are

significant philosophical tensions running through later educational documents and these will be explored in this dissertation. My analysis of some of the major theorists will be undertaken with a view to addressing the philosophical lacunae evident in Irish educational documents. It will also demonstrate that, despite the impression conveyed by benign and seemingly non-controversial language, these documents cannot be culturally neutral.

At this juncture, it becomes apposite to clarify my own interest in this area. My interest emerged from my reading of the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education in Primary Schools* (DES, 2005a). Here I noticed a disjunction between the political and educational context of Ireland and a lack of analysis in relation to the impact of many different cultural groupings on school organisation and ethos. On this basis, I decided to subject this document to critical debate.

In order to undertake this debate, I felt that I needed to engage in an analysis of one of the key philosophical tensions facing theorists today: that of maintaining social cohesion while recognising cultural difference. I consider that this problem is not adequately addressed in the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education*, or in other educational documents of the preceding decade. Along with the *Guidelines*, I have chosen to include the 1999 curriculum and, in particular, the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum in this analysis. This is the curricular area with which I am engaged in my professional life. While I believe that it has many merits, and is indicative of significant progress in terms of curricular design, I contend that its perspective is heavily weighted in favour of the 'Self'. It could be argued that this is supportive of the recognition of difference. This may well be the case, but, nonetheless, the recognition of difference could be seen to outweigh concern for social cohesion

as the excessive focus on the 'Self' renders the curriculum susceptible to the charge of facilitating the culture of individualism which Taylor (1991/1994) views as being endemic to current society.

In his 1994 essay, *The Politics of Recognition*, Taylor provides a clear and lucid formulation of the problems that emanate from the assertion of identity and the quest for recognition, the main one being their potentially conflicting relationship with social cohesion. In doing so, he problematises the concept of liberalism and a liberal society. He considers Dworkin's (1978/1984) vision of 'procedural' liberalism wherein society focuses on treating everyone with equal respect but eschews any views on the ends of life or the good life, as being inadequate to the needs of a multicultural society (Taylor, 1994, pp. 92-95). He puts forward alternative conceptions of liberalism, ones that may help to resolve the tensions between the quest for recognition and the maintenance of social cohesion and the common good. This will be addressed in more detail in Chapter One. Suffice to say at this juncture that Taylor helps to enunciate the philosophical tensions within Irish society and Irish education.

Philosophical Tensions

The inadequacies of procedural liberalism in a rapidly changing demographic can be seen as an illustration of the tensions between modernity and postmodernity. In a society that is increasingly confronted with the impact of globalisation, and the consequent effects of market forces, a modernist solution could be viewed as somewhat ineffective. As will be seen in Chapter One, the adoption of a neutral political stance, ostensibly in the interests of giving a voice to cultural difference, also deflects attention from the impact of globalisation.

O'Sullivan (2005, p. 222) reveals the susceptibility of modernity to the effects of what he terms the 'mercantile paradigm'. He contends that these effects may include "a narrowing of the imperatives of equality, a fragmentation of the basis of civil society, behaviour bereft of a social morality, and a formalist understanding of citizenship and democracy." He proposes that these effects emerge when a society, in endeavouring to detraditionalise, uses naïve or unreflexive modernist appeals without quite engaging with their implications or contradictions (ibid, p. 223). The modernist and mercantile paradigms thus become unequal partners.

Here O'Sullivan reveals to us the "contradictions/limitations of modernity's enlightenment legacy" (ibid, p. 222). This does not mean that he is rejecting enlightenment theory or modernism out of hand. However, like Taylor, he is critiquing one particular aspect of it. The ineffectiveness of a modernist perspective when confronted with the mercantile paradigm can be attributed to the culture of individualism that can, in turn, be interpreted as the darker side of the Enlightenment. 'Being true to oneself' tends to overrule any commitments to the public sphere. This leads to the demise of political engagement and active citizenship. Such demise cultivates the rise of market forces. Yet, it would be wrong to dismiss the phenomenon of the Enlightenment on this basis. I view the reflexive or authentic modernist as a significant contributor to current society.

While the Enlightenment comes in for considerable scrutiny, many of its principles are still relevant today and thus merit inclusion in addressing the needs of a multicultural society and in helping the transition from being multicultural to intercultural. Kant (1991, p. 54) defines Enlightenment as "man's emergence from his self-incurred immaturity". Man thus becomes imbued with the ability to

act according to his own understanding, instead of being the subject of dogmas and formulas. Enlightenment theory requires man to “make public use” of reason in all matters, so that established doctrines and mores can be challenged. The evolution and progress of knowledge is achieved.

One age cannot enter into an alliance on oath to put the next age in a position where it would be impossible for it to extend and correct its knowledge, particularly on such important matters, or to make any progress whatsoever in enlightenment. This would be a crime against human nature, whose original destiny lies precisely in such progress (Kant, 1991, p. 57).

It is difficult to be definitive about enlightenment theory as it can be viewed from a number of perspectives, and indeed, the fact that it evades a single definition reflects Kant’s vision of the progression of knowledge. For example, Dreyfus and Rabinow, (1987, p. 109), observe that Habermas and Foucault had both shared and divergent conceptions of enlightenment theory and O’Sullivan (2005, p. 183, referencing Outram, 1995) observes that such theory is “in no sense unitary”. In the context of this dissertation, enlightenment theory will be analysed with a view to defining its role in the context of a multicultural society.

Critique of the Enlightenment is embodied in postmodernist theory. Here, again, there tend to be anomalies in terms of definition. Cahoone (2003, p. 1) cautions avoidance of the pursuit of “a single, essential meaning applicable to all the term’s instances”, but concedes that it acts as a critique of Western or Enlightenment culture (ibid, p. 2). Postmodernism “reveals a discontinuity with earlier phases of the modern period, hence with the socio-cultural forms, or ideas and methods characteristic of modern Western culture” (ibid). Cahoone

expresses equivocation as to whether postmodernism signals the end of modernity or is, instead, a “phase within the modern” (ibid). This equivocation is endorsed by Bauman (2000) who prefers to use the term “late modernity” to describe the current era.

Postmodern writers are many and varied and represent, at times, many conflicting viewpoints. For example, McLaren, (1994, p. 193) distances himself from the “spectatorial detachment of postmodern free-floating intellectuals” who fail to transform intellectual discourse into action. McLaren places such writers in the category of ‘ludic’ postmodernism that he views as having little consequence due to its lack of transformative properties. ‘Ludic’ critique “involves the implosion of the real into representation, the social into the mediascape, and exchange value into sign value” (ibid, p. 199). He places Derrida in this category, and, although, he is not mentioned by name, one could speculate that Foucault is also a candidate for such a distinction. McLaren views such critique as “endorsing a form of epistemological relativism that calls for a tolerance of a range of meanings without advocating any one of them” (ibid). While acknowledging McLaren’s reservations, I still consider that it will be useful to include Foucault and Derrida, among others, in this dissertation as their writings will help to illustrate the multiplicity of meaning that can be found in policy discourse. Foucault and Derrida help us to realise that to homogenise the heterogeneous elements of a multicultural society is to undermine, and perhaps ignore, its complexity.

Defining Themes

I have already referred to what will emerge as the dominant theme of this dissertation, namely that of maintaining social cohesion while recognising difference in the context of a multicultural society. The challenge here is to move beyond the defensive stance of asserting difference just for difference's sake, to a more proactive stance of working towards the preservation of the 'common good'. Thus, the recognition of difference is located within the public sphere. In defending the cause of the public sphere, one is very likely to be accused of maintaining a hegemonic perspective by one or other of the heterogeneous groups within this sphere. Hegemony will be explored as an instrument of social cohesion in this dissertation and I will question whether social cohesion may actually exist without hegemony. In doing so, I will also question the effect which repeated charges of hegemony exert upon the common good.

The tension between the maintenance of social cohesion and the recognition of difference is a recurring theme in the educational context. Such tension is reflected in the statement of aims of both the 1971 and the 1999 curricula. Both curricula are concerned with enabling the child to live a full life as a child and to contribute to the good of society. The development of a moral and ethical outlook is seen to be an essential component of the individual's ability to contribute to the common good. The 1971 curriculum (citing the National Industrial Economic Council Report No. 16) views "religion, morality and ethics" as determining "the essential quality of the society and of the people who constitute it" (Department of Education, 1971, p. 14) and the 1999 curriculum, although eschewing an overt reference to religion, "seeks to develop children spiritually and morally and to foster in each child an ethical sense that

will enable him or her to acquire values on which to base choices and form attitudes” (DES, 1999a, p. 7). Thus, it could be argued that the freedom of children is to some degree constrained by the values and beliefs of the society in which they find themselves. This may be a reasonably unproblematic issue when the culture of the child and his or her family is in harmony with the culture of their society. It becomes problematic when there is dissonance between the two cultures. This becomes an increasing likelihood with the advent of different groups to Ireland. The recognition of difference tends to be bound up with the discourse of freedom or emancipation. It quickly becomes evident that there are many interpretations of the concept of freedom. The concept of freedom is addressed in Chapter One and its relationship with social cohesion, particularly in the context of a multicultural society, is problematised.

A Theoretical Framework

The philosophical tensions of this dissertation will be explored through the theoretical lens of critical theory. The interpretation of critical theory, traditionally associated with the Frankfurt School and thus with a universal perspective, will expand beyond the views of these philosophers so that divergent, particularistic viewpoints may be included. Kincheloe and McLaren (1994, p. 139) caution against reducing critical theory to discrete formulaic pronouncements or strategies. They advocate a broad and heuristic interpretation of critical theory, thus affirming the inclusion of some dissenting voices.

Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 113) define the aim of critical theory, as “the *critique and transformation* of the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender structures that constrain and exploit humankind, by engagement in

confrontation, even conflict” (original emphasis). A neo-Marxist perspective emerges with more flexible models of revolution presented to the reader. This more flexible model reaches a broad and diverse audience. The writings of Gramsci, for example, have proven very attractive to both the New Left movement of the Anglo-American world and the national liberation struggles in the Third World (Kearney, 1986, p. 172). In the context of education, critical theory “problematised both the content of education and the processes of influence and control within it” (Lynch, 1999, p. 10).

The theme of emancipation, particularly emancipation from the spread of positivism, permeates the writings of the critical theorists (Kearney, 1986, p. 2). In its earlier phase, critical theory was concerned with liberating the individual from the shackles imposed upon him or her by what Bauman (2000, p. 24) terms “an order-obsessed modernity”, embodied in the public sphere. Bauman contends that today critical theory has to contend with a converse problem, namely the defence of the vanishing public realm from being deserted by its citizens (ibid, p. 39). This problem has been generated by the pursuit of unconstrained emancipation. That such pursuit can cause problems for social cohesion seems to have been overlooked. Kearney (1986, p. 175) summarises this dilemma in his essay on Gramsci. He observes that Gramsci viewed the work of the critical theorist as being two-fold: it must serve as an iconoclastic demystification of the old system of values and *it must propose a new set of values* (emphasis added). In the case of some of the writers presented in this dissertation, it could be argued that the first task overshadowed the second, thus rendering them open to the charge of ‘ludic’ critique. Yet, the void that is left when an existing set of values has been overturned, must be filled in order to avoid a state of anarchy. This

consideration will be borne in mind in the application of critical theory to educational discourse.

Chapters One and Two of this dissertation will explore alternative philosophical viewpoints through the lens of critical theory in order to identify a potential philosophical basis for Irish education. The pursuit and maintenance of social cohesion will be the main focus of Chapter One, while the recognition of difference will occupy Chapter Two. The two chapters could thus be viewed as opposing forces. However, this is not the full scenario, as the inclusion of Derrida's exploration of *différance* serves to mitigate the sense of binary opposition. Chapter Three will place the theoretical framework into an Irish context as I consider that there is a need to provide more detail of the political and educational context of Ireland, before undertaking a detailed analysis of the chosen documents. It will become evident that the work of Irish theorists such as Drudy and Lynch, along with O'Sullivan, has significant links with the work of the theorists outlined in Chapters One and Two. Chapter Four will feature a systematic description, interpretation and contextualisation of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999), while Chapter Five will feature the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education in the Primary School* (2005). The concluding section of the dissertation will contain a reflection on the process and some observations in relation to rendering future Irish educational documents more transparent in terms of philosophical rationale.

This dissertation is not a definitive critique of Irish educational policy. It merely suggests one way of engaging in such critique and highlights the potential contribution of some leading philosophers in this regard. Because of the fact that this is a tentative endeavour, I am not proposing solutions to the limitations of

the current education system in relation to cultural difference, although I am making some observations in relation to how the development of future policy may be addressed. Also, although I challenge some of the assumptions made about Irish teachers and endeavour to problematise their role in meeting the needs posed by cultural difference, this dissertation is not proposing to identify and present specific problems encountered as a result of cultural difference in the classroom. This may be material for future research. Neither am I endeavouring to determine why the curricular documents were presented as they were; I am merely critiquing their format and discourse. To uncover the 'why' of their presentation requires a different approach, that of direct engagement with the curriculum designers. Again, this is material for future research.

Clarification of Two Essential Terms

Before proceeding into the main body of this dissertation, I consider it incumbent upon me to clarify two sets of related, yet potentially problematic terms. These are 'multicultural'/'intercultural' and 'multiculturalism'/'interculturalism'. Within each set, the terms are sometimes used interchangeably. For example, Parekh (2006) eschews the use of the terms 'intercultural' and 'interculturalism'. Yet, his interpretation of 'multicultural' and 'multiculturalism' is, at times, close to the terms 'intercultural' and 'interculturalism' as presented in the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education in Primary Schools* (2005). Nevertheless I consider that there are differences between the terms that need to be acknowledged.

Parekh (2006, p. 4) equates a multicultural society with one that endeavours to accommodate rather than to assimilate cultural diversity. He views

such a society as embracing the ideology of multiculturalism. Yet such ideology is subject to a number of different interpretations. Fanning (2007, p. 243) states, “multiculturalism is a term that is employed in a number of ways to refer to a range of ideas and practices that relate to acknowledgement of and responses to social diversity”. Parekh (2002, p. 146) observes that multiculturalism draws its inspiration from a number of different sources and

when a writer attacks multiculturalism, we need to be on our guard, for he is likely to impose a false unity on a disparate and loosely held body of ideas, equate multiculturalism with one particular strand of it and end up distorting those who do not quite fit into his simplistic version of it.

As will be seen, a number of writers express dissatisfaction with the term and present it as being inadequate to the challenge of cultural difference. Bauman (2001, in Chapter One) and Bhabha (1990, in Chapter Two) emerge as particularly trenchant critics of the term. While they may be guilty of imposing a “false unity” on the term, their arguments are worth consideration. Bhabha (1990, p. 208) presents multiculturalism as an outdated concept and views it as a means of containing difference. Bauman (2001, p. 124) contends that the term ‘multiculturalism’ lacks definition and instead reflects the world’s uncertainty about the kinds of values that deserve to be cherished and cultivated and the directions that should be pursued. Parekh’s observation (above) endeavours to shield the multiculturalist agenda from such criticism. However, Phillips (2004, cited by Fanning, 2007, p. 243) suggests that the term should be abandoned as it “is not useful, it means the wrong things...Multiculturalism suggests separateness...”

Even this truncated debate of these terms demonstrates the complexities inherent in the terms 'multicultural' and 'multiculturalism'. To obviate confusion, I have chosen to use the term 'multicultural' to represent the current situation in Irish society, i.e. that we are now a society of many cultures but that these cultures are not necessarily in harmony with, or accommodating of, each other. The term 'intercultural' is interpreted as a society that has come to terms with difference and in which many cultures meet and work together with a shared aim, namely the good of that society. To me, this latter term is more reflexive and proactive than the term 'multicultural'. This intercultural society is more likely to be an aspirational concept and its existence in any country, Ireland or otherwise, remains a subject for debate.

I accept Parekh's representation of multiculturalism yet I am also mindful of Bauman's and Bhabha's interpretation of the term. Again, in order to obviate confusion, I will use the term 'multiculturalism' to represent an inadequate and limited response to cultural difference, and the term 'interculturalism' to represent a more concerted and deterministic response which Irwin (2009, p. 1) defines as seeking "to encourage...different perspectives to enter into communication and to work towards a common framework". Irwin acknowledges the respective merits of both approaches but argues that one of the limitations of the 'multiculturalist' approach is that "it fosters a certain isolationism by allowing specific cultures to remain detached from their wider social and political milieu". The *Irish Times* (MacCormaic, 2008, p. W2) defines the ideology of interculturalism as "a two way process of mutual accommodation, albeit starting from certain core values". This approach to the dilemmas brought about by a heterogeneous society incorporates the notion of

critical dialogue and posits the challenge of the establishment of core values from whence the development of a socially coherent and diverse society may develop. The public sphere is reinstated here. The establishment of core values will involve a critical reappraisal of existing cultural mores on the part of all cultures.

Conclusion

In this Introduction, I have endeavoured to provide an overview of this dissertation and have outlined its main tasks: namely to identify and discuss the philosophical tensions within current Irish educational policy through the application of the deliberations of a number of theorists to selected documents.

The rationale for this study emerged from a concern about the need to problematise the role of Irish educational policy in the context of a multicultural society and, more broadly, in the context of a lack of a defined philosophical basis in Irish educational policy. The exploration of meaning becomes the focal point of my deliberations. O'Sullivan (2005, pp. x-xi) observes that many analyses of policy issues tend to focus on their history or methodology and tend to be descriptive rather than analytical. He contends that while these disciplines have a significant contribution to make, it is not in their nature to place meaning at the centre of their enquiries. I aspire to fill this lacuna, albeit in a modest and limited way.

The underlying theme of this dissertation is the dilemma of maintaining social cohesion while recognising difference in the context of a multicultural society. Perspectives on emancipation will form a significant part of the argument. The associated theme of hegemony as an instrument of, or adjunct to, social cohesion will also be addressed, as it is a likely charge to emanate from

one or other grouping in a heterogeneous society. The tensions between these related themes will be placed in the context of Irish educational policy. The problems relating to the identification of a core value system to which all members of this society can subscribe will be addressed.

Critical theory has been identified as the theoretical lens through which the philosophical tensions in this dissertation will be viewed. The use of critical theory, particularly in the expanded sense outlined above, will serve to unsettle the benign and consensual tone of Irish educational policy documents and will endeavour to identify and confront potential areas of conflict in order to generate the critical dialogue required to meet the needs of a multicultural society.

I view this undertaking as a forum in which to make the case for a more reflexive approach to the development of educational policy documents. This will be undertaken so that lacunae in terms of philosophical basis can be challenged and anomalies between the discourse of the documents and the realities of a multicultural society can be seen.

Chapter One: A Universal Approach to Social Cohesion

1.1 Introduction

McLaughlin (2003, p. 121) comments on the dilemmas faced by schools of “every kind, place and time” in relation to the contrasting and competing demands with which they are confronted in reconciling the needs of the individual with the overall aims and ethos of the classroom and school. He acknowledges that schools in plural, multicultural, liberal democratic societies face very specific dilemmas and concludes that these dilemmas are derived from the complex principles, values and practices that articulate and underpin societies of this kind. I believe that such dilemmas are accelerating in the Irish educational context. Due to our changing demographic, teachers are confronted with the tensions between meeting the needs of many different cultural groupings while endeavouring to prepare them to become active citizens. Thus helping the child “to live a full life as a child and to realise his or her potential as a unique individual” is juxtaposed with preparing him or her “to contribute to the good of society” (DES, 1999a, p. 7). The pursuit of these aims leads to a debate on what constitutes personal freedom, with a number of writers viewing adherence to societal norms and values to be an impediment to its realisation. The tensions between the maintenance of social cohesion and the recognition of difference thus become manifest.

The discourse of Irish educational policy tends to place more emphasis on the recognition of the child as an individual than on the realisation of his or her potential as a citizen. This can be seen in the manner in which the aims of education are catalogued and, in particular, in the emphasis, accorded to the ‘Self’ in the Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum. Seery

(2008, p. 134) attributes this focus on the individual to the discourse of developmental psychology that has become the dominant informing discipline in education of the twentieth century. Within this perspective, the aims of education are self-realisation, the realisation of potentialities and the moral and social development of the individual. I view this extensive focus on the self as compromising the notion of harmonious co-habitation within a community. Such a notion is, potentially, further compromised with the advent of many different cultural groupings. In this chapter and the next, I wish to explore the concept of social cohesion with a view to determining how it can be reconciled with the meaningful recognition of difference. In doing so, I will also address the associated (or dialectical) theme of emancipation and explore its various interpretations. The theme (or charge) of hegemony tends to emerge as a subtext in the pursuit of social cohesion, and so, this consideration will be taken into account throughout the discussion. Essentially, I am endeavouring to highlight the tension between the 'good' and the 'right', a tension that, I believe, has not been sufficiently exposed in the discourse of Irish educational policy.

This tension is manifested in Isaiah Berlin's (1984) exploration of the concept of liberty. He presents two different interpretations of the concept: 'Negative' freedom is the freedom to do as one wishes without obstruction, thus pursuing one's rights (Berlin, 1984, p. 16). 'Positive' freedom is the freedom to live one prescribed way of life, that of the 'common good' (Berlin, 1984, p. 24). Berlin presents the latter as a more limited concept and contends that 'negative' freedom embodied in pluralism seems to be a truer and more human ideal than the authoritarian structures of 'positive' self-mastery by classes, or peoples or the whole of mankind (Berlin, 1984, p. 33). Yet, it could be argued that this view of

freedom is a catalyst for social implosion as its inherent *laissez-faire* approach is the breeding ground for inertia and disengagement from societal concerns.

This chapter presents an argument for the retention of a universal approach to the working of society, an approach that, while acknowledging the rights of individuals, retains the perspective of the common good as a foil to the pursuit of unconstrained emancipation. While Berlin's 'negative' freedom may seem to be more sympathetic to the needs of a diverse society, the writers who feature in this chapter, with the exception of Hegel, also endeavour to address such needs, while still retaining a vision of social cohesion. They can thus be seen to be closer to the more deterministic concept of interculturalism rather than the more isolationist concept of multiculturalism as defined in the Introduction to this dissertation.

1.2 From Socrates to *Sittlichkeit*

Hegel is a necessary starting point for this analysis of social cohesion as many of the writers who are subsequently featured in this chapter derive their inspiration from him. In his writings, Hegel grappled with the tensions between the self (as embodied in Socrates) and society (as embodied in the Greek *polis*) (Singer, 2001, p. 20). While Hegel had significant reservations in relation to the workings of the original *polis*, due to the lack of critical reflection demonstrated by its inhabitants, he still emerges as its champion. Although he admired Socrates for engaging in the critical reflection that was absent from the *polis*, he ultimately endorsed his execution as he viewed Socrates as a threat to the cohesion of the *polis*. Taylor (1984, p. 179) informs us that despite Hegel's

admiration of Socrates, he believed that man's true realisation of himself cannot occur independently of his society.

This does not mean that Hegel rejected the value of reason. On the contrary, as Taylor (1984, p. 179) observes, he relinquished the original concept of *Sittlichkeit* (one's moral obligations to one's community) as embodied by the Greek *polis* but aspired to see it reborn in a new way which would incorporate the role of reason (ibid). Habermas (1987a, p. 27) observes that Hegel viewed reason as "a force that not only differentiates and breaks apart the system of life conditions, but also reunites them again." This is where Hegel successfully intertwines the principles of the Enlightenment with the older moral order, the 'great chain of Being' that "gave meaning to the world and to the activities of social life" (Taylor, 1991, p. 3). For Hegel, the 'good' took precedence over the 'right'. For him, full realisation of freedom required society for the Aristotelian reason that a society is the minimum self-sufficient human reality (Taylor, 1984, p. 179). This notion of freedom contrasts with Berlin's concept of 'negative' freedom.

The advent of critical reflection, as a product of enlightenment thought, served to accord greater recognition to the role of the individual and, consequently, to the ascent of individualism. Taylor (1991, p. 2) observes that the emergence of individualism is viewed by many as the finest achievement of modern civilisation. People were liberated from "a role and a station that was properly theirs and from which it was almost unthinkable to deviate" (ibid, p. 3). On the other hand, individualism has generated a break with the activities of social life. Here, individualism could be viewed as a threat to social cohesion.

The synthesis between individual and community is no longer a given. Hegel, however, negotiates an integration of individual and community:

In civil society each member is his own end, everything else is nothing to him. But except in contact with others he cannot attain the whole compass of his own ends, and therefore these others are the means to the end of the particular member

(Hegel, 1956, cited by Habermas, 1987a, p. 38).

The dialogical notion of identity becomes apparent here: “objective and subjective will are then reconciled and form one and the same untroubled whole” (Hegel, 1955, cited by Taylor, 1984, p. 186).

In serving the community, “the individual is not serving an end separate from him, rather he is serving a large goal which is the ground of his identity, for he only is the individual he is in this larger life” (Taylor, 1984, p. 182). This is all very well when the individual and the community are able to reach a level of harmony with each other. However, the converse is also possible: “this inescapable relation to the culture of my society does not rule out the most extreme alienation. This comes about when the public experience of my society ceases to have any meaning for me” (ibid, p. 183). In a multicultural society, where the likelihood of alienation looms ever larger, it is to be pondered as to whether the Hegelian notion of the individual in harmony with his community can be retained. If not, Hegel’s vision of freedom is lost and while other concepts of freedom may emerge, they, paradoxically, bring with them new forms of bondage. According to Habermas (1987a, p. 33), Hegel viewed such concepts as ‘unfreedom’ because the unshackling power of reflection has become autonomous and now achieved unification only through the violence of a

subjugating subjectivity. This 'unfreedom' (which equates with Berlin's negative freedom) is epitomised in the dark side of individualism. This is a constant concern of Taylor and will be addressed in more detail below.

1.3 Universal Participation and the Recognition of Difference

Hegel's vision of freedom is founded upon the premise of universal participation. But as Taylor (1984, pp. 194-195) observes, "the very size, complexity and inter-dependence of modern society makes this increasingly difficult on technical grounds alone." In addition, "the increasing alienation in a society which has eroded its traditional foci of allegiance makes it harder and harder to achieve the basic consensus, to bring everyone to the 'general will' which is essential for radical democracy." Short of imposing a totalitarian approach, mass participation is subjected to increasing challenge by the complexity and fragmentation of a large-scale contemporary society. This fragmentation leads to "the disruption of the conditions of symmetry and of the reciprocal dependencies of an intersubjectively constituted life-context, where one part isolates itself and hence also alienates all other parts from itself and their common life" (Habermas, 1987a, p. 29). This is the negative impact of a subject-centred reason. According to Habermas, this is combated by Hegel through the unifying power of an intersubjectivity in which the living spirit is the medium that founds a communality of the sort that one subject can know itself to be one with another subject while still remaining itself. Isolation of subjects leads to a disruption of communication (Habermas, 1987a, p. 30). This solution is seen by Taylor (1984, p. 197) as unworkable due to the fact that it is based upon homogenisation and thus suppresses differentiation. Taylor contends:

one of the great needs of the modern democratic polity is to recover a sense of significant differentiation so that its partial communities...can become again important centres of concern and activity for their members in a way that connects them to the whole.

This is one of the challenges which interculturalism endeavours to address.

What renders Hegel's work particularly problematic for his critics is that he leaves no room for alternative constructions of society. The community to which one has an ethical obligation is already in existence. The 'common good' has already been defined and transmitted. Habermas observes that he is operating out of the perspective of a *presupposed* ethical totality (Habermas, 1987a, p. 29, original emphasis). Hence, as Taylor (1984, p. 178) concludes, in *Sittlichkeit* there is no gap between what ought to be and what is, between *Sollen* and *Sein*. This makes Hegel a target for censure by adversaries of the Enlightenment, such as, for example, Horkheimer and Adorno (2003, p.160) who contend that

enlightenment is as totalitarian as any system. Its untruth does not consist in what its romantic enemies have always reproached it for...but instead in the fact that for enlightenment the process is always decided from the start.

Both Habermas and Taylor recognise the potential for such critique of Hegel's work. However, they avoid rejecting it on this basis and instead retain many of his ideas and many of the principles of the Enlightenment, albeit reshaping them to align more comfortably with the exigencies of difference.

In Hegel's work, we observe that the impact of subjective reason and the rational world contribute to the evolution and, paradoxically, to the demise, of

the *polis*. This is the conundrum with which Hegel grappled in his writings. The singular notion of community has become fragmented by the recognition of different communities within it. This poses a threat to social cohesion as these communities are likely to work to achieve emancipation, in the sense of Berlin's negative freedom, but may ignore the interests or even the existence of a unified whole. On the other hand, the imposition of a universal perspective based on the common good may lead to a charge of hegemony.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will endeavour to build upon the framework provided by Hegel. I will undertake this task through the lens of critical theory provided by the works of Gramsci, Habermas, Taylor and Bauman. The discussion will focus upon both the positive and negative influences of enlightenment principles upon society. The works of the above-named authors will be employed to illustrate how enlightenment principles can be reformulated to meet the needs of a complex and diverse society while still retaining social cohesion.

1.4 On Hegemony

As observed in 1.1 above, the theme of social cohesion tends to be accompanied by the theme (or charge) of hegemony. This theme is explored in considerable detail by Gramsci who lauds the benefits of "intelligent reflection" as a catalyst for "social reconstruction" (Gramsci, 1988, p. 58). Gramsci supports his contention through the example of the influence of enlightenment thought on the French Revolution. The identification and the challenging of hegemony could be viewed as a defining moment in the process of social reconstruction. Gramsci describes hegemony as:

the 'spontaneous' consent given by the great masses of the population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group; this consent is 'historically' caused by the prestige (and consequent confidence) which the dominant group enjoys because of its position and function in the world of production (Gramsci, 1971, p. 12).

While Gramsci was significantly influenced by Marx, he did not believe that hegemony was defined by solely economic considerations (or by the base). In his view, hegemony is also defined by a 'superstructure' (or ethico-political history) embodied by apparatuses such as education, the media, law and mass culture (Boggs, 1976, p. 17). Gramsci views the base and superstructure operating on the basis of "necessary reciprocity". This reciprocity is "nothing other than the real dialectical process" (Gramsci, 1971, p. 366).

Gramsci does not dismiss the notion of hegemony out of hand. What he wishes to highlight is the hegemony of the dominant or governing classes who "constitute a willed and knowing deception" and the suppression of the voice of subordinate groups who are the subjects of the deception (Gramsci, 1988, p. 196). He views the destruction of one hegemony and the creation of another as "a necessary moment in the revolutionising of praxis". He notes that, at certain points in history, there occurs an inevitable backlash against the ideological hegemony of the ruling classes as either the ruling class has failed in some major political undertaking or because huge masses have moved from a stage of political passivity to political activity and have put forward demands which, taken together, constitute a revolution. Thus, a 'crisis of authority' or a crisis of hegemony occurs (Gramsci, 1971, p. 210). Gramsci cautions that the conquering

of the old system is not enough, the proletariat must also assume the power that it has conquered:

This revolution also presupposes the formation of a new set of standards, a new psychology, new ways of feeling, thinking and living that must be specific to the working class, that must be created by it, that will become 'dominant' when the working class becomes the dominant class (Gramsci, 1988, p. 70).

However, while the proletariat indeed attempted to challenge the old system of values, it would seem, according to Gramsci's evaluation, that they fell short in terms of replacing such values. This is illustrative of a significant shortcoming in the writings of those who dissent from the universal perspective: namely that, in challenging one set of values, an alternative is not proposed. In the context of this dissertation, it could be argued that this is one of the limitations of the multiculturalist struggle. In addition, Gramsci's writings serve to emphasise that, if social cohesion is to be maintained, it will be accompanied by some form of hegemony. What I believe Gramsci to be proposing here is that hegemony does not always have to be interpreted in the pejorative sense that the 'dissenters' tend to attribute to it.

1.4.1 Instruments of Hegemony

Let us look in more detail at the influences which give sustenance to ideological hegemony and which may subvert the achievement of meaningful revolution. From Gramsci's point of view, religion emerges as a frontrunner here. He problematises the notion of religion and, in particular, that of the Catholic Church, "in the secular sense of unity of faith between a conception of the world and a corresponding norm of conduct" (Gramsci, 1988, pp. 327-328).

Boggs (1976, p. 43) observes that, in Italy, religious ideology performed a concrete political function in containing and distorting popular rebellion, for example, by stressing the 'natural' (God-given) character of existing structures such as private property and the family; the importance of transcendental commitment over everyday ('earthly') collective action to save the world; the supposed moral virtues of poverty and weakness; and the sacrosanct nature of all forms of established authority. Indeed, in Gramsci's view, the words 'ideology' or 'politics' were acceptable substitutions for 'religion' (Gramsci, 1988, p. 328). He contends that the strength of religions, and of the Catholic Church in particular, lies in the fact that they feel very strongly the need for the doctrinal unity of the whole mass of the faithful and strive to ensure that the higher intellectual stratum does not get separated from the lower (ibid, p. 330). Gramsci concludes that religion has the upper hand over philosophy here as the current or 'immanentist' philosophies, as he sees it, have not even attempted to construct a conception which could take the place of religion in the education of children. This situation still prevails today, particularly in the Irish context, and may explain the lacuna in terms of philosophical framework in Irish educational policy. The 'ethos' of the school may have, hitherto, been seen as an alternative to a formal philosophy. The issue of ethos will be addressed in more detail later in this dissertation.

Gramsci demonstrates conflicting and almost contradictory attitudes in his observations on education. It is difficult to determine whether he endorses education as a transmitter of the 'grand narrative', or the transformative potential of education. It could be that he is doing both. If this is the case, Gramsci could be seen to be both perpetuating and subverting hegemony. He endorses the

fundamental elements in the 'old' primary school. These consisted of teaching children the rudiments of natural science and the idea of civic rights and duties (Gramsci, 1971, p. 33). In this school, the children were taught about the existence of "objective, intractable natural laws to which man must adapt himself if he is to master them in his turn" and also about the existence of social and State laws which "create that human order which historically best enables men to dominate the laws of nature, that is to say which most facilitates their work" (ibid, p. 34). It may seem here that Gramsci is endorsing the Marxist view of labour as an unreflective activity. He is without doubt endorsing social cohesion. However, endorsement of work and of social cohesion does not imply a passive acceptance of hegemony. On the contrary, Gramsci sees work as "the specific mode by which man actively participates in natural life in order to transform and socialise it more deeply and extensively" (ibid). Education is thus acknowledged as the means to liberation and transformation.

However, in his endorsement of the content and methodology of a traditional, classical education, Gramsci would seem to favour education as a transmitter of the 'grand narrative'. His perspective on the Greek and Roman civilisations is a tacit acknowledgement of the Hegelian vision of society. Knowledge of the civilisations of the past is seen as a necessary precondition to knowledge of modern civilisations and, consequently, to self-knowledge (Gramsci, 1971, p. 37). His support of more formal methodologies would certainly be challenged by the more 'progressive' educationalists. His focus is on the object of education rather than the process:

In education one is dealing with children in whom one has to inculcate certain habits of diligence, precision, poise (even

physical poise), ability to concentrate on specific subjects, which cannot be acquired without the mechanical repetition of disciplined and methodical acts (ibid).

According to Gramsci, these are requirements for the production of great scholars who are necessary to every civilisation. Gramsci deflects the charge of hegemony by emphasising that the creation of scholars or intellectuals is not confined to one social group (Gramsci, 1988, p. 301). Forgacs observes that much of Gramsci's early educational thinking revolved around the problem of rendering working class people intellectually autonomous in the interest of revolution. They would no longer have to concede decision-making to the 'career intellectuals' (Forgacs, 1988, p. 53). Kearney (1986, p. 171) observes that Gramsci's 'new organic intellectual' is neither elitist and authoritarian, nor servile and passive. This brings up an interesting proposition: namely that acknowledging the strengths of education as a transmitter of the 'grand narrative' does not necessarily imply that one has adopted a hegemonic stance.

Gramsci is concerned about the (then) emerging dominance of vocational schools, schools which are advocated as being democratic, but which instead perpetuate social difference (Gramsci, 1971, p. 40). Gramsci posits that instead of tailoring schooling to suit different social groups, a single type of formative school (primary-secondary) should be created in order to form each child as a person capable of "thinking, studying and ruling – or controlling those who rule" (ibid). This observation has important implications for the debate on intercultural education. Gramsci presents a universalist rather than a particularist perspective here. It could be argued that the recognition of difference through modified programmes and expectations could lead to a new intellectual elite with the

consequent ghettoisation of certain groups of children. Thus, the proponents of difference could, inadvertently, be contributing to the perpetuation of hegemony.

One can conclude in reading Gramsci's writings that, while championing the cause of the marginalised, Gramsci retains a unified view of society and recognises the intrinsic value of the Enlightenment as the catalyst of "intelligent reflection" and its powerful contribution to revolution. He defends the Enlightenment against the "facile critics of theoretical reason" (Gramsci, 1988, p. 58) and contends that it provided Europe with a unified consciousness sensitive to all the woes and misfortunes of the common people (ibid, referencing De Sanctis, 1868). It could be argued that this unified consciousness is still relevant to today's society and to the agenda of interculturalism. In order to bring the universal perspective closer to the current context, I will now turn to the works of Habermas. I view Habermas as an essential contributor to this dissertation as he locates the project of critical theory within current technological society.

1.5 Reason Revisited: The Habermasian Perspective on Critical Theory

Habermas, while distancing himself from the more metaphysical aspects of Hegel's writings, endorses his universalist stance, albeit from a more nuanced perspective. Habermas advocates the acceptance of society as it is and the seeking of change within this framework. He acknowledges the indisputable contribution of the Enlightenment to philosophy and, while conceding that its focus on reason contained many negative and repressive characteristics, he ultimately endeavours to defend it against its detractors. In *Technology and Science as 'Ideology'*, he views "the secularisation and 'disenchantment' of

action-orienting worldviews, of cultural tradition as a whole” to be “the obverse of the growing ‘rationality’ of social action” (Habermas, 1971, p. 81). Yet, instead of renouncing current society, he advocates its retention, seeing technological development as corresponding to the structure of *work* (original emphasis) and

realising this, it is impossible to envisage how, as long as the organization of human nature does not change and as long therefore as we have to achieve self-preservation through social labour and with the aid of means that substitute for work, we could renounce technology, more particularly our technology, in favour of a qualitatively different one (ibid, p. 87).

Habermas’s defence of the Enlightenment is undertaken through the differentiation between purposive-rational (instrumental) reason, which can be aligned with utilitarianism, and substantive reason embodied in the rational life-world (cf. 1.5.2 below). In doing so, he emerges as a formidable challenger to the adversaries of the Enlightenment (Horkheimer and Adorno being two significant examples) and presents their writing as being counterproductive to the task of critical theory. Habermas responds to the radical critique of the Enlightenment by endeavouring to replace it with a philosophy of intersubjectivity which he views as the facilitator of communicative action (Habermas, 1987b, p. 11). This philosophy encompasses “a paradigm of mutual understanding, that is, of the intersubjective relationship between individuals who are socialised through communication and reciprocally recognise one another” (Habermas, 1987a, p. 310). This vision will be realised through a communication community “existing

under constraints towards co-operation”, wherein consensus is pursued but not coerced (ibid, p. 40).

1.5.1 Challenging the Adversaries

Habermas (1987a, p. 107) presents enlightenment thought as “an opposition and counterforce to myth”. For him

Mythical worldviews are far from making possible rational orientations of action in our sense. With respect to the conditions for a rational conduct of life in this sense, they present an antithesis to the modern understanding of the world (Habermas, 1984, p. 44).

Habermas (1987a, p. 111) challenges the “totalised reproach” of Horkheimer and Adorno in relation to the Enlightenment (cf. Section 1.3 above). He contends that this has ensued from their presentation of validity claims as being assimilated by sheer power (ibid, p. 112). To Habermas, this is an incomplete and one-sided interpretation of the Enlightenment that overlooks the essential characteristics of cultural modernity (ibid, p. 114). This interpretation reduces enlightenment thought to the “limited horizon of purposive rationality proper to subjects interested in self-preservation and to self-maintaining systems” (ibid, p. 113). This is to acquiesce to the Marxist perspective of unreflective labour as sustaining social cohesion. In short, the purposive-rational viewpoint excludes the superstructure. In contrast, Habermas admits the superstructure as a means of resisting “this inclination towards a social regression of reason” (ibid). The superstructure is embodied in “the formation of expert cultures, within which carefully articulated spheres of validity help the claims to propositional truth, normative rightness and authenticity, attain *their own logic*” (ibid, original

emphasis). Habermas contends that, if thinking is undertaken independent of validity claims, contradiction and criticism lose their meaning. “To *contradict*, to negate, now has only the sense of “*wanting to be different*” (ibid, p. 124, original emphasis). This is insufficient rationale for critique as there needs to be a demonstration of “why it is false or incorrect or bad to recognise the sovereignty of the ideals of science and universalistic morality, which are inimical to life” (ibid, p. 125). Here, I believe that Habermas is endorsing Gramsci’s perspective and is levelling an implicit criticism at those writers who endeavour to challenge social cohesion through the process of deconstruction, but who equally fail to provide alternative solutions.

Habermas effectively demonstrates that Horkheimer and Adorno’s critique of the Enlightenment has its roots in a one-sided interpretation of the latter, namely that the sciences themselves have been absorbed by instrumental reason and

that reason has been driven out of morality and law because, with the collapse of religious-metaphysical world views, all normative standards have lost their credit before the single remaining authority – science (ibid, p. 111).

As observed above, Habermas does not endeavour to refute the claims of Horkheimer and Adorno by negating the significance of science and technology. Instead he problematises the relationship between what he terms ‘purposive rationality’ or the world of science and technology and what he terms the ‘life-world’ or the world of communicative action.

1.5.2 Purposive rationality and the life-world

According to Habermas (1971, p. 90), the difficulty which accompanies the advent of science and technology lies in determining in “a categorically precise manner the meaning of the expansion of the rational form of science and technology, i.e. the rationality embodied in systems of purposive-rational action, to the proportions of a life-form, of the ‘historical totality’ of a life-world.” Instead of rejecting the instrumentalism of purposive rationality out of hand, Habermas instead endeavours to present the purposive-rational world and the life-world as (potentially) complementary rather than opposing concepts. While purposive-rational action provides us with skills, the communicative action of the life-world us with the “binding consensual norms which define reciprocal expectations about behaviour and which must be understood and recognized by at least two acting subjects” (Habermas, 1971, p. 92). He contends that for society to operate successfully, both of these processes (the systemic and the social), need to be interwoven but yet differentiated. Failure to differentiate co-ordination of action by systemic means, from co-ordination in terms of social integration, results in the ‘hermeneutic paradox’ (Habermas, 1987b, p. 164).

Habermas emphasises that for the merger between systemic and social processes in society to work, purposive-rational action must remain subordinate to the institutional framework or the superstructure of society (Habermas, 1971, p. 95). However, politics is now aimed almost exclusively at the elimination of technical problems (ibid, p. 103). This has contributed to the demise of interaction, as the normative order (a function of communicative action oriented to shared cultural meaning and presupposing the internalisation of values), is supplanted by conditioned behaviour (ibid, p. 107). One form of hegemony

replaces another. The latter form of hegemony is evident particularly “in the areas of putative subjective freedom (such as electoral, consumer and leisure behaviour)” (ibid, p. 107, original parenthesis). The maintenance of the status quo has been achieved by securing the loyalty of the masses through reward rather than through repression. This lessens the likelihood of revolt. Gleeson (2004, p. 109) places the domination of the technical paradigm within the domain of Irish education and reiterates Habermas’s observation on the elimination of problems.

1.5.3 Class and Cultural Tensions

Habermas then extends his argument to include a specific focus on difference. While he looks at class difference, his comments are relevant to the context of cultural difference also. He observes that reducing the likelihood of revolt does not mean that class conflict has been eliminated; instead it has become latent. “Class distinctions persist in the form of subcultural traditions and corresponding differences not only in the standard of living and life style but also in political attitude” (Habermas, 1971, p. 109). He provides a concrete example of class tension by referring to racial conflict in the United States. Tensions can become so acute that in certain areas “explosions resembling civil war can occur”. Habermas contends that these revolts, despite their sometimes tragic consequences, have little long term impact unless they are connected with protest potential from other sectors of society, namely privileged groups (ibid). Here he is implicitly referring to the isolationist problematic of a solely multiculturalist agenda. The role of critical pedagogy with its potential for political action becomes apparent.

In some ways, the subtleties of “soft despotism” (Taylor, 1991, p. 10, cf. 1.7.1 below) render life even more difficult for the marginalised. There is no longer an overt coercive force that must be combated. The depoliticisation of the masses through the media of reward and excess render them immune and even oblivious to the plight of the marginalised. Habermas contends that underprivileged groups do not of themselves constitute a social class nor do they even potentially represent the mass of the population (Habermas, 1971, p. 110). Therefore, class struggle as embodied by the proletariat will not occur, as there is no common unifying force. The case for a universal approach to social cohesion comes into sharp relief here. Habermas observes that underprivileged groups are in themselves quite diverse and thus do not unite in the interest of combating their situations. In many cases, they are competing against each other and in the words of Bauman (1997, p. 29) “the weak meet and confront the weak”. Bauman concludes that such confrontations, when occurring between indigenous and non-indigenous groups, can provide the basis for racism. Both Habermas and Bauman are signalling the problems inherent in the pursuit of recognition. This is given considerable attention by Taylor.

1.6 Recognising Difference, Maintaining Social Cohesion

Taylor (1994, p. 75) observes that the demand for recognition is a significant feature “in what is today called the politics of ‘multiculturalism’”. His placement of the term ‘multiculturalism’ within quotation marks serves to demonstrate the potential for confusion in the term. Taylor is concerned about the impact of differentiation on social cohesion. His concerns with the fragmentation in society are a recurrent theme throughout his work and, although

ultimately, he does not agree with Hegel, his writings certainly re-echo many of Hegel's propositions. While implicitly acknowledging the negative impact of hegemony, he retains a unified worldview, although Bauman (2001, p. 77) disputes this espousal of universality and presents Taylor as prioritising the concept of self-realisation. I contest Bauman's contention and view Taylor as being ultimately concerned with the maintenance of social cohesion. The need to maintain an underpinning moral order in society, despite the flaws associated with such order, is vigorously defended in his work.

Taylor is constantly endeavouring to reconcile the tension between the individual and the polity. While acknowledging the "undoubted primacy of the individual in modern Western culture" (Taylor, 2004, p. 64), he also expresses a type of nostalgia for "older moral horizons" (Taylor, 1991, p. 3). References to a cosmic order in which humans were accorded a specific place, while ultimately, and perhaps reluctantly, dismissed, emerge often enough to convince the reader that such a concept is significant to Taylor. He constantly reminds us of the 'bigger picture' that is society. Following de Tocqueville (and Hegel), Taylor expresses concern in relation to the demise of a heroic dimension in life due to the loss of the cosmic perspective. "People no longer have a sense of a higher purpose, of something worth dying for" (ibid, p. 4). This higher purpose was an intrinsic feature of the Greek *polis*. In it, the ends of the individual are overruled by those of the State. However, as observed in section 1.2 above, a commitment to society can be undermined by a sense of alienation.

When alienation from the community occurs, "men have to turn elsewhere to define what is centrally important to them" (Taylor, 1984, p. 186). Sometimes they turn to another society or a religious community. However,

increasingly “they strike out on their own and define their identity as individuals”. This is the product of Enlightenment thinking but it becomes problematic when community commitments are sidelined or even ignored. This is an increasing likelihood in a multicultural society. Taylor observes that language, and the related set of distinctions underlying our experience and interpretation, is something that can only grow in and be sustained by a community. He contends that an immigrant population cannot fully live their culture and are always forced to take on something of the ways of the new society they have entered. The life of a language and culture is larger than that of the individual (ibid, p. 182). The challenge is to include immigrant populations within the existing culture so that the sense of alienation is at least reduced if not eliminated. The interpretation of language is, according to Taylor, a significant element in shaping our experience and this has a lot to do with the terms that are available to us (ibid, p. 183). The issue of language will be addressed in more detail in the analysis of educational documents, in Chapters Four and Five. The deconstruction of the language therein will help to determine the extent to which Irish educational policy includes, or excludes, immigrant populations.

1.6.1 Taylor’s Liberalism

From a political perspective, Taylor retains many of the principles of liberalism in that he endorses freedom of choice and the pursuit of self-fulfilment (Taylor, 1994, p. 77). This is consistent with the achievement of authenticity. For Taylor the pursuit of self-fulfilment occurs within the backdrop of the *polis* and citizenship. Ultimately, one is expected to act for the common good. What is problematic for Taylor is that the pursuit of self-fulfilment is now being undertaken independently of the common good and discussions about what

constitutes the good life (or the common good) are “banished to the margins of political debate” (Taylor, 1991, p. 18). Referencing Dworkin, he differentiates between ‘substantive’ liberalism, which incorporates a vision of the good life towards which people should strive, and ‘procedural’ liberalism, which has no particular substantive view about the ends of life and instead focuses upon treating people with equal respect (Taylor, 1994, p. 92). Taylor aligns himself with the former view.

The substantive view of liberalism, with its focus on the common good, operates on the basis of equality of rights for all citizens. Yet, for the proponents of cultural difference this is insufficient to their needs as it does not take account of cultural distinctness (ibid, p. 89) and is, in fact, the reflection of one hegemonic culture (ibid, p. 85). This form of liberalism is seen to accord

only a very restricted acknowledgement of distinct cultural identities. The notion that any of the standard schedules of rights might apply differently in one cultural context than they do in another, that their application might have to take account of different collective goals, is considered quite unacceptable (ibid, p. 89).

Procedural liberalism would seem to be more accommodating of difference as there are no particular ends in this view of liberalism; instead, it “understands human dignity to consist largely in autonomy, that is, in the ability of each person to determine for himself or herself a view of the good life” (ibid, p. 92). Consequently, this view of liberalism cannot accommodate publicly espoused notions of the good (ibid, p. 93). Taylor disagrees with this view of liberalism and contends that collective goals can, in fact, be aligned with liberalism:

A society with strong collective goals can be liberal, in this view, provided that it also is capable of respecting diversity, especially when dealing with those who do not share its common goals; and provided it can offer adequate safeguards for fundamental rights (ibid, p. 94).

In this way, liberalism can be cleared of the charge of hegemony as the recognition of difference is an inherent element of the concept. While Taylor is supportive of this “hospitable variant” of liberalism, he is not without reservations and emphasises that liberalism cannot and should not claim complete cultural neutrality (ibid, p. 95). The “liberalism of neutrality” views the good life as “what each individual seeks in his or her own way, and governments would be lacking in impartiality and thus in equal respect for all citizens, if it took sides in this question” (Taylor, 1991, p. 18).

I am proposing here that Taylor’s appellation of the “liberalism of neutrality” could be replaced by the appellation of neo-liberalism as the characteristics of the latter are represented in the ‘hands-off’, non-interventionist depiction of the State. Taylor concludes that just as more rigid forms of liberalism merit challenge, so too does this ‘hospitable variant’ (Taylor, 1994, p. 95). He acknowledges the challenges posed by multicultural societies and the sense of awkwardness generated by those who may call into question our philosophical boundaries. The challenge, as he sees it, is to deal with their sense of marginalisation without compromising our basic philosophical principles (ibid, p. 96). Taylor refutes the implied premise of the multicultural agenda that we owe equal respect to all cultures and states that while openness to the potential value of different cultures is a valid demand, the acknowledgement of

this value cannot be taken as a foregone conclusion (ibid, pp. 97-99). Taylor concludes that difference alone cannot be the ground for the according of equal value (Taylor, 1991, p. 51) and “ a favourable judgement on demand is nonsense” (Taylor, 1994, p. 100). He attributes such sentiments mainly to Foucault and Derrida and observes that they amount not to respect, but rather to condescension (ibid). I contend that this type of recognition is an impediment to interculturalism. Taylor proposes that, instead of granting recognition on demand, we should base this recognition on “some standards of value on which the identities concerned check out as equal” (Taylor, 1991, p. 52).

1.6.2 ‘Toleration’ and ‘Celebration’

I wish to extend Taylor’s notion of condescension here. Bauman (1997, p. 28) adds a significant observation to this perspective. He contends that attitudes to strangers are manifested according to the stratum of society to which one belongs. To those who are secure in terms of personal safety, financial circumstances and occupation, the stranger is somewhat of a novelty, offering new experiences and perhaps more significantly, undertaking tasks and services which are avoided by the indigenous population. Also, the groups who emit this attitude are the dominant groups in society; the groups who have imposed their own form of hegemony and who, in bestowing this level of ‘acceptance’ to strangers, remain secure that their hegemony will not be threatened. This is the group who ‘tolerates’ and even ‘celebrates’ diversity, as long as it is something that is experienced on their terms. Such ‘toleration’ and ‘celebration’ are, in my view, acts of condescension. In addition, Bauman observes that

toleration of difference may well be wedded to the flat refusal of solidarity, monologic discourse, rather than giving way to a

dialogic one, will be split into a series of soliloquies, with the speakers no more insisting on being heard, but refusing to listen into the bargain (Bauman, 1997, p. 81).

This re-echoes Habermas's contentions (see 1.5.3 above) in relation to the limited impact or even likelihood of revolt unless various sectors of society unite.

Habermas (2006, p. 197) states that for 'tolerance' to refute the above charges, it must be based on the principle of reciprocity, with a universal determination of what can and cannot be tolerated. "Everyone who could be affected by the future practice must first voluntarily agree on those conditions under which they wish to exercise mutual toleration". Habermas thus demonstrates that the enjoyment of cultural rights does not come "free of charge". Members of discriminated groups cannot benefit from a morality of equal inclusion without themselves making this morality their own (ibid, p. 205). If minority groups view tolerance as a gift of which they are only the recipients and not the benefactors, the paternalistic characteristics of the concept of tolerance will be perpetuated. If this is the case, tolerance will remain the prerogative of the privileged sectors of the indigenous population as not all strata of the indigenous population can afford to bestow such 'blessings' on strangers.

Bauman (1997, p. 29) identifies two very different and unsatisfactory reactions to the advent of different cultures. The first "rejoice in the variety of guests and pride themselves on their open minds and open doors, the second gnash their teeth at the thought of lost purity." To present the indigenous population as a united front working together in the interest of 'celebrating' cultural difference is to present a one-sided hegemonic viewpoint, a viewpoint which obscures reality. I think that this is a very important point and one to

which I will return in my analysis of educational documents, as the viewpoints of those most likely to be threatened by the advent of a multicultural society do not really feature in the optimistic aspirations of the documents.

I wish to acknowledge at this juncture that the ‘celebration’ of difference is viewed as a progression from the concept of tolerance by critics of the liberal tradition, for whom liberalism is an insufficient *modus vivendi* for contemporary society. I refer, in particular, to the works of Haran and Tormey (2002) and Baker, Lynch, Cantillon and Walsh (2004). While Baker et al. align themselves with the concept of celebration, they also acknowledge the need for such celebration to be accompanied by critical assessment (Baker, et al., 2004, p. 35). Without this understanding of celebration, it becomes a tokenistic gesture, manifested by those least likely to be affected by the advent of different cultural groups. As will be seen in the analysis undertaken in this dissertation, the word ‘celebration’ is used in the documents under scrutiny. However, it is not accompanied by the caveat of critical dialogue or analysis.

1.7 Preserving the Whole

For Taylor, the working of society is based on a unified perspective encompassing the moral ideal and, in consequence, he contends,

it is reasonable to suppose that cultures that have provided the horizon of meaning for large numbers of human beings of diverse characters and temperaments, over a long period of time – that have, in other words, articulated their sense of the good, the holy, the admirable – are almost certain to have something that deserves

our admiration and respect, even if it is accompanied by much that we have to abhor and reject (Taylor, 1994, p. 101).

This is the modern order as we know it. Yet, Taylor contends that the modern order, although entrenched, or because entrenched, still awakens much resistance (Taylor, 2004, p. 82). Once again, Foucault and Derrida, along with Nietzsche, are identified as key protagonists in such resistance (Taylor, 1994, p. 100). Taylor contends that the process of deconstruction of values is a key factor in the rise of anthropocentrism as “it leaves the agent...with a sense of untrammelled power and freedom before a world that imposes no standards, ready to enjoy ‘free play’, or to indulge in an aesthetics of the self” (Taylor, 1991, p. 61). Nevertheless, despite Taylor’s antipathy towards the proponents of deconstruction, I consider that their inclusion in this dissertation will serve to mobilise our thinking in relation to the issue of social cohesion and possibly unseat any complacencies we have in this regard.

Taylor outlines how the rise of anthropocentrism has generated a new dilemma in society, namely the disappearance of the public sphere. This dilemma has been referred to in the Introduction to this dissertation. In some ways the disappearance of the public sphere may be viewed by some as welcome, as its demise could be viewed to lead to the demise of hegemony. Yet, as previously noted, hegemony can appear in many guises and its ultimate demise may not be achievable or even desirable. Taylor (2004, pp. 83-99) provides an outline of the public sphere that can be effectively linked with Gramsci’s outline of civil society (the ethico-political sphere). Taylor consigns what he terms an ‘extrapolitical’ status to the public sphere. It is defined as “a locus in which rational views are elaborated that should guide government” (ibid, p. 89).

Although it differs in significant ways from the Greek *polis*, it still mirrors the notion of community involvement and citizenship. Yet there are many new considerations to be taken into account when analysing what constitutes the public sphere. Citing Warner (1990), Taylor observes that the rise of the [new] public sphere “involves a breach in the old idea of a social order undivided by conflict and difference”. Instead it acts as a catalyst for debate, “involving in principle everybody” (Taylor, 2004, p. 90). The old unity of the social order disintegrates in its wake; however, this is replaced by a new unity (ibid, pp. 90-91). Implicit in Taylor’s remarks here, is the admission of, at the very least, the possibility of hegemony. In his observation that the debate involves everyone *in principle*, he appears to be conceding that this does not necessarily occur in reality. Also, his comments on ‘soft despotism’ (cf. 1.7.1 below) signal a belief that hegemony may be construed as a still dominant force in society. However, this does not necessarily align him with the Gramscian notion of hegemony.

1.7.1 Hegemony by imposition, Hegemony by choice

Where Taylor and Gramsci diverge, is in their explanations for the perpetuation of hegemony in society. Gramsci is concerned with the false consciousness of the masses, which led them to mobilisation against oppression but which ultimately resulted in them being manipulated by the new system. They were aware of hegemonic forces and sufficiently concerned to revolt against them, but did not succeed in liberating themselves from the shackles of a dominant force, possibly due to a lack of an alternative worldview. However, the public sphere was a definitive influence at this juncture. Taylor, on the other hand, presents a scenario where the individual reigns supreme and where hegemony should, by consequence, recede. However, it exists almost as a

conscious choice of the masses. Following de Tocqueville, he delineates the phenomenon of 'soft despotism', which he views as a fundamentally modern problem. Here, control is still in the hands of an oligarchy, not as a result of tyranny or oppression, but as a result of the self-absorption of the individual (Taylor, 1991, p. 9). Participation in the public sphere is minimal and the individual "is left alone in the face of the vast bureaucratic state and feels, correctly, powerless" (ibid, p. 10). In this scenario, hegemony could be seen to occur as a consequence of unconstrained emancipation as opposed to a quest for social cohesion.

Powerlessness as a result of diminished participation in the public sphere has contributed to what Gramsci (1988, p. 201) terms 'conjunctural' movements. These movements give rise to political criticism of a minor, day-to-day character but which has little far-reaching historical significance. Taylor develops this perspective. He contends that the anthropocentrism of modern society has had the inevitable result of rendering its people increasingly less capable of forming a common purpose and of carrying it out (Taylor, 1991, p. 112). They may well be capable of engaging in small-scale political activities (conjunctural), but they tend to have a local rather than a global impact. Small scale participation (or non-participation) in political activity, leads to a sense of being incapable of participation, which leads to further non-participation and so a vicious circle is created (ibid, p.113). This accords greater power to the global elites whose freedom to move depends to a very great extent on the locals' inability or unwillingness to get their act together (Bauman, 2001, p. 105). Here again, the spectre of neo-liberalism looms large. It would seem that the more disengagement that occurs in society, the more the global elites will benefit. In

the context of educational policy, two considerations emerge from these deliberations. The first is the extent to which the child is prepared for political awareness and activism so that he or she can pursue the common good. The second is the effect of differentiation on the formation of a common purpose. As I observed above, the domination of the discourse of developmental psychology does not necessarily synthesise with the formation of a common purpose or pursuit of the common good.

Taylor advocates the formation of a common democratic purpose in order to counteract the fragmentation that results from the pursuit of one's rights at any cost and without taking cognisance of the effects of such action on the whole (Taylor, 1991, p. 117). Taylor contends that the only way to address the cultural struggle of current society is, rather than according indiscriminate recognition based on an ideology of relativism, to promote the politics of democratic empowerment (ibid, p. 118). Such politics are based upon effective community action that can be achieved through devolved power to communities that are already acknowledged as such by their members (ibid, p. 119). I acknowledge later in this dissertation that what O'Sullivan (2005, p.113) terms "the majoritarian tendencies of democracy" are not without their problems, particularly in a society where citizenship, and thus the right to vote, is denied to many of its population. Notwithstanding this consideration, Taylor's deliberations merit attention. Taylor concludes by cautioning us that the many-faceted and complex debates which are required for democratic empowerment must take account of what is great in modernity as well as what is shallow or dangerous (Taylor, 1991, p. 120). This dual focus on modernity is one that many

of the postmodernist writers choose to ignore. Their concerns lie with pursuing the rights of the individual and with challenging the modern order.

The works of Bauman can be seen to endorse those that have been analysed throughout this chapter, as they engage in a trenchant defence of the modern order. I acknowledge that he takes a limited view of multiculturalism, in that he sees it as an indeterminate concept with no clear direction in relation to values or social cohesion (Bauman, 2001, p. 124). Parekh, in particular, would take issue with his view and counsels against imposing a false unity on a disparate set of ideas (Parekh, 2002, p. 140). As will be seen in the Conclusion of this dissertation, Parekh himself successfully aligns multiculturalism with a substantive view of liberalism. Despite this caveat to Bauman's theses, I believe that his observations on current society resonate effectively with the argument presented hitherto.

1.8 On Bauman: The Separation of Human Rights from Social Cohesion

The pursuit of one's rights at any cost unsettles the notion of community and undermines the concept of social justice based upon the principles of equality. Bauman (2001, p. 74) contends that, in the new postmodern version of community, social justice has been replaced by human rights as the yardstick by which to establish acceptable forms of cohabitation. Here, the 'right' has taken precedence over the 'good'. The concept of human rights is open-ended and constantly subject to redefinition and the setting of ever new battlefronts and dividing lines, as more and more claims to recognition occur (ibid, p. 75). The concept aligns with postmodern uncertainty. Friedman (cited by Bauman, 2001,

p. 75) observes that with the decline of modernism, all we are left with is simply difference and its accumulation. This echoes Habermas's comments on the limitations of contradiction and criticism independent of validity claims. Bauman suggests locating the issue of recognition within the framework of social justice rather than self-realisation. In this framework demands for recognition in the name of equality become a fertile ground for mutual engagement and meaningful dialogue. This may lead eventually to a new unity, indeed a widening rather than a cutting down, of the scope of 'ethical community' (ibid, p. 78). He thus aligns himself with Taylor's substantive liberalism. However, as observed above, he seems to misread Taylor in that he places him in the camp of self-realisation (ibid, p. 77), whereas Taylor's concerns about individualism would seem to distance him from this perspective.

The task of critical theory has thus become redefined. A new form of emancipation is being sought. Here, instead of denouncing the public sphere, it seeks instead to relocate the individual within it, thus reconnecting him/her to the public policy agenda. This task is open to criticism by those advocating above all the recognition of difference, as they would see it as being dismissive of the human rights agenda due to public policy being defined by the dominant group in society. Yet, to focus on human rights independently of society is to render the latter susceptible to a form of anarchy, which, in its own way, poses more threat to it than the shackles imposed by the forces of production and enlightenment principles. Bauman contends that the "yawning gap between the rights of self-assertion and the capacity to control the social settings which render such self-assertion feasible or unrealistic seems to be the main contradiction of fluid modernity" (Bauman, 2000, p. 38). This contradiction tends to feature in some

multicultural discourse and will become evident in the analysis of Irish educational documents.

1.8.1 Communitarianism and Multicommunitarianism

The concept of community may well serve to bridge the gap between rampant individualism and the exigencies of the public sphere as embodied in the Greek *polis*. Rorty (1991, p. 13) urges,

whatever good the ideas of “objectivity” and “transcendence” have done for our culture can be attained equally well by the idea of a community which strives after both intersubjective agreement and novelty – a democratic, progressive pluralist community....

Rorty considers questions relating to community to be political rather than metaphysical or epistemological. Yet the achievement of intersubjectivity or solidarity is a difficult challenge, as there tends to be little common ground between groups. What exists instead is a series of individual, separated communities without a common allegiance. This is likely to lead to, at best, ‘conjunctural’ movements. Bauman (2001, p. 128) likens these communities to ‘swarms’ who act in a co-ordinated, but not an integrated manner. In such a scenario, communal cultures may live alongside one another but they seldom talk to each other. To subscribe to this is to deny all participants the benefits of a shared life (ibid, p.135). Multiculturalism (as Bauman interprets it) is transformed into multicommunitarianism (ibid, p.141). Such an outcome falls short of the critical dialogue and shared values implicit in the intercultural agenda. The issues of dialogue and shared values will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters.

1.9 The Habermasian Solution

Bauman (2001, p. 139) contends that recognition of difference should occur within the Habermasian framework of the democratic constitutional state. The constitutional state or autonomous society does not necessarily resolve the issue of conflicting community and individual rights “but it does make evident that without democratic practice by free-to-self-assert individuals”, the issue cannot be addressed. This requires a universal perspective in which “discussion about a shared conception of the good and a desired form of life that is acknowledged to be authentic” (Habermas, 1994, cited by Bauman, 2001, p. 140) is situated. Universality of humanity does not stand in opposition to pluralism, “but the test of truly universal humanity is its ability to accommodate pluralism and make pluralism serve the cause of humanity” (Bauman, 2001, p. 140). Only in this scenario, can Habermas’s discussion of the good be facilitated.

Such debate, as that envisaged by Habermas, is hampered by the current preoccupation with ‘political correctness’. While its intentions are laudable, it is also an effective means of eliminating all constructive debate in relation to difference. Bauman observes that, if attention is focused on civility and political correctness in encounters with difference, it will absolutise the difference and bar all debate about the relative virtues and demerits of coexisting forms of life. (Bauman, 2001, p. 106). Bauman contends that the implicit message is that we will acknowledge difference just for its own sake, but that all debate is to be put out of bounds in case it is aimed at reconciling extant differences, so that the overall standards binding human life can be raised.

Bauman attributes a subversive element to this elimination of debate, namely that debate does not really serve current global economic interests (ibid,

p. 105). Thus, the assertion of difference for its own sake is detrimental to the interests of those asserting the difference. This is an issue overlooked by many of those promoting the cause of multiculturalism. Bauman observes that the liberal face of multiculturalism hides an essentially conservative force, as its effect is the recasting of inequalities, which are unlikely to command public approval, as 'cultural differences' - something to cherish and obey. "The moral ugliness of deprivation is miraculously reincarnated as the aesthetic beauty of cultural variety" (ibid, p. 107). This is to succumb to a neo-liberal agenda as this metamorphosis obviates the need for public expenditure to address social inequalities. Thus, the multicultural agenda achieves virtually nothing for its proponents unless it is discussed within the framework of social justice wherein redistribution of goods serves to support and render meaningful the quest for recognition. Again I acknowledge that not all proponents of the multiculturalist agenda eschew the social justice agenda and, again, Parekh is notable here.

However, if the assertion of difference remains just that, it is doomed to failure by what Bauman (2001, p. 81) terms the "callous indifference of disengagement". In modern society, the notion of engagement is becoming anachronistic. Instead people are left to their own devices, being managed at a distance and seduced by economic rewards that will contribute to their individual happiness (ibid, p. 129). Bauman views the ideology of multiculturalism as a way of adjusting the role of the learning classes to these new realities (ibid, p. 133). More alarmingly, it grants the right to be indifferent along with the right to be different (ibid, p. 135). In such a scenario, different communities may coexist but their indifference to each other obviates any opportunity for shared dialogue.

1.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, it has been observed that the universal perspective on social cohesion, while acknowledging and welcoming the advent of a multicultural society, does not demonstrate boundless or gratuitous acceptance of the concept of difference. While the metaphysical nature of Hegel's writings is, to a greater or lesser degree, circumvented by the more recent theorists, many of his ideas re-emerge in their writings. A universal set of values is acknowledged by all to be the rubric of social cohesion. The almost inevitable charge of hegemony can be levelled at the defence of universalism; a charge that the theorists referred to in this chapter may well find difficult to refute. In fact, Gramsci makes overt acknowledgement of the unavoidable existence of some form of hegemony in society.

Hegel could be viewed as championing the transmission of long-standing values, the maintenance of social order and, by default, hegemony, and the prioritisation of the state over the individual. The recognition of different cultures or social groupings did not feature in his vision of society. In this chapter, the "presupposed ethical totality" of his worldview has been subjected to scrutiny, evaluation and modification.

Gramsci explores the impact of the base and the superstructure on society and sees the potential for hegemony in both. However, perhaps controversially, he concedes that one form of hegemony will inevitably be replaced by another. He acknowledges the need for subordinate classes to revolt against oppression, but that in revolting against one set of values, they must have formulated another set to replace them. This contention is implicit in the theses of the other writers in this chapter also. In other words, there is not much point in revolution if one

cannot address the aftermath. Gramsci's views on education could be viewed as anachronistic and hegemonic. However, careful reading demonstrates that one does not have to break with traditional forms of content and methodology in order to highlight and address the causes of the marginalised. In fact, although his ideas may be disputed by the 'progressive' educationalists, he imbues his view of education with transformative potential. An intellectual elite is created in every stratum of society through the dissemination of a single programme of education in which each child is challenged and accorded the possibility of becoming part of the governing class. Differentiation is discouraged as it is seen as restrictive and divisive. Thus, Gramsci, like the other writers featured in this chapter, eschews the claim to recognition of difference just for its own sake.

Habermas expands on Gramsci's account of the impact of the base and the superstructure on society and places them in a more contemporary context. The benefits of market forces, embodied in 'purposive rationality', are acknowledged. However, Habermas recognises the need to ensure that the base remains subordinate to the superstructure or the life-world, something that is becoming less evident in contemporary society. If this trend is to continue, Horkheimer and Adorno's version of the Enlightenment will come to fruition with the resultant implosion of society. Habermas views the superstructure as the means of engaging in a meaningful quest for truth. For him, criticism of society must extend beyond simply fulfilling the wish to be different. Asserting difference in a directionless manner does little for the cause of interculturalism. This assertion is developed by Taylor and Bauman.

Taylor is constantly struggling with the need to recognise difference and the need to maintain social cohesion. While sympathetic to the causes of

minority groups and aware of the negative impact of nonrecognition or misrecognition, Taylor refuses to concede to the potential fragmentation of society that may result from a gratuitous acknowledgement and acceptance of difference. His writings help us to reflect on the meanings and implications of liberalism, particularly in relation to the common good. While espousing a 'hospitable variant' of liberalism, he distances himself from adopting a neutral or *laissez-faire* stance. He laments the disappearance of the public sphere in society and trenchantly defends the need for a moral order, reluctantly stopping short of imbuing this with metaphysical characteristics. While Bauman may see him as veering more towards self-realisation, I contend that Taylor ultimately retains a universalistic viewpoint and cautions us that the adoption of a liberal perspective may not always defend the cause of social cohesion.

Bauman expands on Taylor's view and engages in a trenchant defence of the common good. He adopts a sceptical if not cynical view of the concept of multiculturalism, seeing it as simply a moniker for non-intervention and for the abandonment of social order. This may be overly derisory, yet his concerns are worthy of consideration. Like Gramsci, Habermas and Taylor, Bauman decries the gratuitous assertion of difference and contends that it is actually counterproductive to the cause of those who are marginalised in society. He contends that the social inequalities that accompany assertions of difference need to be addressed in order for the assertion to have any meaning or effect. However, he takes the argument a step further by observing that the acknowledgement of difference as something to be celebrated in society, removes the onus from those in power to address its problems. This perpetuates indifference and removes the possibility of shared dialogue among communities.

The writers in this chapter demonstrate awareness of the threat to the public sphere from the assertion of difference without consideration of social cohesion. They consequently maintain a universal focus in the interest of maintaining cohesion. The universal focus has been subjected to significant challenge by other theorists as they deem it an instrument in the marginalisation and exclusion of some groups in society. In order to maintain a balanced perspective in this dissertation, I am now about to include some dissenters from universalism into this theoretical framework.

Chapter Two: Deconstructing the Universal Perspective: Dissenting Voices

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I endeavoured to address the complexities of maintaining social cohesion in an increasingly diverse society. This was undertaken through the use of the theoretical lens of critical theory, which in its purest form, takes its inspiration from Hegel. The writings of some of the protagonists of the Frankfurt School were employed to facilitate this task. The Frankfurt School distanced itself from traditional metaphysics while, in some instances, retaining a nostalgia for some of its precepts. Yet, even within the Frankfurt School, opposing or dissonant voices were heard. The voice of dissonance becomes more acute if we expand the definition of critical theory to include other writers who extended the concept and the pursuit of emancipation and who engaged in a more trenchant rejection of, and detachment from, traditional Western metaphysics. This extended version of critical theory is needed in order to undertake a rigorous and balanced interrogation of educational policy and to obviate a charge of ideological bias.

Adherence to a Hegelian or neo-Hegelian, and thus universalist, perspective brings with it the risk of being charged with an ideological bias and, in doing so, of excluding the voices of the marginalised. McLaren (1994, p. 205) provides a detailed account of what he terms “the politics of signification” and, drawing upon the writings of Teresa Ebert, outlines how “our current ways of seeing and acting are being disciplined for us through forms of signification, that is, through modes of intelligibility and ideological frames of sense making”. The

adoption of an intercultural perspective does not necessarily shield us from the charge of ideological bias. Irwin (2009, p. 2) while adopting the term 'interculturalism' in favour of that of 'multiculturalism', cautions us that "there is a real possibility that an emphasis on dialogue and communication between cultures can all too easily become distorted into a majority demand that minority cultures conform to the overarching 'essential' identity". Thus, a need to present an alternative argument to the universalist perspective becomes evident. Kearney observes, "it is the critical duty of philosophy to explore and interrogate *other*, and perhaps hitherto, undisclosed, dimensions of existence and truth" (Kearney, 1984, p. 9, following Marcuse, original emphasis). Therefore I am turning to two notable critics of universalism, namely Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. Both writers are concerned with what is singular and contingent in life and call attention to those who do not conform to one 'essential' identity. In addition, I am including the voice of Homi Bhabha, as I consider that his comments on cultural difference complement the theses of Foucault and Derrida and lend themselves in a more specific manner to the tensions within this dissertation.

In exploring the works of these writers, I will expand upon the notion of critical theory as presented in Chapter One to include a postmodernist, or more specifically, a poststructuralist, perspective. Postmodernist social theory dismisses the conviction that knowledge is knowledge only if it reflects the world as it "really" exists in favour of a view in which reality is socially constructed or semiotically posited (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994, p. 143). Poststructuralist theory focuses more specifically on power, not simply as one aspect of a society but as the basis of society (ibid, p. 145). This theory "offers very different ways of looking at and beyond the obvious and puts different sorts of questions on the

agenda for change” (Ball, 1994, p. 2). Since educational policy is shaped by political power relations (Sugrue, 2004, p. 168), the need to include a poststructuralist focus in this dissertation becomes apparent. The inclusion of Foucault, Derrida and Bhabha will serve to obviate the reductionism and the pursuit of certainties inherent in Western metaphysics. In this chapter, I will endeavour to demonstrate how the emancipatory motives of the poststructuralists impact upon the pursuit of social cohesion and upon the ideology of interculturalism.

2.2 Foucault’s Genealogy

The diversity of Foucault’s writings provides fertile ground from which a multiplicity of themes can be developed. His dissociation from metaphysics is well documented in his writings not only by virtue of their content but also of the design and method employed in his critique. For him, “criticism is not transcendental, and its goal is not that of making a metaphysics possible: it is genealogical in its design and archaeological in its method” (Foucault, 1991a, p. 46). He views history not as a metaphysical concept, imposing its own ‘Egyptianism’, but as a privileged instrument of genealogy on condition that it refuses the “certainty of absolutes” (Foucault, 2003, p. 246). Foucault outlines the fallibility of the concept of social order as a political undertaking and identifies the real political task in society as that of criticising “the working of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent; to criticise them in such a manner that the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked, so that one can fight them” (Foucault,

1974, cited by Rabinow, 1991, p. 6). For Foucault, order is not something that can be imposed externally, but is

at one and the same time that which is given in things as their inner law, the hidden network that determines the way they confront one another, and also, that which has no existence except in the grid created by a glance, an examination, a language; and it is only in the blank spaces of this grid that order manifests itself in depth as though already there, waiting in silence for the moment of its expression (Foucault, 1989a, p. xxi).

Like the critical theorists discussed in Chapter One, Foucault does not limit his critique of society to formal institutions like the Law or the State. He also targets the more subtle methods of power which are embodied in 'The Norm' or 'Normalisation'. For Foucault, normalisation acts as a mechanism for differentiation, hierarchization, homogenisation and exclusion and is "irreducible in its principles and functioning to the traditional penalty of the law" (Foucault, 1991b, p. 183), which, in turn, "permits the perpetual instigation of new dominations and the staging of meticulously repeated scenes of violence" (Foucault, 2003, p. 246). The law, an instrument of social cohesion, has been redefined as a violent means of social control, the latter term tending to invade the meaning of the former.

Foucault rejects an ontological interpretation of the development of humanity and instead views it as resulting from "substitutions, displacements, disguised conquests and systematic reversals" (Foucault, 2003, p. 246). Here, I view Foucault's genealogical approach as being close to Derrida's *assemblage* which suggests a bringing-together which "has the structure of an interlacing, a

weaving, or a web, which would allow the different threads and different lines of sense or force to separate again, as well as being ready to bind others together” (Derrida, 2003, p. 226).

Foucault’s genealogy questions the realm of the universal in terms of its accommodation of “what is singular, contingent and the product of arbitrary constraints” (Foucault, 1991a, p. 45). While he agrees that government is primarily concerned with men (sic), he presents these concerns as a bringing together or *assemblage* of other significant factors and their consequent impact on men:

the things which the government is to be concerned about are men, but men in their relations, their links, their imbrication with those other things which are wealth, resources, means of subsistence, the territory with its specific qualities, climate, irrigation, fertility, etc.; men in their relation to that other kind of things which are customs, habits, ways of doing and thinking, etc.; lastly, men in their relation to that other kind of things again which are accidents and misfortunes such as famine, epidemics, death, etc. (Foucault, 1979, p. 11).

Here, Foucault is also encapsulating Lefebvre’s (1947) concept of ‘everyday life’ (Irwin, 2009, pp. 8-12) and just as Irwin argues that Lefebvre’s preoccupation with the everyday accords him significance in the interculturalism debate, so too, could this argument be extended to Foucault. (Indeed, I acknowledge that the term ‘*assemblage*’ is more usually associated with Lefebvre and Gilles Deleuze).

2.2.1 Challenging Hegemony

Foucault may be aligned with Gramsci as he emerges as a significant challenger of hegemony. However, as observed by Rabinow (1991, p. 13), Foucault is resolutely and consistently anti-Hegelian and anti-Marxist, a categorisation that cannot be applied to Gramsci. Smart (1986, pp. 158-159) contends that Foucault's work "may be read as providing a radically different approach and a new set of concepts through which to develop analysis and understanding of the exercise of power and the associated effects of hegemony in modern societies". For Foucault,

criticism is no longer going to be practiced in the search for formal structures with universal value, but rather as a historical investigation into the events that have led us to constitute ourselves and to recognise ourselves as subjects of what we are doing, thinking, saying (Foucault, 1991a, p. 46).

While Foucault can be linked to Gramsci in relation to the challenge of hegemony, it can be seen that he takes a more radical stance than the latter in relation to the forces of social cohesion. Gramsci and the other writers in the previous chapter have all indicated that there are boundaries beyond which they will not go. Foucault on the other hand seeks "to give a new impetus...to the undefined work of freedom" (ibid). He envisages "a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibilities of going beyond them" (ibid, p. 50).

2.2.2 *On Marginalisation*

I view Foucault's main preoccupation as that of giving a voice to those who have been marginalised. His extensive corpus illustrates that marginalisation, in various guises, has been a consistent feature of society. It also illustrates that marginalisation is an instrument of hegemony. In *Madness and Civilisation*, Foucault demonstrates how communication between the madman and the man of reason is silenced. Dialogue with the madman is broken off and "all those stammered, imperfect words without fixed syntax", in which the exchange between madness and reason occurs are thrust into oblivion (Foucault, 1989b, p. xii). Oppression thus becomes manifest through its silence. Only the language of the dominant group, in this instance, the psychiatrists, is heard. The madman becomes marginalised and confinement within the *Hôpital Général* is the embodiment of his marginalisation. Foucault observes that in a relatively short period of time, "confinement had become the abusive amalgam of heterogeneous elements" (ibid, p. 41). He questions why this is so and concludes that a social sensibility must have taken root across Europe that "suddenly isolated the category destined to populate the places of confinement" (ibid, p. 42). He acknowledges that, to our eyes, this group is strangely mixed and confused, comprising an undifferentiated mass of beggars, disbanded soldiers or deserters, unemployed workers, impoverished students and the sick (ibid, pp. 42-43). Foucault contends, "what is for us merely an undifferentiated sensibility, must have been, for those living in the classical age, a clearly articulated perception" (ibid, p. 42). Foucault extends this theme in *Discipline and Punish*, wherein the high wall of the prison becomes "the monotonous figure, at once material and symbolic, of the power to punish" (Foucault, 1991b, p. 116). Again,

difference (of crime and of criminal in this instance) is reduced to the “grey, uniform penalty” of imprisonment (ibid, p. 117).

The ‘undifferentiated sensibility’ referred to above can be linked specifically to cultural difference. In today’s society, there is a tendency to refer to ‘multiculturalism’ as if one were referring to one homogenous group, when in fact there are many different layers and groups in a multicultural society. As demonstrated in Chapter One, Bauman (2001) outlines the inadequacies of the term and contends that it is indicative of a limited response to cultural difference. Bhabha (1990, p. 208) observes that while multiculturalism can be viewed as entertaining and encouraging cultural diversity, it also seeks to contain it. Thus, the charge of amalgamating heterogeneous elements, as levelled by Foucault, may still be applicable today and it is a consideration of which we should be aware when engaging in discussions on multiculturalism and interculturalism. That is why I have chosen to differentiate between the two terms.

2.2.3 On Education

In *Discipline and Punish*, using the Lancaster method as a model, Foucault demonstrates how education is a continued, repeated process wherein “the school became a machine for learning, in which each pupil, each level and each moment, if correctly combined, were permanently utilised in the general process of teaching” (Foucault, 1991b, p. 165). Education was based on the process of Stimulus/Response: “the order does not need to be explained or formulated; it must trigger off the required behaviour and that is enough” (ibid, p. 166). Education forms part of a complex and chronological machine that maintains control over a nation. This machine could be embodied in the forces of the military or the forces of labour (ibid, p. 165). Whatever machine it

contributes to, it is evident from Foucault's outline that critical reflection or dialogue does not form part of this education. Education is transmitted to the children who provide the appropriate response to a series of codified signals. This scenario corresponds with Freire's 'banking' concept of education, "in which the scope of action allowed to the students extends only as far as receiving, filing and storing the deposits" and in as meek a manner as possible (Freire, 1972, pp. 45-46).

Gramsci's outline of the vocational school mirrors Foucault's depiction of the Lancaster method. The vocational school allows the labourer to become a skilled worker or the peasant a surveyor or petty agronomist. However, it tends "to restrict recruitment to the technically qualified governing stratum, in a social and political context which makes it increasingly difficult for 'personal initiative' to acquire such skills and technical-political preparation" (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 40-41). A hierarchical system of social control is thus maintained. Yet Gramsci also acknowledges the less attractive aspects of the educational process as intrinsic parts of the formation of the child:

Many people have to be persuaded that studying too is a job, and a very tiring one with its own particular apprenticeship – involving muscles and nerves as well as intellect. It is a process of adaptation, a habit acquired with effort, tedium and even suffering (ibid, p. 42).

It can be concluded here that Foucault and Gramsci diverge significantly on the actual process of education. Gramsci can be viewed as presenting a more conciliatory attitude to the process, whereas Foucault seeks to reveal what he views as its intrinsic power imbalance.

Foucault's observations on transformation, although not written in the context of education, merit consideration here. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault outlines the developments of the penal system and its reformatory as well as punitive aspects. The reformatory aspect of the penal system was designed to bring about the transformation of the individual. Many characteristics of this aspect of punishment mirror Foucault's observations on education: time-tables, compulsory movements, regular activities, solitary meditation, work in common, silence, application, respect, good habits (Foucault, 1991b, p. 128). This is undertaken with a view to shaping the obedient, 'docile' subject who is less likely to threaten the cohesion of the society in which he is located. All of this serves the interests of those in power who focus on "changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them" (Simone de Beauvoir 1963, cited by Freire, 1972, p. 47). Freire observes that the oppressed are regarded as the pathology of the healthy society, who must therefore be 'integrated', 'incorporated' into the healthy society that they have 'forsaken' (Freire, 1972, p. 48). Thus, both Foucault and Freire identify that the process of transformation needs to be relocated from the individual to society; a society that, in their view, manifests many characteristics of ill-health; characteristics which they see as being perpetuated by the existing social order.

2.2.4 *The Location and the Unearthing of Knowledge and Meaning*

Foucault's genealogy acts as a foil to the universalist perspective and to the notion that meaning and understanding have remained steadfast throughout the centuries. He views meaning as constantly reinventing itself and as being the product of many and diverse sources. Meaning is obtained through the process of genealogy which "rejects the metahistorical deployment of ideal significations

and indefinite teleologies” and “opposes itself to the search for ‘origin’” (Foucault, 2003 p. 242). Instead, it must seek the singularity of events in “the most unpromising of places...in sentiments, love, conscience, instincts” (ibid, p. 241). Genealogy finds at the historical beginning of things not the inviolable identity of their origin but the dissention of other things and thus disparity (ibid, p. 243). Thus, according to Foucault:

The purpose of history, guided by genealogy, is not to discover the roots of our identity, but to commit itself to its dissipation. It does not seek to define our unique threshold of emergence, the homeland to which metaphysicians promise a return, it seeks to make visible all of those discontinuities that cross us (ibid, p.250).

In short, as observed by Ball, (1994, p. 4), “genealogy identifies and counterpoints antagonistic discourses – the dominant and the silenced, the ‘truthful’ and the illegitimate”.

Having thus identified where meaning can be found, it is important to know how to unearth it. Foucault responds to this dilemma by providing us with the archaeological method. For “the problem is no longer one of tradition, of tracing a line, but one of division, of limits; it is no longer one of lasting foundations, but one of transformations that serve as new foundations, the rebuilding of foundations” (Foucault, 1989c, p. 6).

The focal point of this problem is *the document*. Foucault acknowledges that the document was also the focal point of linear and continuous analysis. However, now the approach to the document has changed: “history now organises the document, divides it up, distributes it, orders it, arranges it in levels, establishes series, distinguishes between what is relevant and what is not,

discovers elements, defines unities, describes relations” (ibid, p. 7). Documents are no longer inert materials, instead they are evolving, organic structures with the potential for transformation into monuments by means of an archaeological approach (ibid, p. 8). Foucault transposes the incongruities, uncertainties and fallibilities of this approach into his own writing. “Hence the cautious, stumbling manner of this text: at every turn, it stands back, measures up what is before it, gropes towards its limits, stumbles against what it does not mean and digs pits to mark out its own path” (ibid, p. 18). The vagaries of this method will become more apparent both to the reader and myself as I attempt to analyse the discourse of Irish educational policy later in this dissertation.

2.2.5 *Limitations of Foucault*

Rabinow (1991, p. 22) observes that while Foucault exhorts us to challenge the power of the state and thus to reform society, the general practical implications of this challenge have not been explored by him to any great extent in his writings. This is a limitation of Foucault, one to which many of his critics return from time to time (Rorty, 1986, 1991; Couzens-Hoy, 1986; Taylor, 1991; et al.). Ashenden (1999, p. 159) defends Foucault from his detractors by observing that rather than searching for universally valid criteria of justice, Foucault suggests the more modest approach of giving an account of what we are, of the relationships that constitute and circumscribe us. Ashenden contends,

this is not to dismiss normative questions but to suggest that in so far as genealogies bring our modes of acting upon ourselves and others into relief, this is already to question what we are and to open space in which to reflect critically on what we might become (ibid).

Ashenden's defence strengthens the rationale for the inclusion of Foucault in this dissertation as it endorses the reflexivity that his approach brings to analysis.

2.3 The Derridean Challenge to 'Logocentrism'.

Foucault, following Baudelaire, criticises modernity for 'heroizing' the present (Foucault, 1991a, p. 40). This critique is taken up and expanded upon by Derrida. He undertakes this task in his undermining of the 'logocentrism' of Western metaphysics. Kearney (1986, p. 114) observes that one of the motivating impulses of his work has been to disrupt all univocal classifications and fixed identities which he sees as symptomatic of the logocentric bias of Western thinking – the compulsion to have a central place for everything and to reduce everything to this central place. The logic of the argument leads the way, while everything else is consigned to the periphery as mere rhetoric or ornamentation (Caputo, 1997, p. 83). According to Caputo, Derrida viewed logocentrism as privileging the philosophy of Plato. As the focal point of this dissertation is the *document*, Derrida's rejection of logocentrism, in the specific context of the elevation of speech over writing, is relevant to the analysis. Derrida believed that the traditional supplementary role occupied by writing in relation to speech resulted in writing carrying out the task of veiling or hiding or encrypting itself throughout history. Its role was servile, becoming "the instrument of an abusive power, of a caste of 'intellectuals' that is thus ensuring hegemony, whether its own or that of special interests..." (Derrida, 1998, p. 55). Derrida endeavoured to challenge this servile role in many of his texts, one of the most influential being his essay '*Différance*' (Derrida, 1968/2003).

Here, the metaphysical prestige of the logos is subverted by the operation of *différance* (Kearney, 1986, p. 119) as, in changing the spelling to accommodate duality of meaning (to differ; to delay), Derrida is according priority to writing over speech as the change can only be seen in writing (the 'a' being silent in speech). Derrida informs us that writing is considered subversive in that it creates a spatial and temporal distance between the author and the reader; it presupposes the absence of the author and so we can never be sure exactly what is meant by a written text; it can have a multiplicity of meanings as opposed to a single unifying one (Derrida, 1984, p. 116). Thus, writing can no longer be seen as an auxiliary or an ancillary to speech (Derrida, 1998, p. 51) and the relationship between writing and power is thrown into relief.

Différance assumes a liberating quality; the bringing together of an *assemblage* of uses for the word or concept (although Derrida contends that it is neither) of *différance* in its new spelling (Derrida, 2003, p. 226). Writing is no longer confined to the transmission of a set of ideas. It is no longer the prerogative of those who hold power. Instead, the multiplicity of meaning that can be drawn from a document bears witness to the transformative powers within writing itself. "The a of *différance*, therefore, is not heard; it remains silent, secret and discrete, like a tomb. It is a tomb that (provided one knows how to decipher its legend) is not far from signalling the death of the king" (ibid). Here I view Derrida as signalling a challenge to the reign of universality, of metaphysics, and the emergence of singularity and contingency. This occurs through the process of deconstruction. In a later commentary, Derrida observes,

the very meaning and mission of deconstruction is to show that things – texts, institutions, traditions, societies, beliefs and

practices of whatever size and sort you need – do not have definable meanings and determinable missions, that they are always more than any mission would impose, that they exceed the boundaries they currently occupy (Derrida, 1994, cited by Caputo, 1997, p. 31).

Thus, deconstruction is, for Derrida, “an affirmation of the other, a precursorial way to make way for the invention of the other” (Caputo, 1997, p. 103).

Derrida demonstrates that *différance* does not lend itself to binary oppositions. It does not require us to choose a sensible or intelligible interpretation. In fact, we must resist this opposition as *différance* refers neither to the voice nor to writing. *Différance* undermines modernity’s ‘heroizing’ of the present as it cannot be exposed and thus does not become present (Derrida, 2003, p. 227). Derrida contends instead that *différance* encompasses and inevitably surpasses onto-theology or philosophy (ibid, p. 228). “We thus interrogate the limit that has always constrained us...to form the sense of being in general as presence or absence, in the categories of being or beingness” (ibid, p. 230). Derrida later expands upon the difficulties in translating the term as “it is neither *this* nor *that*; but rather *this and that* (e.g. the act of differing and deferring) without being reducible to a dialectical logic either, [and thus] cannot be defined...within the logocentric system of philosophy” (Derrida, 1984, pp. 110-111).

Différance is distinguishable by its disorder and thus challenges the linearity that tends to be associated with the rational order. Derrida informs us that his thesis “will not be developed simply as a philosophical discourse that operates on the basis of a principle, of postulates, axioms and definitions and that

moves according to the discursive line of a rational order”(Derrida, 2003, p. 228). He is thus imploding the notion of cohesion and the certainties proposed by metaphysics. Derrida does not, however, advocate an absolute rupture with metaphysics. Indeed, he observes that *différance* has profound affinities with Hegelian speech, but that despite these affinities, “it can, at a certain point, not exactly break with it, but rather work a sort of displacement with regard to it” (ibid, p. 232).

2.3.1 Challenging Metaphysics

Drawing upon Nietzsche, Derrida enunciates one of the key criticisms of [Western metaphysical] philosophy, namely that it comprises active indifference to difference (Derrida, 2003, p. 234). This is one of the charges that may be levelled at a universal perspective, although I have endeavoured in Chapter One to counter this charge. Derrida is not unaware of the inherent difficulties of his challenge to metaphysics. The existence of Being “has always made ‘sense’, has always been conceived or spoken of as such”, however “*différance* [is] ‘older’ than the ontological difference or the truth of Being” (ibid, p. 237). It thus predates the *arche* and thus Derrida is “reinscribing our truths and principles within the an-arche of *différance*, attaching to them a co-efficient of ‘contingency’” (Caputo, 1997, p. 102). *Différance* is not contained within boundaries and thus “there is no support to be found and no depth to be had for this bottomless chessboard where being is set in play” (Derrida, 2003, p. 237). Here, I view Derrida as removing the ‘bottom line’ implicit or explicit in the writings of the theorists in Chapter One. We thus have to cope with an irrepressible iterability that can never be contained or decisively regulated (Caputo, 1997, p. 102). We must venture beyond our own logos, that is, we must

confront “a *différance* so violent that it refuses to be stopped and examined as the epochality of Being and ontological difference” (Derrida, 2003, p. 237). This is

neither to give up this passage through the truth of Being, nor is it in any way to “criticize”, “contest” or fail to recognize the incessant necessity for it. On the contrary, we must stay within the difficulty of this passage; we must repeat this passage in a rigorous reading of metaphysics, wherever metaphysics serves as the norm of Western speech, and not only in the texts of “the history of philosophy” (ibid).

Here, Derrida is acknowledging the magnitude of the metaphysical influence and the difficulties inherent in confronting it. While problematising metaphysics, he does not provide a conception of “what stands opposed to the text of Western metaphysics” and concedes, “*différance* remains a metaphysical name; and all the names that it receives from our language are still, so far as they are names, metaphysical” (ibid, p. 239). Thus “we are still *in* metaphysics in the special sense that we are *in* a determinate language” (Derrida, 1984, p. 111, original emphasis). Yet, we are exhorted to move on from the *nostalgia* (original emphasis) of metaphysics as we must accept that there is no unique or finite name, not even the name of Being. Instead the name “must be conceived outside the myth of the purely maternal or paternal language belonging to the lost fatherland of thought” (Derrida, 2003, p. 240). This is the task of deconstruction, a task that does not necessarily lead to resolution but instead reveals the *aporias* (or irresolvable contradictions) of texts (Thomassen, 2006, p. 5).

2.3.2 *The Community as a means of Social Cohesion*

In the previous chapter, I outlined how the concept of community remains quite tenuous and how it may, perhaps mistakenly, be viewed as the panacea for the demise of citizenship. Through exploring the treatises of Taylor and Bauman, it became evident that such a solution is not without its problems. Derrida also demonstrates the potential tensions within the concept and cautions us to avoid viewing 'community' as being synonymous with 'harmony':

If by community one implies as is often the case, a harmonious group, consensus and fundamental agreement beneath the phenomena of discord or war, then I don't believe in it very much and I sense in it as much threat as promise (Derrida, 1995, cited by Caputo, 1997, p. 107).

Caputo, in his analysis of Derrida, allies the word community with the word 'communio' in the sense of military formation whose purpose was to defend a city against the stranger or foreigner (Caputo, 1997, p. 108). There are visible parallels with Foucault here, although whereas here the majority or dominant group remain within the walls of the city and those marginalised remain without, for Foucault it was those marginalised who were confined within the walls of the *Hôpital Général* or the prison. Bhabha's views on confinement of difference (cf. 2.4.3 below) are also relevant here. Caputo makes the very obvious but perhaps overlooked point in relation to communities: they always have an inside and an outside (ibid). This is something that we need to bear in mind when advocating the establishment or re-establishment of communities as a means to active citizenship and thus to social cohesion.

Caputo observes that “what alerts and alarms Derrida about the form of association described by the word “community” is that, while the word sounds like something warm and comforting, the very notion is built around a defence that a “we” throws up against the “other” (ibid, p. 113). This is to mask the potentially conservative force of community under the guise of liberalism. I have already outlined a similar reservation of Bauman (2001, in Chapter One) in relation to the liberal face of multiculturalism. Caputo contends that deconstruction is the opposite of community “since deconstruction is the preparation for the incoming of the other, ‘open’ and ‘porous’ to the other” (ibid, p. 108). However, community finds itself in an almost impossible conundrum: if it is too welcoming, it loses its identity; if it keeps its identity, it becomes unwelcoming (ibid, p. 113). Thus, deconstruction may help us to acknowledge difference but we may get no further as it may also reveal the impossibility of resolving the difficulty of accommodating difference within unity, a contradiction that Foucault also failed to resolve. Such is an example of *aporia*.

2.3.3 Derrida’s Response to the Concept of Tolerance

In Chapter One, I outlined what I believe to be significant limitations in relation to the concept of tolerance. Here, I drew upon the work of Habermas and Bauman. Derrida also expresses reservations and mistrust of the concept and views it as a manifestation of power. His deliberations on tolerance are epitomised in his representation of hospitality. Derrida challenges the positivity that tends to be attached to both of these concepts and reveals them to be more complex constructs, with less positive undercurrents. His essay ‘*Hostipitality*’ reveals many facets and contradictions of the concept of hospitality. Like the concept of ‘*différance*’, it eschews the assertion of an alternative worldview and

instead provides us with a similar middle voice of undecidability as that provided by '*différance*'.

In linking the word 'hospitality' with its German equivalent, *Wirtbarkeit*, Derrida reveals to us the assertion of power that accompanies the exercise of hospitality. The patron of a house (*Der Wirt*) is the master "who defines the conditions of hospitality or welcome; where consequently there can be no unconditional welcome, no unconditional passage through the door" (Derrida, 2006, p. 210). Derrida views the formalisation of a law of hospitality as violently imposing a contradiction on the very concept of hospitality, in that there are conditions imposed on the guest before he can accept the hospitality of the patron (ibid, p. 211). The threshold of the host is symbolic of the contract that is implicit between the host and the guest. Here, I view Derrida as using the concept of hospitality to symbolise the 'bottom line' that was erased by *différance*. Yet in delineating this 'bottom line', Derrida quickly erases it again by contending that hospitality is "not a present being" (ibid, p. 216). He concludes that hospitality has to extend beyond hospitality in order to reveal its essential meaning. It needs to extend beyond the 'bottom line' of the threshold in order to avoid being confused with hostility (ibid, pp. 226-227). Derrida's deconstruction of hospitality serves to illustrate the tensions within the concept of tolerance. The latter concept also contains the conditionality inherent in hospitality. The image of the benevolent but yet exacting patron is common to both concepts. While 'tolerance' and 'hospitality' seem to endorse the principles of interculturalism, Derrida has effectively unearthed the potential for hegemony within these concepts and, like both Habermas and Bauman in Chapter One, cautions us against complacency in using these terms. Yet, I feel compelled to add here, as a

rejoinder to Derrida, that I am unsure about the survival of society without the imposition of some conditions.

2.3.4 *Deferring Interpretation*

It is evident from this brief and limited outline of Derrida's work, that to view him as rejecting the universal out of hand, would be to misinterpret him. Ultimately, I see him as endeavouring to unsettle the universal perspective out of a certain complacency that it has amassed throughout the centuries. Derrida views "the privilege granted to unity, to totality, to organic ensembles, to community as a homogenised whole" as "a danger for responsibility, for decision, for ethics, for politics" (Derrida, 1997, p. 13). However this does not imply that we have to choose between unity and multiplicity. Indeed pure unity or pure multiplicity "is a synonym of death" (ibid). Thus we need to defer our interpretations and instead be mindful of their plurality, occupying a middle voice between unity and multiplicity. Derrida contends that a plurality of perspectives and of interpretations is essential to the workings of a state. This plurality is unearthed by the process of deconstruction (ibid, p. 15). A state where unity reigns supreme would be a catastrophe:

A state without plurality and a respect for plurality, would be first, a totalitarian state, and not only is this a terrible thing, but it does not work...thus a state as such must be attentive as much as possible to plurality, to the plurality of peoples, of languages, cultures, ethnic groups, persons, and so on. This is the condition for a state (ibid).

It is interesting to note how Derrida subscribes to the notion of conditionality here, whereas it is rejected in his later essay. I consider that this

particular statement demonstrates the relevance of the process of deconstruction to the context of this dissertation. It illustrates how universality must be challenged in order to encompass the concept of difference. It outlines the transformative nature of hermeneutics and challenges us to counteract Nietzsche's criticism of philosophy as active indifference to difference. This gauntlet is taken up by Homi Bhabha who presents his own perspective on the middle voice presented by both '*Différance*' and '*Hostipitality*'. Bhabha also places the concept specifically within the context of cultural difference.

2.4 Homi Bhabha and the 'Third Space'

While Derrida was somewhat equivocal about his political role, finding it difficult to align political action with his intellectual project of deconstruction (Derrida, 1984, p. 120), Bhabha adopts a more overt stance in relation to political activism. He reiterates Derrida's endorsement of the role of writing in the process of social transformation and observes that "the attention to rhetoric and writing reveals the discursive ambivalence that makes 'the political' possible" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 24). Bhabha contends that the language of critique is effective not for delineating opposition but in overcoming it and opening up a space of translation, a place of hybridity. In such a space, *negotiation* rather than *negation* takes place (original emphasis) and the possibilities of *différance* are exposed (ibid, p. 25). Bhabha makes a critical point at this juncture, one that tends to be overlooked by the more extreme defenders of both the right and the left. He draws our attention to the fact that "*there is no given community or body of the people whose inherent, radical historicity emits the right signs*" (ibid, p. 27, original emphasis). This caution serves as an endorsement of *différance*.

2.4.1 Accepting Hegemony

Bhabha acknowledges the presence of hegemony in society, and, like Gramsci, acknowledges its role in revolution (ibid, p. 28). Instead of endeavouring to eliminate it in order to serve the cause of the recognition of difference, he calls for a counter-hegemonic power to be established and, echoing Stuart Hall (1987), contends that the Labour Party of 1980s Great Britain was not hegemonic enough. Thus, transformation of society cannot occur without hegemony. This poses a challenge to those who champion the cause of transformation and who may spend fruitless time and energy in seeking the elimination of hegemony in order to bring transformation about.

What Bhabha does is to endeavour to use the impact of hegemony to achieve his own ends as he views its work as “the process of iteration and differentiation” (ibid, p. 29). Bhabha consistently endorses an antagonistic approach to political change and views hegemony as giving meaning to the politics of struggle and the war of positions (ibid). He recognises the difficulties inherent in endorsing hegemony and similarly seeking a collective political will. He views both as being necessary in society but insists that one is not the product of the other. Yet, he acknowledges the conundrum posed by the endeavour to represent differentiated social movements in a collective will and the potential lack of synchronicity in such representation (ibid, p. 30). The role of theory as a metanarrative is thus portrayed as an anachronism. Bhabha emphasises that, from the perspective of negotiation and translation, there is no final act or closure of theory. Neither is there any first or final act of revolutionary social transformation. Here, I view Bhabha as reiterating Gramsci’s (or Marx’s) call to

permanent revolution (Gramsci, 1971, p. 210) although he distances himself from the universal perspective.

2.4.2 *'Diversity' and 'Difference'*

Bhabha (1994, p. 31) engages in a substantial exploration of the complexities and tensions within critical theory and outlines the limitations of Western logocentrism. He endorses what he terms a 'revisionary' approach to critical theory and lauds Foucault's archaeology for enabling "the linear, progressivist claims of the social sciences...to be confronted by their own historical limitations" (ibid, p. 32). Bhabha concretises these tensions through his separation of the concepts of cultural *diversity* and cultural *difference*, identifying the latter term as being representative of the discourse of deconstruction and, potentially, of transformation. This separation of concepts can be linked with the tensions between multiculturalism (as an undifferentiated term) and interculturalism. For Bhabha, "cultural diversity is an epistemological object – culture as an object of empirical knowledge – whereas cultural difference is the process of the *enunciation* of culture as *knowledgeable*, authoritative, adequate to the construction of systems of cultural identification" (ibid, p. 34, original emphasis). Bhabha then goes on to make a very significant point in relation to the enunciation of cultural difference, namely that this enunciation in itself needs to be problematised. What happens in reality is that

the reality of the limit or limit-text of culture is rarely theorised outside of well-intentioned moralist polemics against prejudice and stereotype, or the blanket assertion of individual or institutional racism – that describe the effect rather than the structure of the problem (ibid).

These observations are particularly relevant to the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education*. As will be seen, polemic, well-intentioned or otherwise, does not serve the cause of interculturalism.

2.4.3 *Locating Meaning*

Drawing on Fanon (1986), Bhabha contends that the enunciation of cultural difference demands that we rethink our perspective on the identity of culture and engage in a critique of the positive aesthetic and political values we ascribe to the unity or totality of cultures, especially those that have known long and tyrannical histories of domination and misrecognition (ibid, p. 35). This is not to endorse dualism or binary opposition; it is not simply to replace the perspective of the ‘Self’ with that of the ‘Other’. It is instead to locate meaning within the middle voice of *différance* or what Bhabha terms the ‘third space’. This space “displaces the histories that constitute it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). In the context of linguistics, this space “represents both the general conditions of language and the specific implications of the utterance in a performative and institutional strategy of which it cannot ‘in itself’ be conscious” (Bhabha, 1994, p. 36, original punctuation). This unconscious relation introduces an ambivalence in the act of interpretation (ibid). Bhabha sees the intervention of the third space (and by association that of *différance*) as challenging “our sense of the historical identity of culture as a homogenising, unifying force, authenticated by the originary Past kept alive in the tradition of the People” (ibid, p. 37). A willingness to engage with the third space helps to avoid the polarisation of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ and to speak about and problematise cultural difference. It helps to avoid what Bhabha terms

“the exoticism of multiculturalism” and to engage with “culture’s *hybridity*” (ibid, p. 38, original emphasis).

To retain a perspective of cultural *diversity* instead of cultural difference is to eschew entry into the third space. Bhabha observes, “it is a commonplace of plural, democratic societies to say that they can encourage and accommodate cultural diversity”. However, he contends that the term ‘diversity’ represents a limited and conditional indulgence on the part of the host or dominant culture which tends to place other cultures “in a kind of *musée imaginaire*; as though one should be able to collect and appreciate them.” (Bhabha, 1990, p. 208). Bhabha concludes that while there is an entertainment and encouragement of cultural diversity, there is always a corresponding *containment* of difference. He equates the term ‘diversity’ with the liberal relativist perspective. The similarities between Bhabha and Foucault are easily identified here as the notion of containment is a recurring theme with Foucault. Also, Bhabha observes that focusing on difference allows him to engage with alterity, thus avoiding a logocentric bias. Bhabha calls for a notion of politics that is based upon *potentially antagonistic* political identities (original emphasis). He observes:

What is at issue is a historical moment in which these multiple identities do actually articulate in challenging ways, either positively or negatively, either in progressive or regressive ways, often conflictually, sometimes even *incommensurably* – not some flowering of individual talents and capacities (ibid, original emphasis).

2.4.4 *The Limitations of 'Multiculturalism'*

Bhabha observes that the endorsement of cultural diversity became the bedrock of multicultural education policy in England (Bhabha, 1990, p. 208). He identifies two specific problems in relation to multiculturalism and multicultural education: one is the containment of difference outlined above and the second is the fact that he sees racism as still being rampant in societies where multiculturalism is encouraged. "This is because the universalism that paradoxically permits diversity masks ethnocentric norms, values and interests" (ibid). As is seen in the previous chapter, those that champion the universal perspective would not agree with Bhabha here and they would not be content to be placed within this limited sphere of 'multiculturalism'. We have observed that much of their deliberations serve the cause of interculturalism, namely the coming together of many cultures to act in the interest of the common good. Nevertheless, while Bhabha's observations on universalism may be open to debate, his comments on multiculturalism merit consideration. He observes that in the English context "multiculturalism represented an attempt both to respond to and to control the dynamic process of the articulation of cultural difference, administering a *consensus*, based on a norm that propagates cultural diversity" (ibid, pp. 208-209, original emphasis). His use of the past tense is noteworthy here. I view it as implying that 'multiculturalism' has become somewhat of an archaic term and one that, in the British context, has been replaced with an alternative ideology. I am not sure that this is the case in reality.

Bhabha distances himself from the liberal relativism of cultural diversity, and thus of 'multiculturalism', as he views this as inadequate and limited. Here, I view him as throwing down a significant gauntlet to liberalism, namely

challenging whether it is adequate to the vagaries and complexities of a multicultural society. This dilemma has already been addressed in the previous chapter, notably in the works of Taylor, who while operating out of a somewhat different perspective to that of Bhabha, and who ultimately retains the liberal view, nevertheless expresses very similar concerns.

Bhabha's work, in itself, could be viewed as a conduit to the understanding of the more esoteric style of Foucault and, in particular, Derrida. His delineation of the 'third space' renders *différance* more accessible. The 'cultural hybridity' inherent in the third space "gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation" (Bhabha, 1990, p. 211). The third space also provides a more nuanced view of hegemony. While we may expect Bhabha to denounce hegemony and call for its elimination, he surprises us by stating that it can actually be employed to enhance the cause of difference. His stance is quite practical here in that he acknowledges the futility of the quest for the elimination of hegemony and, instead, seeks to harness its potential. Bhabha's treatise on 'multiculturalism' is particularly apposite to the current debate. He demonstrates a certain obsolescence in the term and presents it as an inadequate liberal solution to the complexities of a multicultural society. I must acknowledge at this juncture that Bhabha's separation of 'diversity' and 'difference' is not shared by other writers who may be otherwise sympathetic to his viewpoint. Parekh (2006), for example, uses the term 'diversity' throughout his work, and indeed as previously observed, retains the term 'multiculturalism' although his interpretation of the concept is at significant variance with the indulgent and

paternalistic undercurrents of Bhabha's *musée imaginaire*. This discrepancy in terms may be due to the fact that Parekh ultimately retains the liberal viewpoint.

2.5 Conclusion

In this chapter, I expanded upon the traditional concept of critical theory to include the singular and contingent, as well as the universal. This was achieved through the analysis of the writings of Foucault, Derrida and Bhabha. The notion of Being, implicitly or explicitly contained in the discourse of the universalists, is unsettled and displaced by a less definitive notion of reality. This endorses Kincheloe and McLaren's (1994, p. 140) contention that "any attempts to delineate critical theory as discrete schools of analysis will fail to capture the hybridity endemic to contemporary criticalist analysis". Foucault is more trenchant in his rejection of the universal, although ultimately and perhaps by default, he acquiesces to its reality. Derrida is more equivocal, accepting the unified whole as an essential part of existence but pleading the cause of pluralism within this unity. Bhabha, while engaging in a rejection of the universal that is similar to that of Foucault, is nevertheless closer to Derrida through his acknowledgement of the cultural hybridity encompassed in the 'third space'.

Foucault demonstrates closer affinity with Lefebvre's (1947) concept of the 'everyday' (as outlined by Irwin, 2009, in 2.2 above), in that he concretises concepts such as marginalisation and exclusion by placing them in the context of the asylum or the prison. However, Foucault avoids any alliance with existing norms or value systems and, like Derrida and Bhabha, demonstrates suspicion in relation to the structures in society and sidesteps the linearity of the metanarrative. The transmission of previously held values is, for him, to yield to

existing power structures, manifested overtly in, for example, the Law, and, more covertly, in the 'Normalisation' of behaviours and practices. His critique is aimed at the transformation of society, and yet, the manner in which this transformation is to occur, is not addressed by him. Derrida, while questioning existing values and mores, is less trenchant, or perhaps, less obvious, in their rejection. Similarly, the direction of his writings in terms of effecting change in society remains obscure although *différance* gives us an insight into the means of exploring, if not operationalising, the concept. Bhabha's 'third space' also serves as a locus of exploration.

Yet, both Foucault and Derrida emerge as significant challengers of hegemony. Hegemony is implicitly allied to social control in their writings and is thus dismissed as a pariah. However, social cohesion is a potential and, very likely, a probable casualty in their assault on hegemony. Neither Foucault nor Derrida seems to have taken this on board. While the rejection of hegemony has a legitimate basis in the pursuit of emancipation, they have avoided addressing the question of what will govern social order in the wake of its demise. The unpalatable question of whether effective government can take place without some degree of hegemony has been left unanswered, thus opening up the potential for anarchy. Bhabha adopts a contradictory and almost oppositional stance to Foucault and Derrida here. While endorsing the poststructuralist tradition in its critique of the effects of power, he nevertheless seeks to retain and even extend the influence of hegemony so that power can be extended to those to whom it has been denied. Here, Bhabha is cognisant of the insidious nature of hegemony in society and of the futility in trying to eliminate it. It should be recognised here that social cohesion is not specifically mentioned by Bhabha,

although his wish to work with rather than against hegemony is a means of retaining order in society.

The inclusion of Foucault, Derrida and Bhabha has particular relevance to a multicultural society and thus to the specific context of this dissertation. The themes of marginalisation, exclusion and confinement assume even more significance in a multicultural society. Foucault indicates to us the problems of homogenising different groups and imposing upon them the naïve and simplistic perspective of “undifferentiated sensibility”. Derrida unseats the dominance of ‘logocentrism’, thus ‘deheroizing’ the present and acknowledging the role of alterity. He avoids placing the absent or the ‘Other’ in binary opposition to the *logos* and instead presents the notion of *différance* as a space in which to explore alterity. This theme is reinvented by Bhabha in his creation of the ‘third space’ in which similar explorations take place. All three writers eschew the notion of exoticising or ‘celebrating’ difference and the provision of the middle voice of *différance* or the third space serve to provide a forum for the problematising of difference and at times engaging in a conflicting manner with it. Bhabha reveals the potential shortcomings of the concept of “multiculturalism” and demonstrates that the pursuit of this ideology does not ultimately serve the interests of cultural difference. Once again I acknowledge that the concept of multiculturalism is open to many different interpretations.

In a situation of heterogeneity, the totality of the universal, while an agent of order, can also become an agent of marginalisation and exclusion. The treatises of these writers serve to raise awareness of cultural difference in society and of the extent of political violence that may, either overtly or covertly, be levelled against various groups. They thus provide a reflexivity in terms of the

current *modus vivendi* and challenge existing approaches to social cohesion as well as the accommodation of “multiculturalism” as an ideology.

In this chapter and the previous one, I have endeavoured to provide a comprehensive outline of critical theory as a theoretical framework for this dissertation. All of this was undertaken with a view to identifying the philosophical basis of Irish education. The relationship between the maintenance of social cohesion and the recognition of difference within the context of a multicultural society is the overarching theme or problem within the dissertation. At this juncture, I am conscious of the fact that, although I have emphasised the Irish context of this research, I have not so far provided any description of it. Nor have I included the contribution of Irish theorists to the debate. Before engaging in a detailed analysis of the chosen documents, I wish to devote a chapter to addressing these lacunae.

The next chapter will place the universalist perspective as outlined in Chapter One and the dissident perspective as outlined in the current chapter in a specific Irish context and will examine the impact of recent cultural change on the cohesion of Irish society. Ireland’s political context will be taken into account and the management and accommodation of cultural change will be measured against this backdrop. The contributions of a number of Irish theorists to the debate will be included. All of this will be undertaken with a view to determining the implications of cultural change for Irish educational policy.

Chapter Three: An Irish Response to the Challenges of Social Cohesion and the Recognition of Difference

3.1 Introduction

As observed in the Introduction to this dissertation, there is a need to foreground the realities of living and learning in an increasingly diverse Ireland and the role of primary schooling in shaping and contributing to such change (Lodge et al., 2004, p. 6). The 2006 census indicates that of the total population of 4,172,013 in Ireland, 419,733 residents are classified as non-Irish (CSO, 2008). This equates with approximately 10% of our population. During the period 2002-2004 the population in Irish schools rose by approximately 5000 (DES, 2005b, cited by INTO, 2006, p. 3). Some large schools have reported numbers of 'newcomer' children making up 25-30% of the school population (INTO, 2006, p. 5). Yet, insufficient debate has taken place in the Irish educational context in relation to the conflict, confusion, challenges to identity and the unseating of traditional, and hitherto, steadfast norms wrought by the advent of a multicultural society. Consequently, as will be outlined in Chapters Four and Five, Irish educational policy documents tend to be rather circumspect in the manner in which they address issues relating to cultural difference. In particular, they have failed to problematise such issues, thus reducing the possibility of critical dialogue. This may be due to the residual effects of consensualism that, despite increasing evidence of heterogeneity, still exerts a significant impact on the workings of Irish society.

However, consensus should be sought on the basis of the identification and resolution of problems, not on the basis of an avoidance of their existence.

Nicholas Sarkozy, in endorsing the concept of a strong and unified Europe, observed that this concept is one that “rejects consensus based on pushing problems to one side” (Fitzgerald, 2008, p. 11). Yet, the avoidance of conflict seems to be an overriding aim in the deliberations of Irish policy makers. O’Sullivan sees this as one of the most striking features to emerge from the analysis of official Irish educational thinking from the 1950s. He comments on “its insulation from competing/contesting viewpoints, and the associated mechanisms [to achieve such insulation] such as those of editing, filtering or excluding discordant meanings, through which the orthodoxy of understandings was maintained” (O’Sullivan, 2005, p. xiv, brackets added). This serves to undermine the impact and effect of policy and is, in fact, an insidious manifestation of power (O’Sullivan, 2005, p. 18, referencing Lukes, 1974). Avoiding conflict may achieve social cohesion of sorts; however, it fails to engender the notion of dialogue needed for the type of unified community outlined in Chapter One. Habermas’s (1987a, in Chapter One) communication community, wherein consensus is pursued but not coerced, is not accorded sufficient recognition here. Indeed, Derrida’s reservations about community (Derrida, 1995, cited by Caputo, 1997, in Chapter Two) are resonant. He expresses scepticism about the existence of a community wherein there is consensus and fundamental agreement and sees in it as much threat as promise. Thus consensualism needs to be viewed with caution. The avoidance of conflict also tends to obscure the identification of a specific philosophical basis within Irish educational discourse. I will use specific examples to illustrate this point in later chapters.

My deliberations up to now demonstrate a significant lacuna in terms of Irish representation among the selected theorists. This may have conveyed the impression that there is a dearth of Irish theorists and that I was forced to confine myself to the international dimension. I defend my dependence upon the international perspective on the basis that I view the contributions of the chosen theorists as serving to highlight and problematise the theme which I am addressing in this dissertation: namely the maintenance of social cohesion in the face of increasing demands for recognition by different cultural groups. This is a significant political issue and as political theory impacts upon education, I needed to use it as the starting point in my deliberations. Nevertheless, there are a number of Irish theorists who can be linked with this theme and thus with the deliberations undertaken so far. Their observations will be included to complement the discussion and to place it more specifically within the context of Irish education. Before engaging with these theorists, I consider it necessary to elaborate on the concept of identity and also on the current political context of Ireland, as I believe that both of these issues impact significantly on our response to cultural difference. The influence of the Catholic Church and the Irish language will be explored in relation to our identity, while our status as a nation-state, liberal democracy and republic will be debated in relation to political context.

Thus, this chapter sets out to describe the realities of the current Irish context, and specifically the impact of cultural difference and the pursuit of recognition upon the political and educational organisation of the country. It will look at the contribution and relevance of Irish educational theory within this

context. This will serve as a backdrop to the analysis of the educational documents in the subsequent chapters.

3.2 Sustaining Identity, Accepting Change

The Report of the National Education Convention provides a vision of educational policy aimed at enabling each pupil to “appropriate from moral and spiritual tradition, and from the plenitude of human learning, something of an abiding and sustaining sense of identity, amid the ubiquity of change in contemporary society” (Coolahan, 1994, p. 8). The question that must be broached is whether it is, in fact, possible to achieve “an abiding and sustaining sense of identity” amid the unprecedented and accelerated change in Irish society. The challenge is to sustain a sense of identity so that it, in turn, will sustain us in a society in an almost constant state of flux, and thus contribute towards maintaining social cohesion. There are two issues emerging from this statement: the first is relatively predictable, that of concern with identity; the second is more sublime but yet points us towards a dilemma that becomes particularly problematic in relation to immigration policy (or lack thereof) in Ireland. This is the issue of the autonomy of the individual and the non-intervention of the State that is indicated through the use of the verb “to appropriate”. This latter issue is intertwined with our political context. I will address the issue of identity first.

3.2.1 Irish Identity in 21st Century Ireland

Ireland is currently grappling with the Derridean conundrum posed by Caputo (1997, in Chapter Two) in relation to community. In a decade that has witnessed unprecedented demographic change, we are struggling to maintain a

hold on our identity, on the culture and value system that has made us 'Irish', yet we wish to extend the hand of welcome to non-indigenous groups. However, as observed in Chapter Two, if we maintain a hold on our identity, we become unwelcoming, if we are too welcoming, we run the risk of losing our identity.

The meaning and implications of being Irish have evolved from being definitive and exclusive to being more nebulous and inclusive. Haran and Tormey (2002, p.13) outline how an ethnocentric view of Irish identity is being countered by a more inclusive one. Waldron (2004, p. 210) observes that this is a liberating concept. However, she acknowledges the need to take control of the emergent Irish identity, and to name, discuss and debate its characteristics and consequences. It is reasonable to assume that in 21st century Ireland, for many Irish citizens, being "Catholic and Gaelic", (Tovey and Share, 2000, in Introduction) is not at the forefront of their sense of identity.

Yet, one cannot simply dismiss the impact of the Catholic Church and the Irish language on identity, even if such a limited viewpoint is becoming anachronistic and anathema to cultural pluralism. Earley (1999, p. 150) advises us that we should be cautious about assuming that the decline in formal adherence to the Church is necessarily matched by an equal decline in its influence and observes that the value system of the vast majority of Irish people is still rooted in Catholicism. Seery (2008, p. 135) observes that although less explicitly invoked nowadays in Ireland, "the language of Christian education has occupied a privileged station in the past, and echoes and reminders of a theological idiom in educational language still persist in Irish education". The Catholic influence is strengthened by the fact that most Irish schools are still owned by the Catholic Church (Lodge et al., 2004, p. 5).

The Irish language is also a significant aspect of our identity and its links with our heritage cannot be overlooked. Yet, its divisive characteristics are not new. McGorman and Sugrue (2007, p. 8) comment on the manner in which the Irish language was used to create a kind of indigenous apartheid long before the advent of immigrant groups. They observe that those belonging to the ‘Gaeltacht’ areas were somehow seen as being more Irish than those belonging to ‘Galltacht’ (literally meaning foreign) areas. It is interesting to note that The Report of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (NCCA, 1990) did not seek to problematise the ‘Gaeltacht’/’Galltacht’ distinction. This distinction has residual effects. The premise that empathy with, and ability to speak, the Irish language defines how Irish we are, has implications for immigrant groups. Yet, as will be seen in Chapter Five, the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education* (DES, 2005a) endeavour to resolve these tensions and to present the Irish language as being sympathetic to the needs of a multicultural society, thus imbuing it with less anachronistic associations.

Haran and Tormey (2002, p.13) observe that equating Irish culture with Catholicism and Gaelicism does not properly represent the diversity that has historically been present in Ireland, and that is currently on the increase. (It is interesting to note that these two writers, who eschew a limited perspective on multiculturalism, and whose deliberations are supportive of those of Bhabha, still retain usage of the word ‘diversity’). Yet, in order to achieve the “abiding and sustaining sense of identity” needed to cope with the current cultural uncertainty, and thus maintain social cohesion, we need to bring forward our rich, cultural traditions and retain a sense of their value and a sense of their potential contribution to a more evolved and inclusive notion of identity. In this way we

can avoid Bauman's (1997, p. 25) notion of a *palimpsest* identity; an identity that is constantly painted over and reinvented in order to cope with the transience of our social surroundings in which long-held social norms are rapidly becoming an anachronism. Bauman observes "this is the kind of identity which fits the world in which the art of forgetting is no less, if no more, important than the art of memorising." This does not serve the interests of either existing or 'newcomer' cultures. We should also bear in mind that our 'Irishness' may be part of the reason why different cultural groupings come to Ireland in the first place. It may be that they wish to share in our national identity. Miller contends that the wish to share in a common identity reflects a fundamental psychological need to belong:

Minority groups want to feel at home in a society to which they or their forebears have moved. They want to feel attached to the place and part of its history, even if they feel some attachment to their place of ethnic origin....To see themselves only as bearers of a specific identity...would be to lose the chance to join a larger community whose traditions and practices have inevitably left their mark on the environment they inhabit (Miller, 1995, p. 138).

I consider this point to be often overlooked by the proponents of cultural difference. A flexible attitude to identity should not diminish into a self-depreciating one. All of these considerations relating to identity need to be taken into account when deconstructing current Irish educational policy and practice.

3.2.2 The Implications of Appropriation

The use of the verb "to appropriate", in the quotation cited above, is an indicator of the non-interventionist stance adopted by the State in relation to

issues concerning personal autonomy and responsibility. This may be deemed an acceptable route to follow in that identity is thus allowed to “blossom” in an unconstrained manner without any impositions being placed upon it by the State. This non-interventionist, non-prescriptive approach aligns with the principles of a liberal democracy and thus with the Irish political system. This may seem to be particularly apposite in a multicultural context where the issue of identity becomes an increasingly complex one. In the context of identity, the verb “to appropriate” may be acceptable. However, the overall concept of appropriation is problematic in a multicultural context, as it allows for a certain abdication of responsibility on the part of the State. The concession to personal autonomy and responsibility can be somewhat misleading, and far from serving the interest of the individuals, ends up in compromising such interest, as well as that of social cohesion as a whole.

This contention becomes more apparent if we apply it to the current lacunae in terms of immigration and integration policies in Ireland. The current *laissez-faire* approach evident in Ireland, in relation to the advent of non-indigenous cultural groups, does little to address either the need to maintain identity or to accommodate cultural difference in any constructive manner. There has been an *ad hoc* approach to facilitating integration and, despite the appointment of a Minister of State for Integration, Irish official integration policy at the beginning of 2008 is, according to Boucher, (2008, p. 2), more of a piecemeal, reactive response to immediate problems arising from immigration and integration, than a coherent, integrated policy framework for the short and long-term integration of immigrants and their descendants. This approach to immigration and integration aligns with the principles of ‘multiculturalism’, as

viewed by Bauman (2001, in Chapter One) and Bhabha (1990, in Chapter Two), as distinct from interculturalism as outlined in the Introduction of this dissertation.

Boucher is critical of the Irish State for failing to construct a systematic integration and immigration policy despite the fact that Ireland is statistically a country of net immigration since 1996. He contends that the resultant *laissez-faire* approach may lead to social exclusion rather than social cohesion (Boucher, 2008, p. 2). Our *Céad Mile Fáilte* image is well and truly compromised by the lack of supporting policy. Once the immigrants have stepped beyond the welcome mat, it would seem that they are left to their own devices in terms of integrating into Irish society. Boucher expresses dissatisfaction with the report *Integration: A Two Way Process*, published by the Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform (2000), and contends that, despite its stated concession to reciprocity, it is more concerned with “legitimising a *laissez-faire* integration strategy in which individual immigrants are meant to apply neo-liberal modes of governance to themselves by taking responsibility for their own economic, social, cultural and political integration” (ibid, p. 12).

This is where the discourse of appropriation becomes subversive, or at least, problematic. Boucher suggests that it is more likely that this neo-liberal approach will pressurise immigrants to ‘choose’ to integrate into Irish society by assimilating to Irish national culture and social practices (ibid, p. 13). Thus, the ‘two-way process’ is, according to this interpretation, but a fallacy. Citing the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) (2006), Boucher presents the ‘integration challenge’ as being more about maintaining social cohesion and social order by individual immigrants adapting to the existing Irish national

society, rather than the government or Irish society adapting to the changes arising from immigration and cultural diversity (ibid). This may seem to address the psychological need for belonging referred to in 3.2.1 above but it does so from a one-sided perspective and very much in the cause of the national interest. Irwin's caution (2009, in Chapter Two) in relation to communication between cultures becoming distorted into a demand by the majority for minority cultures to conform to the overarching identity resonates here. The net result of integration should be that it serves the interests of those who endeavour to integrate as well as the interests of the host country. The conundrum posed by Derrida's '*Hostipitality*' becomes evident in that if immigration and integration policy is focused predominantly upon the national interest, our seeming hospitality to minority groups is undermined by the imposition of this condition.

McGorman and Sugrue (2007, p. xiv) place these concerns within the educational context. In a study focusing on the Dublin 15 area, an area of particular interest in relation to the challenge of cultural difference, they conclude that there is a clear necessity for appropriate legislative and policy responses if social fragmentation, and ghettoisation, exacerbated by 'white flight', are not to become established and entrenched. Their study shows the need to extend the responsibility for addressing cultural change beyond schools and into the overall political system. Their observations have particular resonance in the context of the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education* (DES, 2005a), which will be explored in detail later in this dissertation. The notion of taking responsibility requires a more proactive stance on the part of the State and does not synchronise with the concept of appropriation.

Implicit in the notion of appropriation is the assumption that because there is a perception of choice, it is somehow an unproblematic process. The impression of choice tends to eliminate conflict and critical debate in relation to immigration and integration. This may leave us with the impression of a socially cohesive society, yet the elimination of conflict is, in itself, as noted by O'Sullivan, (2005, in 3.1 above), an insidious manifestation of power. Avoidance of conflict leads us into the chimera that immigration and integration are always positive events to be 'celebrated' by both immigrant groups and the host country alike. Even if some of the members of either grouping fail to see the positivity and the cause for celebration in these events, there is an unstated discouragement from voicing this dissent as this may be seen to be politically incorrect. I view this as a particular issue in relation to current educational policy in Ireland.

In a 2005 report, the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) identifies both the positive and negative aspects of recent immigration into Ireland (NESC, 2005, pp. 133-134, cf. Appendix A). It is interesting to note that all of the positive aspects relate to the national interest either in relation to the Irish economy or in relation to our international profile. This begs the question as to whether there is a concern by the State in relation to rendering the process of immigration a positive one for the immigrant. This would require a more proactive and interventionist approach by the State. The list of negative aspects of immigration mainly relate to the immigrants themselves and, while there is an acknowledgement of the additional demand on public infrastructure, Boucher's later comments indicate that these concerns have not been addressed in any coherent manner and that the main emphasis in policy discourse has been on restricting the State's role in the integration process (Boucher, 2008, p. 14). The

call on the part of the NESC that each of the negative aspects of immigration should be “honestly faced, monitored and actively combated” (NESC, 2005, p. 134) is still devoid of an adequate response. The notion of appropriation does little to further the cause of critical dialogue or of rendering the ‘two way process’ more meaningful. However, it occupies a significant role in relation to Ireland’s political status.

3.3 Ireland’s Political Status

Boucher (2008, p.10) views the government’s main priority as that of protecting the national interest through its immigration and integration policies, while providing an intercultural framework within which individual immigrants integrate into the liberal, republican Irish nation. Any approach to immigration and integration cannot but be influenced by Ireland’s political status. The political categories of a nation-state, a liberal democracy and a republic are not unique to Ireland, yet the manner in which they influence our response to immigrant groups needs to be acknowledged. I have alluded to this in the Introduction to this dissertation and I will expand upon it here.

3.3.1 *The Nation-State*

Dunne (2000, p. 164) endeavours to clarify the term ‘nation-state’ by presenting the ‘state’ and the ‘nation’ as two separate concepts that fuse to create a somewhat uncomfortable synthesis. For Dunne, ‘state’ connotes a more or less concentrated system of power over a defined territory, whereas ‘nation’ connotes a social grouping held together by an amalgam of factors such as shared descent, historical experience and memory, language, custom and belief. I contend that the synthesis is uncomfortable whenever minority groups or cultures form a part

of the population of the nation-state, as they tend to resist the 'forcible homogenisation' (Dunne, 2000, p. 165) that underpinned the success of the nation-state. Yet, it could be argued that the current *laissez-faire* approach to immigration and integration, despite its liberal characteristics of appropriation rather than imposition, is facilitative of such homogenisation. Boucher's observations in relation to 'choice' cited in 3.2.2 above are relevant here in that the outcomes of such 'choice' are more likely to be the assimilation of the immigrant to Irish culture and society.

3.3.2 Liberal Democracy

Kymlicka (2001, p. 224) remarks on the coincidence of the emergence of the nation-state and that of liberal democracy as the prevailing form of government in the Western world. Williams (2003, p. 211) contends that the nation-state provides the context in which liberal democratic principles can be located. It could be argued that the liberal democracy has, in itself, adopted a palimpsest identity and attests to many meanings or interpretations, or conversely, to none at all. We have seen in Chapter One that this is an issue of considerable concern to Taylor. This nebulosity in relation to what liberalism actually means in today's society may explain the *ad hoc* approaches to political organisation and management that are legitimated in its name. Kymlicka (2001, p. 5) observes that these practices have been adopted as *ad hoc* compromises "for reasons of stability rather than justice and without too much attention to their fit (or lack of fit) with basic liberal principles of freedom, equality and democracy". This may well be a short-term solution to the advent of cultural difference.

We need to determine just what the concept of a liberal democracy means in the context of a multicultural society if we are to devise any form of

meaningful policy. Dworkin (1984, p. 60) observes that liberalism is often now considered to be wishy-washy, an untenable compromise between the two more forthright positions of conservatism and radicalism, applying at best to only a limited number of political controversies it tries to explain. Although Dworkin does not agree with this perspective on liberalism, it is not difficult to understand why it may be shared by many people. The decade of Dworkin's observations is noted. It can only be assumed that in the intervening time, such reservations in relation to liberalism are further accentuated in an increasingly complex society where minority rights and state nation-building are constant realities. Kymlicka (2001, pp. 4-5) endorses such reservations and states that in the real world of liberal democracies, liberal theory has largely ignored such realities. Thus it could be concluded that, in many instances, current practices do not necessarily reflect underlying theory. Subsequent analysis of educational documents will ponder the likelihood of extending this conclusion specifically to educational policy and practice.

The *laissez-faire*, non-interventionist approach of the Irish state to the advent of minority groups is indicative of a relativist, even a 'wishy-washy' manifestation of liberalism. Bhabha's observations (1990, outlined in Chapter Two) are relevant here. The 'toleration' and 'celebration' of difference inherent in a non-interventionist State approach, wherein the immigrant is allowed to express his/her individuality, but is not necessarily or adequately supported by the host society, is reflective of the containment of difference outlined by Bhabha. This containment is located within the metaphor of the *musée imaginaire* within which cultures are collected and appreciated (Bhabha, 1990, p. 208). This particular metaphor will be utilised specifically in relation to the

educational approach to difference later in this dissertation. Suffice to say at this juncture that despite educational aspirations towards interculturalism, current State or political policy (or non-policy) seems not to have progressed much beyond the stage of 'multiculturalism'. Bhabha's observations are worth repeating here:

Multiculturalism represented an attempt both to respond to and to control the dynamic process of the articulation of cultural difference, administering a *consensus*, based on a norm that propagates cultural diversity (Bhabha, 1990, pp. 208-209, original emphasis).

Although the past tense was used by Bhabha in the British context, I believe that it would be more apposite to use the present tense in relation to Ireland. The non-interventionist approach of the State, exemplified in the non-provision of meaningful policy, represents a limited and qualified response to cultural difference, along with an attempt to control it. There is also an effort to perpetuate the consensualism, so long a feature of Irish society, in this instance by conveying the impression that the advent of different cultural groupings is a cause for unmitigated celebration and that any voice of dissent should be silenced. Watt (2006, p. 153) observes that evidence suggests that multiculturalism "only succeeded in embedding a superficial understanding and accommodation of cultural and ethnic diversity". As a result, it has proven weak in promoting interaction or equality or in addressing tangible and concrete problems, such as poverty and unemployment, which tend to accompany the advent of minority groups (ibid, pp. 153-154). Crucially, Watt observes that, in this scenario, the State adopts the role of "neutral broker in what is essentially

defined as a conflict between communities” (ibid, p. 154). Attempts to obviate conflict in both Irish political and educational discourse can be viewed as either a manifestation of political correctness or an assertion of power or both, in that Bauman (2001, p. 106) would view emphasis on political correctness as a manifestation of power by the dominant group in society. In either case the result is the same; the power balance, and thus the status quo, are unaffected. This maintains social cohesion, but such cohesion is balanced in favour of the dominant group and is predicated upon the suppression rather than the elimination of problems. I would advocate the adoption of a Derridean perspective here (see 3.1 above), as I believe that such cohesion needs to be viewed with a certain degree of scepticism. In other words, I am posing a challenge to logocentrism, as I believe that unproblematic cohesion should not be accepted at face value.

The questioning of the operation of liberal democracy within the parameters of the nation-state, with the consequent implication of the role of the ‘greater good’, heralds a challenge to the third premise of the Irish context, namely that of the republican ideal. I am unsure as to the extent to which the concept of the republic impacts upon the Irish psyche or indeed upon the policy making process. My uncertainty is underscored by the variations in interpretation of the term ‘republican’.

3.3.3 The Concept of ‘Republic’

Jefferson’s notion of the republic was that of a society where “the voice of the people would be fairly, fully and peaceably expressed, discussed and decided by common reason” of all of its citizens (Jefferson, 1816, cited by Arendt, 1984, p. 240). The sense of unity inherent in Jefferson’s vision is

becoming increasingly difficult to sustain, due to the challenges posed upon the “common reason” by an amalgam of different groups. In addition, it is by no means certain that the right of decision is accorded to all in a given society. This is true of current Irish society wherein a significant proportion of those living here do not have citizenship rights and thus do not have the right to vote.

The concept of the republic is, paradoxically, under most threat from the very characteristic that most defines it, that is, the empowerment of its citizens. Arendt (1984, p. 242) contends that corruption and perversion are more pernicious, and at the same time, more likely to occur, in an egalitarian republic than in any other form of government. “Corruption of the people themselves – as distinguished from corruption of their representatives or a ruling class – is possible only under a government that has granted them a share in public power and has taught them to manipulate it.” Arendt’s perspective concurs with that of Taylor (1991/1994, in Chapter One) and Bauman (1997/2001, in Chapter One) in that whereas formerly this danger used to arise from the public realm, under conditions of rapid and constant economic growth, this is now more likely to occur from within the private realm. Using the observations of Jefferson, Arendt observes that, whereas the Bill of Rights in the American Constitution served to protect the private realm, it also, in Jefferson’s view, conferred all power on the citizens of America without giving them the opportunity of *being* republicans and *acting* as citizens (Arendt, 1984, p. 243, original emphasis). The Bill of Rights thus served to emancipate the individual, through the recognition of his/her rights, but at the same time compromised the cohesiveness of society.

This dilemma would seem to have been addressed by the French Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen (1789 and 1793). This declaration

heralded a signal feature of the French *République*, namely the conviction that the Rights of Man and the Rights of the People were mutually inclusive (Kearney, 1997, p. 28). This is the form of republicanism that was espoused in Ireland. Kearney questions the extent of the impact of this legacy of rights on Ireland. He asks whether Irish Republicanism was historically capable of sustaining the delicate but indispensable balance between the Rights of Man and the Rights of the Nation. This is the dilemma that, instead of veering towards resolution, has become more acute in the current heterogeneity of Irish society.

The dominance of individualism in current society prevents successful and meaningful integration into the republican ideal, because the balance between the Rights of Man and the Rights of the Nation has become weighted in favour of the former. Our overall sense of citizenship, or solidarity, has been usurped by the dominance of the 'Self', and participation in politics (if it occurs at all) is limited to Taylor's (1991, pp. 114-115) conjunctural movements or single-issue agendas.

This loss of vision of the republic may explain why we have not provided any formal means of assisting immigrant groups to become active members of the Irish republic and, instead, allow them the 'freedom' to 'appropriate' aspects of Irish life and culture as they see fit. The recommendations of the European Commission in relation to the provision of a national integration programme have not been taken on board in Ireland. There are three main components to such a programme: language tuition, orientation or introductory courses and professional labour market training (CEC, 2003, cited by Boucher, 2008, p. 4). It could be argued that these components have not been operationalised out of the fear of a charge of usurping the Rights of Man in favour of the Nation. A

Derridean challenge could undoubtedly be posed in that there are conditions imposed upon the migrant groups. A counter-argument would be that to implement these three components would serve both individual and citizenship rights. They would benefit the individual immigrant as well as the Irish nation. Thus the ideals of the French *République* would be sustained. Current Irish political and educational policy demonstrates an uncertainty in relation to how these ideals may be sustained with the consequence that the concept of republicanism is being accorded nominal rather than active significance. While the principles of *liberté, égalité* and *fraternité* may well be coming under increasing challenge in today's society, this does not mean that they have to be cast aside, particularly when they have no defined successor.

Yet, we need to exercise caution in relation to reclaiming an active concept of republicanism, as this may not necessarily serve the interests of all those who live in Ireland today. Kearney (1997, p. 27) observes that there is a fundamental paradox within the concept of modern republicanism – on the one hand it promoted “an *enlightened universalism* of world citizens.” On the other hand, it promoted “a *separatist nationalism* which subordinates the universal rights of the citizen to the rights of the nation-state (original emphasis).” Kearney states that by the end of the 18th century, in Ireland, the former vision had ceded incontrovertibly to the latter (ibid, p. 36). As a consequence, to reclaim the notion of active republicanism may be interpreted as an assertion of nationalist ideals and may serve to compromise the interests of non-indigenous cultures. Thus, the significance and implications of our appellation as a republic is something of a conundrum at this stage of our historical and demographic

evolution. Nevertheless, the historical links between republicanism and another aspect of Irish society, that of our faith, merit further discussion.

3.4 The Catholic Church

Becoming a republic provided the Irish population with the freedom to practice its predominantly Catholic faith, a freedom that was hitherto suppressed. It should be borne in mind that the liberty to practice Catholicism emerged as a consequence of the republican revolution, not as a specified goal. Kearney (1997, p. 33) observes that Catholics were motivated by the doctrine of republicanism, not in defence of their religion, but because of their dire material circumstances. The result of the republican revolution was the liberation of a populace whose inspiration was obtained as much from Tridentine Catholicism as from Enlightenment ideals (ibid, p. 32). As a consequence, the politics of the nation were seen to be as dependent on the influence of God as much (if not more) than the influence of the State. This is evident, for example, in the opposition by the Church to Dr. Noel Browne's Mother and Child scheme in the 1950s. The government at the time deferred to the rules of the Catholic Church and thus when "a minister who had clear views about the proper relationships between Church and State in a democratic society" (Browne, 1986, p. 142), asserted his views, a crisis ensued.

I am employing this event to demonstrate the very unequal relationship that existed between the Church and the State in Ireland at that time. It illustrates how the 'natural', (God-given) character of existing structures was accorded precedence over State intervention (Boggs, 1976, in Chapter One) and thus bears out Gramsci's outline of the Catholic Church as an instrument of hegemony. It

can be asserted that the charge of perpetuating hegemony, which could be levelled at the republican ideal (in the nationalist sense), was strengthened by the almost autocratic hold that the Church exerted on the politics of the nation. However, since the practice of Catholicism emerged as a consequence of republicanism, rather than as a specified goal, the assertion of the republican tradition does not necessarily mean the assertion of the Catholic ideal.

Neither should the decline of the influence of the Catholic Church, which has been occurring over the past three decades or so, be seen as a catalyst or a manifestation of the decline of the republican ideal. Yet, it could be argued that the two are occurring almost simultaneously. Ardagh (1994, p. 158) observes that many practising Catholics, while still believing in God, have grown critical of the Church as an institution and no longer follow its moral laws in their private lives. Nevertheless, the Church maintained a fairly tenacious hold on Irish society up to the mid 1990s, considering that homosexuality was not decriminalised until 1993 and divorce did not become legal until 1995, and then only after a referendum which was passed by a very small majority. I have already referred to Earley's observations in relation to the continuing influence of the Catholic Church on Irish society (Earley, 1999, in 3.2.1 above). This means that any influence the Church attempts to exert on the policy process is likely at least to be taken into account by those with whom the responsibility lies for policy decisions. Earley (1999, p. 150) identifies health and education as significant targets here. This is due to the fact that the Church continues to occupy a major role in the delivery of these services. As observed in 3.2.1 above, the vast majority of Irish schools are still managed by the Catholic Church and thus are still guided by Catholic norms and values.

3.5 Irish Education

The influence of the Catholic Church has been, traditionally, almost inextricably intertwined with Irish education. Up to the 1960s the Church exercised almost unilateral control over schools although, as observed by Lodge et al. (2004, p. 3), in certain respects Irish education has become increasingly democratised in the last three decades at both local and national level. Yet, while the influence of the Church on education may have receded, it would be an overly naïve assumption to assume that it has dissipated entirely. Just as the Church has a residual effect on Irish life in general, despite less formal adherence to its influence, so too is this effect perpetuated in Irish education. I now wish to look at Irish education in some detail, and, in particular, Irish educational theory. This is undertaken with a view to placing the theories hitherto presented within the context of Irish education.

Drudy and Lynch (1993, p. 26) present the education process as playing a crucial role in the socialisation of the young and in the transmission of culture. They distance themselves from this role of education. Instead, they put forward a neo-Marxist perspective and outline how the education system plays a significant part in the reproduction of the social relations of production (ibid, p. 27). Referencing Bowles and Gintis (1976), they observe that because these relations are often inequitable, schools play a part in reproducing social outcomes that are far from positive (ibid, pp. 27-28). They unveil the emancipatory potential of education and reiterate Ó Súilleabháin's vision of such potential in the Irish context:

The essence of education is *becoming*, the gradual discovery of what it means to be human, the search for a personal identity, an identity which brings individual autonomy within a community structure (Ó Súilleabháin, 1986, cited by Drudy and Lynch, 1993, p. 29).

From this quotation it can be observed that Ó Súilleabháin, and thus Drudy and Lynch, align themselves closely with Freire's comments on problem-posing education, which he contends "affirms men as beings in the process of becoming – as unfinished, uncompleted beings in and with a likewise unfinished reality" (Freire, 1972, p. 57). Like Freire, they place the pursuit of emancipation within the universal perspective. While the importance of the individual is acknowledged, so too, is the importance of community.

Yet, while retaining a perspective on community, Drudy and Lynch engage in a critique of the liberal approach to education and conclude that it does not suffice to address the structural inequalities in society. This critique is manifested through their rejection of the structural functionalist approach to education, an approach which, they contend, is predicated upon consensus in society (Drudy and Lynch, 1993, p. 30), and which confines its perspective on equality to that of 'equality of opportunity', thus supporting the concept of meritocracy (ibid, p. 31). O'Sullivan (2005, p. 316) cautions that the yardstick of educational success, while seemingly 'culture fair', is actually biased towards the middle classes. This means that pupils who suffer as a result are meant to view their failure to be a consequence of their own inability rather than any failing in the system. O'Sullivan concludes that this is seen as essential if society is to avoid dissent and political agitation.

Drudy and Lynch (1993, pp. 35-36) challenge the avoidance of dissent by presenting the neo-Marxist perspective on education as an alternative to the structural functionalist (or liberal) approach. They contend that, within a neo-Marxist framework, the parameters of the debate shift from a more benign perspective on 'equality of educational opportunity' to the more challenging and conflict-laden 'reproduction of class inequalities'. Tovey and Share observe that the Marxist approach focuses on how the education system operates as an institution for the creation and transmission of social inequality and the maintenance of the class system. Within this perspective

Schools are seen as a site for social control, both through the overt activities of reward and punishment and through the 'hidden curriculum' that stresses and rewards punctuality, obedience and respect for authority – the very attributes required of a productive workforce (Tovey and Share, 2000, p. 200).

This perspective aligns quite closely with Foucault's views on education in which the creation of 'docile' bodies was the predominant objective and where "the school became a machine for learning, in which each pupil, each level and each moment, if correctly combined, were permanently utilised in the general process of teaching" (Foucault, 1991b, p. 165, in Chapter Two). However, as acknowledged in Chapter Two, Foucault refused to align himself with the Marxist perspective.

The essence of the neo-Marxist perspective is to challenge the acceptance and reproduction of inequality on which the concept of meritocracy fundamentally rests (Drudy and Lynch, 1993, p. 37). It promotes the development of critical pedagogy in order to generate the political action which

is required if the vision of education, as an agent of transformation in society, is to be realised. It thus asserts “the importance of making the pedagogical more political” (Giroux, 1994, p. 326). Drudy and Lynch’s treatise, although not focusing specifically on pedagogical issues, nevertheless aligns with the vision of writers such as Giroux (1994) and McLaren (1994). These writers focus on critical pedagogy and place the neo-Marxist perspective specifically within the context of a multicultural society.

While the contention that Irish educational theory is still located within the functionalist perspective may seem dismissive of recent initiatives, particularly in relation to educational disadvantage, there is evidence to suggest that little has changed in relation to the reproduction of the social relations of production. Tovey and Share (2000, p. 199) observe that while functionalist thinking has been sharply criticised from conflict and interpretative viewpoints, it enjoys considerable support among governments, policy makers and many researchers, as it does not challenge to any great extent the existing power relationships within society. Drudy and Lynch (1993, pp. 34-35) contend that, despite a rather ineffectual focus on the vague concept of ‘equity’ in the Green Paper, 1992, its underlying assumptions align with a human capital approach to education. This, in their view, does not adequately meet the problems of equality in class-based societies. In a later essay, Lynch (1999, p. 296) drawing from the work of a number of other researchers, contends that while a trickle of social mobility between social classes occurred, policies in relation to equality of educational opportunity have had no real impact on class structure. Baker, Lynch, Cantillon and Walsh (2004, p. 141) observe,

schools continue to operate according to mutually contradictory principles in relation to equality. While they profess principles of basic equality of opportunity...at the same time schools and colleges select and stratify students in a manner that clearly defeats certain aspects of their equality remit.

3.6 The Limitations of the Liberal Agenda

The previous chapters have acknowledged the limitations of the liberal agenda, particularly in the context of cultural difference. The need to problematise this agenda was recognised. So too, does the notion of education, particularly education as a route to equality, need to be problematised. This is the task of critical theory. Lynch observes “writers within the critical tradition refocused the debate about equality in education from concerns about ‘equal rates of consumption’ to questions about the nature of knowledge and patterns of control *within* education itself” (Lynch, 1999, p.10, original emphasis). This is not to say that the intrinsic principle of equality is being challenged here, rather it is the question of where to place the emphasis in discussions about equality. Lynch and Lodge (2002, p. 5) acknowledge that equality is a principle to which there is deep commitment in education, and indeed, this is borne out in the White Paper on Education (DES, 1995). However, they also contend that it is one that is often ill-defined and minimally implemented.

Lynch (1999, p. 287) contends that the pursuit of liberal equality policies can be a mere distraction from the business of equality in a more substantive sense. Referencing Baker (1987), she observes that promoting equal opportunities in a highly unequal society makes systems of inequality seem

reasonable and acceptable; it moves the debate away from inequalities of wealth, power and prestige to the question of how to distribute inequalities more fairly. Citing Tawney, she contends that policies of equal opportunity gain approbation on the understanding that the limited notion of equality that they propose will be

content with ceremonial honours. It retains its throne on condition that it refrains from meddling with the profitable business of the factory and the market place. Its credit is good as long as it does not to cash its cheques. Like other respectable principles, it is encouraged to reign, as long as it does not rule (Tawney, 1964, cited by Lynch, 1999, p. 296).

I believe that Lynch's observations link with the some of the concerns outlined in Chapters One and Two. Distracting attention from the substantive issue of equality and inequality has been demonstrated as serving the interests of the global elite in that critical debate aimed at the redistribution of resources is silenced. 'Celebrating' difference and placing it within the *musée imaginaire* of Bhabha, (1990, in Chapter Two) is to imbue it with "ceremonial honours". This serves the strategy of disengagement characteristic of the global elite, a strategy emanating from "an abhorrence of the immobilizing impact of long-term commitments and of the cumbersome and messy ties of dependency which the now abandoned alternative would inevitably have entailed" (Bauman, 2001, p.107).

Baker et al. (2004, p. 24) acknowledge that a liberal approach to issues of equality can be interpreted in many different ways, thereby demonstrating how the concept of equality itself is difficult to confine to one particular definition. Lynch (1999, p. 289) outlines the concept of equality in terms of a continuum,

with basic equality (focusing on minimal equal formal rights) at one end, and radical equality, (focusing on equality of condition) at the other. The liberal egalitarian perspective occupies a mid-way position, with the weaker forms of liberalism veering towards basic equality, and the stronger forms having more of an affinity with its radical counterpart. Baker et al. (2004, pp. 32-33) recognise the challenge that the liberal egalitarian perspective poses to societal inequalities. Nonetheless, they posit that liberal egalitarian principles are insufficient to achieve the structural change required to eliminate major inequalities. This observation is endorsed by Tovey and Share (2000, p. 207) who observe that, despite three decades of educational reform, class inequality in Ireland remains largely unchanged.

Lynch (1999, p. 294) outlines liberalism as being mainly concerned with the removal of legal barriers to participation in society. In the context of this dissertation, it can be seen that this is far from adequate to the needs of immigrant groups, most of whom are here by virtue of the fact that legal constraints have already been removed at an international level – I refer in particular to the widening of access to participation in the European Union in 2004. However, equality in terms of living standards and material resources did not necessarily derive from the removal of legal impediments. Nor does the removal of such impediments imply a change in attitudes in relation to the advent of different cultural groups. Lodge et al., (2004, p. 6) posit,

while legislation gives rights to minorities to access and participate in education, it is much more difficult to challenge people's often unquestioned assumptions about the nature of

society, the purpose of education and expectations regarding the status or rights of different groups.

Baker et al. (2004, p. 33) present what they consider to be a more ambitious approach to inequality than that of the liberal agenda. This is encapsulated in the pursuit of equality of condition. This requires recognition that “inequality is rooted in changing and changeable social structures, and particularly in structures of domination and oppression”. A key distinction lies within the premise that liberal egalitarianism tends to treat individuals as responsible for their successes and failures, while equality of condition emphasises the influence of social factors on people’s choices and actions (ibid). Lynch (1999, p. 295) contends that equality of condition is not part of the liberal agenda. The liberal agenda is thus presented as being preoccupied with maintaining the status quo, and while acknowledging the legal rights of marginalised or disadvantaged groups, there is an onus placed on such groups to adapt to the dominant social system and to the values which it projects. We can thus conclude that the liberal agenda is limited to providing hospitality to minority groups without concerning itself with alleviating the subordinate role that is imposed by hospitality. Derrida’s comments (2006, in Chapter Two) in this regard resonate here. Lynch (1999, p. 300) observes that the structures and mechanisms required to promote equality of condition would involve widespread changes in constitutional and legislative frameworks, as well as in the political, economic, social and cultural infrastructures of society. Taxation, legislation and education would be among the many mechanisms required to bring about change.

I am not sure about casting aside the liberal framework, as I believe that it is possible to generate societal change from within this framework. As observed in Chapter One, Taylor (1991/1994), while expressing many concerns about the limitations of liberalism, attributes its ineptitudes to the fact that it lacks determinism and tends to adopt a neutral, *laissez-faire* attitude and ultimately serves the interests of the market forces. He could be viewed as supporting Lynch's contentions. However, as was also observed in Chapter One, Taylor's solutions came from within liberalism itself, in that while conceding to its 'hospitable' variant, he also called for more definition in terms of the liberal agenda, or in other words, a bottom line. As our political structure is dependent upon liberal principles, I view Taylor's solution as being more realistic and feasible in current Irish society.

In any case, I view some of the solutions put forward by Lynch in advocating equality of condition as being possible from within the liberal perspective. For example, she calls for "a strong politics of presence for marginalised groups within all decision-making systems and government departments within the state" (Lynch, 1999, p. 301). The current lacuna in this regard does not require an abdication of liberal principles. What is required is that these principles be acknowledged, and if necessary, subjected to critical debate. It is interesting to note that Lynch, while espousing a more radical agenda, does not subscribe to the abolition of existing systems in order to hasten change. Instead, she sees the potential for change within existing systems, and endeavours to shake the education system out of what she calls 'institutional lethargy' (ibid, p. 306), which she sees as serving the interests of the status quo. This lethargy has been demonstrated above, in more general terms, as evidenced

by the paucity of long-term strategies and policy in relation to the advent of immigrant groups. Analysis of educational documents will serve to illustrate Lynch's charge in the educational context.

In the specific context of education, Lynch contends that if schools are not participatory democracies in their organisation, and dialogical in their pedagogical practice, then it is likely that equality goals pursued through the curricula will be self-defeating as the hidden curriculum of schooling will contradict the message of the formal curriculum (ibid, p. 303). If this proves to be the case, such curricular initiatives as the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum and the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education*, will be symbolic gestures rather than innovative interventions. This juxtaposition of the hidden and formal curriculum is an example of the ambiguities that feature in current educational provision. Yet, once again, I am not convinced that an abdication of liberal principles is required to address this ambiguity.

The ambiguity alluded to above can be seen to span many decades of educational provision in Ireland, particularly post 1960s when our cultural certainties came to be challenged. Many of the educational documents of the era may be seen to subscribe to change; yet analysis of their discourse and their subsequent practice will also indicate an adherence to the status quo. For example, the concepts of active participation and dialogue referred to by Lynch above, have long been features of the discourse of educational documents, even as far back as the 1971 curriculum. Yet, Sugrue, (2004, p. 189, citing the OECD, 1991), demonstrates that despite the innovations of this curriculum in theory, in practice they were not borne out and that emphasis was largely placed upon didactic approaches and a relatively narrow range of content. It remains to be

seen as to whether a similar conclusion will be derived from the 1999 initiative. If this is so, the hierarchical structures between the teacher and the pupil will continue to be perpetuated and the issue of equality, particularly equality of condition, will continue to linger in academic forums rather than being operationalised in the classroom. To achieve equality of condition in the context of the accommodation of cultural difference will require “a change of management structure, of ‘school ethos’ and of the level of resourcing” (Tovey and Share, 2000, p. 223). The essential question here is whether this can be achieved from within the liberal perspective.

3.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I looked specifically at the current situation in Ireland in the context of a developing multicultural society. A strong theme to emerge from my deliberations is the failure on the part of government departments to problematise the advent of cultural difference and the consequent dearth of formal policy in this regard. While both our formal political structures and our informal structures have become unsettled in the face of difference, there seems to be an official silence about the realities of a multicultural society. The lack of critical debate is tangible and the lack of policy and infrastructural support even more so. Officially, the advent of cultural difference is not a problem and to view it as such is actively discouraged. And so, we are exhorted to ‘tolerate’ and ‘celebrate’ difference but ultimately we do little to accommodate its reality.

We are not ethnoculturally neutral and to pretend that we are renders us complicit in perpetuating the ‘liberalism of neutrality’ of which Taylor is trenchantly critical. While we have moved beyond the ethnocentric nationalism

characterised by being Catholic and Gaelic, we cannot ignore these fundamental aspects of our identity. The Catholic Church still exerts a strong influence, either overtly or covertly on a significant part of the Irish population and the Catholic ethos is still a defining characteristic in the vast majority of Irish schools. Similarly the Irish language is still a significant aspect of Irish identity and occupies a significant part of Irish education.

In my deliberations, I have posed the question as to whether the liberal tradition is sufficient to achieve an intercultural society. The liberal tradition endorses the notion of 'appropriation' in which individuals are encouraged to 'choose' to integrate into Irish society. This removes the onus on the State to provide resources and infrastructure to facilitate such integration. This is the 'neutral' version of liberalism and is, in my opinion, an obstacle to the process and does not facilitate the achievement of the equality of condition outlined by Lynch (1999). Yet, it could be posited that a benign or neutral stance towards a multicultural society is a feature of many of the educational policy documents of the past decade. Referencing multiculturalism or interculturalism does not, in itself, achieve equality of condition. This can only be achieved through moving beyond a limited perspective on 'equality of opportunity' and through initiating a consequent and radical reorganisation of existing societal and educational structures. However, I am not necessarily advocating the dismissal of the liberal tradition, as I believe that the *ad hocery* of current approaches can be replaced with a more deterministic, but still liberal, perspective.

Liberal theory can be deemed to recognise cultural difference. However, many of the more radical, neo-Marxist theorists, for example, Bhabha and Freire, McLaren and Giroux, with whom Drudy and Lynch can be seen to link, consider

that its perspective renders it inadequate to do more than engage in recognition. If this is the case, it may fall short of facilitating the achievement of interculturalism. The liberal endorsement of existing values and of social cohesion is anathema to the more radical perspective. Yet, an alternative society is difficult to conceptualise. This conundrum becomes evident in the Irish educational policy documents. The reality of the situation is that they have been developed in a liberal democratic context but yet seek to sidestep any of the more problematic aspects of liberal theory. This renders them ambiguous in terms of philosophical basis, an ambiguity which may serve to dissipate potential confrontation among opposing groups but which ultimately leaves us without direction in relation to how a multicultural society can become intercultural. It may well be that they have benignly engaged with the middle voice provided by *différance* and the 'third space', while they eschew the antagonism and conflict which needs to ensue if such a middle voice is to have any resonance. The following chapters will engage with this conundrum.

Chapter Four: Towards a dialogue with difference (1): The Primary School Curriculum (1999)

4.1 Introduction

In the previous chapters, I have explored a diversity of perspectives with a view to devising a theoretical lens through which to analyse how Irish education meets the challenge of maintaining social cohesion while recognising difference in the context of a multicultural society. This has been undertaken through a broad and heuristic interpretation of critical theory (Kincheloe and McLaren, 1994, in Introduction) wherein a variety of perspectives are admitted. The underlying theme of critical theory is that of emancipation. However, it was observed in Chapter One that this theme, while laudable, is not without its problems and the pursuit of freedom without constraint can, in Hegelian terms, lead to ‘unfreedom’ through being shackled to the yoke of individualism. This leads to the demise of active citizenship. This is a significant concern of Hegel and of many of his followers. For those theorists, a vision of the ‘good life’ with attendant rules and boundaries is the means of maintaining social cohesion. For them, there is a ‘bottom line’ beyond which they will not go.

On the other hand, for the more radical theorists, such as Foucault and Derrida, this vision embraces the “certainty of absolutes” (Foucault, 2003, p. 246, in Chapter Two), and for them, its reductionist viewpoint is insufficient to address what is localised, singular and contingent in a world of uncertainty. As observed in the concept of *différance*, Derrida disputes the existence of the ‘bottom line’ as the ultimate arbiter in the workings of society. Thus, to reiterate a quote used in Chapter Two, for Derrida, “there is no support to be found and no

depth to be had for this bottomless chessboard where being is set in play” (Derrida, 2003, p. 237, in Chapter Two). For many of us, removing the safety net of the bottom line leaves us more open to the challenges relating to the workings of society. Perhaps this is what is needed to take place so that the complexities inherent in a multicultural society can be unearthed and addressed. Yet, the issue of an alternative to the bottom line remains a significant lacuna in the work of the more radical theorists. For them, their role as critics seems to suffice.

In this chapter and the subsequent one, I wish to use the intratheoretical analysis undertaken in the previous chapters as a way of locating the philosophical basis of Irish educational policy. Specifically, I am intent on determining the extent to which the overall theme or problem in this dissertation, namely that of maintaining social cohesion while recognising difference, is acknowledged and addressed by Irish education. This problem will be placed in the context of cultural difference. In order to pursue my objective, I intend to engage in an interrogation of a number of Irish educational policy initiatives undertaken in the past decade or so. In extending critical theory beyond the Frankfurt School, I have acknowledged Ball’s exhortation to embed policy discourse analysis in more than one good theory (Ball, 1994, p. 24). Specific excerpts from the documents under scrutiny will be employed as a means of focussing the discussion and of supporting my contentions. The intratheoretical analysis undertaken hitherto will assist in the process of “excavating hidden power circuits in Irish education that routinely escape identification and meaning” (O’Sullivan, 2005, p. xiii). The relevance of Foucault to this endeavour thus becomes evident, although as can be seen from my deliberations, I eschew the application of a solely poststructuralist approach to this task. I am using the

term 'policy' in a broad sense, as it can be observed that the second of the two documents under scrutiny is accorded the more limited appellation of 'Guidelines'. Nevertheless, both documents can be aligned with the challenges and complexities of policy development. For this reason, I consider it apposite at this juncture to reflect on the meaning(s) inherent in the word 'policy' itself.

4.2 What is Policy?

Ball (1994, p. 15) observes that one of the problems featuring within policy research is that analysts fail to define what they mean by policy. It would appear that this difficulty is easily resolved by turning to the Oxford English Dictionary. The OED defines policy as a "course or general plan of action to be adopted by government, party, person etc." (OED, 1984, p. 793). Although a concise and easily understood definition, it does not illustrate the complexity and ambiguity that are inherent features of policy. It also ignores its evolving nature. Ball refrains from offering his own definition of policy and admits to having "theoretical uncertainties" about its meaning. Instead he chooses to present policy in the context of a hermeneutical exercise. He cautions us that the "structure/agency dichotomy" within policy cannot be resolved by viewing them as binary opposites (Ball, 1999, p. 15). Policy analysis must therefore achieve insight into both overall and localised outcomes of policy (ibid, p. 21). Here, the universal becomes enmeshed with the singular and contingent, becoming more of a conceptual conundrum, thus according a more tangible significance to Derrida's middle voice of *différance*.

Ball presents policy under two headings: as text and as discourse. Both observations are relevant to this discussion. In looking at policy as text, we

acknowledge the complexity of hermeneutics as, “for any text a plurality of readers must necessarily produce a plurality of readings” (Ball, 1994, p. 16, citing Codd, 1988). Ball emphasises that “the policies themselves, the texts, are not necessarily, clear or closed or complete”, thus admitting the notion of “ad hocery, negotiation and serendipity” in policy formulation as well as implementation, and though only certain voices are heard at any point in time in the process, even within this constraint, there is still dissensus and blurring of meaning (ibid, p. 16). Here, he is implicitly acknowledging the “closure of presence, together with the closure of the conceptual order and denomination” (Derrida, 2003, p. 226), which is heralded by *différance*. Meaning changes with the passage of time and with the change of key protagonists in the formulation of policy (Ball, 1994, p. 17). Thus the historical aspect of discourse needs to be taken account of in analysis. Ball observes that, at all stages in the policy process, we are confronted with interpretations and reinterpretations of policy and that “these attempts to represent or rerepresent policy sediment and build up over time; they spread confusion and allow for play in and the playing off of meanings”. Here Ball effectively illustrates both a Foucauldian and Derridean perspective: the painstaking approach of the archaeological method as one sifts through the sediment of policy becomes evident, along with the ludic nature of deconstruction.

To engage with policy solely as text may result in a limited focus with much of the complexities surrounding policy being overlooked. Ball (1994, pp. 21-22) contends that we run the risk of concentrating too much on what those who inhabit policy think about and missing and failing to address what they do not think about, thus obviating the notion of alterity. Chouliaraki and Fairclough

(1999, pp. 14-15) observe that the social fragmentation of late modern society makes it difficult to sustain the characteristic earlier modern view that meaning resides in texts. Therefore, we need to embrace policy *as discourse*. According to Fairclough (1989, p. 24), what differentiates discourse from text is that text is a product rather than a process. It is the product of the process of text production. He uses the term 'discourse' to refer to the whole process of social interaction of which text is just a part. Therefore, in seeing language as discourse and as social practice

one is committing oneself not just to analysing texts, nor just to analysing processes of production and interpretation, but to analysing the relationship between texts, processes and their social conditions, both the immediate conditions of the situational context and the more remote conditions of institutional and social structures (ibid, p. 26).

In short, seeing language as discourse is to analyse the relationship between *texts, interactions and contexts* (ibid, original emphasis). This relationship is defined as 'intertextuality' (Fairclough, 1995, p. 189). O'Sullivan (2005, p. 319) distinguishes intertextuality from *pastiche*. Intertextuality is viewed as bringing diverse paradigms into contact with each other in order to generate an intersubjective dynamic, whereas *pastiche* is seen as a non-generative, consensual-driven mixing of traces of texts. O'Sullivan contends that "*pastiche* promotes little dissonance that cannot be eased by non-reflexive negotiation, compromise and pragmatism and allows intervention to be quickly foregrounded in discourse" (ibid, p. 199). In the exploration of the selected documents, I will endeavour to demonstrate how the analysis of discourse will

demonstrate the story behind the text. Power balances and imbalances will become evident and the many ambiguities evident in policy as text will be explored, if not resolved. The impact of social context will be acknowledged as a key issue in the analysis that follows. Over the course of this analysis, it will become evident that I am employing some of the principles of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to assist me in this undertaking. In doing so, I make reference to the work of Fairclough (1989/1995) and Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999). However, I have not confined the analysis solely to an exercise in CDA and have instead chosen to present it as a more specific application of the intratheoretical analysis undertaken in Chapters One and Two. Nevertheless, the influence of CDA will be seen in certain aspects of the analysis, an influence that I wish to acknowledge here. The focus of CDA on social context is particularly relevant to the current undertaking.

Two documents have been selected for review. These are the Primary School Curriculum (1999): *Introduction and Social, Personal and Health Education*; and the *Guidelines on Intercultural Education in the Primary School* (2005). I am justifying this choice to the exclusion of other significant documents of the decade, in that I view them as illustrative of the tensions between the maintenance of social cohesion and the recognition of difference in the context of an increasingly multicultural Ireland. Also, the *Guidelines on Intercultural Education* present a definitive link between the two documents, as they consistently refer to the earlier document as an ‘intercultural’ one (DES, 2005a, pp. 5-7, etc.). This interpretation is, in my opinion, open to debate. Other documents will be accorded acknowledgement where relevant, in order to substantiate the argument. However, their inclusion will, of necessity be brief. I

wish to add at this juncture that I do not propose to engage in a systematic analysis of the chosen documents. Instead, those parts of the documents that are deemed to impact either positively or negatively on the intercultural agenda, i.e. the active pursuit of an intercultural as opposed to a multicultural society, will be included. In undertaking this analysis of Irish educational documents, I aim to challenge what O'Sullivan (2005, p. x) terms the 'gloss' placed on the policy process that presents it as conceptually and procedurally uncomplicated.

Due to the fact that this dissertation is an exclusively theoretical one, the issue of validation does not assume the same significance as it would were action research involved. Nevertheless, a number of factors could still compromise validity and these need acknowledgement. In addition, ethical considerations need to be outlined.

4.2.1 Validation of Findings

In order to achieve validation in the context of critical theory, we are looking for criteria to judge the goodness or quality of the inquiry (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p.114). Guba and Lincoln identify the criteria as the historical situatedness of the inquiry (i.e. that it takes account of the social, political, cultural, economic, ethnic and gender antecedents of the studied situation), the extent to which the inquiry acts to erode ignorance and misapprehensions and the extent to which it provides a stimulus to action, that is to the transformation of the existing structure. I consider that my study takes account of these criteria, although I acknowledge that I do not focus specifically on gender issues.

The validity of this research could be compromised by a charge of ideological bias being levelled at me in my capacity as researcher. O'Sullivan (2005, p. xix) observes that analysts are "social actors and cannot be beyond

culture/ideology". I am aware of the potential bias that I may bring to this dissertation, writing as, in O'Sullivan's terms, "an indigenous commentator", as a former primary school teacher and as a lecturer in Social, Personal and Health Education. My inclusion of an expanded form of critical theory in this research allows for divergent views to be incorporated into the study of the selected documents, thus allowing for a more complete analysis, one that is less open to the charge of bias. However, it should also be borne in mind that critical theory is not a value-free or a value-neutral discipline. On the contrary, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 114) contend that values have a pride of place within critical theory as they are seen as ineluctable in shaping inquiry outcomes. To exclude values would be inimical to the interests of the powerless and of "at risk" audiences. Thus, in the case of critical theory, a charge of bias may be seen to strengthen rather than compromise the validity of the research.

In any case, Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 329) caution us that naturalistic inquiry is by its very nature open-ended and that, unlike conventional inquiry, no amount of criteria for validity or in their words, trustworthiness, can ever compel, it can, at best, *persuade* (original emphasis). Thus the validity of the findings will be constantly open to challenge.

4.2.2 Ethical Considerations

As this is a theoretical study, ethical considerations are of lesser significance than if the study consisted of live participants. Nevertheless, Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 115) observe that ethics is nearly *intrinsic* (original emphasis) to critical theory as implied by the intent to erode ignorance and misapprehensions and to take full account of values and historical situatedness in the inquiry process. This consideration will be borne in mind as the analysis

progresses. In addition, I consider that this undertaking has imbued me with an ethical responsibility of contributing to future policy development.

One other consideration that I consider to be relevant here relates to my use of the first person singular and plural throughout this dissertation. Lyotard (1989, pp. 315-316) observes that within the tradition of modernity, the position of the first person is, in fact, marked as being that of the mastery of speech and meaning. My use of “I” may imply an overly subjective and authoritative response to both the theory and the discourse, thus imposing my own ideological bias. However, at the same time, as observed above, I am aware that my response is just that, just mine, and that another reader may respond in quite a different manner to the selected texts. I will bear in mind Derrida’s observation (1984, in Chapter Two) that we can never be sure of what is meant by a written text and that it can have a multiplicity of meaning. I consider that an overly detached and neutral response may result in being diluted and thus less participative in critical dialogue. However, at the same time I do not consider myself to have ‘the last word’. The implication of mastery can also be extended to the first person plural. Lyotard (1989, p. 317) sees an implication of tyranny in the use of “We” as “We” are decreeing laws to be applied to third parties, to those outside. Caputo’s observations in relation to the Derridean caution about the concept of community resonate here. He observes that the use of “we” (of community) can be interpreted as a defence against the “other” (Caputo, 1997, in Chapter Two). Thus, in the use of the first person (singular and plural), it could be inferred that I am imposing my voice on that of the marginalized and perhaps disempowering them rather than contributing to their empowerment. Fairclough (1989, pp. 126-127) expands on this consideration by challenging the analyst to reflect upon

whether he/she is using what he terms the 'inclusive We' or the 'exclusive We', thus making an authority claim. I am open to the charge of using the 'exclusive We' in that I am using the pronoun to speak on behalf of minority groups, thus augmenting disempowerment. The actual voices of the relevant groups are not included in this study. However, acknowledgement of this consideration also allows me to see the potential for further research wherein those currently absent voices will be included.

4.3 In Pursuit of a Philosophical Basis

One of the main criticisms levelled at the Green Paper (1992) by the National Education Convention related to its lack of an adequate philosophy of education, resulting in an over-emphasis on utilitarian and commercial concerns (Coolahan, 1994, p. 7). The discourse of the market place took a dominant role in this document. In responding to change, Irish education was to be broadened so that students could be prepared for work in an *enterprise culture*, an overhaul of *management practice* was indicated, *quality assurance* became a significant consideration and *openness and accountability* were to be ensured throughout the system (Department of Education, 1992, p. 5, emphasis added). In addition, the school principal was to be seen as the *chief executive* (ibid, p. 19). While not refuting the economic concerns of the Green Paper, the National Education Convention emphasised the need for such concerns "to be balanced by the other dimensions which should be integral to educational policy making" (Coolahan, 1994, p. 9). This would serve to provide a more adequate philosophy of education. Here, it can be observed that the Habermasian dilemma of rendering

the purpose-rational world subordinate to the life-world (Habermas, 1971, in Chapter One) comes into play.

Although the White Paper (1995) sought to address the issue of a philosophical basis by presenting a philosophical rationale in the first chapter, the pervasive effects of purposive-rationality continue to be evident in Irish education. While concern with the purposive-rational model may seem to digress from the substantive issue of this dissertation, namely maintaining social cohesion while recognising difference, it will be seen that the two concerns actually coalesce. Olson (1989, cited by Gleeson, 2004, p. 126) concludes that within the technical rationality model, there is “tacit agreement” to assume consensus, emphasise techniques and avoid public debate about the fundamental values of schooling. Gleeson (2004, p. 125) applies this criticism to the Irish context. We are not far from the Freireian critique of education here, wherein “critical consciousness” (Freire 1972, p. 47) is demonstrated to be a notable absentee. If this is the case, the needs emerging from cultural difference will not be addressed in any constructive manner. In the analysis that follows, I will posit that the assumption of consensus and the avoidance of problematising controversial issues, are significant features of current educational policy. It will be seen that the concept of identity will be accorded priority in Chapter Four. This will be embodied in an exploration of the influence exerted by the Irish language and, in particular, by the Catholic Church. The associated issue of school ethos will be examined, along with the impact of individualism upon social cohesion. This exploration will employ the Primary School Curriculum as its focal point. Chapter Five will focus more specifically on Ireland’s political context and will link this to the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education*.

4.4 The Primary School Curriculum (1999), Introduction

The Primary School Curriculum (1999) is the culmination and product of the Report of the National Education Convention (Coolahan, 1994) and the White Paper on Education (Department of Education, 1995). As such, it should come as no great surprise that there is a dearth of specific focus on explicit issues of social cohesion and difference, particularly in the context of minority, non-indigenous cultures, as this was not a feature of the preceding documents. Nevertheless, at this juncture in Ireland, the impact of demographic change was becoming an increasing reality, as Ireland was a country of net immigration since 1996 (Boucher, 2008, in Chapter Three).

An observation made by Sugrue (2004, p. 170) serves as an apposite preamble to my deliberations on the Primary School Curriculum. This relates to the official definition of the curriculum. The curriculum is defined as being 'revised' and Sugrue queries why the stronger term 'reform', incorporating a transformative element, was sidestepped. He proposes that the term 'revision' was employed to mask more substantial reforms that remain unarticulated due to power relations within the system. I interpret from Sugrue's observations here that what has actually taken place in the curriculum, is, in fact, stronger, than what the term 'revision' implies, but that the term has been used in order to keep the various interest groups on board. However, I contend that the term could also be interpreted at face value: it may well be that the curriculum has stopped short of transformation and is aligning itself more closely with the reproduction or transmission of the status quo. This interpretation renders the term 'revised' a more accurate description of the process which has taken place. This bodes

poorly in terms of what Gleeson (2004, p. 105) terms “deep change” in relation to curriculum reform. Such change would be a far lengthier process and would imply a more concerted rupture with the status quo. Gleeson (2004, p. 126, citing Callan, 1995) contends that fundamental curriculum issues have been neglected in the pursuit of “piecemeal adjustments or alignments to a host of social and cultural issues... leading to an enlargement of curriculum contents with resultant pressures on schools to respond”. Such an approach indicates a philosophical deficit. I acknowledge that Gleeson was writing in the context of second-level education; however, his observations resonate with the argument presented here.

4.4.1 The Ambiguity of ‘Flexibility’

The Primary School Curriculum undoubtedly attempts to call into question the purposive-rationality that characterised the Green Paper. In the Introduction to the 1999 document, we are informed, “the curriculum reflects the educational, cultural, social and economic aspirations and concerns of Irish society” (DES, 1999a, p. 6). This variety of concerns could be seen to bear witness to a concerted effort to downplay economic or technological influences. Yet, the discourse of the market place is retained, although it is presented in a more subtle manner than in the Green Paper.

There is a consistent focus on *flexibility* throughout the curriculum commencing with the Introduction (DES, 1999a, p. 6), in which we are informed, “the curriculum outlines a detailed and structured framework of content that is comprehensive and flexible”. Later we are told that the curriculum “affords flexibility to the school and teacher in planning the learning experiences that are useful to the individual child at the various stages of his or her development” (DES, 1999a, p. 10). Chouliaraki and Fairclough (1999, p. 3, referencing Harvey,

1990) observe that 'flexibility' has become a key concept and practice that covers both intensive technological innovation in the diversification of production and the 'flexibility' of labour, where short-term and part-time working are increasingly the pattern. While the term may have a more nuanced signification in the educational context, there is no doubt about the many demands that 'flexibility' places upon current classrooms. In the context of a multicultural society, this can have two different and opposing effects: undoubtedly, the teacher needs to be flexible in attitude and approach to cater for the requirements of difference. Yet her flexibility may also obviate the need for investment and intervention at a more macro-level.

Ultimately, the promotion of a flexible approach to teaching could be viewed as a subtle way of maintaining the status quo and of endorsing the purposive-rational model. A flexible approach to teaching will serve to mask, if not eliminate, the problems that a multicultural classroom may pose – problems that, as observed by McGorman and Sugrue (2007, p. xiv), require appropriate legislative and policy responses. I have already outlined Habermas's distinction between the symbolic interaction of the life-world and the world of purposive rationality and the importance of the latter remaining subordinate to the former (Habermas, 1971, in Chapter One).

I contend here that a flexible approach to teaching runs the risk of conceding more in favour of the 'system' (embodied by purposive-rationality), than to the symbolic interaction of the life-world. The teacher as a 'resource' is being used to optimise returns. In responding to the call for 'flexibility', the teacher is expected to address the problems emanating from cultural difference without being allowed to enunciate them as such. Such enunciation would be

commensurate with inflexibility. It could be argued that an overly flexible approach operates as a neo-liberal force, as the accordance of recognition is not sustained by the practice of redistribution.

McGorman and Sugrue (2007, p. 155) highlight the inadequacies of the current legislative and policy framework, in terms of providing a more comprehensive approach to inclusion, based on equality of participation. They conclude that, in many respects, principals and teachers have become pawns in a larger policy power struggle. Concessions to the demands for flexibility will result in the principals and teachers being confined to this subordinate role. Lynch (1999, pp. 302-303), in her critique of the liberal approach to education, contends,

the issue of equality is not just about getting working-class or other marginalised groups and individuals ‘in and out of the system’ successfully; it is about changing the nature of education itself in both its organisation and its curricular substance.

A flexible approach may help to get marginalised children ‘in and out of the system’, but too much flexibility may act as an impediment to change.

4.4.2 *Individualism*

I have so far presented the curriculum as retaining earlier characteristics of purposive-rationality, one that may serve to maintain a cohesion of sorts. I now wish to focus on a related feature of the purposive-rational model, one which could be viewed initially as sympathetic to the assertion of difference, but which ultimately subverts its accommodation. I am referring to the phenomenon of individualism; a phenomenon seen by O’Sullivan (2005, p. 108) to be a feature of what he terms the ‘mercantile paradigm’ of education.

From the outset, the curriculum affirms the moral and spiritual development of the child. This could be seen to endorse the Hegelian notion of *Sittlichkeit*, in that “an ethical sense that will enable [the child] to acquire values on which to base choices and form attitudes” is fostered (DES, 1999a, p. 7, brackets added). Yet, I am not convinced that the Hegelian notion is upheld here, in that “the moral obligations I have to an ongoing community of which I am a part” (Taylor, 1984, p. 75, in Chapter One), is not, in my view, sufficiently highlighted. While there is a cursory reference to the good of society, the main benefits from the development of an ethical sense seem to relate to the child himself or herself. Children “will acquire knowledge and skills that will serve them not only in their lives as children but later as adults” (DES, 1999a, p. 7). I contend that these attributes should be explicitly presented as serving the community as well as the child so that Taylor’s sense of a “higher purpose” (Taylor, 1991, p. 4) may enter the equation. The concept of the greater good is not in evidence and the curriculum thus leaves itself open to a charge of endorsing individualism.

Pages 8 and 9 of the Introduction to the curriculum provide an outline of its principles. What is striking about the principles is that there is no reference to the child in the context of his or her community. All concern is with the child himself or herself. There are seventeen principles in all and they are outlined in detail in Appendix B. The principles are, in essence, based on those of the 1971 curriculum, and retain the focus on “celebrating the uniqueness of the child” and of “ensuring the development of the child’s full potential” (DES, 1999a, p. 8). This may lend an emancipatory role to education, however it is to be queried as to whether Hegel’s ‘unfreedom’ (Habermas, 1987a, in Chapter One) may be a

more accurate interpretation, as the subjectivity of the child seems to be the prevailing concern.

At this juncture, a vision of the common good is not provided and it would seem that the rights of the child take precedence over his or her duties and responsibilities towards the common good. In fact one has to go to page 23 of the Introduction before finding any reference to the child's contribution to the community. This inclusion comes at the end of a lengthy and detailed outline of the principles of learning and appears as the final sentence in the final paragraph. Here, we are informed that school planning should "take cognisance of what the community has to offer in creating relevant and effective learning experiences for its children, and in identifying the contribution that children can, in turn, make to the community" (DES, 1999a, p. 23). There is an impression created that this inclusion occurred almost as an afterthought. This leads to a concern in relation to the dearth of priority accorded to the duties of citizenship, a dearth that has significant negative implications for future social cohesion and political engagement. There is little sight of the republican ideal here. Taylor, (1991, p.9, citing de Toqueville, 1981) observes, "a society in which most people end up as the kind of individuals who are 'enclosed in their own hearts' is one where few will want to participate actively in self-government". The authentic dimension of the liberal agenda becomes eclipsed by what Taylor (1991, pp. 17-18, in Chapter One) calls "the liberalism of neutrality", and which he views as axiomatic. This means that, as a liberal, one is deterred from questioning, challenging and, much less, making a judgement on the values and practices of others. This obviates a common consensus on what constitutes the good life. It may be worth

reproducing a quote from Taylor here and applying it to the context of the school:

The good life is what each individual seeks, in his or her own way, and government would be lacking in impartiality, and thus in equal respect for all citizens, if it took sides in this question (Taylor, 1991, p.18).

It could be argued that the curriculum, in endeavouring to manifest liberal principles, is veering towards the 'liberalism of neutrality' outlined above. The teacher is viewed as the neutral, impartial facilitator of the development of the child as an individual. For example, it is stated that the teacher

has a complex role as a caring facilitator and guide who interprets the child's learning needs and responds to them. This role is informed by a concern for the uniqueness of the child, a respect for the integrity of the child as a learner and by a sense of enthusiasm and a commitment to teaching (DES, 1999a, p. 20)

I contend that the role of the teacher should also be informed by a concern for the community and for the principles of active citizenship. The excessive focus on the individual could result in the neo-liberal agenda being allowed to predominate.

I wish to acknowledge at this juncture that the predominantly individualistic focus that can be witnessed in the curriculum is not without precedent. As observed in Chapter One, Seery (2008, pp. 134-135) posits that this prioritising of the individual can be attributed to the discourse of developmental psychology, which is the dominant informing discipline in education of the twentieth century. He identifies its extensive usage by the

National Council for Curriculum and Assessment and also as the *lingua franca* of initial teacher education in Ireland. Yet, he observes that there are a number of difficulties associated with this discourse. On the one hand, “the overemphasis on the individual and catering for individual needs neglects an ancient understanding of the role of education in the reproduction of traditions, solidarities and identities” (ibid, p. 135). On the other hand, for critical pedagogy theorists, “the concerns of an individually based developmental psychology mask the political and emancipatory potential, even duty, of education” (ibid). If this contention is to be accepted, we are left with the rather pessimistic conclusion that the predominant discourse and, indeed, structure, of the curriculum does little to facilitate either social cohesion or the recognition of difference.

The liberal agenda does not preclude the assertion of core values. This is consistently maintained by Taylor (1994, in Chapter One). For him, the imposition of a ‘bottom line’ is crucial to the workings of society and for the liberal agenda to be a meaningful one. Consideration of the features of this ‘bottom line’ is significant in order to avoid a charge of ethnocentrism. Thus, I wish to look more closely at the issue of ethnocentrism as, despite my contention that a ‘liberalism of neutrality’ emanates from the focus on individualism, shades of the ethnocentric agenda could, paradoxically, also be seen to be in evidence in the curriculum. This is where confusion in terms of philosophical basis, begins to manifest itself.

4.4.3 An Ethnocentric Agenda?

As observed in the Introduction to this dissertation and also in Chapter Three, being “Catholic and Gaelic” (Tovey and Share, 2000, p. 330) is no longer deemed to be sufficient to a definition of Irish identity. Yet, it was also

acknowledged that these essential parts of our identity cannot be overlooked. The key issues in primary education as outlined in the curriculum (DES, 1999a, p. 9 and pp. 26-31) include a significant focus on Irish identity. While being quite unspecific in the general outline of identity (thus aligning with the more neutral features of liberalism and thus eschewing a charge of ethnocentricity), the curriculum then goes on to focus specifically on the Irish language and on spirituality. While the statement on the Irish language is unequivocal in relation to the role of Irish in the curriculum, thus risking a charge of ethnocentricity, the statement on spirituality is less so. As will be seen from the deconstruction of the statement below, it presents itself as a manifestation of the confusion and uncertainty surrounding religious and spiritual matters in current society. I will now examine the two statements in more detail.

The statement on the Irish language asserts its importance in developing a sense of identity. We are informed that

It is a particular feature of Irish primary education that children, from the beginning of schooling, have an experience of language learning in two languages. An engagement with the Irish language throughout the period of primary education extends the child's linguistic experience and deepens cultural awareness. The curriculum recognises that an experience and a knowledge of Irish are important in enabling the child to begin to define and express his or her sense of national and cultural identity

(DES, 1999a, p. 27).

There is no consideration given to the fact that for some children, the Irish language is not a feature of their national and cultural identity. There is a

presumption of homogeneity that, by 1999, was becoming a less tenable feature of Irish society. In this respect, it can be seen that the curriculum has not advanced significantly from the pronouncement on the Irish language by the Irish Free State in 1922, which decreed that Irish should be taught as a medium of instruction in all national schools for at least one hour a day (Hyland, 2000, pp. 24-25). Thus, the assertion of the importance of the Irish language could be interpreted as an assertion of nationalist ideology and, consequently, as an imposition of hegemony. However, this is not necessarily the case. O'Sullivan (2005, pp. 201-202), in his outline of the rise of the *Gaelscoileanna* movement, demonstrates how the Irish language can be used to highlight the cause of minority rights and choice. Irish was viewed by both those from within the movement, and those from without, as a matter of choice rather than prescription. Consequently, it was seen as a means of asserting the rights both of those who wished to use Irish as their chosen medium of communication and those who wish to eschew involvement with the language. Thus it can be concluded that it is the manner in which Irish is defined in the curriculum, rather than the acknowledgement of Irish itself, which legitimises a charge of ethnocentrism and of imposing a hegemonic perspective. As will be seen in Chapter Five, the potential for Irish to serve the cause of minority groups is further highlighted in the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education*.

The section on spirituality in the curriculum merits attention in that it may well be that, here, the core societal values, and thus a philosophical basis, which are proving elusive in other parts of the curriculum, can be found. Some of this section is reproduced below:

For most people in Ireland, the totality of the human condition cannot be understood or explained merely in terms of physical and social experience. This conviction comes from a shared perception that intimates a more profound explanation of being, from an awareness of the finiteness of life and from the sublime fulfilment that human existence sometimes affords. The spiritual dimension of life expresses itself in a search for truth and in the quest for a transcendental element within the human experience (DES, 1999a, p. 27).

This section sidesteps a definitive association with the Catholic Church and endeavours to present a less partisan interpretation of spirituality. Nevertheless, while not explicitly Catholic in its presentation, the section may be seen to be embedded in the language of Christian education. This is not a particularly novel revelation. Seery (2008, p. 135, in Chapter Three) reminds us, “echoes and reminders of a theological idiom in educational language still persist in Irish education....” Seery goes on to observe that Christian education is directed “at full understanding in order to come to an understanding of God so its aims go beyond this-worldly ends” (ibid, p. 136).

This section bears out Seery’s observation. It can be seen to attribute the meaning of life to transcendent or metaphysical influences and could thus be interpreted as discriminating against those who espouse a humanistic perspective, as the meaning of life is denied to them. A potential charge of hegemony emerges here but is mitigated by a sense of restraint from providing a definitive stance on spirituality. This renders the language in this section particularly obscure and it does little to convey to either the teacher or the child a sense of

what the development of the spiritual dimension of life actually means. However, the neutrality that it is trying to convey results in what Rorty (referenced by Fanning, 2007, p. 241) views as the ‘muddle’ that emanates from the application of a non-definitive stance. In any case, Foucault, (1974, cited by Rabinow, 1991, in Chapter Two) would contend that institutions that appear to be neutral and independent are open to suspicion.

I wish to critique this segment in more detail in order to include an Enlightenment and poststructuralist perspective. The subordination of the “physical and social experience” could be viewed as the subordination of the Enlightenment to metaphysics. If the Enlightenment is viewed solely in terms of the Horkheimer and Adorno perspective, that is, in terms of purposive-rationality and the individualism which accrues from it (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2003, in Chapter One), then this segment could be viewed as an antidote to the charges levelled at the curriculum up to now. Yet, if we accept the broader and more positive view of the Enlightenment, for example, that presented by Habermas, it can be seen that meaning can be found without recourse to metaphysics but through the “far from contemptible compulsion of a reason that...assumes a procedural form – a compulsion induced by the rationalisation of world views and life-worlds...” (Habermas, 1987a, p. 113). Those for whom religion and metaphysics are not significant features of their lives need more inclusion here. For these individuals and groups, the “physical and social experience” of life, and thus the life-world, is their source of meaning.

A universal perspective is retained throughout the segment. It is extended by the reference to the “shared perception which intimates a more profound explanation of meaning”. This “shared perception” can no longer be assumed in

Irish society. Also, the reference to the “more profound explanation of meaning” aligns with Seery’s observations above on the metaphysical nature of Christian education. Paradoxically, a Foucauldian challenge emerges within this universal perspective in that as the sentence delves more deeply into the meaning of the spiritual dimension of the curriculum, the meaning becomes more elusive. It is left up to us to continue uncovering this explanation by digging and sifting through the words and phrases. This is a feature of the genealogical approach, an approach which demands “relentless erudition” but which at the same time “opposes the search for ‘origins’” (Foucault, 2003, p. 242). The metaphysical object of the search is thus challenged. Foucault questions the notion that “beyond any apparent beginning, there is always a secret origin – so secret and fundamental that it can never be grasped by itself” (Foucault, 1989c, p. 27).

I consider that the metaphysical object of the search is retained in the sentence under scrutiny but that the verb “intimates” illustrates the elusiveness of meaning and implies that it is not available to all, only to those who are bound together by the ‘shared perception’ and thus intimates of each other. This presents a notion of exclusivity by conveying the impression of a privileged group, one that may engage in dialogue with others who share the same convictions. However they are unlikely to engage in the critical dialogue that will generate the notion of reciprocity that Habermas (2006, in Chapter One) considers necessary to extend recognition beyond the notion of paternalistic toleration. The language of the dominant group, those that purportedly render the quest for meaning a metaphysical exercise, is the only one to be heard, with the consequent marginalisation of other groups; groups who are making their voices increasingly resonant in Irish society.

In engaging in the above critique, I am cognisant that the Foucauldian challenge, namely “to give a new impetus...to the undefined work of freedom” with the consequent possibility of going beyond the “limits that are imposed upon us” (Foucault, 1991a, in Chapter Two), is not an easy one to embrace. This is a challenge which, in the Irish context, demands the unseating of values and beliefs which, until relatively recently, tended to define Irish society. It is a challenge with which the writers of the curriculum are, understandably, reluctant to engage, particularly when the provision of alternatives is a significant lacuna in the work of theorists such as Foucault.

I view the sentence under scrutiny as implying that the ‘profound explanation of being’ already exists as a discrete entity to be uncovered but not changed or moulded. The Hegelian notion of a ‘presupposed ethical totality’ (Habermas, 1987a, in Chapter One) is in evidence here. The idea that tradition could be reshaped to meet the needs of future generations is absent. Consequently, we have a model of profundity that will be transmitted unchanged from generation to generation. In the latter part of the sentence, we are accorded a perspective on “the sublime fulfilment that human existence *sometimes* affords”(emphasis added). This clause conveys a more Derridean focus, through the middle voice of *différance* or undecidability presented by the adverb ‘sometimes’. Two interpretations are possible: one being that everyone achieves a sublime fulfilment at some time in their lives; the second being that the sublime fulfilment is restricted to certain groups. Given the overall focus of the segment, I consider the latter interpretation to be the more likely one. This renders the segment open to a charge of hegemony, a charge that other sections of the

document are trying to resist, through the adoption of a seemingly neutral and non-definitive stance.

Yet, as observed in Chapter One, fear of a charge of hegemony should not impede the establishment of core societal values, encapsulated in Hegel's *Sittlichkeit* (Taylor, 1984, in Chapter One), but becoming increasingly difficult to locate in today's society. Such core values are at the kernel of social cohesion. The difficulty that seems to be evident in the curriculum lies not in the affirmation of core values, but where and how to define them. It would seem that the decision was made to assign them to the spiritual dimension of the curriculum. This serves to deflect a charge of hegemony from other aspects of the curriculum as the spiritual dimension is confined to a very limited part of the Introduction, parts of the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum (cf. 4.5 below) and to Religious Education. The development of the latter is assigned to the relevant Church authorities (DES, 1999a, p. vi). To equate the establishment of core societal values to spirituality, and, in particular, to religion (and even now, in Ireland, to the Catholic Church) is a catalyst for protest from many quarters, and in particular, from the poststructuralists. Indeed, Nietzsche, for example, would dispute the very existence of such values as he contends "*there are no moral facts whatever*" (Nietzsche, 1895, cited by Norman, 1998, p. 130, original emphasis). (I acknowledge here Norman's (p. 128) caution that Nietzsche would also dispute being categorised within any philosophical tradition). However, the association between core societal values and religion has many historical links, and, even today, can be seen to be beneficial to society.

In the past, religion tended to provide guidance in relation to the identification of core values. This premise is particularly relevant to the Irish context. It informed the working of Irish society and thus, according to Gramsci (1988, p. 330), can be accepted as an ideology, but “on condition that the word is used in its highest sense of a conception of the world that is manifest in art, in law, in economic activity, and in all manifestations of individual and collective life”. Gramsci problematised the preservation of the ‘ideological unity of the entire social bloc’ and located the resolution of this problem within religion. He viewed the strength of the Catholic Church to be the fact that it saw the need for doctrinal unity among the whole mass of the faithful and strove to ensure that there was no segregation between the intellectual strata of society (Gramsci, 1988, in Chapter One). Gramsci equated the Church with the maintenance of social cohesion and did not see the ‘immanentist’ philosophies as providing a plausible alternative. We need to consider whether this scenario has changed in current society. While religion no longer overtly occupies the role it once did in the lives of many people, it would seem that the secular alternative has not adequately replaced it in terms of the provision of core societal values. In the context of the curriculum, Gramsci’s contention that immanentist philosophies have not even attempted to construct a conception that could replace religion in the education of children would seem to be borne out (Gramsci, 1988, in Chapter One), in that the provision of such values has been sidelined.

The above analysis indicates that it is very difficult to identify a definitive ideology within the curriculum apart from the endorsement of moral relativism, which could be seen to emanate from the language of developmental psychology, and which, on a more negative note, could be aligned with Horkheimer and

Adorno's perspective on the Enlightenment. Thus, in the absence of alternatives, for example, a concerted reflection on what is meant by the moral ideal, or in Taylor's terms, "the ideal of authenticity" (Taylor, 1991, p. 17), a return to spirituality may be what is required. In the Irish context, as in Gramsci's Italy, the role of the Catholic Church is, whether or not we care to admit it, still significant.

The role of the Catholic Church could be viewed as a barrier to the accommodation of cultural difference. However, I consider this conclusion to be too obvious and too simplistic. There are other, more subtle influences in play, namely State or government influences which seem to align themselves more with the liberal agenda, particularly the type of non-interventionist, 'neutral' liberalism which Taylor views as being endemic in current society. This agenda affirms the assertion of difference and independence. Yet, the non-interventionist, disengaged approach of the policy makers serves to bring about the societal division accruing from individualism, which Gramsci (1988, in Chapter One) viewed the Church as trying to eliminate.

The Conference of Major Religious Superiors (CMRS), now the Conference of Religious in Ireland (CORI), views society as "made up of interdependent rather than independent units...and recognises that the circumstances of poor people will not change until the circumstances of people who are not poor also change" (CMRS, 1992c, cited by O'Sullivan, 2005, p.197). The words of Habermas (1987a, in Chapter One), along with those of Bauman (2001, in Chapter One) resonate strongly here as the principle of reciprocity is endorsed. CORI adopts a confrontational stance against the subtle but pervasive policies (or non-policies) of neo-liberalism and what O'Sullivan (2005) terms the

'mercantile paradigm' and provides an example of how the 'theocentric paradigm' (O'Sullivan, 2005) may well be more closely attuned to the needs of minority groups, despite the problems associated with the ownership of schools and the perpetuation of a particular ethos.

Thus, while the Church may be seen as a more obvious impediment to the achievement of an intercultural society, and a more obvious target of censure in this regard, the pursuit of the neo-liberal agenda is a more subtle barrier. Here, Bauman's cynical depiction of 'multiculturalism' is acutely resonant: for him the learned classes have adopted a 'hands-off' approach to the needs of minority groups, remaining silent about the preferred shape of the human condition. In doing so, they have aligned themselves with "increasingly extra territorial economic powers" (Bauman, 2001, p. 125) and thus with the neo-liberal agenda. I wish to add here that the time of writing of these comments coincides with the closure or curtailment by the State of key organisations concerned with defending the rights of the most deprived groups in Irish society (O'Brien, 2008, p. W2).

In this section of the chapter, I have explored how the philosophical basis of the 1999 curriculum remains elusive. While purposive-rational influences were deemed significant, these were tempered by the more ethnocentric concerns of language and religion. These tend to be seen as anathema to difference. Yet, the ensuing argument suggested that perceived ethnocentricity (and hegemony) may, in fact, be more conducive to social cohesion and the accommodation of cultural difference than the type of liberalism which permeates current society. The vagueness and value neutrality of the latter may, in fact, constitute the greater threat. It is suggested that the Church, in particular, may be a means of

eliminating the type of social divisions that may occur when assertions of difference are met with official silence and disengagement. It may thus be seen as an aid in resolving the dilemma of this dissertation, namely that of maintaining social cohesion while recognising difference. However, it would be unfair at this juncture to present this as the overall conclusion without giving consideration to the part of the curriculum which also reflects on morality and spirituality and which concerns itself specifically with the issue of difference. Therefore, I will now turn to the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum to explore more comprehensively the issue of maintaining social cohesion while recognising difference.

4.5 The Primary School Curriculum (1999), Social, Personal and Health Education

The Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) curriculum may be viewed as the most obvious location for issues pertaining to societal change to be addressed. It was introduced as a new area of the curriculum and its ‘newness’ could be seen as an endeavour to acknowledge and address the change occurring in Irish society on the cusp of the new millennium. However, SPHE is definitively linked with the ethos of the school from the outset (DES, 1999b, p. 2), and thus, in most cases, with the Catholic Church. We are also informed on page 11 that children will “become aware of how particular beliefs and values are important in their lives and how they influence the decisions and choices they make”. If Earley’s observations in relation to the ongoing, if less overt, influence of the Catholic Church (Earley, 1999, in Chapter Three) are to be taken on board, we can conclude that the influence of the Catholic Church will be significant

here. While contributing to the maintenance of social cohesion, this could be seen, by some, to compromise the cause of difference. However, as observed in the previous section, this need not be the case.

4.5.1 Cultural Difference and SPHE

Ethnic and cultural difference is given explicit acknowledgement in the SPHE curriculum. Yet, while seeking to accord specific recognition to difference, such recognition is accorded from a distance and avoids direct confrontation with the more problematic and less attractive aspects of cultural difference. I view this as a barrier on the route towards interculturalism. I have chosen a segment from page 4 of the SPHE Guidelines to illustrate this point:

Children live in a diverse society and this diversity requires the development of mutual understanding and a sense of respect for the dignity of every human being. The SPHE programme provides a context in which children can learn about various ethnic, social and cultural groups and can recognise and appreciate the contributions of these groups to society. As they acquire a deeper understanding of their own traditions and heritage, they are encouraged to act in ways that foster inclusiveness and to have regard for the heritage and perspective of others. Through SPHE children can discover the role each person has to play in counteracting prejudice, discrimination and inequality as they may experience it in their own lives (DES, 1999b, p. 4).

The use of the word 'diversity' instead of the word 'difference' demonstrates, according to Bhabha, (1990, in Chapter Two), an ideological bias that, in Bhabha's view, is more in line with multiculturalism than

interculturalism. Bhabha endorses the problematising of difference so that the dominant perspective, that of liberal relativism, can be confronted. I argue that this task is eschewed by the curriculum in order to avoid conflict. As observed by O'Sullivan, (2005, in Chapter Three), the reduction or elimination of conflict can have a subversive influence that aids the maintenance of the status quo. This liberates the statutory groups, including government departments, from having to address the less attractive aspects of cultural difference and also from having to invest resources into the process of integration. Evidence of inadequacies in this regard has been presented in Chapter Three. The neo-liberal agenda is in the ascendancy here. The transformation of society can only be achieved through the active engagement of different groups with each other as, to reiterate the observation of the CMRS (1992) referred to above, they are 'interdependent' rather than 'independent'. Such engagement yields the potential for antagonism and conflict that will then have to be addressed rather than contained by the various parties. The 'bottom line' may slacken but this does not signal its disappearance, as may be the case under the auspices of the neutral liberalism of relativism which approaches difference as something to be allowed to 'flower' under the benevolent (and non-interventionist) gaze of the dominant group. I wish to add here that I am not predicating the above observations solely on the use of the word 'diversity'.

Later in the SPHE Guidelines (DES, 1999b, p. 17), the celebration of *difference* is identified as one of the features of citizenship education. It could be contended that the authors have acknowledged Bhabha's concerns about terminology here. However, both words occur in one sentence in the SPHE curriculum itself. We are informed that "*diversity and difference* characterise the

society in which children live” (DES, 1999c, p. 4, emphasis added). Fairclough (1989, p.115) contends that ‘overwording’ may be indicative of ideological struggle. This sentence could be deemed to encapsulate such a struggle, which is generated by the wish to maintain the liberal perspective while addressing the concerns of a multicultural society in a constructive manner.

In the segment, we observe the acknowledgement of mutual understanding. This endorses the principle of reciprocity and may serve to counteract the more indulgent and patronising undertones, which may accompany the concept of diversity. Mutual understanding implies a concerted effort on the part of all concerned to engage with each other in the pursuit of an intercultural society. The task of reaching an understanding among different groups removes the notion of Bhabha’s (1990, in Chapter Two) *musée imaginaire* in which cultures are placed as objects of curiosity and wonder and can, instead, be predicated upon Habermas’s (1987a, in Chapter One) view of a communication community that seeks, but does not coerce, consensus. Yet as previously observed, the Habermasian viewpoint, while maintaining social cohesion, is open to the charge of hegemony as it is dependent upon universally valid norms, the application of which becomes problematic in a multicultural situation. On the other hand, a community which ‘celebrates diversity’ thus eliminating conflict, but which does not engage in meaningful communication, is one which can be deemed to succumb to the Habermasian charge of indirect control with the resultant manifestation of conditioned behaviour (Habermas, 1971, in Chapter One). Such a community is in the thrall of hegemony just as much as one that engages in a more overt imposition of a universalist perspective.

4.5.2 *Active Engagement with Difference*

The achievement of mutual understanding and respect is a key element in the achievement of an intercultural society. The constructivist methodology of the SPHE curriculum facilitates the pursuit of this society as it helps the children to realise that the achievement of mutual understanding and respect are active rather than passive constructs. In the words of the curriculum “active learning promotes action” (DES, 1999b, p. 55). Yet, I am not sure that critical pedagogy is sufficiently emphasised here. Giroux (2003, p. 384) observes that critical pedagogy involves providing students with the opportunity to develop the critical capacity to challenge and transform existing social and political forms, rather than simply adapting to them. For this to occur, I believe that the potential for critical pedagogy should be explicit in the discourse of educational policy rather than simply implicit in its methodology. In the SPHE Guidelines, we are told that active participation helps children to put health-related messages into their own lives and to become active members of their communities (DES, 1999b, p. 55). However, the potential for transformation of society remains undisclosed. In addition, the teacher’s role as critical pedagogue is not realised. While the teacher is acknowledged to be the guide and facilitator of the work (ibid), the potential for political action is not acknowledged.

The acknowledgement of mutual understanding is somewhat compromised by the statement that “the children learn *about* various ethnic, social and cultural groups...” (emphasis added). I consider that the inclusion of the preposition ‘about’ accentuates a sense of distance between the dominant and minority cultures. It also conveys the impression that a multicultural society is more of a theoretical construct than an existing or an impending reality. A more

inclusive (and thus intercultural) perspective would have been achieved were the word 'learning about' to be replaced with the word 'engagement with' or 'learning from'. The concept of mutual understanding would have been developed. Instead, we are left with the impression of one community learning about others but at a distance. I acknowledge that this may be more in line with the still homogenous profile of many schools in the late 1990s. However, the portents of the future were becoming manifest by then.

Learning 'about' a concept or an issue shields the learner from engagement with change. There is little sense of the learning being a reflexive exercise generating a review of the individual's own values and beliefs in order that the reality of cultural change can be effectively incorporated into his/her worldview. Learning 'about' difference will not necessarily generate the sort of political awareness or activism which is implied in the final sentence in the paragraph under scrutiny and which is necessary to lead to societal transformation. Giroux (1994, p. 329) outlines the "new language" of "a democratic or insurgent multiculturalism". This language

challenges the boundaries of cultural and racial difference as sites of exclusion and discrimination while simultaneously rewriting the script of cultural difference as part of a broader attempt to expand and deepen the imperatives of a multicultural society.

This is the type of challenge which Drudy and Lynch (1993, in Chapter Three) and Lynch (1999, in Chapter Three) consider to be absent from the liberal approach to education. The individual as an agent of change is not presented here. The language of critical pedagogy, while in evidence in the final sentence

in the paragraph (cf. 4.5.6 below), is somewhat diluted by those which precede it, in that the reality of cultural change is addressed in a benign and passive manner.

4.5.3 *The Meaning of Recognition*

The insertion of the verb 'to recognise' in the selected segment, may be construed as responding to the demands of minority groups, yet, according to Habermas (1987a, in Chapter One), without validity claims, assertions of difference lose their meaning. Taylor (1994, in Chapter One) expands upon this and eschews the accordance of recognition on demand without the imposition of a 'bottom line'. In any case, the second verb annuls the possibility of difference being accommodated or addressed in a constructive manner. To 'appreciate' reiterates once again the concept of the *musée imaginaire*. There is a sense that the dominant group is observing the minority groups separated by a one-way glass conveying the impression that the minority groups are there for the amusement and entertainment of the majority. Bauman (1997, in Chapter One) observes that for some groups in society, strangers are the purveyors of pleasures. Their presence is a break in the tedium. As observed in Chapter One, the appreciation of the contributions of minority groups is limited to those for whom the arrival of these groups does not pose a significant threat. It is too optimistic to assume that the advent of a multicultural society is a source of appreciation for all. This is not acknowledged in the SPHE curriculum or indeed in the curriculum overall, thus indicating once again that the containment of problems accruing from difference is prioritised. Drudy and Lynch (1993, p. 54) observe that recognising difference, in itself, does not amount to identifying conflicts of interest as central dynamics of society.

4.5.4 *Contribution as a Condition*

There is an implicit assumption or prescription in the statement that all of the groups will make a contribution to Irish society, contributions that will enhance its well-being and overall social cohesion. This would bring the statement closer to Taylor's treatise on recognition and his imposition of a 'bottom line' in terms of criteria for gaining recognition. This may be deemed an acceptable premise for recognition and, without doubt, it serves to maintain social cohesion. Yet, the implicit expectation of contribution leaves itself open to challenge by Foucault and Derrida as it can be viewed as an imposition of limits and an impediment to unconstrained freedom. Once again, Foucault's exhortation to critique "the limits that are imposed upon us" and to experiment "with the possibilities of going beyond them" (Foucault, 1991a, p. 50, in Chapter Two), becomes significant. If we do not go beyond those limits, we risk marginalising certain groups, namely those who do not contribute to society, those who, in Foucault's vision, were confined to the *Hôpital Général* (Foucault, 1989b, in Chapter Two). The possibility of such groups is not admitted in the statement above. We can thus conclude that communication between such groups and the dominant one is silenced. For Foucault, this is a manifestation of power on the part of the dominant group (ibid). Derrida's observations on the conditionality of hospitality (Derrida, 2006, in Chapter Two) could also be deemed to be borne out by the expectation of all groups contributing to society. Derrida equates the imposition of conditions with a manifestation of hostility. Yet, making a contribution to society is an integral feature of active citizenship, upon which a cohesive society depends. Neither Foucault nor Derrida take this

concept sufficiently on board. Admission of Foucauldian or Derridean concerns would render social cohesion a far more elusive construct.

4.5.5 The 'Self' and the 'Other'

The next sentence from the segment under scrutiny juxtaposes the notion of the children acquiring a “deeper understanding” of their own cultural heritage, with them “having regard” for the heritage of others. This could be seen to respond to Taylor’s almost Derridean-like call for “something midway between the unauthentic and homogenizing demand for recognition of equal worth, on the one hand, and the self-immurement within ethnocentric standards on the other” (1994, p. 101). It also highlights the tensions between identity and difference and I consider that it is illustrative of the Derridean conundrum posed by Caputo (1997, in Chapter Two). It demonstrates our wish to welcome other groups while retaining our own identity.

Yet, despite its laudable and pluralistic aspirations there is an imbalance in the phrase. The juxtaposition of the two abstract nouns ‘understanding’ and ‘regard’ demonstrate the imbalance. The dominant group is focused on reaching a deeper understanding of its own culture and with having a ‘regard’ for others. The effort intrinsic to reaching understanding is confined to one’s own culture. Having a regard for something is a more cursory activity, less contingent upon effort and equating, at best, with appreciation. The ‘other’ is thus placed at a distance. Reaching mutual understanding is compromised. Understanding is aligned with the indigenous culture only. We can conclude here that the notion of identity overrules that of difference. While a sense of identity is an essential component of social cohesion, one’s sense of identity needs to evolve in order to meet the demands of a multicultural society, and as observed by Waldron (2004,

in Chapter Three), one needs to take control of this emergent identity. I am not sure that this sense of evolving identity is in evidence here. I contend that the concern with tradition and heritage outweighs concern with difference. 'Having regard for', while not quite indicative of the indifference that Bauman (2001, in Chapter One) equates with multiculturalism, certainly falls short of the level of engagement required for the achievement of interculturalism. Once again, critical pedagogy does not enter the equation.

The absence of critical pedagogy is further highlighted by the emphasis on individualism which is implicit in the confinement of "deeper understanding" to one's *own* traditions and heritage. As I have observed, the sentence under scrutiny here tends to veer in favour of a more introverted perspective, focusing on the 'Self' in terms of identity rather than on the 'Other'. This preoccupation with the self becomes more manifest as one progresses through the curriculum. Much space is accorded to raising the child's sense of self and while there is an effort to include a community focus, I contend that the concern with self significantly outweighs other concerns. If we look at the overview of the Strands and Strand Units for SPHE (DES, 1999b, p. 9) we can observe that issues of personal interest are given most attention, with half of the Strand Units being accorded to the 'Myself' Strand. In addition, the manner in which the three Strands are named (Myself, Myself and Others, Myself and the Wider World) can be seen to facilitate an individualistic focus. (This overview is provided in Appendix C). The preoccupation with the self is further endorsed in the final clause under scrutiny wherein the addressing of prejudice, discrimination and inequality is limited to the child's *own* experience.

4.5.6 *Critical Pedagogy or Not?*

We are informed that through SPHE the children can “*discover* the role each person has to play in counteracting prejudice, discrimination and inequality as they may experience it in their *own* lives” (emphasis added). The choice of verb undermines the potential for critical pedagogy and transformation that occurs in the sentence. The notion of political activism is diluted to a body of abstract knowledge. We are left pondering as to what the children will do subsequent to their discovery of the role to be played in bringing about a society which supports the rights of all those who live in it. There is no sense that the children will actually be led to embrace or adopt this role themselves, thus the notion of learning *about* rather than engaging *with* is sustained.

The choice of verb may serve to preserve the existing social cohesion and to diffuse the potential for disorder ensuing from a more active engagement with political activism. It may also be a tacit acknowledgement of the fact that not all teachers are able or willing to lead the charge towards political change and that, in any case, such change is not necessarily the aim of the policy makers. There is a certain neutrality posited by the verb as making a discovery is not synonymous with the results of such a discovery being put into action. While the issues that impede the achievement of an intercultural society are rendered explicit in this final section of the segment, creating the potential for transformation, this potential is not subsequently fulfilled.

It is, therefore, questionable as to the extent to which the SPHE curriculum can be deemed to address the notions of social cohesion and the recognition of difference. The prioritising of the child’s individuality undermines social cohesion and while seeming to facilitate the assertion of difference, does

little to address the issue in any constructive manner. We are consequently left to turn to other, possibly anachronistic, features of education to resolve this dilemma. I will now turn to one which is a regular target for criticism, but one which has been deferred to from very early on in the Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum and also in the earlier Relationships and Sexuality Education curriculum (NCCA, 1996, p. 8). I refer to the “ethos and characteristic spirit of the school”(DES, 1999b, p. 2). This deference removes the potential for controversy and antagonism from the documents, thus facilitating their legitimation and publication. However, it also compromises their usefulness and their potential for innovation. I wish, at this juncture, to explore the concept of ethos in some more detail in order to identify its impact on social cohesion and the recognition of difference.

4.6 School Ethos

Williams (2000, p. 74) observes “every human institution has its own ethos in the sense of a dominant, pervading spirit or character that finds expression in the habits or behaviour of those who are part of it”. This is no less true of schools and Williams goes on to say that, although impalpable, “the ethos of a school touches the very quality of our lives and can constitute an abiding element in the fabric of our very identity” (ibid, p. 76). While ethos is not necessarily contingent upon religious beliefs, it would be naïve to contend that, in the majority of schools in the Irish context, ethos is immune from religious influence. Williams contends, “a school with a religious ethos aims, as a matter of policy, to influence in young people a commitment to a particular religion and the religion in question is reinforced as part of the school’s ethos” (ibid). Yet,

adhesion to, or affirmation of school ethos, does not, or should not preclude the possibility of moving beyond the status quo. Such a possibility is dependent upon our understanding of the concept of ethos.

Norman (2003, pp. 1-16) provides a comprehensive insight into the subtleties of meaning that are intrinsic to the concept. For him, “ethos is an essential and implicit entity; it is unavoidable and cannot be separated from the school” (ibid, p. 3). School ethos is essentially a democratic and inclusive concept “nourished by a healthy dialogue so as to inform and give vision to the life of the institution” (ibid, p. 5). Norman presents the Catholic understanding of ethos as being in line with this understanding of the concept (ibid, p. 7). Yet, he stops short of imbuing Irish Catholic schools with this notion of ethos, and, using the contributions of the Irish Catholic Church to the National Education Convention (1993), demonstrates reluctance on the part of the Church to allow the notion of ethos to evolve (ibid, p. 12). Church ownership of the schools was reiterated and there was a strong resistance to allow the State to increase its influence over schools (ibid). Norman concludes that a paternalistic understanding of ethos was adopted by the trustees of Irish Catholic schools (ibid, p. 13). He contends that this understanding of ethos results in an attitude of compliance among those who work in these schools. As a result, teachers do not challenge the status quo and are slow to bring themselves or their students into dialogue with the tradition of the school (ibid, p. 15). The Education Act (1998) endorsed the system of patronage in the schools, but according to Devine (2005, p. 58), this is not a system, which is dealing with the lived realities of our society and the changes that have taken place there.

Deference to school ethos may be an adroit and subtle way of affirming core societal values and also of maintaining the status quo. In this way, the curriculum itself avoids censure from groups who may consider themselves disenfranchised by the imposition of such values. If Norman's contentions are to be accepted, a justifiable charge of hegemony may be levelled, but not specifically at the curriculum. Yet, I view the curriculum to be complicit in this scheme in that the ethos of the school is presented as a fixed or absolute entity, one that is resilient in the face of change. There is little consideration given to the Derridean challenge to logocentrism (Kearney, 1986, in Chapter Two) or to the Foucauldian critique of the 'heroization' of the present (Foucault, 1991a, in Chapter Two). The Hegelian notion of a "presupposed ethical totality" (Habermas, 1987a, in Chapter One) needs to be relinquished.

The curriculum needs to acknowledge the necessity and the role of dialogue in the definition of ethos and also its potentially evolving nature. For this to happen, the curriculum and ethos need to be at one in relation to the nature of the education being provided to the children. This means that its philosophical basis needs to become more evident and more transparent. However, as demonstrated above, there is an uncertainty, even a fear, in relation to being definitive in this regard. I acknowledge that, as observed above, the Church has much to offer schools, and in the absence of an alternative philosophy, the value system that it presents may have to suffice. The introduction of more dialogue and the challenging of unquestioning and compliant attitudes among all those involved in the working of the school would make ethos a concept less open to challenge by the proponents of difference.

4.7 Conclusion

This brief and selective commentary on the 1999 curriculum serves to demonstrate that the discourse of this potentially pivotal document was more concerned with avoiding controversy and confrontation than with addressing the implications of demographic and cultural change. We can observe that, overtly, the State has occupied the central role in educational policy formulation with the Church's role becoming less significant than it was in previous decades. This, in itself, could be interpreted as a forward step in addressing the implications of demographic change. My reading of the curriculum has left me to conclude that this was not, in actual fact, the case. The portents of instrumentalism, embodied in particular in the emphasis on individualism, served to compromise both the establishment of core societal values and the meaningful accommodation of difference. The overall characteristic to emerge was a reluctance to present any overarching philosophy apart from the endorsement of *laissez-faire*. The reaching of consensus and fear of censure seem to be the key influences informing the discourse. I thus conclude that the documents under scrutiny are more representative of *pastiche* than intertextuality (O'Sullivan, 2005, in 4.2 above).

The distance from difference evidenced in the documents under scrutiny in this chapter can be attributed to two reasons. The first is the fact that the impact of demographic change had not yet made itself felt. Thus, cultural difference was not yet a reality in Ireland. Yet, the portents of difference were becoming manifest and thus the lack of substantive engagement with the issue could be deemed to be, at the very least, short-sighted. A more subversive interpretation would be that the disengagement from the problems and

complexities associated with difference could be attributed to a wish to avoid the political and economic implications of resolving them. The *musée imaginaire* is thus retained and the subsequent claim of the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education*, that the Curriculum itself is 'intercultural', is not borne out in the evidence presented here. Instead, Devine's comment (in 4.6 above) that we have an education system that is structured for a different type of society may be more apposite.

Paradoxically, the more ethnocentric (or hegemonic) aspects of our identity (being Catholic and Gaelic) and their associations with the Church and the Irish language, may be the aspects which serve to accommodate difference and address the issue of minority rights and discrimination while at the same time maintaining social cohesion. The Irish language, while a significant manifestation of 'Irishness', was also presented as a means of highlighting minority rights through the operation of the *Gaelscoileanna*. A more significant portion of the chapter was accorded to the issue of spirituality and its association with the Church. While the language of this particular segment was particularly difficult to analyse, ultimately, the conclusion was reached that the Church demonstrated an ideological affinity with the discourse of social cohesion and the accommodation of difference in a meaningful way. The associated issue of school ethos (for the vast majority of schools) was discussed with the conclusion that in the absence of a set of definitive societal values in the curriculum, the significance of school ethos becomes acute.

While a paternalistic notion of ethos may be seen as an impediment to the accommodation of difference, it was postulated that the intrinsic concept of ethos, even with religious affiliations, did not stand in binary opposition to

difference and change in society as long as it was imbued with the potential for dialogue. It was also postulated that the Catholic Church may be more concerned with the addressing of problems emanating from difference, through, for example the redistribution of goods, than the curriculum, for which acknowledgement of difference seemed to suffice. The focus accorded by the SPHE curriculum to different cultures in society can be viewed as a response to, rather than an engagement with, cultural difference, as it tends to romanticise and exoticise the arrival of different cultures to Ireland, but ultimately to become susceptible to Bhabha's (1990, in Chapter Two) charge of containment. Admittedly, the possibility of critical dialogue through "the development of mutual understanding and a sense of respect for the dignity of every human being" (DES, 1999b, p. 4) demonstrates the potential for engagement with difference. In addition, the potential for critical pedagogy materialises in the final sentence of the segment. However, these potentials recede again with the sense of distance from difference that is imposed by other words and phrases in the segment, for example, learning *about* different groups and *appreciating* their contribution to society. While the curriculum as a whole, and, in particular the introduction of SPHE as a discrete curricular area, could be viewed as a being an innovative initiative, it is uncertain as to whether it led to major changes in terms of the accommodation of difference. Gleeson (2004, p.105, referencing Fullan, 1991) observes that the adoption of innovation, without the realisation of change, is a common occurrence.

In the next chapter, I intend to turn to the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education* to determine whether progression along the route towards an intercultural society has occurred through a more tangible attempt to resolve the

tensions between the maintenance of social cohesion and the recognition of difference. In the 1999 curriculum minority groups are presented as groups to be recognised and appreciated but the problematising of cultural difference is notably absent. This reduces the potential for negotiation and critical dialogue. I will endeavour to find out whether this distance from difference continued to be the predominant approach in the decade that followed.

Chapter Five: Towards a dialogue with difference (2): The Guidelines for Intercultural Education in the Primary School (2005)

5.1 Introduction

The analysis in the previous chapter yielded the less than satisfactory conclusion that a philosophical basis is not clearly identifiable in the 1999 curriculum. This rendered its response to the overall theme or problem of this dissertation, namely the maintenance of social cohesion while recognising difference, difficult to ascertain. However, what was revealed in the chapter was that the reality of a multicultural society composed of non-indigenous as well as indigenous groups had not yet made significant inroads into Irish educational policy discourse by 1999. This conclusion is mitigated by the fact that up to the mid-1990s cultural difference was mainly represented by indigenous minority groups, of which the Travelling Community is the most significant.

I view the non-problematizing of cultural concerns to be a consistent feature of Irish educational discourse. This may be due to the fact that, according to Gleeson (2004, p. 102, referencing House, 1981), cultural concerns tend to be overshadowed by technological and political issues. The tensions between the purposive-rational world and the life-world (Habermas, 1971, in Chapter One) become evident here with the purposive-rational world emerging as the more dominant force. Callan (1995, cited by Gleeson, 2004, p. 109) observes that the main concern of Irish political forces has been “with fitting people into a society that is allowed to remain unproblematic”. This is borne out in Irish educational policy. Issues that of their very nature are problematic (the achievement of an

intercultural society being a prime example) are divested of their more difficult and controversial characteristics and presented to practitioners in their most benign form in anticipation of unquestioning acceptance and implementation. This serves to maintain social cohesion but it does little to address the needs that emanate from cultural difference.

The 'distance from difference', which became manifest in the analysis of the 1999 Social, Personal and Health Education curriculum, endorses this contention and bears witness to O'Sullivan's observation (2005, p. xiv, in Chapter Three) on the propensity of Irish educational thinking to insulate itself "from competing/contesting viewpoints". In addition, as could be seen in the analysis in Chapter Four, there is a significant dearth of what O'Sullivan (2005, p.199) terms "theorised intentional language". He observes that concepts such as equity, inclusion, and cohesion, among others, "continue to operate in a form of knowledge production that relies on action, programmes, protocols and selection criteria for its realisation and advancement". However, without the support of theory, the likelihood of implementation is lessened.

The dearth of 'theorised, intentional language' could be explained by a wish to achieve consensus among policy makers. The presentation of a phenomenon as a fact, a 'given' or an absolute obviates the necessity to provide empirical or statistical evidence as support. Drudy and Lynch (1993, pp. 51-52) provide a substantial list of documents that embody the consensus mode. These include *Curaclam na Bunscoile* (1971) and the Report of the Review Body on the Primary Curriculum (1990). In addition, I contend that the Report on the National Education Convention (Coolahan, 1994) manifests the same characteristic. We are informed that, "to the great credit of the participants,"

there was a concerted engagement with the process (Coolahan, 1994, p. 1). There is an almost palpable sense of relief that the convention did not cause untoward upset, antagonism or conflict. There is also an impression conveyed that to raise controversial or antagonistic issues would somehow have discredited the process. I am imposing a Foucauldian or Derridean challenge here, as I believe that the crediting of participants for the obviation of conflict, is, in itself a manifestation of power. The presence of forty-two different organisations at the convention would lead to an expectation of some level of dissensus. The disposition towards unproblematic consensus in the 1999 curriculum should therefore come as no great surprise.

The drive towards consensus by educationalists has significant implications for a multicultural society as it represents society as “an undifferentiated whole”, within which “it is assumed that there is agreement within all sectors of that whole on what is the ‘public interest’ or ‘collective interest’ in education” (Drudy and Lynch, 1993, p. 50). This model does not admit conflicting class, gender or other interests as potent forces determining the direction of the education system (ibid). This was evidenced in the analysis of the curriculum. Throughout the analysis, it became evident that issues of cultural difference were subdued in the interest of maintaining social cohesion. This begs the question as to whether “deep change” (Gleeson, 2004, in Chapter Four) in terms of school culture and classroom practice compromises the cohesion of the school, and if so, whether such change can actually be implemented or whether it remains within the confines of academic debate. The *Guidelines for Intercultural Education in the Primary School* (2005) provide an indicator of the possibility of deep change, and thus are the subject of analysis in this chapter.

5.2 The Guidelines for Intercultural Education in the Primary School

The National Action Plan Against Racism (NAPAR) recommended, as part of its national intercultural education strategy, the development of guidelines for teachers on how best to mediate and adapt the curriculum to reflect expanding cultural diversity in Ireland (NAPAR, 2005, p. 107). The *Guidelines for Intercultural Education in Primary Schools* (henceforth referred to as the *Guidelines*) were published in 2005 as a response to this recommendation. Jones (1975, cited by Matland, 1995, p. 159) observes that politicians react to demand for action by producing action. The production of the *Guidelines* in response to the NAPAR bears out Jones's contention. However, the extent to which they respond to the needs of different cultures merits further exploration.

The *Guidelines*, at first glance, are indicative of a transformative approach to education and a concrete effort to advance the cause of interculturalism. They manifest many of the principles put forward by writers such as Foucault, Derrida and Bhabha and thus pose a challenge to the universal values of the majority culture. The notion of alterity becomes manifest early in the *Guidelines* as, in considering the significance of the 'hidden' curriculum, we are exhorted to focus on what is absent just as much as on what is present (DES, 2005, p. 4). In general, the *Guidelines* call into question existing practices both by individuals and society and invite us to critically reflect on the diversity of issues that emerge from a multicultural society and to change our practices accordingly. However, a closer analysis of the *Guidelines* is required in order to determine whether the potential for transformation is ultimately built upon. My

critique of the *Guidelines* is based (as before) upon selected words and passages. This critique begins with the very title of the document.

5.2.1 *A Titular Conundrum*

From the outset, the *Guidelines* embody the Derridean conundrum of 'undecidability'. While they align with the OED definition of policy outlined in Chapter Four, the word policy is conspicuously absent from this document. So we are unsure as to whether they can be viewed as policy or not. I think that this may well be a strategic move on the part of the Department of Education and Science (DES) as the term 'Guidelines' does not have the legislative implications of the word 'policy' and, consequently, it releases the DES from the duty of providing supportive resources in relation to implementation. In addition, there would be more pressure on the DES, along with other organisations, to address significant challenges unearthed by intercultural policy. These include ownership of schools, the status of the Irish language in the curriculum, the current profile of the majority of teachers and, consequently, the admissions policies of the colleges of education. Retaining the term 'Guidelines' serves to highlight these challenges but to eschew the difficulties in addressing them. This indicates that the purposive-rational model of society may be the dominant influence at this juncture as the element of choice or appropriation, which is implicit in the term 'Guidelines', is indicative of a neo-liberal perspective designed to place the responsibility for the accommodation of difference on the school, but independent of significant state intervention.

This indicator is further strengthened by the use of the interrogative tense, which is sustained throughout the document. Significant issues for addressing cultural difference appear at various intervals in the forms of 'checklists' to

which schools can respond either positively or negatively (see, for example, pages 28 and 33 of the *Guidelines* and Appendices D and E of this dissertation). We are informed, “negative answers identify opportunities for further development” (DES, 2005, p. 28). However, there is little provided in the way of support to those schools that provide a negative response. Thus, in my view, the appellation of ‘Guidelines’ leaves us unsure in relation to their likely outcomes. However, in view of the fact that Ireland did not have and still does not have a coherent immigration and integration policy (Boucher, 2008, in Chapter Three), the sidestepping of a defined educational policy in this regard is not unexpected.

5.2.2 *The Role of the Guidelines*

The *Guidelines*, from the outset, are placed in a subordinate role to the 1999 curriculum and continually identify the latter as being intercultural: “These guidelines support the Primary School Curriculum (1999) and identify the ways in which intercultural education permeates that curriculum” (DES, 2005, p. 5). Later, we are informed, “the curriculum itself is an intercultural curriculum” (p. 19). The language of consensus emerges here and is indicative of a wish to maintain social cohesion in the form of the status quo. I acknowledged in Chapter Four that while an intercultural perspective may emanate from the approaches and methodologies of the curriculum, such a perspective is absent from its discourse, in that difference is presented as a distant construct, one to be learned *about* and *appreciated* but not necessarily engaged with. In addition, the word ‘intercultural’ itself is conspicuous by its absence. Thus, the seamless transition of a document which just about aligned itself with ‘multiculturalism’ (in the sense attributed to the term by Bauman and Bhabha), to becoming an *Intercultural* document poses a challenge to credibility. The *Guidelines*

endeavour to address many of the anomalies in the curriculum while not overtly acknowledging them. I consider that they would have done much for their own credibility had they outlined the anomalies first and then presented themselves as a means of addressing them.

I wish to engage with the notion of alterity here by endeavouring to interpret the motivation behind identifying the *Guidelines* as a support to the existing curriculum. Here I am adopting a genealogical perspective in that I wish to challenge the “heroization of the present” (Foucault, 1991a, in Chapter Two) and “make visible discontinuities that cross us” (Foucault, 2003, in Chapter Two). The appellation of ‘intercultural’ may serve to assuage teachers’ concerns about an ‘overloaded’ curriculum and thus render the use of the *Guidelines* more feasible. This approach demonstrates to teachers that applying a more intercultural perspective to lessons is undertaken with relative facility. A quotation from the teachers involved in a pilot project preceding the publication of the *Guidelines* bears out this contention: “By seeing the opportunities that exist in our lessons for an intercultural perspective, we can easily make our lessons intercultural...The opportunities for an intercultural perspective are always in our lessons but can be easily missed if we don’t look for them” (Celebrating Difference, Promoting Equality Project, cited by DES, 2005, p. 37).

However, a more subtle and subversive agenda could also be in question here: if the accommodation of cultural difference is presented to teachers as an easy undertaking, they are less likely to call for support. This means that the issue is addressed with minimal investment of resources. This is to confine the issue of cultural difference to the classroom and to confer responsibility on to the (flexible) teacher. While we are informed that “it is important that the members

of the community of the school, children, parents, teachers, support staff and management, are included in the process of creating a school that values cultural diversity” (DES, 2005, p. 26), there is no reference in the *Guidelines* to the need for change in terms of school governance, ownership of schools or infrastructure. The research undertaken by McGorman and Sugrue (2007, in Chapters Three and Four) bears witness to the limitations of this confined approach. Their study of schools in the Dublin 15 area demonstrated that responsibility for addressing cultural change needed to be extended beyond the schools and into the political arena. The redefining of the curriculum to the category of an intercultural one could, therefore, be viewed as the most cost-effective manner of addressing the issue of cultural difference within the school. The *Guidelines* could be seen to succumb to the instrumentalist exigencies of the purposive-rational world.

5.2.3 *School Policy and Cultural Difference*

School organisation is addressed in the 1999 SPHE Curriculum, albeit without a specific reference to cultural difference. Nevertheless, there is a comprehensive outline of the stages in developing a school approach to SPHE (DES, 1999b, p. 29) with the importance of school policy accorded recognition. This is expanded upon in the *Guidelines* (DES, 2005, p. 29). Yet, there is insufficient guidance or even acknowledgement in relation to some of the areas of policy-making that are rendered problematic through the advent of different cultures. A list of policies is provided, which it is stated that schools *may* have. First of all, some of these policies are mandatory and should have been acknowledged as such: I refer in particular to the policies on admissions and on discipline and anti-bullying. Many of the policies become problematic when different cultures are involved, in particular, policies relating to discipline,

religious education, uniform and specific healthy eating habits, yet the potential problems are not highlighted.

A study undertaken by the Development and Intercultural Education Research Committee in 2006 highlighted the inadequacy of policy measures in relation to the accommodation of different religions, also cultural differences in relation to discipline and school uniform. The lack of consistent departmental policies was acknowledged by the researchers (DICE, 2006, pp. 19-20 and 25). The more recent evidence presented by Boucher (2008, in Chapter Three), in relation to Ireland's *laissez-faire* approach to integration and lack of coherent immigration and integration policy, indicates that this lacuna has not been addressed in the interim. In addition to the issues outlined above in relation to policy, three policies which are mandatory in all schools have been omitted from the list: these are Child Protection, Relationships and Sexuality Education and Substance Use.

5.2.4 *Individualism versus Communitarianism*

So far my analysis of the *Guidelines* indicates that they, while seemingly innovative, defer to the exigencies and the fallibilities of social cohesion. I believe that this is not an irreconcilable difficulty as, if the theorists in Chapter One are to be believed, social cohesion and difference can be addressed through critical debate, perhaps resulting in a new and less fallible form of social cohesion. Further analysis of the *Guidelines* will determine the extent to which this is facilitated. The more worrying proposal which I have put forward relates to them being subordinate to the influences of purposive-rationality and consequently to neo-liberalism. The rest of this analysis will endeavour to temper this proposal.

What I wish to determine now, is whether the excessive focus on the child as an individual, witnessed in the curriculum, is sustained in the *Guidelines*. As observed in Chapter Four, a focus on the individual can be seen to be an acknowledgement of the uniqueness and difference of each child. Yet, without a sufficient focus on community, this focus operates in the interests of purposive-rationality as it deflects the individual's focus from the needs of the community and thus allows neo-liberal interests to prevail.

While the *Guidelines* are built upon the vision of the curriculum and reiterate its key aims, its focus serves to mitigate a charge of excessive individualism. Intercultural education, by its very nature, deflects focus from the individual towards his or her interactions with others. In addition, the very structure of the *Guidelines* starts off with a community or societal focus. Intercultural education is placed within the realities of the Irish context (DES, 2005, pp. 9-17). There is a focus on current Irish society rather than on the child as an individual. The rationale for Intercultural Education is supported by statistical evidence in relation to the demographic changes that have occurred in Ireland in the past decade or so (pp. 10-11).

In outlining the role of intercultural education in the curriculum, the development of the child as a social being through living and co-operating with others is emphasised from the start, along with the necessity of all children living within and contributing "to the evolution of our growing intercultural society" (DES, 2005, p. 21). Here, I see the *Guidelines* as developing significantly from the curriculum. While still influenced by the language of developmental psychology, I see the *Guidelines* as beginning in a place which recognises the value of cultural difference but also accords priority to the socialisation of the

child, thus contributing towards the maintenance of social cohesion through facilitating the child's active participation. Thus, the *Guidelines* could be seen to resonate with Gramsci's vision of education.

As observed in Chapter One, in his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci reflects upon the educational principles of the 'old' primary school wherein children were taught the rudiments of natural science and the idea of civic rights and duties. "Scientific ideas were intended to insert the child into the *societas rerum*, the world of things, while lessons in rights and duties were intended to insert him into the State and into civil society" (Gramsci, 1971, pp. 33-34). He adds that lessons in civic rights and duties also combated tendencies towards individualism (ibid, p. 34). There is a sense in the *Guidelines* that a more defined philosophical basis is emerging. The tensions between the maintenance of social cohesion and the recognition of difference are beginning to be addressed in a coherent way. However, teachers need to be cognisant of this philosophical dilemma. Gramsci expresses doubts as to whether the primary school "yielded all its fruits" (1971, p. 35) or whether teachers were aware of the nature and philosophical content of their task. As observed in Chapter One, Gramsci did not demonstrate much optimism in this regard. Whether the situation has changed much in the meantime is difficult to say and is beyond the remit of this particular dissertation. Yet, I view the *Guidelines* as endeavouring to provide an indicator to teachers of the philosophical and political nature of their task.

5.2.5 Aims of the Guidelines

While I acknowledge that the *Guidelines* represent a progression from the individualistic focus of the curriculum and represent difference as a central rather than a peripheral societal issue, I wish now to analyse in greater detail the extent

to which they further the cause of the recognition and accommodation of cultural difference. I have chosen a segment outlining the aims of the *Guidelines* as the focus of my analysis:

The aim of these guidelines is to contribute to the development of Ireland as an intercultural society based on a shared sense that language, culture and ethnic diversity is valuable. They aim to contribute to the development of a shared ability and sense of responsibility to protect for each other the right to be different and to live free from discrimination (DES, 2005, p. 5).

The verb “to contribute to”, which appears twice in this short segment, highlights the fact that education plays a significant part in the development of Ireland as an intercultural society but that there are other key players also. It indicates awareness on the part of the authors that the school is not the sole locus of resolution for issues relating to cultural difference. The verb prompts us to challenge logocentrism by contemplating the absent stakeholders, those who have the power to render the *Guidelines* a significant advancement towards an intercultural society or to confine it to being a tokenistic gesture masquerading as something more radical. The *Guidelines* need support from the other stakeholders, in particular the relevant government departments along with the dominant religious groups. Without such support, the latter status, namely a tokenistic gesture in the guise of something more radical, is the likely one for the *Guidelines*. I thus interpret this verb as a subtle ‘call to action’ directed at statutory and non-statutory groups. This is a call to universal action, with a vision of many different agencies working together with one common aim: that of contributing to the development of Ireland as an intercultural society. If this call

is answered, I contend that the *Guidelines* could be viewed as part of the Gramscian vision of an organic movement with attendant political implications and action, rather than a conjunctural one which gives rise to minor political criticism but no more (Gramsci, 1988, in Chapter One). It is only then that the transformative potential of the *Guidelines* will become evident. Their existence as a discrete entity renders them a far less effective agent of change and more facilitative of Bhabha's (1990, in Chapter Two) *musée imaginaire*. A notable lacuna in the *Guidelines* is the omission of a list of those organisations and groups who could be seen as having an interest (either positively or negatively) in their development. This, in itself, could be seen as a manifestation of power or control as these organisations are shielded from censure.

The notion of a shared sense of value relating to language, culture and ethnic diversity endorses the notion of a universal perspective within which one can observe a search for consensus. There is a sense of prescription and imposition here that eliminates discordant voices. The impression is conveyed that there is unanimous agreement on the value of cultural difference. Yet, it is somewhat unrealistic to propose that a sense of the value of cultural difference is shared across all sectors of society. Bauman's observations (1997, in Chapter One) are again of relevance here. He contends that those who can afford to do so, those "secure in their burglar-proof homes in leafy suburbs", will welcome the advent of the 'stranger'. However, the already disenfranchised and disempowered groups in society, "experiencing the world as a trap, not as an adventure park" will react to the 'stranger' in a defensive manner (Bauman, 1997, pp. 28-29). This reality has not been accorded significance by the *Guidelines*. It is unlikely that those who are most likely to feel disenfranchised

by minority groups will place the same sense of value on the advent of a multicultural society as those whose lives are affected the least by these groups. In any case, it is unlikely that the 'shared sense' of value will occur independently of action outside of the classroom, action which leads to the redistribution of resources so that the concerns of all those who may feel disenfranchised can be alleviated. A shared sense of value cannot be prescribed by those in power. Those who may not feel such a sense need to be acknowledged and their voices heard. I consider there is an anti-dialogic tone in this sentence that serves to silence but not eliminate dissent. Cohesion of a sort is achieved but predicated upon imposition rather than communication. It thus becomes a fallible concept.

Associated questions in this problematic relate to just how the sense of value is defined and who benefits from it. Bhabha (1990, p. 208) states that there is a transparent norm constituted by the host society that says that 'these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid'. Hence, power is retained by the majority culture. If, as argued above, the sense of value is accepted as being imposed by the majority group, then it is reasonable to assume that the sense of value is defined by this group and is of value to this group. It is unclear as to whether the sense of value is to be interpreted as an economic or social variable. As indicated in Chapter Three, the NESC (2005) provided an outline of the positive and negative aspects of recent immigration. The positive aspects tended to align with the national interest while the negative aspects pertained to the situation of the immigrants themselves. We are thus left to ponder as to whether the sense of value accorded to interculturalism is predicated upon the contribution that the immigrant makes to the national

interest. The conditionality of Derrida's 'Hospitality' (2006, in Chapter Two) again becomes evident here. Those on the margins of society, be they indigenous or non-indigenous groups, are unlikely to experience, define or benefit from, the value of ethnic diversity, particularly if it is determined by economics. Consequently, in accepting the 'shared sense' of value without question, we could be seen to be acting in the interests of the majority rather than the minority group. We are thus confronted with a subtle example of hegemony. Gramsci's (1988, in Chapter One) charge of "a willed and knowing deception" of the subordinate groups is taking place, as the affirmation of the value of cultural difference masks the need for awkward questions to be posed and for the less attractive aspects of cultural difference to be unearthed. Here, inequalities are recast as cultural differences that we are exhorted to "cherish and obey" (Bauman, 2001, in Chapter One). There is a sense of coercion towards consensus here thus undermining Habermas's (1987a, in Chapter One) notion of a communication community.

On the other hand, the Habermasian vision could be deemed to be endorsed by the notion of reciprocity that emerges in the endorsement of the children "protecting for each other the right to be different". This alleviates the somewhat problematic aspects of the final sentence in the segment from the SPHE curriculum, cited in Chapter Four, wherein the children are invited to counteract inequality as they may experience it in their own lives. Here, the flaw has been addressed in that the children are now exhorted to assume responsibility beyond themselves and to engage with their community. The Hegelian notion of 'absolute' freedom emerges here: freedom which is placed under restraint but which ultimately yields a greater harvest, both to the individual and his or her

community (Taylor, 1984, pp. 191-192). There is an implication that each individual or group is aware of groups who are different to themselves and are willing to work in the interests of the others. This presents a less fallible notion of social cohesion as each group retains the sense of the 'bigger picture'. In addition, the sense of indifference to difference which is embodied in Bauman's swarms, who act in a coordinated but not an integrated manner (2001, in Chapter One), is eliminated here. The sense of reciprocal responsibility is reiterated later in the *Guidelines* with an acknowledgement that the assertion of one's own rights is not sufficient for membership of the human community. The responsibility of the minority as well as the majority group to protect and promote the rights of others is clearly and unequivocally stated:

The recognition that responsibilities come with rights is essential.

If any group, the majority or an ethnic minority, is to demand of other people that their rights be respected, members of that group have, in turn, a responsibility to protect and to promote the rights of other groups. (DES, 2005, p. 64).

The Habermasian contention that rights do not come "free of charge" is endorsed here (Habermas, 2006, in Chapter One). This clarity is testimony to a progression in the discourse of Irish educational policy in relation to the achievement of an intercultural society as issues of difference are addressed in a constructive rather than a paternalistic manner. The notion of the dominant group bestowing rights upon marginalised groups is firmly refuted: "rights are not simply an issue for the needy or those discriminated against: we each have rights..." (DES, 2005, p. 64). The realities and attendant problems of a multicultural society are beginning to be foregrounded.

5.2.6 *The Right to be Different*

My above observations are somewhat compromised by the absolutist tone of the phrase in which “a sense of responsibility to protect for each other the right to be different” is endorsed. The assertion of difference seems to be made just for the sake of being different and thus could be seen to endorse indifference both to other cultures and to the greater good. If this is the case, social cohesion becomes compromised as consideration of the ‘good’ cedes to the ‘right’. As observed in Chapter One, this is insufficient rationale for Habermas. Here, there is no demonstration of “why it is false or incorrect or bad to recognise the sovereignty of the ideals of science and universalistic morality” (Habermas, 1987a, p. 125, in Chapter One).

At the same time, the assertion also gives rise to critique from Derrida and Bhabha as it brokers little negotiation. There is little evidence of the middle voice of *différance* or the hybridity of the ‘third space’ (in Chapter Two). Instead of the hybridity of the situation and its attendant potential for antagonism being acknowledged, I contend that some ‘glossing over’ as referred to by O’Sullivan (2005, in Chapter Four) occurs here. We are informed that “significant minority ethnic, linguistic and religious groups have long been part of Irish society” and this cultural diversity has contributed to making Ireland the country it is today (DES, 2005, p. 9). This is presented as an unproblematic fact and fails to embody the reality of previous encounters between different cultural groups as they struggled to gain recognition for their own cultural mores and beliefs. Such struggle gave rise to much upheaval and rebellion over the centuries; the religious divide has occupied a significant part of our history and there are still underlying tensions in this regard in some parts of Ireland. The contention that

ethnic, religious and cultural groups have been *part* of Irish society is, in my opinion, a prime example of O'Sullivan's 'gloss'. This implies inclusion and accommodation. I believe, that, if anything, the opposite has been the case, and, although these groups have existed in Irish society, they have been, and continue to be, marginalised. Thus they have still to be empowered to become a meaningful part of Irish society.

The current 'hands off' approach of the government under the guise of liberalism does little to facilitate such empowerment. As observed by Boucher, (2008, in Chapter Three), the main emphasis in the policy discourse, and in the few policy statements on integration has been on restricting the state's role in the integration process through the legitimating of a *laissez-faire* strategy. The *Guidelines*' assertion of the right to be different, without problematising its implications for social cohesion, can be seen as a subtle endorsement and reflection of overall state policy in this regard.

The assertion of difference can be interpreted as a gesture of emancipation, of freeing oneself from the shackles of hegemony, yet we are running the risk of being left with nothing but "difference itself and its accumulation" (Friedman, 1999, cited by Bauman 2001, p. 76). Bauman contends that demands for redistribution voiced in the name of equality are vehicles of integration, while claims to recognition stripped to the bare bones of cultural distinction promote division, separation and ultimately a breakdown of dialogue (p. 78). Without doubt, the *Guidelines* promote dialogue, particularly in the methodology chapters. Yet at this point, the stark call for the assertion of difference, independent of any acknowledgement of social justice or redistribution of goods, serves to disembody those groups asserting their rights

from society as a whole. Thus the pursuit, and even the achievement, of recognition in itself is not an antidote to marginalisation. Nor does it serve the cause of citizenship.

5.2.7 Citizenship and the Irish Context

While the principles of citizenship are implicit in the approaches and methodology section of the *Guidelines*, I consider that the complexities and challenges of citizenship need to be outlined and placed in context, in particular in political context, in order to render the concept meaningful. The concept of the nation-state and the corresponding concept of nationalism may be anathema to the proponents of difference (and indeed, also to the proponents of individualism). Yet, whether or not we care to acknowledge it, this is our political reality. The *Guidelines* are not operating in a political vacuum. Thus, the implications for the nation-state, which emerge from the assertion of difference, in particular the assertion of difference from non-indigenous groups, merit acknowledgement. However, according to Kymlicka (2001, p. 221), many theorists, while writing within the context of the nation-state, do not see the need to make it explicit.

Yet, the assertion of cultural difference, particularly non-indigenous cultural difference, may give rise to antagonism in a context wherein the concept of 'nation' invokes uncomfortable memories and a defensive reaction. The struggles that Ireland experienced in the pursuit of nationhood still exist in the collective memory. For that reason, the concept of the nation tends to evoke a sense of nationalism which was predominantly based upon the Irish language and the (Catholic) Church and which tended to be exclusive rather than inclusive. Haran and Tormey (2002, p.14, referencing Gillespie, 1998) view this as ethnic

nationalism and present civic nationalism as a means of preserving links with the nation but reconceptualising it so that it is predicated upon a common set of ideas rather than on common ethnicity.

Each presents a different view of what it is to be Irish – one is based around shared ideals and is open and inclusive of difference. The other is based around a shared culture and can be narrowly defined and exclusive (Haran and Tormey, 2002, p. 14).

I view the *Guidelines* as being developed on the basis of civic nationalism although a possible weakness in this regard is the fact that the role of the Church is ignored and any reference to spirituality omitted. The ideas that have emanated from our religious traditions merit acknowledgement. A different approach is taken with the Irish language. Here, the significance of the Irish language is retained but is redefined to align with the exigencies of cultural change. The difficulties relating to the learning of a second language are outlined with supporting evidence and the approaches used in the teaching of Irish as a second language are extended to include English (DES, 2005, p. 163). In addition the learning of Irish is acknowledged as helping the indigenous children to develop a positive sense of their own cultural identity and thus facilitating them to engage positively with other cultures and also to recognise the value of multilingualism (*ibid*). In this manner, the *Guidelines* helps the reader to see that the Irish language curriculum, rather than being a catalyst for division, can actually help to support the accommodation of non-indigenous children in the school. (I acknowledge that the compulsory nature of Irish may still be seen by some groups as problematic).

While the *Guidelines* can be seen to retain a nationalistic perspective in the form of civic nationalism, I am unsure as to their role in relation to the ideology of liberalism. I believe that they do endeavour to shake the liberal agenda out of the lethargy and inaction that tends to define it currently. The introductory chapters indicate an effort to impose a 'bottom line'. We are informed from the outset that intercultural education "is education which promotes equality and human rights, challenges unfair discrimination, and promotes the values upon which equality is built" (DES, 2005, p. 3). Yet, I believe that this 'bottom line' sometimes tends to fade from view and is compromised in my view by the eschewal of a definition of morality or an overt reference to the common good. Once again this task is seen to be defined by the (religious) ethos of the school, and, consequently, has been placed outside of the remit of the *Guidelines* (DES, 2005, p. 86). This may present the *Guidelines* as acquiescing to the 'hospitable variant' of liberalism that, according to Taylor (1991, in Chapter One) endorses the liberalism of neutrality and precludes any debate on what constitutes the 'good life'. Yet, I believe the focus on responsibilities as well as rights prevents the *Guidelines* from falling into this category. Nevertheless, there is a somewhat hollow ring to its defence of the right to be different independent of either an acknowledgement of the common good or a concerted approach to equality issues. While equality issues are accorded acknowledgement, they are not pursued to any great extent. We are informed that intercultural education "emerges naturally from existing educational policy and is in keeping with other equality legislation issues" (DES, 2005, p. 17). Such legislation is mainly concerned with eliminating discrimination and does not really address the material inequalities in Irish

society (see, for example, the Equal Status Acts, 2000 to 2004). Thus in taking their lead from this legislation, I contend that the *Guidelines* stop short of embracing the liberal egalitarianism, embodied in the redistribution of resources, which renders the liberal agenda a definitive champion of difference rather than a nebulous ‘wishy-washy’ concept. This impacts on the republican ideal.

The extent to which the republican ideal of liberty, equality and solidarity is upheld in the *Guidelines* tends to fluctuate. Undoubtedly the *Guidelines* subscribe to the principle of liberty. The form of liberty that emerges in the document (although in my view is not sustained throughout) is commensurate with the Hegelian notion of absolute freedom which is predicated upon commitment to and participation in society. Responsibility is emphasised as well as rights. This type of freedom facilitates solidarity, which, at the same time, is compromised by the assertion of difference for difference’s sake. This does not mean that solidarity is a finite and unchanging construct. Rorty (1991, p. 22) acknowledges the contribution of the “objectivist tradition” brought about by the Enlightenment, to the interrogation of the concept of solidarity in order to obviate parochialism.

The concept of equality is reiterated throughout the document. Nevertheless, it merits further exploration in order to determine whether it is imbued with the significance that is commensurate with the Republican ideal. This concept of equality empowers all citizens by according them all a voice. I defer to Jefferson’s notion of ‘elementary republics’ where “the voice of the whole people would be fairly, fully, and peaceably expressed, discussed and decided by the common reason” of all citizens (Jefferson, 1816, cited by Arendt, 1984, p. 240).

5.2.8 *Equality Issues*

The *Guidelines*, following the Education Act (1998), extend the notion of equality of opportunity to include equality of access and participation (DES, 2005, p. 29). This would indicate a concerted effort to keep the equality agenda on view, yet I believe that this agenda is not subsequently maintained throughout the document. In any case, it should be borne in mind that current Irish society is significantly different from the context in which the Education Act was developed. As observed in Chapter Four, Devine (2005, p. 58) reminds us that the Education Act enshrined the status of the different patrons within the school system, a system which, she contends, is not dealing with the lived realities of our society. Enshrining the patrons within the school system renders access and participation problematic for an increasing number of children as patronage is retained, in the vast majority of cases, by the Catholic Church, and in the majority of the remainder, by other denominations. This anomaly seems to have been overlooked in the *Guidelines*, just as it has in the Education Act itself. While the schools cannot exclude children on the basis of religious beliefs, the fact remains that for many children, the ethos of the school conflicts with their own values or mores. While they may have access to the school, they do not participate fully as there are some aspects of the curriculum from which they are excluded. Yet, there is limited choice available to these children and their parents and so it must be concluded that they are denied access to an environment that would be more supportive of their needs. That is not to say that I am identifying the Catholic Church or other denominations as opponents of difference. As acknowledged in Chapter Four, CORI has done much to signal the interdependent nature of society. What is required in Ireland today, is not the

subversion of traditional Church values, but instead a greater choice of schools in order that access and participation can become a reality for all children.

5.2.9 Tackling Racism

The *Guidelines* take a definitive stance against racism from the outset. They provide a broad ranging definition of the concept, one that admits the notion of alterity:

It [Racism] encompass a range of **attitudes or beliefs** on one hand and **practices or rules** on the other. This means that the term ‘racism’ actually includes some things that may not have appeared as such to many people at a first glance (DES, 2005, p. 13, original emphasis).

In addition, statistics on racism in Ireland are given (ibid, p. 14) along with examples of racist practices by individuals and institutions (ibid, p. 16). The *Guidelines* also focus on the impact of indirect discrimination, thus revealing the potential racist practices within organisations and institutions that may not appear overtly racist. The notion of alterity becomes evident here. The *Guidelines* use the example of schools that allocate priority of access to children who already have siblings in the school and demonstrate how this disadvantages nomadic groups (ibid). It is observed, “while the practice did not originate from the prejudiced intention of reducing the numbers of Traveller children, this will be the effect”. Here the relevance of the Foucauldian exhortation to criticise the working of institutions that may appear to be neutral and independent in order to unmask the political violence that may operate covertly within them (Foucault, 1974, cited by Rabinow, 1991, in Chapter Two) becomes evident.

While the section on racism is comprehensive and informative, I consider that care needs to be taken that critical dialogue in relation to cultural diversity is not subverted out of a fear of being accused of being racist. People may fear censure if they express an oppositional or ill-thought out remark in this regard and thus choose to remain silent. Thus those who may have concerns in relation to demographic change, concerns that may not necessarily be racist, may find themselves on the margins of debate. Callan (2006, p. 3) queries the point at which a charge of racism becomes apt and observes that the demarcation of racism may generate a mood of suspicion and recrimination which proves not to be conducive to the achievement of racial reconciliation. Here he calls into question blanket assertions of individual or institutional racism, a concern also enunciated by Bhabha, (1994, in Chapter Two).

What is noteworthy about this quite substantial section on racism is that teachers and pupils seem to have been exempted from the equation. While there are some references to resistance to difference (DES, 2005, pages 21 and 26), the overall impression that is conveyed is the advent of cultural difference has been embraced with positivity and efficacy in schools. Little acknowledgement and attention is accorded to those who take a negative view. Indeed, the reference on page 21 relates to negative reactions to the *past*:

When people (children, teachers, parents, and others in the community of the school) explore their own attitudes and values, and when they look at their own past reactions, they may get defensive and angry (p. 21).

While the statement on page 26 recognises the potential for resistance to intercultural education and the possible need for further support and training for

staff, it seems that it is left up to the staff themselves to pursue such training, again demonstrating that the *Guidelines* view such ‘dissenters’ as being outside of their frame of reference.

I see the likely outcome here to be that teachers will bury any oppositional attitudes they themselves may have towards difference and will avoid discussion of difference in the classroom for fear of their own inadequacies in dealing with negative comments from the children. There is no support provided in the *Guidelines* for such an event. Yet difference-related negativity on the part of both children and teachers needs to be admitted and problematised. Lodge and Lynch (2004, p. 72) observe that while there is little available research on the extent of racist behaviour and harassment in Irish educational institutions (such a lacuna in itself being symptomatic of a wish to avoid the less attractive aspects of the impact of cultural difference), the emergent research is not encouraging. Devine, Kenny and McNeela (2004, p. 183), present evidence of how children’s behaviour can be “exclusionary and derogatory of minority ethnic groups as well as respectful and inclusive of ethnic difference”. To suppress admission of these realities does little to help the cause of recognition.

The methodology of the *Guidelines* has moved beyond the benign ‘celebration’ of difference to addressing it in a more constructive manner. Children are encouraged to look at the issue of difference from different perspectives rather than to simply accept difference on a superficial level. There are a number of exemplars provided throughout the *Guidelines* which pose such challenges to the children, for example, Exemplar One, *Who is the real Pocahontas?* (DES, 2005, p. 48) and Exemplar Nine, *First Impressions*, (ibid, p. 71). Exemplar One challenges the children to explore a number of different

perspectives from which the story of Pocahontas could be viewed, while Exemplar Nine helps the children to realise that ‘first impressions’ may have to be reviewed and revised. These and other exemplars promote critical discussion of difference and the challenging of stereotypes. Yet, there is no reference in the *Guidelines* in relation to the management of such discussions or the tackling of inappropriate remarks. Again, such discussions appear to be predicated upon the assumptions that such events do not occur. The lack of subsequent training for teachers becomes an issue here. Ultimately if teachers do not feel empowered to conduct such discussions, they are likely to avoid them and if this occurs, the likelihood of achieving real change is significantly compromised. The issue of ‘undecidability’ emerges again here. We are left unsure as to whether the *Guidelines* are a portent of significant change or whether they, while moving beyond the discourse of the 1999 curriculum, remain a symbolic gesture.

5.2.10 ‘Undecidability’

There are a number of ‘undecidables’ to be observed in the *Guidelines*. I have already demonstrated the ambiguity evident in the title. What I also find difficult to decide, if not ‘undecidable’, is the level of recognition accorded to difference in the *Guidelines*. It has been established that they have moved beyond the level of appreciation evident in the 1999 curriculum and are assuming a more definitive role in relation to the accommodation of cultural difference in the school. However, it remains unclear as to whether systemic change is in question here. While the *Guidelines* (cf. Appendices D and E) pose questions in relation to school planning and organisation, it is left up to the school to answer (or not answer) these questions. Thus the *Guidelines* can be seen as stopping short of providing an interventionist approach thus aligning with what seems to

be overall State policy in this regard. The more focused, deterministic approach that is undoubtedly in evidence in the document is confined to the classroom and more systemic issues ultimately cede to the influence of *laissez-faire*. In addition, it is unclear as to whether the children will be sufficiently empowered to become politically active, or indeed if this is an aim of the *Guidelines*. Out of nineteen exemplars, only one, Exemplar Fifteen, *Working Together for Change*, (DES, 2005, p. 137) extends beyond discussion and reflection to action.

This 'undecidable' is accentuated by the reiteration of the words 'diversity' and 'difference' through the use of an excerpt from the SPHE curriculum (DES, 2005, p. 27). As observed in Chapter Four the use of both words demonstrates an ideological confusion with the result that we are uncertain as to whether the document is seeking to deconstruct previously held perceptions and understandings in relation to difference or whether it is simply acknowledging difference within the status quo. The transformational aspirations of difference are reined in by the more benign forces of diversity. Again, I acknowledge that I am following Bhabha's interpretation here and that other writers, such as Parekh, retain the term 'diversity' while still seeking transformation. These writers retain the liberal perspective. It would seem that the *Guidelines* (like the curriculum) are unwilling to indicate for sure their philosophical affiliations and thus prefer to use both terms as a means of dissimulation.

We thus remain unsure as to whether the *Guidelines* represent a radical challenge to existing social cohesion or whether ultimately there is an unstated concession to the status quo. Throughout the document, there is an absence of reference to existing core values and while the development of moral and

spiritual values is acknowledged (DES, 2005, p. 20), there is little subsequent reference to these. It may well be that, like the 1999 curriculum, the *Guidelines* direct us elsewhere to locate core values. They mirror the curriculum in their eschewal of religious issues (ibid, p. 86), conceding to Church authority in this regard. However, unlike the curriculum, references to school ethos are conspicuous by their absence. This may indicate a concerted wish to avoid specific religious connotations, since, as indicated in the previous chapter, there tends to be a link between ethos and religion, specifically the Catholic religion. Yet again, I cannot be unequivocal in my conclusion. The “theorised intentional language”, which O’Sullivan, (2005, in Section 5.1) seeks, is more present in the *Guidelines* than in previous documents and provides a set of core values (elimination of racism from society, emphasis of responsibilities as well as rights). Yet, I consider that there needs to be more links made with previously held values and mores and acknowledgement that these may be challenged by different cultural groups.

Throughout the document, there is an effort to avoid confrontation or even acknowledgement that there may be attitudes or behaviours manifested in the classroom which “may call into question our philosophical boundaries” (Taylor, 1994, p. 96, in Chapter One). Our philosophical boundaries are our bottom line, the core values upon which the operation of our society depends. Undoubtedly the advent of cultural difference will expose their fallibility and require them to be renegotiated and possibly redefined. However, it does not mean that they fade into insignificance. While I believe that the *Guidelines* have successfully redefined the role of the Irish language while retaining its

significance, their eschewal of a similar course of action in relation to core values and the greater good compromises their impact.

This critique of the *Guidelines* has been undertaken in the knowledge that they were written within a broader socio-political context and thus were bound to operate within these parameters. Yet, I see the *Guidelines* as throwing down a gauntlet to existing education policy and practice. They pose enough questions to schools to unsettle them out of a sense of complacency in relation to their existing *modus operandi* when confronted by cultural difference. The discourse on difference has progressed from being vague and benign in the 1999 curriculum to being more clear and explicit in the *Guidelines*. The document becomes more credible through the provision of supporting references and numerous explanatory notes and statistics. Nevertheless, there are a number of realities which could be viewed as potential impediments to the achievement of an intercultural society and these have been sidestepped by the *Guidelines*. The needs and concerns of teachers; the political reality of Ireland as a liberal democracy operating in the context of a nation state; the reality of the religious ethos of most schools and the social and economic inequalities in society need more acknowledgement and focus. Miller (1995, p. 139) observes that “behind multi-culturalist rhetoric, there seems to lie the assumption that to expose an injustice is already to have created the constituency to abolish it”. Without acknowledgement of current realities in Ireland, and without the involvement of other agencies, this constituency does not exist. While the *Guidelines* indicate a challenge to the power balance at micro-level, this is not yet mirrored at macro-level.

5.3 Conclusion

The *Guidelines for Intercultural Education in the Primary School* demonstrate a significant progression from the 1999 curriculum in terms of the recognition and accommodation of difference. There is a sense of rapprochement with difference that is absent from the former document. This is understandable given the changes in the Irish demographic since 1999. Yet, despite the commitment of the *Guidelines* to the recognition of difference, and despite the potential in the discourse of the document, it is placed under considerable constraints. There are a number of barriers to be overcome and a number of realities to be acknowledged in order to realise its potential for transformation.

First of all, the *Guidelines* have been developed in the context of a post-colonial state, whose relatively recent past has rendered her protective of her identity. The Church exerted a significant influence on this society for many years and this influence has residual effects that could be seen to be in opposition to cultural change. The influence of the Church on education impacted significantly on schools until the 1960s and, after that period, the State still tended to concede many decisions to the Church. Thus, the *Guidelines* are grappling with the non-interventionist strategies of a liberal democratic state and the still pervasive influences of the Church.

While the principles of liberalism could be seen to be a sympathetic foundation upon which to develop a set of guidelines aimed at creating links between cultures, it becomes apparent that supporting the assertion of difference is not commensurate with its accommodation. Non-intervention or *laissez-faire* approaches do little to further the cause of difference. There is little investment of resources and, while claims of recognition are facilitated, there is no guarantee

of a response to such claims as a response may be seen to compromise the national interest, which is increasingly viewed in economic terms. While the concept of republicanism could be seen to be upheld in the *Guidelines* as liberty, equality and solidarity feature in the discourse, these principles require support beyond the rhetoric of the *Guidelines* in order to render the concept of republicanism normative rather than nominal.

The subordinate relationship of the *Guidelines* to the 1999 curriculum poses somewhat of a conundrum in that the curriculum, which was devoid of any specific reference to cultural change in the Irish context, subsequently and seamlessly evolved into an intercultural curriculum. The presentation of the *Guidelines* as an adjunct to the curriculum undermines their significance and their potential for transformation.

Thus, the *Guidelines*, while endeavouring to pursue some fairly radical ideals, could be seen to become a victim of the market forces and neo-liberal ideals as the lack of support accorded to their implementation compromises their transformative potential. The *Guidelines* support the assertion of difference and identify one of the most evident and significant barriers to that assertion, namely racism. However, they fail to identify more subtle barriers. In particular, I consider that they fail to highlight the need for the dominant group to unite with minority cultures in order that the claim of recognition can be rendered meaningful. As both Habermas (1987a, in Chapter One) and Bauman (1997, in Chapter One) have observed, such claims have little long-term impact without support from more privileged groups in society.

We need to avoid what Bauman (1997, p. 81, in Chapter One) views as a “series of soliloquies with the speakers no more insisting on being heard but

refusing to listen into the bargain". Such "soliloquies" threaten the cohesion of society. We need, instead, to find a common voice and a common purpose in order to bring together the cause of difference with the cause of social order. In this way, order becomes an intrinsic part of the person or group, their "inner law" (Foucault, 1989a, in Chapter Two) rather than an externally imposed construct likely to generate resistance. This is a difficult task in the current climate of disengagement (under the guise of liberal policy) of the State and of individualism on the part of civil society. I acknowledge that it will take a far greater initiative than the production of a set of guidelines to overcome these barriers. While the *Guidelines* manifest a concerted aspiration to advance along the liberal continuum in the pursuit of a more equal society, they will remain aspirational until the State divests itself of its mantle of neutral disengagement which, on closer examination, is not in fact neutral at all but a concession to the status quo and the sublime exigencies of a deregulated society.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

6.1 Realising Objectives

Having reached this point in a dissertation, the expectation would be that one would have realised the objectives as outlined in the Introduction. In this instance, this is not the case. I may have been rather naïve in my original aspirations in that I expected to uncover a definitive philosophical basis in the discourse of educational policy. Instead, I have found that such definition has proven to be elusive. It could be argued that an eschewal of definition may, paradoxically, be the defining feature of the documents under scrutiny and that I may have to content myself with this conclusion. It thus behoves me, in this concluding section, to reflect upon the inconclusiveness of the documents and to present some reasons as to why the policy makers opted for a lack of definition as their preferred *modus operandi*. This involves an analysis of the choices and tensions with which the policy makers were presented.

First of all, the inconclusiveness of the documents may have served the interests of consensus and legitimation and ultimately have facilitated the publication of the documents. This, presumably, was one of the main objectives of the process. At the same time, the lack of definition may also have compromised the relevance and usefulness of the documents. This calls into question whether policy makers are concerned with the achievement of change or with the achievement of unproblematised consensus. I contend that the latter concern tends to dominate. Yet, this form of consensus is unhelpful to the workings of society. I consider that consensus needs to be reached through the acknowledgement of problems, not through their suppression. The avoidance of problems emerges as a consistent feature of both of the documents under review.

Drudy and Lynch (1993, p. 30) observe that a major concern of consensus theory or structural functionalism is with the question of order – with the manner by which societies remain cohesive and maintain themselves from one generation to the next. They are critical of the structural functionalists due to their dependence on consensus. However, I believe that the main concern of society must be with its cohesiveness and that instead of dismissing the concept of consensualism, we should, as observed above, be more concerned with the manner in which it is achieved and with problematising potential barriers. Only in this way can the fallibility of the concept of social order be addressed in a meaningful manner. This is where the views of Foucault and Derrida become significant as they expose the weaknesses of political organisations that are based upon the deliberations of the dominant majority. As observed in Chapter Two, Foucault (1974, cited by Rabinow, 1991, p. 6) sees the real political task in society as criticising “the workings of institutions which appear to be both neutral and independent” so that “the political violence which has always exercised itself obscurely through them will be unmasked...” Foucault is thus challenging the means by which consensus is reached.

By challenging existing values, both Foucault and Derrida serve to champion the cause of the marginalised. Yet, Gramsci’s caution in relation to the conquering of existing power relations through revolution needs to be acknowledged; namely that in rejecting one set of standards, a new set needs to be formulated (Gramsci, 1988, in Chapter One). This is where both Foucault and Derrida fall short. They thus remain in the category of ‘ludic’ postmodernists (McLaren, 1994, in Introduction), whose deliberations constitute “a moment of self-reflexivity in deconstructing Western metanarratives” (McLaren, 1994, p.

198) but which do not yield any significant outcomes. I wish to retain a perspective on the 'bottom line', or on the Hegelian (or neo-Hegelian) notion of the common good, which is needed to achieve a workable society. This is a perspective which I believe exists in Irish educational policy but which tends to slacken in order to keep all of the stakeholders on board.

6.2 A Workable Society

Irish educational policy, while concerned with the formation of the child, is ultimately contributing to future society. This will happen regardless of whether societal concerns are focused upon or not. The propensity of Irish educational discourse to focus on the child as an individual and to de-emphasise the focus on society and the community will still contribute to the formation of future society, in that it will be a society, which, due to the "atomism of the self-absorbed individual[s]" (Taylor, 1991, p. 9) which it encompasses, yields to the 'soft despotism' which ultimately facilitates market forces and a neo-liberal society. This leads to a social cohesion of sorts, but one that perpetuates inequalities, indifference and exclusion. In this scenario, social cohesion is not concerned with the accommodation or even the acknowledgement of difference. The individual is so concerned with himself or herself that he or she gives little thought to the vicissitudes of social cohesion. Yet, in an increasingly heterogeneous society, we need to give it more, not less, consideration. Sachs (1991, cited by Miller, 1995, p. 138) contends, "the more plural a society we become, the more we need to reflect on what holds us together". I believe that this needs to be given more consideration in Irish educational policy as I view

this as the means by which the cause of difference can be meaningfully supported and protected.

This dissertation has looked at the meaning and implications of social cohesion and its, sometimes fraught, relationship with difference and with freedom. As observed through the works of Hegel, the maintenance and prioritisation of social cohesion leads to a particular type of freedom (absolute freedom) that is not without its conditions, namely, universal and total participation in society (Taylor, 1984, p. 191). This constrained notion of freedom tends to be seen to subvert the cause of difference and thus the more radical champions of the latter focus on the achievement of recognition, independently of concerns with social order. It was seen, for example, that Derrida (2006, in Chapter Two) opposed the conditionality that a host society imposes, either implicitly or explicitly, upon a non-indigenous group. Yet conditions are necessary if society is to work.

While Foucault (1989a, p. xxi, in Chapter Two) argues that order “is that which is given in things as their inner law”, this becomes problematic when the inner law becomes detached from a sense of moral laws and community. This compromises authenticity and endorses moral relativism. The conundrum which emerges from endeavouring to maintain social cohesion while simultaneously recognising difference is thus reconceptualised as the tensions between the ‘good’ and the ‘right’, tensions to which I consider that Irish educational policy has not accorded sufficient attention. Conceding to individual or group rights tend to overrule societal concerns. As observed in Chapters Four and Five, a conclusive reason for this disposition remained elusive; I was unable to determine whether concessions to rights independent of social cohesion were

made in the interest of political correctness and from fear of censure, or whether they were made in the interest of deflecting attention from global concerns through the facilitation of localised and ultimately ineffectual skirmishes wherein “the weak meet and confront the weak” (Bauman, 1997, p. 29) but ultimately effect little change in the status quo and thus prove to be “politically demoralising” (Jameson, 1989, cited by McLaren, 1994, p. 207). In any case, concerns with political correctness serve as a distraction from substantive issues such as structural inequalities, so the final result is the same, with no gain for those who would benefit most from critical discussion on such issues.

A preoccupation with social cohesion can be viewed as an endorsement of a universal perspective, a perspective that tends to be viewed as anathema to difference by some of its more radical proponents such as Foucault and, perhaps to a lesser degree, Derrida. This is not to place the universal perspective and the cause of difference in binary opposition. Indeed the value of the universal perspective is retained by many of the champions of difference. McLaren, (cf. 6.1 above), distances himself unequivocally from ‘ludic’ postmodernism and contends that not all forms of totalisation are democratically deficient (McLaren, 1994, p. 207). He believes that, without a shared vision of democratic community, we risk endorsing struggles in which the politics of difference collapse into new forms of separatism. He cites Best to endorse this point:

Without some positive and normative concept of totality to counter-balance the poststructuralist/postmodern emphasis on difference and discontinuity, we are abandoned to the seriality of pluralist individualism and the supremacy of competitive values over communal life (Best, 1989, cited by McLaren, 1994, p. 207).

I consider that we can take a lead from McLaren here. He endorses the need “to retain some kind of moral, ethical and political ground – albeit a provisional one – from which to negotiate among multiple interests” (p. 207). It is within this framework that the recognition of difference must be pursued if society is to continue working. While such a framework or vision may be implicit in Irish education policy, this needs to become explicit, and the implications of belonging to a specifically Irish society need to be outlined if different cultures are to be accommodated in a meaningful way.

6.3 Belonging to Irish Society

Claims to recognition need to take place in context, and not in a political and social vacuum. However, it is within just such a vacuum that acknowledgement and ‘celebration’ of difference takes place in Irish educational discourse. The reality of Irish society and Irish culture, while featured, tends to be ‘glossed over’ (O’Sullivan, 2005, in Chapter Four) when placed in discussions about difference. Little reference is accorded to the problems that an immigrant group may encounter in relating to Irish societal mores. Indeed, there is little reference to such mores in the first places as the teaching of moral values is placed outside of the remit of the curriculum.

I believe that meeting cultural difference provokes a nervous, uncomfortable and even self-depreciatory response on the part of the indigenous Irish population. Because the advent of ‘newcomer’ groups is a very recent phenomenon, we are left unsure as to how we should respond to their arrival. The response of Irish educational policy is, as observed above, to retreat into a cocoon of neutrality, wherein difference is subjected to a non-confrontational and

non-problematic discussion. Yet 'newcomer' groups are entering a specifically Irish society with accompanying values and mores. Instead of adopting a somewhat apologetic stance in this regard, we need to be aware that there are bound to be positive reasons as to why non-indigenous groups choose to come to Ireland in the first place. This requires us to retain pride in our Irish identity, and while allowing it to evolve, we need to avoid allowing it to become subordinate to competing cultures and value systems. To subdue our national character and values may be to subdue the features that rendered us attractive to non-indigenous groups in the first place. I have already referred to Miller's contention that minority groups wish to feel an attachment to their new community as well as to their place of ethnic origin (Miller, 1995, in Chapter Three).

Such a perspective places the recognition of difference within a broader social and political context and thus aligns with Sachs's vision of social cohesion (cf. 6.2 above). It serves as a meeting place for nationalists and multiculturalists and, in Bhabha's (1994) terms, facilitates the process of negotiation rather than negation. For Miller, like Habermas, the principle of reciprocity is the key to retaining social cohesion in a society composed of different groups:

What must happen in general is that existing national identities must be stripped of elements that are repugnant to the self-understanding of one or more component groups, while members of those groups must themselves be willing to embrace an inclusive nationality, and in the process to shed elements of *their* values which are at odds with its principles (Miller, 1995, p. 142, original punctuation).

Miller is critical of radical multiculturalism, which he views as having the potential to subvert the causes of both minority and majority groups. It overlooks the desire for belonging on the part of minorities while placing unrealistic demands on the majority groups, in terms of equal respect and treatment. Here Miller expresses Taylor's concerns in more stark language. He challenges the notion of equal respect and treatment by the majority "to groups with whom they have nothing in common beyond the fact of cohabitation in the same political society" (ibid, p. 139). He contends that these concessions should be made on the basis of a shared identity and belonging to the same community. This is Miller's notion of citizenship.

Williams (2003, p. 218) is less convinced that the accommodation of difference can take place within a framework of shared identity and instead argues strongly for such accommodation to be placed within a framework of "shared fate". This concept of citizenship is based upon the premise that "we find ourselves in webs of relationships with other human beings that profoundly shape our lives, whether or not we consciously choose or voluntarily assent to be enmeshed in these webs" (ibid, p. 229). Here, I view Williams as presenting a Foucauldian alternative to Miller's more Hegelian vision. People in "their relations, their links, their imbrication" with the other contingencies of life (Foucault, 1979, p. 11 in Chapter Two), contingencies which may preclude a shared identity, are presented as the basis for a citizenship of shared fate. Yet Williams cannot be unequivocally aligned with Foucault. Indeed, ultimately, she aligns herself more closely with Habermas and Bauman, as she envisions a society in which people "acknowledge their interdependence and choose to live with it rather than fight against it" (2003, p. 230). Here, there is a relationship of

“*reciprocal* interdependence and interconnection” (ibid, original emphasis). Thus, in a society wherein people acknowledge their shared fate, there is an intermingling of groups and classes in society, which both Habermas and Bauman view as integral to the meaningful accommodation of difference.

6.4 Irish Educational Policy Documents in the Context of Shared Fate

I believe that the *Guidelines* for Intercultural Education, and, to a much lesser degree, the 1999 curriculum, could be aligned with Williams’s vision of citizenship as shared fate. In Williams’s framework, the members of the community are not bound to each other by shared values or moral commitments, but by relations of interdependence. While cultural identity may be a feature of shared fate, it is not the only one. Williams outlines institutional and material linkages as other features. In the *Guidelines*, we are presented with situations where shared values and mores are eschewed and instead the children are bound together by virtue of their institutional linkage with the school. The issue of identity becomes subordinate to other linkages between members of society:

A person can be at the same time, a mother, a Traveller, a childcare worker, an artist, a sister, an Irish person, and a fan of ‘Anyone But Manchester United’. Usually we have something in common with members of other groups and should therefore be able to relate to and empathise with them (DES, 2005, p. 59).

The activities that are presented in the *Guidelines* are based upon the premise that the children will work together in pursuit of a shared aim. There is a focus on citizenship (although as observed in Chapter Five, I am not sure that

this is sufficient to generate political action), and an effort to create what Williams terms “networks of interdependence” (p. 230). Being members of a community of shared fate

Entails telling ourselves (true) stories about how we came to be connected to particular other human beings, and believing that we are responsible for constructing that connection in a manner that is justifiable to them. Telling those stories truthfully and conscientiously, in a manner that acknowledges others’ perspectives on past and future, requires effort and intentionality (Williams, 2003, p. 231).

A number of the exemplars in the *Guidelines* align closely with this concept of story. I refer, in particular to Exemplar One: *Who is the real Pocahontas?* (DES, 2005, pp. 48-49); Exemplar Seven: *Developing a Charter of Rights* (pp. 66-67) Exemplar Eleven: *Developing win-win situations* (pp. 76-77); Exemplar Eighteen: *All the Ones They Do Call Lowly* (pp. 145-146); Exemplar Nineteen: *The Troll’s Story* (pp. 147-148).

It is more difficult to make the link to citizenship as shared fate in relation to the 1999 curriculum although the eschewal of the definition of values and mores could again be seen to align more with the notion of shared fate. However, the excessive focus on the individual precludes real empathy with any conception of citizenship. In addition, the ‘distance from difference’ that has been observed, precludes the type of engagement and dialogue envisioned by Williams.

This possible linkage with citizenship as shared fate could be seen (in the case of the *Guidelines* at any rate) as evidence of a philosophical basis in Irish educational policy, one that could be incorporated into future documents. This

will serve to address what Williams terms the “involuntariness of shared membership and pluralism” which are “palpable realities” of multicultural democracies (p. 236). However, the concept of shared fate is not stated explicitly in the *Guidelines*. We are therefore left in the state of uncertainty and inconclusiveness to which I referred at the outset of this chapter.

While Williams’s concept of shared fate may be more acceptable to the proponents of difference, it cannot be viewed as an independent entity and thus it needs to be aligned with the context in which it is operating – in this case, Irish society. Just as shared identity is a concept of citizenship, so too is shared fate. In both instances, a sense of belonging to a particular society is relevant, although this is not acknowledged by Williams. In Irish education and in Irish society in general, there are a number of impediments to the achievement of this sense of belonging, for non-indigenous groups, but also possibly even for the indigenous Irish themselves.

6.5 Achieving a Sense of Belonging

Achieving a sense of belonging to Irish society requires action on the part of the State as well as on the part of the individual. It is not enough for the individual to appropriate some or all of the aspects of being Irish, the result of which could be assimilation. Instead, the State needs to be proactive in relation to the meaningful accommodation of ‘newcomers’. This requires policy on immigration and integration, policy which, as observed by Boucher (2008, in Chapter Three), still does not exist. In the absence of a national policy on immigration, it is not difficult to understand why the school-based initiative has been limited to the production of guidelines.

Insufficient consideration has been given to Sachs's concern (cf. 6.2 above), namely consideration of what it is that holds us together in a plural society. This could be a concept of shared identity; it could be a concept of shared fate. Both merit acknowledgement in national and educational policy. Both imply the establishment of a set of core values in society. However, the excessive concession to the individual that is evident in society in general, and reflected in Irish education, has usurped the sense of belonging and the attendant sense of duty to society. Indifference to the needs and concerns of others is one of the main manifestations of individualism. This severs the bonds of social cohesion and undermines the cause of difference.

Reflection on societal bonds will be problematic in a plural society, due to different beliefs and value systems. Such reflection requires a critical and, at times, a confrontational approach that allows conflict to emerge. In this manner, fundamental problems can be identified and discussed and a meaningful consensus achieved, thus leading to a sense of belonging. This will not occur in the current climate of political correctness wherein constructive dialogue is impeded or even silenced through fear of censure. This fear is tangible in many written or spoken discussions on difference and limits us to the notion of the 'celebration' of difference and to Bhabha's (1990) *musée imaginaire*. Structural inequalities have, in Bauman's (2001, p. 107) words, been recast as "something to cherish and obey", thus obviating the need for resources and support, which is an inevitable outcome of problematising difference. Teachers are a specific target in this masquerade. Expressions of opposition are quelled before they are uttered, through a subtle but tangible threat of censure. I refer again to the examples outlined in Chapter Five wherein oppositional reactions and emotions were either

relegated to the 'past' (DES, 2005, p. 21) or accorded a cursory acknowledgement in relation to the need for future training, such training being provided by the school itself and not by the Department of Education and Science (ibid, p. 26). The fact that the possibility of opposition is mentioned only twice in the entire document is a further indicator of a wish to silence or ignore such a possibility. In addition, the suggestion that intercultural education can be undertaken with facility (ibid, p. 38) obviates reservations in relation to its implementation and consequent demands for resourcing. This is not serving the cause of intercultural education, as the most likely outcome is that it is not sufficiently taken on board by the school.

We need to reflect on the concept of 'celebrating' difference. Those who coined the phrase make explicit the need for 'celebration' to be accompanied by critical assessment and dialogue and caution against following the route of political correctness wherein all difference is cherished (Baker et al., 2004, p. 35). Yet, I posit that the notion of critical dialogue has been subsequently (and perhaps conveniently) overlooked. This serves the interests of neo-liberalism in that it obviates the need to address the less attractive aspects of difference. As observed in Chapter One, Bauman (2001, p.106) contends that if attention is focused on civility and political correctness in encounters with difference of mores, it will absolutise the difference and bar all debate about the relative virtues and demerits of coexisting forms of life. Bauman contends that there is a covert agenda here: that of placing all debate on difference out of bounds "in case it is aimed at reconciling the extant differences so that overall standards binding human life can be lifted onto a higher (and presumably better) level"(ibid). Thus, the champions of political correctness can also be seen as

champions of the status quo as the suppression of debate acts as an effective impediment to change. This approach serves the market forces in that it mirrors the “new strategy of detachment, distantiating and non-commitment” (Bauman, 2001, p. 107) so favoured by the global elite. The achievement of a higher standard of living for disenfranchised groups thus becomes sidelined.

6.6 Liberalism: An Inconclusive Concept

It seems to me that much political and educational inactivity is defended on the grounds of liberalism. The general theme running through the curriculum is that of appropriation rather than prescription. This may seem a far more acceptable and more democratic *modus operandi* as it is based upon the premise of choice, and, ostensibly, of empowerment. This gives sustenance to the concept of liberty. Yet, a non-interventionist approach based on the right to choose, results in the perpetuation of inequalities in society. This formula, according to Bauman (2001, pp. 108-109) relates to the abandonment of ‘good society’ blueprints and what it leaves unsaid is that

inequality is its own most potent cause, and that representing the divisions it spawns as an inalienable aspect of, rather than a paramount obstacle to, freedom of choice is one of the principal factors in its self-perpetuation.

As I observed above, a claim of liberal politics can be made as a response to critique of State inaction. Yet, such a claim can be rendered meaningless due to the inconclusiveness that surrounds the definition of liberalism itself. As outlined in Chapter One, Taylor (1991) opposed the neutral stance that tends to be espoused by liberal politics particularly when confronted with difference. He

demonstrated that this *laissez-faire* approach served neither the cause of social cohesion nor that of difference. Boucher (2008, in Chapter Three) concurred with the concerns of Taylor and criticised Ireland's *laissez-faire* approach to the advent of different cultural groups. Bhabha (1990/1994) queried the concept of a liberal democracy as an acceptable *modus vivendi* for a multicultural society. Drudy and Lynch (1993) also distanced themselves from the liberal model. Here, a neo-Marxist alternative to political organisation was presented in which the State became the active rather than the benign protagonist.

While I am critical of the non-interventionist and *laissez-faire* approach of the State in the current Irish liberal context, I am reluctant to adopt a neo-Marxist approach as I consider that there is much in the liberal model that can meet the needs of a multicultural society. This requires the appellation of 'a liberal democracy' to be imbued with meaning and its principles put into practice. The significance of being a liberal republic needs to be internalised and operationalised by the policy makers. A vision of the common good must be maintained with the principle of reciprocity featuring as an essential element in such maintenance. Citizenship must assume normative significance.

We are a liberal democracy and we must place our approach to cultural difference within this framework in order to maintain the cohesiveness of society. Parekh (2006, p. 361) contends, "the liberal society represents a rationally defensible way to organize human life, and that is a strong enough reason to stand up for it". He provides "good internal and external reasons" to support it. Internal reasons include "the society's history, cultural and religious heritage, traditions, level of economic development and the moral character and aspirations of its members". External reasons comprise "known facts about

human beings, lessons of history, experiences of other societies, and those universal values for which compelling reasons can be given". Parekh advises, "these reasons need not convince all human beings; it is enough if they are publicly debated, withstand critical scrutiny, and carry conviction with most members of a liberal society" (ibid). In my view and in my (limited) analysis of Irish educational policy documents, neither the internal nor external reasons supporting liberalism have been aired sufficiently. Instead there have been extensive avoidance tactics so that the public debate and critical scrutiny advocated by Parekh have been suppressed.

For Parekh (2006, p. 362), the explicit recognition of culture is an effective means of generating a spirit of reciprocity. He observes that, in this scenario, immigrants can "legitimately argue that when they are able to offer good reasons for their cultural beliefs and practices, these should be respected and suitably accommodated". In addition, the liberal society can "legitimately ask immigrants to respect the prevailing cultural beliefs and practices when good reasons are given for them". This is the type of dialogue that I believe is currently absent from political and educational policy on cultural difference in Ireland. The configuration of the consultative committee that produced the 1999 curriculum favoured the majority group in society, while the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education* did not present any account of its consultative committee. As the *Guidelines* were presented as an extension of the curriculum, it can be presumed that the configuration of its committee was similar, if not identical. In addition, Lodge et al. (2004, p. 4) observe, "there is no place in the current partnership model for the inclusion of groups representing the interests of minorities..." This undermines the principles of liberalism as outlined by Parekh.

6.7 The Development of Future Educational Policy on Difference

This chapter, and this entire dissertation, have focused on the inadequacies and limitations of current educational policy in relation to the recognition and meaningful accommodation of difference within the social order that is a liberal democracy. This has been undertaken with a view to rendering the development of future educational policy a more transparent endeavour, one that is more useful and relevant to schools. This requires more clarity in the development of the documents and in relation to the role of schools and education with regard to *future* society, particularly a society that will be composed of many different cultures. Although this is acknowledged in the curriculum (DES, 1999a, p. 7), concerns with the child's present life as a child and as an individual, tend to subsume concerns relating to his/her role as a future adult. Walzer (1998, p.48) opines that schools have a double task: First of all of providing students with a clear and firm understanding of the substantive values and also of the constraints and burdens that make up their common citizenship and *then* to facilitate the growth of the child as an individual through the development of their critical capacities. This pertains to all students irrespective of background or culture. Rorty (1999, p.118) endorses Walzer's vision of education. He contends that socialisation has to come before individualisation, and education for freedom cannot begin before some constraints are imposed. This aligns with Gramsci's vision of education as outlined in Chapter One. Gramsci (1971, p. 33) contends that in the first phase of school, the child needs to learn discipline before embarking on the creative phase which expands the

personality and allows for autonomy but which is predicated upon solid moral and social conscience. This is the foundation for the active citizen.

In my opinion, the 1999 curriculum, in particular the SPHE curriculum, reversed this process. The expectations of social cohesion were overlooked and the excessive focus on individualisation ultimately did little to maintain order or to recognise cultural difference. I am aware that the writers were following the language of developmental psychology that is adopted by the NCCA and I wish to emphasise that I am not in any way criticising the manner in which they undertook the task assigned to them. Yet, if I were to suggest a change in the SPHE curriculum, it would be to reduce the focus (even visually) on 'Myself' and to place more emphasis on the whole aspect of citizenship (cf. Appendix C for an overview of the Strands and Strand Units of the SPHE curriculum). The 2008 review of the Primary School Curriculum (NCCA, 2008, p. 149) outlines teachers' concerns in relation to the difficulty of balancing concern with the self with concern for others. According to the review, 39% of respondents referred to the children's ability or inability to relate well to other people as their greatest challenge in teaching the strand 'Myself and Others'. One teacher outlined the challenge in helping children to appreciate that others think differently and see things from different perspectives. Another mentioned the need to get across to children that they must treat others with respect and understand that the world does not revolve around them alone. Such responses indicate a need to revise the SPHE curriculum so that the preoccupation with 'Myself' is challenged.

While the school needs to have a vision and understanding of its role in relation to future society, it needs to exercise caution in terms of taking on all of the responsibility in terms of the provision of intercultural education. A

requirement of 'flexibility' is explicit in the 1999 curriculum and implicit in the *Guidelines for Intercultural Education* by virtue of the fact that they are based upon an assumption that teachers are ready, willing and able to undertake the task of intercultural education without supplementary training and with minimal support. However, this serves to exonerate the State from being more proactive in the process of accommodation. I reiterate McGorman and Sugrue's (2007, in Chapters Three and Four) observations here: they contend that the dramatic demographic shifts witnessed in the past decade or so in Ireland are not merely a responsibility for schools. They also have major implications for local authorities and central Government. As observed in Chapter Three, this is not yet a political issue.

Contrary to the assumption of the readiness and willingness of all teachers to embrace and to celebrate the advent of cultural difference, they need time to reflect upon and to come to terms with its impact. The *Guidelines* were distributed to all schools independently of any accompanying training. While there is a reference to a potential need for training on page 26 of the *Guidelines*, this was not provided and the subtext was that it was up to the teachers themselves to locate such training. McGorman and Sugrue's research indicates that many in the field of education viewed the lack of training as

a missed opportunity, to facilitate debate and discussion among teachers regarding issues such as identity, citizenship, conceptual understandings of interculturalism, and how to give such understandings practical embodiment within and beyond school communities (McGorman and Sugrue, 2007, p. 16).

Such training would allow teachers to engage in what Giroux (1994, pp. 328-329) terms 'critical' or 'insurgent' multiculturalism, thus divesting the term of the benign and somewhat meaningless connotations accorded to it by Bauman (2001) and Bhabha (1990/1994). Such an approach to multiculturalism

takes as its starting point the question of what it means for educators and cultural workers to treat schools and other public sites as border institutions in which teachers, students, and others engage in daily acts of cultural translation and negotiation (Giroux, 1994, p. 329).

Giroux contends that within this perspective on multiculturalism, "pedagogy is removed from its exclusive emphasis on management and is defined as a form of political leadership and ethical address" (p. 329). I view training in intercultural education as an opportunity to provide teachers with the skills in critical pedagogy that are necessary to render intercultural education a meaningful political activity. However, such a critical perspective may unsettle the status quo and generate calls for societal change that the State may be less than willing to take on board.

Training in intercultural education needs to be embedded in the preservice education of teachers in order that the student teacher can internalise the concept of critical pedagogy and incorporate such pedagogy into his or her future teaching. Although colleges of education were not featured in this dissertation, the focus that they accord to training in intercultural education merits comment here. The colleges occupy a significant role in relation to supporting future teachers in relation to implementing intercultural education and accommodating cultural difference in the classroom. Development and

Intercultural Education is now incorporated into the B.Ed course. However, it is necessary to reflect upon the context in which the student teachers receive their education. All five colleges of education are denominational, with four of them being Catholic. Irwin (2005, p. 39) observes the anomaly between this structure and the growing diversity within the Irish population. The current profile of the majority of teachers in Ireland is white, Irish, and at least nominally Catholic, with a proficiency in speaking Irish as well as English. Admissions policies in the colleges of education have, to date, done little to change this profile.

While I subscribe to the concept of critical pedagogy as a means of facilitating the process of intercultural education, I believe that reflexivity should be exercised in relation to the acknowledgement of difference. Exhortations towards the recognition of difference, independent of context and of acknowledgement of the need to maintain social cohesion, may lead to over-deference to the issue of difference, to the extent of being fearful of it. This fear may lead to the unsettling of the cohesion of the school due to the fact that the teachers are uncertain in relation to how to address issues and problems relating to cultural difference. This deference to difference can lead to an impasse rather than a resolution. Being overly deferential to the extent of being fearful impedes critical dialogue as such dialogue implies a certain level of risk-taking. Excessive deference to difference leads to an imbalance of power, undermines reciprocity and impedes progress. It thus could be seen to add another layer to Derrida's *différance*. Difference is deferred to while not being sufficiently problematised. The non-problematising of difference leads in turn to its meaningful accommodation being delayed (or deferred).

6.8 A Final Reflection

This dissertation undertook an analysis of the writings of a number of significant political philosophers in an effort to achieve resolution between the issues of social cohesion and difference, specifically cultural difference, in the context of Irish education. As was seen, such resolution did not occur. Despite this lack of resolution and the lack of realisation of my original objectives, I consider that this dissertation has provided me with a far greater insight into, and understanding of, political and educational philosophy than I had hitherto. It afforded me the opportunity to reflect on the concept of freedom and led me to the conclusion that freedom must be constrained in order that social cohesion may be preserved. In other words, the ‘good’ must take precedence over the ‘right’ in order to obviate anarchy or societal implosion. This does not mean that I am presenting social cohesion and freedom as binary opposites. In fact, I am guarding against what Hegel terms ‘unfreedom’, which is wrought by “the violence of a subjugating subjectivity” (Habermas, 1987a, p.33, in Chapter One).

I realise here that I am open to censure by the poststructuralists, in particular, Foucault, as I am placing limits upon the individual and upon the concept of freedom. Yet, I remain convinced that unconstrained freedom and excessive focus on the individual is not the means to a workable society, although it may be seen to serve the cause of difference. Nevertheless, Giroux (1994, p. 327) cautions against essentialising and granting immunity to groups that speak from subordinate positions of power. Excessive focus on individualism may result in such essentialisation.

Undoubtedly, I am leaving myself open to the charge of imposing power and hegemony upon the more vulnerable groups in society. In relation to power,

I believe that the concept of reciprocity serves to empower marginalised groups and to accord them a voice in society. They are no longer groups that are, at best, 'celebrated', but groups that are accorded the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. In relation to hegemony, I feel that hegemony of some sort cannot be avoided in society, and that we should not allow the charge or, potential charge, to deflect our purpose. Thus, like Gramsci (1988, in Chapter One), I believe that instead of avoiding a charge of hegemony per se, we should be conscious of the type of hegemony to which we succumb. If we allow unconstrained freedom and excessive individualism to prevail, we ultimately succumb to the hegemony of the market place that thrives in a society of deregulation. This is not to say that I am proposing a neo-Marxist solution, just a more concerted State intervention.

While ultimately, I align myself with the Hegelian ideal, this is not to say that I am dismissive of the role of the poststructuralists. In the course of this dissertation, Foucault and Derrida have taught me about the concept of alterity and have provided me with clues in relation to unearthing the power relations and struggles within seemingly benign and neutral documents and to exposing the potentially cloying effects of an implicit neo-liberal agenda. They have helped me to realise we must take account of the singularity and contingency that are a significant part of society. Yet, Foucault and Derrida do not provide an alternative to the society that they critique. Without such provision, the issue of difference is more likely to be confined to superficial recognition without meaningful accommodation within a cohesive society. For the latter to be achieved, the Hegelian (or neo-Hegelian) perspective must be accorded priority.

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Appendix A

Positive and Negative Aspects of Recent Immigration

Positive Aspects

- Skilled workers from overseas have contributed to easing significant skill shortages in public services and the private sector;
- Many workers from overseas have taken jobs that have become increasingly less attractive to Irish people;
- The migrant workforce is still at the stage where it is disproportionately made up of young employed workers without dependants and, thus, is a low user of social services and a source of net contributions to the Exchequer;
- A historic debt of justice has been partially repaid as many former Irish emigrants, economically in-active, as well as workers, have returned to this country;
- The large number of accession state nationals earning at levels currently not possible for them in their own countries is an indirect Irish contribution to making a success of EU enlargement;

- Remittances home by the nationals of developing countries have become an additional mechanism by which Ireland is aiding international development;
- Students from overseas are receiving part of their education in Ireland, and in addition, this may provide a basis for later commercial and cultural links between Ireland and their home countries;
- Ireland has assumed a share of the developed world's responsibility to provide protection to refugees.

Negative Aspects

- Some migrants have been exploited (by recruitment agents, employers, landlords, retailers and others) and their vulnerability has brought the worst out of some Irish people (racism, overcharging etc.);
- Some types of criminal have been able to take advantage of migrant flows and migrant communities (e.g., people trafficking);
- Some public health hazards have become more serious (e.g., HIV infection, TB);
- Some migrants live in tightly closed networks and experience little contact with the Irish population;

- Many migrants may be employed in jobs significantly beneath their capabilities ('brain waste') and the longer they are in such jobs the more they may be damaging their prospects of progressing to better ones (scarring);
- The hours worked by migrants in some sectors (e.g., health and caring services, hotels and restaurants) are much longer than the average that dual working and/or inferior working conditions can be suspected;
- The character of some neighbourhoods has been abruptly changed by the arrival of significant numbers of people from overseas with poor command of English and limited opportunities to form bridges with the local population;
- Additional demand has been generated on already overstretched public infrastructure and services (housing, transport, health care);
- In Ireland, as elsewhere, people seeking asylum exist at a remove from Irish society and only limited examples currently exist of social, cultural and sporting activities that include them.

(NESC, 2005, p. 133-134).

Appendix B

The Principles of the Primary School Curriculum

The 1971 curriculum was based on a philosophy of education that incorporated the following five principles:

- the full and harmonious development of the child
- the importance of making due allowance for individual difference
- the importance of activity and discovery methods
- the integrated nature of the curriculum
- the importance of environment-based learning.

The Review Body on the Primary Curriculum endorsed these principles and recommended that any future curriculum development should reflect them.

The *Primary School Curriculum* affirms the view of the child and the learning process implicit in these principles and develops them. The principles of the full and harmonious development of the child and of making allowance for individual difference are redefined in the broader concepts of

- celebrating the uniqueness of the child
- ensuring the development of the child's full potential.

The three pedagogical principles dealing with activity and discovery methods, an integrated curriculum and environment-based learning are subsumed into a wider range of learning principles that help to characterise more fully the learning process that the revised curriculum envisages. The more important of these are:

- the child's sense of wonder and natural curiosity is a primary motivating factor in learning
- the child is an active agent in his or her learning
- learning is developmental in nature
- the child's existing knowledge and experience form the base for learning
- the child's immediate environment provides the context for learning
- learning should involve guided activity and discovery methods
- language is central in the learning process
- the child should perceive the aesthetic dimension in learning
- social and emotional dimensions are important factors in learning
- learning is most effective when it is integrated
- skills that facilitate the transfer of learning should be fostered
- higher-order thinking and problem-solving skills should be developed
- collaborative learning should feature in the learning process
- the range of individual differences should be taken into account in the learning process
- assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning

(Department of Education and Science, 1999a, *Primary School Curriculum, Introduction*, pp. 8-9).

Appendix C

Overview of content for SPHE

The strands and strand units of the SPHE curriculum

Strand	Strand units
Myself	Self-identity
	Self-awareness
	Developing self-confidence
	Making decisions
	Taking care of my body
	Health and well-being*
	Knowing about my body
	Food and nutrition
	Growing and changing
	As I grow I change
	New life
	Feelings and emotions
	Safety and protection
	Personal safety
	Safety issues
Making decisions†	
Myself and others	Myself and my family
	My friends and other people
	Relating to others
Myself and the wider world	Developing citizenship
	My school community
	Living in the local community
	National, European and wider communities†
	Environmental care
	The sub-unit <i>Environmental care</i> is developed in detail in SESE.
Media education.	

This overview illustrates how the SPHE curriculum is developed throughout the primary school. The strands and strand units are similar at all levels.

*These units or sub-units are integrated in other strands and strand units in the curriculum for infants and first and second classes.

†This sub-unit is applicable only from third to sixth classes.

Appendix D

Intercultural Education in the Primary School

Figure 2: School Review Checklist

For each question place a tick in the appropriate box. The more positive the answers the more intercultural the school context is. Negative answers identify opportunities for further development. Use them to make a list of what you need to do, and try to set achievable deadlines for addressing these issues.

		Yes	To some extent	Not yet
School mission or vision	Does the school mission or vision include a focus on helping each child towards achieving his or her full potential?			
	Does it reflect the principles of equality and diversity?			
	Does it promote a positive self-concept for each child?			
Current practice	Do all aspects of the school plan have an intercultural perspective?			
	Are school organisational and administrative procedures fair and balanced?			
	Is the language of the school inclusive of all cultures?			
	Is the school environment, both physical and social, inclusive of all cultures?			
	Is the school complying with the relevant legislation in this area?			
Other issues to consider	How have our practices changed in light of cultural diversity in recent years?			
	What intercultural issues are staff most concerned with at the moment?			
	Who should be involved in drawing up a plan for an intercultural school?			
	What aspects of school policy and practice need to be addressed?			

Reviewing the school social and physical environment from an intercultural perspective

Figure 3: School Environment Review Checklist

For each question place a tick in the appropriate box. The more positive the answers the more intercultural the school context is. Less positive answers identify opportunities for further development. Use them to make a list of what you need to do, and try to set achievable deadlines for addressing these issues.

		Yes	To some extent	Not yet
Physical Environment	Are the diverse cultures and ethnic groups of Ireland and of the school represented in pictures, multilingual signs, and other elements in the school's physical environment?			
Social Environment	Are routines in place for welcoming new children, for assisting them in becoming part of the school, and for ensuring that their culture is affirmed in the environment?			
	Are there procedures in place for ensuring that the capabilities and needs of new children are recognised?			
	Are school routines and expectations made explicit in a way that can be understood by all children?			
	Are there procedures in place for dealing with racist incidents?			
	Is there a variety of extra-curricular activities to choose from?			
	Are special events planned to be as inclusive as possible of all the cultures in the school?			
	Is there recognition given to important festivals and special days of all the cultures in the school?			
	Are members of minority ethnic groups affirmed in a positive sense of their identity?			
	Is the school complying with the relevant legislation in this area?			
Choosing Resources	Is there a method for vetting the appropriateness of images and messages contained in school texts and other resources?			