

The challenges and possibilities of teaching and learning about conflict: A qualitative analysis of school-based peacebuilding education programmes on the island of Ireland.

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## Declaration

I hereby certify that this material, which I now submit for assessment on the programme of study leading to the award of PhD 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 work.

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## **Abstract**

This thesis provides a qualitative analysis of 13 school-based peacebuilding education programmes on the island of Ireland, and through a critical case study, engages in a deeper exploration of one programme as practiced and experienced within the Transition Year class of an all-girls post-primary school within the Republic of Ireland.

Qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews with educators involved in the development of peacebuilding education programmes developed for schools in NI and RoI were used to explore the multiple theoretical frameworks underpinning educational practice. Drawing upon qualitative methods including focus-group interviews with young people participants, non-participant observation, and qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews with teachers and programme designers, this case-study reveals the possibilities and challenges of teaching and learning about conflict within formal education.

This study contends that whilst peacebuilding education programmes represent an important challenge to the omission of conflict from schools in NI and RoI, there remains a need to strengthen the opportunities for all young people to participate in peacebuilding education in both jurisdictions. The experiences of educators suggest that the legacy of violent conflict affects the understanding and attitudes of young people across the island of Ireland and requires an ongoing commitment, in both jurisdictions, towards both pedagogically driven peacebuilding education but also to the broader development of education for peacebuilding.

Finally, this study advances a framework which supports the realistic inclusion of young people, as active participatory citizens, within a broader network of peacebuilding responsibility.

*Keywords:* Global Citizenship Education; peacebuilding education; conflict.

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## **List of Acronyms**

BBC	British Broadcasting Company
CAIN	Conflict Archive on the Internet
DE	Development Education
DES	Department for Education and Skills
EHL	Education for Humanitarian Law
GCE	Global Citizenship Education
GFA	Belfast/Good Friday Agreement
HL	Humanitarian Law
HRE	Human Rights Education
ICAHD	Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NI	Northern Ireland
NCCA	National Council for Curriculum and Assessment
OSDE	Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry
RoI	Republic of Ireland
RTÉ	Raidió Teilifís Éireann
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

### **1.1 Introduction**

An extensive body of research has explored the relationship between education and conflict in Northern Ireland (NI) in light of the experiences of the jurisdiction in relation to the most recent episode of violence, known as “the Troubles”. Such research, alongside studies conducted in other post-conflict contexts, has revealed a complex and paradoxical relationship and has deepened our understanding of how certain aspects of young people’s conflict-related learning is framed. Research has also explored how conflict has been addressed as an aspect of citizenship education, and more recently as a dimension of Global Citizenship Education. However, there is a recognised need to explore how young people learn about conflict in more detail.

Citizenship education across the island of Ireland has been perceived as potential means of addressing the violent conflict on a divided island, and within NI as a divided society. Over the past 20 years, a number of programmes within the formal education systems of both jurisdictions have been developed by external agencies, with the expressed objectives of addressing violence and building peace. Across this period, developments in citizenship education have led to approaches which not only support young people to contend with local and national issues, but also to explore their roles and responsibilities in relation to global issues; such as violent conflicts in other regions of the world. A number of education programmes focused on building peace and theorised around citizenship education have been developed specifically for post-primary schools both in the Republic of Ireland (RoI) and in NI. This study provides a critical exploration of both the theoretical frameworks and practical implementation of these programmes. With reference to the contradictory potential of education, this study utilises qualitative methods to explore the relationship between theory and practice. The

study questions how young people's responsibility for building peace and the associated actions they are expected to take are conceptualised and practised within peacebuilding programmes developed for schools across the island of Ireland. To advance the perspectives and experiences of young people participating in peacebuilding education programmes, a qualitative case study methodology, drawing on ethnographic methods, is employed to consider how young people experience peacebuilding education and how they perceive their responsibilities and action in relation to building peace.

This chapter provides an introduction to the study, illuminating the context and highlighting the rationale for this research. I begin by exploring the definitions of conflict, violence and peacebuilding which are at the heart of this study. I then consider the role of education in reinforcing negative conflict, before exploring the development of peacebuilding education as a response to conflict across the island of Ireland, with a particular focus on Global Citizenship Education. I highlight the key gaps within the literature in this area, including a focus on the position of young people in the processes of peacebuilding education and research. Finally, I provide a brief outline of the structure of the thesis.

## **1.2 Positive Conflict and Negative Conflict**

From the outset, it is important to note that conflict is a fundamental component of human relationships, and is therefore a part of everyday life (Davies, 2004a; De Felice & Wisler, 2007; Deutsch, 1973; Smith & Smith Ellison, 2012; Tomlinson & Benefield, 2005). As Tawil (1997) argues, "conflict is inherent to social dynamics [and therefore] peace is not the absence of conflict. Rather, it is an operating mode wherein conflict is managed through non-violent means" (p. 14). Conflict may even hold a creative potential leading to an improved situation for those involved (Fisher et al., 2000). Indeed, with a specific focus on education, positive conflict may provide



opportunities for inclusive and democratic engagement with dialogue, encounter and challenge (Davies, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2010a, 2011; Novelli & Cardozo, 2008).

Certain conflicts are not so easily resolved and have dire consequences for those involved. Negative forms of conflict are often associated with violence, as “action, words, attitudes, structures or systems that cause physical, psychological, social or environmental damage and prevent people from reaching their full human potential” (Fisher et al., 2000, p. 4). These negative conflicts may include the personal, the interpersonal and group conflict, the latter sometimes leading to armed conflict and resultant death and destruction (Uppsala, 2013). Armed conflicts may range in size (from minor, through intermediate, to war) and type (interstate, extrastate or internationalised), however the boundaries between categorisations are often blurred (Gleditsch, Wallensteen, Eriksson, Sollenberg, & Strand, 2002).

Whilst the number of armed conflicts throughout the world is decreasing, the nature of conflict has changed (Danesh, 2006; Smith, 2011). Contemporary armed conflicts are protracted, increasingly complex and difficult to define (Davies, 2006; Gallagher, 2011a). These conflicts are also marked by the difficulties associated in identifying the beginning and end of war (Smith & Vaux, 2003; Gallagher, 2011b). The attribution of linear phases and associated transitions between stages of conflict is problematized (Davies, 2004). Where once battles were fought on demarcated grounds, modern warfare has spilled from the battlefields into homes, workplaces and schools, bringing with it an increasingly direct impact to non-combatants. Young people continue to be disproportionately affected by violence with tens of millions of children growing up in conflict-affected regions (UN, 2015; UNESCO, 2011). Comprehensive human-rights based research has revealed the physical and psychosocial impact of armed conflict upon young people (Machel, 1996), and more recently, the damage

inflicted upon educators, institutions and young people as a result of direct and indirect attacks on education systems in areas affected by conflict (O'Malley, 2010).

### **1.3 The Role of Violence in Negative Conflict**

Direct violence takes the form of killing, maiming and repression which affects the lives of many people both within conflict-affected regions and in societies recovering from war (Galtung, 1990, 2008; Salmi, 2006). However it should also be noted that there are other recognised forms of violence which affect the lives of people both inside and outside of conflict-affected regions. Exploitative societal structures perpetuate structural violence which limits well-being and denies fundamental rights (Galtung, 1969, 1990, 2008). Aspects of culture are used to legitimise both direct and structural forms of violence (Galtung, 1990). Elsewhere, the work of Bordieu (1986) has been used to explore how the imposition of particular forms of knowledge, beliefs and values reproduces inequality through symbolic violence (Cremin, 2015; Davies, 2009a; Tawil, 2001). A failure to intervene in violent processes represents violence by omission (Salmi, 2006). Furthermore, the gendered nature of violence is also an important consideration (Harber, 2004; Kirk, 2004; Leach, 2003; Leach & Mitchell, 2006).

The multiple types of violence represent huge barriers to the well-being and livelihoods of people both inside and outside of conflict-affected regions. For Galtung (1979), violence remains a key concept in understanding peace. Firstly, he defines negative peace as the absence of direct violence. Secondly he defines positive peace as the presence of social justice and equality, and thus the absence of all forms of violence. In regions affected by direct violence, there is a call for the transformation of conflict and a movement away from negative relationships, behaviours and societal structures (Lederach, 1997). However, there is an increasing argument that peacebuilding

education should address violence in all its forms (Ardizzone, 2003; Harris, 2004; Smith, 2010) and is therefore a matter for all countries regardless of the levels of conflict present. Indeed, peacebuilding education can be seen as a process “which goes beyond the cessation of violence and conflict and addresses structural and cultural violence, [and] emphasises the concepts of local and global peace” (Reilly & Niens, 2014, p. 53).

#### **1.4 The Role of Education in Perpetuating Negative Conflict**

An increasing body of international research has provided a substantial argument that educational policies and practices may perpetuate violent conflict (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2004a; Harber, 2004; Sommers, 2002; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Smith, 2005, 2011; Tawil & Harley, 2004; Buckland, 2004). Multiple educational agendas may be conveyed through both formal structures of schooling, such as teaching and learning, and informal sites of learning, such as the family. Education has at times fuelled conflict by increasing inequality and reducing social cohesion (Brown, 2011). Schools are places where direct violence occurs (Harber, 2004; Cremin, 2015). Davies (2005c), suggests that limiting the damage done by education might be the best we can hope for, as “without a massive dismantling of the examination system and a radical rethinking of the goals of education, the most it could probably do is to do no further harm” (p. 639). Nevertheless, educators attempt to tackle the complexities of violent conflict and education has been vaulted as a means by which the causes and consequences of violent conflict can be addressed.

Conflict has shaped the educational systems and structures of both the RoI and NI (Akenson, 1970; Darby, 1995; Dunn, 1986; Rankin, 2007; Smith, 2001). After a violent conflict resulting in over 3,500 deaths over a 35-year period, NI is experiencing a fragile peace, but deep societal divisions remain (McCully, 2006). The region remains

segregated, both residentially and educationally (Niens, Cairns, & Hewstone, 2003) with children identified as victims of violence and as agents operating in segregated communities (Leonard, 2007). Whilst schools were viewed as a means by which young people could escape the violence, increasing critique of educational practices questioned the role of education in relation to conflict (Gallagher, 2004; Smith, 1995). Connections between the education system and the societal issues that underpinned violent conflict were revealed (Dunn, 1986; Gallagher, 2010). A deeper understanding of the complex relationship between education and violent conflict, both within the NI/RoI context and in other regions across the globe, has left those concerned with two pressing questions: Firstly, how can the negative effects of education be mitigated? Secondly, how might education support the transformation of conflict in pursuit of peace?

### **1.5 Peacebuilding Education on the Island of Ireland**

Education has been promoted as a means of addressing violence in NI (Dunn, 1986; Smith, 1995). Initial programmes focused on the development of cross-community relations (Cairns & Cairns, 1995; Duffy, 2000; Robinson, 1983; Smith, 1995). These were followed by citizenship education programmes developed and facilitated by outside agencies (Richardson, 2008; Rooney, 2008; Smith, 2003). Peacebuilding education programmes have been specifically developed for schools across the island of Ireland, yet research exploring this context remains sparse.

There is increasing global interest in the potential role of education in supporting peacebuilding processes particularly in societies recovering from violent conflict (Akar, 2016; Novelli & Higgins, 2016). Peacebuilding education programmes are perceived as difficult to develop (Kupermintz & Salomon 2005; Firer 2008; Maoz, 2011) and there has been repeated calls for research which offers a deeper exploration of educational

interventions aimed at building peace (Buckland, 2006; Davies, 2005a, 2010a; Tomlinson & Benefield, 2005; Salomon, 2002, 2004, 2006).

Theory can be seen as the principles that inform practice (Harris, 2004) or a frameworks which explain certain actions in particular contexts (Whitehead, 1989). In relation to peacebuilding education, theory can be viewed as a means by which educators can explore the complexity of conflict and support positive change (Opatow, Gerson & Woodside, 2005). However, research suggests that there is an undertheorised approach to peacebuilding education (Bajaj, 2004; Gill & Niens, 2014b). Furthermore, there is a lack of research exploring the connections between peacebuilding theory and educational practice (Novelli & Smith, 2011). This study aims to illuminate the gap between theory and practice within the field of peacebuilding education.

### **1.6 Global Citizenship Education for Peacebuilding**

In NI and RoI, Citizenship Education (CE) has been gradually developed as a means of addressing conflict on the island of Ireland, and more recently as a response to global issues. The challenges of national oriented forms of CE, particularly in NI, have to some extent been assuaged by models of citizenship which considered broader forms of European and global identity (Kerr, McCarthy & Smith, 2002; Smith, 2003; McCully, 2008). GCE seeks to empower learners to develop their understanding of local and global injustices, to consider their positions within these networks, and take action to create a fairer world (Bourn, 2015; Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Davies, 2006; Griffiths, 1998). Despite the limitations of political commitment, curricular space, and teacher expertise, GCE has continued to develop in both jurisdictions with a focus on the active participation of young people and the centrality of human rights (Kerr, McCarthy & Smith, 2002; Niens & McIlrath, 2010a, 2010b).

At a broader level, the need to promote a deeper understanding of the relationship between globalisation and violent conflict called for education systems to attend to GCE (Peters & Thayer, 2013; Pigozzi, 2006). In light of the global interconnections to conflict, peacebuilding has been identified as a key focus for a number of forms of GCE (Davies, 2006; Niens & Reilly, 2010; Reardon, 1998; Noddings, 2005). However, there remains a pressing question of how the theoretical frameworks of GCE are connected to classroom practice (Hartung, 2015, p. 12).

### **1.7 The Role of Young People in Peacebuilding Education**

Within school settings, young people have a desire to learn more about the causes and consequences of violent conflict (Davies, Harber & Yamashita, 2005; Yamashita, 2006; Niens & Reilly, 2010). Importantly, young people's existing understandings of conflict are often shaped by family and community influences (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010; Connolly & Healy, 2004; McCully, 2006, 2012; Sánchez Meertens, 2013). There is a small but increasing amount of research which explores young people's involvement in peacebuilding processes (Agibiboa, 2015; Ardizzone, 2007; Pruitt, 2013), but remains balanced against research which cautions against any overemphasis on young people's power within peacebuilding processes (Salomon & Cairns, 2010). As such there is a need to consider young people's voices within formal forms of peacebuilding education (Misoska, 2013; Winthrop & Kirk, 2008) and to deepen exploration of their perceptions on the application of learning (Davies, 2005a).

### **1.8 Importance of this Study**

Education may have a role in the perpetuation of violence and negative conflict, but also in the processes of building sustainable peace in all countries (Davies, 2004a). As such, it is imperative for research to consider how educational structures, policies and practices could be transformed to limit the former whilst encouraging the latter.

This study presents a significant contribution to this body of research, in light of its focus on the experiences and perceptions of those participating and involved in, the development of peacebuilding GCE programmes designed for schools across the island of Ireland. The study offers a broad exploration of the relationship between education and conflict, before considering the theoretical frameworks which underpin peacebuilding education programmes. This study also seeks to illuminate the gap between the theory and practice of peacebuilding GCE through an exploration of how programme designers use these theoretical frameworks in the development and practice of peacebuilding education. Finally, this research offers an exploration of the perceptions and experiences of young people partaking in peacebuilding education programmes.

### **1.9 Aims of the Study**

The purpose of this qualitative study is to understand how peacebuilding education programmes are conceived, practised, and experienced in post-primary schools on the island of Ireland. This study aims to:

- Present a critical analysis of the key theoretical frameworks which underpin peacebuilding education programmes.
- Explore the relationship between peacebuilding education programmes and the educational and societal structures within which they are located.
- Explore the relationship between theory and practice within peacebuilding education programmes.
- Provide a critical account of approaches to GCE that address conflict as a major theme.
- Advance a framework which considers young people's position within reticulations of responsibility for building positive peace.

- Advance a framework which supports educators to develop peacebuilding practice.

### **1.10 Overview of Thesis and Conclusion**

This study explores how young people are taught about and learn about conflict – as conceived on the island of Ireland – as a dimension of GCE. The thesis is organised as follows:

Following this introductory chapter, chapter two draws on existing literature to explain the island of Ireland as a context, through an examination of educational developments in relation to violent conflict. It provides a justification for extending this investigation of peacebuilding education programmes on the island of Ireland, with a specific focus on the conception and practice of these initiatives.

Chapter three presents the conceptual framework of the study (Davies, 2005a). I then build upon this framework providing a critical analysis of the wider body of literature, which explores education and conflict, and in particular peacebuilding education programmes.

Drawing on a “reflexivity of discomfort” (Pillow, 2003), chapter four reveals the key methodological decisions which have shaped the research design. Grounded in perspectives of critical constructivism and interpretivism, I provide a rationale for the use of qualitative methods which draw upon ethnographic methods as a means of answering the central research questions at the heart of this study.

The first of the findings chapters - chapter five - explores the theoretical foundations underpinning the peacebuilding education programmes at the heart of this study. Drawing on interviews conducted with the educators involved in the design and delivery of peacebuilding education programmes, it reveals how young people’s perceptions and experiences have shaped the development of the programmes.



Chapter six investigates how the peacebuilding education programmes at the centre of this study conceptualise young people's responsibility for peacebuilding. This chapter considers how the programmes support a critique of the day to day practices which may serve to perpetuate negative conflict, before exploring young people's peacebuilding action as an enactment of responsibility.

Based on observations, focus groups and interviews, chapter seven explores the development of "interruptive democracy" within a case study into the *Peacebuilding Schools* programme. Developed around the perceptions and experiences of young people participating in the programme, this chapter explores how spaces for deliberation and dialogue support young people to engage in positive conflict.

Chapter eight provides a synthesis of the key findings from this study. Firstly, the chapter considers the key tensions between peacebuilding programmes and the education systems and societies that they serve. Secondly, the chapter explores how a focus on "the local" as experienced by young people poses a challenge for peacebuilding GCE. Finally, the chapter considers how action is conceptualised and understood within the programmes.

In the final chapter, I draw together the findings of the study to consider its original contributions to the field of education and conflict through a series of implications and recommendations.

### **1.11 Research Questions**

There are two main research questions, each with accompanying sub-questions, guiding this research:

- 1) What theoretical frameworks underpin the design and practice of peacebuilding GCE programmes developed for schools across the island of Ireland?

- a) What theoretical frameworks do educators employ in facilitating peacebuilding learning?
- b) What is the relationship between theory and practice in the development of these programmes?
- c) What is the relationship between these programmes and the schools, education systems and wider societies that they serve?

2) How is action conceptualised and experienced within peacebuilding education programmes?

- a) How is the theme of action addressed within peacebuilding education programmes?
- b) How do educators perceive the roles and responsibilities of young people in relation to conflict?
- c) What are young people's perceptions and experiences of action in peacebuilding education programmes?

## **Chapter 2: Conflict and Global Citizenship Education**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This study is based on a critical exploration of teaching and learning about conflict – as conceived and practised in the RoI and NI – as a dimension of Global Citizenship Education (GCE). This chapter provides the context for the educational programmes at the centre of this project through a focus on three main areas: GCE; issues of conflict and peace on the island of Ireland; the position of young people within educational approaches to peacebuilding.

This chapter begins by introducing GCE, through an exploration of its evolution, firstly in relation to Global Education (GE) and globalisation, and secondly with regard to other forms of citizenship education. The chapter then considers how peacebuilding issues have emerged as an important dimension of GCE.

The chapter then explores the development of citizenship education in NI and the RoI. This section begins by examining the socio-historical foundations which underpin the educational structures of the two jurisdictions, as well as the episodes of violent conflict on the island of Ireland. I consider how approaches to citizenship education have developed across the island of Ireland, with reference to the broader relationship between education and conflict in NI, the impact of the peace process on citizenship education in RoI and NI, as well as the number of citizenship and peacebuilding projects/programmes which have been developed within and between the regions.

The final section of the chapter explores how young people are positioned within educational approaches which seek to address conflict. This section provides an important exploration of a number of sources of conflict-related learning, outside of the formal education system, to which young people are exposed.

## **2.2 Global Citizenship Education and Conflict**

GCE is an educational process which seeks to develop understanding of local and global injustice and to encourage action leading to a more equal and sustainable world (Bryan & Bracken, 2011). Many of the key features of GCE, such as focus on learning about global issues, are shared with other “adjectival” educations (Bourn, 2015; Oxley & Morris, 2013). However, GCE does not stand as a unifying concept amongst the myriad of educational approaches which seek to address social justice, and suggesting that GCE is a progeny would be misleading. Therefore, in developing an explanation of how GCE became viewed as important aspect of education, it is useful to consider two fundamental relationships which have shaped its evolution: firstly its connection to other globally-focused forms of education; secondly its relationship to other forms of citizenship education.

### **2.2.1 Putting the “Citizenship” into Global Education: GCE in relation to GE**

A focus on global issues has been identified as a feature of particular educational approaches from as early as the late 1930s (Harris, 2004; Pike, 2008). Bourn (2015) argues that in the period following World War II, the development of an international focus within educational practice was supported by the United Nations. However, it was not until the 1970s, and particularly within the United Kingdom, that the concept of global education took hold, driven by a desire to broaden learners’ horizons (Bourn, 2015; Davies, 2006, 2008; Osler & Vincent, 2002; N. Richardson, 1976). With a deepened understanding of globalisation, education was seen as a means by which young people could learn about the economic, cultural and political networks which stretched across the globe (Harris, 2004; Lapayese, 2003). However the justifications for developing GCE emanated from two inconsonant perspectives. On one

hand, there was a call for education systems to support learners in meeting the economic opportunities of life in an increasingly globalised world. Here, GCE was a means of preparing young people for competition within the global market place and consideration of individual economic responsibility (Hartung, 2015; Schattle, 2009). On the other hand, deeper analysis of globalisation is increasingly connected to extreme inequality, environmental destruction and asymmetrical global relationships (Davies, 2006; Noddings, 2005). From the latter perspective, GCE is a means of supporting young people to consider their roles and responsibilities in a deeply unequal world (Bourn, 2015; Davies, 2006; Griffiths, 1998). Whilst a variety of educational approaches may fall under the banner of GCE, there is undoubtedly a tension between approaches which seek to facilitate learning for action in a global marketplace, and those which promote learning for action in response to global issues (Bryan, 2012, 2013). Indeed, the former may be complicit in reproducing and reinforcing agendas which have in fact contributed to global inequality (Jefferess, 2008; Biccum, 2005; Roman, 2008). As such, any exploration of GCE requires a deep interrogation of the theoretical frameworks which shape the learning of young people.

Often used interchangeably with GCE, Development Education (DE) is an educational approach which aims to improve the general public's knowledge and understanding of development issues, and has received increasing attention throughout Europe as NGOs sought to garner support for aid programmes (Bourn, 2015; Bryan & Bracken, 2011). At the same time, broader policies (such as the Millennium Development Goals), public support (for example the Make Poverty History campaign), and perceptions of an increasingly globalised world made DE a concern for civil society and governmental departments dealing with both aid and education (Bourn, 2015). Certain approaches to DE are criticised for an overemphasis on charity yet have often shaped GCE in an Irish context (Bryan & Bracken, 2011). Of particular importance,

Bryan and Bracken (2011) highlight that non-governmental organisations (NGOs), central to the process of improving public understanding of development issues, have played an important role in framing approaches to GCE within the formal education sector and exploring the development of programmes by such organisations is an important consideration for this research.

### ***2.2.1.1 Conflict as an important GCE theme***

During the latter part of the twentieth century, a focus on violent conflict prompted the internationalisation of certain educational practice (Harris, 2004). The negative effects of globalisation also stimulated deeper analysis of interdependent global relationships and the search for perspectives which cast light on the asymmetrical power within (Dobson, 2005). Elsewhere, connections between on-going armed conflict and globalisation were drawn (Peters & Thayer, 2013). Outbreaks of violent conflict provided added impetus for multilateral organisations in their call for education systems to attend to GCE, and meet the conflict-related challenges of globalisation (Pigozzi, 2006). Addressing conflict and peacebuilding became a fundamental component of global citizenship (Noddings, 2005; Reardon, 1988).

The development of certain GCE approaches has been based on the work of radical social-justice oriented educationalists who espoused active, child-centred transformative learning which challenged inequality (Bourn, 2015). Along similar lines, forms of DE, structured around the work of Johan Galtung and Paulo Freire, explored conflict as a matter of injustice perpetuated through multiple forms of violence (Harris, 2004). Galtung (1979) draws a distinction between negative peace (the absence of direct violence), and a positive peace (the absence of direct and structural violence). Freire's (1970) methodologies promote taking action against structural violence based on a process of reflection, or *conscienziatation*. The focus on multiple forms of violence

mirrored wider calls for education to consider structural as well as direct violence (Ardizzone, 2003; Harris, 2004; Smith, 2010). Thus GCE in this regard is seen as education for peacebuilding which addresses direct, structural and cultural violence at local and global levels (Reilly and Niens, 2014).

Whilst conflict is recognised as a key theme within critical conceptualisations of citizenship across local, national and global levels, there is also a need for the recognition of important interconnections between local and global issues. As Davies (2006) explains, "global citizenship identity is the recognition that conflict and peace are firstly rarely confined to national boundaries, and secondly that even stable societies are implicated in war elsewhere - whether by default (choosing not to intervene) or actively in terms of aggression and invasion" (p. 10). How these conflict-related interconnections are framed within GCE is an important consideration for this study.

### **2.2.2 Putting the "Global" into Citizenship Education: GCE in relation to CE**

As well as its clear connections to global education, GCE can also be viewed as a form of citizenship education. How citizenship is defined and implemented varies between regions, and a contextual understanding of citizenship is pivotal in exploring citizenship education (Banks, 2004). Traditional forms of national citizenship education are framed around both the rights and responsibilities of citizens (Engel, 2014). More recently, these forms of citizenship education have been criticised for a failure to respond to increasing ethnic diversity (Tully, 2009; Scott & Lawson, 2002). Furthermore, a tension between the competing objectives of citizenship education has also been recognised: on one hand creating an obedient populace and, on the other, developing the critical skills of citizens (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Johnson & Morris, 2012).

Increasing ethnic diversity within countries of the Global North<sup>1</sup> necessitated the development of new forms of citizenship and citizenship education which address local, national and global relationships. Citizenship education in western democracies had reinforced dominant cultures, yet gradually movements supporting the cultural and language rights of ethnic minorities propagated reform (Banks, 2004). Alternative forms of citizenship education, such as “multicultural citizenship” were proposed. These approaches legitimised learners’ positions both within local cultural communities and national structures, providing a more inclusive alternative to national-oriented citizenship (Banks, 2004; Kymlicka, 1995). Multiculturalism has permeated certain forms of GCE with elements recognised within school-based practice in the UK (Schattle, 2008). It is therefore important to consider how diversity is approached within GCE programmes.

Within a European context, conceptualisations of citizenship also began to extend across national boundaries. Representations of Europe and the European Union became important considerations in the field of citizenship education (Engel, 2014) and GCE gained an increasing exposure at a European level (Tormey, 2006). Supporting the ideals of a European identity, citizenship education became framed across number of dimensions, including the ecological, economic and political, as well as at multiple levels, from the local, to the global (Lapayese, 2003). Connections between global, national and local issues became of key importance and an increased understanding of how broader factors were intertwined with local issues directed frameworks which underpinned developing forms of citizenship education (Engel, 2014). The skills and values-based approaches to GCE were distanced from local and national citizenship,

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<sup>1</sup> This thesis employs “Global North” and “the West” as collective references to Europe, North America, New Zealand and Australia. “Global South” refers to countries within Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean. It is acknowledged that, as Bryan and Bracken (2011) identify, whilst these terms provide vital contextualisation for research, they also serve to homogenise and reproduce deeply unequal relationships.



and became defined by reflexive approaches to the often asymmetrical global relationships (Engel, 2014; Rizvi, 2009).

Although the scope of citizenship education may have widened, the challenge of developing an accepted values base remains (Kerr, McCarthy & Smith, 2002; Niens & McIllrath, 2010a). Cosmopolitan frameworks have increasingly been suggested as a means of conceptualising global citizenship. Cosmopolitanism can be explained as an allegiance to "the worldwide community of human beings" (Nussbaum, 2002, p. 4) or a widening of the political realm (Linklater, 1998). Through an emphasis on diversity and universalism, cosmopolitanism has increasingly permeated citizenship education curricula across the globe (Bromley, 2009; Osler, 2011). More specifically, cosmopolitan citizenship education is viewed as a means of addressing "peace, human rights, democracy and development, equipping young people to make a difference at all levels, from the local to the global" (Osler & Starkey, 2003, p. 243).

Despite perceptions that global citizenship may transcend national or regional identities (Noddings, 2005), there are important tensions to consider. Cosmopolitanism implies broad and potentially weighty global responsibilities, and there are serious questions about the realistic potential of these obligations (Heater, 2004; Miller, 2002). In fact, there is a compelling argument that such duties may stand in opposition to certain national responsibilities (Linklater, 1998). For example, there would be clear tensions between cosmopolitan responsibilities connected to peace and non-violence and national responsibilities of compulsory military service. Furthermore, there are questions as to whether cosmopolitanism can function for those who are not even granted the citizenship attached to national identity (Banks, 2004), for example, young people forced to flee violent conflict as refugees or those seeking asylum.

A key consideration for cosmopolitan forms of citizenship education has been how cosmopolitan perspectives can be connected to the lives of young people. Dobson

(2006) identifies the need to move beyond cosmopolitanism as a belief, towards cosmopolitanism as practice, and he suggests “identifying relationships of causal responsibility” (p. 182) as an important strategy in this regard. However, the practical implementation of this appears challenging, for example where research has questioned how identities which transcend national state, such as European identities, can be meaningfully connected to young people’s lives (Osler, 2011). Elsewhere, there is evidence that many approaches to GCE engage with forms of cosmopolitanism which fail to connect global inequalities to the lives of young people in the global North (Bryan & Bracken, 2011).

Elsewhere, there is criticism that cosmopolitanism overlooks the important attachments that individuals have to political communities (Parekh, 2003). This argument is particularly relevant in divided societies, and explains the strong recommendation that GCE in NI must consider controversial issues of identity and relationships at a local as well as global level (Niens & Reilly, 2012). Within this context, peacebuilding GCE may offer the opportunity for critical reflection on local identities connected to conflict, as well as a shared humanity (Reilly & Niens, 2014) but a deeper exploration of the opportunities and challenges of this approach is required.

With these compelling criticisms of cosmopolitanism in mind, a range of alternatives have been suggested. Delanty (2006) proposes a form of “world openness” (p. 27) grounded in the multiple social, cultural and national identities as a means of resisting nationalism and globalisation. Elsewhere, there are calls for cosmopolitan citizenship to be enacted through democratic human rights, and as such declarations on human rights provide a means to understand the roles and responsibilities of global citizens (Davies, 2006; Osler, 1994; Osler & Starkey, 2003; Oxley and Morris, 2013). Whilst these frameworks provide an opportunity for young people to better understand cosmopolitanism as an ethical concern for all human beings, there are questions as to

whether this ethical concern can be developed into actionable responsibility and whether cosmopolitanism extends beyond simply “doing no harm” (Linklater, 2008). A deeper understanding of how such action is conceptualised within GCE programmes is a central question for this study.

### **2.2.3 Learning about conflict through GCE and elsewhere**

Learning about conflict is recognised as an important dimension of GCE (Davies, 2006, 2008; Niens & Reilly, 2010; Noddings, 2005; Reardon, 1988). Whilst chapter three will provide a deeper examination of the theory and practice of peacebuilding teaching and learning, a general introduction to some of the broader approaches taken in addressing conflict through education is useful here.

Despite the difficulty of developing programmes which address issues of conflict (Kupermintz & Salomon 2005; Firer 2008; Maoz 2011), education has been advocated as a potential means by which the causes and consequences of violence can be addressed (Brown, 2011, Magill, Smith & Hamber, 2009). Although operating under various guises (such as peace education, conflict resolution education, conflict education) educational approaches which address issues of war, conflict and peace share a number of principles and methods with GCE (Huckle & Sterling, 1996; O’Loughlin & Weigmont, 2005; Osler & Vincent, 2002). There is an increasing argument that one particular approach, peacebuilding education, should consider addressing not only direct violence, but violence in all its forms (Ardizzone, 2003; Harris, 2004; Smith, 2010). Peacebuilding education “goes beyond ‘peace education’ to contribute to broader social transformations” (Smith Ellison, 2012, p. 5) and is therefore a matter for all countries regardless of the levels of conflict present.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This study is focused on educational programmes developed with a particular focus on addressing aspects of violent conflict. As such, this literature review addresses associated literature as ‘peacebuilding education’, in light of the focus on issues of

Peacebuilding education approaches vary depending on the temporal and geographical proximity of the particular region to armed conflict (Salmon, 2002, 2006). Differences exist between education which supports young people for whom violent armed conflict is a day-to-day reality, a recent memory, or a very real possibility, as opposed to education which supports young people who are perceived to be divorced from the realities of conflict. Yet, this consideration raises some interesting questions about education programmes which take place in regions at different points on a continuum of conflict-affectedness. Davies (2004) supports the application of educational responses which have been developed within areas associated with conflict, to countries deemed stable. As of yet, such an approach remains underreported, and exploration of educational initiatives designed to facilitate learning in both NI and the RoI, is warranted. Davies (2010a) argues for a contextualised approach to the examination of education, and it is important that the individual, local, regional, national and global narratives are considered in further research in this area. As such, this study explores peacebuilding education programmes which consider issues of conflict in NI, in the RoI, across the island of Ireland, and elsewhere in the world.

A gap between theory and practice within the field education and conflict has been identified by Tomlinson and Benefield (2005) who support a deeper critical examination of the broader relationship between education and conflict, as well as more focused examinations of approaches to peacebuilding education. Indeed, Salomon (2004) highlights how peace education requires further systematic research, more recently calling for in-depth examination of such programmes (Salomon, 2006). Research has identified often under theorised approaches towards peacebuilding education (Bajaj, 2004; Gill & Niens, 2014b) and furthermore little is known of how

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conflict, war and peace, but in a number of cases, the concern with the objectives of positive peace. Where it provides conceptual clarity, I will refer to the specific form of education, for example 'peace education'.

theoretical frameworks influence practice. As such, this research seeks to explore the theoretical foundations underpinning peacebuilding education programmes across the island of Ireland and also to consider how these frameworks influence educational practice.

### **2.3 Historical Conflict and Education Developments on the Island of Ireland**

The history of modern Ireland is a catalogue of violence – both parts of the island, the Republic and Northern Ireland, owe their very existence to violence or the threat of violence. (Cairns, 1987, p. 26)

Although Cairns' bleak synopsis would appear to stand true when applied to many modern societies, it raises questions as to how violent conflict has shaped the island of Ireland, and in the context of this study, how education programmes address historical conflict and its entanglement with contemporary affairs. This section traces an evolution of GCE on the island of Ireland, with a particular focus on how conflict on the island has shaped the educational systems of NI and RoI. This approach is justified for two particular reasons. Firstly, Smith (2010) argues that an examination of the role of education prior to, throughout and post conflict could provide a deeper understanding of the extent to which education may offer something in terms of building peace. Second, Lederach (2003) suggests that in order to transform conflicts into more peaceful realities the causes and consequences of violent conflict must be understood. As such, this review of literature develops a basic genesis of the key events which have shaped the background of this study. My goal here is not to generate a deep historical analysis, but rather is to illustrate the context within which conflict-related learning on the island of Ireland is grounded.

### **2.3.1 The epicentre of conflict on the island of Ireland**

Charting a timeline which begins with the Norman invasion of 1170, Darby (1995) argues that colonization, plantation and partition are the major themes which underpin conflict on the island of Ireland. From as early as the beginning of the 18th century, the relationship between education and conflict was an issue. The beginning of this period saw the Catholic population of Ireland excluded from formal education as a result of the Penal Laws of the time (Smith, 2001). Designed to enforce a state-defined Christianity, this legislation necessitated that a large percentage of education on the island of Ireland was facilitated through informal classes known as "hedge schools". These alternative systems of schooling took place in rural locations away from the authorities and by the end of the 18th century were the predominant form of Catholic education on the island. In 1801 the Act of Union brought into being the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and placed Ireland under the direct rule of the Westminster government. The relaxation of Penal Laws and the subsequent 1812 commission of inquiry appeared to address some of these issues by recommending grants to educate *all* Christians but still, these attempts at school establishment were treated with scepticism (Smith, 2001). In 1831, the multi-denominational National School System was created in order to extend state control over education (Akenson, 1970; McCully & Waldron, 2013). However, inter-religious conflict continued to damage this system and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century schools "had become segregated and *de facto* denominational institutions" (Smith, 2001, p. 559). Over this period, it is clear that education was viewed by both the British government and the Catholic population as a hugely influential factor in shaping the young people of the time, and concomitantly the future of the island of Ireland.

Across Ireland, unrest against colonial rule continued into the latter part of the 19th century and was followed by increasing levels of Irish nationalism in the early 20th

century. Parliamentary movements focused on Repeal (1840s) and Home Rule (1870s), as well as those seeking change through physical force (such as the Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Fenians), sought to overthrow the union (Darby, 1995). Constitutional nationalists, pursuing home rule for Ireland through peaceful means, had gathered strength in the 1880s and early 1890s, yet a split in the movement (precipitated by Parnell's divorce case) and the opposition of Unionists supported by British Conservatives stifled their cause (Anderson & O'Dowd, 2007; Todd, 2009). Enactment of the Irish Home Rule Bill was thwarted by the threat of violence from objectors before being postponed due to World War I (Anderson & O'Dowd, 2007). On the Easter week of 1916, an armed republican rising broke out in Dublin. Upon execution of the leaders, public sympathy for Sinn Féin and the IRA swelled, and the election of 1918 led to the establishment of an Irish parliament. The ensuing War of Independence between the IRA and British forces was brought to an end with the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, the foundation of the Irish Free State and partition of the island. However, further conflict in the Irish Civil War, pitting supporters of the Free State against those pursuing republican aims, continued until 1923 (Darby, 1995).

The partition of Ireland (into the RoI and NI) reconfigured "the political and geographical dimensions of conflict rather than [serving] as a decisive political instrument solving it" (Rankin, 2007, p. 909). The partition also produced changes in institutions as well as identities, exemplified by the divergence of the education systems of the RoI and NI. As Dunn (1986) notes, "the two major cultures of the province have existed over some centuries beside each other and have evolved independent structures and institutions to serve them" (p. 235).

### **2.3.2 “The Troubles” as an episode of conflict**

The most recent episode of armed conflict on the island of Ireland, or “the Troubles”, led to the deaths of over 3,000 people and saw another 30,000 people injured as a result of violence (Cairns & Darby, 1998). Towards the end of the 1960s, civil rights protests challenging discrimination against Catholics in relation to housing, employment and voting rights were met with counter-protest and the intervention of the state through the mobilisation of the British Army in support of the Royal Ulster Constabulary (Smith, 2003). Worsening relations between the Catholic community and the security forces were compounded by increasingly vociferous campaigns by republican nationalist groups, with the Provisional IRA beginning a violent campaign against the British Army (Darby, 1995). With the inclusion of loyalist paramilitary organisations, the scene was set for a violent conflict which was to last until the latter part of the twentieth century. Grounded in the historical epicentre of the conflict, matters of religion, politics and constitution had become intertwined (Akenson, 1973).

### **2.4 Education and Conflict in NI During “the Troubles”**

At the start of “the Troubles”, schools had been viewed in some quarters as spaces where young people could escape from the violence in their communities (Gallagher, 2004; Smith, 1995). In fact, education was seen as an element which could contribute to building peace (Smith, 2011). However, increasing amounts of evidence revealed that schools were themselves targets of violence, and young people were at risk of harm on the journeys to and from school, but also within schools (Cairns, 1982).

The evolution of separate education systems within NI reflected the religious divide (Akenson, 1973). As “the Troubles” began, Fraser (1973) identifies how history education within NI was underpinned by “two widely divergent curricula” (p. 170) but division was evident elsewhere within school curricula. This segregation and



accompanying socialisation underpinned the experiences of young people at this time and as Fraser (1973) describes, difference “permeate[d] every part of school life – lessons, drama, games.” (p. 142).

In addition to revealing relationships between schools and organisations involved in the violence (Fraser, 1973), research also highlighted other connections between education and the societal conflict. McEwen (1990) notes variances in not only the teaching of the Irish language, sport and music but also within the “unofficial or hidden curriculum [which] also translates divergent cultural, economic and political perceptions” (p. 131). Gradually, a deeper critical analysis of the role of education in NI revealed its connections to profound societal issues (Dunn, 1986).

Education has remained a central component of the wider response to political violence in the region. Such approaches initially centred upon improving contact between children from opposing communities and were one part of a triumvirate of educational interventions, alongside curricular change and school integration (Dunn, 1986). Smith (1995) further categorises such approaches: first, systems interventions, which address inter-school equity and integration; secondly, process interventions in the shape of curriculum reform and intergroup-contact. These frameworks certainly emphasise the range of educational responses to violent conflict, and highlight the importance of considering the wider policies which frame the programmes focused on in this study. The relationships between the programmes within this study and wider educational policies in NI and RoI is an important focus of this research.

At the start of “the Troubles”, Fraser (1973) argues that education had a role to play in building peace, and in particular that primary school integration was “the one initiative that would contribute more than any other single factor to the prospect of peace in Ulster” (p. 164). As a systems intervention, integrated education, which has seen Protestant and Catholic children schooled together, has been developed since the

1980s and now represents 5% of schooling provision in NI (Hughes, Campbell, Lolliot, Hewstone & Gallagher, 2013; Smith, 2010). Despite the small size of this provision, research has revealed how integrated education may underpin more positive attitudes to “the other” (Hughes, 2011; Hayes & McAllister, 2009; Niens & Cairns, 2005) and is perceived as a means of supporting reconciliation but also developing social cohesion in an increasingly diverse society (McGlynn, Niens, Cairns & Hewstone, 2004). However, there are serious questions as to whether there is sufficient opportunity for parents and young people to avail of integrated schooling (Hamber, 2014b). With reference to the significant public support which may prefer separate schooling, more recent research has focused on the exploration of the possibilities of peacebuilding approaches within the existing system (Hughes et al., 2013). One such example is the shared education programme (SEP) which promotes collaboration between schools through the sharing of resources and expertise (Duffy & Gallagher, 2015).

#### **2.4.1 Citizenship education in NI**

At significant times in the history of the past 25 years the response to violent incidents has been to design schemes and projects which are intended to provide young people with opportunities to learn about other contexts and to understand how peaceful societies can be managed (Wilson & Tyrrell, 1995, p. 233).

In the 1960s, initial educational approaches addressing sectarianism in NI were extemporaneously facilitated by schools and churches (Duffy, 2000). Such programmes were staffed and resourced by voluntary groups and focused on community and school relations. These led to further cross-community projects, which often centred on the formation of school links (Smith, 1995). Other projects led cross-community programmes outside of NI, such as schemes hosted in the USA (Cairns & Cairns, 1995).

In the 1980s a number of school programmes focused on cultural studies and the development of community relations (Robinson, 1983) yet controversial issues were avoided (Arlow, 2004; Gallagher, 1999; Smith & Robinson, 1996). Initial governmental reluctance to sanction educational initiatives which addressed community relationships gave way to curricular reform and statutory backing for the programme of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU). This involved a syllabus and associated resources which supported mutual understanding, respect and tolerance (McCully, 2008). Kerr, McCarthy and Smith (2002) suggest that the development of education in NI mirrored associated policy in the rest of the United Kingdom, in particular the focus on the citizenship framework. The emphasis on education as a means of addressing diversity and conflict in NI was at the time symbolic of a wider global movement which sought to harness the perceived power of education towards building peace (Smith, 1995). A number of citizenship education programmes in NI were developed and facilitated by outside agencies, whose objectives included promoting social cohesion (Richardson, 2008; Rooney, 2008; Smith, 2003). Smith (2003) identifies a number of stumbling blocks for citizenship education programmes developed by external organisations, such as the tension between the promotion of interdisciplinary inquiry-based pedagogy within formal education settings noted for their content-based curricular silos. However, it is important to recognise that these projects created a network of educators, academics and community workers whose proficiency and engagement would go on to inform future projects (Smith, 1995). Certainly, peacebuilding educators may provide important perspectives and experiences on the development of peacebuilding education programmes and the role of education in addressing conflict. The perspectives and experiences of such educators will inform this study.

Peacebuilding education programmes in NI continued to grow in size and achieve varying degrees of success towards objectives based mainly around cross-

community work (Duffy, 2000). Indeed, programmes aimed at developing intergroup contact in NI were funded in the region of £1 million per year from the United Kingdom government (Smith, 2011). For such projects, sustained and effective educational interventions built upon collaboration is seen as pivotal in ensuring success (Niens & Cairns, 2005; Gallagher, 2011b).

#### **2.4.2 Citizenship education in the RoI**

A compulsory but non-examination Civics syllabus was first implemented in the RoI in 1966, but its potential was limited by the lack of support afforded to teachers and the minimal consideration given to developing participatory methods or providing opportunities for meaningful forms of action (Gleeson, 2008; Jeffers, 2008). In comparison to the primary level commitment to Civics since 1971 (Waldron et al., 2010), developments at post-primary level were slower to emerge. DE was piloted in schools in 1986 (Brennan, 1994) as a number of Irish church-based organisations and NGOs sought deeper public engagement with various humanitarian crises across the globe (Fiedler, Bryan & Bracken, 2009). The next major curricular change in this regard came with the emergence of Education for Citizenship at Transition Year (TY) and junior certificate level (DoE, 1993, 1994). This was shortly followed by the piloting and, in 1997, incorporation of Civic Social Political Education with its focus on human rights and social responsibilities (Kerr, et al., 2002). Focusing on key concepts, including democracy and interdependence, and facilitated through active and participatory methodologies the course aimed to explore active participation at local, national and global levels (Kerr et al., 2002). Although by the late 1990s there appeared to be a state-level commitment to citizenship education, the time allotted for the subject and the approach to staffing remained considerable issues (Jeffers, 2008).

During the 1990s, the majority of direct violence on the island of Ireland had taken place north of the border, but the impact of the armed conflict was felt strongly in the RoI. The border region in particular experienced the direct impact of conflict as well as the displacement of those fleeing violence (Hayward, 2007). This did not escape the attention of those shaping education within the RoI. In 1995, the White Paper on Education, *Charting our Educational Future*, defined a number of the key challenges faced at a national, European and global level:

Recent geopolitical developments, including major changes in Eastern Europe, concern about an apparent resurgence in racism, violence and xenophobia, in many countries, and the focus on conflict resolution in the island of Ireland, serve to underlie the importance of education in areas such as human rights, tolerance, mutual understanding, cultural identity, peace and the promotion of co-operation in the world among people of different traditions and beliefs. (DoE, 1995, p. 204).

Clearly violence and conflict appeared to be an important consideration in the development of education within the RoI, and the resolution of conflict on the island of Ireland was a central consideration. Violence stemming from nationalism and ethnicity was a key consideration in justifying the development of educational approaches which addressed conflict. Harvey (2010) notes that although conflict within NI has been the sight of considerable academic scrutiny, exploration of its impact has often failed to extend beyond the border. Developing a broader picture of how conflict has been addressed across the island of Ireland will add to the depth of understanding in this area and is a focus of this study.

### **2.4.3 The Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and citizenship education on the island of Ireland**

From the early 1980s, both the British and Irish governments remained committed to finding a solution to the ongoing violence yet political accord remained elusive (Fahey, Hayes & Sinnott, 2005). Finally, on the 10<sup>th</sup> April 1998, as the result of protracted political negotiations, the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement (hereafter GFA) was signed by NI political parties and the British and Irish governments. This agreement addressed the central constitutional items and political structures of NI and was a key source of interventions intended to develop confidence and trust between signatories (Smith, 2003). The referendum that followed the GFA involved the majority protestant population NI and the majority Catholic population of the RoI (Arlow, 2001). This represented the opening of the peace process and a development of the relationships between communities within NI, and between NI and the RoI itself (Smith, 1999). As a result of the GFA, citizens of NI were awarded the right to hold British, Irish or dual citizenship.

We are committed to partnership, equality and mutual respect as the basis of relationships within NI, between North and South, and between these islands.

(British and Irish Governments, 1998, p. 1)

Framing citizenship in relation to rights and responsibilities, in keeping with Europe-wide definitions supported by the peace process, offered an educational alternative to potentially divisive conceptualisations built around national identity (Smith, 2003). Although such an education approach was open to accusations of lacking in critical content, the immediate challenge of supporting a societal transformation beyond violent conflict was a huge calling (McCully, 2006). In practice, the peace process prompted a shift from longstanding initiatives which had maintained cross-community relationships towards those which addressed issues of equality and human rights (Smith, 2011).

The GFA paved the way for cooperation between NI and RoI that had been challenging previously (Fahey, Hayes & Sinnott, 2005). During the 1980s, a small number of educational initiatives had focused on the development of relationships between the RoI and NI. Supported by funding from both sides of the border, the first North-South educational programme, the *European Studies Project*, sprang from the Anglo-Irish agreement of 1985 (M.E. Smith, 2005, p. 167). Pollak (2005) suggests that the renewal of educational links between NI and the RoI came at governmental and EU level addressing the issues of violent conflict through the promotion of a European identity. Education was identified as one of the central components of the GFA, with particular mention afforded to cross-border educational cooperation between NI and the RoI:

Areas for North-South co-operation and implementation may include the following:... Education - teacher qualifications and exchanges. (p. 16, The Agreement, 1998)

Pollak (2005) identifies a number of formal education programmes that focused on the development of the relationship between NI and the RoI in a number of ways. For example, through ICT curricular projects, citizenship education programmes and those supporting the professional development of teachers. Pollack (2005) ascertains that previous evaluations of such cross-border education initiatives highlight that cross-community reconciliation and North-South reconciliation should work in unison, but whether this theory is put into practice requires further examination. Whilst the GFA made specific reference to the role of education in developing cooperation at an all island level, the extent to which it underpins peacebuilding citizenship educational programmes on the island of Ireland requires further examination. Such an exploration would provide a deeper understanding of the involvement of peacebuilding education programmes, and young people, within broader processes of peace.

Research offering a perspective which transcends the political border between NI and RoI is rare (Fahey, Hayes & Sinnott, 2005). Furthermore, research which explores the impact of cross-border educational cooperation has been scant, and whilst such programmes are noted as potential sites for developing peace, the perspectives of young people on their involvement in peacebuilding are conspicuous in their absence (McEvoy-Levy, 2001). With this in mind, this study seeks to explore the theoretical foundations of peacebuilding programmes developed for schools across the island of Ireland. Furthermore, it seeks to deepen understanding of these programmes with an exploration of how they are experienced and understood by the young people participating in them.

There are number of areas where cross-border cooperation is considered a priority (such as agriculture, environment, health and transport) but whether educational approaches connect to these projects as part of a broader strategy is unknown. However, what can be gauged from existing cross-border projects is that they have dealt with a number of challenges. Although varying island-wide frameworks have existed for some time, Whyte (1983) notes that the acceptance of such approaches in a non-political field can by no means be considered as a broader acceptance. Greer (1996) argues that connections across the Irish border are fraught with difficulty. Whilst collaboration has been promoted through a number of North-South agreements, such as the Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985) and the Joint Framework for Agreement (1995), these linkages were often viewed with scepticism. Greer (1996) suggests that “for many nationalists, cross-border cooperation, particularly the need for institutional structures of coordination, is simply another route to the holy grail of a united Ireland. Unionists, whilst not averse to a good neighbourly relationship with the Irish Republic, typically see cross-border institutions in terms of a ‘slippery slope’, ‘Trojan horse’ or ‘embryo united Ireland’” (p. 87). This relationship remains an important educational issue beyond peacebuilding



programmes<sup>3</sup>, and how educational initiatives which transcend the border negotiate such complexities requires examination.

#### **2.4.4 New Models of citizenship education in NI**

Developing the practice of Citizenship Education in a divided society such as NI posed a number of challenges (Smith, 2000). With a history of political conflict, the relationship between nationalism and violent conflict threw doubt on the appropriateness of national-oriented forms citizenship education, yet there remained a belief in the potential of alternative forms and their associated identities (Niens & Chastenay, 2008; Niens & McIlrath, 2010).

Gradually NI moved from the EMU programme to a curriculum based model through the piloting of Social, Civic and Political Education and in September, 2007 to Local and Global Citizenship (Arlow, 1999, 2004; Richardson, 2008). Centred on diversity, democracy, equality and human rights (Smith, 2010) Local and Global Citizenship sought to provide a balance between rights and civic republicanism and provide the opportunity to move beyond disputed national identities (McCully, 2008). Other aspects of the NI curriculum have seen changes both during and post-conflict, with History and Religious Education undergoing changes (Smith, 2010).

This global dimension was considered an important asset of the Local and Global Citizenship curriculum in NI, particularly when the content included issues of conflict. McCully (2006) argues that exploring other conflicts at a distance, in contexts

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<sup>3</sup> In December 2012 the Department of Education in NI and the Department of Education and Skills in the RoI announced that they would be surveying parents of students in primary and post-primary schools close to the border to “determine level of parental demand for cross-border education and help future planning of schools” (Department of Education and Skills, 2012). Although the findings have yet to be revealed, this development raises a huge number of questions around how the separate education systems and political systems of NI and the RoI could be negotiated in the planning and delivery of a formalised cross-border education for young people living within the corridor on either side of the border.

geographically and temporally divorced from the sensitivity of local and national issues may give young people the opportunity to consider controversial themes in a manner which avoids an overemphasis on local and national issues. This raises an important question of how local, national and global issues related to conflict are addressed, and how the relationships between those dimensions are approached, within the design and development of peacebuilding GCE programmes, and is an important theme within this study. More recently, McCully (2008) suggests that reflecting back upon NI has, when structured carefully, facilitated deeper understandings of conflict closer to home. There is less explanation of how the connections and reflections between conflict within local and global contexts are made, and therefore deeper exploration of this approach is required. McCully (2008) also identifies that the breadth of citizenship education may detract from addressing the pivotal issues of community division which underpin conflict in NI, and continue to hinder social cohesion. Learning from other cultures through a global dimension is considered as a way in to sensitive topics, but not at the expense of addressing community divisions. Although such an approach may well be a welcome alternative to the “relentless introspection” (McCully, 2008, p. 4), exploring how global and local conflict-related issues can be successfully interconnected requires exploration. Furthermore, where young people consider their position, and the possible action they may take, in relation to local, national and global peacebuilding issues requires careful examination.

#### **2.4.5 Globalised citizenship education in the RoI**

Increased ethnic diversity within the RoI had prompted questioning of national-oriented forms of citizenship, and alongside developing EU membership, provided the context for the emergence of participatory and active forms of citizenship education (Hammond & Looney, 2000; Kerr, McCarthy & Smith, 2002). This active citizenship

mirrored a broader EU approach (Jeffers, 2008; Tormey, 2006) which at policy level constituted active democratic citizenship in light of interdependence, responsibilities, tolerance of diversity and connection to the EU (C. Harris, 2005).

Prior to 2000, GCE in the RoI had received little attention at primary or post-primary level (Kenny & O'Malley, 2002; McDonnell, 2003). Gradually, the focus of citizenship education extended to more global matters. Political and economic globalisation were perceived as important factors for the education system to address (Tormey, 2006) and GCE received increasing governmental funding particularly through Ireland's official overseas development programme, Irish Aid (Bryan & Bracken, 2011). A number of civil society and political groups supported the curricular and extra-curricular delivery of GCE within schools (Tormey, 2006) with a number of GCE programmes developed by NGOs (Barry, 2008). The work of these organisations is recognised as important in shaping GCE in formal education in Ireland (Bryan & Bracken, 2011) and requires consideration within any exploration of educational programmes developed by outside agencies.

The 2003 inclusion of the CSPE syllabus within the RoI curriculum provided an important avenue for GCE. Alongside the participatory methodologies which underpinned the syllabus, the inclusion of an action project component was seen as an important milestone (Jeffers, 2008; Redmond & Butler, 2003). These projects were included to provide students with the opportunity to engage in actions, whilst developing the skills which could foreground active participation in later years (NCCA, 2003). In practice, an emphasis on fundraising constituted a quarter of action projects, however war and conflict were increasingly noted as common themes (Wilson, 2008).

One important variation between the NI and RoI GCE provision is the presence of the Transition Year (TY) option within the RoI curriculum. As a one year, post-junior certificate course, the TY focuses on the development of personal and social

skills. After piloting in the 1970s the TY was formalised in 1994, and was soon provided within 600 schools in the RoI (Smyth, Byrne & Hannon, 2004). Kinlen, Keenaghan, Canavan and O'Connor (2013) note that in contrast with the later years of post-primary education, TY provides important opportunities for a deeper engagement with citizenship education, however it remains an optional choice for schools. Honan (2005) argues that the TY holds the greatest potential for GCE incorporation, as a whole school, cross-curricular or stand-alone component. Whilst teachers hold positive perceptions of TY as a space for GCE, incorporation remains dependent on the proficiency, engagement and availability of teachers (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Honan, 2005). Despite these barriers, an investigation of peacebuilding programmes developed within the TY may provide an important opportunity for exploration of how conflict is taught and learned through GCE.

#### **2.4.6 Comparative CE research on the island of Ireland**

The evolution of citizenship education in NI and RoI has followed similar paths since the 1990s (Hammond & Looney, 2000). However, it is important to consider points of contrast between the jurisdictions. Niens and McIlrath (2010a, 2010b) explore how non-educational organisations in NI and RoI, such as political parties and trade unions, perceive the value and impact of citizenship education, in comparison with curricular conceptions of citizenship. Whilst citizenship education on both sides of the border is underpinned a human rights framework, “the Troubles” are considered a priority for citizenship education in NI. Whilst a focus on nationhood was identified in RoI, participants from NI suggested such a focus should be avoided. Indeed, the early manifestations of citizenship education in both jurisdictions exhibited similar features, such as a focus on active participation and the incorporation of a human rights framework (Kerr, McCarthy and Smith, 2002). Although conflict forms a central theme

within the RoI history curriculum, Niens and McIlrath (2010b) suggest that the omission of “the Troubles” within citizenship education in the RoI should be addressed: “Given the history of conflict on the island of Ireland and its present-day geographical, political, social and economic impact, it might be particularly important to incorporate the NI conflict and peace process into citizenship education North and South.” (Niens & McIlrath, 2010b, p. 23). Niens and McIlrath (2010b) provide an important investigation into the perceptions of non-educational organisations towards citizenship education in NI and RoI. In contrast, my research seeks to provide an exploration of the perceptions and experiences of educators who, whilst based outside of the formal education system, have developed peacebuilding citizenship education programmes for schools across the island of Ireland. A specific focus on programmes which directly address issues of conflict within the education systems of NI and RoI also supports an exploration of the challenges and possibilities of incorporating local issues of conflict into citizenship education across the island of Ireland.

## **2.5 The Challenges of Teaching about Conflict as a Dimension of GCE**

The success of educational approaches to addressing issues of conflict and peace is perceived to depend on the context, as well as the perspectives and skills of educators (Bar-Tal, 2002). Whilst the curriculum and its associated supplementary material create spaces for the discussion and deliberation of political issues within a classroom, the teacher remains pivotal to developing learning opportunities in this regard (Hess, 2009). Positioned at the intersection between official versions of conflict-related knowledge and young people, the practice of teachers in this area is of key importance. Whilst some teachers manage this position, some subverting and resisting dominant versions of conflict-related knowledge (Sánchez Meertens, 2013, p. 262), others willing to transcend accepted boundaries in pursuit of social transformation (McCully, 1998;

Kitson and McCully, 2005; Kitson, 2007), for many teachers, this is an uncomfortable position. Research from Harber, Yamashita and Davies (2004) identifies a variance in how teachers and schools in the UK approached teaching about conflict. A number of teachers reported a lack of training in addressing issues such as conflict, and felt uncomfortable teaching about such themes. However, certain teachers were willing to tackle controversial issues, with some demonstrating citizenship action by “modelling resistance to violence” (Davies, 2005b, p. 368). A lack of confidence on the part of teachers in addressing conflict-related issues in the classroom has been well-documented (Yamashita, 2006; Bickmore, 2005b). Such feelings are not confined to conflict-related learning, with research suggesting that teachers may often lack confidence when teaching any number of controversial issues (Davies, Harber & Yamashita, 2005). Yamashita (2006) argues that whilst the confidence of teachers has a bearing on their approaches to tackling conflict-related themes in the classroom, a lack of professional support exacerbates this. With both confidence and professional expertise deemed crucial in supporting the teaching of peacebuilding education, professional development is recognised as pivotal in supporting the facilitation of critical learning in conflict-related and controversial issues (Bickmore, 2005; Niens & Reilly, 2010).

Within an Irish context, research focusing on the experiences and perceptions of teachers and students in relation to GCE suggests that only a minority perceive themselves to be knowledgeable in relation to global issues (Devlin & Tierney, 2010; Gleeson, King, O’Driscoll & Tormey, 2007; Jeffers, 2008; Murphy, 2008). In research exploring Irish and Northern Irish pre-service teachers’ attitudes and understandings of GCE, Bryan, Clarke & Drudy (2009) found that the majority of participants report a belief in the importance of DE in developing understanding or raising awareness, but yet felt lacking in confidence towards effecting social change. This research highlights

the challenges of supporting a deeper engagement with development issues when exposure to such themes within teacher education is sporadic and short-lived. More experienced teachers also face challenges in addressing development issues, leading to calls for professional development aimed at building capacity and confidence (Honan, 2005). However, even where professional development has been provided, many teachers express a lack of confidence in addressing such themes (Dillon & O'Shea, 2009).

In the Northern Irish context, McCully (2008) argues that one of the key challenges facing the Local and GCE programme is whether teachers possess the pedagogical capabilities required to support transformative practice. More recent research identifies that teachers perceive that the lack of time and resources limits the opportunity for critical reflection and dialogue with GCE (Niens & Reilly, 2014). Bryan & Bracken (2011) suggest that without engaging with critical frameworks, teachers may miss key concepts, such as interdependence and interconnectedness. Furthermore this research also suggests that teachers may avoid complex development topics, under which banner issues of conflict and peace would appear to fall. There is clearly a need for a deeper exploration of GCE practice within schools and research which explores the practice of peacebuilding GCE programmes on the island of Ireland offers something in this regard.

Smith (2003) identifies that early citizenship education projects in NI were developed by external organisations, yet how teachers were positioned within these programmes is unknown. Although exploring the confidence, expertise and professional development of teachers is not a central research question within this project, the position of teachers within the facilitation, if not the design and development of GCE programmes is an important factor in the methodological development of this research project.

## 2.6 Young People at the Centre of the Research

Young people have been increasingly included within approaches which seek to address conflict such as peace processes and predominantly their participation takes place through education (Dupuy, 2008). McEvoy-Levy (2001) argues that the inclusion of young people within the peace processes must provide them with “ownership of the process” (p. 33) raising questions about how young people are positioned within related education programmes. However, Salomon and Cairns (2010) caution as to an overstated focus upon young people within peacebuilding processes. They argue that “the decision to focus on children ignores the fact that power is in the hands of adults, and it is how this power is used that will determine the type of society children will inherit” (Salomon & Cairns, 2010, p. 2). Exploring how young people’s capacity to act as perceived by educators and experienced by young people themselves is an important consideration for this study.

The positions of young people in relation to broader societal networks are also important to consider, especially in relation to the associated actions that young people may or may not be able to take. McCully (2012) highlights this, identifying “just how difficult it can be for students to free themselves from family and community influences to achieve the goals that they, themselves, consider important” (p. 7). In another important piece of research, Bickmore & Kovalchuk (2012) identify how a lack of equity (which Galtung identifies as one of the key determinants of peace) limits the opportunity for involvement in peacebuilding for young people from marginalised backgrounds. It is therefore important to consider how such young people are included within the peacebuilding education programmes at the centre of this research, but also how they included within the broader social and educational systems that frame these programmes.



Winthrop and Kirk (2008) argue that exploration of peacebuilding education approaches either comes through an educationalist lens, which negates the perspectives of young people, or through a child protection lens which incorporates children's voices but often overlooks schooling. With this in mind it is imperative that further research in this area considers the perspectives and experiences of young people, not only in post-conflict regions, but in spaces where learning about issues of armed conflict takes place. More recent research considers the perceptions and experiences of young people in relation to contact related programmes (Misoska, 2013); building on this approach, I seek to explore young people's experiences and perceptions in relation to peacebuilding education on the island of Ireland and in particular the application of the knowledge and understanding they have accrued (Davies, 2005a).

Clearly, it is important to consider how children and young people are defined and constructed within educational approaches to addressing issues of conflict or peace. However, how they are conceptualised within the wider systems of schools, education systems, communities and societies must also be considered. To what extent they appear within narratives which consider causes and consequences of conflict, whether they are embedded within current approaches, and how they are positioned within future considerations are all worthy of particular focus when considering issues of education and conflict. Importantly, an exploration of theory must capture the dynamic and ever-evolving nature of citizenship without driving the subject further away from the young people at its core (Hammond and Looney, 2004).

### **2.6.1 Learning about conflict outside of the school gate**

McCully (2012) argues that although peacebuilding education holds promise, it may be hampered by a failure to link historical learning to the lived experiences of young people within their families and wider communities. This suggests the need for

further research to consider the interconnected sites of learning that young people inhabit. As well as within the formal education system, there are numerous alternative contexts where young people develop their knowledge and understanding of violent conflict (McCully, 2012). In certain regions, this learning has implications for the perpetuation of violence.

Fraser (1973) identifies that in the early stages of “the Troubles” in NI, the socialisation of young people was affected by a number of factors including peers, parents and schooling. Sánchez Meertens (2013) identifies spaces where young people may learn about conflict, as she argues that within regions affected by conflict, “no violence comes without epistemologies of armed conflict being construed and transmitted through institutional settings (education), witnessing (lived experience), indoctrination by warring parties, older generations’ storytelling (parents, teachers and elders) and/or media imaging.” (p. 256).

Within the context of NI, an increasing body of research has considered how families play a role in shaping the learning experiences of young people (Connolly & Healy, 2004; Connolly, Smith & Kelly, 2002; McCully, 2006). Parental experiences have been identified as a significant factor in shaping young people's understanding of conflict-related events (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010). Indeed, children may “arrive in school with a range of well-established attitudes and beliefs, some of which may be negative and biased” (NICIE 2008: 10). MacGill, Smith and Hamber (2009) call for a deeper examination of family settings and the complex processes which underpin conflict-related learning such as “intergenerational dialogue”. Sánchez Meertens (2013) reiterates this argument, identifying the importance of deepening our understanding of how a “repertoire of practices and social mechanisms were required for the conflict’s continuation, thereby transmitting the necessary knowledge to guarantee its permanence or induce its transformation.” (P. 254). Sánchez Meertens (2013) argues that a careful

consideration of the desired engagement of future generations with such social memory requires careful consideration in order to move onto more peaceful trajectories.

The relationship between young people and their local community has also been shown to have a bearing on conflict-related learning (Connolly & Healy, 2004; McCully, 2006). Research suggests that some young people within schools demonstrate a willingness to discuss the aspects of conflict which are rooted within communities (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010). As GCE focuses on a range of contexts, from the local level through to the global level, it is important to consider the communities which young people, their schools, and associated education programmes, are situated in.

At times, the content of learning that occurs in different contexts may be contradictory. Sørensen (2008) recognises tensions stemming from differences in the formal educational curricula (and accompanying resources) and the social history of particular communities in Sri Lanka. This raises an interesting point as to how programmes which seek to address conflict-related issues are developed in light of the individual young people who participate within such projects, and the diversity of their associated communities. This is particularly relevant for programmes which not only operate across different communities within NI, but across communities throughout the island of Ireland.

In the early stages of “the Troubles”, the impact of media and in particular the effect of television reports of violence on children was criticised (Fraser, 1973). More recently, the media has been recognised as an important, yet complex means by which young people learn about conflict (Magill et al., 2009). Bell, Hansson and McCaffery (2010) suggest that film in particular is an important source of conflict-related knowledge for young people. At the same time, media representations in conflict-affected regions are often strongly linked to community narratives which underpin violence (Sánchez Meertens, 2013).

Young people negotiate multiple sources of information in developing their own understandings of complex societal issues. Clearly conflict-related learning which takes place within formal education settings does not operate in a vacuum. Whilst conflict-related learning which takes place in outside of formal educational practice is not a central research question within this project, these alternative settings are an important part of the contexts within which the programmes and their participants are situated. These informal learning contexts will shape the prior learning of young people involved in the programmes, as well as offering an on-going, alternative learning context, throughout and beyond the programmes and young people's formal schooling. These contexts may be places where the understanding, knowledge and skills that young people have developed through aspects of their formal schooling, including on GCE projects, may be applied in the future. As such, understanding the relationship between learner, school, community and the GCE programmes which attempt to support young people's conflict-related learning is an important contextual consideration for this study.

## **2.7 Conclusion**

Whilst educational approaches which are related to peace, such as GCE, are considered "possibilities of hope" (Davies, 2005b, p. 367), there is a need for further research to give clarity to the connections between forms of peacebuilding education and citizenship education (Tomlinson & Benefield, 2005). Conflict is considered as a key theme within many GCE approaches, both in its own right, and also in light of its complex connections to many social justice issues. Citizenship education programmes focusing on conflict have been developed to serve young people NI and the RoI since the early 1980s, yet little is known about the theoretical underpinnings of such projects, and indeed the relationships between theory and practice in peacebuilding education programmes worldwide. With a number of citizenship education programmes in NI and

RoI developed by external agencies (such as NGOs), the experiences and perceptions of educators working through these organisations and involved in the design and development of conflict-related learning as a strand of GCE may provide an important insight. The political cleavages throughout the conflict in NI are well documented (Smith, 2011), and future developments may weigh upon the future political experiences of young people across the island of Ireland. Therefore how political issues, particularly those related to conflict, are learned about and facilitated in schools is of huge importance. This further supports an investigation of how peacebuilding education programmes are conceived, practised, and experienced in post-primary schools on the island of Ireland.

Finally, it is important to note that citizenship education and peacebuilding education are framed within a wider societal context. McMurray and Niens (2012) realise this as they comment on the possibility that citizenship education "reaches beyond the school gate" (p. 209). An investigation of cross-border citizenship-related teacher education programme between NI and RoI also reveals the connections between classroom practice and societal context, as Cusack (2008) identifies that education must be supported by societal developments which challenge the policy and praxis that exacerbates conflict. Furthermore, the political and ideological forces behind education are shown to have a clear impact on the relationship between education and conflict (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000). Reilly and Niens (2014) identify that the "boundaries of educational systems and structures can also influence pupils' understandings" (p.53). Any exploration of approaches to teaching about conflict, for positive and for negative, must consider the relationship between programmes, the societal context and the systems and structures of education. This chapter has considered some of the ways in which young people may learn about conflict, but the next chapter narrows the focus of

the study to explore how young people are taught and learn about conflict within the formal education system.

## **Chapter 3: The Theory and Practice of Teaching and Learning about Conflict**

### **3.1 Introduction**

Young people have a desire to learn about conflict (Davies, Harber & Yamashita, 2005; Yamashita, 2006; Niens & Reilly, 2010) and the formal education system is one place

where such learning occurs. This chapter seeks to explore the existing literature focused on the theory and practice of conflict-related learning within schools through a focus on three specific areas: schools as contexts of peacebuilding education; educational approaches which perpetuate negative conflict; educational approaches which seek to build peace.

This chapter begins by exploring the formal education system as a space for peacebuilding education. Firstly, I explore the challenges of situating peacebuilding approaches within school systems which have been recognised as complicit in violence, before considering the spaces for peacebuilding found within educational curricula.

The chapter then utilises Davies' (2005a) *Typology of Teaching about Conflict Through Citizenship Education* as a framework for exploring forms of education which are perceived to support negative conflict, before considering forms of education designed to build peace. A focus on how action is predicated by particular educational responses remains an ongoing theme throughout this chapter.

### **3.2 Schools as (Violent?) Places to Learn About Conflict**

Whilst the educational programmes which are the focus of this study may hold the ideals of addressing violent conflict and building peace as core aims, the programmes are designed to take place within the formal educational system, and as such the broader relationship between education systems and peacebuilding issues is an important contextual consideration. Whilst approaches to both GCE and peacebuilding

education address the many forms of violence that underpin conflict and perpetuate injustice, from the outset it is important to identify that schools are recognised as institutions where many forms of violence are sustained (Harber, 2004; Harber & Sakade, 2009; Pinheiro, 2006). With the presence of bullying, prejudice and punishment, schools may be sites of both direct physical and often hidden structural violence (Harber, 1998). The focus of such violence may vary, for example gendered and racialised violence is identified as a particular issue for a number of schools (Harber, 1998; Harber, 2004; Leach & Mitchell, 2006). As the educational experiences of young people can be affected by the violence prevalent in many aspects of formal schooling, questions are raised as to how educational approaches which seek to address certain forms of violence can operate within systems and structures which are potentially complicit in perpetuating other types of violence. More specifically, can there be compatibility between education programmes concerned with addressing the causes and consequences of violent conflict, and the policy and practices of educational establishments, themselves linked to the perpetuation of forms of violence?

Other research has considered that violence may include militarised forms of schooling, connecting educational policy and practice to large scale conflict (Davies, 2004a; Saltman, 2007; Nelles, 2003; Harber, 2004). Bush and Saltarelli (2000) categorise the positive and negative effects - or faces - of education in relation to larger scale violent conflict. On the negative face, they argue that the uneven provision of schooling may perpetuate educational and consequently socio-economic inequalities, and in doing so serve to fuel on-going conflict. On the positive face, inclusive peace-centred practices can challenge violent conflict. This dichotomous framework portrays education as either positive or negative, neglecting the possibility that complex educational systems or processes may simultaneously prevent and perpetuate violence – for example, an education programme (which supports social cohesion) taking place in



a school with a selection policy which damages social cohesion. Conceptualising such a complex relationship is a tall order, and despite lacking intricacy, the framework has provided a notable foundation for subsequent research into the relationship between education and conflict (Davies, 2004a, 2010). Most critically, the framework identifies that by no means can education be viewed as an inalienable good.

More recent academic research has undertaken a deeper exploration of the entanglements between conflict and educational policy and practice. In a comprehensive critical examination of a number of complex intersections between education and conflict, Davies (2004a) analyses a number of educational approaches which have attempted to address conflict, whilst also providing a notable exploration of numerous educational contributions to violent conflict. In providing a critical analysis of the relationship between formal education and negative conflict, Davies (2004a) provides the basis for a contextual assessment of the role of education, and highlights the need for substantial educational transformation. It is unsurprising that, particularly in regions severely affected by violent conflict, there is a recognised imperative to move beyond the systems associated with violence and to create an enduring change (Davies, 2004a; Smith & Vaux, 2003). Often the scope of such transformation is perceived to be vast: "the existing educational systems, including the overall educational vision, institutional structure within schools, classroom climate and teacher education, need to shift" (Gill & Niens, 2014a, p. 21). As such, it is unsurprising that in certain contexts, creating conditions which make negative conflict less likely might seem like a more realistic aim (Davies, 2013).

The most urgent requirement for those concerned with the education of young people appears to be an honest appraisal of the extent to which formal education contributes towards perpetuating violence and, within regions more directly affected by war, reinforces the foundations of violent conflict and attenuates any attempts to build

peace. At the very least, education must ensure that it is not reinforcing the wider societal norms which are causes of conflict, before it may consider operating as a force for positive change (Davies, 2010).

This compelling body of research suggests that, at worst, schools can be places where young people experience violence in many forms, and that educational establishments, and the systems they operate within can make a considerable contribution towards perpetuating violent conflict. Yet still, numerous educational programmes seek to address conflict from within these structures. A deeper analysis of this paradoxical relationship reveals a number of tensions. For Harber and Sakade (2009) the presence of deep-rooted violence and militarisation, coupled with an absence of democracy and human rights within schools, limits the compatibility between formal education structures and educational approaches which seek to address conflict. In addition to the challenges faced by peacebuilding programmes in terms of time constraints and limited curricular opportunities, they also note deeper conflicts in the form of “significant and contrasting ideologies of practice” (p. 184, 2009). A clear tension exists between the deeper aims of educational approaches which seek to develop critical consciousness yet take place within systems historically associated with the establishing the compliance of young people. How practitioners perceive and negotiate the relationship between formal education structures and the peacebuilding education programmes they have developed is an important question within this study.

In a similar vein, Levy (2014) suggests that the culture of schools and the nature of educational practice may impact on the potential of peacebuilding education programmes. Multiple education programmes addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict have failed to bring the conflict to an end, which raises a number of questions about the position of schools and the role of teachers in supporting learning about conflict. Levy (2014) calls for a deeper analysis of the barriers to facilitating positive education

approaches which address conflict and citizenship, and an examination of how school culture and practice affect such learning.

It is also important to note that the complex relationship between education and conflict renders the assessment of learning within peacebuilding education programmes which are connected to the broader education system, and indeed wider society, problematic. Davies (2013) highlights the difficulty in evaluating the outcomes of inter-related educational processes, and called for a candid appraisal of the impact of interventions. Elsewhere, there are voices which call for exercising caution in overstating the potential of education programmes, and indeed education more broadly, to address highly complex issues. Brown (2011) warns that an overemphasis on the potential of education to overcome conflict may create aspirations that cannot be matched in reality. This illustrates the need to ensure that further research in this area situates education policy and practice within the wider socio-economic context and remains grounded in theory. Gill and Niens (2014b) make a compelling argument that inflating the potential of education to address violent conflict also appears to transfer the huge responsibility for conflict transformation onto the shoulders of young people. Such expectation, it would appear, is not matched by the power that young people hold, both within schools and within societies more broadly. The individual and collective power that young people experience, and are perceived to have within peacebuilding education programmes, as well as their schools and communities influences the action they may or may not take, and is an important consideration for this study.

This substantial literature clearly identifies that in addition to broader societal factors (media, families and communities, for example), the learning which takes place within peacebuilding education programmes is also framed by formal education structures. Further research in this area must be attentive to the multiple factors which influence the nature of conflict, as well as how young people experience and understand

it. Ultimately, as Levy (2014) suggests, “where the environment is not conducive to the development of mutual understanding and peaceful coexistence, can we reasonably expect the school to be an isolated enclave in which education for peace is promoted, and thus contribute to the changing of the non-peaceful reality?” (p. 102).

### **3.3 Spaces for Peacebuilding on the Curriculum**

Through its promotion of particular skills, knowledge, attitudes and values, the curriculum is integral to how teaching and learning is organised within schools. Whilst certain knowledge is promoted, other knowledge is delegitimised (Apple, 2000; Bickmore, 2006). Adding further complexity to the situation, contradictory discourses may coexist across educational policies (Carnoy & Levin, 1985). Most importantly in relation to this study, how young people learn about conflict is framed by educational curricula (Tawil & Harley, 2004). In certain cases, long established and often unquestioned educational policy and practice can serve to contribute to conflict (Davies, 2005a). Educational policy, and in particular the curriculum frames how young people directly and indirectly learn about conflict. Exploring the intersection between peacebuilding education programmes and the national curricula of NI and the RoI is an important focus.

A recent report suggests that the nature of young people's understanding of historical events which have shaped contemporary NI were in part moulded by formal education, and although the study of history was pivotal within this formation, the report also highlights the cross-curricular relevance of language, literature, citizenship, drama, the arts and religious education, as well as events outside of the classroom such as school visits (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010). There are a number of curriculum areas within which young people may learn directly about conflict. Within history education, learning about historical conflict may have direct links to contemporary

issues. Identity-based factors form points of division in conflicts, and as such the teaching of religion and languages can be areas of particular tension. Subjects such as arts and literature are often closely linked to identity and may be sites of peacebuilding learning. It is important to recognise that other subjects have a part to play in shaping how young people learn about conflict. Indeed, there are examples of conflict-related content existing within subjects not noted for their identity-based connections, for example a violent military action being used as the context for a learning activity in a mathematics textbook (Davis, 2002).

The previous chapter identified the more conspicuous connections between GCE programmes and the national curricula of both NI and the RoI. As conflict-related learning may take place in a number of different subjects, it is important for this research to explore how GCE programmes are not only connected to the citizenship curricula of NI and RoI, but also to examine the nature of their connections to other curricular areas. It is also important to consider aspects of the programmes in addition to the statutory curriculum, particularly as there are questions as to whether traditional modes of curricula, with their connections to societal discourse which neglects ethical dimensions, can support peace and in particular reconciliation (du Preez, 2014).

Tawil (2001) suggests that the impact of education in relation to conflict may move beyond the written policies of schools, to a “hidden curriculum” which can transmit values, attitudes and beliefs to students. Indeed, schools can contribute towards conflict in indirect ways (Davies, 2004). School assemblies, extra-curricular activities and school publications are other examples of sites of learning which occur outside the classroom, and possibly outside the curriculum, yet may shape how young people learn about conflict. In an exploration of how young people are taught and learn about conflict, considering the contribution of these wider educational practices, which may not always be immediately evident, is of importance (McMurray & Niens, 2012). The

scope of further investigative research must consider the curriculum that exists outside of the boundaries of the classroom, both in terms of wider school policy and the ethos and culture of schools and classrooms.

Supplementary to the curriculum, educational resources also have a bearing on how young people learn about conflict (Smith & Vaux, 2003; Smith, 2010) and about global issues (Bryan & Bracken, 2011). A critical analysis of the design and development of the educational resources associated with GCE programmes which address conflict related issues is an important aspect of this research.

### **3.4 Setting the Conceptual Framework: A Typology of Teaching about Conflict**

The complex relationship between education and conflict necessitates a conceptual framework which can support a deep examination of teaching and learning about conflict (Smith & Vaux, 2003). Whilst a number of frameworks provide broad conceptualisations of the relationship between education and conflict, a number of more recent frameworks have explored specific aspects of the relationship in greater detail (Bar-Tal, Rosen & Nets-Zehngut, 2010; ). Smith and Smith Ellison (2012) provide a framework which conceptualises approaches to addressing issues of conflict and peace within schools. On the one hand, conflict management approaches are identified. These methods involve the development of methods such as intergroup contact and bridge building activities, which develop civic knowledge. On the other, peacebuilding programmes, which consider inequality and power through fostering political literacy and engagement, are identified. This framework delineates the development of knowledge and understanding from the application of knowledge through engagement. The focus and depth of such a framework would appear useful in facilitating a critical exploration of the objectives and outcomes of a range of educational approaches to promoting equity, equality, harmony, social justice and social cohesion, and decreasing

violence (in all forms), conflict and trauma, and in doing so contribute towards education which develops peace. This framework provides a useful categorisation of particular approaches to directly and indirectly facilitate learning for peace, and focus on the potential positive contribution of education towards mitigating armed conflict.

Broader frameworks, developed to further understand the relationship between education and conflict, highlight the paradoxical potential of education (Bush and Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2004) yet this critical understanding appears absent from the majority of conceptual frameworks which focus on the teaching and learning of conflict. One exception to this is the Typology of Teaching about Conflict through Citizenship Education (Davies, 2005a). In spite of recognising the challenges of generating a theoretical framework in this field, Davies (2005a) offers a suggestion of how some of the main channels through which the theory and practice of teaching which contributes towards conflict and peace can be identified, and explored.

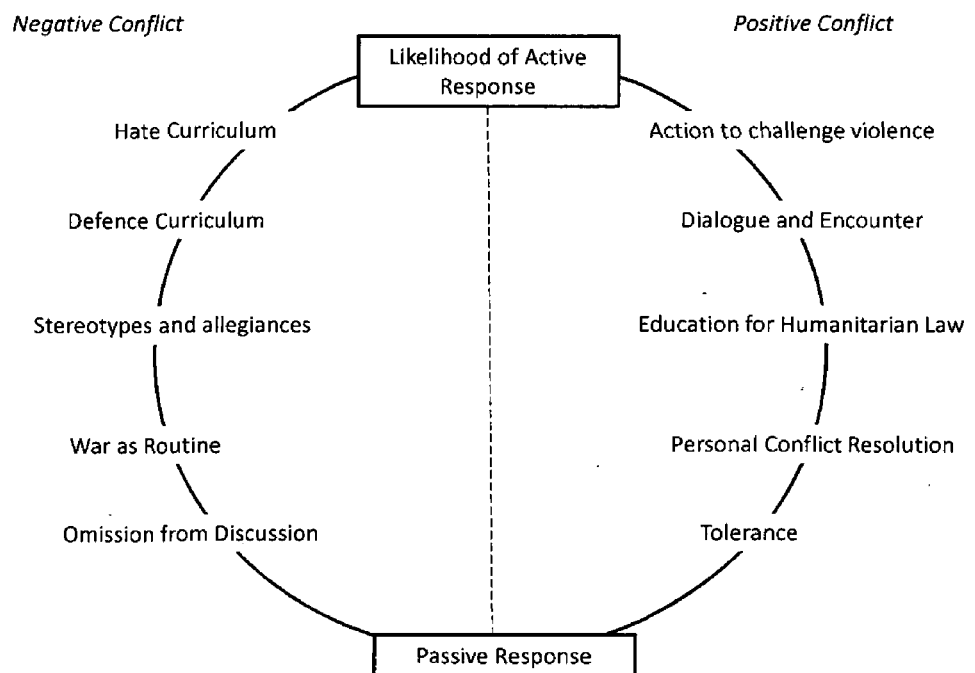


Figure 1: Typology of Teaching about Conflict through Citizenship Education (Davies, 2005a)

The Typology of Teaching about Conflict through Citizenship Education differentiates ten particular modes of conflict-related teaching in relation to the nature of conflict they engender (negative conflict/positive conflict), and the level of action (active/passive response) that they facilitate. The horizontal axis represents a continuum of conflict which ranges from educational approaches which are deemed to facilitate positive conflict, to those which are deemed to lead to negative conflict.

Davies' (2005a) typology is inclusive of approaches that facilitate creative, constructive, and positive conflict, whilst at the same time recognising that certain modes of teaching about conflict can lead to negative conflict. As such, it offers an important critical framework for exploring the theory and practice of teaching about conflict and, in doing so, the basis of a conceptual model which supports the investigation of how young people learn about conflict through participation in GCE programmes on the island of Ireland.

Davies (2005a) herself bemoans the lack of focus on learner response within the index, and indeed the impact of the approaches identified within the framework would clearly depend on the context within which the learning was taking place, and most importantly, for the individual circumstances of the young people involved. This particular analysis highlights the opportunity for this study to utilise the conceptual framework in a manner that positions young people centrally, through a focus on learning as well as teaching. Davies' valid criticism aside, this typology has potential in that it takes a large step closer to the young people whose experiences and perceptions are conspicuous in their absence from a great deal of research in this area. Such a framework certainly supports positioning young people at the centre of research into the relationship between education and conflict, and might ensure that young people's voices illuminate research into the longer term impact of teaching about war and conflict. Indeed, as this framework focuses on the teaching opportunities that may take



place in regard to issues of conflict, it would appear useful as a means of identifying a number of the conflict-related learning opportunities that young people are presented with within schools, and supporting a deeper exploration of how young people are positioned within, and learn about conflict through, peacebuilding education programmes. Importantly, the framework remains open to the possibility that education can contribute towards violent conflict.

The remainder of this chapter is constructed around the framework suggested by Davies (2005a). This review of literature references Davies' original theoretical justifications for each category within the framework and, where appropriate, I offer an analysis of additional sources of literature which address the theory and practice of conflict-related learning, as well as those sources which grapple with similar themes as a part of approaches to teaching about GCE. The levels of action (or inaction) form part of an on-going discussion in relation to each mode of teaching, and receive a deeper analysis in the final section of this chapter.

### **3.4.1 Modes of teaching for negative conflict**

Conflicts are an inescapable feature of society, are to the most part resolved without damage or harm, and may lead to an improved situation for all involved (Fisher et al., 2000). For Deutsch (1973), such constructive conflict is the cornerstone of societal interaction. However, certain conflicts have damaging consequences for those involved. These negative conflicts range from the personal, to group conflict, including armed conflict (Uppsala, 2013). Negative conflict is often associated with violence, as actions which limit the lives of others (Fisher et al., 2000). Such conflict may be reinforced by direct physical violence as well as structural violence (where institutions fail to meet basic needs), and cultural violence, as "the aspects of culture...used to justify or legitimise structural or direct violence" (Galtung, 1990, p. 291).

Davies' (2005a) typology identifies five modes of teaching that, she argues, may lead to negative conflict. Exploring these modes of teaching through this framework serves two purposes. Firstly, it foregrounds a research perspective that countenances that certain educational approaches may lead to negative conflict, whether intentionally or otherwise. Secondly, it advances a critical examination of the tensions within education systems, and of the extent to which peacebuilding education programmes might be seeking to actively challenge modes of teaching which support negative conflict.

#### *3.4.1.1 The denigration or "hate curriculum"*

Deemed to prompt the greatest degree of negative action from learners, Davies identifies modes of teaching built upon denigration, or hate. Davies (2005a) presents a number of examples of educational approaches where the enemy is graphically illustrated in denigrating terms, while the other side are positioned as heroes. Davies' (2005a) point is illustrated with examples from Bosnia-Herzegovina, where negative portrayals impeded attempts at building peace (Stabback, 2007); in Sri Lanka difference was positioned as eternal and legitimated conflict (GTZ, 2004); in Lebanon history was deemed to determine the future of the conflict (Frayha, 2004); in parts of Europe textbooks containing negative stereotypes remained pervasive, despite the passing of time (Mitter, 2001).

The inclusion of this approach within the typology is supported by additional literature which provided evidence of how stereotypes and the demonisation of groups underpin conflict (Bar-Tal 1996; Firer & Adwan 2004; Papadakis, 2008). Du Preez (2014) argues that such stereotypes underpin typified narratives which, in turn, frame the dominant socio-cultural discourses. When pitted against each other, these form competing narratives which du Preez (2014) argues ensure that complex societal issues

are addressed in a limited manner, posing a reductionist version of events, and entailing a focus on the consequences, as opposed to the causes, of complex issues.

Many of the examples given here involve direct and extreme stereotyping associated with the deligitimisation of certain groups, which is used to justify violence, therefore perpetuating conflict (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). However, there is also recognition that education programmes seeking to address negative conflict, particularly those in conflict-affected regions, can serve to offer both to cement attitudes despite their intentions (Salomon, 2004). A critical examination of how peacebuilding education programmes challenge the conceptualisation of social division and violent conflict as immemorial and inevitable is an important consideration for this research.

#### ***3.4.1.2 Teaching for defence and militarisation***

Davies (2005a) identifies that particular modes of teaching are grounded in militarisation and the teaching of particular skills which can be applied within a violent conflict. In the aftermath of violent conflict in the region of the former Yugoslavia which occurred between 1991 and 1999, school textbooks which taught the use of weaponry were uncovered (Davies, 1999). In other regions, military training has been a recognised part of schooling, for example where such practice was used to support the apartheid regime in South Africa.

Davies (2005a) also identifies approaches which aimed to prepare young people for military involvement through military education, such as the cadets in the UK and the preparatory army courses in Israel. While they may not focus on military skills for direct combat use, the knowledge and understanding addressed within such approaches is deeply connected to wider military structures. As the militarisation of education systems is reflective of broader issues of militarisation of society (Gor, 2003), how young people are taught about themes such as militarisation is an important

consideration. Indeed, Najcevska (2000) argues that, in the absence of theoretical teaching of peace and non-violence, curricular representations of militarism, often grounded in history, have a legitimising effect on how young people perceive conflict. The extent to which peacebuilding education programmes on the island of Ireland address themes such as militarisation requires deeper critical examination.

#### ***3.4.1.3 National stereotypes and allegiances***

Davies (2005a) argues that stereotyping of national and transnational groups has influenced how many young people understand certain conflict-related issues. These stereotypes are problematic for a number of reasons. In certain circumstances, they may be generalised further to create larger stereotypes of groups who follow a particular religion, for example. In other circumstances, these stereotypes may lead to young people developing allegiances which reinforce negative conflict. Davies (2005a) argues that allegiances are a contemporary feature of certain conflicts, with groups geographically divorced from particular conflicts announcing solidarity with groups involved in violent conflict elsewhere in the world. For example, Davies, Harber and Schweisfurth (2002) found evidence of young people in Qatar demonstrating solidarity with Palestinians through the burning of the Israeli flag.

The global dimension is an integral component of GCE Programmes, therefore how these programmes address conflict at the global level requires critical consideration. Just as important is the consideration of how global conflict issues are linked to local, community level conflict. In an example from NI, the flying of Israeli and Palestinian in certain areas since 2002 seeks to draw parallels with the Israel-Palestine conflict, whilst simultaneously addressing issues of legitimation and power (Hill & White, 2008). As a study which is exploring conflict-related elements of such programmes across the island of Ireland, it is also important to consider how conflicts in

different regions of the globe may intersect and the how existing connections between conflict-related issues at local and global level are negotiated.

#### *3.4.1.4 War as routine*

Here Davies (2005a) explored how particular approaches to teaching about violent conflict conceptualise the situation as inevitable. Drawing upon Perera, Wijetunge and Balasooriya's (2004) work based in Sri Lanka, Davies suggests that this approach merges individual episodes of conflict into one continuous narrative and supports assertions that the conflict in Sri Lanka was centred on episodes of conflict, rather than the complex issues at its core. Sánchez Meertens (2013) supports this analysis, identifying how knowledge of the war-history of Sri Lanka has been transferred from institutions (such as policy and textbooks) to spaces of transmission (schools and armed movements), and sustained the legitimization of violence and a three-decade war. There are further examples of how war has been normalised within educational curricula, with one such example from Afghanistan being the incorporation of the action of firing a rocket propelled grenade in a mathematics examination question (Davis, 2002). An overemphasis on teaching about episodes of violent conflict, without the counterbalance of teaching about periods of peace is seen as detrimental to how young people learn about conflict (Davies, 2005a; Firer, 2002). If, and how GCE programmes which address conflict-related issues meet this challenge is an important consideration.

#### *3.4.1.5 Omission from discussion*

The final mode of teaching about conflict which is considered as a potential contributor to negative conflict, is not what is taught, but what is not taught. Davies (2005a) argues that content which is omitted from curricula has an important part to play in the teaching of negative conflict, supporting her point with a number of

examples. In the Northern Irish context an absence of teaching which tackled sectarianism is identified (Arlow, 2004). Violent conflict in an Indian context was a notable absence from educational approaches in the aftermath of the assassination of Indira Gandhi (Davies, 2005a). The omission of aspects of Japanese history, argued to be 'denial history', another pertinent example (Davies, 2005a).

Davies provides a theoretical grounding to this aspect of the typology by drawing upon Salmi (2000), who theorises that such approaches constitute "violence by omission" typified by inaction despite evidence of harm. This approach has connections to other literature in this area which supports the addition of "omission" within the typology. Cole (2007) identifies that such omissions are prevalent in particular subjects: "History education, especially textbooks (...) can be construed as a part of the official acknowledgement of past injustices or can show the lack thereof" (p. 123). Whilst such gaps in the teaching of conflict could limit the development of learners' critical thinking in relation to such issues, they may contribute to negative conflict in other ways. For Sánchez Meertens (2013), the implications of deficits within the curriculum go beyond that of limiting the opportunities for the development of certain skills, as she argues that, within the context of Sri Lanka, omission itself leaves space for extremism. This perspective on omission certainly suggests a more active response than Davies' (2005a) typology represents, and identifies the importance of a context specific approach to research in this area.

Aspects of conflict-related knowledge and understanding that have been omitted from teaching may not be so easily discernible. Although such voids may be difficult to identify, they must be considered within further research. Exploring the perceptions of educators in relation to the content and themes that have been included and omitted in the development of GCE programmes which address conflict-related issues is an important task.

### ***3.4.1.6 Concluding the Negative Conflict Dimension***

The negative potential of education in relation to violent conflict is apparent from the broader literature in this area, and peacebuilding education programmes can by no means be absolved of this possibility, simply in light of their intended outcomes. From this analysis of the practices that have been and can be employed as means of teaching for negative conflict, it is apparent that this study must maintain a critical awareness of the negative possibilities of general and more focused education practices. Employing a critical framework which is open to the possibility that educational approaches could foster stereotypes and hate, can support militarism and may provide incomplete, exclusive and simplified knowledge, is necessary in order to garner a deeper understanding of how peacebuilding education programmes are conceived, practised, and experienced in post-primary schools on the island of Ireland.

## **3.4.2 Modes of teaching for positive conflict**

### ***3.4.2.1 Social and political tolerance***

Amongst the modes of teaching purported to facilitate positive conflict, Davies (2005a) distinguishes modes of teaching which addressed tolerance, within a multicultural framework, as passive yet positive. Davies (2005a) offers no empirical or theoretical support for the inclusion of tolerance within the framework, but suggests that it may hold potential as a means of broaching issues such as prejudice. Yet, the theme of tolerance in relation to peacebuilding and citizenship education has received notable analysis in a number of contexts. Projects developed to support Northern Irish curricular change in the early 1980s were focused on the ideals of mutual understanding, respect and tolerance (Dunn, 1986). More recently, Smith and Robinson (1996) identify that tolerance, alongside respect, was a key pillar of the Education for Mutual Understanding policy. The focus on tolerance during a time of on-going violence is

perceived to be a tool in supporting the cessation of armed conflict, and remains a central tenet of a number of peace agreements (Dupuy, 2008). Bar-Tal, Rosen and Nets-Zehngut (2010) argue that approaches which address social tolerance (controlling and preventing negative stereotypes) and political tolerance (dealing with views or actions with which you do not agree) are appropriate prior to formal peace processes. Particular educational approaches seek to address these issues, where a focus on the tolerance of different views exists within broader frameworks of tolerance between groups (Terra, 2013). Tolerance is recognised as a key aim or specific learning outcome of many peacebuilding education programmes in a range of contexts (Salomon, 2002, 2006) belying an expectation that tolerance will underpin, or at least influence, the knowledge and understanding of learners.

Importantly, the employment of tolerance and its associated frameworks as a means of facilitating peacebuilding learning is not without analysis. Firstly, the employment of multicultural approaches which emphasise difference has received criticism (see Gallagher, 2011b; Brubaker, 2002; Modood, 2005). Elsewhere, the ideals of multiculturalism and associated tolerance are deemed too simplistic, as they ignoring the ever changing nature of culture (Davies, 2006). It is also argued that adopting a focus on tolerance fails to address the complex issues which are at the heart of violent conflicts (Duffy, 2000). Indeed, a focus on simplistic forms of tolerance may crowd out opportunities for critical forms of learning. Through analysis of the conflict and social justice related components of Canadian national curricula, Bickmore (2006) reveals a prominence of multicultural ideals at the expense of critical content, and argues that this limits young people's opportunities to contribute towards peace and social justice. The level of passivity attached to approaches built around tolerance is clear, and there is scant evidence of modes of teaching built on multiculturalism and tolerance facilitating more active outcomes, for example how intolerance could be challenged. With the lack



of connection to action, it is therefore surprising that the concept of tolerance has been positioned as a central theme within the broader architecture of GCE (UNESCO, 2013). Moving beyond this passivity is vital if GCE which addresses issues of conflict is to be a “highly political education, not simply a bland multiculturalism, unquestioning ‘tolerance’ or ‘being nice to each other.’” (Davies, 2008, p. 4).

#### ***3.4.2.2 Personal conflict resolution***

As I have already discussed, conflict can be experienced on multiple levels, and it is to the micro-level that the approach of personal conflict resolution relates. Programmes addressing the resolution of conflict dominate the current research on peace education (Salomon, 2006) and to what extent educational initiatives addressing peace move beyond the personal dimension of conflict resolution requires further research. Davies (2005a) identifies a number of techniques which aim to provide young people with tools to address the very different forms of conflict in their own lives – “conflict prevention, negotiation and bargaining, mediation, arbitration, anger management, consensus seeking and restorative justice” (p. 26). Salomon (2004) distinguishes conflict resolution from other educational approaches, in light of its interpersonal focus, as opposed to collective issues and inter-group conflict. Harris (2004) suggests that conflict-resolution education remains predominant in the West, based in part on the work of Montessori (1974), and more recently through frameworks such as the Quaker Project on community conflict.

Elsewhere, a focus on interpersonal conflict is viewed as an essential component of broader frameworks aiming to address conflict. Indeed, Levy (2014) argues that research which explores the teaching and learning of conflict must consider all levels of conflict, including the interpersonal. Whether approaching peacebuilding issues through personal conflict resolution comes as part of a broader framework or not, there are

important questions about the extent to which this mode of teaching allows young people to connect learning about conflict at an interpersonal level to conflict and violence that takes place outside of the school context (Davies, 2010; Harris, 2004). Even when such links are made, exploration of conflict at local and national levels appears important in order to avoid an unreasonable leap from the interpersonal to the international, or as Davies (2005a) describes, “from Janet and John to genocide” (p. 29).

#### *3.4.2.3 Frameworks of Humanitarian Law and Human Rights*

Drawing on the work of Tawil (2001), Davies (2005a) identifies that educational approaches built around international humanitarian law have been utilised in Djibouti, NI, Lebanon, South Africa and Morocco. Focused explicitly on the humanitarian laws enacted in times of war, Education for Humanitarian Law (EHL) aims to support learners to view complex local and global conflicts with a humanitarian perspective, and to facilitate action around the protection and promotion of humanitarian attitudes (Tawil, 2000). Davies (2005a) argues that EHL may open dialogue around shared experiences and foreground collective action. EHL has served as the basis for teaching resources and teachers’ continuing professional development in NI (Devine & Coffey, 2007) but there is little critical analysis of such an approach. Furthermore, how action is facilitated through EHL-based peacebuilding education programmes on the island of Ireland requires a deeper examination.

Whilst an investigation of the use of EHL within peacebuilding education programmes is warranted, there is a substantial body of research which considers peacebuilding education through other international humanitarian frameworks. Tawil (2000) argues that EHL has clear links to CE and Human Rights Education (HRE) and whilst the latter is not included within Davies’ (2005a) typology, the volume of

associated literature warrants inclusion within this study, and as such the following section provides a critical analysis of HRE and peacebuilding education.

HRE is posited as one particular approach to dealing with peacebuilding issues in particular within countries affected by conflict (Davies, 2013). Davies (2010b) suggests that citizenship education, with a strong human rights component, is a potential strategy in addressing violent conflict. Guided by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, HRE approaches to addressing matters of peace and conflict focus on the achievement of justice in light of the basic dignity of individuals (Harris, 2004). Flowers et al. (2007) go as far as identifying educational approaches concerned with peace as a particular type of HRE and for the UN (2006) "the building and maintenance of peace" is one of the key objectives of HRE. Tibbitts (2002) offers an alternative conceptualisation of the objectives of HRE in relation to conflict: protection, participation and conflict resolution.

Brander et al. (2012) argue that educational approaches that originate from a HRE perspective can lead to a more nuanced critical understanding of peace, and also support the development of socio-economic conditions that may create long term peace. They propose three dimensions of HRE: learning about HR, learning through HR and learning for HR. In a similar tract, Waldron (2010) suggests that HRE "extends beyond knowledge to include dispositions, attitudes and skills and it is action-orientated" (p. 2). Bajaj (2011) also identifies that the consensus on HRE is built around the need for participatory practice which supports content, skills and action-related objectives, but questions whether HRE loses its grounding in activism within curricular developments. In theory, each of these conceptualisations of HRE suggests that learners can move beyond the acquisition of knowledge and development of skills towards some means of application and action. Exploring both the theory and practice of HRE and the extent to

which peacebuilding educational initiatives seek transformation also requires consideration.

Despite a lack of theoretical consensus on HRE, it has emerged as a feature of GCE, particularly within post-conflict contexts (Bajaj, 2011). Whilst GCE allows development of human rights and citizenship education (Davies, 2000) tensions between human rights and citizenship education, due to the corresponding global and societal focus, remain (Kiwani, 2005). Bajaj (2004) maintains that HRE should be taught as a complex and contested theme and it is therefore important to consider whether human rights frameworks which serve as a unifying framework in certain conflict-affected situations remain open to critical analysis in the context of peacebuilding education.

Research from Bajaj (2011) and Cardenas (2005) considers the stakeholders involved in the promotion and implementation of HRE, and illustrate the importance of exploring organisations involved in the design and implementation of education initiatives aimed at addressing issue of conflict and peace. Bajaj (2011) suggests that NGOs have long held a position of framing social approaches in relation to HRE, in particular responses built upon an educational approach. As this study is concerned with the perceptions and experiences of educators who have developed peacebuilding education programmes through organisations such as NGOs, the use of HR is an important consideration here.

#### *3.4.2.3.1 The position of responsibility within Human Rights?*

Whilst Davies (2010b) identifies the potential of educational approaches which galvanise human rights centred approach, critics argue that this framework cannot stand alone. Giri and van Ufford (2004) question the foundations of contemporary rights frameworks without inclusion of the “challenge and calling of responsibility” (p. 4).

They call for transformations based on the practice and perspective of shared responsibility. Exploring the responsibilities attached to particular frameworks may provide the opportunity to consider the types of action that are predicated. Indeed, whilst HRE is grounded in a framework based on individual entitlement, the universality of such an approach opens up a wider question of how "the responsibility to accord others those same rights" is addressed (Davies, 2010b, p. 466). Other research is more explicit about the form such responsibility should take. Bar-Tal, Rosen & Nets-Zehngut (2010) argue that any responsibility is for upholding the rights of others, rather than having to meet any responsibility to receive human rights. This point suggests that the discourse around human rights and HRE requires particular examination. For example, when young people participating in peacebuilding education programmes learn about individuals who, in conflict situations, have had their human rights abused, as victims of contraventions of international humanitarian law or otherwise, what responsibility do young people perceive they have and what actions are considered and undertaken in this regard?

#### *3.4.2.4 Dialogue*

Although Davies (2005a) combines dialogue and encounter as one particular approach, in the interests of conceptual clarity I feel it appropriate to deal with both terms individually, although as I will soon discuss, the themes of dialogue and encounter are by no means wholly unrelated.

Whang (2009) defines dialogue in relation to debate: "Unlike debate, which seeks to score points and to persuade, the goal of dialogue, in which small groups of people who hold opposing views on highly divisive and emotional issues are brought together to hold a conversation, is to create mutual understanding and respect—essentially the recognition of the validity of opposing viewpoints" (p. 220). Bohm

(1996) also differentiates dialogue and debate, and as such, the potential of the former in relation to peacebuilding learning. Furthermore, Broome (1993) positions dialogue as an integral part of any transformative approach towards building peace, as it supports the development of new understanding through interaction. Within the Irish context, Hamber and Kelly (2004) argue that dialogue should constitute a cornerstone of attempts to build peace.

In terms of peacebuilding education, dialogue is considered fundamental (Reardon & Cabezudo, 2002). Gill and Niens (2014b) draw on the work of Paolo Freire to justify the promotion of dialogic pedagogy, alongside humanisation, as a means by which peacebuilding education can be developed. Importantly, they assert that transformative potential of such an approach which "equips them [learners] to individually or collectively challenge such situations in order to transform them" (p. 3). The potential of transformation and the action which it requires are as of yet unexplored and require deeper consideration.

In a South African context, du Preez (2014) suggests that a form of dialogue, 'dialogical nostalgia', can support the intersection of competing narratives in post-conflict situations, and as such may influence reconciliation. Elsewhere, Otsuki (2011) critically analyses the role of jointly written history textbooks as a tool for reconciliation that transcends political borders, with a particular focus on publications between China, South Korea and Japan. This research explores the potential of transnational learning opportunities in regions where particular aspects of history are deeply contested and controversial. In the context of NI, although commemorative events may damage social cohesion, they have also been recognised as potential opportunities for inter-community dialogue and learning (Kelly, 2012). Research in this area is given additional weight in light of acts of remembrance and commemoration, which are inextricably linked to identities in NI (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010),

and also within the scope of this study, across the island of Ireland. Of particular relevance to this study, dialogue has framed existing approaches to cross-border educational higher education programmes on the island of Ireland (HEA, 2006).

As Bickmore (2011) identifies, the application of methodologies and learning activities which engage with conflict, such as constructive dialogue, require deeper examination. Gill and Niens (2014) support such a call, as they argue that a focus on dialogical approaches is a necessary component of any further investigation into the theory and practice of peacebuilding education:

We argue that the lack of explicit recognition of dialogic and humanising pedagogical influences has resulted in theoretical ambiguity relating to key concepts. This no doubt precludes the field of peacebuilding education developing and implementing more rigorous empirical research that could bridge the frequently cited gap between theory, research and educational practice. Only by moving the field forward through such empirical research will we be able to highlight effective teaching pedagogies for peacebuilding in a variety of different socio-political and educational contexts." (Gill and Niens, 2014, p. 25)

As well as student to student interactions within learning activities, other dialogue is important to consider. Quaynor (2012) identifies that conflict and peace-related dialogue takes place between students, but also between teachers and students, albeit with differences in the associated dynamics of power. Quaynor (2012) suggests that a focus on this dialogue has potential: "Understanding the ways students and teachers discuss both citizenship and controversial issues within post-conflict contexts will help researchers and teachers to identify the dynamics of these conversations and suggest ways to deepen dialogue across difference while also respecting the sensitive nature of the post-conflict context." (Quaynor, 2012, p. 47). This study must remain open to the

multiple dialogues which involve young people both inside and outside of the classroom.

#### *3.4.2.5 Encounter*

In 1954, Allport proposed a “contact hypothesis” which stated that under particular conditions, interactions between opposing groups can reduce prejudice. This hypothesis has served as the theoretical basis for alternative approaches to schooling in countries affected by violent ethnic conflict (Hughes & Donnelly, 2006). Such contact interventions have played an important role in efforts to manage conflict and promote better relations between Protestants and Catholic groups in NI (Community Relations Unit, 2008) and Arab groups and Jewish groups in Israel (Bar-Tal, 2002). The hypothesis has evolved into “fully-fledged theory” (Hughes et al, 2013, p. 762) underpinning programmes facilitating contact between oppositional groups and challenging the issues attached to social identity which have fuelled the conflict (Cairns, 1982; Hewstone, Cairns, Voci, Hamberger & Niens, 2006).

Whilst the development of cross-community contact is perceived as a success of recent approaches in NI (Kelly, 2012), these developments have come about alongside a number of critical analyses of the approach. Early evaluation of the contact hypothesis suggests that beyond failing to address prejudice, there is evidence that certain approaches worsened situations (Cairns, 1982, p. 159). Niens and Cairns (2005) argue that the prerequisites for any reduction in conflict are status equality between individuals, cooperation through commonality of goals, an avoidance of social competition, and the support of wider institutions. Approaches are perceived to be strengthened by reducing associated anxiety and developing empathy within the process (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008). Hughes (2014) identifies unexpected outcomes for certain programmes, where “even when optimum conditions are present, some contact is



unsuccessful and that in the absence of optimum contact, outcomes can be positive" (p. 195). Other criticism centres on the difficulty of ascertaining causality between contact and relational improvements, and the lack of focus on larger structural change in programmes focused on interpersonal progress (Maoz, 2011).

As Gallagher (2011) observes, collaborative programmes require maintenance and support. Likewise, Niens and Cairns (2005) identify the importance of sustaining contact, and in doing so raised the question as to how educational programmes are affected throughout periods of economic recession, and how the young people who were deemed important enough to be targeted in the first place stand to be affected.

Peacebuilding education approaches focused on encounter are often structured around bringing together young people to consider the issues of identity connected to negative conflict. However, it is important to note that aspects of identity may be overlooked. Cockburn's (1998) exploration of women's movements operating in conflict-affected contexts illustrates the tensions between individual identity and the narrowed collective gender identity. That the exploration of all aspects of young people's identity is considered, represented and understood within peacebuilding education, is an important component of this research. Furthermore, development of gender analysis supports exploration of the experiences and understandings of both young men and young women in peacebuilding research (Smith, 2010). This approach is supported by the incorporation of a conceptual framework developed through a lens of gender (Davies, 2005a).

Niens and Cairns (2005) argue that research in this area can be used to facilitate effective educational interventions, not only in post-conflict societies, but in other contexts with different experiences related to peace and conflict. The application of educational strategies onto countries with varying relationships with local and global conflict is of interest, and offers a possibility as to how young people from different

regions may learn from each other. Whilst some research has examined educational programmes which have operated between opposing sides (Davies, 2004a), a study of educational responses across the island of Ireland may provide the opportunity to consider how additional complex relationships that move beyond the oppositional are taught about and learned. A wealth of research on contact-based peacebuilding education approaches is situated in NI, yet there is limited research which considers the extension of contact-related programmes which transcend the Irish border. As such, this project seeks to consider peacebuilding GCE education programmes on the island of Ireland, including those which operate as cross-border, contact-based programmes.

### **3.4.3. Non-violent action for conflict transformation**

Davies (2005a) provides a typology of educational approaches towards the teaching of conflict in terms of the levels of action that they predicate. This chapter has made repeated reference to various forms of action, often connected to particular approaches to teaching about conflict. Whilst approaches such as fostering tolerance initiate a passive response from learners, other responses are deemed to promote increasingly active responses. Davies (2005a) identifies that educational approaches which support action require deeper examination, and an empirical exploration of how peacebuilding education programmes address the theme of action is a central research question within this study.

As an educational approach perceived to encourage a high likelihood of positive response, Davies (2005a) suggests the concept of “interruptive democracy” (p. 30). Here learners engage in non-violent positive conflict and in doing so take transformative action to challenge injustice. Indeed, a great deal of the research which considers peacebuilding action refers to the importance of transforming violent situations. Bickmore (2005a) argues that citizenship education is an integral aspect of

the transformation of violent conflict. She suggests that education for peacebuilding includes "difficult citizenship - redressing social fractures and injustices that underlie destructive conflicts" (p. 2). Reardon (1988) considers transformation as fundamental, defining the objective of peace education as "to transform the present human condition by changing the social structures and patterns of thought that have created it" (p. x). Whilst the focus on transformative aims may depend on the specific form of peacebuilding education (Smith, 2010), Gill and Niens (2014b) argue that there has been a "converging conceptualisation of peacebuilding education as dialogic, humanising and transformative."(p. 21).

It is also important to note that this transformation is not only focused on addressing direct violence. Education for peacebuilding "goes beyond 'peace education' to contribute to broader social transformations" (Smith Ellison, 2012, p. 5) and further research argues that that education should consider violence in all its forms (Ardizzone, 2003; Harris, 2004; Smith, 2010). Whether educational programmes aimed at addressing conflict offer a deeper engagement with social, economic and political transformation requires deeper examination (Smith & Smith Ellison, 2012).

Of course, it is important to note that whilst existing research highlights the transformative potential of peacebuilding education, it is not recognised as a panacea for overcoming violence. As Bajaj (2015) identifies, "whether schooling or sites of education themselves can achieve this herculean task of the elimination of all forms of violence at all levels is a constant tension" (Bajaj, 2015, p. 156). Reardon (1988) also recognises that the transformative nature of such a process is a tall order, and as such, peace education approaches can only make a small contribution to overcoming violence and the associated threats to peace. In light of this evidence, a key question for this study surrounds the position of young people. Transformative citizenship education suggests action on behalf of learners, yet questions remain as to "the process by which

people are enabled to intervene in practices which continue injustice” (Davies, 2005a, p. 370). Gill and Niens (2014) assert that transformative educational approaches can support both individual and collective forms of transformative action. Likewise, Davies (2008) suggests that GCE which addresses issues of conflict may have two action-related outcomes. Firstly, learners may develop political skills, such as persuasion, negotiation, lobbying, campaigning and demonstrating. Secondly, they may explore taking joint action, which Davies (2008) describes as “networking through communications technology, starting a website, or joining international forums of young people working for peace” (p. 4). Exploring the opportunities for action within GCE in the RoI, Bryan and Bracken (2011) note that activism is often rooted in fundraising and individual action (for example, signing of petitions), with limited political or collective action, such as involvement in campaigns, staging demonstrations or accompanying protests. A focus on collective action is given added weight when the often under-examined role of women within peacebuilding is explored. Cockburn (1998) recounts the collective action of women towards violent conflict, organised through broad and diverse networks and alliances, built upon democratic processes. Considering both individual and collective forms of citizenship action is an important aspect of this study and in research focused on democratic citizenship education, Westheimer and Kahne (2004) provide a notable framework exploring forms of action. They suggest three conceptualisations of active citizenship. Firstly, the personally responsible citizen who is honest and law-abiding. Secondly, the participatory citizen, who takes an active leadership role within community structures, and understands democratic workings. Finally, a justice-oriented citizen whose deep critical assessment of societal structures supports their transformation of systems and structures which reproduce injustice. Examination of the assumptions which underpin peacebuilding educational approaches will enable an exploration of not only the action that young

people participating within the approaches are supported to take, but also how young people are conceptualised in relation to their action.

Finally, it is important to note that as Bickmore and Kovalchuk (2012) identify, “democratic capacities do not emerge by themselves: agency requires nurture” (p. 590). Young people’s action may depend greatly on the pedagogy and practice of education systems and structures. The development of such agency through education may be challenging (Bickmore, 2006) yet how peacebuilding education programmes support young people to learn about action is an important consideration.

### **3.5 Conclusion**

In spite of the fact that some educational practices have been shown to perpetuate violence, and in certain cases to facilitate the negative involvement of young people within armed conflict, educational programmes have been designed to support young people in building peace. The theories and practices which underpin such approaches vary in light of the contexts within which they operate, but also with regard to the types of action they support young people to take. A deeper exploration of the theoretical foundations underpinning peacebuilding GCE programmes across the island of Ireland could deepen understanding of how conflict is taught about and learned. Furthermore, a study in this area would provide the opportunity to explore further understand how educators involved in the development of such programmes perceive the action-related roles and responsibilities of young people in relation to conflict.

This chapter has provided a comprehensive account of the existing literature exploring peacebuilding education, set against the Typology of Teaching about Conflict through Citizenship Education (Davies, 2005a). The conceptual framework and the additional literature analysed within this chapter provide an lens through which to consider the theoretical foundations for peacebuilding education on the island of

Ireland. More specifically, the axes underpinning the typology offer two important opportunities for this study. Firstly, this lens promotes a focus on the conceptualisation and practice of action within peacebuilding programmes. Secondly, and most importantly, it supports research which remains open to the converse potential of education, as a potential force for peacebuilding, but also as a mechanism which can perpetuate negative conflict.

Finally, this chapter has also provided a justification for the following research questions: Firstly, what theories and practices underpin the teaching and learning of conflict - as conceived and practiced in the RoI and NI - as a dimension of GCE? Secondly, how are young people's participation and agency addressed and experienced within peacebuilding GCE programmes on the island of Ireland?

## **Chapter 4: Research Methods and Methodology Through the Lens of a 'Reflexivity of Discomfort'**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter provides an explanation of the research design underpinning an empirical investigation of peacebuilding education programmes designed for schools across the island of Ireland. More specifically, it provides a justification for the methods and techniques employed within a qualitative study which answers the following research questions:

- What theories and practices underpin the teaching and learning of conflict - as conceived and practiced in the RoI and NI - as a dimension of GCE?
- How is young people's participation and agency addressed and experienced within peacebuilding GCE programmes on the island of Ireland?

Through a lens of "reflexivity of discomfort" (Pillow, 2003), this chapter seeks to illuminate the methodological decisions underpinning this study. The chapter begins with a justification of the role of reflexivity in supporting ethical research which explores the perceptions and experiences of educators and young people in relation to conflict and peacebuilding. The chapter then moves to explore the key components of the methodology underpinning this study, as represented in Figure 2.

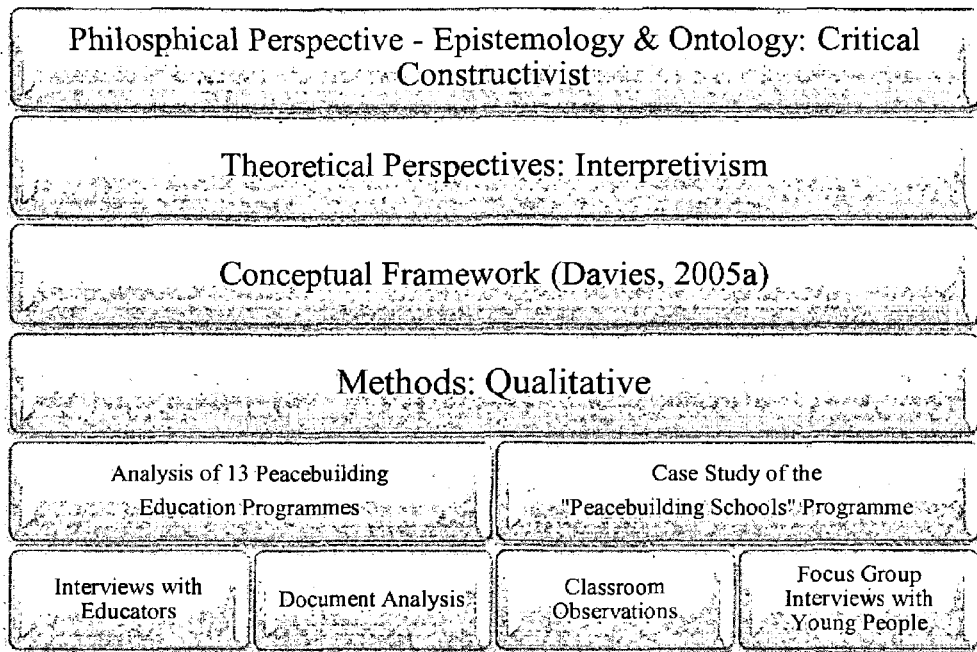


Figure 2: Research methodology and methods overview

Firstly, I set out my position in relation to the theories of knowledge and reality which underpin my theoretical framework and methodology, in response to Cresswell's (2009) call for a qualitative constructivist format which throws light onto the philosophical assumptions underpinning research. The chapter then proposes qualitative research as a means of answering the central research questions. Following the framework suggested by Phellas, Bloch and Seale (2011), I explore the critical decisions connected to the research population and sample, the research instruments and the analysis of data. In respect to the latter, I offer a deeper explanation of the analytical framework employed throughout the research process with reference to the transcription, description, analysis, interpretation and display of data (Brenner, 2006). I address these components in a systematic manner here, but it is important to note that in light of the holistic nature of this study, the philosophical perspectives, methodology and method, should be considered deeply interrelated.



## 4.2 “Reflexivity of Discomfort” as a Means of Constructing Ethical Research

An important factor to consider within the process of research is the position of the researcher. Indeed, research can be described as an “interactive process, shaped by one’s personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5). Reflexivity is considered to be one means of exploring and deepening understanding of the relationship between researcher and researched (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2000; Berger, 2013; Finlay, 2002). It offers an explicit explanation of how the personal biography of the researchers shapes their research (Mauthner & Doucet, 1998) and is a means of countering research which ignores these foundations, or what can be described as the “view from nowhere” (McCarthy, 1994, p. 15). For a study focused on gaining a deeper analysis of peacebuilding contexts such as the island of Ireland, there is a need for critical reflection focused on connections between the research process and personal biography (Schierenbeck, 2015). Furthermore, reflexivity is also recognised as an important element of research exploring the lives of children (J. Davis, 1998; Punch, 2002). It is also important to note that reflexivity is a key component of critical approaches to GCE (Andreotti, 2006; Engel, 2014; Rizvi, 2009) and forms of peacebuilding practice (Bekerman, 2004; Hamber & Kelly, 2004; Zembylas, 2012a, 2012b).

As Pillow (2003) identifies, reflexivity is deeply connected to ethical research. For example, it offers an important conceptual lens to understand procedural (ethical approval) and practical (matters arising during the research process) research ethics (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). In relation to the former, this study was granted full ethical approval by the Research Ethics Committee of St. Patrick’s College (Appendix N), yet practical research ethics remained an ongoing concern. As this study utilised a critical interpretive approach to explore the experiences of educators and participants involved within peacebuilding education projects across the island of Ireland, ethical concerns,

such as the well-being of participants, were central to the key methodological decisions. Through an engagement with reflexivity, this research aimed to respect the rights, and ensure the well-being of all participants, and support future research and researchers (Connolly, 2003; DYA, 2012).

Reflexivity is clearly recognised as an important component of qualitative research, yet, in light of its complex and contested nature, questions remain as to how meaningful reflexivity can be best pursued (Finlay, 2002). In response to this challenge, this chapter is structured around what Pillow (2003) describes as “reflexivity of discomfort”. This reflexive lens does not seek any singular “truth” and is not a vehicle for transcending subjectivity. Instead, it provides a methodological tool which supports an on-going process of vigorous self-awareness, questioning the personal assumptions, habits and practices connected to the multiple levels of conflict my research seeks to explore. Pillow (2003) describes this approach as “a move to use reflexivity in a way that would continue to challenge the representations [research] came to while at the same time acknowledging the political need to represent and find meaning” (p. 193). Through this lens, I identify a number of discomfiting critical incidents which took place during the research process and prompted analysis of the relationship between myself as researcher and the research process. These incidents are drawn from a reflexive journal which I have kept from the start of the research process. Whilst this journal is itself located in the emotional and intellectual challenges of the research process (Mauthner & Doucet, 2003) it offers reflection on the fluid position of researcher (Berger, 2013) and illuminates the intersection between my personal biography, the research process and my personal reflections on this interaction, and provides useful insight into the production of knowledge within this study.

### **4.3 Personal Biography and the Rationale for this Study**

Whilst this chapter provides a discussion of the reflexive process undertaken throughout this study, this represents just one stage of a wider intellectual journey. A number of factors within my personal biography have shaped my understanding of the relationship between education and conflict, but what follows remains an important experience.

On the 7<sup>th</sup> July, 2005 a series of suicide bomb explosions across central London killing 52 people and injuring over 700. As a citizenship teacher and form tutor in an inner London secondary school the incident became the source of a huge amount of discussion within the classroom.

I had taught citizenship in the school for three years. Although I had trained and was primarily employed as a physical education teacher, I had taken up the offer of some citizenship hours with some excitement. I had a strong interest in politics at a local and global level and whilst the lack of training presented an ongoing challenge, I enjoyed exploring sometimes controversial themes with young people.

Although I had experience of teaching about aspects conflict within the theory dimension of P.E. (for example, in exploring sport during apartheid South Africa), discussions which dealt with more contemporary conflicts proved a particular challenge. In classes made up of high numbers of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, certain aspects of conflict had a personal dimension. A number of young people had direct experience of violent conflict before migrating to London sometimes with families, sometimes alone. Others had strong familial connections to ongoing conflicts across the globe. With the terror attacks, young people's understanding of aspects of conflict was derived from their experiences in London.

Despite my apprehensiveness to engage in discussion of conflict within citizenship education lessons, young people wanted to know more about why conflicts

happened, and what could be done to stop them happening. In spite of concerted efforts to support their learning, I reflected that I did not know enough.

When the opportunity arose to deepen my understanding of the relationship between education and conflict, I undertook a Master's thesis which explored the lives of young people who had arrived in Ireland as refugees and those seeking asylum, and the challenges faced by teachers who sought to support their educational achievement and well-being. Although this research developed my understanding of the consequences of conflict for many young people, I had a number of questions about how violent conflict was taught about in schools. It is from this personal perspective that this thesis was born.

#### **4.4 Exploring Identity-Based Conflict from a Perspective of Critical Constructivism**

There is a need for social researchers to be explicit about their philosophical perspectives (Grix, 2002). By elucidating the epistemological and ontological positions underpinning this research, I hope to shed light on my personal understanding of what constitutes valid knowledge, how this knowledge can be obtained, of what constitutes social reality and how this is understood (Guba, 1990). Engagement with epistemology is an important consideration for peacebuilding educational research, since the way in which "truth" is understood and played out through educational theory and practice, is of such importance (Smith, 2010).

From a constructivist perspective, knowledge is created by the interaction of individuals and an interpretation of meanings (Crotty, 1998). As a researcher, I recognise that my individual experiences, identity and presence within the field have an important influence on the interactions which take place during my research and subsequently the knowledge this research explores (Flick, 2007). As part of my personal

identity, factors such as language, gender, social class, race and ethnicity affect the research process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Berger (2013) raises the important question as to “whether different aspects of [a] researcher’s positionality have differential effects on reflexivity and how the impact of such aspects depends on the topic under study” (p. 231). For a study exploring peacebuilding citizenship education, my perceptions and practical experiences of citizenship-related identity became important considerations.

After a series of email communications with [potential participant], we had arranged to meet face to face...I entered his office and greeted him. On hearing my voice, [potential participant] expressed surprise that I wasn’t Irish. “I thought from your surname you were Irish! I didn’t realise you were English!”. “I’m actually Welsh!” I replied. “Oh, I’m sorry!” he responded. Although I was well aware of the impact that researcher identity could have on research (particularly in my area), I hadn’t really considered with any great depth the role that my own identity could play with the research. What might my Welshness or Britishness mean to the individuals involved within my research? What does my national identity mean to me in the context of this study? How would my research be perceived by the participants in light of my perceived identity, the location of my studies or the nature of my research funding? (Reflexive Journal)

Identity is recognised as having a potential impact on research exploring group relations in NI, although ascertaining the extent appears difficult to gauge (Donnelly, 2008). Reflexivity itself has been identified as an important consideration for local researchers conducting research in NI (A. Finlay, 2001) but this incident prompted reflection on how my position, as a Welsh, British researcher studying within an Irish institution might be perceived. As a result of these considerations, particular emphasis was placed on ensuring that the information provided to participants was as transparent as possible.

The relationship between British and Irish identities remains at the centre of historical and on-going conflict across the island of Ireland and between Britain and Ireland. The event above illustrates some of the complexity underpinning these identities. This reflection provoked a deep consideration of the multiple identities that I bring as researcher and questioned how my own orientations to Wales and Welshness are related to both British and Irish identity within the context of violent conflict. This reinforced the importance of engaging in ongoing reflexivity within the study, both within the research journal and throughout the data collection process, which I shall explore shortly.

Within this extract from my reflexive journal, I also reflected upon how my “Welshness as an expression of citizenship” (K. Smith, 2015, p. 200), formed only one part of “highly liquid, porous, unbounded” personal identity (Thomson & Gunter, 2011, p. 27). This incident troubled my perceptions of the “British” and/or “Irish” identities central to my study, and developed my thinking about identity as “open not boxed” (Todd, 2015, p. 38). Furthermore, this reflection reinforced the need for qualitative research which supported participants to define identity and associated themes in their own terms.

In response to the need to address the forms of identity which are often associated with negative forms of conflict, critical constructivism has been posited as a viable approach to peacebuilding education (Bekerman & Zembylas, 2011; Gill & Niens, 2014; Zehfuss, 2002). More generally, critical constructivism explores the deep connections between teaching, learning and research (Kincheloe, 2009) and, as such, supports an investigation of the theoretical premise for social and educational practice, such as research which explores peacebuilding education programmes. Indeed, deep examination of the theoretical foundations of peacebuilding educational programmes matches well with a philosophical standpoint which argues that “the social, cognitive

and educational theories we hold must be consciously addressed” (Kincheloe, 2005, p. 7). Although the fit between philosophical perspective and the central research questions is apparent, critical constructivism poses a number of challenges for researchers. Within Table 1, I have identified a number of examples of how this research project seeks to meet the challenges identified by Kincheloe (2008).

<b>Challenges of Critical Constructivism</b>	<b>Research Response example</b>
<i>Temporal and spatial positioning of individuals and knowledge.</i>	Reflexive journal focused on experiences and actions of the researcher within the research process.
<i>Connections between teaching-learning-research-knowledge.</i>	Triangulation of qualitative methods to explore teaching-learning interface.
<i>Gaining a thick understanding of the world.</i>	Employment of qualitative research methods including participant observation.
<i>The engagement of students within the knowledge production process.</i>	Central inclusion of the experiences and perceptions of young people.
<i>Complex intersection between student experiences and academic knowledge.</i>	Research methods which support the primacy of young people's perspectives.
<i>The value of non-traditional knowledge.</i>	Theoretical perspective inclusive of non-traditional forms of peacebuilding education.

Table 1: Research response to the challenges of critical constructivism

In doing so, I do not seek to provide an exhaustive list of the links between theoretical perspective and research practice, but instead attempt to illuminate a number of important connections between the epistemological foundations of the study, and the methods and methodology of the research process, which I will return to throughout this chapter.

#### **4.5 A Deeper Understanding of Peacebuilding Education Through Qualitative Research**

The central research questions underpinning this study focus on an exploration of theoretical foundations and practical implementation of peacebuilding citizenship



education programmes. Existing research calls for methodological approaches which enable deep examination of peacebuilding approaches to education (McEvoy-Levy, 2001) and GCE practice (Bryan and Bracken, 2011; Fiedler et al., 2011), thus supporting qualitative forms of research. Whilst a qualitative approach offers the opportunity to deepen understanding of the theory and practice of peacebuilding education, as understood by educators, it also offers an opportunity to consider how peacebuilding education is understood and experienced by young people. In doing so, this study sought to meet the recognised need for qualitative approaches which provide the opportunity for young people to discuss their own experiences and perceptions in relation to conflict (Connolly, 2002; Connolly & Healy, 2004; Connolly, Smith & Kelly, 2002).

Deciding how to approach the collection of data in qualitative research, given the iterative nature of such a project presented a challenge. One on hand research promotes “collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues that are the focus of the research” (Hammersly & Atkinson, 1995, p. 1), however a framework which supports the structured process of qualitative research, drawing on ethnographic approaches, is useful in order to inform at least the early stages of data collection (Miles & Huberman, 1994, cited in Pole & Morrison, 2001, p. 79). Qualitative research methods exploring the perceptions and experiences of educators provided an extensive investigation of a range of peacebuilding programmes, but an in depth exploration of an individual critical case required a combination of various research techniques in order to provide a nuanced picture of happenings from these multiple perspectives (Angrosino, 2007; Pole & Morrison, 2003). The collection and analysis of empirical materials, or what Denzin and Lincoln (2011) describe as “interconnected interpretive practices”, was undertaken through semi-structured interviews, document analysis, observations

and focus groups, which correspond to the central research questions which guide this study (see Table 2).

Research Questions	Designer Interview	Document Analysis	Observation Field Notes	Focus Group Schedule	Teacher Interview
<b>1. What theoretical frameworks underpin the design and practice of peacebuilding GCE programmes developed for schools across the island of Ireland?</b>					
a) What theoretical frameworks do educators employ in facilitating peacebuilding learning?	✓	✓			
b) What is the relationship between theory and practice in the development of these programmes?	✓	✓	✓		✓
c) What is the relationship between these programmes and the schools, education systems and wider societies that they serve?	✓	✓			✓
<b>2. How is action conceptualised and experienced within peacebuilding education programmes?</b>					
a) How is the theme of action addressed within peacebuilding education programmes?	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b) How do educators perceive the roles and responsibilities of young people in relation to conflict?	✓	✓	✓		✓
c) What are young people's perceptions and experiences of action in peacebuilding GCE programmes?			✓	✓	

Table 2: Central research questions and the interconnected interpretive practices

This combination of approaches best meets the need to develop “vivid and lively descriptions of school dynamics” (Mills & Morton, 2013, p. 2) which are key to developing the rich narratives of ethnographic research. These approaches not only enabled an exploration of the “rigor, breadth, complexity, richness and depth” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011, p. 5) of peacebuilding education programmes, but the collection of multiple forms of data provided an important opportunity for triangulation associated with successful qualitative research (Flick, 2007), which I shall return to later in this chapter. The primary data (such as observations, interviews and focus groups) was gathered through face-to-face contact with participants, and the secondary data was collected in order “to locate that data within a wider context” (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p. 47). The context, in the case of this study, represents the temporal and spatial aspects of peacebuilding education programmes, seen as paramount when constructing viable ethnographic research (Mills & Morton, 2013). Illuminating this context is also of importance in developing an understanding of the political and social forces which shape the interactions and relationships between research settings, participants and objects (Fortnum, 2009). Such context and the historical narratives of case studies are of the utmost importance (Flick, 2007), particularly in the exploration of peacebuilding themes where the historical and political environment is of such importance (Novelli & Smith, 2011).

#### **4.6 Locating and Accessing Education Programmes as an ‘Outsider’**

The research process highlighted within this chapter culminated in an exploration of 13 peacebuilding education programmes through document analysis and interviews with 15 key informants. Two of the programmes had two key informants who were each interviewed. One programme was the site for the case study, informed by further interviews with the programme designer, teacher interviews, observations and

focus group interviews with young people. However, the path towards is important to consider.

Being a relative “outsider” has a number of implications. First of all, my lack of networks to secondary schools in NI and RoI and peacebuilding organisations presents a challenge in approaching potential participants from cold, gaining some level of trust and hopefully access to existing peacebuilding programmes. On the other hand, my position might enable me to be open to employment of the sociological imagination. As an outsider, the first step that I take in engaging with potential participants will have an important bearing on the direction of my research. (Reflexive Journal)

The first stage of data collection involved gaining access to the educators currently or recently involved in the design and delivery of peacebuilding education programmes developed for post-primary schools across the island of Ireland<sup>4</sup>. These educators were located across the island of Ireland, some working alone, some working for organisations, some having moved on from their previous roles. Gaining access to such a disparate population posed a methodological challenge and as such, purposive sampling provided the opportunity to engage with a sample of participants (Denscombe, 2007). The literature review identified a number of school-based peacebuilding citizenship education projects which had taken place over the last thirty years on the island of Ireland. With access to the details of these programmes my initial round of approaches focused on the types of organisations who had published details of involvement in such programmes and similar, namely the departments of education,

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<sup>4</sup> Each of the peacebuilding programmes within this study was designed by individuals employed outside of the formal post-primary education system. These programmes took place within post-primary schools across the island of Ireland, including controlled, voluntary and integrated schools in NI, and vocational, community and comprehensive schools in RoI. The duration of programmes ranged from two days through to an entire year’s involvement, specifically for young people on TY programmes in RoI.

regional educational committees/boards and non-governmental organisations across the island of Ireland.

Initial email contact with these bodies, followed by phone calls and in certain cases face to face meetings yielded eight potential participants. These individuals were approached in this initial purposive sampling stage with five agreeing to participate in the study. From this point, I developed a combination sampling approach, drawing upon the work of Cohen and Arieli (2011) which began with quota sampling (research population analysed and subgroups identified; contact with subgroups) before the initiation of parallel snowball sampling (Cohen & Arieli, 2011; Wessel & Hirtum, 2013). As an outside researcher seeking access to critical key informants through underdeveloped networks, snowball sampling methodology<sup>5</sup> was an appropriate sampling approach for the study (Cohen, Manion & Morrisson, 2007). This approach has been utilised successfully with existing research focused on GCE (Bryan & Bracken, 2011) and peacebuilding education (Ben-Nun, 2013; Bickmore, 2005a, 2005b, 2010; Levy, 2014; Nasser, Abu-Nimer & Mahmoud, 2014). It is also recognised as a useful sampling tool in research environments where other methods may be problematic and is considered particularly useful in conflict environments where, even after direct violence may have abated, underlying tensions may remain (Cohen & Arieli, 2011).

The five individuals who participated in the initial phase of the research represent the start of the snowball. At the end of each interview, participants were invited to suggest other potential participants, who were in turn approached, and interviewed once participation was agreed. As well as locating research participants, snowball sampling aids accessing of research participants (Cohen & Arieli, 2011) and

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<sup>5</sup> At its most basic, snowball, or chain sampling makes use of social networks to gather the contact information of potential participants from existing participants, resulting in an accumulation, or “snowball” of potential participants (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Noy, 2008).

indeed in a number of cases, existing participants were not only able to identify existing programmes of interest and potential participants, but were also able to offer introductions to these individuals and organisations. Figure 3 illustrates the step by step process of sampling within this study.

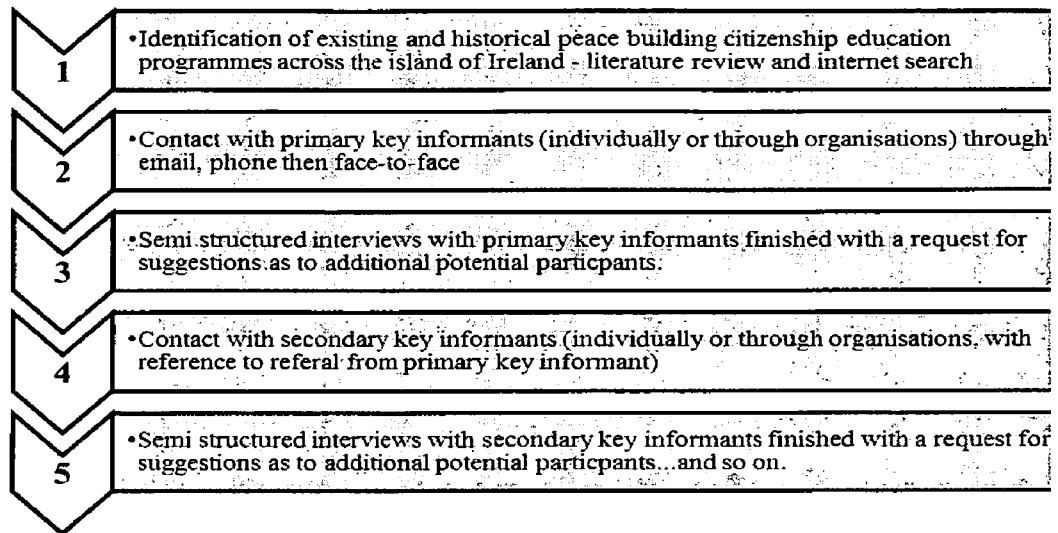


Figure 3: Order of research sampling stages

It is important to note that SSM sampling is open to accusations of limitations of the validity of such an approach. Sampling bias is a danger when utilising snowball sampling, where primary key informants of the snowball sample would dictate the social network, and thus frame my data collection (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981). Questions have been raised as to whether snowball or chain referral sampling leads to a biased sample as it is limited within the pre-existing networks of participants (Bickmore, 2010; Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981; Bryan & Bracken, 2011). In an attempt to overcome the problems of an exclusive social network which excluded important social knowledge, the sample was open to the inclusion of participants identified through on-going quota sampling, adding individuals who had not been picked up in the initial sample round. The on-going process of literature review revealed a number of additional peacebuilding education programmes, and five individuals were approached as participants who through snowball sampling yielded two additional participants. The

sampling went no further than this after the potential participants suggested by the final cohort had already been approached.

#### **4.7 The Case Study: Gaining Access to a Peacebuilding Programme**

As the study was concerned with generating a rich understanding of peacebuilding citizenship education programmes on the island of Ireland, key informants were also gatekeepers towards accessing the actual programmes themselves. From the interviews with key informants, four potential research sites were identified. These potential case studies were chosen, not for their representativeness, but for the insights that they might provide (Morton & Mills, 2013). Robson (2002) argues that exploring unique cases may provide valuable insight. Such critical case sampling has illuminated educational practice related to GCE (Bryan & Bracken, 2011) and peace education (Brantmeier, 2013). However, gaining access to the peacebuilding programmes and the young people participants proved challenging.

Gaining access to the actual practice of peacebuilding programmes is proving hugely difficult - there is a so far insurmountable gap within my own research between the theory and the practice of peacebuilding. Young people are at the centre of my research but I can't get anywhere near them. Why is gaining access to peacebuilding education programmes proving so difficult? Informal discussions with gatekeepers suggest a number of possibilities. Firstly, although the participants have been generous with their time and appear happy to be involved in the interviews, facilitating deeper research in the form of observations and focus groups may be perceived as too time consuming. Secondly, participants are sensitive towards their relationships with classroom teachers and schools. Certainly, a number of participants appear protective towards the time of teachers and do not want my research to add to teachers'



already heavy workload. Finally, I am aware that in certain cases, participants have a fear that my research is evaluative, and that research might have a subsequent impact on funding. (Reflexive Journal)

Placing young people at the centre of the research process offers the opportunity for richer and deeper understandings of their experiences, but gaining access to them can prove challenging. Negotiation with these adults must come before consent from young people can be sought (Leonard, 2007). From the four potential sites identified as active critical cases, I was unable to gain access to three of the programmes<sup>6</sup>. Through a process of developing relationships with the gatekeepers and ongoing transparency in elucidating the research aims, two gatekeepers agreed to facilitate access to peacebuilding education programmes, and critical cases which provided the opportunity for a deeper exploration of both the theory and practice of peacebuilding education programmes, and in particular, the experiences of young people at the centre of these programmes.

#### **4.8 From Gaining Access to Gaining Informed Consent**

Gaining access and then subsequent consent for research which takes place within and especially between institutions is recognised as an oftentimes protracted affair (Flick, 2007). Within the context of this study, gaining access and full consent presented considerable challenges. The peacebuilding education programmes were developed by external organisations and implemented within schools. This necessitated consent from a number of parties as explained in Figure 4. Here I illustrate the process

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<sup>6</sup> On one occasion, the meetings and paperwork associated with gaining consent from all participants (information sheets and consent forms) were considered too much additional work for the classroom teacher, who was perceived to be under existing pressure as a result of involvement of the peacebuilding programme. In another occasion, the organisation running the peacebuilding programme was already undertaking a small study which had already gained written consent from schools, teachers, students and their parents. Understandably, it was perceived that another layer of consent would cloud the understanding of participants.

of first securing access to the Peacebuilding Schools programme, and then gaining informed consent from the key participants and, where required, their guardians.

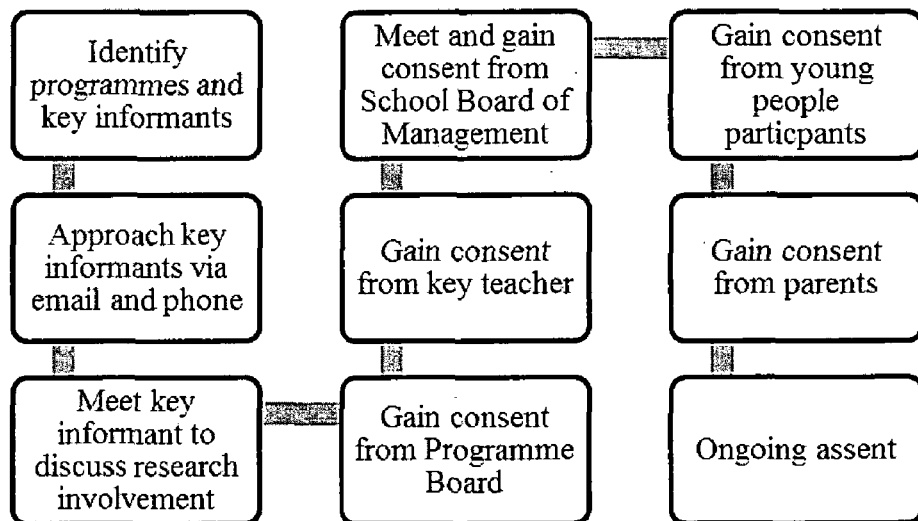


Figure 4: Process of gaining access and consent

The active informed consent of all participants was a non-negotiable requirement of this study with each individual required to provide a clear written and verbal indication of their intention to be involved in research participation (Shaw, Brady & Davey, 2011). It was this requirement which presented a barrier to the inclusion of one potential case study. Despite consent from the programme management and key informant, the classroom teacher involved in Programme C was reluctant to facilitate the involvement of the school board of management within the research, and without this consent, the exploration of this critical case could not continue and the study was left with one critical case study.

An individual's consent to participate in research is only valid where the information which explains the purpose of the research, what participation involves, and the rights of those involved is understood by potential participants (Shaw et al., 2011). All participants received information sheets (Appendix D, E & F) which invited them to participate in the research, and explained, in plain language, the aims and expectations of the research. The information sheets also explained potential harm arising from the

research and that participation was entirely voluntary, that participants did not have to answer any question they do not wish to, and that they may terminate their involvement in the project at any time. Furthermore, the information sheet explained that data collected in this project would not be used for any purpose other than that stated at the outset.

The written and verbal confirmation of consent of all participants was collected at the earliest opportunity within the research process (see Appendix D, E & F for consent forms). This initial consent did not signify on-going consent (Connolly, 2002) and revisiting informed consent with participants took place at points throughout the study, before specific data collection points, namely interviews and focus groups.

#### **4.9 Building Ethical Research to Support the Participation of Young People**

As a teacher, I wouldn't accept that a young person signing a sheet guaranteed their understanding of what research was itself, let alone of issues as complex as conflict. The assessment of learning within a classroom is built around more complex frameworks. How can I ensure the meaningful consent, and indeed ongoing assent of the young people involved in my research? (Reflexive Journal)

The journal excerpt above represents an important micro-ethical incident worthy of reflexive exploration (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). My desire to employ a children's rights-based approach to the study required my practice to "empower children through the provision of information, support and guidance in research processes" (Lundy & McEvoy, 2012, p. 142). Whilst the research methods employed within this study prioritised the ethical inclusion of all participants, the question of how these processes could be best adapted to support the ethical involvement of young people in the study

was of paramount importance. These adaptations included a focus on informed consent and ensuring their protection<sup>7</sup> and well-being<sup>8</sup>.

Research information for children and young people should be in an accessible format (Connolly, 2003; DCYA, 2012). The information sheets for the children and young people involved in this research (Appendix C) were age-appropriate and were given to participants a week before my first visit to the school in order to provide individuals with an opportunity to read the information<sup>9</sup>. I wanted to ensure that the young people understood that their participation was voluntary despite the research taking place during their compulsory formal education. However, the means by which this information was delivered took place through these school systems and networks, and the blurring of lines between “informed consent” and “educated consent” (David, Edwards & Alldred, 2001, p. 347) was apparent. My reflections raised questions of how young people can best be supported to understand research as well as the more specific

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<sup>7</sup> All undertakings within this research project fell within the recognised standards of best practice in child protection as laid out in *Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children* (DCYA, 2011). The researcher was recognised as competent with regards to child protection issues, had access to additional expertise if required and holds a completed Garda-vetting certificate. In line with the suggestions of the DCYA (2012), a trusted adult was required present in any situation where a one-on-one interaction with a child occurs, although during the study, no such situation occurred.

<sup>8</sup> Evaluating potential risk, with regard to the everyday experiences of children (Shaw et al., 2011) and indeed all participants is a necessity of research. The participants were already involved in a peacebuilding educational initiative, and as such the probability and magnitude of risk to participants involved in this research did not extend beyond those ordinarily encountered in everyday life. In line with DCYA guidelines (2011), protocols were put in place which stipulated that in the event of a participant’s safety or well-being was being negatively affected, the research would have been suspended until the issue had been addressed. For a participant under the age of 18 years, the researcher would have informed others (such as a teacher or parent) of any situation, whilst ensuring that the child had immediate support and is kept fully informed.

<sup>9</sup> On my introductory visit to the school, I recapped the content of the information sheets with the entire class, giving young people time and space to discuss the research information, before offering the opportunity to ask question about the research. None of the young people of Willow class disclosed any previous involvement in research, and despite the desire to develop dialogue in relation to informed consent, the time challenges limited the opportunity for any deep discussion.

aims and risks of my specific research studies. Although beyond the scope of this study, one such possibility might be the development a resource which, through the participation of young people, offers explanation of research in a format which may offer young people a means of gathering information in relation to research and consent in a setting away from the classroom.

Despite these challenges, the process of gaining informed consent within the research remained focused on supporting children and young people's understanding, decision making and participation within this project (DCYA, 2012). Parental/guardian consent was also prerequisite for research involving children and young people as potential participants under the age of 18 years (DCYA, 2012) and parents/guardians were provided with information sheets (Appendix B) which again outlined the aims of the research, and a consent form to sign (Appendix E). In line with Shaw et al. (2011) this consent did not negate the requirement of informed consent from children and young people themselves. However, the limited opportunities for young people to exercise rights of participation or not (Morrow & Richards, 1996) are recognised. As such, following the practice of Leonard (2007), I provided opportunities for informed dissent in spaces away from the adult gatekeepers, for example during the introduction to the focus groups, or allowing young people participants to remain silent during interviews.

#### **4.10 Research Methods, Data collection and Ethical considerations**

##### **4.10.1 Exploring the theory and practice semi-structured interviews**

Interviews are recognised as a powerful means of qualitative data collection (Cohen & Manion, 1994). More specifically, semi-structured interviews offer an important opportunity to deepen qualitative research (Denscombe, 2007; Stake, 2009; Yin, 1995) and thus gain important insights in to the central research questions at the

heart of this study. In existing research, semi-structured face to face interviews also have a useful means of exploring educators' understanding of potentially controversial issues (for example, McCully, 2006) and the sensitive application of such a method offered an important opportunity in this study.

A series of semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 educators involved in the design and delivery of peacebuilding education programmes developed for schools across the island of Ireland. These interviews lasted between 60 and 120 minutes, and took place at times and locations which suited participants, therefore entailing travel across the island of Ireland. Semi-structured interviews schedules begin with an open-ended question before moving on to pre-determined probe questions (Angrosino, 2007). An interview schedule (Appendix G) provided the structure of a series of questions exploring the experiences and perceptions of educators whilst examining the theoretical foundations and practices of peacebuilding education programmes. These questions included exploration of the structure of the programmes, the key objectives, and the methodologies employed.

Within the context of the critical case study, a semi-structured interview was used to explore the experiences of the classroom teacher involved in the case study programme (Appendix H). This interview schedule followed a similar format with an increased focus on the implementation of the programme within Parkview School and the experiences of the educator delivering the programme and in teaching about conflict in other parts of their practice.

Semi-structured interview schedules provided the opportunity for deeper probing questions, as well as extemporary improvisation (Wengraf, 2001) which supported openness to emergent themes, or the "unexpected topics or individual differences that emerge during the interview" (Brenner, 2006, p. 362). Interviews also offered a space for participants to define their own understandings of terminology within the study

(Stake, 1995) and throughout each interview, I referred to the forms of education as preferred by the participants, for example “peace education” or “peacebuilding education” etc.

Each interview was recorded using a digital voice recorder with the consent of participants, whilst additional notes were also taken to prompt probing questions during the interview, and to highlight data of interest for the analysis stage. All participants were offered the opportunity to member check transcriptions but each declined. Verbatim transcriptions of each interview were then prepared<sup>10</sup>.

#### **4.10.2 Document analysis to support triangulation**

The theory and practice of peacebuilding education is not simply framed within a classroom. The programmes which are the focus of this research constitute multiple “zones of engagement” (Mills & Morton, 2013, p. 63), spaces where the learning of young people in relation to conflict and peace is theorised and facilitated, and within which young people develop their experiences and perceptions. The different structures which frame young people’s learning in this regard are vital to explore as they “shape, limit and in some cases define social action are central to the explanation and understanding of that action” (Pole & Morrison, 2003, p. 5). As such, the programme policy documents programmes which construct practice (Doty, 1993) were important considerations. Documents related to a number of the educational programmes were openly provided by participants, and other times given in response to requests. These documents were entered into a research database (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Flick, 2007). Virtual objects such as interactive sites or texts are important sources of data (Hine,

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<sup>10</sup> During one interview, a participant requested that a previous comment would be removed from the transcript, and in accordance with the terms of consent, this extract was eliminated. On another occasion, a participant sent a follow up email to request a change in the definition of an organisation she had given during the interview. Again, this was undertaken without issue.

2000) and a number of documents related to certain programmes were openly available online and were also added to the database including relevant national curricular documents from NI and RoI.

The critical analysis of these documents was undertaken as an initial search for archetypal sample material, but was also revisited throughout the research process, in light of emergent themes (Flick, 2007). The documents within the database also provided an important point of triangulation between interviews, and in the case study, with focus groups and observations. This triangulation offered an opportunity to compare and contrast data derived from different methods, deepening understanding of key themes and improving reliability (Angrosino, 2007; Bresler, 1995; Flick, 2007; Patton, 1990).

#### **4.10.3 Exploring the theory-practice gap through observation**

Observations offer an important means of deepening understanding of peacebuilding citizenship education practice (Quaynor, 2012). They also provide a means of exploring “discrepancies between what people say they have done or will do...[and] what they actually did, or will do” (Robson, 2002, p. 310). As such, observation offered an important opportunity to explore the relationship between the theory and practice of peacebuilding education.

After gathering consent from the numerous gatekeepers, I was in a position to begin the qualitative data collection which was to inform my critical case study. Participant observation into peacebuilding education programmes has revealed the multiple roles inhabited by a researcher during the observation process (Pruitt, 2008). Before embarking on the school visits, I had aimed to take the role of non-participant observer or complete observer, remaining as unobtrusive as possible (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Johnson and Christensen, 2011). Such naturalistic observation may



allow the researcher a direct window into the situations within a given context, and offer a deepened understanding of the case study programme (Johnson & Christensen, 2011). In pursuit of this style of observation, I was cognisant of how inequalities of power between adults and children may influence the nature of observation within educational research (Leonard, 2007; Lundy & McEvoy, 2012; Punch, 2002). From previous experiences within schools, both as a teacher and researcher, I was aware of certain factors which may represent this imbalance. For example, the means of identification (young people recognised by their first names, teachers given a formal title) and uniform (young people in schools uniforms, and teachers in individual clothing). I was determined to limit factors which extenuate such power differences and influence research (Eder & Fingerson, 2002; Punch, 2002), but despite my desire to avoid reinforcing this dynamic, things did not immediately go according to plan.

Prior to my first visit to the school, I had considered whether I would be able to control the nature of my first meeting with the [young people], for example introducing myself by my first name, explaining that I was a researcher and not a teacher for example. I knocked on the classroom door, and entered the room. All the students in the classroom stood up - I am an adult, and in that classroom and in that school, I was immediately treated as such. (Reflexive journal)

This incident highlighted the imbalance that immediately existed between the young people in Willow class, and me as an unknown adult. Here reflexivity offers an important social critique of the power imbalances between researcher and young people as participants (Finlay, 2002). Despite taking time to plan the structure of my initial and ongoing relationship with young people participants within the study, my position as an adult in the classroom was governed by pre-existing frameworks. Lareau (2000) illustrates that the position of the researcher may evolve during the observation process and in my interactions with the young people, I attempted to disassociate myself with

the formal structures of the school, using and encouraging the use of my first name, as opposed to titles, such as “Mister” or ‘Sir’, and reiterating my role as a researcher from an outside organisation as an attempt to develop as a familiar figure (Mayall, 2008). However, the time available for observation severely limited this disassociation.

The observations took place during four visits to Parkview School as well as one day accompanying Willow class on an offsite visit connected to their programme. A research observation schedule (Appendix J) was used to record in-depth field notes throughout each observation, with field notes taken where possible during the sessions, and written up immediately after the exit from the field. On occasions, direct note taking was deemed inappropriate (for example, where it might distract participants from a task) and notes were taken at the earliest suitable opportunity. These schedules were structured to gain a deeper understanding of the practice of peacebuilding education and the experiences of young people participating in the particular programme. Primarily, these field notes provided a holistic description of the events at hand, and offered a documentation of the educational programme (Angrosino, 20007). They covered accounts and observations of events, informal conversations and interactions, methodological considerations and practical matters in line with the suggestions of Lincoln and Guba (1985). The observations followed the guidelines of LeCompte, Preseille and Tesch (1993) in recording the who, what, where, when, how and why of observations, maintaining a specific yet objective focus on the central research questions whilst remaining open to emergent themes as the research progressed (Phellas, Bloch & Seale, 2011).

Throughout the observation process, a number of young people participants approached me to ask what I was doing and to find out what I was writing. These interactions opened up opportunities to develop relationships with the participants but also yielded verbal data which, alongside other observed conversations, was included

within my field notes. As Brenner (2006) identifies, ascertaining participants' meaning in such interactions is more challenging than through direct in-depth interviewing, which reiterated the importance of engaging with the young people of Willow class in a more direct format, namely through focus group interviews.

#### **4.10.4 Exploring the voices of young people through focus groups**

During the four initial visits to the school, I organised a series of focus group interviews within the young women in Willow class. Focus groups offer the opportunity to reveal "how knowledge, and more importantly, ideas, both develop and operate within given cultural context" (Kitzinger, 1994, p. 116) and more specifically a chance to explore how young people experienced the critical case of a peacebuilding education programme. Exploring young people's perceptions and experiences of peacebuilding in such a manner could contribute towards research which Schierenbeck (2015) describes as "context-specific, bottom-up, inside-out" (p. 1023).

Although artificial groupings associated with focus groups may restrict their usefulness (Barbour, 2012), they can be used to provide a "snapshot" (Flick, 2007, p. 87) of the perceptions and experiences of young people on their involvement in educational initiatives. The young people participating in this research project were involved in the educational programme as both individuals and as a collective, and as such, focus groups were particularly suitable as they allowed the exploration of group norms, meanings and processes (Bloor et al., 2001).

Aspects of young people's identity such as citizenship (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010) and gender (Flick, 2007; Mauthner, 1997) may have an important bearing on their involvement within research projects. These were important considerations within the theoretical structure of the focus groupings, but within the context of Parkview School, as an all-girls Catholic school in the RoI, these factors did

not have a bearing on grouping decisions. Aside from these issues, sampling is a key consideration when utilising focus groups (Barbour, 2012), and it is recognised that the positioning of individual participants within constructed groups may be at odds with their own experiences and perceptions of group membership (Flick, 2007). After discussions with the class teacher, it was decided that the young people would take part in the focus groups within smaller familiar groups which they had been involved in during aspects of the programme. Despite planning the inclusion of the whole of Willow class to support the participation of all students, on the day of the focus group sessions eight students from the class had been taken out of lessons as part of another project. The focus groups went ahead without these students, and unfortunately there was no space in the rest of the school year to conduct additional interviews with these students.

The three focus groups took place over the course of one afternoon at the school. The interviews involved four students and lasted no more than 40 minutes in line with guidelines on number of participants and duration (Krueger, 2002; Shaw, Brady & Davey, 2011). Focus groups can be used for the exploration of sensitive or controversial issues (Barbour, 2007; Kitzinger, 1994), and as research has revealed that young people whose family have been seriously affected by violent conflict were identified as having been less willing to engage with research (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010, there was clearly a need to develop a methodology sensitive to the experiences of young people. Certainly, I was keen to ensure the focus groups taking place in "a non-threatening, comfortable setting" (Shaw, Brady & Davey, 2011, p. 21) and in line with Lundy's (2007) rights-based model of conceptualising 'pupil voice', use focus groups to provide a safe space for young people to express their views on peacebuilding education.

Krueger (2002) suggests conducting focus groups in a seated circle, an approach in line with recognised participatory methodologies often employed within GCE practice. However, a dialogue with the first focus group strongly suggested that the

participants were more comfortable sat in a circle around a table, which is how the focus group progressed. With participants seated, each focus group session opened with a welcome, an overview of the topic, and a reminder of the ground rules (Krueger, 2002). Within the focus groups, I employed an ethical framework of participation suggested by Flick (2007) focused on providing transparency and clarity to all participants. As well as reiterating the information sheets and gaining verbal consent, this was an important window to address some of the “social risks” faced by children and young people making contributions to research with a group setting (DCYA, 2012, p. 7). Existing research suggests the importance of clear ground rules and management of the focus group (Shaw et al., 2011) and I constructed a number of simple rules to encourage participation and limit social risks.

With the introduction in place, the schedule of the focus group was primarily concerned with providing the participants with an opportunity to voice their own opinions on peacebuilding education and its associated themes. Task-based interviews are recognised as useful means of eliciting both individual and collective responses from young people within group interviews (Goldin, 2000; Phellas, Bloch & Seale, 2011; Pole & Morrison, 2001). Such approaches have been used to great effect within research exploring young people’s experiences and understanding of peacebuilding themes (for example, McCully, 2006), yet the central research questions warranted an approach which gave young people the opportunity to dictate the direction of the interview. With this in mind, the focus group opened with a “grand tour” question (Spradley, 1979), where the participants were asked to provide broad descriptions of the peacebuilding education programme that they had been involved in. This approach identified important themes perceived by young people, which were revisited and explored in greater depth, but also gave an idea of the language of the used by participants (Bernard, 1988), thus providing a basis for using the participants’

terminology when questioning, probing or clarifying (Brenner, 2006; Spradley, 1979). For example, how participants referred to specific individuals or groups, or how they defined particular actions they had undertaken. Such an approach was also perceived as a strategy to minimise the risk of interviewer bias, allowing elaboration and "sensitive to contextual variations in meaning" (Phellas, Bloch & Seale, 2011, p. 183) and encouraged engagement with sensitive issues, such as conflict (Weber, Miracle & Skehan, 1994).

Following the recommendations of Krueger (2002), the focus groups concluded with a summary of the discussion and an opportunity for additional contributions. Focus group interviews were recorded using a digital voice recorder and notes were taken during interviews to prompt exploration of both group and individual themes.

#### **4.11 Confidentiality Throughout Data collection and Beyond**

As the DYCA (2012) identify "confidentiality implies that research data that include identifiable information on participants should not be disclosed to others without the explicit consent of the participants" (p. 3). The confidentiality of all participants was prioritised throughout all stages of this research.

Appearing genuinely interested in the discussion which had taken place during the first focus group session, the class teacher asked what the group of students had talked about. Aware of the need to ensure the confidentiality of all participants, I replied with an ambiguous comment that the focus groups had been 'very interesting'. This was an awkward interaction, and I worried that she perceived I was hiding students' negative comments – which wasn't the case. Maybe dealing with this could have been prevented by a clearer explanation of student confidentiality on the teachers' information sheet. (Reflexive Journal)

This excerpt illustrates one challenge of protecting the confidentiality of young people participants, which has been identified elsewhere (Leonard, 2007). Providing a clear explanation of the confidentiality afforded to young people participants as a part of the teachers' information sheet may have lessened the chance of such questions, and avoided the danger of a study being perceived as less than transparent.

During observations, information such as names and addresses or personal characteristics, was not recorded and participants were provided with pseudonyms which were used in place of their name throughout. With a small sample size, participants were advised that in extreme cases there was a risk that maintaining complete confidentiality might be impossible (Niens & McIlrath, 2010a), but that every step would be taken to ensure the identity of participants was protected. Indeed, the legal limitations in relation to data confidentiality are highlighted in both the information sheets and the consent forms, along with the identification that the confidentiality of information is only protected to the limits of the law.

Information sheets (Appendix A) explained how privacy and confidentiality would be ensured through the careful recording, storage, security, processing and eventual deletion of data. The data collected in this project was not and will not be used for any purpose other than that which has been gained after participant consent at the outset, and where such data was used, participant confidentiality was respected during presentation in public dissemination events, and within printed publications. As with all ethical issues related to this research, the collection, storage, dissemination and destruction of all data followed the Ethical Guidelines laid out by St. Patrick's College.

#### **4.12 The Synthesis and Analysis of Research Data**

As suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), this section provides an explicit discussion of the choices made in relation to the thematic analysis of the data corpus of

this exploratory research project. In short, I provide an explanation of the identification, analysis and reporting of the themes which underpin this study and the “thick” description herewith. Braun and Clarke (2006) argue that epistemological clarity, naming the theoretical framework, is integral to good thematic analysis. As previously mentioned, this deductive study is built around central research questions and a conceptual framework derived from an extensive review of associated academic literature. This reflexive engagement with both new and existing literature continued throughout the data collection.

As Gough (2004) considers, synthesis corresponds to the collation of results with the aim of answering the central research questions posed within the review of literature and in creating “a coherent, focused analysis of some aspect of the social life that has been observed and recorded, an analysis that is comprehensible to readers who are not directly acquainted with the social world at issue” (Emerson, 1995, p. 18). In a useful explanation of the steps towards answering those central research questions, Brenner (2006) identifies the key points in the development of the analytical framework throughout the research process as transcription, description, analysis, interpretation and display (p. 367). The process of data analysis and synthesis was undertaken through a data analysis software package, N-Vivo 9 which supported the storage, organisation and coding of data.

The primary data collection process produced transcriptions in the form of verbatim interview transcriptions, verbatim focus group transcriptions and detailed field notes. The secondary data collection produced national curricular documents, course syllabi, and additional programme material. Each of these data sources were uploaded to the N-Vivo platform and organised as per source type and programme. The process of analysis began as soon as the collection of data was underway. Emerson (1995) suggests a process of on-going codification of field notes in order to aid the eventual data



processing, and in this study each transcription was accompanied by analytical memos (Mills & Morton, 2013), which added on-going commentary on both the theoretical and affective aspects of the research project. Important themes connected to the central research questions were identified as field notes were made and interviews undertaken and added in the form of such memos.

It is at this point that my thematic analysis falls in line with the phases suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006). Firstly, I read and re-read each data item in a process of familiarisation. Interview transcripts were read alongside correspondent documents. In undertaking a thematic analysis of the critical case study data, it was important to focus on the position of young people within the research. Whilst observation field notes offer a key focus of analysis for qualitative methodology (R. Emerson, 1995), the analysis of data gathered from children and young people requires careful consideration, especially when this data is accompanied with data derived from adult participants (Shaw et al., 2011). In order to promote the voices of young people within this analysis, the focus groups transcriptions, and the perceptions and experiences of young people participants, were analysed primarily, followed by the observation field notes, interviews transcriptions and documents.

In the next level of analysis, initial codes were attributed to data extracts. Angrosino (2007) describes this descriptive analysis as the reduction of data to its constituent parts to explore emergent themes. At a practical level, the process involved the coding and categorisation of data, namely the assignment of labels or codes to particular content. This coding identified points of interest in relation to the central research questions, conceptual framework and existing literature. Importantly, derivations from dominant emerging codes were also noted. These categories and their associated coding were stored within nodes in the N-Vivo package (Richards, 2005). Descriptive coding (Richards, 2005) was also used to record important variables

concerning the participants and the programmes, for example the name, age of participants. These 'attributes', as labelled within the N-Vivo programme, supported building the descriptions of particular programmes and the critical case study.

Theoretical analysis then considers how these codes fit together (Angrosino, 2007). Here the codes were collated and analysed in order to develop the broader units of analysis, or themes. These themes were derived by grouping codes into collectives of association both within data items, across data sets and as individual occurrences. Main themes and sub-themes were identified, and codes outside of these categories labelled miscellaneous.

The fourth phase of the thematic analysis involved interrogation of the strength of supporting relationship between coded extracts and the themes they supported. The strength of each theme was considered on the basis of similarity within themes, and difference between themes. Each data item was then re-read to review the coded extracts and to add additional codes to sections of the data which had been overlooked in the initial stages of thematic analysis. The fifth phase of the analysis then focused on the definition and refinement of themes. Themes were named in light of their content and their position alongside other themes and also in relation to the central research questions.

#### **4.13 Dissemination of Research and the Reporting of Thematic Analysis**

The reporting of the analysis of themes and subthemes seeks to illuminate the "juxtaposition between 'what data are saying' with 'what the theory is saying'" (Mills & Morton, 2013, p. 125) and forms the basis for the following three chapters. This analytical coding leads to the development and analysis of theory (Richards, 2005). Data vignettes were used to support the narratives which run within and between themes. These vivid extracts support a deeper latent analysis of the themes developed

throughout this study and draw out the meanings, underlying assumptions and implications of particular ideas.

The accessibility of educational research has received criticism (Gough, 2004) and as such the dissemination of research has been carefully considered throughout the research process. The comprehensive dissemination of ethically gathered transparent research is a central consideration of this project, in order to both allow assessment of the research by all concerned, and to protect the integrity of future research (Connolly, 2003). Elements of the study have been disseminated through publications and presentations (Appendix K) at times with study participants as audience members. With the importance of communicating research progress through in non-technical formats (Connolly, 2003), this dissemination also included adapted presentations to members of the general public (see *Tell it Straight* in Appendix K).

#### **4.14 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to provide an explanation of the research design underpinning this study. The chapter employed a “reflexivity of discomfort” (Pillow, 2003) as a means of exploring the complex relationship between researcher and study, illuminating a series of key methodological decisions, and illustrating the development of an ethical study, grounded in critical constructivism, which seeks to explore the theory and practice of peacebuilding education from multiple perspectives.

This chapter revealed how a qualitative approach is justifiable in addressing the central research questions. On one hand, this approach provided the opportunity to unearth the theoretical leanings which underpin peacebuilding education projects; on the other hand, it offered a means to investigate the experiences, perceptions and agency of the educational actors involved within peacebuilding projects: the project designers and

facilitators, and most importantly, the young people involved in the initiatives, so central to this project.

The chapter then provided a rationale for the employment of qualitative methods, drawing on ethnographic approaches to outline how semi-structured interviews with key informant educators and document analysis support exploration of a range of peacebuilding education programmes, before the employment of semi-structured interviews with classroom teachers, observations of peacebuilding practice and focus groups with young people participants supports an in depth exploration of one specific education programme, as a critical case study. The chapter explored how challenges in relation to gaining access and informed consent were overcome in order to support appropriate sampling and case selection, before examining the research instruments used to support the meaningful participation of adults and young people involved in the study.

Finally, the chapter concluded with a detailed explanation of the processes of data synthesis and analysis, which includes the considerations of confidentiality and anonymity, as well as the reporting and dissemination of research.

## **Chapter 5 : Peacebuilding Education, Young People and the “Local Turn”**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the theoretical foundations underpinning the development of thirteen peacebuilding citizenship education programmes designed for schools within NI and the RoI. I draw upon a thematic analysis of fifteen semi-structured interviews conducted with educators who have been involved in the design and delivery of the programmes. Through this analysis, I endeavour to answer the research question at the centre of this study: what theoretical foundations underpin peacebuilding citizenship education programmes on the island of Ireland?

In this chapter, I suggest that the design of programmes in this context has been undertaken with a specific focus on the perspectives and experiences of young people across the island of Ireland, and in particular the local dimension of peacebuilding as it applies to young people’s lives. Recent research has given the local aspects of peacebuilding explicit focus (Mac Ginty, 2015; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013) with this “local turn” attributed towards the prevalence of approaches grounded in conflict transformation and focused on the empowerment of local citizens to drive peacebuilding processes (Paffenholz, 2015). This chapter explores how young people’s perceptions and experiences have contributed towards the development of peacebuilding citizenship education programmes and how the local space represents a challenge to peacebuilding, with its associations to negative conflict, but also as space of possibility for future peacebuilding action.

### **5.2 An Overview of the Peacebuilding Education Programmes**

Before considering the themes gathered from the analysis of the interviews with educators involved in this study, it is important to provide an overview of the peacebuilding education programmes. Below, I identify the key theoretical components

of each of the programmes within this study. This table (Table 3) defines the target audience<sup>11</sup>, aims and anticipated outcomes for each programme. It also supports a comparison of the key methods employed within each programme such as teacher education sessions, the provision of tailored learning resources, the facilitation of student workshops and opportunities for face to face encounter between students from different schools.

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<sup>11</sup> Whilst the main focus of this thesis is at post-primary level, it is important to identify that certain programmes also focused on primary schools in both jurisdictions. The Pathways to Peace programme also engaged with special schools in both jurisdictions. In RoI and NI, special schools are designed to support children with special educational needs (DES, 2016a; NI Direct, 2014). In NI special schools may be controlled or voluntary (NI Direct, 2014).

Programme Pseudonym	Programme Aims	Programme Targets	Key Methods					Anticipated Outcomes
			Teacher Education	Learning Resources	Student Encounter	Student Workshops		
<b>Peace and Reconciliation</b>	Developing schools' contributions to peace and reconciliation, human rights and justice through citizenship education.	Post-primary schools in NI and RoI	✓	✓		✓	Young people develop understanding, attitudes and skills to be active citizens within communities and society. Teachers will embed peacebuilding within citizenship education.	
<b>Building Peace</b>	Increasing teachers' expertise to support young people to learn about global themes and active citizenship.	Post-primary schools in NI and RoI	✓	✓		✓	Teachers will develop and employ active and participatory methods to support young people's critical thinking, emotional engagement and active citizenship.	
<b>Peace Blocks</b>	Supporting young people to understand and analyse conflicts through HL.	Post-primary schools in NI and RoI	✓	✓		✓	Young people will develop positive changes in attitude stemming from developing respect for life and human dignity.	
<b>Transform</b>	Supporting young people's critical exploration of conflict and peace building through HR and HL.	Post-primary schools in NI and RoI	✓	✓		✓	Young people will learn to use HL to analyse conflicts, identify the barriers to peace and consider how these may be overcome.	
<b>Right to Peace</b>	Developing young people's understanding, respect and support for the protection of human rights.	Primary and post-primary schools in RoI and NI.	✓	✓		✓	Young people will explore injustice within a framework of HR.	
<b>Citizens for Peace</b>	Supporting young people to explore conflict, stereotyping and prejudice.	Post-primary schools in NI and RoI	✓		✓	✓	Young people will undertake collaborative citizenship action through mutual learning experiences and inter-group contact.	
<b>Peacebuilding schools</b>	Supporting young people's engagement in local and global collaborations to take action for peace.	Post-primary schools in NI, RoI, Israel and Palestine		✓	✓	✓	Young people will increase their awareness, reflection and action on the issues of conflict, as experienced and expressed by young people.	
<b>Peace Initiative</b>	Supporting young people's understanding of self and their relationship to local and global communities.	Post-primary schools in NI and RoI		✓	✓	✓	Young people will develop communication, conflict resolution and leadership skills whilst exploring conflict and personal identity.	
<b>Point Forward</b>	Supporting young people to explore stereotypes, prejudice and sectarianism.	Post-primary schools in NI and RoI.			✓	✓	Young people will develop confidence, increase cooperation and resolve conflicts through engagement in mutual learning and role play.	
<b>Progress Peace</b>	Supporting young people to develop tolerance and further the integration of those from different backgrounds.	Post-primary schools in NI and the border region of RoI			✓	✓	Young people will work collaboratively to explore conflict and conflict resolution through the medium of film.	
<b>Founding Peace</b>	Increasing young people's tolerance and addressing sectarianism and racism.	Post-primary schools in NI and RoI			✓	✓	Young people will explore personal identity, and through encounter activities, address sectarianism and racism.	
<b>Pathways to Peace</b>	Developing tolerance and fostering sustainable relationships through long term collaboration and mutual learning.	Primary, post-primary and special schools in RoI and NI.	✓		✓		Schools will develop cross-cultural educational links and young people will develop tolerance through engaging in collaborative learning.	
<b>Growing Together</b>	Developing young people's understanding of conflict and ability to resolve it by non-violent means.	Primary and post-primary schools in RoI and NI.	✓			✓	Young people will improve confidence and develop the skills to resolve conflict and manage positive peer relationships.	

Table 3: Overview of Peacebuilding Education Programmes

## 5.2 Learner-Centred Peacebuilding Education

A key theoretical concern for each of the peacebuilding education programmes involved the conceptualisation of young people of as active decision-making actors, “as holders of human rights and capable of agency and participation in the present, as well as, the future.” (Kinlen, Hansson, Keenaghan, Canavan, & O'Connor, 2013, p. 2). The interviews revealed that a focus on young people was considered pivotal to the process of peacebuilding education as imagined by the educators.

You know there are steps to be achieved but the content of the programme came from the young people. It came from where they were and what stage they were at. (Nessa, Citizens for Peace<sup>12</sup>)

[We have come] to the conclusion that you’ve got to start with children... We don’t give children enough credit for what they can do. (Thomas, *Growing Together*)

Learner-centred approaches have been proposed as a means by which citizenship education can contribute to peacebuilding (Rwantabagu, 2010; Kinlen, Hansson, Keenaghan, Canavan & O’Connor, 2013) and through the employment of active participatory methods each of the programmes positioned young people’s young people experiences as a central theoretical consideration. Iris suggested that the emergence of learner-centred approaches to peacebuilding education across the island of Ireland was a relatively recent phenomenon.

Thinking about peacebuilding initiatives, I’d still be quite critical of them because I think they haven’t changed much. From the last 30 years I don’t think

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<sup>12</sup> All research participants and peacebuilding programmes have been given pseudonyms. Within the case study, school names, town names, class names and participants have all been given pseudonyms.



there has been much creativity or change in how they are run. I do think for young people, [peacebuilding] is done to them. (Iris, *Building Peace*)

The argument that young people had for too long been the recipients of peacebuilding, as opposed to active participants within the process, was also echoed by Eugene. In developing Peacebuilding Schools he placed a strong emphasis on the grass-roots perceptions and experiences of young people and was critical of peacebuilding approaches which failed to engage with young people.

Hold on a second, it's about listening to the people on the ground. [Other peacebuilding approaches] they do their galas and it's very much a top down. It looks like top down. It looks like it's more about fundraising for initiatives and photo opportunities. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

For certain programmes, utilising a learner-centred approach was a response to alternative methods which, whilst targeting young people, were critiqued for ignoring their experiences and perceptions. Indeed, some participants felt that the position of young people as central actors in the process of peacebuilding education operated in direct contrast to how young people were perceived in wider society.

I suppose [society has a] fear of giving over power. I suppose it is quite deep rooted in the media and negative perceptions of young people. But I think having, just by having that more public [inclusion of young people] it could start addressing that. That we would see young people doing these things. It's a funny one. (Deborah, Point Forward)

In NI and maybe in the Republic, society seems to treat children like they're feral animals, to be minded, to be controlled, to be put manners upon. How do you [develop peacebuilding] against a background of attitude at political level to young people as dysfunctional? So yes there is potential and I hope that a lot of

our work will survive but it will be against the odds...I think our society is awash with kind of fear-filled and suspicious attitudes towards the younger generation. (Thomas, Growing Together)

It seems quite radical, whenever you talk to people to ask young people's opinions or to involve them in the process or design it seems like that's just too radical. But I think it's not at all. It just makes sense. It's a blind spot. (Iris, Building Peace)

For these participants this obscuration necessitated the development of peacebuilding educational approaches which positioned young people's lives at the centre of the local dimension of peacebuilding citizenship. This theoretical perspective would go on to underpin the development of the educational programmes. Here participants revealed examples of what Harber and Sakade (2009, p. 184) have described as the "significant and contrasting ideologies" between how young people were perceived within peacebuilding educational approaches and how they are perceived in wider society. More specifically, this reveals a contrast between the inclusion of young people within the design and development of the peacebuilding educational process, and a perceived absence of young people's participation within formal education and more broadly within society.

### **5.3 Mapping "the Local" Through Active Learning Methodologies**

Active participatory learning methodologies have been increasingly viewed as a means of supporting the meaningful participation of young people throughout the learning processes (Jeffers, 2008; McMorrow, 2006; Waldron, Kavanagh, Maunsell, Oberman, O'Reilly, Pike, Prunty & Ruane, 2011; Niens & McIlrath, 2010). Such methodologies are also viewed as a fundamental component of educational approaches

which challenge negative conflict (Davies, 2005; McCully, Smyth & O'Doherty, 1999; Niens & McIlrath, 20010a) and formed an important theoretical foundation for the majority of peacebuilding education programmes within this study.

I would bring the young people together, the kids would talk and discuss. That's a whole different approach and a skill. That would be our main active methodology. (Nessa, Citizens for Peace)

[The programme] involves interactive participatory activities which are applicable to any number of issues. (Eileen, Peace Blocks)

[We would] start with where young people are at themselves and find an active method of exploring with them, what their issues are, what's their place in the world and where they are situated. (Deborah, Point Forward)

Fergal offered a deeper analysis of the source of the participatory methodologies employed within the *Peace Initiative*.

The methodologies that we use are informed by an active participatory approach to learning, informed by Paolo Freire. These approaches involve the learners in creating a process, in being active and using methodologies that are experiential as much as anything else. (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

Connections have been drawn between Freirean approaches and transformative peacebuilding education (Harris, 2004; Reardon, 2009), however educational approaches have often neglected to make explicit reference to Freirean pedagogical principles (Gill & Niens, 2014). For Fergal, this theoretical framework supported a context specific form of critical education which incorporates dialogue and positions learners at the heart of the peacebuilding education process (Freire, 1970). As I outline

in more detail below, this theoretical approach formed an important foundation for exploring local and global dimensions of citizenship (Reilly & Niens, 2014).

The employment of active participatory learning methodologies was also seen by several participants as a means of providing young people with the opportunity to voice their opinions on the issues which were important to them.

We tried to involve children in, in designing projects and having a voice in those projects as well... Our children have a voice, full stop. And it's my job to make sure they have a voice. (Colin, *Right to Peace*)

I'm very keen to definitely to develop [methodologies] and see if we can do something that gives kids a voice, because I think we have the potential to give them a voice to talk about social issues as well. (Timothy, *Progress Peace*)

A number of educators perceived participatory methodologies as important in supporting engagement with student voices, suggesting that such approaches offer an alternative to the inappropriate methodologies which have framed certain attempts to garner student voice (Fielding, 2004). Whilst the inclusion of the voices of young people within peacebuilding programmes should not be considered definitive of on-going participation in the education process (Lundy, 2007), participants felt that the active methodologies employed by peacebuilding education programmes made important use of the perceptions and experiences of young people. More specifically, young people were involved in the planning, design, implementation and at times evaluation of certain programmes. Their local experiences were perceived by participants to keep programmes close to the local realities for young people. Through active and participatory methodologies, the programmes were able to develop a clearer picture of the "local turn" as it was experienced by young people.

We brought in the affective aspects, the personal. What you do in your free time? What are the good things about your hometown? What places do you like? Where do you hang out? (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

We would look at [the young people], their situations and the other people in their lives. All the stakeholders across whatever issue it is. And you would look at the politics. Look at parents. Look at the community [the young people] were brought up in. You would map out a whole picture of things. (Deborah, Point Forward)

First and foremost, probably the biggest thing is that they come up with the story themselves...they've only come up with it because it matters to them, you know? So that's a big thing. (Timothy, Progress Peace)

Using the perspectives and experiences of young people to “map” the networks, relationships and actions of importance to them, the education programmes were able to contextualise “the local” dimension of peacebuilding (Schierenbeck, 2015). It is important to note that although active methodologies were viewed as an important methodology for peacebuilding education, a small but significant number of participants questioned the extent to which such methodologies were employed within schools outside of their programmes.

We feel that the way we work and the methodologies that we would use with young people are perhaps different than they're used to in a school context (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

Although the deployment of active methodologies in supporting young people to develop a sense of citizenship appears, in theory, to be supported by the curricula of both jurisdictions (Niens & McIlrath, 2010a, 2010b) research suggests that barriers such as time and a crowded curriculum may inhibit teachers from using such methodologies

(Bryan et al., 2009; Bryan & Bracken, 2011). Certainly young people's lack of previous experience in active participation in classrooms practices would present a challenge for short-term peacebuilding education programmes who would therefore be introducing these approaches from scratch.

For a number of participants, the employment of active learning methodologies was perceived to support the development of a safe learning environment where young people could engage with a controversial theme such as a conflict.

[These participatory methods] were really effective because they allowed the young people space, a safe space to explore the issues. And it all came from them. I didn't have an agenda. It was their issues. (Deborah, Point Forward)

You can be sure within groups there'll be challenges, so it's a huge thing in terms of these methodologies, building and creating a safe space. (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

Developing a safe learning space, where young people feel comfortable participating in learning activities, is a key component of citizenship education focused on controversial issues and in particular education approaches which address conflict (Andreotti & Warwick, 2007; Cusack, 2008; McClean Hilker, 2011). Although developing safe spaces was considered an important foundation for supporting young people's meaningful involvement in the peacebuilding education process, there was little explanation of how "safe spaces" were conceptualised and created, particularly in light of the time constraints placed on programmes. Certainly, there are a number of important questions to consider in this regard. For example, who exactly are these spaces safe for? Who or what do they provide safety from? Peacebuilding education programmes deal with difficult forms of citizenship education, and may explore issues which underpin negative conflict, such as prejudice, allegiance and hate. Boostrom

(1998) argues that creating safe spaces may limit the possibility of positive forms of conflict, which underpin critical peacebuilding education. Further research must consider how controversial themes are addressed within safe spaces and whether or not these safe spaces support or limit the opportunities for peacebuilding action.

#### **5.4 The Family and Young People's Conflict Biographies**

A small but significant number of programmes had experienced the participation of young people whose lives had been directly affected by violent conflict. Eugene revealed that during the Peacebuilding Schools programme taking place within a school in one of the border counties of RoI, it emerged that a number of young people had family members who had been affected by the violence of the Irish conflict.

There was a girl in one year whose dad had died in [a bomb explosion]. Another girl in another school whose father is [a member of a Republican organisation is] and is in prison. And there were others. There were other stories there. So it was very real, in their back yard. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

Frank recounted a similar example which occurred when the Progress Peace programme was taking place in another school within the border counties of RoI. During a group discussion, a female student had openly discussed the death of her grandfather in a bomb explosion and explained that although this incident had taken place before her birth, it shaped her strong feelings towards the Irish conflict and underpinned what she described as sectarian attitudes. Where families are recognised as playing an important role in shaping the conflict-related learning experiences of young people in NI (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010; Connolly & Healy, 2004; McCully, 2006; Stringer et al., 2010) these examples suggest that elsewhere in the island of Ireland young people's local spaces may also be shaped by the conflict experiences of family members. Whilst the border region is recognised as a recent site of conflict (Hayward, 2007; Patterson,

2013) these examples from peacebuilding educational programmes operating in schools in the border regions of RoI suggest that some young people in RoI also hold deep and complex familial connections to the Irish conflict. As such, family spaces both within NI and elsewhere across the island of Ireland may be sites of networks and processes which underpin conflict-related learning, as potential spaces for the continuation of conflict or as local spaces for building peace (MacGill & Hamber, 2009; Sánchez Meertens, 2013).

Although the Peacebuilding Schools and Progress Peace programmes had not been developed with the expressed intention of dealing with the interpersonal aspects of conflict, it is clear that for some young people, their connections to conflict were deeply personal. This observation supports Levy's (2014) exploration of educational approaches to conflict must consider all levels of conflict, including the interpersonal. It would appear evident that educational approaches which address the broader levels of armed conflict cannot be divorced from the personal aspects of conflict, which includes those related to young peoples' family spaces.

### **5.5 Negative Conflict within Local Spaces**

A small number of education programmes had been developed in reaction to violent incidents that had taken place within communities across the island of Ireland. In these instances, participants viewed educational programmes as a response to armed conflict, in the hope that that education might play a role in challenging negative conflict (Davies, 2005a).

I think the original impetus was the Omagh bombings<sup>13</sup> and three boys killed, you may remember, in an arson attack in Ballymoney<sup>14</sup>...they all happened

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<sup>13</sup>On 15th August, 1998, a car bomb exploded in Omagh, NI killing 29 people including nine children (Gallagher, 2004; Jarman, 2004). It was seen by some as a turning point in



within a time when there was supposed to be peace in the north. The ceasefire had happened, and there was a big discussion about what could be done to address those issues of conflict. (Colin, Right to Peace)

We came to the [Peace Initiative] through a partner organisation which was founded by the father of [a boy] who was killed in an IRA bomb in the early nineties. (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

What is of particular interest in such examples is that the particular violent incidents which had served as a catalyst for these educational programmes involved young people. The direct impact of the Irish conflict on young people is well-documented (for example, Cairns, 1987; Muldoon, 2004) and such incidents appeared to provide an important motivation for certain peacebuilding education programmes.

A number of the participants felt that the peacebuilding education programmes were inextricably connected to the local communities of the young people participants. Thomas discussed that in the development of the Peacebuilding Schools programme he felt it impossible to divorce peacebuilding education from the lived community experiences of the young people who participated in the programme.

I suppose my reaction to “let’s do peace education, this is what is required” is this: consider the denials ... that children don’t go home in the evening and they’re not picking up alternative vibes. That’s the environment in which the children are growing up... children cannot be expected to counter that or replace it. (Thomas, Growing Together)

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the conflict, shifting consensus toward a peace process (Hampson, Crocker & Aal, 2007).

<sup>14</sup>On the 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1998, three children were killed as the result of a sectarian arson attack on their home in Ballymoney, NI (Melaugh, 2014).

Young people's connections to their local community have been shown to have a bearing on conflict-related learning (Connolly, 2004; McCully, 2006) and the majority of the peacebuilding education programmes paid careful consideration to this aspect of the local dimension. The community issues faced by young people within these local spaces varied. Iris suggested that for young people in particular areas of NI, the local community spaces and their associated issues were more directly connected to Irish conflict.

[A group of young people] wanted to put more flags up in their estates. So then we got into the conversation about flags and what does that mean and why would you want flags? Even whenever there are issues seen as potentially sectarian it's a good inroad into digging up some of those issues...That was quite controversial but it started to dig up some of those issues. I think you have to deal with them if you ask young people what are they concerned about and it comes up to be something sectarian and racist I think it still has to be dealt with.

(Iris, Building Peace)

The display of explicit cultural symbols such as flags and murals are recognised as marking the sometimes contested local spaces within NI (Bell, Jarman & Harvey, 2010). Young people are recognised as having awareness of cultural symbols, such as flags, associated with conflicting British and Irish identities (Connolly, Smith & Kelly, 2002) and within the Building Peace programme, young people's willingness to discuss aspects of their local communities which are deeply connected to negative conflict echoes previous research which has identified young people's openness to discuss conflict at the community level (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010). Iris suggested that it was important for peacebuilding education programmes to address these identity-based local issues, despite the recognised challenges that teaching about these controversial themes can entail (Donnelly, 2008; McCully, 2006).

In an important divergent example, the Right to Peace programme had unearthed local issues in both NI and the RoI which were distanced from direct violence.

I tried to make [Right to Peace] relevant to [young people] and relevant to their context. I think there were pertinent rights issues that emerged very quickly.

There were issues in relation to travellers' rights. There were issues in relation to disability. There were issues in relation to children's voice which are central to children's experiences. (Colin, Right to Peace)

In such a scenario, the Right to Peace programme focused on local issues, aside from direct violence, which were connected wider themes of social justice and positive peace which are considered an essential component of sustainable peacebuilding education (Davies, 2005; Reardon, 1988).

Local communities may be shaped by the Irish conflict and other peacebuilding issues and despite an acceptance that young people are inextricably connected to these spaces (McCully, 2012) a number of peacebuilding education programmes within this study continued their commitment to learner-centred approaches as they pursued engagement with the issues of importance to the young people participants.

## **5.6 The “Underlying Whispers” of the Border and Beyond**

A number of participants revealed that peacebuilding programmes on the island of Ireland had, in the last decade of the twentieth century, widened a focus beyond NI to include schools in the border counties of the RoI (Donegal, Sligo, Leitrim, Monaghan, Cavan and Louth). As well as experiencing acts of violence, these regions also felt the effects of violent conflict elsewhere, as many people were displaced from NI to these counties throughout the 1970s and 1980s (Ó Gráda & Walsh, 2006; Patterson, 2013) with many people never having returned (Ralaheen, 2005). Many young people living in the border region were perceived by some participants to hold strong opinions towards

conflict on the island of Ireland. In one such example, Frank relayed how the Progress Peace programme had exposed “strong sectarian feelings” held by some young people participants from the border counties of RoI. Brigid indicated that in developing the *Founding Peace* programme, an important consideration were local attitudes towards Protestant communities within the border region, which she described as “underlying whispers”. She perceived these narratives to play an important role in shaping how young people from particular regions perceived the Irish conflict and the associated identities, further reiterating the importance of contextualising approaches to peacebuilding education. Whilst the prevalence of sectarian attitudes is recognised as an issue for young people in NI (Connolly, Smith & Kelly, 2002), and as a key concern for CE in the jurisdiction (Niens, O’Connor & Smith, 2013), there is some evidence here that suggests that within RoI a deeper exploration of sectarian attitudes and the implications for peacebuilding is required.

The Peacebuilding Schools programme placed a particular focus on the Palestine-Israel conflict, yet during one session in a school in a border county of RoI, young people participating in the programme suggested that a focus on conflict in NI was of more importance for them.

In [a school within the border counties of NI], the [Irish] conflict was far more real. I remember a number of times when the kids said “We should be focusing a little bit more on Northern Ireland here”. I said “You’re dead right, you know”.

It was refreshing to hear that. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

Salomon (2002, 2006) argues that peacebuilding educational approaches are differentiated in light of the context within which they operate, and the location’s temporal and geographical proximity to armed conflict. The peacebuilding education programmes featured in this study appeared sensitive to the closeness of schools in the

border regions of RoI to NI as well as the conflict history of the region (Hayward, 2007; Patterson, 2013; Todd et al., 2005).

As well as focusing on schools in NI and the border counties of RoI, a number of programmes had extended their practice to include schools across the rest of the island of Ireland. Although these regions and their associated communities were perceived to have experienced less direct violence in more recent episodes of conflict, participants suggested that young people's perceptions of Irish conflict and the identities underpinning the conflict were still influenced by their local communities. Negative attitudes towards NI as a whole were perceived to be prevalent in communities situated further from the border, as Nessa explained:

The perceptions [of NI] were very negative, especially in places like Cork and Kerry. They hadn't an awful lot of contact with Northern Ireland. A lot of peacebuilding bridges were needed, in terms of their perceptions of Northern Ireland and of the different identities there. I was shocked myself going into some of the schools, of what was coming back at me. (Nessa, Citizens for Peace)

Educational approaches dealing with violence can sometimes unearth deeper negative conflicts which may inhibit social cohesion and equality (Bickmore, 2012) and peacebuilding education programmes revealed away that from the direct conflict interfaces within NI, local spaces were affected by less explicit connections to conflict, as has been suggested in existing research (Bell, Jarman & Harvey, 2010). The participants within this study suggest that peacebuilding education programmes have at times revealed that beyond NI, underlying community narratives connected to Irish conflict may have an impact upon how young people understand the Irish conflict in these local spaces. Kupermintz and Salomon (2005) argue that peace education differs between countries experiencing violent conflict and those experiencing comparative peace. Whilst NI is understandably labelled as a post-conflict region, the interviews

strongly suggest that the remnants of violent conflict have had, and may continue to have, an impact on local spaces within the RoI and consequently upon how young people within the RoI understand and experience peacebuilding education.

### **5.7 The Inclusion of Young People from a Minority Ethnic Background**

Peacebuilding education programmes featured in this study had been developed with sensitivity to how some young people's understanding of conflict and peace may have been affected by familial and community connections to Irish conflict. In applying a critical lens to an exploration of "the local" as per peacebuilding citizenship, it is also imperative to consider who is included and who is excluded from these spaces (Schierenbeck, 2015). Brigid described how the Founding Peace programme had been developed after analysis which revealed that certain communities had perceived themselves to be excluded from the peacebuilding process.

Well, as far as I know, money was being put into the protestant community [in the RoI], because after Peace I, II and III, the protestant community felt that money hadn't been spent in a meaningful way on them. It had been spent on a sort of tokenistic kind of way, just to say "Yes, they were included as a minority." People were starting to feel "Well look it's all talk and no action. The money is being spent on just us coming together complaining". So that's how I think the project kind of originated in a sense. (Brigid, Founding Peace)

Brigid explained that although Founding Peace was not developed with the inclusion of young people from a minority ethnic background in mind, it was part of a border network of peacebuilding approaches which included alternative local perspectives.

Other projects are working with traveller groups, and other projects are working with like immigrant groups. Whenever we meet we can discuss and see how

different stuff is working with different groups, and then form linkages kind of between the different projects. (Brigid, Founding Peace)

Although the Founding Peace project was specifically focused on peacebuilding within Protestant communities in the ROI and NI, the inclusion of minority ethnic individuals and communities appeared to be an attempt at developing an inclusive approach to peacebuilding citizenship education. In relation to the other peacebuilding programmes, some participants highlighted the need to ensure an inclusive approach to citizenship education which involved the full diversity of the island of Ireland, not just those from a nationalist/republican/catholic or unionist/loyalist/protestant background. Frank suggested that the inclusion of the perspectives of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds was an important component of successful peacebuilding citizenship education, in particular when employing methodologies based around dialogue, which required “diverse people in the room” (Frank, Progress Peace). Iris suggested that peacebuilding education was beginning to expand its focus beyond the key identities central to the Irish conflict.

[Peacebuilding education] is starting to recognise other ethnic minorities ... It was always protestant or catholic. I just always feel like young people are just fed up with the protestant/catholic thing. You know, that there are other issues we could look at even together. (Iris, Building Peace)

Within an Irish context, Gallagher (2004) has called for an engagement with the “voices and perspectives that have been traditionally excluded” (p. 155). Indeed, the inclusion of young people from a minority ethnic background is considered a vital component of critical peacebuilding education, yet in many cases their perceptions and experiences are undervalued and ignored (Bickmore, 2012). In a CE study in the UK, Warwick (2008) identifies that for some young people, a concern about war stemmed from personal and familial connections to regions affected by conflict. It would therefore appear important

that peacebuilding education approaches were inclusive of the perspectives and experiences of young people across the island of Ireland whose local understanding of conflict may be informed by personal, family and community experiences of the Irish conflict, but also conflicts in regions beyond the island of Ireland.

At another level, a specific focus on the inclusion of young people from a minority ethnic background would support wider social inclusion central to conflict transformation (Dupuy, 2008). In failing to include the perspectives of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, there is danger that peacebuilding education approaches may mirror the national-oriented forms of citizenship education recognised for excluding certain minority groups (Tully, 2009; Scott Lawson, 2002) which, within certain contexts, have served as a basis for violent conflict (Banks, 2004). For peacebuilding education to function as a transformative form of citizenship it must recognise young people's cultural identities (Banks, 2008) and balance engagement with conflict and addressing other forms of social division (Niens, O'Connor & Smith, 2013).

### **5.8 Local Perceptions of All-Island Peacebuilding**

From the interviews, it was apparent that the local dimension of conflict and peacebuilding were shaped by political and geographical boundaries as well as particular national identities. A number of participants viewed peacebuilding education programmes developed for schools across the island of Ireland as an extension of the ongoing approaches connecting local communities in NI. As Barbara explained:

*Pathways to Peace* is a step in the direction of another more ultimate aim of reducing the conflicts that there are in NI, but also between NI and RoI.  
(Barbara, Pathways to Peace)



However, the development of programmes for schools in both jurisdictions, which sometimes involved the participation of young people from both NI and RoI, presented certain challenges.

In Northern Ireland, half the community distrusted many of the structures that were in place. So there was a lot of distrust, a lot of anxiety among young people. So what we were trying to do was getting them to engage with the structures as well. (Nessa, *Citizens for Peace*)

The loyalist-unionist communities [in NI], I think really believed they are being sold a pup here, of some description. They're not at ease here and we have to tread very carefully. (Brendan, *Peace and Reconciliation*)

These examples reveal that perceptions within the local community spaces were an important factor in influencing how peacebuilding educational approaches are developed. In particular, it was perceived that educational programmes which involved the participation of young people from NI and RoI were viewed with suspicion by some young people from certain local communities. Using citizenship education as a vehicle for exploring conflict across the island of Ireland presented the challenge of how to address the complex relationship between RoI and NI. This evidence is commensurate with existing research which has identified the challenge of overcoming possible suspicion, from a unionist perspective, of hidden nationalist agendas, in developing social programmes between both jurisdictions (Greer, 1996; Whyte, 1983). By extending the focus of peacebuilding education beyond NI to include the rest of the island of Ireland, programmes were widening an analysis of Irish and British identities. Not only have Irish and British identities underpinned recent violent conflict in NI, but these relational identities would appear at the epicentre of historical conflict on the island of Ireland (Lederach, 2003). Indeed, it is argued that in order to gather a more

complete understanding of conflict on the island it is hugely important to consider the political history of both the south and the north of the island (Walker, 2012).

Fergal revealed how in addition to a north-south focus (between NI and the RoI), an east to west focus formed an important basis for particular educational programmes. He stated that his “work would have what we call ‘an East-West dimension’ because it brings in Britain as well.” Nessa explained how this east-west dimension added an important element to the peacebuilding process, and also held potential in addressing certain attitudes in RoI:

What we are also looking at now is moving east west. Because in a lot of our work, you’re looking at the British-Irish divide. A lot of [people in the] Republic [of Ireland] need to address their issues to England more so than Northern Ireland. I think moving to the next phase of would be to have schools [on the island of Ireland] linked to schools in England. An awful lot of the issues are around that kind of English identity, British identity. (Nessa, Citizens for Peace)

The inclusion of an east-west dimension was a relatively minor component of the peacebuilding education programmes featured in this study. However it does point to one important factor. Namely, that addressing British and Irish identities within NI has been an important peacebuilding approach in NI, that considering these identities across the island of Ireland, and indeed across GB might offer an approach to peacebuilding which strikes at the epicentre of conflict on these islands and remains inclusive of the political and geographical boundaries which shape the local dimension of peacebuilding.

### **5.9 The Peace Agreement and the ‘Local Turn’**

Whilst incidents of violence were identified as the impetus for certain educational approaches, one of the central foundations for a number of peacebuilding

programmes was the Belfast/Good Friday Peace Agreement (GFA) of 1998. Although a focus on NI and RoI had been a central tenet of the Anglo-Irish Agreement (1985) and the Joint Framework for Action (1995), the GFA offered a gateway for educators across the island of Ireland to support the engagement of young people with the peace process. The GFA provided an important framework which connected young people to the peacebuilding process:

There is quite a significant historical context for Pathways to Peace - The Good Friday Agreement, or the Belfast Agreement, signed in 1998. (Barbara, Pathways to Peace)

The Belfast Agreement was the first time that we to be able to get involved [in peacebuilding work in the RoI]. (Thomas, Growing Together)

It was democratically brought into existence through democratic engagement. We had a referendum [in RoI] and we had people signing off on it. So to me, there was a point of agreement. If we find that that's the basis for our whole peacebuilding process, then there would be a moral imperative for us all to engage in that ... Because I'm in the education sphere, I'm suggesting it should be education. (Brendan, Peace and Reconciliation)

The agreement was made between NI, the rest of the United Kingdom and the RoI and a number of participants suggested that the agreement provided an opportunity for educational engagement in a process of peacebuilding which extended beyond the borders of NI. The perceived importance of the GFA within the development of peacebuilding education programmes across the island of Ireland echoed existing research in this area (Pollack, 2005; Smith, 2003, 2011).

In the development of the Right to Peace programme, the GFA served as the source of a key theoretical foundation.

We wanted to support the education system in responding to the spirit of the agreement by integrating human rights into the education system. (Colin, Right to Peace)

The human rights framework employed within the GFA provided an alternative to the narrow conceptualisations of citizenship at the heart of the Irish conflict (Smith, 2011) and here it appears that this framework also offered an important foundation for particular peacebuilding education programmes. Furthermore, this provides an example of how peacebuilding education may make explicit linkages to peace agreements, through the employment of key theoretical frameworks such as human rights, and offer an important means of connecting young people to the peacebuilding process. This adds further weight to calls for the UK and RoI to maintain their commitment a human rights (Committee on the Administration of Justice, 2015) which underpins the GFA and resultant peacebuilding initiatives.

Whilst the peace agreement signed by the Irish government was strongly reinforced through a referendum (Arlow, 1999), a number of participants perceived a lack of engagement with the peace process at a local level within the RoI.

The Irish down south, in Dublin and Dundalk to a lesser extent were not as motivated, or naturally interested, in learning about how the peace process came about. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

The students in Northern Ireland were very aware of it, very engaged with it. Students down the south were less engaged with the peace process, less aware of it. You know they had more stereotypical views of the whole process, less aware of the whole intricacies of it ... we'd a new peace process being put in place, but

you had a very apathetic community, you know in the RoI, you know people didn't engage, they didn't feel a sense of belonging. (Nessa, Citizens for Peace)

An engagement with the peacebuilding process has been recognised as an important gap within citizenship education approaches within both NI and RoI (Niens and McIlrath, 2010a, 2010b). From these examples, peacebuilding education programmes revealed an active engagement with both the GFA and the ongoing peace process. Participants identified that popular political support for the GFA did not necessarily relate to an ongoing public engagement with the peace process, particularly within RoI. Yet this perceived lack of engagement provided educators with a particular focus for their programmes, namely improving young people's understanding of, and engagement with, the peace agreement and peacebuilding more broadly.

Engagement with the GFA was not solely described as an issue for just the island of Ireland. Some participants also felt that the relationships between NI, the rest of the UK and RoI, or the east-west dimension, were central to the GFA.

One of the things that was forgotten, I think, was the fact that the human rights commitments that were made in the Belfast agreement, Good Friday agreement applied just as much in the rest of UK and in the Republic as they did in the north. (Colin, Right to Peace)

We're talking about the reconciliation between all the jurisdictions on the two islands ... I thought that this would be a good vehicle for, again, the expression of the Good Friday Agreement because equally important was the east-west relationships which haven't really been developed in that context. (Brendan, Peace and Reconciliation)

Whilst a number of participants identified the east-west dimension as an important component of the GFA this relationship appeared to be an underdeveloped issue within

peacebuilding education programmes. This lacuna has parallels with a perceived lack of development of the east-west dimension within the wider peace process (Pollak, 2012).

Just as the north-south dimensions of peacebuilding encountered challenges, participants were also sensitive to the challenges that might be faced by future developments in relation to the east-west dimension. Some participants offered a suggestion as to how the north-south and east-west relationships could be approached in a manner that overcame the challenges posed by attitudes to both British and Irish identity – namely through a broader European citizenship.

That we are jointly within the EU is very important as well. The relationship between Ireland and UK is stronger, and on a more respectful basis because of that. I think it's a hugely important element as well ... We have to make sure that we are secure between each other so there isn't some vagueness if something goes wrong in Northern Ireland. That's important. (Brendan, Peace and Reconciliation)

Both within this example, and in other programmes, exploring the role of European countries and of the EU in relation to Irish conflict and other conflicts further afield appeared an important factor and further evidence of the employment of European citizenship as a means of framing peacebuilding education programmes across the island of Ireland (M.E. Smith, 2005; Pollak, 2005). It is argued that the Irish conflict is best understood within a broader European context (Walker, 2012) and European citizenship had already provided an important alternative to the divisive conceptualisations built around national identity that had underpinned much of the most recent violent conflict (Smith, 2003). Indeed, representations of Europe and the European Union are recognised components of contemporary citizenship education (Engel, 2014; Hammond & Looney, 2000; Kerr, McCarthy & Smith, 2002; Lapeyese, 2003).

Although number of participants alluded to the importance of the European dimension at a theoretical level, there was little evidence of how the rights or responsibilities commonly associated with European citizenship (Ross, 2015) were tackled in practice. Questions remain as to whether approaches to peacebuilding within an EU framework may indeed favour the compliant forms of citizenship at the expense of critical approaches (Kappler & Richmond, 2015). Indeed there was little evidence of critical approaches towards European Citizenship within the peacebuilding programmes at the focus of this research. Davies (2005a) is critical of approaches to citizenship which, whilst focusing on local and global themes, fail to address national level interconnection to violent conflict, for example government policy. Building upon this analysis, a critical approach to citizenship education should also encompass critical analysis of European level interconnections to conflict. Whilst there is compelling evidence of the commitment of the EU towards peacebuilding, for example the large number of conflict prevention projects funded by the EU through the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace initiative (IcSP), a critical approach would also raise important questions about the relationship between the EU and violent conflict. For example, ineffective responses to the forced migration of people fleeing conflicts across the world (Park, 2015), damaging EU trade practices connected to violent conflict, such as the relationship between timber export and the conflict in the Central African Republic (Global Witness, 2015) and the involvement of EU member states in arms production and trade underpinning contemporary conflicts across the globe (Valero, 2015). A critical approach to multiple layers of citizenship could support young people across the island of Ireland to consider their peacebuilding roles and responsibilities as European citizens.

## 5.10 Reflecting on the Local through the Global

The majority of peacebuilding education programmes included some reference to conflicts beyond the island of Ireland within their practice, but there were contrasting ways in which the global dimension of peacebuilding was approached both within and between programmes. Educational programmes had included a focus on a number of ongoing conflicts including Israel-Palestine, Ukraine, Afghanistan and Lebanon. The inclusion of a range of different of conflicts was considered an important factor in the development of the Peace Initiative, as it provided the opportunity for young people to deepen their understanding of conflict:

[Through a global focus] they develop a better understanding of what conflict really means, you know? (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

A number of participants made reference to the comparisons that could be drawn between post-conflict peacebuilding, and that these foundations could serve as a basis for teaching and learning.

[Commonalities between peace processes include] I suppose that the notion that you have to bring people to the table. There has to be some kind of give and take. There has to be some kind of negotiation on it, some kind of implications for everyone. I think that can go across the board. (Fiona, *Transform*)

I was conscious, when we talked about examples of peacebuilding in the past, which we hadn't had time to explore properly. One example was when France and Germany got together to ensure there was a peace process. (Brendan, Peace and Reconciliation)

For some participants, the global focus offered an alternative approach to peacebuilding education:



I think [global approaches] are important because I think in Northern Ireland we are quite insular. [Northern Ireland] gets very set in its ways. I think with the other work you definitely get a different perspective and they are not so caught up with community relations. (Iris, *Building Peace*)

I just find it useful from a development education angle, the work with organisations [in the RoI]. I think that global justice campaign is stronger in the south than it is in the north. There's a lot [Northern Ireland] can learn from that you know. (Deborah, *Point Forward*)

Here an inclusion of the global dimension served was perceived as an important component of peacebuilding education, and one which moved beyond an insular discussion of Irish conflict within certain programmes. The inclusion of a global dimension was evident within the majority of programmes, yet the simple addition of international material to citizenship education programmes, or raising 'global awareness', has received criticism for its lack of critical edge (Davies, 2006; I. Davies, Evans & Reid, 2005).

Some participants perceived that supporting young people to develop a deeper understanding of conflict issues in other contexts provided them with an important opportunity to reflect on the local peacebuilding, and in particular the Irish conflict.

I guess it is something we have been talking about and discussing. How does IHL relate to [the Irish Conflict]? For me personally, you can look at some of the activities and in your debrief, bring it back to "What about here? What if that was in your own context? If there was a violent conflict here, who should be protected? Do you think there should be rules to protect people if there's violent situations?" (Patricia, *Peace Blocks*).

We weren't honing in on Northern Ireland, the island of Ireland. We were bringing it in by default, we were sneaking it in the back door if you like ... Well focusing on the outside can help to deflect the difficulties, or the discomfort. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

This evidence suggests that an approach which uses distant conflicts to reflect back on to local issues, as suggested by McCully (2006), is considered a viable strategy within some of the peacebuilding programmes. More specifically, certain programmes considered controversial themes in a manner which avoided an overemphasis on local issues. Through case studies beyond the island of Ireland, programmes had developed opportunities for young people to consider how multiple contrasting perspectives underpin negative conflict, which is recognised as an important factor to consider in approaches to building peace (Kupermintz and Salomon, 2005; Lustig, 2002 cited in Salomon, 2004, p. 263). How any such global-local reflection is planned requires careful consideration (McCully, 2008) and as such a deeper analysis of this reflective approach is necessitated. However it is important to note that as I shall now discuss, global-local reflection can be complicated by the connections between young people's local spaces and conflict-related issues beyond the island of Ireland.

### **5.11 Conflict as a Matter of Interconnection**

A number of the participants revealed that the peacebuilding programmes made explicit connections between young people's local spaces and conflict beyond the island of Ireland, or indeed broader global themes.

We would look at some of the wider global interconnectedness ... and at community level too we would explore things like that. Really look at the history and the structure behind it ... You still do need a bit but I am amazed at how much you can do and connect stuff that's already going on. (Iris, Building Peace)

There's the local focus and the global focus. Young people are living in a globally interdependent world where they see these conflicts on the news. They seem so distant to them and might seem that they're not relevant... British armed forces could be involved in these conflicts. These young people could end up in the armed forces. They are going to be voters one day who are making decisions. This is relevant. (Patricia, Peace Blocks)

We would give them a little bit of input on, for example how much money is spent on weapons in the world. So young people have some sense of the money that's spent on weapons versus money that's spent on anti-poverty work in developing countries. That's always something they get quite engaged with. (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

The interviews revealed that some programmes would put particular emphasis on the exploration of the interconnections between local spaces and wider conflict-related themes.

The development of such interconnections is deemed a central component of educational approaches concerned with both understanding violence (Salmi, 2000) and building peace (Niens & Reilly, 2010; Reilly & Niens, 2014; Synnott, 2005). Furthermore, exploring interconnection between local and global issues is seen as a prerequisite of "critical" forms of citizenship education (Bryan & Bracken, 2011). Certainly for the Peace Initiative and Peace Blocks, exploring interconnection offered the opportunity to consider national issues, such as military budget or policy, which have often been left out of peacebuilding approaches as they jump from personal conflict to global issues without considering the problematic ground of national level involvement in armed conflict (Davies, 2005b). Furthermore, the direct engagement

with themes such as militarisation suggests a clear challenge to themes associated with negative conflict such as “defence” and “militarisation” (Davies, 2005a; Gor, 2003; Najcevska, 2000).

Eugene explained that the Peacebuilding Schools programme had unearthed a number of interconnections between local spaces on the island of Ireland and the Israel-Palestine conflict.

And the other interdependence point is that there are Israeli companies in Ireland. There’s the whole question of the boycott. There are Irish people going out on pilgrimages out there. There are Israeli holiday makers over here. We’re involved with the European Union. There are the United Nations Irish troops in Lebanon ... We need to work more on the interdependence idea a little bit more make it clear.  
(Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

As young people explored the Israel-Palestine conflict a number of connections between the conflict-affected region and local spaces within the island of Ireland had appeared. As well as revealing relationships between Israel and the island of Ireland based on business and tourism, Eugene suggested that membership of the EU and the UN, and the attendant peacekeeping responsibilities constituted important interconnections which could frame how young people understood the Israel-Palestine conflict. Eugene was also aware that particular connections could be viewed as potential avenues for forms of action, such as the action to boycott Israeli goods. Participants revealed the importance of critical analyses of the relationships between NI, RoI and elsewhere across the globe. Indeed, the action or inaction of countries in relation to violent conflict is seen as an important component of peacebuilding forms of GCE (Davies, 2006). In addressing peacebuilding in both NI and RoI, these peacebuilding education programmes offer an important opportunity for young people in both jurisdictions to consider how local spaces, national policies and global issues are interconnected, and propose a challenge

to the “omission of the national” (Davies, 2005a, p. 29), or the gap between personal conflict and large scale violent conflict.

In a divergent example, Deborah suggested that exploring interconnection across the island of Ireland, between NI and RoI, could serve as a stepping stone to exploring interconnections with global issues and themes. She explained:

And where better than to start on an island that's really divided? I mean to create that sense of interconnectedness, solidarity, spread that out all across the world.

(Deborah, Point Forward)

Indeed, educational programmes tasked with overcoming the numerous challenges of division and conflict on the island of Ireland, may indeed offer a great deal in terms of informing the challenge of developing broader conceptualisations of interdependence and interconnectedness.

Finally, it is important to note that these interconnections are a means of connecting local spaces to global themes, whilst at the same time illuminating how national themes are deeply connected to violent conflict. The exploration of such interconnections would also appear to correspond to the “knowledge for global survival” which Davies (2005a, p. 30) argues can underpin students’ positive action.

### **5.12 Useful Interconnections or Problematic Allegiances?**

Whilst the majority of participants considered the development of local-global interconnections to be a positive tool for exploring conflict and supporting young people’s deepened understanding of complex issues, there was one particular incident which raised questions about the relationship between local spaces and global themes. Eugene described an introductory session to the Peacebuilding Schools programme which took place in a school in Belfast. He was providing an introduction to the Israel-

Palestine conflict which included sharing basic information about Israel and Palestine, which included showing the young people the respective flags.

I'll never forget the girl, a Belfast girl, when I showed the two flags. [I said] "Have you seen these flags before?" And the girl said "My Da has that [Israeli flag] on the roof of the house. I don't even know what's it's about." (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

The young person participating in the programme identified that an Israeli flag flew on the roof of her father's house. Although she appeared unable to explain why it was placed there at the time, the presence of such a flag within the local space symbolised existing connections between the Irish conflict and the Israel-Palestine conflict. This highlights two particular challenges faced by peacebuilding programmes which explore conflicts beyond the island of Ireland, such as Pathways to Peace, Peacebuilding Education and Progress Peace. Firstly, young people within programmes across the island of Ireland may have evolving understandings of the Israel-Palestine conflict which may take the form of allegiance to one particular side or another. Within her typology Davies (2005a) argues that allegiances are a contemporary feature of certain conflicts, with individuals or groups announcing solidarity with groups involved in violent conflict elsewhere in the world. These allegiances can be seen as forms of identity which transcend legally defined citizenships (Heater, 1997). In one particular example, Davies, Harber and Schweisfurth (2002) found evidence of young people in Qatar demonstrating solidarity with Palestinians through the burning of the Israeli flag. Hill and White (2008) have identified that both Israeli and Palestinian flags have been flown in certain areas of NI since 2002, signifying a perceived allegiance between particular communities in the conflict-affected regions. Furthermore, Niens and Reilly (2012) suggested that such allegiances were mirrored in the attitudes of certain schools towards groups within the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The second factor here is the impact of negative allegiances with distant conflicts upon local conflict. The flying of Israeli or Palestinian flags not only highlights the existence of allegiances, but also represents how these symbols are drawn upon to reinforce existing divisions in relation to the Irish conflict (Hill & White, 2008; Nolan & Bryan, 2016). As such, there would appear to be a risk that young people may utilise negative allegiance to reinforce existing negative conflict within the Irish context. On one hand, in addressing conflicts beyond the island of Ireland, there is a possibility that certain educational approaches could increase the risk of young people forming negative allegiances which undermine peacebuilding and perpetuate violent conflict. On the other, the negative connections between violent conflicts may already shape young people's understanding in this area and should not be omitted.

Although research has suggested that incorporating proximal and remote conflicts within peacebuilding education may provide an important opportunity for learners to broaden their understanding (Kupermintz & Salomon, 2005), evidence within this study suggests the need for a deeper exploration of the connections between conflicts, such as the Irish (proximal) and Israel-Palestine (remote) conflicts, which feature within certain peacebuilding education programmes. Certainly, this reinforces the need for careful planning of any attempts to develop peacebuilding education approaches which involve apparently abstract conflicts (McCully, 2006). It also supports the call for GCE "which is inclusive of local identities and divisions" (Reilly & Niens, 2014, p. 72). Finally, it places added importance on placing young people and their local spaces at the centre of peacebuilding approaches, for it is within these local spaces that the interconnections between violent conflicts may appear.

### **5.13 Local Spaces for Peacebuilding Action**

Whilst the interviews reveal that young people's understanding of conflict was in many respects shaped by their local spaces, it was also apparent that the local was an important consideration in relation to the possible actions that young people might take as a result of their involvement in peacebuilding education programmes.

I think it has to come from the young people then what they want. Do they want contact? What do they want to do and how it should be done? So basically the action is generally coming from the young people. The outside bodies like myself and the teachers are just equipped with skills to take young people on that process.  
(Deborah, Point Forward)

So you try and take away your agenda and go into a group of young people, or out on the streets with the young people, and start with them. "What are the things that concern you? What makes your blood boil? What would you like to change?" Really start to get at some of the issues that they feel strongly about. That really does work, because starting at that level you've got their energy, you've got their involvement, and they are involved in the whole thing. But you still facilitate but as much as possible they take on. (Iris, Building Peace)

Just as allowing young people to map out their local spaces, certain programmes offered important opportunities for young people to develop their own ideas about what future peacebuilding action might entail. Deborah suggested that young people's involvement in the process could entail making decisions about the educational activities that should follow, for example whether a meeting with young people from another community could happen, and if so, how would it be structured. For Iris, placing young people at the centre of the process was a means of ensuring an ongoing energetic commitment to a peacebuilding process underpinned by young people's interests. This positioning of



young people at the centre of the ongoing development of these peacebuilding programmes mirrors the increasing prevalence of conceptualisation of young people as active citizens (Biesta, Lawy & Kelly, 2009; Lawy & Biesta, 2006; Osler & Starkey, 2003; Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) and appeared of central importance to the continuation of the educational process.

Within the Peacebuilding Schools programme, young people were also involved in the discussion of how peacebuilding action might take place in the local community. Eugene explained how young people participating in the programme had voiced their opinions on potential forms of peacebuilding action.

We changed the course of our programme by listening to the kids there. ‘Listen, if you go out in the street’, the Northern Irish protestant kids said, ‘You’re going to look like another band of do-gooders on the street’. We were going to do a performance theatre type of sketch, or drama. We didn’t do it because we were listening to them on the ground. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

In this example, Eugene described how young people were concerned as to how their involvement in certain forms of peacebuilding would be negatively perceived by others. This discussion had led to a change in direction for the programme, as they negotiated an alternative activity. Not only were young people consulted and involved in the evaluation of educational programmes (Thomas & Gunter, 2006), but these participants were perceived as “active partners in the processes of education” (Fielding 2007, p. 334). Their engagement had influenced both the structure and content of peacebuilding education programmes, and in doing so set the limits of peacebuilding within their local communities. This provides an important example of how local perceptions, specifically those of young people, may influence the means by which sustainable peacebuilding is developed (Schierenbeck, 2015).

## 5.14 Conclusion

Despite the difficulty of developing educational programmes which address issues of conflict (Kupermintz and Salomon 2005; Firer 2008; Levy, 2014; Maoz 2011) this chapter has revealed that educators across the island of Ireland have developed such programmes underpinned by motivations beyond that of simply ensuring that education does no harm, through the belief that education can have a transformative impact on negative conflict. These programmes offer a small but important incorporation of the peace process into schools within NI and RoI, which has often been lacking (Niens & McIlrath, 2010a). This chapter argued that peacebuilding education programmes featured in this study recognise the importance of the local turn, as it corresponds to young people. Their experiences and perceptions become a key component of instructional design (Kupermintz & Salomon, 2005) within the planning and implementation of peacebuilding education programmes. Although previous research exploring peacebuilding education across the island of Ireland has suggested that the perspectives of young people are conspicuous in their absence (McEvoy-Levy, 2011), the programmes appeared to place the perceptions and experiences of young people as a central theoretical concern. The development of peacebuilding education programmes can be seen as commensurate attempt to include young people within the peace process through the medium of education (Dupuy, 2008). McEvoy-Levy (2001) argues that the inclusion of young people within the peace processes must provide them with “ownership of the process” (p. 33) and the extent to which young people’s experiences and perceptions lie at the centre of the development of a number of programmes suggests clear attempts to support the empowerment of young people in this regard.

Winthrop and Kirk (2008) argue that peacebuilding education may operate through an educationalist lens, which negates the perspectives of young people, or through a child protection lens which incorporates children's voices but often overlooks

schooling, however the programmes at the focus of this research revealed an alternative conceptualisation of peacebuilding education, which incorporated children's voices whilst remaining deeply engaged with the formal education system. This engagement exposed contrary conceptualisations of young people within education and more broadly within society, hinting at the contrasting ideologies which separate peacebuilding education and formal education (Harber & Sakade, 2009) as well as offering a deeper analysis of the barriers to facilitating positive education approaches which address conflict and citizenship, and an examination of how school culture and practice affect such learning (Levy, 2014).

Through learner-centred participatory methodologies, peacebuilding education programmes have "mapped" the key local spaces, outside of schooling, where young people may learn about positive conflict, or peacebuilding citizenship, but also negative conflict (Davies, 2005a). This "mapping" enabled the peacebuilding programmes to contextualise the "local turn" (Schierenbeck, 2015) a focus sometimes lacking within peacebuilding education (Hart, 2011). This focus appeared to provide foundation for critical citizenship education which explored citizenship and citizenship practice as connected to their lives, experiences, understandings and abilities (Biesta & Lawy, 2006) revealing the importance of local spaces, such as family and local community, where interconnected and sometime conflicting experiences can occur (Lawy & Biesta, 2006). At times these conflict-related issues appeared explicit, as the practice and symbolism of negative conflict. Elsewhere, the local connections to conflict were more circumspect. For some young people, including those in the RoI, their local spaces had been deeply affected by violence at a personal level with family members' victims and perpetrators of violence within the Irish conflict. Elsewhere, the "underlying whispers" of certain regions were perceived to frame how young people understood the Irish conflict. Examining this local dimension through a critical lens can move beyond the

simplified conceptualisations of “the local” as a territory where negative conflict and peacebuilding may take place. Here it can be seen as fluctuating and dynamic networks of relationships and actions (Mac Ginty, 2015) and exploring young people’s participation in these practices can deepen understanding of how their lives are connected to broader societal issues (Biesta, Lawy and Kelly, 2009).

Within any critical examination at this level, it is imperative to consider who is included and who is excluded from “the local” (Schierenbeck, 2015). As such, this chapter utilised this critical lens to explore inclusion and exclusion in relation to peacebuilding citizenship education programmes across the island of Ireland. Whilst a small number of peacebuilding education programmes engaged in developing the inclusiveness of their practice, there remain questions about whether certain young people may be excluded from peacebuilding, particularly where alternative perspectives on both the Irish conflict and conflict elsewhere are of such importance (Bickmore, 2012; Gallagher, 2004).

In developing educational programmes for the island of Ireland, educators encountered challenges in ensuring the participation of young people from a unionist background in light of mistrust of all-Ireland framework of such programmes. A minority of programmes widened their focus to consider the east-west dimension and the relationship between the UK and RoI although this approach appeared to be in its infancy.

Whilst education has formed a specific component of many peace agreements globally, including the GFA, less is known about how it is actually addressed (Dupuy, 2008). The interviews revealed that the GFA had served as a stimulus for a number of programmes, but also as a means of devising a key theoretical framework, in the form of human rights. Whilst the European dimension has underpinned existing approaches to peacebuilding on the island of Ireland (Smith, 2003; Pollak, 2005), critical

approaches which address super-ordinate identities have proved challenging to develop in the context of citizenship education in NI (Niens & Reilly, 2012). Furthermore, it is also important to note that approaches grounded in uncritical eurocentrism may limit the potential of GCE (Jefferess, 2008).

Importantly this chapter has illuminated aspects of the dimensions of citizenship that lay between the personal and the global level, which have been viewed as underexplored (Davies, 2005a). A focus on conflict as a global theme was utilised as a means of reflecting on the local and as a means of exposing local-global interconnections. It also revealed the problematic interconnections between local and distant conflicts, which may shape how young people may learn about conflict and in particular the possibility of allegiances which can reinforce negative conflict.

Finally, it is important to note that these local spaces were recognised as places where young people could learn about negative conflict but were also recognised as potential spaces for peacebuilding action. It is to the concept of peacebuilding action that the next chapter of this study turns.

## Chapter 6: Models of Responsibility for Peacebuilding

### 6.1 Introduction

National and transnational organisations concerned with GCE place an increasing emphasis on producing global citizens who are able to take responsibility for a plethora of local and global challenges, including peacebuilding. Reardon (1988) maintains that as an increased understanding of global interconnections reveals a complicity in systems of conflict and war, responsibility is "the most essential peace making capacity" (p. 62). Whilst existing models of responsibility connected to social justice provide important analyses of the complex position of global citizens (Applebaum, 2012; Butler, 2005; Young, 2006), these frameworks are structured around the lives and experiences of adults. Drawing upon a series of 15 semi-structured interviews with educators involved in the design and delivery of peacebuilding GCE programmes, this chapter considers how the responsibility and associated actions of young people in relation to conflict and peacebuilding are conceptualised.

The chapter begins by providing an important contextualisation through an exploration of participants' views on the possibilities and limitations of peacebuilding education with specific reference to the position of programmes within educational systems and wider social structures. The chapter is then structured in three key sections – firstly, the conceptualisation of young people's responsibility for peacebuilding within programmes; secondly, the critique of daily practices which underpin violent conflict; thirdly, peacebuilding action as an enactment of responsibility.

The first of these sections considers how young people's responsibility for peacebuilding is conceptualised within peacebuilding programmes. I explore how the engagement with this difficult form of citizenship is supported through forward facing forms of collective responsibility, before examining the challenges presented to such a

model by alternative forms of responsibility connected to school-based behaviour, which are often coupled with human rights.

The second section explores how peacebuilding education programmes engage critical thinking as a means of interrogating everyday practices of violence which may underpin negative conflict. I then explore how programmes develop critical analysis of negative conflict through a focus on forms of media, exploring multiple perspectives, and engaging with frameworks of human rights and humanitarian law.

The final section explores the forms of action developed within peacebuilding education programmes. I consider the individual forms of action which represent examples of resistance to violence, before exploring how peacebuilding education programmes address collective forms of action within action projects across the island of Ireland and as part of the Transition Year (TY) programme in RoI. This section concludes with an exploration of how young people's ongoing involvement in peacebuilding action is considered by programme designers.

## **6.2 Young People and the Responsibility for Peacebuilding**

### **6.2.1 The roles and responsibilities of education in responding to conflict**

Despite participants' belief in the importance of peacebuilding education programmes, there was a clear perception that addressing conflict was not always an educational priority for schools across the island of Ireland.

In terms of peace education, our argument is that it's essential, rather than some kind of luxury add-on. Especially with young people, we think that it needs to be done well. It needs to be done systematically. (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

Allied with the committed classroom teachers, participants made considerable efforts to make spaces for young people to engage with the programmes and learn more about conflict. Whilst the programmes made a significant challenge to the omission of conflict

from the curriculum which may itself represent a factor underpinning negative conflict (Arlow, 2004; Cole, 2007; Davies, 2005a; Sánchez Meertens, 2013), there was a strong argument that there was a need for a deeper and more prolonged commitment to peacebuilding education in both jurisdictions. When this significant perspective is viewed alongside the conceptual framework which guides this study, it can be seen as a call for educational approaches which not only challenge negative conflict but which support positive conflict.

Whilst the specific aims varied (Table 3), each programme made reference to the presence of different forms of conflict throughout society.

For me, [peacebuilding education] is such a no brainer. Bullying in the school yard and cyber bullying, how do you resolve conflicts? How do you deal with conflict? How does the community deal with it? How does society deal with it? Our nation, our countries, how do we work on conflicts? It's building it up in that way. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

In light of the deepened understanding of the connections between individual and collective forms of conflict, research suggests that educational approaches should engage with these multiple levels of conflict (Levy, 2014; Smith, 2010). Participants made strong arguments as to the importance of exploring interpersonal through to ongoing issues of societal conflict, across the island of Ireland and further afield. Whilst participants presented compelling theoretical justifications for this approach, maintaining this broad focus in practice appeared a huge challenge, especially considering the serious time constraints placed on peacebuilding education. With this evidence in mind, it is important to consider that whilst theoretical understanding of all forms of conflict deepens, educators may be left in a position where they are attempting to squeeze an increasing breadth of ever-deepening content into small, and in some cases decreasing, curricular spaces for peacebuilding practice.



There was a strong perception amongst participants that whilst education could play an important role in challenging negative conflict and supporting young people to develop peacebuilding skills and attitudes, it should not be considered as a panacea to violence.

[There is a danger] in dumping the problem of conflict on education. I keep looking for the source of this quote, it goes back a century or more, but is still valid: 'education cannot compensate for society'. It cannot. To me, that's powerful. (Thomas, Growing Together)

Through Bernstein's (1970) quote, Thomas provides a significant illustration of a key challenge faced by the educators participating in this study. On one hand, participants were tasked with challenging the omission of conflict by promoting the importance of including peacebuilding education within the school curriculum. On the other hand, participants were cognisant of the limits of an isolated educational response to conflict. The problems associated with positioning citizenship education as a panacea for social issues, including violent conflict are well documented. Whilst education systems, and to a lesser extent peacebuilding programmes, may have an important part to play in challenging violent conflict, it must only be considered as part of a wider network of social and political forces which affect young people's learning. Young people's social worlds have a great bearing on their experiences of conflict (Connolly & Healy, 2004) and processes of peacebuilding require the engagement of all levels of society (Cusack, 2009). Peacebuilding education programmes represent one aspect of educational systems, which in turn represent just one component of society. Therefore an overemphasis on the potential of education systems or specific programmes to overcome the complexities of violent conflict is highly questionable.

Finally, it is important to also consider that education structures and policies are sometimes complicit within varying degrees of violent conflict (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000;

Davies, 2004; Smith & Vaux, 2003). This is an important consideration for any educational approach seeking to address conflict and build peace. A significant number of participants questioned the practice of peacebuilding education within NI, as it took part in a divided education system.<sup>15</sup>

Young people have been brought up in their own communities with its influences, and part of that influence is the Catholic school or the Protestant school...It seems somewhat tokenistic to bring someone like me in to do a wee bit of anti-sectarian work where arguably the schooling system is sectarian. What really needs to happen is a root and branch overhaul towards integrated education. (Frank, Progress Peace)

The structures and practices of separate or segregated schooling may be detrimental to social cohesion within NI, and a divided education system presents huge challenges to any educational attempts to transform aspects of society (Gallagher, 2010; Leonard, 2007). It is also important to note here that the RoI was certainly not free of criticism for the educational structures which shaped attempts to build peace.

I find it strange that very little attention in [the Republic of] Ireland is given to the fact that we work in just as segregated a system as in the North. (Colin, Right to Peace)

Indeed, the education system in RoI remains divided along denominational lines<sup>16</sup>. Whilst these divisions are not connected to violent conflict, the inequality and lack of

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<sup>15</sup> The school sector in NI comprises controlled schools (managed and funded by the Education Authority through school Boards of Governors (BoGs) which mainly include representatives of the Protestant churches), voluntary maintained schools (managed by BoGs nominated by trustees - mainly Roman Catholic) and integrated schools (which invite Protestants and Catholics to come together with other traditions in order to improve their understanding of one another, their own cultures, religions and values) (NI Direct, 2014).

<sup>16</sup> The post-primary education sector in RoI comprises secondary schools (privately owned and managed), vocational schools (managed by Education and Training Boards)

social cohesion perpetuated by the education system in RoI (Lodge & Lynch, 2004) can certainly be considered a barrier to positive peace. With these compelling perspectives in mind, it is important to consider whether short-term peacebuilding education programmes represent a tokenistic response supported to deflect from accusations that existing educational structures are themselves a barrier to positive peace, with their complicity in underpinning societal division in NI and perpetuating inequality in RoI. No matter the strength of short-term peacebuilding education programmes, operating within a fundamentally divided education system makes peacebuilding education's "herculean task" (Bajaj, 2015, p. 156), all the more difficult.

### **6.2.2 Prospective collective forms of peacebuilding responsibility**

As outlined in the previous chapter, the peacebuilding education programmes at the heart of this project are constructed around the presumed agency of young people and their active involvement in learning but also within wider educational and social processes (Misoska, 2013). Whilst the programmes focused on supporting young people to engage with the complexity of violent conflict, a number of participants revealed that they had at times considered whether exploring all forms of conflict through citizenship education was appropriate for young people.

Are we traumatising them? Is this appropriate for this age group? They're not used to discussion. They're not used to giving opinions. They're not used to being serious about world issues. All of these things are coming in to your head.

(Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

As Larkins (2014) explains, "children have an unsettled relationship with the status of citizenship, being given some rights, responsibilities and opportunities for participation, and being denied others" (p. 7). Where children are conceptualised as partial or

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and community and comprehensive schools (managed by Boards of Management of differing compositions) (DES, 2016a).

becoming, rather than fully-formed citizens, they are often excluded from participation in difficult forms citizenship (Robinson, 2012). Programmes which address violent forms of conflict, where young people learn about the consequences of violence, including serious injury and loss of life, would appear to constitute difficult citizenship. Yet, rather than excluding young people, the peacebuilding education programmes promoted an engagement with both positive and negative forms of conflict (Davies, 2005a; Fisher et al., 2000). For many participants, the important question was not whether young people should engage with this difficult citizenship, but rather how their responsibilities should be conceptualised.

Kowal (2012) identifies that responsibility can be framed as retrospective, in terms of events that have happened already, often linked to blame, and as prospective, where one accepts a duty. A number of participants provided strong arguments that young people's responsibility should not be conceptualised as a backwards facing responsibility or blame for conflict, either at an individual or collective level. In developing the Right to Peace programme, Colin had considered how the responsibility for past conflict-related events was communicated to young people.

I think we were very clear that [young people] weren't responsible for causing conflict and they weren't necessarily seen to be people who were going to resolve conflict. In that essence we were careful about the messages. (Colin, Right to Peace)

Otsuki (2011) raises the question as to whether intergenerational retrospective forms of responsibility for injustices connected to conflict may be held by members of social groups. A number of participants in this study rejected the notion that young people could be held collectively responsible for others' past actions in light of group membership. This is highly relevant when it is considered how many of the programmes focused on challenging prejudice, discrimination and pre-conceived notions of

individuals and collectives. Although the argument against intergenerational responsibility as collective blame within the context of peacebuilding education may be compelling, it was not evident how programmes addressed the responsibility associated with individual involvement in direct forms of violence. This aspect of responsibility is an important omission from any discussion of the responsibility associated with conflict and peacebuilding. However, instead of focusing on individual or collective backward facing responsibility, programmes employed a forward looking prospective responsibility, for something that has yet to happen and as such a “responsibility for the future” (Birnbacher, 1999, p. 23).

A number of participants argued that encouraging young people to take action on complex themes, such as conflict, could place too much responsibility on their shoulders.

Young people taking responsibility for like the mess of our world is too much. Sometimes I think it's bad that we throw all that responsibility onto them as well.  
(Iris, Building Peace)

If it seems bigger than the young people, they don't know what they are responsible for. I mean for example within the context of Northern Ireland in relation to sectarianism, if it's not handled right children can't find a role for themselves...That's huge, it's a big thing. So you have to break that down.  
(Deborah, Point Forward)

Research has considered whether the expectations placed on young people are out of touch with their power to enact change and contribute towards conflict transformation. Salomon and Cairns (2010) are critical of the over-emphasis on young people within peacebuilding processes. They argue that "the decision to focus on children ignores the fact that power is in the hands of adults, and it is how this power is used that will

determine the type of society children will inherit" (p. 2). Gill and Niens (2014b, p. 14) also make a compelling argument that inflating the potential of education to address violent conflict also serves to transfer the responsibility for creating change to the shoulders of young people, rather than adults. Yet in determinedly resisting the conceptualisations of young people as requiring protection from difficult citizenship, the participants were suggesting that young people have agency, can choose to act or not act and hold some degree of power. The responsibility for peacebuilding may lie primarily with adults, but collective or shared forms of responsibility offer spaces for young people to be considered within broader networks connected to making the local, national and global a less violent and more peaceful place. Rather than placing all responsibility for transforming conflict on young people, participants within this research offered important reflections on young people's meaningful participation in collective networks of responsibility which may challenge negative conflict and build peace.

Esquith (2010) identifies the importance of exploring the position and operation of young people within wider networks of responsibility. Nessa explained how the shared nature of responsibility between citizens and the government was explored on the Citizens for Peace project.

There are people who are responsible for doing things and young people should be able to engage with them. The simple example I would give the kids would be the river behind the school is polluted. You can go down there and you can clean that up and that's a fabulous citizenship program. It's great participation, but it's going to be dirty next week. The same thing is going to happen. Cleaning up the river would be part of your campaign but [you must] also highlight who should have been cleaning it. The first question you ask yourself should be who should have

been doing this and why isn't somebody? Who is responsible for this? So they have to engage with the policy makers. (Nessa, Citizens for Peace)

Programmes such as Citizens for Peace appear to offer an alternative to citizenship education approaches focused on the individual responsibility of young people at the expense of exploring other actors or organisations (Biesta, Lawy & Kelly, 2009; McEvoy, 2007). In illustrating the responsibilities of local government, such programmes may support consideration of how responsibility may differ between citizens and their governments (Howe & Covell, 2010) and further an exploration of relationships between these actors (Biesta, 2011). Whilst programmes referenced the importance of interactions between young people and governments as avenues for potential citizenship action, it is important to note that young people and their governments do not represent the extent of actors within any network of peacebuilding responsibility. As Biesta (2011) argues, the "responsibility for citizenship" also belongs to families, educational establishments and to society as a whole. As such, the relationships between young people and these other actors should not be overlooked.

### **6.2.3 Responsibility as a prerequisite for human rights**

Whilst many of the peacebuilding programmes utilised prospective and collective forms of responsibility to consider young people's roles in peacebuilding, a number of participants suggested that within schools, young people's responsibility was often understood very differently.

Teachers are going to mention responsibilities of children from the get go. They are going to focus just as much on children's responsibilities as they are on rights. (Iris, Building Peace)

Approaches towards developing social responsibilities within schools may have positive outcomes (McMurray & Niens, 2012). However, a number of participants argued that

commonplace approaches to addressing responsibilities, specifically alongside human rights, could be problematic. Focusing on responsibilities at the expense of human rights is described as a misrepresentation of HRE (Howe & Covell, 2010; McEvoy, 2007) yet within the citizenship curricula of both NI and RoI, responsibility is coupled with human rights (NCCA, 2005; NI Curriculum, 2012). This raises the question of whether the relationship between rights and responsibilities is adequately conceptualised with national curricula.

A number of participants suggested that forms of responsibility within the formal education system often referred to the behaviour of young people in schools.

My worry sometimes when you use the word responsibility in an education context, it sounds like the high moral ground: Do what you're told! Take responsibility! (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

It's interesting actually. When you talk about rights, it's always been a teacher who's mentioned the word responsibility. School equals discipline, equals responsibility. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

There is that language of power. "Well, if we're going to give you more rights now, you'd better behave yourself! And this is what you have to do in order to be treated properly by me!" Which is actually a complete misrepresentation of the human rights framework. (Colin, Right to Peace)

Certain approaches to HRE have focused on managing the behaviour of young people (Osler & Starkey, 2010). This approach, utilising "responsibility" as a means of controlling young people, appeared a concern for the educators involved in this research. Brendan suggested that this emphasis originated from the perception that



singularly, human rights could be utilised by young people to avoid taking responsibility for their actions.

I think what has happened is people are worried about rights. Where is it coming from? I have often wondered about it myself in education terms. I wonder whether it has come from the idea that “we don’t want a whole lot of students screaming that they have rights and have no responsibilities!” So we get [responsibility] out there very quickly! (Brendan, Peace and Reconciliation)

Brendan’s suggestion chimes with existing research which has found evidence of perceptions that teaching young people about their rights can be perceived as a controversial practice (Osler & Starkey, 2005) which may in turn lead to behavioural issues within classrooms (Cassidy, Brunner & Webster, 2013). From the experience of participants, there is evidence that responsibility is in many cases tied to human rights, and at times it appears to have been used as a means of mitigating the perceived impact of human rights on young people’s behaviour. Whilst this poses obvious challenges to HRE more generally, some participants identified how such an approach presents particular obstacles to exploring rights and responsibilities in relation to conflict.

Responsibilities don’t sit in equal parity with rights. Rights are where it’s at and children have rights. I think that’s very important, because you have rights simply because you’re human. You have rights because you have dignity. You don’t lose your rights because your Dad is a bomber. You don’t lose your rights because you come from an area which is full of conflict. (Colin, Right to Peace)

I don’t know whether we’ve got it right. What I’ve seen is that in schools, the responsibilities are you have to be a responsible person to be entitled to your human rights. You are entitled to human rights whether you are responsible or

not, prisoners or whoever. I think it's kind of used sometimes as a stick. I don't think it works. I don't think children respond to that. (Iris, Building Peace)

Violent conflicts represent situations where human rights are often abused (Bajaj, 2008; McCully, 2012) and there is an urgent need, therefore, to ensure that education does not represent responsibility as a prerequisite of rights. Despite participants' reservations as to the relationship between rights and responsibilities, a number of participants suggested that useful connections between the two concepts could be made.

If you, as a citizen, see something that is out of order, there is a responsibility for you to not allow that to happen. Because you know there is a rights issue here. There is a responsibility in that sense. If there is bullying going on, abuse of people in some way or other, and you can see it is linked within the context of rights, I think there are huge responsibilities at individual level to engage on the issue. (Brendan, Peace and Reconciliation)

I do think it is important; this notion that we are all responsible because, how are human rights upheld on a daily basis if somebody doesn't take responsibility? (Fiona, Transform).

Once again, participants avoided the liability model of responsibility, built around notions of individual moral and/or legal blame, instead focusing on collective forms of responsibility and associated participation or action (Young, 2006). This reinforces the idea that in relation to human rights, responsibility should be considered as a shared obligation for citizens to respect and uphold the rights of others through individual action (Bar-Tal, Rosen & Nets-Zehngut, 2010). With a conception of responsibility connected to human rights, the suggested forms of action would appear twofold. On one hand, individuals should not undertake actions which damage the rights of others. On the other hand, individuals should take positive action to uphold the rights of others. At

this juncture, an important question is how any collective complicity in broader societal structures, which may limit the rights of others is addressed (Applebaum, 2012; Young, 2006). I shall return to this point later in the chapter.

### **6.3 Critical (Thinking) Foundations of Peacebuilding Responsibility**

#### **6.3.1 Critical thinking as means of interrogating everyday practices of violence**

Critical thinking is widely regarded as a fundamental component of educational approaches which seek to challenge conflict and build peace (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Danesh, 2008; Dupuy, 2008; Harris & Morrison, 2003). It is also recognised as an important element of citizenship education curricula in NI and RoI (Niens & McIlrath, 2010a). In considering frameworks of responsibility, critical thinking represents an important means of interrogating the “normal and acceptable daily practices” (Young, 2006, p. 177) which underpin injustice. Within the context of the peacebuilding education programmes, critical thinking was perceived as an important means of deepening young people’s ability to analyse everyday practices which may underpin violence and negative conflict.

A number of programmes focused on critical thinking as a means of addressing the complexity of conflict, echoing McCully’s (2005) argument as to the importance of thinking critically about “contentious situations [that] are multi-faceted and complex” (p. 40). As such, these peacebuilding education programmes can be seen as providing important spaces for conflict-related explorations of critical thinking within schools in NI and RoI.

A huge [objective] is helping children to develop critical thinking skills. Now if there is a thing that I regard as fundamental to education today it is not having

lorry-loads of knowledge but having the ability to critique what is being offered and the ability to think critically. I would maintain that education isn't doing it and I think that's a major, major, major flaw. (Thomas, *Growing Together*)

Although engagement with critical thinking may be an important means of addressing conflict (Smith, 2011), a number of participants felt that critical thinking which explored everyday practices was underexplored within formal education across the island of Ireland. These participants perceived that an over emphasis on retaining knowledge within formal education left little room for deeper forms of critical thinking which could be fundamental in challenging the social norms which underpin negative conflict. Such evidence chimes with existing research that suggests curricula with narrow forms of assessment can limit the extent to which critical thinking can be developed within schools (Davies, 2005a).

Other participants revealed that they had drawn on alternative methodologies to develop the inclusion of critical thinking within peacebuilding programmes.

Well questioning and critical thinking are really important. I think in both education systems that's something that's missing. It's missing and that's why I loved learning about Open Spaces for Dialogue<sup>17</sup> and critical literacy because it's so important for young people to start asking the right questions. But knowing what questions to ask is sometimes tricky. So that's the hard part. (Iris, *Building Peace*)

Research carried out in NI has suggested that developing direct engagement with conflict-related issues through critical thinking can be limited by time constraints and teacher training (Reilly & Niens, 2014). However, a number of participants had developed their own peacebuilding educational practice around GCE methodologies,

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<sup>17</sup> Open Spaces for Dialogue and Enquiry (OSDE, 2006), a programme which engages with controversial issues, such as conflict through a focus on critical thinking (Andreotti & Warwick, 2007).

such as OSDE. Critical engagement with knowledge is a central component of such methodologies (Warwick & Andreotti, 2007) and this overlap may offer an important training avenue for educators grappling with critical thinking in relation to conflict.

### **6.3.2 Interrogating sources of conflict knowledge through “critical media literacy”**

A number of peacebuilding programmes included a focus on conflict beyond the island of Ireland (for example Israel-Palestine) and participants suggested that the majority of young people knew little of these conflicts. As within previous research (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010), the majority of young people from both jurisdictions were perceived by most participants to have limited knowledge of the conflict on the island of Ireland.

I found out many [young people participating in Peacebuilding Schools] didn't know what “the Troubles” were about. They didn't know what the peace process was about. There was a very high level of curiosity, which is a positive aspect.  
(Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

Despite a perceived lack of knowledge, participants suggested that young people had a desire to learn more about conflict, both on the island of Ireland and beyond, which mirrors existing research (Davies, Harber & Yamashita, 2005; Yamashita, 2006; Niens & Reilly, 2010). Although this lack of prior knowledge presented challenges in developing introductory material, young people's enthusiasm for learning about conflict and peace presented positive opportunities for engagement with the programmes.

In light of the lack of existing knowledge, a number of peacebuilding programmes were particularly concerned with supporting young people to develop their understanding of conflict, or as Fiona explained, “understanding what the key issues are around the conflict - what are people actually arguing over?” (Fiona, Transform).

Critical media literacy is defined as the skills and knowledge to analyse and create different forms of media (Kellner & Share, 2005) and a number of programmes promoted the critical interrogation of conflict through focusing on multiple media sources of oftentimes conflicting information. A number of participants made reference to the need for programmes to support young people in a critical analysis of media sources, such as newspaper articles and television reports.

We spoke about the notion of students being able to be critical about sources that were put in front of them. This notion of media literacy, to have some kind of sense of who is saying that and why would they be saying that? (Fiona, Transform)

Forms of media are recognised as powerful sources of conflict-related information (Davies, 2004b; Finley, 2003; MacGill, Smith & Hamber, 2009; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Raviv, Oppenheimer, and Bar-Tal, 1999; Sánchez Meertens, 2013). As well as being a useful foundation for learning activities exploring conflict, media were perceived as an important source of information for young people outside of school and thus worthy of particular focus. This was equally applicable for online information. The internet is recognised as an important source of conflict-related material (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010; Firer, 2008; Tomlinson & Benefield, 2005) and a number of programmes used activities structured around specific internet sources to provide the opportunity to critique everyday practices which might contribute towards conflict, but also to support young people in exploring alternative perspectives.

[The project would get] into the nitty gritty of the Israeli Palestinian conflict. So all the information processing there, being aware of bias, making sure that you see alternative views. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

Programmes placed emphasis on supporting young people to understand that media representations of conflict were constructed from very particular perspectives. Whilst a

number of programmes addressed content, message and non-transparency which are core components of “critical media literacy” (Kellner & Share, 2005), the depth to which programmes could develop other important concepts appeared limited. For example, there was little evidence of programmes exploring the motivations behind certain messages or indeed young people’s individual positions as part of a media audience. However, for one programme, focusing on specific forms of media provided an opportunity for a more focused engagement.

The first [Progress Peace] session is showing [young people] how to review films. So there’s an aspect of that critical thinking. It’s such a transferrable skill to any subject. (Timothy, Progress Peace)

Methodologies developed around film-based critical media literacy have been used to explore global issues (Bryan, 2010; Esquith, 2011). Here the Progress Peace programme provided an opportunity for a specific focus on conflict, supporting young people to engage with the codes and conventions which underpin the creation of media (Kellner & Share, 2005). Although this focus certainly extended the programme’s engagement with critical media literacy as a means of peacebuilding, the time constraints imposed on the programme still limited the level of specialist critical analysis that could be reached. However, the film related focus did offer the programme the important opportunity to engage with areas of the curriculum beyond citizenship, for example Moving Image Arts in NI, or Media Studies within the English curriculum in RoI. Broadening the applicability of programmes and increasing the opportunities for young people to learn more about conflict and may be an important avenue for peacebuilding education.

### **6.3.3 Exploring “multi-perspectivity” as a means of understanding conflict**

In addition to exploring a range of sources of conflict information, the majority of programmes also focused on providing young people with different perspectives on both the Irish conflict and on conflicts further afield. Such multi-perspectivity explores multiple contrasting and often contested perspectives on issues such as conflict, and offers an important alternative to singular or binary narratives (Davies, 2005a; McCully, 2012; Seitz, 2004). Drawing on multiple perspectives to explore historical events and processes is recognised as an important framework for investigating historical conflict (McCully, 2012) and Colin explained that this approach was equally important for citizenship education, as “in order to resolve conflicts it’s important to be able to understand conflicts from others’ perspectives” (Colin, Right to Peace).

These perspectives took the form of written testaments and reports, media sources, guest speakers and discussions between young people. The latter provided an opportunity for what Bickmore (2014) describes as conflict dialogue or “various kinds of conversation processes in which participants talk together about differing and opposing perspectives” (p. 293). Across the programmes, this dialogue took place between peer groups in classrooms, but also through face to face and online meetings with young people from other schools across the island of Ireland, including cross-community and cross-border dialogue, but also with young people in conflict-affected countries elsewhere. The majority of participants felt that incorporating these perspectives within conflict-related programmes provided young people with a more nuanced picture of the complexity of conflicts.

I’d like them to have an idea that there’s lots of different opinions on something and they are not always the same...there is lots of different opinions and lots of different people are affected [by conflict] in different ways (Fiona, Transform)

Whilst each of the peacebuilding education programmes expressed the “commitment to



include multiple perspectives and encourage critical thinking” required of such approaches (Macgill, Smith & Hamber, 2009, p. 26), there is a need for a deeper exploration of this multi-perspectivity. Interrogating personal positions and perspectives is an integral component of forms of responsibility which consider complicity within wider structures connected to violence (Applebaum, 2012; Butler, 2005). Although activities exploring alternative perspectives on conflict represent important opportunities for young people to engage in “discomforting dialogue” (Bickmore, 2006, p. 374), the theoretical frameworks underpinning this practice were elusive. In this regard, a deeper exploration of the perceptions and experiences of young people in relation to such processes is required. Furthermore, there is a need to interrogate the connections between such dialogue and forms of action. For example does “this disruption, in turn, provoke the desire and the need for further knowledge building” (Bickmore, 2005, p. 5)? Whilst certain programmes appear to offer a bridge between individualised critical thinking and collective thinking, through engaging with the perspectives of other, do they move beyond individualised critical thinking to what Gould (2013) terms “thinking together” (p. 59) as an engaged collective approach?

Some programmes included a focus on the perspectives of individuals who had been injured as a result of violent conflict, both on the island of Ireland and elsewhere across the globe.

[It is important to] involve people in the discussion around notions of victimhood (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

Within the NI context, the status of “victim” remains a contested and problematic term, particularly within the context of peacebuilding and transitional justice. Emerson (2012) explains that whilst the perspectives of victims of the Irish conflict are important narratives within peacebuilding, the form of this inclusion remains ad hoc. Although a number of programmes were specific about the engagement of such perspectives, it was

unclear how these perspectives were interpreted by the young people participating in the programmes. Whilst narratives of trauma represent an important opportunity for young people to engage with responsibility at a deeply personal level, there is an imperative to consider the pedagogical approaches which frame their inclusion (Zembylas, 2012b). As such, it is important to consider whether the perspectives of victims of violence are explicitly connected to deeper questions of the responsibility to challenge violence, or to whether they impede transformative educational approaches (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Boler, 1997).

In relation to the development of the Transform programme, Fiona argued that it was important to support young people in understanding that, in relation to conflict, individuals may hold differing positions contrary to the political positions held by governments.

One of the things I liked [in the project] was the notion that what an official government position might be is not necessarily the same as what the people living there think. So the idea that there are conflicting or multiple viewpoints depending on whom you speak to and who you ask. I think being aware of that is important for young people. That notion of what the government says is not necessarily what all the people think. I just think it's important for young people to start to digest that idea. (Fiona, Transform)

Fiona's argument provides an important additional layer to the exploration of multiple perspectives in relation to violent conflict, namely the potential contrast between governmental perspectives and the positions of other groups or individuals. Whilst this example provides an illustration of the importance of dissenting perspectives, there is a question as to whether approaches grounded in multi-perspectivity include the voices of those who have opposed and continue to oppose violence and seek peaceful non-violent means of resolving conflict. The perspectives of dissent and non-violent resistance

would appear essential in supporting an engagement with multi-perspectivity which challenges understandings of war as routine and inevitable (Davies, 2005a). This point is given added weight in light of the perceptions of a number of participants, who maintained that peacebuilding education programmes may also support young people to think critically about the perspectives expressed by adults in their communities.

Critical thinking and the ability to think for themselves [is important] because young people, they don't come up with these notions themselves. They're taught them from their elders. What we hope to do is give them the ability to think and make up their own minds by giving them alternatives. That's an invaluable skill, the ability to think for them. (Timothy, Progress Peace)

Young people's understanding of conflict-related issues is heavily informed by their families (Bell, Hansson & McCaffery, 2010; Connolly, 2004; McCully, 2006, 2012). It is also recognised that certain approaches to peacebuilding education may generate conflicting perspectives and attitudes (Macgill, Smith & Hamber, 2009, p. 26). The development of critical thinking through peacebuilding education may provide young people with the skills to develop their own perspectives and critically interrogate the perspectives of others, including adults. Eugene also perceived that other sources of information required young people to employ critical thinking.

Kids felt that they didn't know anything about [the Irish conflict] but they always depended on the kid with the sort of with the big stories. Because he or she had experience of sectarian abuse, attacks, or was involved in it himself, herself, so, there were stories to tell. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

This extract provides an interesting example of how interaction between young people, outside of the planned and structured opportunities for conflict dialogue may shape young people's conflict-related knowledge and is worthy of deeper exploration (for example, Bickmore, 2014).

#### **6.3.4 A critique of violent practices through international frameworks**

For the majority of the programmes, global frameworks such as international humanitarian law (enacted specifically during violent conflicts) and human rights were hugely important for supporting young people's critical analysis of violent conflicts.

Not enough people know what the law is. Young people should know that there are limits in armed conflicts, and humanitarian consequences for the people involved. (Eileen, Peace Blocks)

A general awareness of the [UN] Convention on the Rights of the Child would be our key tool...you're saying that human rights are a tool and you're giving a language to deal with the conflict. Human rights give you a way of looking at the world...you use those tools to talk about the conflict. (Colin, Right to Peace)

In the NI context, human rights frameworks have underpinned longstanding educational initiatives addressing issues of equality (Smith, 2011) and, more recently, have offered a foundation to state building connected to the rights and responsibilities of citizens regardless of identity (Smith, 2014). For a number of participants, human rights frameworks were perceived as a means by which young people could consider particular conflict-related incidents or practices. In doing so, participants perceived that young people may gain a deeper understanding of how everyday practices might contribute towards violent conflict, or act as a barrier to positive peace.

The Progress Peace programme explored the conflict between Palestine and Israel through framework of human rights and international law.

It was important to hang [the programme] on a framework because for some people it's a very contentious issue. It's reported in the media a lot in a certain way and people can have certain personal feelings about it. (Fiona, Transform)

Humanitarian law provided the programme with a robust framework for the critical analysis of incidents within Israel-Palestine conflict. For the Peace Blocks programme, Eileen explained that maintaining this stance sometimes presented challenges: “things like impartiality and neutrality can be quite difficult in different situations” (Eileen, Peace Blocks). Importantly, Fiona perceived that using a humanitarian law framework was a means of assuaging any possible criticisms of bias.

One of the things we kept facing in developing this programme is that it couldn't be seen as lobbying or forcing people into viewing the conflict in a certain way. Whether it was to come down on the Israeli side or the Palestinian side, it had to be, ‘You're looking at the facts. You're looking at international law. What are you going to do?’... It's like you're on a tight rope and you have try and keep everybody happy and not stray too far. (Fiona, Transform)

Fiona's attempts to avoid accusations of bias resonate with those of educators attempting to develop a neutral or politically balanced programme (Solhaug, 2013). However, whether educators can come close to impartiality or neutrality is deeply contested (McCully, 2006; McCully & Barton, 2010). Indeed, peacebuilding programmes with a specific focus on the Irish conflict have been criticised for claiming to hold a neutral position (Emerson, 2012). The “tight-rope” that Fiona describes appears to come about as she navigates two positions. Firstly, there is the need to communicate how failure to adhere to international humanitarian law has resulted in death and destruction in Palestine and Israel. Secondly, there is the need to avoid employing, or being perceived to employ, an educational approach which perpetuates negative conflict through allegiance (Davies, 2005a).

Evidence from research in NI and RoI suggests that human rights are often considered as neutral frameworks and as such a potential avenue for the exploration of conflict (Niens & McIlrath, 2010a). However, some participants questioned this

perception. Colin suggested that in both the Irish conflict and the Israel-Palestine conflict, perspectives on human rights may vary greatly.

I think rights [frameworks have] become conflictual mainly because one group has a tendency to see rights as supporting their cause, so then they tend to take ownership of the human rights agenda. Human rights tend to be associated with one group over the other group. Rather than something that unites people and as a way of resolving the issue it becomes a source of the conflict. (Colin, Right to Peace)

Although programmes built around human rights and humanitarian law may support positive conflict (Davies, 2005a), these participants raised the important point that such frameworks may not be perceived as impartial or neutral from all perspectives, and may represent a point of conflict themselves. Indeed, Smith (2003) identifies that within NI, civil rights were important themes in the protests of the 1960s which focused on anti-Catholic discrimination and led to “counter-protest and state reaction [giving] rise to civil unrest and violence” (p. 16). Human rights frameworks are complex and contested (Bajaj, 2008) yet whether peacebuilding education programmes engage in a critical analysis of human rights or humanitarian law instruments themselves, requires deeper exploration. Here there appears a tension between promoting the importance of human rights to young people, and supporting an analysis of the flaws of such universal frameworks. Whilst such frameworks may offer an important tool for the analysis of conflict, positioning them beyond scope of critical interrogation, particularly in conflict-affected regions where they may inextricably linked to violent conflict, would appear to go against the critical thinking which peacebuilding programmes promote.

A key consideration for programmes which used human rights and humanitarian law frameworks was the types of action predicated. As I have already explored in this chapter, the majority of programmes employed a forward facing responsibility to

respect and uphold the rights of others. However, as an important contrast, the Progress Peace programme was less explicit about the promotion of action.

[The programme is] presenting human rights and international law. We are not asking students to take a side. It's not asking them to lobby so I think for that reason, we couldn't say you have to take action. We couldn't say I want you to sign up to the Israeli Committee against House Demolitions<sup>18</sup>. Are you going to become a member of Breaking the Silence<sup>19</sup>? Are you going to set up a branch of Amnesty International<sup>20</sup> in your school specifically looking at Palestinian prisoners? It just wouldn't have washed and I think it would have been wrong to be honest...we left it up to [young people] to come up with their own views on how peace might be possible, without saying "Okay, well what are you going to do?" I don't know if that's a cop out, maybe it is. (Fiona, Transform)

Human rights and humanitarian frameworks are perceived as a means by which learners may analyse global issues and decide on action (Osler, 1994; Osler & Starkey, 2003, 2010). Davies (2005a) suggests that EHL may provide a relatively strong opportunity for positive action. However, although the Progress Peace programme clearly supported a critical analysis of conflict in relation to humanitarian law, the step from critical analysis to taking action was deemed problematic. For Fiona, the context (the island of Ireland) and the content (the Palestine-Israel conflict) of the education programmes deeply affected how action was conceptualised. Programmes exploring the Israel-Palestine conflict based within schools in RoI have received criticism of bias from

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<sup>18</sup> Israeli Committee against House Demolitions is a Israeli direct action group campaigning against the demolition of Palestinian houses in the occupied territories under the control of Israel (The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions, 2016)

<sup>19</sup> Breaking the Silence is an NGO which explores the experiences of Israeli soldiers in the OT (Breaking the Silence, 2015).

<sup>20</sup> Amnesty International is an international NGO which focuses on international human rights abuses and humanitarian law violations. Its work has included a focus on the Israel-Palestine conflict (Amnesty International, 2016).

Israeli media commentators (Lucey, 2013). Such public criticism could have negative consequences for peacebuilding programmes and participating schools, and human rights frameworks appear to provide a rigorous theoretical framework to counter accusations of allegiance. In choosing not to focus on the action dimension of peacebuilding education, the programme may be avoiding criticism that could stem from young people's subsequent action. However, as the programme avoids the action component of GCE, young people who have undertaken a critical exploration of the Israel-Palestine conflict may still remain in the dark as to the most appropriate forms of peacebuilding action that could be undertaken. An important question is, therefore, whether peacebuilding action can be conceptualised in manner which remains grounded *within the frameworks of humanitarian law and human rights* yet supports young people to explore meaningful resistance to violence.

Davies (2009b) argues that critical thinking extends beyond the analysis and interpretation of evidence, or as she describes "the skills to weigh up alternative ideals and the means to pursue them" (p. 200). A pressing question is how pupils are expected to turn knowledge and understanding into action (Davies, 2006).

#### **6. 4 Taking Responsibility through Peacebuilding Action**

Dobson (2006) argues that any form of responsibility must be matched by the ability to take action and affect change. If "responsibility can be best learned by taking responsibility" as Reardon (1988, p. 67) suggests, examining whether young people are able to take responsibility within classrooms, schools and communities is an important consideration. Exploration of these programmes revealed that peacebuilding action could be explored as individual action, collective action and finally potential future actions.



#### **6.4.1 Young people and individualised forms of peacebuilding action**

Although Davies (2008) suggests GCE for peace is underpinned by joint or collective forms of action, it was clear from the participants that individualised forms of action were considered of importance.

And then if they were involved in a dialogue about some issues for example if it was flags, emblems or allocation of resources to respective communities, maybe I mightn't jump to conclusions and I might also have a facility within me to listen to you some more about that. (Frank, Progress Peace)

Frank, among others, suggested that as a result of involvement in peacebuilding education, young people might be more open to considering the perspectives of others, particular around issues which typically serve as a source of conflict in NI. This example of passive action, as accepting views with which you do not agree could be viewed as political tolerance and is recognised as an outcome of a number of peacebuilding education programmes (Bar-Tal, Rosen & Nets-Zehngut, 2010; Salomon, 2006, 2009).

For a number of participants, political tolerance alongside critical thinking were perceived to support young people in deciding on peacebuilding courses of action, as Eugene explained, after "transformation of attitudes and dispositions, then you're looking at transformation of behaviours" (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools). Peacebuilding education based on critical thinking may challenge violent action (Davies, 2008) and a number of programmes were concerned with lessening the likelihood of violent conflict.

We're looking at peace education very much as both an exploration of how violence impacts on the world we live in and how it might be otherwise, but also how people can learn very practical skills to deal with issues of conflict that make it less likely that violence might ensue. So we would define those as very essential

skills. We would feel they are very important areas that should be founded in education but actually rarely are. (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

A number of possible forms of individual peacebuilding action would involve resisting negative conflict.

Once they have the confidence and the ability to think for themselves, to see things and just think “well actually I’m not going to hit him just because Jonto down the street told me he was Fenian”. (Timothy, Progress Peace)

I suppose it is going to be their attitudes and I don’t know how much wider than that it will go. I can see that [the programme] has made them think a lot more than they would have beforehand, and maybe just getting that thinking started is valuable in itself. It could be as simple as in school someone might make a comment that they don’t agree with as a result of what they’ve learned, and they might say something, and that might subconsciously influence someone else to think ‘Ok well maybe we do need to be more accepting’. (Brigid, Founding Peace)

These expectations of participants can be seen as examples of resistance to violence (Davies, 2005a, 2005b, 2009b) which would appear to operate on two levels here. Firstly, as Timothy suggests, young people may choose to ignore peer pressure and refuse to engage in direct violence. This can be seen as a personal resistance of violence or the decision not to act in a violent manner. The second example, as illustrated by Brigid, is an active resistance. Here young people are actively challenging a discriminatory comment made by peers (which may underpin certain negative conflicts), and in doing so positively influencing the actions of other young people. Patricia (Peace Blocks) summarised these approaches as she described the importance of supporting young people to “decide on the best course of action or inaction”

depending on the circumstance, and described activities which required students to consider the impact and difficulty of potential positive actions.

For some participants, their expectations of the types of individual action that young people might take were influenced by their own experiences of engaging with violent conflict.

[I said] “I don’t want to be part of this. I don’t want to be associated with this. I want to oppose it.” And then what’s the behaviour that follows that? When the RAAD shot dead Andrew Allan<sup>21</sup>, when dissidents attacked Denis Bradley<sup>22</sup> when he was vice chair of the policing board, I would have written to the local paper and said not in my name. (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

Fergal explained that he had shared his own experiences of individual action in response to violence which had occurred, on both sides of the NI/ROI, border since the BGFA, more specifically writing to the local newspaper to condemn violent actions which appeared to have been undertaken by Republican organisations. This incident represents an important example of demonstrating peacebuilding citizenship action (Connolly & Healy, 2004; Niens, O’Connor & Smith, 2013). Davies (2005a) describes such action as “modelling resistance to violence” and it illustrates a means by educators may offer young people ideas about viable forms of action against violence.

Despite most participants holding expectations that young people may take individual actions as a result of involvement in peacebuilding education programmes, a number of participants were also concerned that the types of individual action espoused within peacebuilding education programmes were both suitable and safe for young people.

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<sup>21</sup> Andrew Allen was killed in shooting in Buncrana, County Donegal in February, 2012. A group called Republican Action Against Drugs claimed responsibility for the murder (BBC, 2012).

<sup>22</sup> In September, 2005, Denis Bradley, vice-chairman of the NI Policing Board was injured in an attack linked to a dissident Republican group (RTÉ, 2005).

Ultimately, I think a lot of the young people that I worked with [in peacebuilding programmes] came home, went back into their communities, into their lives and didn't come back out of them again. I would question the impact of them for the long term because it's expecting a lot of them. Some of them are from areas where it would be really frowned upon, or maybe slightly dangerous to go ahead with those relationships and keep them up. It's quite difficult. (Iris, Building Peace)

The individual forms of action stemming from peacebuilding education programmes, such as maintaining cross-border or cross-community dialogue, could be difficult for certain young people. Here, research which questions the over-emphasis on young people within peacebuilding processes (Gill & Niens, 2014b; Salomon & Cairns, 2010) appears of great importance. Young people's peacebuilding action will most likely take place in their local spaces, and the types of action may be heavily influenced by what young people, their peers and other members of the community find appropriate (Leonard, 2006; Leonard & Knight, 2015).

#### **6.4.2 Collective forms of peacebuilding action**

In the development of peacebuilding education programmes for schools across the island of Ireland, participants revealed that as well as individual conceptualisations of action, some of programmes placed an emphasis on collective forms of action which are viewed as important means of addressing controversial issues (Reilly & Niens, 2014) and are fundamental for GCE for peace (Davies, 2008).

##### ***6.4.2.1 Action projects as spaces for peacebuilding action***

Action projects are intended to support students to "link a particular theme or concept to real world action" (Kinlen, Hannsson, Keenaghan, Canavan & O'Connor, 2013, p. 20) and for a number of peacebuilding programmes, these projects represented an important opportunity to take action based on the foundations of critical engagement

with conflict.

Some participants suggested that, although action projects were included in educational policy in both jurisdictions, the practical implementation of the project in NI was more problematic.

I think what's interesting is in the [RoI] children can take action through action projects. But I don't think that's encouraged as much in the North. (Deborah, Point Forward)

When they were designing citizenship particularly in NI, the Action Project was a key part of it. It has been watered down as time has gone on. They've back tracked on it and what they give the young people to do now is a chance to plan action but not actually take it. I didn't see the point because that's where the learning is. I think for all our work that would be something that is really important. That's part of it as young people then get involved, and whatever issue it was they come up with, getting involved and designing campaigns or speaking out. I think that's where the learning does really happen and the action part. (Iris, Building Peace)

The opportunity to develop action projects as a part of peacebuilding education programmes may vary between NI and RoI due to a difference in the compulsory nature of the projects. A "Citizenship Action Project" is included within the Local and Global Citizenship component of the NI curriculum as a possible learning, teaching and assessment activity (NI Curriculum, 2015). Within the RoI curriculum, there is a requirement that within the Junior Cycle CSPE course young people should undertake at least two individual and/or collective action projects (DES, 2005) and action projects in RoI are recognised as important sites for exploring issues of war and conflict (Wilson,

2008). For Patricia (Peace Blocks), action projects that were provided with enough time in schools presented an important opportunity for young people.

It's not so much the result of the action [young people] take, it's more the methodology to build their skills. Action projects get them to engage with a real life issue and to do something about it. They have ownership to do things but they're supported by the teacher. That's such a valuable learning experience. (Patricia, Peace Blocks)

Although a number of peacebuilding programmes developed their practice within action projects in schools in NI and RoI, a number of participants suggested that a lack of time curtailed the scope of action projects.

You say to yourself what can you do in an hour? What can you actually do in an hour? What's the sustainability of this? You know what would be a better example? Sustained programmes. (Frank, Progress Peace)

I think it would have taken a lot of a longer process than we had time for in our project, or money for in our project, to get past those completely...I think it's a problem with a lot of the peace projects is you don't have enough time. (Brigid, Founding Peace)

From the perceptions of participants in this study, the effectiveness of action projects in supporting collective forms of action, which should underpin GCE for peace, appears limited. These findings mirror research elsewhere which suggests the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding education programs is dependent on the time and space afforded to such programmes (Bickmore, 2005a, 2010).

Importantly, a number of participants suggested that to be effective, action projects should not only be spaces for planning collective action, or as spaces for

developing competencies but fundamentally, should include opportunity for young people to experience forms of action (Osler & Starkey, 1996).

[Action] should really come from the young people themselves as their ideas are followed through. I'm sure there are loads of great examples of great action projects in the formal system. But an example within informal, is where the young people came up with idea. They wanted to make something or do something and it was carried through. Then they were allowed to go out on the streets and do active campaigning on the streets. I'm not sure if the formal education would allow you to take the children out for various reasons. (Deborah, Point Forward)

Participants' reservations raise questions about the extent to which critical forms of citizenship action can be taken within the formal education system. This chimes with Davies' (2011) comment that "schools are supposed to promote active citizenship, yet may be wary of the really active forms (such as demonstrations against war)" (p. 16). Certainly, although most programmes attempted to cultivate political skills in the form of persuasion and negotiation, there was less clear emphasis placed on other key political skills which could be considered collective actions, such as lobbying, campaigning and demonstrating (Davies, 2006, 2008). The clearest examples of these forms of action were found within programmes who engaged with young people on a longer term basis, such as through the TY.

#### **6.4.3 Transition Year as a space for peacebuilding action and teacher workload**

As a one year post junior cycle course for schools in RoI, the TY focuses on the development of personal and social skills (Smyth, Byrne & Hannon, 2004). The TY represents a key difference in the opportunities for collective forms of peacebuilding action between NI and RoI. A number of participants had developed peacebuilding

education programmes for inclusion within the TY programme. Eugene described the TY programme as a “gift” for peacebuilding education and CSPE more broadly. He explained that when located within a school’s TY programme, the Peacebuilding Schools programme had space for learning activities which gave young people participants the opportunity to explore collective action.

We would [support participants to] set up a mini NGO. The programme would encourage kids to learn what it’s like to get active. They would develop their own campaign and their own mission and vision. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

The TY programme afforded Eugene more time to develop the activities which would support both the planning and the implementation of collective forms of action such as lobbying and campaigning (Davies, 2006, 2008). The Peacebuilding Schools programme is the focus of the next chapter but a number of other programmes were focused on TY.

Obviously, transition year is a way in to schools. Financially [peacebuilding programmes] can be challenging...but fact that we come and we do have funding to do this work means that it’s not going to cost the schools. (Fergal, Peace Initiative)

Participants’ perspectives are in agreement with Honan (2005) who argues that TY holds the most potential as a space for exploring GCE. However, just as research also recognises that the inclusion of GCE within TY programmes is often dependent on the commitment of teachers and schools (Bryan & Bracken, 2012; Honan, 2005), some participants were adamant that without the engagement of teachers, peacebuilding education programmes would not be able to operate, even within TY.

Participants explained that time and energy went in to supporting teachers to engage with the programmes and the sometimes challenging content they addressed.



Finding teachers who were willing to support the peacebuilding education programmes had proved a challenge to many of the participants, yet a number of teachers became involved in programmes, some even undertaking additional professional development through workshops attached to programmes. A small number of participants had developed their relationships to teaching unions to strengthen connections with teachers across the island of Ireland. Whilst participants spoke highly of the commitment of many teachers in this regard, a number of participants expressed concern at the challenges faced by the teaching profession.

Teachers increasingly are so under pressure because so much has changed for them in the last few years. They're being asked to do so much more than they ever were before. While I'm sure every teacher you ever ask would be totally in favour of peacebuilding projects, there's the simple fact they just mightn't have the time, you know? (Timothy, Progress Peace)

Schools have now become very difficult places to put any programmes in. You know teachers are busy, so getting the time in the timetable, getting time to deliver these programmes, getting time to take teachers out to train them properly. (Nessa, Citizens for Peace)

Even where TY provided a significant space in young people's school timetables to participate in peacebuilding education programmes, participants recognised that involvement in peacebuilding programmes placed a burden on classroom teachers which went beyond their timetabled TY classes. Research suggests that certain teachers are willing to challenge accepted practices to meet the ends of social transformation (Kitson, 2007; Kitson & McCully, 2005; McCully, 1998; Sánchez Meertens, 2013) yet even were such teachers were willing to engage with peacebuilding programmes, the pressures of workload and the crowded curriculum presented significant barriers.

#### **6.4.4 Young people and ongoing peacebuilding action**

A number of participants made reference to the importance of supporting young people to develop continued engagement with peacebuilding which extended beyond the duration of peacebuilding programmes.

I think there has to be something there that they can take away and develop after the project, that's, that's a big part of the success... You want their involvement in the project to go beyond the days that they're in the project so the project sort of lives on in them. (Timothy, Progress Peace)

I think the actual kind of project element of it was kind of successful but trying to get people to work on a continual basis or exchange on a continual basis was very difficult. (Colin, Right to Peace)

In a number of cases, once programmes had finished, participants perceived that teachers and schools had found it difficult to maintain the forms of action which had been central to the programmes. For example, whilst schools in NI had the opportunity for cross-community dialogue through the Progress Peace programme, schools timetabling prevented an ongoing commitment to dialogue once the programme had ceased. This lack of ongoing engagement with peacebuilding presents a huge challenge for those concerned with supporting young people as global citizens, for it would seem questionable as to whether, once disengaged with active forms of citizenship, young people continue to position themselves within the frameworks of responsibility that peacebuilding education programmes attempt to construct.

Supporting ongoing participation in peacebuilding was deemed of importance because ultimately the success of peace processes was perceived to rest with young people's ongoing willingness to engage in citizenship action beyond the education programmes.

They need to find a role for themselves in [peacebuilding]. So that again that has to come from them. I think our role as educators is to facilitate that. (Deborah, Point Forward)

I think people need to be equipped to critically evaluate issues and to see that they can play a role if they want. Whatever the issue is, be it global warming or [conflict]. To be aware that there's all these different actors involved and there are normal regular people who decide to work for an NGO or work for the UN, to play a role and make a change (Fiona, Transform)

Although participants perceived the importance of young people finding opportunities for continuing a commitment to peacebuilding and social justice, there was little evidence of potential avenues for such involvement being discussed within the programmes. Bryan et al. (2009) suggest that “providing concrete examples of positive, effective, non-violent social movements” (p. 16) may provide young people with important insights into potential forms of action. Certainly, groups, movements and organisations involved in collective action to resist violence and build peace may provide young people with important ideas of how they may be able to engage in ongoing forms of citizenship action and could be included within peacebuilding programmes.

A number of participants had considered the most appropriate ways to explore if and how any longer term involvement in peacebuilding may have been shaped by their participation in programmes.

We're in a grey area because how do you measure impact? There is pressure on us to evaluate the impact of what we're doing, and it's impossible to measure that within a school environment. You lose the kids the next year. That's it, they're gone, they move on and we start again with another group. So it's very

hard to follow up. We tried to do that, by doing a sort of alumni circle. Now that's something, but it takes a lot of resources. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

Davies (2006) describes the difficulty of attributing longer term involvement or action to specific programmes as an "attribution gap" (p. 22) resonant of the difficulty Eugene had experienced. Whilst programmes may include a focus on supporting young people's ongoing future involvement in peacebuilding activities, the difficulty in providing quantifiable evidence which funders may require, makes this undertaking a particular challenge. A methodology such as the alumni circle Eugene spoke of is in its early stages, but it may offer an important means of meeting Davies' (2006) call for approaches which support tracking young people's ongoing engagement with peacebuilding.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

GCE is an educational practice which seeks to develop understanding of local and global injustices and to encourage action leading to a more equal and peaceful world (Bryan & Bracken, 2011). Action is a fundamental component of GCE for peace (Davies, 2006) yet our understanding of how it is theorised and practiced is underdeveloped. This chapter has explored how the themes of action and responsibility are conceptualised within peacebuilding education programmes which take place in schools across the island of Ireland. The programme designers suggest that there is a need for realistic peacebuilding educational approaches. Any educational response to violent conflict must consider that, education is only one, albeit an important, component of the wider societal structures of NI and RoI and that the responsibility for addressing social issues should not fall on education alone. Secondly it is clear that participants perceive peacebuilding programmes as operating alongside existing

educational policies and practices that themselves may play a role in reinforcing negative conflict and limiting positive peace.

Applebaum (2012) argues that educators should question the conceptions of responsibility which frame their practice and the learning of young people. As such, this chapter offered an exploration of the conceptualisations of responsibility which underpin the peacebuilding education programmes. Participants' appear to prioritise forward facing prospective forms of responsibility over backward-facing forms connected to liability and blame, and although this may avoid unhelpful attribution of collective blame, it is unclear how the responsibility for past individual actions is addressed.

Sensitive to the lack of power available to young people, participants also identify the responsibility held by governments, casting their political obligations within networks of responsibility. However, although such a network offers a more complex construction of responsibility, it does appear to exclude young people's relationships with other agents, such as other young people and families. Broadening this network of responsibility may support a consideration of young people's ability to take action through each of these different channels. Alternative forms of responsibility which are often located with school-based forms of HRE are also revealed and problematised.

The ongoing critique of existing social practice and structures is recognised as a pivotal component of models of responsibility (Applebaum, 2012; Butler, 2005) and within the peacebuilding education programmes, critical thinking was employed as a means of interrogating everyday practices which underpin negative conflict. Programmes explored these practices through an engagement with multiple forms of media, such as news reports and documentary films, with certain programmes providing a specific focus on the development of critical media literacy. Programmes extended this critical exploration of conflict through a focus on "multi-perspectivity" (Davies,

2005a; McCully, 2012; Seitz, 2004) which considers how multiple and sometimes contrasting perspectives provide a nuanced picture of the complexity of violent conflict. However, this chapter suggested that perspectives grounded in opposition to violence are important exclusions from such approaches to “multi-perspectivity”, and argued that any exploration of perspectives, including those of victims of violence, should be explicitly connected to the responsibility to challenge violence.

A number of programmes utilise frameworks of human rights and humanitarian law as a means of supporting a critical exploration of the causes and consequences of violent conflict. This chapter revealed that certain programmes employ such frameworks as a means of providing rigor to the analysis of conflict and subsequently avoiding accusations of bias. In direct contrast, other participants revealed that these frameworks were themselves sources of conflict. Questions are raised as to how such mechanisms may support a balanced critical analysis of conflict.

The final section of this chapter considered whether young people participating in peacebuilding education programmes have “the possibility to disrupt the repetition of social norms” (Applebaum, 2012, p. 624) and engage in meaningful peacebuilding action. Here the chapter considered how action is conceptualised within peacebuilding education programmes, namely as an individual, collective and ongoing theme. Through individual actions, young people may partake in resistance to violence, sometimes modelled by educators, which includes refusal to engage in direct violence as well as actively challenging actions which may contribute to negative conflict. It is important to note that for some young people, the nature of such actions may be severely curtailed by their local realities. Participants perceived that collective forms of action were easier to develop with RoI in light of compulsory nature of citizenship action projects and the opportunities afforded on TY programmes. However, even where curricular space was available, there was limited evidence of programmes which developed political forms of

collective action, such as campaigning and demonstrating. Finally, whilst participants considered the ongoing participation of young people in peacebuilding action as imperative, the programmes made little reference to the potential avenues for future action which young people might explore.

## Chapter 7: “Interruptive Democracy” Through Global Citizenship Education

### 7.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I draw on a qualitative study of a peacebuilding education programme as theorised, practiced and experienced within an Irish post-primary school, to suggest that such programmes may provide young people with important opportunities to practice “interruptive democracy”, shaping their knowledge of conflict, and framing their understandings of peacebuilding. Drawing upon Davies’ definition, I argue that the Peacebuilding Schools programme supports “interruptive democracy” through its inclusive handling of identity, opening spaces for deliberation and dialogue, nurturing creativity, and supporting young people’s defiant agency (Davies, 2005c), yet a number of challenges for the practice of peacebuilding education remain.

Although an increasing body of research has deepened our understanding of the relationship between education and conflict, little is known about the pedagogical theories and practices of school-based programmes which explicitly seek to counter violent conflict and build peace (Davies, 2005b; Davies, 2011b). Exploring the possibilities and limitations of such interventions may have important implications for educational practice in both peaceful and conflict-affected societies (Niens & Cairns, 2005). However, locating opportunities to observe peacebuilding pedagogies remains an ongoing challenge (Bickmore & Parker, 2014). Whilst important research has begun to illuminate the perspectives and experiences of young people in this area, the absence of their voices is a gap which has resulted in an incomplete picture of peacebuilding education (McEvoy-Levy, 2001; Misoska, 2013). Recent approaches to peacebuilding have centred on concepts such as “partnership” and “ownership” (Mac Ginty, 2015), yet there remains a need to examine young people’s perceptions of their own level of empowerment in relation to peacebuilding education programmes, and in particular of



the application of the knowledge and understanding they have accrued (Davies, 2005a). As McEvoy-Levy explains, there is a pressing need to explore how young people “think and feel about war, peace, peace processes, conflict and conflict resolution, politics and violence, themselves, the ‘other’, and the future” (2006, p. 285). Previous research incorporating the perspectives of young people has taken place through a child protection lens. This chapter offers something different, by providing a focus on peacebuilding education through an educationalist lens, which encompasses the perspectives of young people themselves (Winthrop & Kirk, 2008).

Whilst peacebuilding educational approaches are perceived to promote varying degrees of action, Davies (2004, 2005a) argues that approaches which support high levels of active engagement with positive conflict can be understood as ‘interruptive democracy’. Through this process, young people are “enabled to intervene in practices which continue injustice” (Davies, 2004, p. 212) and explore spaces for both dissent and action (Davies, 2005b; 2011). The concept of “interruptive democracy” offers a bridge between the theoretical and practical implementation of peace education (Paulson & Rappleye, 2007) and when informed by the inclusion of marginalised perspectives, may underpin critical peacebuilding pedagogy (Bickmore & Parker, 2014).

## **7.2 Parkview School, Willow class and the Transition Year Programme**

Parkview School is a voluntary post-primary girls’ school located in Rathmall, west Dublin. The school supports 400 students and has a Catholic ethos. Parkview School is recognised as serving a disadvantaged community and as such is included within the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme<sup>23</sup>. The

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<sup>23</sup> The DEIS Programme runs in 190 second level schools across the RoI. It is funded by the Department of Education and Skills to support the educational needs of children from disadvantaged communities through staff provision and training as well as through the provision programmes focused on pupil literacy, the development of home-school relationships, and supporting school completion and third-level access (DES, 2016b).

young people who participated in this research spoke warmly of Rathmall, often using their experiences in the area and within Parkview School as an important counter point in discussing the challenges faced by young people living in regions affected of violent conflict. At the same time, some of the young people were aware of the social issues faced by the community, including crime and drugs. Members of Willow class who lived outside of Rathmall said they preferred to spend time with their friends in Rathmall. Out of a class of 20, eight of the class were not involved in interviews due to commitments to other school activities. Pseudonyms for the young women involved are listed in Appendix M.

The young women of Willow class completed their Junior Certificates in June 2013 and the following September moved into Transition Year (TY). The Transition Year programme was first introduced into the RoI in 1974 and offers schools an opportunity to develop an independent and flexible programme of study (Jeffers, 2008). Over 600 schools across the RoI had developed a TY programme by 2004 (Smyth, Byrne & Hannon, 2004) although DEIS schools are recognised as less likely to have TY (Smyth & McCoy, 2009). The TY is recognised as an important opportunity for the inclusion of GCE within schools (Honan, 2005). Although a number of schools have a selective policy in relation to which students may undertake their TY programmes (Jeffers, 2008), the Parkview School TY programme is a compulsory programme for all students in the school, commencing at the end of year 10 (15-16 years of age). The Parkview TY programme focuses on students' personal and social development as well as educational and vocational objectives connected to curricular and non-curricular areas. Social participation and responsibility are identified as two of the main themes underpinning the TY programme. The school also offers a range of extra-curricular activities alongside the TY programme, including a debating club and an environmental committee.

Bryan & Bracken (2011) identify that the inclusion of GCE with TY programmes is highly dependent on the classroom teachers' engagement with such topics. In Parkview School, Mr Bradley has been keen to ensure the inclusion of GCE. Mr Bradley has been teaching history, religion and CSPE for ten years at Parkview and has been involved in running the Peacebuilding Schools programme in the school for six years. He had incorporated aspects of the programme within a number of classes across the school, including junior certificate CSPE, leaving certificate RE and the TY programme. Across the 2013/2014 academic year Mr. Bradley taught Willow class for four forty minute periods per week, within which he delivered the Peacebuilding Schools programme.

### 7.2.1 The structure of Peacebuilding Schools in Parkview School

The Peacebuilding Schools programme took place across the duration of Willow class's TY and was divided into three parts, as illustrated in Figure 5.

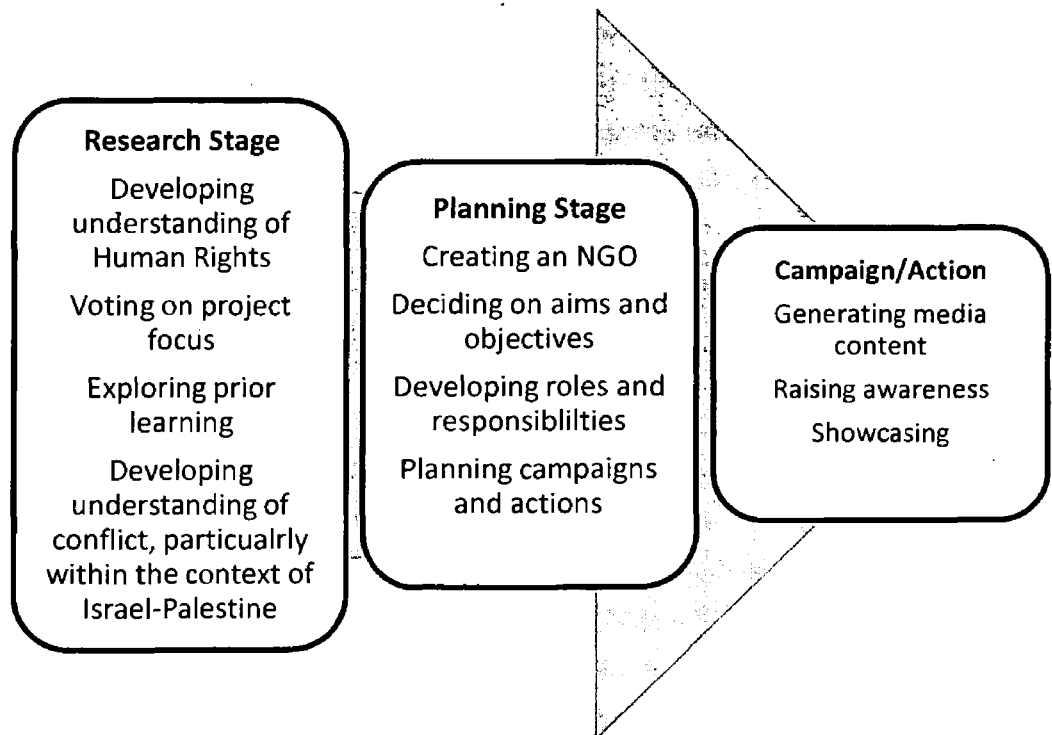


Figure 5: Peacebuilding Schools programme stages

These stages, as explained by the programme designer, Eugene, and recorded within associated programme material, provide an important illustration of the planned structure of the programme. Although these stages inform the narrative arc of the following chapter, the analysis draws most heavily on the experiences and perceptions of the young people of Willow class as they consider their participation in a peacebuilding education programme.

The first section of this chapter considers the “research stage” of the programme, where the young people of Willow class considered their existing understanding of issues such as conflict and human rights, before democratically deciding upon a key topic (the Israel-Palestine conflict), from a number of possibilities including child labour, education for all and child soldiers. With a range of prior learning evident, Willow class undertook a process of “citizen research” (Davies, 2006, p. 33) by exploring a number of media sources to consider the causes and consequences of conflict, (for example conflicts in Ukraine, Syria, Egypt and Nigeria) with a specific focus on conflict between Israel and Palestine and the experiences of young people in the conflict-affected region.

Building on the foundations of the ‘research stage’, the young people in Willow class began the planning stage of the programme. This chapter considers how young people in Willow class designed and developed their own non-governmental peacebuilding organisation, or “mini-NGO” named “Peace in Palestine and Israel”. Through engaging in a “mutual learning” activity through video conferencing with a school in Palestine, Willow class developed the collective aims of their mini-NGO.

Finally, the chapter explores the campaign or action stage of the programme, where young people undertook various forms of peacebuilding action. As well as the development of forms of peace media, such as videos and blogs, the young people in Willow class also engaged in peer teaching episodes with other students from Parkview

School, as well as becoming involved in various forms of action outside of Parkview School.

### **7.3 Spaces to Learn about Conflict: Omissions and Opportunities**

Existing research suggests that many young people are inquisitive about the causes and consequences of conflict (Davies, Harber & Yamashita, 2005; Niens & Reilly, 2010; Yamashita, 2006). The young people of Willow class shared this desire to learn more about why violent conflicts happen and what can be done to address them. The students in Willow class arrived at the start of the TY with a range of prior knowledge on the Israel-Palestine conflict, echoing the mixed understanding of global issues that young people in Ireland hold (Devlin & Tierney, 2010). As the TY progressed, the young people had developed a deeper interest in the Israel-Palestine conflict, but they perceived that Irish society, including most young people, to be unaware or unconcerned by the issue.

It's not going on between Ireland and another country. We can try our best to get the word out but it probably won't work that much. It's a fact that it's not happening to our country. (Michelle)

I would say that a lot of people say "it doesn't affect me." (Sinead)

Ciara: I'm sure of the English came over here and tried to take land back of us then I'm sure the Irish would know about it. It's *only* Palestine and Israel. I'm sure if it was over here, people would care. Just because it's not happening to us, it doesn't mean that it doesn't matter.

Maria: It doesn't mean that we shouldn't care

Ciara: I think that's what most people our age think. "We don't care because it's not happening to our country."

Maria: They think "It's not affecting us."

The young people of Willow class perceived that this lack of awareness of the Israel-Palestine conflict was connected to the geographical distance from the conflict, suggesting that conflicts that directly involved or were in closer proximity to the RoI might prompt an increased awareness of similar issues. The young people in Willow class were clear that they perceived the Israel-Palestine conflict as an important issue which required action.

Benjamin Mallon (BM): Why do you think it's important that you do something about it?

Fran: It might not affect us now, but it might affect us when we are older. If things go into turmoil, countries will have to get involved. Ireland will have to get involved.

Sinead: Not only that, if that was us in their situation, I'd hope that other countries would stand up for us.

Despite the students' awareness of important interconnections between Ireland and the conflict in Israel and Palestine, a number of young people in Willow class perceived that there was a lack of opportunity to learn about conflict within schools.

Molly: More schools should know about [the conflict]. More schools should do these types of project.

Ciara: [Peacebuilding education] should be brought into more schools.

As well as identifying the absence of opportunities to learn more about conflict, Maria suggested that this absence could be related to adult decisions to "hide" conflict from young people.

It's like older people don't really want young people to know about it. They want to hide it. (Maria)

A lack of engagement with issues such as conflict within schools limits young people's opportunity to develop important critical thinking skills (Salmi 2006). Davies (2005a) argues that omission of conflict-related issues from educational curricula not only limits the possibility of positive conflict and 'interruptive democracy', but may support negative or violent conflict. This omission, often in relation to history and citizenship curricula, is particularly problematic in post-conflict societies (Arlow, 2004; Cole, 2007; Najcevska, 2000; Salmi, 2006; Sánchez Meertens, 2013) but young people in Willow class perceived the lack of opportunity to learn about conflict to be an important gap within Irish educational provision. With this gap in mind, Maria argued that there were a number of possible curricular spaces for exploring conflict, suggesting particular curricular spaces.

I think [learning about conflict] should be brought more into CSPE. In the junior cycle we didn't learn about that. It should be brought in more I think. It's just being ignored. There should be people coming to schools and trying to raise awareness, but not just in CSPE or Religion. I don't know why we don't do it in other classes. It is religious topic sometimes but you can bring it into other subjects. We had a CSPE portfolio and you had to do it about a current affair and I did it about Israel, the wall and stuff. It can be brought in. (Maria)

Maria revealed that on one occasion, within another module on the TY programme at Parkview School, students were tasked with completing a current affairs project, and as the students decided the choice of topic, Maria had focused on the Israel-Palestine conflict and in doing so developed her own space for learning more about conflict. From these examples, it is apparent that not only can TY offer young people the opportunity to explore conflict through specific peacebuilding education programmes,

but for young people who are interested in understanding more about conflict and peacebuilding, there are opportunities elsewhere in the curriculum for young people to develop their own spaces for learning in this area, for example where they are involved in deciding topics or issues for future study.

The students spoke positively of the open dialogue and democratic vote which had underpinned their choice of topic and such encounters can be seen as exchanges fundamental to “interruptive democracy” through deliberative practices (Davies, 2005a). With the topic decided, Willow class moved on to the next stage of their project – developing their knowledge and understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

#### **7.4 The Role of Multiple Forms of Media in Young People’s Conflict Research**

I found that if you let them do their research themselves, using pictures, using videos, try not to use a book, try not to give them handouts, get them talking about it, that gets them more involved. (Mr. Bradley)

The opening stages of the programme were focused on an introduction to human rights and social justice and the impact of conflict on these concepts. Willow class explored various aspects of the Israel-Conflict using photographs, maps, and a variety of media sources. Whilst the Peacebuilding Schools programme provided a number of resources to support young people to learn more about the conflict, Mr. Bradley had developed a collection of additional resources which he made available to Willow class. Amongst this collection were resources which explored the multiple perspectives on the conflict of young people from Israel and Palestine, as well as sources from multilateral organisations such as the United Nations and European Union. The resources explored events which had taken place in both Israel and Palestine. Mr Bradley felt that employing sources which included multiple perspectives was an important approach in avoiding oversimplified understandings and problematic allegiances.



I don't want the kids to be leaving here thinking that all Israeli people are bad or all Jewish people are bad. There's an issue going on here, it's between the state of Israel and Palestine. There are real people involved in it but not necessarily all Israeli people agree with government and not all Palestinians agree with their government. I'd really try to push that. (Mr Bradley)

Mr. Bradley had adapted some of the resources to support the inclusion of young people with Special Educational Needs in Willow class, but explained that the application of complex theoretical foundations behind peacebuilding education into viable classroom practice sometimes posed a challenge.

See that's always a problem for [the Peacebuilding Schools programme]. Children understand it from their level, but the Peacebuilding Schools programme wants them to understand it at a higher plain, more of the intellectual side of things. The kids are not going to get that. (Mr Bradley)

This example illustrates how educators face a challenge in utilising the sometimes complex theoretical frameworks to support practice in a manner which is not so simplistic it develops allegiances and stereotypes which perpetuate violent conflict (Davies, 2005a), but at the same time supports the inclusion of all young people.

When discussing researching the Israel-Palestine conflict, most young people in Willow class suggested that the media, and in particular television news programmes were potential sources of information, yet a number of students felt that the Irish media had ignored the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Maria: If you watch RTE news you would never see anything about Palestine or Israel. People are dying everyday over there, but it would never be on the news.

Sinead: I've never really seen it on the news, but you would know that in those countries there is a conflict going on.

There was a perception that whilst the television news media was an important source of information on issues such as the Israel-Palestine conflict, the issue did not receive enough coverage.

It's not really mentioned enough on the news. It's not really mentioned enough to young people. We didn't know much about it before...I think if it was on the news more you would be more inclined to talk about it. You never hear it so you wouldn't talk about it. (Michelle)

In an important divergent opinion, Fran explained an alternative news source had provided her with important information about the conflict.

BM: Did any of you know much about Israel and Palestine before doing the project?

Fran: Yes, on the news. A lot!

Margaret: I never heard it on the news!

Fran: I did, because I always watch the news!"

BM: What news do you watch?

Fran: Sky News. I always watch it. I find it very interesting!

These discussions suggest a range of prior understandings of the Israel-Palestine conflict gathered by young people of Willow class through Irish and British news media. Whilst certain students were explicit about the information they had gathered from news media prior to the Peacebuilding Schools programme, other students had not encountered the issue on television. For the latter group of young people in Willow class, the Peacebuilding Schools programme represented an important introduction to the conflict.

Media is recognised as an important source of conflict-related information for young people (Davies, 2004b; Finley, 2003; MacGill, Smith & Hamber, 2009; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Raviv, Oppenheimer, and Bar-Tal, 1999; Sánchez Meertens, 2013) and

although the young people in Willow class recognised this, a number perceived that the Palestine-Israel conflict had been largely absent from television news broadcasts in the RoI. The importance that young people attributed towards the media as a source of information reinforces calls for critical forms of media education focused on issues such as conflict (Davies, 2010, 2011; Brock-Utne, 2009). Whilst the range of media resources employed within the programme gave young people the opportunity to explore a range of perspectives on the Israel-Palestine conflict, an important consideration here is not only whether conflict is addressed within the media, but how it is addressed. There remains an unrelenting media focus on violence in conflict-affected regions which often fails to include existing peacebuilding or reconciliatory approaches (Nasser, Abu-Nimer & Mahmoud, 2014) or what Davies (2004b) has termed “peace media” (p. 238). The inclusion of media sources which provides opportunities for young people to explore peacebuilding as well as negative conflict would appear to be an important factor for similar educational approaches.

Willow class watched a number of documentary films exploring issues in Palestine and Israel. These included short films based on interviews with young people from both regions, which explored their perspectives on the causes and consequences of conflict. One of the sources which appeared to have had an important effect on a number of young people in Willow class was a longer documentary film. *Death in Gaza* (2004) is a documentary film focused on the Israel-Palestine conflict and in particular the lives of Palestinian children living within the Rafah refugee camp which lies within the Gaza strip. The young people from Willow class expressed strong responses to the film.

Molly: We watched a DVD called *Death in Gaza* which was about what happens over there, about the wall and stuff.

Deirdre: About a BBC reporter who got shot.

Molly: It was brilliant.

Deirdre: It was very good. It showed you what happened. Everything.

There was one called *Death in Gaza* by James Miller. He went over and he was holding a white flag. He was helping the students. He got shot by the IDF even though he had the white flag. The camera crew that were with him recorded it. It was about him, and how he wanted to help, and it made us want to help even more. (Britney)

A central narrative within the film is the position of the documentary's producer, James Miller, who was shot and killed by an Israeli Defence Force soldier during filming. A number of Willow class felt strongly about this aspect of the story, and saw the actions of Miller as an important stimulus for action on their part. However, it is important to consider how Miller's narrative appeared to shape the students understanding of the conflict. On one hand, Miller's actions certainly represent the forms of modelling resistance to violence which Davies (2005b) calls for. However, on the other hand, there are questions as to whether this focus on an "outsider" might lead young people to form a dichotomy between Miller and the local people which promotes the helping imperative recognised in less critical approaches to GCE (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Bryan, Clarke & Drudy, 2009).

Other students focused on the lives of the young Palestinian people portrayed within the documentary.

Fran: [*Death in Gaza*] was horrible!

BM: What was horrible about it Fran?

Fran: You're seeing little kids and I was imagining my nieces and nephews doing what they're doing. Carrying guns. It's just horrible.

Sinead: Writing goodbye letters to their parents in case they die.

Fran: Yes. It's just something that little kids shouldn't have to think about.

Another central aspect of the film was the direct involvement in violence of some young Palestinian people, and Fran and Sinead expressed their emotions at the involvement of young people within violent conflict. A focus on young people's experiences within violent conflict appeared to be a powerful activity and as Sinead explained, the film was repeatedly referred to throughout the TY project - "we have talked about [the film] later on, when stuff comes up" (Sinead). Esquith (2011) argues that film may serve as important openings for democratic political education and the use of documentary film within the Peacebuilding Schools programme appeared to constitute an important foundation for young people's understanding of certain aspects of the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, the importance that young people placed on the film reinforces the calls for a deeper critical engagement with the educational role of film media (Brock-Utne, 2009; Bryan, 2011b; Finley, 2003; Davies, 2010).

Whilst media sources played an important role in informing Willow class's research in the early stages of the project, social media also provided an ongoing source of discussion throughout the TY. Mr Bradley revealed that members of Willow class had, outside of school, come across a number of conflict-related social media campaigns, including those connected to Syria, Egypt and Ukraine. During class discussions, students brought up these topics.

Last year was Syria was huge on Twitter, then Ukraine actually. [The students] wanted to know about it, so they came in and asked me what was happening. They are aware on social media. That's where they get most of their news, a hundred and fifty characters of news. And then if they don't understand the hundred and fifty characters they'll come in and ask you about it. (Mr Bradley)

Social media networks appeared to be an important source of information on ongoing conflict, and served as the stimulus for a number of discussions throughout the TY. It is

important here to identify that social media may represent an important source of conflict-related knowledge for young people, and as such beg the inclusion of critical media literacy which encompasses not only critical media literacy focused on print and television media, but also upon digital forms, including social media. The role of social media in relation to peacebuilding action I shall consider shortly.

### **7.5 Balancing Realism and the Desire for Positive Peace**

Having completed the research stage of the programme, Willow class developed a mini-NGO, and through discussion decided on the name and aims of objectives of the organisation named 'Peace in Palestine and Israel'. The aims of the NGO centred on promoting human rights and equality for young people in Palestine, and Willow class decided to focus on certain key issues including the Gaza strip, the separation barrier and the settlements in the West Bank.

Raising awareness of the conflict and particularly the impact of the violence on the human rights of young people in Palestine were important objectives of the NGO, and Fran offered an explanation of why raising awareness of people in Ireland was a realistic goal for the project.

I think [the aim of the NGO] was to bring awareness of the issues in Palestine, because to be realistic, [the conflict is] not going to stop tomorrow. To bring awareness and let people know what is going on in the world. (Fran)

Fran demonstrated her awareness of the highly complex nature of the violent conflict and the subsequent challenges facing attempts to build peace in the region (Davies, 2004; Gallagher, 2011; Emerson, 2012). From Fran's perspective, raising the awareness of people within the Rathmall area was an important and achievable objective, which appeared to stem from her perception that, just as within Willow class, there were a number of people in Irish society who were unaware of the violence taking place in the

region. Raising awareness therefore represented an important first step towards encouraging peacebuilding action.

Whilst discussing the aims and objectives of the Peacebuilding Schools programme and the actions of the mini NGO, young people from Willow class offered insights into their understandings of the term peace.

Molly: Peace is stopping fighting.

Felicity: Where people don't have to worry about losing their homes.

Deirdre: [Young people] have rights. They shouldn't be afraid to walk down a road at a certain time. They should be able to walk where they want and go where they want. Get a proper education.

Sinead: [Peace means] everyone to stop fighting and just get along.

Margaret: It could mean for everyone to get along, but that isn't going to happen any time soon...I don't really know.

Fran: Sort of like what Sinead said, for everyone to get along. But everyone isn't going to get along!

BM: What does peace mean to you?

Ciara: That everyone would stop fighting.

Maria: That everyone would stop fighting, yes.

Ciara: Equality.

BM: What do you mean by that?

Ciara: That everyone would be the same. If there was equality, there would be peace. If people think they are better than others, like the Israelis think they are better than the Palestinians and they can take their land. If everyone was equal, there would be none of that. Equality leads to peace.

Research has explored young people's understandings of peace (Fargas-Malet & Dillenberger, 2014; Hakvoort, 1996; McLernon & Cairns, 2005; K. Walker, Myers-Bowman & Myers-Walls, 2003) and the discussions between the young women in Willow class revealed complex definitions of peace. In each discussion, the negative conceptualisations of peace, centred on the cessation of direct physical violence appeared as a primary consideration. Galtung (1969) argues that negative peace represented the absence of physical violence, and that addressing the violence was the immediate concern in the Israel-Palestine context is unsurprising. Each of the interview groups developed this definition of peace to include what Hakvoort (1996) describes as the abstract themes, such as universal human rights, specifically in relation to housing, movement and education, and broader concepts such as equality. These additional components of peace can be seen as stages on the road towards a positive peace which Galtung (1990) defines as the absence of social injustice. Following an exploration of how peace was understood by young people from Israel and Palestine, Biton and Salomon (2006) suggests the development of common conceptualisations of peace may provide important foundation for future peacebuilding. The deep conceptualisations of peace offered by young people in Willow class appeared to be matched with realism as to the complexity and scale of the challenge facing Israel and Palestine. This approach would appear to offer a solid foundation for peacebuilding, both in countries experiencing violent conflict, and those where conflict is a recent or distant memory, but where issues of human rights and inequality remain.

## **7.6 “Mutual Learning”, Human Rights and Outrage**

### **7.6.1 A video call to Palestine and the opportunity for ‘mutual learning’**

In the early stages of the TY project, Willow class had completed a number of activities which explored the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights. As well as



discussing the implications of human rights on their lives, they also considered how conflict may have an impact on the human rights of young people. Mr Bradley identified the inclusion of a human rights framework as an important foundation for exploring the lives of young people in Israel and Palestine. Shortly after the sessions on human rights, Willow class took part in a forty minute online video discussion with students from a school based in a refugee camp in Nablus, Palestine who themselves were involved in a peacebuilding education programme.

[The video conference session] was very good. We got to hear their opinions, what they think. (Maria)

[I liked] getting to hear about [young people from Israel and Palestine's] experiences and seeing what they have to say. (Ciara)

In sixth class I had a pen pal from Iceland but other than that I've never spoken to anyone outside of Ireland, apart from when I've gone on holiday. I enjoyed talking to them, learning how their days in school go, finding out about what it is like living in a refugee camp. (Felicity)

The young people in Willow class spoke at length about the video conferencing session with the young people from a refugee camp in Palestine, and a number expressed how enjoyable they had found the conversation. Within the session, young people from both schools made cultural presentations. Sinead performed an Irish dance and a student from Palestine performed a traditional dance.

Fran: Sinead Irish danced!

Sinead: They did their dance then I had to get up and do a dance as well, because

I was the only one who could do it!

Fran: We also talked about religion, about how it affects our lives and how it affects theirs. About what life is like in a refugee camp.

After the dances, young people in both classrooms had developed questions which they posed to those from the other school. These included questions on day to day life, on the role of religion in both Ireland and Palestine. Young people from both schools were provided with the opportunity to learn from each other through discussion and dialogue. A number of questions focused on the nature of involvement within a peacebuilding programme.

They were asking us ‘how have you benefited from doing Peacebuilding Schools?’ We encouraged them to set up their own petition, get their own blog, get their own NGO. It’s great to know that we’d done that. If that’s one thing that [both schools] could do, then what else can we do? It was really interesting to hear what they had to say. Everyone had a chance to speak. (Maria)

Maria emphasised the potential benefits of ongoing collaboration between Willow class and the young people in Palestine and felt that the discussion had been useful to the young people in Palestine. The interviews with Willow class suggested that the approach shared certain characteristics of “mutual learning” identified by Bryan and Bracken (2011) as the collaboration appeared to offering important learning opportunities for young people on both sides of the activity.

### **7.6.2 School linking with schools in conflict-affected regions**

Davies (2005a) argues that an encounter constitutes a teaching approach which can support young people to support positive conflict. Indeed, the encounter with young people from the school in Palestine offered the opportunity for dialogue which is considered central to many forms of peacebuilding (Hamber & Kelly, 2009; Quaynor, 2012; Reardon & Cabezudo, 2002; Whang, 2009) and supported young people from

Willow class to develop new understandings of conflict through important interactions (Broome, 1993). Based on the experiences and perceptions of the young people of Willow class, aspects of Peacebuilding Schools programme are characteristic of the “mutual learning” model (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Martin, 2007). Eugene explained that this approach provided an important foundation to the programme.

We hope that by engaging with Israeli and Palestinians, that they are having some real contact time. A chance to ask the questions they want to ask. And to create some, something that’s reciprocal, that’s reciprocated and that’s transferable. So that if they do a poster, or they do a letter, that they will, that the Israeli, Palestinians will also look at them. And interactively think about it, reflect about it and, and if they want, give feedback, back. It can be positive and it can be negative. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

Whilst the potential of “mutual learning” within peacebuilding education is recognised (Bajaj, 2008; Davies, 2009b) this case study raises two important questions. Firstly, while there is clearly a case for ensuring that school linking does not exclude young people who live within conflict-affected regions of the world, the young people in Willow class described the discussion with the Palestinian class as a powerful event. The media resources employed during the research stage of the programme provided multiple perspectives from young Palestinians, yet it would appear important to ensure that discussion and dialogue of “mutual learning” within conflict-affected regions should extend beyond one dominant perspective. Secondly, the conceptualisation of school linking which involves young people from the Global North developing connections and engaging in dialogue with young people within conflict-affected regions in the Global South needs further consideration. Whilst there was no evidence of the charitable focus which underpins certain approaches to school connections (Bryan & Bracken, 2011) and certainly both Eugene and Mr Baker were explicit in their

opposition to educational approaches which presented the individuals affected by conflict as passive, and in doing so foster a “helping imperative” (Heron, 2007), there was evidence that young people from Willow class felt determined to “help”. Eugene suggested that despite the critical approach taken within the Peacebuilding Schools programme, the experiences and perceptions of young people garnered through child-centred approaches may be based around helping. In the Palestinian context, violent conflict framed the majority of young people’s experiences, and the imperative to help or uphold the human rights of other young people, loomed large. Quite possibly, the young people of Willow class this helping may represent the first stage of a decision to take action on matters of conflict. As such, this case study raises the question of whether educational programmes which address violent conflict and human rights abuses can complement those forms of educational practice which seek to act on the unequal interconnectedness of global issues (Andreotti, 2006; Bryan & Bracken, 2011).

Martin (2007) identifies reflection as a key component of “mutual learning”; the discussions had stimulated considerable reflection from a number of young people in Willow class. Molly explained that listening to young people in Palestine discussing their lives had challenged certain stereotypes which had influenced her perspectives on certain groups of people.

We’ve learned about people in other countries, like Palestine. I used to think that Muslims were bad people but now I understand why some do the things they do.  
(Molly)

Davies (2005a) argues that negative stereotypes of groups of people, including those who identify with a particular faith, can influence how young people learn about conflict. For Molly, the discussions with young people from Palestine had provided her with the opportunity to reflect on her existing understandings of people who would identify as Muslim, which had been shaped by her understanding of certain violent

conflicts. Davies (2005a) included educational approaches which seek to challenge prejudice through encounter within her typology of teaching about conflict, and such approaches have indeed framed peacebuilding education programmes in conflict-affected regions (for example, Bar-Tal, 2002; Hughes, 2014). However in the case of Peacebuilding Schools, challenging prejudice was not noted as a programme objective, and in Molly's case, appeared as an unintended outcome. Martin (2007) argues that "mutual learning" may provide learners with the opportunity to acknowledge how particular perspectives have shaped their understanding of the world, and in this case, Molly offered important insight into the possible role of "mutual learning" in relation to peacebuilding.

The discussion with young people from Palestine, along with the other components of research undertaken by Willow class, had prompted considerable reflection on the lives of young people living in a conflict-affected area, and in particular the challenges faced by young people who had been displaced as a result of violent conflict.

People here are going to school, and there some can't go to school every day. People want to go to school but they can't get through a gate because of who they are. It's not fair. We moan about going to school because we have to do a bus journey! Some people can't even get to school without being shot at or having rocks thrown at them. (Ciara)

They told us about their day to day lives. Their families. It's hard. How they can't leave, and if they do leave, that they can't come back. It's hard. (Molly)

Molly: The wall got my attention. They can't leave. They're surrounded. It would be like putting a wall around Rathmall. I think it's mad they have to go through borders to get to school.

Fran: I think it's horrible they have to walk half an hour to school, half an hour back, but that it's only at certain times they can walk down that road. If I was told I couldn't walk down the main road in Rathmall I'd snap!

They have the right to live where they want, but the wall is stopping them doing that. They can't leave Gaza because of the new wall going around it. (Fran)

As the young people in Willow class explored the experiences of some young people in Palestine, they reflected upon the challenges of accessing education, difficulties of movement to and from schools, and within local areas. Existing research argues that certain approaches may reproduce us/them dichotomy, and in turn may underpin young people's focus on the imperative to help, as opposed to interrogating considerations of complicity and mutuality (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Bryan, Clarke & Drudy, 2009). The programme designer, Eugene, was explicit in his desire to avoid young people participating in the Peacebuilding Schools programme viewing Palestine and other countries of the Global South as homogenous.

Palestine is the developing world...and I was aware of the debate around [dichotomous grouping] from my own discussions. But I felt also that the issues of occupation, poverty, the inequality, social justice, the power imbalance, the water issues, that there was a lot development related stuff in there that development education wasn't necessarily addressing. I felt that conflict, conflict zones, fragile states, were not been brought into the equation enough. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

The Peacebuilding Schools programme does provide a highly contextualised focus on young people's lives in one specific conflict-affected region. Clearly the lives of children in this area are indeed shaped by the global political and economic conditions which perpetuate inequality and, as forms of structural violence, prevent positive peace. However, a key concern for many children in Palestine and Israel is how their lives are so greatly affected by the direct violence which prevents even a negative form of peace. For Eugene, it was important to provide young people with the opportunity to consider conflict-affected regions, as part of a broader form of GCE.

I think it's important for us to try and reach those areas which are not considered safe. You know there's this kind of feeling that, "oh it's dangerous!" I think, we have to see. Otherwise we're creating stereotypes of places in conflict. Rather than seeing places of conflict as also containing people, who wish to resolve conflict and transform what's going on. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

It would appear understandable that violence and associated human rights abuses predominate Willow class' understanding of events, and may lead to a dichotomy being drawn between a region at war (Palestine and Israel), and a country that is not (RoI). Whilst Bryan and Bracken (2011) recognise that issues such as violent conflict do represent particular challenges to the quality of life in many areas of the Global South, there remains a question as to whether a focus on conflict-affected regions does allow any exploration of themes such as complicity. For Eugene, a vital component of the Peacebuilding Schools programme was the exploration of interconnections between countries of the Global North and conflict-affected regions in the Global South.

And the other interdependence point is that there are Israeli companies in Ireland. There's the whole question of the boycott. There are Irish people going out on pilgrimages out there. There are Israeli holiday makers over here. We're involved with the European Union. There are the United Nations Irish troops in Lebanon ...

We need to work more on the interdependence idea a little bit more make it clear.  
(Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

Without drawing the interconnections between the Global North and Global South, it would appear there is a risk of providing young people with incomplete understandings of global issues. Although the discussions with the young women in Willow class focused on their research did not unearth any explicit perspectives on issues of interconnection and complicity, certain forms of peacebuilding action discussed by participants suggested important perceptions of interconnection and interdependence, and I shall return to explore these later in the chapter.

### **7.6.3 Young people's reflections on emotional engagement with "mutual learning"**

For a number of students, dialogue with young people in the refugee camp had stimulated feelings of discomfort towards the relative peace which young people in Rathmall experience.

BM: Does a focus on young people get your attention more?

Michelle: Yes. We are the same age as them and we don't have to go through half of what they go through. And we moan about stupid stuff.

BM: What were the things that stood out for you?

Sinead: You don't realise how lucky you have it until stuff like that is brought to your attention.

Certainly the young people in Willow Class seemed to perceive the key difference between their lives and the lives of young people in Palestine to be the presence of violent conflict. Although these represent important reflections on the contrast between their lives and the lives of young people growing up in conflict-affected regions, there



was no evidence of whether this contrast was also extended to consider the lives of other young people closer to home, for example across the island of Ireland. It is important to consider how, in the event of negative peace, young people in Willow Class would reflect on the issues of social justice implicit within positive peace.

A number of students explained that their strength of feeling in relation to the challenges faced by some young people in Palestine, expressing anger at the impact that conflict had on the lives of some young people.

Maria: The wall, that is really annoying, seeing that wall. I wouldn't be able to live if they put a wall around Rathmall and you couldn't leave.

Ciara: It's like putting a wall around Rathmall and Cowhill and me not having a passport. I'm from Cowhill and I go to school in Rathmall so it's like putting a wall between the two and me having to go through all the effort of having a passport and getting questioned just to go to school.

Maria: And then if parts of Rathmall were taken and you were left with nothing. It's bad enough having a wall, but when land is taken, that would get me really angry.

A number of young people from Willow class described their feelings of anger at the situation faced by young people in Palestine. Dealing with such emotions in the process of addressing controversial issues is a challenge for practitioners, yet supporting young people to explore these emotions is recognised as an important aspect of the educational process (McCully, 2006). The young people involved in the Peacebuilding Schools programme were forthcoming yet measured in discussing the emotional aspects of their involvement in the project. Such anger and outrage is perceived as a natural and important human response to injustice (Adams, 2013; Ragland, 2014) and a such a response towards social justice is argued to be a hallmark of justice-oriented citizens (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004). Peacebuilding education may provide positive outlets for

such feelings (Salmon, 2002) and emotional feelings encountered by young people in Willow class appeared to serve as an important motivation for challenging violence and negative conflict (Davies, 2005c; 2006; Schock, 2013). The anger that some young people in Willow class described can be seen as important evidence of emotional engagement, which is perceived as central to teachers' engagement with peacebuilding through critical forms of GCE (Reilly & Niens, 2014) and here may appear as an important factor for young people. It is important to note that strong negative emotions may limit the impact of peacebuilding approaches by negatively influencing learners' ability to consider alternative perspectives (Kupermitz & Salomon, 2005), yet the measured responses did not appear indicative of this.

Human rights underpinned the research stage of the Peacebuilding Schools programme and are also considered integral to the process of "interruptive democracy" (Davies, 2005b). Some students from Willow class made specific reference to human rights frameworks as they reflected on their video conference discussion with the young people in Palestine.

Not all their rights are being looked at or listened to. If we wanted our rights to be enforced, we could just say "I have the right to do this!" but they can't say that because they could be shot! (Sinead)

Margaret: That young people are not able to speak out. They don't have the right to speak out. Whereas here we do have but that's stuff you kind of take for granted. That was what my poster was about.

Fran: They don't have a choice. Speak out and you're in trouble.

The voice of young people is a central focus for academic research exploring human rights (for example Lundy, 2007) and for young people in Willow class, how the voices and human rights of young people were constrained by conflict in Palestine was a

particular concern. A number of participants perceived young people in Palestine to have little or no voice, despite evidence of ongoing dialogue. Whilst young people within conflict-affected regions, may indeed have many aspects of their lives shaped by violence, there is clear evidence of the agency of individuals within conflicts. A failure to recognise these voices and actions could lead to the problematic forms of GCE which promote dichotomous understandings of the lives of people in conflict-affected regions of the Global South (Bryan & Bracken, 2011). One approach here might be to not only focus the causes and consequences of violent conflict, but also to include a specific focus on individuals and organisations, including in some circumstances young people, who are involved in peacebuilding actions. Such an approach might support a more nuanced consideration of human rights interconnectedness and lead to types of action based on foundations of mutual learning.

Whether dialogic pedagogy can serve as a foundation for transformative peacebuilding depends upon learners' engagement with the challenge of tackling transformation of situations (Gill & Niens, 2014). As Davies (2005c) identifies, "The final aspect of interruptive democracy is a sense of agency, that one can and should make a difference" (p. 641) and it is to the peacebuilding action, that this chapter now focuses.

### **7.7 Designing, Developing and Utilising "Peace Media"**

The young people in Willow class had identified that one of the key aims of their NGO was to raise awareness of the conflict in Israel and Palestine and in particular the impact of violent conflict upon the human rights of young people within the region. One of the key roles for members of the NGO was to develop content to support this awareness raising and over the course of the TY, Willow class developed posters, short films and an online blog. These resources supported a series of events towards the end

of the school year, including a series of assemblies for other year groups within Parkview School and an inter-school event involving young people involved in similar projects from across the Dublin area. Willow class had produced two short films which included role plays centred on the impact of violent conflict on the lives of young people in Israel and Palestine. Young people within the programme had also developed their own social media content for raising awareness of the non-violent action they were undertaking. The class had developed a blog, housed within the Parkview School website, which reported on their peacebuilding project. Davies (2004b) argues that peace media may hold an important role in peacebuilding, yet open source media coverage of nonviolent action is underreported (Chenoweth & Cunningham, 2013). Willow class utilised social media to develop an information site which provided information on the Israel-Palestine conflict but also upon their involvement in peacebuilding. This development of “peace media” during the Peacebuilding Schools programme can also be viewed as evidence of the role creativity plays in the realisation of “interruptive democracy” (Davies, 2005c). Exploring young people’s creative use of social media may support the development of educational approaches focused on the development of a range of critical media skills.

Social media not only represented a source of information for the young people in Willow class, but it also offered the opportunity to engage directly with social media campaigns. On April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2014, 276 young women were kidnapped from Chibok Secondary School, Borno State, Nigeria, by Islamist group Boko Haram, as part of an ongoing violent campaign against schools in the region (Peters, 2014). This event precipitated a large scale social media campaign focused on securing the return of the young women and popularised through the hashtag #bringourgirlsback. Mr Bradley explained that shortly after the event had occurred, a number of students in Willow class discussed the events.

They all hash tagged 'bring our girls back'. They'd be in the Willow class and they'd say 'girls make sure you tweet #bringourgirlsback!'...I said to them, "why are you tweeting that?" and they were like "Because it's bring our girls back!" "But you're tweeting, how is that going to matter?" They're sitting there kind of thinking about it. And then they said "what if everybody tweets bring them back?" (Mr. Bradley)

The hashtag emanated in Nigeria and spread globally, being used over 5 million times over the following year (Mazumdar, 2015) yet at the time of writing, the young women, along with a number of other young people abducted during the course of the ongoing conflict, remain missing (BBC, 2016). The social media campaign certainly appeared to gain the attention of the young women in Willow class and prompted class discussion on the impact of conflict on young women in Nigeria. Whilst the Willow class may have been part of broad and rapid dissemination of information through social media, the limits of such an approach are evident in literature examining similar campaigns. In an analysis of the Kony 2012 campaign, Drumbl (2012) suggests that social media campaigns, or clicktivism, are short term and ineffective. Karpf (2010) however, argues that the complexity of online social networks and associated activism justifies a deeper exploration. Smith and Smith Ellison (2012) identify that there are increasing number of examples of the political engagement of young people through the use of social media (for example blogs, videos, twitter, email) in a manner which enables more direct contact with politicians, and therefore possibly supportive of political transformation. Furthermore, as social media offers opportunities for innovative forms of civic engagement (Karlin & Matthew, 2012), it may also offer the opportunity for creative peacebuilding fundamental to "interruptive democracy". At a broader level, as young people are recognised as important agents in relation to peacebuilding action mediated through social media (Davies, 2013), gaining deeper understanding of the relationship

between citizenship and online social networks may be an important component of research which considers young people and peacebuilding.

### **7.8 Limited Avenues for Vertical Peacebuilding Action**

Osler and Starkey (2010) conceptualise two important sets of relationships of relevance to young people's action in relation to human rights. Namely, horizontal relationships, which occur between people and vertical relationships which connect citizens and the government or state. Throughout the peacebuilding education programme, some young people identified the actions of governments as pivotal in addressing the Israel-Palestine conflict.

The governments over in [Israel and Palestine], they should definitely do more. Our government as well should mention it more to the news, put in the newspapers. They just put stupid things in the newspapers. They don't mention big things like this. They have a lot of power but they don't use it, I think.  
(Michelle)

The governments [have responsibility]. It's not only the government, but it's the organisations that are down from the government, but up from the people. Like the police. It's their responsibility as well. I don't think they are helping. I think they are making everything worse. (Ciara)

Whilst Michelle perceived that the governments of Israel and Palestine needed to do more to address the violent conflict negatively affecting the lives of young people in the region, she also suggested that the Irish government had a responsibility to take action, specifically mentioning the connections between government action and the Irish media. Indeed, information providers such as governments and the media have an important role and an implicit responsibility in the establishment or maintenance of a culture of

peace (Davies, 2004b). Ciara was also aware of the role of other state bodies, such as the police force, in perpetuating violent conflict. Willow class had decided upon two forms of action running along this vertical plane. Firstly, each member of the class had written to Eamon Gilmore, then Minister of Foreign Affairs, asking him to raise the issue of human rights abuses in Palestine. By the end of the TY, the young people had yet to hear back from the minister, as Sinead explained: “We wrote letters to Eamon Gilmore but we haven’t had any replies yet.” The second approach involved collective action through an online petition, again to Eamon Gilmore.

BM: Does anyone know who the petition was to?

Ciara: Eamon Gilmore in the Department of Foreign Affairs.

BM: What do you hope will happen through the petition?

Ciara: That they will take more notice of [the conflict] bring it up in the news and stuff. We are after putting all our effort and time into it and the least he can do is take into consideration what we are talking about. Hopefully there will be a change.

Fran: [The petition is] to stop the wall, to get it to be deconstructed.

BM: Do you know who it goes to?

Sinead: The Irish government.

BM: What do you hope will happen from the petition?

Sinead: I hope they listen. We kind of put a lot of work in to the petition. I would be upset if they didn’t.

The petition requested the Foreign Minister to call for an end to expanding Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including the West Bank barrier and ending the Gaza blockade. Lederach (2004) identifies that developing vertical relationships between individuals and societal leaders is a fundamental tenet of conflict transformation,

although within school based educational practice addressing human rights, this area has often been overlooked in favour of the horizontal relationships between individuals (Osler & Starkey, 2010). Both the individual letter writing and the collective development of an online petition was perceived by young people as an important engagement with the Irish government, and although some young people were hopeful of the continuation of dialogue, most appeared unclear of the potential benefits of such action, beyond that of raising awareness. Although awareness of government bodies is recognised as an important aspect of participatory citizenship (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004), there was little evidence that young people in Willow class understood how their interactions with these bodies might affect change. This suggests a need to explore how vertical avenues for action could be further explored by young people. Despite the limitations of pursuing these vertical relationships, the online petition did open up spaces for action, as young people from Willow class were faced with the immediate question of how to gain support for their mini-NGO.

### **7.9 Young People's Perceptions of Power and Influence**

Whilst this chapter places a high value on young people's perceptions and experiences, I am also cognisant of the unequal power held by adults in relation to matters of conflict and peacebuilding (Salomon & Cairns, 2010). It is important to note that within the group interviews, young people were also aware of the differential of power between young people and adults. These dynamics affected how much action young people perceived to be possible and thus how they aggregated the responsibility for addressing conflict.

Personally, I don't think we can make much of a change, because young people don't have a say in things...Adults walk along saying that they do listen to young people but I don't think so. I don't think we have as much of a say as



older people do, because they don't think we know. Adults think they know it all, and know better than us. As much as we learn from them, they learn from us as well. (Molly)

Other young people were sceptical that young people had the power to transform complex violent conflicts.

Felicity: We don't have a say.

Molly: I like the fact that we have run awareness days, but I personally don't think that things are going to change, as much as we try.

BM: Why do you think that?

Molly: Because to get rid of the separation wall, you would need the US on board, but America would go against that.

Molly argued that the complexity of the situation in Israel and Palestine represented a huge challenge, demonstrating her awareness of how global politics played an important role in the ongoing conflict. Other young people considered their ability to influence as an evolving aspect of their citizenship practice.

Ciara: I think we have a lot of power but we just don't know how to use it. We don't know what to be doing. If someone was to say 'you have the opportunity to do this. You have the opportunity to change the way young people are living over there', I'm sure we would. We don't understand how much power we have really.

Maria: Before this, we would never have thought of doing a petition, of writing letters to Eamon Gilmore. We would never have thought of that until we did this project. I think now we know more.

Ciara: We took that into our own hands. That's how you can use your own power.

The foregoing examples demonstrate that some young people do feel that despite holding great potential to effect change, many young people underestimate how much power they might hold. These students were positive about the power and influence that young people could learn to apply to peacebuilding. However, whilst young people in Willow class did suggest that they were able to express their perspectives within the space of the Peacebuilding Schools programme and within the TY more broadly, they perceived other barriers to meaningful participation in peacebuilding.

### **7.10 Modelling “Interruptive Democracy” Through Peer Teaching**

Willow class developed an awareness-raising assembly for the first and second year students in Parkview School in the hope of gaining support for their mini NGO. The event took place at the beginning of May.

Fran: [The aim of the awareness day was] to show the first and second years that there is a world outside Rathmall, and that bad things happen.

BM: How do you think it went?

Fran: Good, because they were all asking questions: “Why is it happening? What can they do? Why are people having land taken?”

We did an awareness day for the first and second year students. We were trying to educate them about [the Israel-Palestine conflict]. Then they could tell their friends about it and it would spread like that. (Michelle)

The assembly took place in the school hall. Mr Bradley and Willow class organised the displays at the start of the school day. The young people designed a series of twenty posters promoting the objectives of their mini NGO and these were displayed on boards at the front of the hall. The posters focused on settlements, the barrier, human rights and peacebuilding between Israel and Palestine, and many showed a particular focus on the

impact of violent conflict on young people. Mr. Bradley, with the help of Ciara and Fran set up a laptop on the lectern at the front of the hall, in preparation for the presentation to be projected onto a large whiteboard at the front of the hall. As the first lesson began, approximately 60 first year students entered the hall, and filled the benches. The accompanying class teachers sat on the back row of benches, and the assembly began.

Michelle stood up from her seat to the right of the whiteboard and, carrying a number of papers, walked up to the pulpit in the middle of the stage. Placing the papers on the lectern, she began speaking to the audience. In the background, a power point presentation was underway, powered by another student. (Field Notes)

Michelle gave an introduction to the mini NGO and an explanation of the TY project, explaining some important terms such as Israel, Palestine, settlers, settlement, settlers and the barrier wall. Michelle talked about researching the Israel-Palestine conflict and the powerful effect that the film, *Death in Gaza* had elicited. Michelle revealed that the class had decided to form a mini NGO which highlighted the inequality experienced by young people in Palestine - "what's happening is not fair!" (Michelle).

Fran then took over from Michelle, explaining through a series of time-lapse maps the changing ownership of land in Palestine. Fran also described the wall which has been erected through one of the settlements, and that what such a structure might have meant if it had been raised in Rathmall: "it would be like building a wall round Rathmall and being told you can't leave" (Fran).

In the next part of the assembly, Ciara discussed the environmental damage caused by the conflict and the cost to the farmers who had previously relied on the olive crop: "once chopped down they were lost to the farmers" (Ciara). The presentation then shifted its focus to the Gaza strip. Using a map, Deirdre explained some of the basic geography of the region, with particular reference to the position of Gaza along the

Mediterranean coastline. She described how shortages of food, supplies and energy caused issues for young people living in Gaza.

Michelle continued the presentation by focusing on the plight of refugees in a Palestinian refugee camp, in the West Bank. She explained how the class had taken part in a group Skype call to young people in the camp, and how this experience had shown her the challenges faced by young people there. Michelle then played one of the short films that Willow class had developed. Against the background music of Bob Marley's '*Get up Stand up*', the students of Willow class appeared on screen one by one, holding up hand written statements referring to human rights including "We all have a right to our own way of life", "People have a right to a fair, free world", "We all have a duty to other people" and "No one can take away our human rights".

Deirdre then made a request for the first year students in the audience to write a message to the young people living the refugee camp on the "peace wall", a large board covered in white paper at the back of the hall. The wall was covered in a number of words: peace, hope, respect, equality, freedom, dignity, cooperation, friendship, justice, education, communication, charity. Guided by a number of students from Willow class, the first years made their way towards the "peace wall" and began to write comments on the wall.

At the [peace] wall [younger students] were like "what should I write?". I said "give them hope" and stuff. (Margaret)

We let them go up and write on the Peace Wall themselves. It was kind of more fun than sitting and talking to them for an hour...If there were words they didn't understand we would explain it to them. We made the posters very detailed."

(Michelle)

The first year students spent twenty minutes viewing the posters and a number wrote on the 'peace wall'. Once they had returned to their seats, Ciara provided the introduction to the second short film the Willow class had produced.

I can walk to school without any harm or hassle. I can sit in doing homework without the fear of someone coming in to hurt my family. For some Palestinians this is not the case. Today we are going to tell you the story of two students. These stories are based on an actual event. This is not what all Israeli people are like. It is the minority, not the majority. (Ciara)

The short film involved two short stories focused on two incidents in the lives of young people in Palestine, one at a checkpoint and one involving a house search. The characters in the stories were each played by members of Willow class. To conclude the assembly, Deirdre gave the first year students some ideas about the action they could take including signing the online petition. Deirdre also urged the audience to be more aware of goings on in places like Palestine, and secondly to "look out for people who are having their rights abused." The students gave a round of applause and under the instruction of a senior teacher, made their way back to class.

In reflecting on the experience, the young people in Willow class were positive about the impact of the assembly. Fran suggested that a number of the younger students had signed the online petition.

Here [in school] there would be lots of students. I'd say it would mainly be younger students. More people have awareness now, and those people tell other people, who tell more people. (Fran)

However Fran was also aware that the extent that younger students would be engaged with the topic was a personal thing, and she hoped that this interest would grow over time.

[The awareness day] it depends on the person. By the time [the first and second year students] had got to fourth year they would probably be a lot more interested. They might get to do the project as well. (Fran)

Student-student interaction was an ongoing feature of the Peacebuilding Schools programme both within Willow class and between Willow class and the group of young people in Palestine. However a number of students perceived the student interactions which took place between Willow class and the younger students as important.

BM: Did you think the first and second years would listen to you?"

Molly: Yes, we are older but we aren't adults. I think they would listen to teenagers because I know I would...I didn't think they would be interested but they actually showed interest.

We're not sitting them down telling that they have to learn. We are educating them in our own kind of way. (Ciara)

Molly suggested that whilst students from Willow class were not viewed as adults by the younger students, they were granted a certain status. Whilst the unequal power underpinning peacebuilding dialogue between adults and children is recognised (Quaynor, 2012), these dynamics of power should also be considered within interactions between students, particularly those of different ages.

The development of peer learning in peacebuilding programmes is recognised as a means of giving young people ownership over the educational process (Pruitt, 2008; Salomon, 2011) and the opportunity for Willow class to lead the assembly had provided them a space within which they were able to describe their detailed understanding of the Israel-Palestine conflict as well as their collective response to this issue. Certainly, Willow class had put extensive effort in developing an assembly which provided the younger students with an educational opportunity to explore conflict. As well as

illustrating the depth of research undertaken by a number of young people in Willow class, the assembly also revealed the confidence that some of the class had in speaking about such a complex issue. Davies (2005a) 2009) suggests that to support young people's engagement with positive conflict, teachers should model resistance to violence by demonstrating forms of peacebuilding action, which may stand against violence and extremism (Davies, 2009b). Within this peer teaching episode, a number of young people within Willow class could be seen modelling basic forms of resistance to violence, through their clear engagement with the peacebuilding project, involvement in dialogue and their limited but important actions.

Interaction with peers is an important source of citizenship learning for young people (Biesta & Lawy, 2006). The assembly stimulated numerous discussions between Willow class and the younger students. However it is important to note that whilst peer teaching which addresses issues such as conflict may develop spaces for positive conflict, peer teaching may also open up spaces for negative conflict (Akar, 2014). Exploring how complex and oftentimes controversial GCE issues are discussed between students of equal and slightly different ages may be worthy of deeper exploration.

### **7.11 Intergenerational Dialogue and Citizenship Practice in the Family**

Conflict and peace-related dialogue takes place between students, but also between teachers and students, albeit with differences in the associated dynamics of power (Quaynor, 2014). During the awareness-raising assemblies, there were a number of teachers present in the school hall. Whilst the first year students were writing messages on the 'peace wall', one of the teachers was approached by Molly and Felicity and asked to sign the online petition, which the teacher agreed to do.

Felicity: Loads of people signed it for us. There's over a hundred. Two of the teachers as well signed it.

BM: How did you get them to sign it?

Molly: Just asked them.

Felicity: We were telling them about it. They asked us what the petition was for, we told them and they signed it.

Whilst Molly and Felicity were confident in approaching teachers, other students explained that Mr Bradley would have also been involved in garnering signatures for the online petition from his colleagues.

Michelle: Mr Bradley would have said it in the staff room.

Maria: I'd say he probably did.

Michelle: There are computers in the staff room and the teachers could have signed it on there.

Davies (2005a) argues that through voting or signing petitions, teachers may offer young people “modelling resistance to violence” (p. 27). Over the course of the TY Mr. Bradley had certainly modelled this “commitment to action” (Davies, 2005a, p. 33). In their interaction with other teachers in Parkview School students from Willow class demonstrated agency in opening up further spaces for “interruptive democracy” and bringing other teachers into discussion about a controversial and challenging issues.

The teachers of Parkview School were not the only adults involved in dialogue concerning the Israel-Palestine conflict. Families play an important role in shaping how young people understand conflict (Bell, Hansson & McCaffrey , 2010; Connolly & Healy, 2004; McCully, 2006, 2012) and the interviews with young people provided an insight into how discussion and dialogue took place in family settings. Maria and Deirdre both revealed how their emotional engagement with the project continued into their family space. Deirdre explained that her mother wasn't aware of the situation in Gaza, so Deirdre took it upon herself to explain aspects of the conflict to her. Maria also



entered into a discussion with her mother, and as a result convinced her to sign the petition.

I was telling my mum about going to the [awareness day] and she asked me what it was for, so I sat there and ranted on about it. She'd never heard anything about Gaza or the wall. She never knew anything about that so I told her about it and the paintings from Banksy<sup>24</sup>. About him. About what happens. (Deirdre)

I get real angry sometimes about it, and I would go home moaning and my mum would be "what's wrong with you?" I just hate it. [Young people] are living their lives over there but no one hears about it. So my mum signed it. I signed it and so did my mum. (Maria)

Ciara explained that the discussion about the Israel-Palestine conflict in her family also included her older brother.

Ciara: My brother is very interested in this stuff as well so he signed the petition.

BM: How old is he?

Ciara: 19.

BM: You chatted to him about it had you?

Ciara: I knew a bit about it because he had told me stuff about it. He gets very annoyed because stuff isn't on the news about it and not many people care too much about it. That's how I knew about it. Then I was really interested about it coming in to school and telling the teachers stuff that my brother had told me....[I said to Mum and Dad] I was just telling them "Do you know the thing

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<sup>24</sup> Between 2005 and 2015, Banksy, the British graffiti artist completed a number of pieces of work in the Gaza strip, including along the Israeli West Bank Barrier. These images illustrate the impact of violent conflict on the lives of people living within the Gaza strip, and call for international action on ending the conflict (Beaumont-Thomas, 2015).

that Kevin is always talking about, we're bringing it up in school and we are going to the [awareness day] to talk about it." Just telling them about the project and the blog.

Kevin appeared to have been an important source of information on the Israel-Palestine conflict for Ciara, informing her understanding of the issues faced within the region. Certainly, these discussions do not present as one off interactions which simply shaped Ciara's prior learning, but instead appear as an ongoing feature of familial relationships. Furthermore, these conversations are situated within a broader network of concurrent dialogues, between Ciara and her siblings, parents, teachers and classmates each of which can be seen to shape her engagement with positive conflict.

For Felicity, the family interactions connected to her involvement in the peacebuilding programme involved discussion and debate.

Felicity: I would go home and tell my mum about it, have big rants about it! I'd have debates with my dad.

BM: What type of things would you talk about?

Felicity: I would be for the Palestinians rights and I would love to see them getting their land back, but my Dad is very narrow-minded about it. He'd say 'that was Israeli land first'. I think it's wrong that their land is being taken off them but my Dad doesn't.

BM: When do these chats happen?

Felicity: I'd be telling him what we learned in school today and he'd be 'No, no, no!' going against me. I think he just does it to get on my nerves.

The comparisons and contrasts between the perceptions of young people and people of other generations are important in understanding how conflicts are understood within family settings (Hammad, 2011). Felicity's description of the discussion with her father reveals something of how positive conflict (Davies, 2005a) may occur through

intergenerational dialogue. Felicity and her father held opposing views on an issue central to the Israel-Palestine conflict, yet continued to engage in debate on the matter.

Not all the young people in Willow class however, discussed their involvement in the Peacebuilding Schools programme with their families.

Molly: I don't go home and chat to my mum and dad about it.

Deirdre: I think it depends on the relationship you have with your parents. See, my dad is like me, very opinionated. He watches lots of documentaries and know about what goes on in other countries. I think it depends on your interests, their interests and what you talk about.

Just as Molly explained that she did not discuss the Peacebuilding Schools programme with either of her parents, Deirdre suggested that whether young people discussed certain issues was dependent on the relationship with parents and the possibility for dialogue affected by parents' awareness of global issues. Whilst the involvement of parents within approaches to citizenship education or peacebuilding education (Harris, 2003; Niens & McIlrath, 2010)), may offer some young people an important spaces for 'interruptive democracy', this evidence suggests that opportunities for intergenerational dialogue may vary for different young people.

The perceptions and experiences of young people in Willow class suggest that the family may be an important place for ongoing citizenship practices, not simply an important factor in determining young people's prior knowledge of global issues. There have been calls for a deeper exploration of "intergenerational dialogue" between young people and families living in conflict-affected regions (MacGill, Smith & Hamber, 2009; Sánchez Meertens, 2013; Smith & MacGill, 2009; Smith, 2014) and although this case study focuses on young people in RoI, a country not labelled as post-conflict, the research does provide an insight into intergenerational discussion centred on violent conflict. The nature of relationships between young people and their families clearly

affects the extent to which citizenship practices connected to conflict are discussed. For some young people, the family setting may provide the opportunity for deliberation and dialogue and represent a space for an ongoing engagement with positive conflict.

### **7.12 Considerations of Boycott and Protest**

How young people apply the knowledge they have developed through citizenship education is an important consideration (Davies, 2005a). Investigating the types of action that young people undertake is one means of exploring this application (Davies, 2006) and in addition to the forms of action previously discussed within this chapter, such as generating peace media, letter writing and developing and running a petition, young people from Willow class had also considered and experienced other forms of peacebuilding action. Non-violent civil resistance is defined as a strategy for political change incorporating non-violent methods such as boycott, demonstration and protest and operates outside state-defined channels of political participation (Chenoweth & Gallagher Cunningham, 2013). The young people from Willow class offered some important reflections on two particular strategies: boycott and protest.

More people would take a stand and do things like boycott Israeli products and stuff like that. I would. I'm dead fussy over the stuff I buy. If I went and saw something was from Israel I probably would [choose not to buy]. (Fran)

You could avoid buying products that come from Israel. I don't know. I wouldn't buy anything that has the Israel name on it, because I know that money is going towards stuff that...I don't know...money going towards hurting Palestinians. Bombs and stuff like that. (Maria)

Both Maria and Fran considered boycott to be a possible individual action for those supporting human rights of Palestinians affected by the violent conflict. While Fran

appeared unsure as to whether she would undertake such action, Maria was more certain, suggesting that consumer practices which supported Israeli companies could indirectly support the violence inflicted on Palestinian people. Although consumer boycott is recognised as a viable measure in challenging mass violence which affects children (Machel, 1996) and as a potential action for young people (Davies, 2006), within the context of the Israel-Palestine conflict it remains a complex issue. Boycott along with divestment and economic sanctions have been utilised by international campaigns in responses to Israel's lack of compliance with international humanitarian law, but these actions have not been without controversy, including accusations of anti-Semitism (Bakan & Abu-Laban, 2009; Dart, 2015). In addressing a controversial issue, boycott in this context clearly differs from the "light touch" individual activism which marks many approaches to active citizenship (Bryan, 2013). When these actions are viewed as part of a collective, they can be considered as part of powerful approach which has been central in affecting change (Dart, 2015). Such a form of action appears to represent a level of understanding on the part of Maria and Fran in relation to the important interconnections between their lives in RoI and the conflict between Israel and Palestine. Certainly, the complexity of the action from young people concerned with the rights of young people affected by the Israel-Palestine conflict alludes to a more critical form of GCE which considers complicity and interdependence in relation to global issues (Bryan & Bracken, 2011).

Towards the end of the TY, Willow class attended an event where five of the schools involved in the Peacebuilding Schools programme came together to present their work to their peers. The event took place in a large indoor space in a conference centre in west Dublin and was organised and facilitated by Eugene, the educator in charge of the Peacebuilding Schools programme. Willow class and Mr Bradley set up a small stall which displayed the posters that the class had developed earlier and

organised a laptop to play the small films that the class had produced. Each school then made a presentation on their respective projects. Willow class completed a similar presentation to the awareness raising assemblies earlier in the year and after hearing the presentations of other groups, young people had the chance to speak to other participants. This time was a chance for the young people in Willow class to find out about the projects devised by other classes by visiting the different stalls, as well as an opportunity to gather more names for the online petition. This event prompted some young people from Willow class to consider what forms of collective action could be taken.

Meeting other schools was fun. Presenting our work and finding out about what [other young people] had to say. We actually thought about the same things! If two schools were thinking about the same topic, if there were loads of schools, imagine what we could do together! (Maria)

Towards the end of the day, the young people took part in an activity in which each class planned a small protest, first designing and putting together a number of placards using card and wooden stakes, and then writing and practicing a chant or song.

Willow class sat in a rough circle on the floor opposite the exit door. Maria had collected the equipment for the activity which included four large pieces of white card, two pieces of metre long wood and a set of coloured pens. The girls set about preparing their placards, Fran and Maria drawing the symbol of their NGO in bright colours, with others offering ideas on additions to the design.

Around the room each of other groups were preparing their placards. (Field Notes)

After half an hour preparation, under the instruction of Eugene, the classes organised themselves into a continuous line. The young people then moved around the conference hall, waving their placards and chanting. Although initially some of Willow class

seemed embarrassed, after one lap of the hall they all looked to be immersed in the activity. Reflecting back, the young people in Willow class were generally very positive about the activity.

Michelle: I held [the placard]. We got to see what other people wrote on theirs. It felt like I was a part of something. You know the way you see it on TV, a march, a protest. I felt like we were protesting for what we stand for. It was good.

BM: Do you think that is an action that people could take?

Michelle: Yes.

Ciara: Yes. I think there should be protesting. It doesn't take that much to do. If we all put our different ideas together, there'd be loads of ideas. Not just our school.

Michelle: We could make it a public protest. I'm sure that would be on the news then. I'm sure people would want to know what we were doing it for. That would get people involved and get them to hear people's opinions on why we are doing it.

Ciara and Michelle offered some interesting insights into the potential of protest, both as a form of collective action which could bring people and ideas together, and also as a means of engaging the media. In exploring forms of action such as protest, Willow class appear to be engaging with alternatives to the GCE approaches centred on obedient activism so pervasive within Irish schools (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Gleeson et al., 2007). Although this activity took place alongside other school students within young people within a private space, it does represent an experience which stimulated young people in Willow class to consider the possibility of protest and collective action, and may be a step towards providing opportunities to engage in more public forms of protest

activity (Anyon, 2009). Here it is important to recognise that Mr. Bradley had concerns about the involvement of Willow class in public protest.

It would be great for them to [protest] but sometimes I think at this age that you don't want to be kind of feeding them too much. I want them to make decisions for themselves. I want them to come to a realisation. I don't want to have them out there marching and they really don't understand what they're marching for.

(Mr. Bradley)

Mr. Bradley's main concern was that young people in Willow class might become involved in protest which they did not fully understand. This implies a perception that young people may lack the capacity to understand complex and controversial issues, and to take appropriate action accordingly. Conceptualisations of children as partial or becoming, rather than fully-formed citizens, they are often excluded from participation in difficult forms citizenship (K. Robinson, 2012) and whilst the Peacebuilding Schools programme, through Mr. Bradley's engagement, offers the young people in Willow Class a valuable opportunity to engage in peacebuilding education, there remain limits to the forms of action that are perceived as appropriate. It is possible that this hesitancy, and the concerns over "feeding" information which Mr Bradley refers to, may refer to the scrutiny which forms of action related to violent conflict, stemming from educational programmes, could be placed under. Educational approaches which lead to problematic allegiances have been shown to support negative conflict (Davies, 2005a) and although there was no evidence of such allegiances within the Peacebuilding Schools programme, dealing with highly contested themes could make such programmes open to accusations of fostering allegiance (for example, Lucey, 2015). For citizenship education which addresses conflict, how young people can build solid understanding of complex and controversial issues whilst developing the skills and confidence to take part in collective action remains an important question.



### 7.13 Application of Learning onto the Irish Conflict

Parkview School had been involved in a number of activities which formed links between students in the school and young people from both maintained and community schools in NI. Although none of the students in Willow class had been involved in such projects, the topic of the Irish conflict had been raised within the early stage of the Peacebuilding Schools programme. Initial participatory activities had generated discussion around the meanings of conflict, and a number of students made reference to violence in NI. As Fran explained:

[The Irish conflict] was kind of brought in a little bit, but the project was about conflicts between countries, but it wasn't really about the Northern Ireland situation. (Fran)

Whilst there were a number of points throughout the programme where the Irish conflict was raised by young people in Willow class, the discussion did not appear to extend beyond a passing reference. Of course, as Willow class grappled with the complexity of the Israel-Palestine conflict, a direct engagement with another equally complex conflict was unsurprising.

There were some young people from Willow class who were happy to discuss their understandings of the Irish conflict. Ciara demonstrated her awareness of ongoing violence in NI, and just as some students lamented the absence of news coverage on the Israel-Palestine conflict, Ciara felt that violence in NI was also absent from news in the RoI.

It's still bad in NI. There is still people's houses getting bombed, but it's never on the news. There's not enough on the news I think. Things are still happening.

I would be aware of stuff like that. (Ciara)

Although the GFA of 1998 represented a key event in the peacebuilding process, it did not signal the end of large scale violence. As McCully (2006) has identified, NI remains

a post-conflict country experiencing a fragile peace, and as Ciara explains, although the volume of violence has decreased markedly since “the Troubles”, violence, including bombings, remains an ongoing issue within NI (BBC, 2015).

A focus on geographically distant conflicts has been suggested as a means by which local conflicts can be better explained to and understood by young people (McCully, 2006, 2008). The Peacebuilding Schools programme focused most of its attention on the Israel-Palestine conflict although other conflicts (for example conflicts in Ukraine, Syria, Egypt and Nigeria) were discussed at various points throughout the year. In the discussions with young people participants, there was little evidence of reflection on the local aspects of conflict, although without a direct connection being made within the Peacebuilding Schools programme, this is unsurprising considering the lack of attention afforded to the Irish conflict within ROI (Niens & McIlrath, 2010). However, although there was no evidence of young people connecting Israel-Palestine and the Irish conflict, Felicity revealed that the latter conflict was an important issue for her.

BM: Has anything you’ve done in this project made you think any differently about the Irish conflict?

Felicity: I don’t really think about Northern Ireland at all. I’m a Republican but it doesn’t look like we’ll ever get the six counties back so I think all the people who fight over it are looking for something to do. The IRA how it is now is just completely different. They are just fighting for the craic, whereas years ago they did it for the country.

Felicity considered herself Republican, and although identifying with this political ideology, Felicity was clear that she felt that the contemporary IRA did not share the same political ideals as the original manifestations of the organisation, and expressed doubt as to whether the political aims of Irish republicanism, namely the achievement of

an independent Ireland, could be achieved<sup>25</sup>. This encounter revealed the strong political perspectives of a young woman living in Dublin and illustrates how the political elements that have been and remain central to the Irish conflict are important for some young people outside of NI. An important question would be how the “interruptive democracy” developed through the Peacebuilding Schools programme could be extended to support young people’s peacebuilding action in relation to the conflict on the island of Ireland.

#### **7.14 Future Spaces for ‘Interruptive Democracy’**

McEvoy-Levy (2006) calls for research to explore the peacebuilding perceptions and experiences of young people, including a focus on the future hopes of individuals. Mr. Bradley focused on the opportunities for the young people of Willow class to further their study of conflict and peacebuilding in Parkview School.

I’m always kind of looking to the future as well. Some of them girls would be going on to the leaving cert religion. [Conflict is an] issue within the leaving cert syllabus, so you’re kind of laying the ground work. (Mr. Bradley)

Indeed, within the leaving certificate there is an element of the course focused on peace and conflict, as well as within the leaving certificate Politics and Society curriculum (NCCA, 2016) highlighting potential spaces for peacebuilding learning within schools in RoI. Two of the young people participants also revealed their future hopes for involvement in peacebuilding and social justice.

I would like to continue with this project and still be involved with Peacebuilding Schools. This has really inspired me. I had done a module called

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<sup>25</sup> On its conception, The Irish Free State, later to become the RoI, was comprised of 26 counties, with the 6 counties in the north east of the island remaining in union with Britain as NI. The position of these counties, either in union with Britain as NI or as part of a united Ireland has remained a key element of conflict on the island of Ireland (Cairns & Darby, 1998). Regaining political control of these six counties was also a key objective of the IRA’s armed action during the Troubles (Smith, 2003).

Development Studies (a selective 4<sup>th</sup> year module) where we did look at child slavery as well as this stuff on Israel-Palestine. I'd love to have this sort of stuff every week. I'd be going home banging on about it. It made me want to volunteer when I'm older in different countries. (Deirdre)

I'd love to be a missionary kind of person. I'd love to go over, go into the schools and teach about it. I'd just love to go over and help them. That's something I'm going to do. I'm going to travel over to Israel and try my best to help them. I don't know what I'm going to do yet but I will. (Ciara)

For Ciara and Deirdre, their experience of the Peacebuilding Schools programme had stimulated thoughts of future peacebuilding involvement within Israel and Palestine. While both young women were committed to continuing their involvement in peacebuilding, both of them seemed unsure of the shape such ongoing action could take. Eugene explained that during the development of the Peacebuilding Schools programme he had been determined to offer a programme which provided an alternative to GCE approaches grounded in charity so pervasive within Irish schools (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Gleeson et al., 2007).

You're trying to introduce critical thinking, into an area where whenever kids are doing something for the world at large, for the global south, for other areas, it's coming from a caring perspective. This caring perspective is, I suppose, nurtured by the whole charity focus. There's a lot of that coming at schools from Trocaire and Concern, for example. They're all working on the charity agenda and basically we're recreating these stereotypes of helping others. (Eugene, Peacebuilding Schools)

Despite Eugene's efforts in developing the project, and Mr. Bradley in delivering the programme, it appeared that the future aspirations of some members of Willow class

were still framed by the conceptualisations of citizen action, from a volunteering or missionary perspective, which have dominated the Irish context (Bryan, 2013; Fanning, 2002). Bryan and Bracken (2011) identify that a key challenge for GCE is supporting an ongoing commitment to social justice. Whilst the young people of Willow class have demonstrated engagement with positive conflict, keenness to explore defiance and action, and a desire to intervene in unjust practices, imagining an ongoing commitment to building peace and continuing the practice of “interruptive democracy” appears difficult. Whilst the actions explored within educational approaches such as the Peacebuilding Schools Programme may lay the foundations for future actions (Anyon, 2009), there appears to be a need for supporting young people in exploring future spaces for the dissent and action which underpin “interruptive democracy” outside of, and possibly in opposition to, frameworks based around charity.

### **7.15 Conclusion**

This chapter provided an empirical exploration of the perceptions and experiences of the young people of Willow class, Parkview School, in relation to their participation in a TY peacebuilding education programme, Peacebuilding Schools. This chapter has added to existing research which has examined the perceptions and experiences of young people within peacebuilding education programmes whilst also providing a deeper exploration of how GCE is practiced and experienced within schools. In supporting the peacebuilding education of young women of Parkview School, which serves a disadvantaged area of Dublin, the Peacebuilding Schools programme provides an important opportunity for critical exploration of “interruptive democracy” through the perceptions and experiences of often underrepresented young people (Bickmore & Kovalchuk, 2012). Whilst a single case study within a highly contextualised peacebuilding education programme renders broad generalisations

problematic, the perceptions and experiences of the young people from Willow class raise a number of important points.

The lack of opportunities for exploring conflict within the formal education system are recognised by young people, yet TY offers an important space for a year-long engagement with peacebuilding education and an important alternative to the short-term projects whose effectiveness has been questioned (Kupermintz & Salomon, 2005). TY also provides a space for learning which occurs outside of the examination based system recognised as limiting the peacebuilding potential of education (Davies, 2005c; Davies & Harber, 2003). Within Parkview School, the non-selective structure of the TY programme ensured Willow class developed their “interruptive democracy” in an environment of “academic diversity” (Davies, 2005c, p. 640) yet how these experiences may be carried on beyond TY remains unknown.

Multiple forms of media, including television news, social media, and documentary film are perceived by young people as important in supporting their citizen research. These sources underpin how young people develop their knowledge and understanding of the complexities of violent conflict which reinforces calls for critical media literacy. Whilst this citizen research provided an important foundation for undertaking action which challenges negative conflict, young people within this research also drew upon deeper frameworks of understanding, namely conceptualisations of positive peace balanced by measured realism.

In exploring Willow class’s experiences of an online video discussion with young people living in Palestine, this chapter offered a deeper examination of dialogic pedagogies (Bickmore, 2011; Gill & Niens, 2014). These activities provide important opportunities for the deliberation and dialogue which underpins “interruptive democracy” but also stimulate an emotional engagement with young people affected by conflict. However, dialogue between schools in a peaceful country of the Global North

and conflict-affected regions of the Global South raises important questions of how conflict, human rights and broader global inequality are addressed within GCE programmes of this nature.

In exploring the spaces for action described by the young people of Willow class, the chapter revealed somewhat limited avenues for peacebuilding action which operates between young people and governments, and draws attention to young people perceptions of their influence in this regard. Although the horizontal relationships of citizenship have often been overlooked (Lister, 2008), they are recognised as integral in the exploration of educational approaches which engage with social and political conflict (Bickmore & Kovalchuk, 2012; Bickmore & Parker, 2014). This chapter revealed complex and dynamic relationships between the young people of Willow class, their peers, teachers and families. The chapter also investigated young people's perspectives on actions which sit outside the traditional forms found within GCE. The chapter explored young people's perceptions of boycott as a means of non-violent resistance, and considered how activities which engage with forms of protest may support young people to consider alternative means of civic participation.

Finally, the chapter explored how young people perceive their future involvement in peacebuilding. Despite evidence of high levels of engagement with positive conflict, there appears a need for peacebuilding education to support young people in exploring future avenues for defiant agency which transcends the traditional conceptualisations of GCE action.

## **Chapter 8: Discussion of Key Findings**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This study explored how peacebuilding education programmes designed for post-primary schools on the island of Ireland are theorised, practiced and experienced. Drawing upon interviews with educators and the critical case study of Peacebuilding Schools, this chapter offers a synthesis of the key findings from this study. In the first section, I consider the key contrasting ideologies which represent tensions between the peacebuilding education programmes and other key factors. I then explore the findings which emanate from a consideration of “the local” as experienced and understood by the young people participating in peacebuilding education programmes. The chapter then considers position of young people within these education programmes and within peacebuilding processes more broadly. Finally, I explore the forms of action which are conceptualised within peacebuilding education.

### **8.2 Tensions with Education Systems, Education Structures and Society**

Educators involved in the design and development of peacebuilding GCE programmes for schools across the island of Ireland perceived a number of what Harber and Sakade (2009, p. 184) describe as “significant and contrasting ideologies” between their practice and broader social structures in NI and RoI (Figure 6).



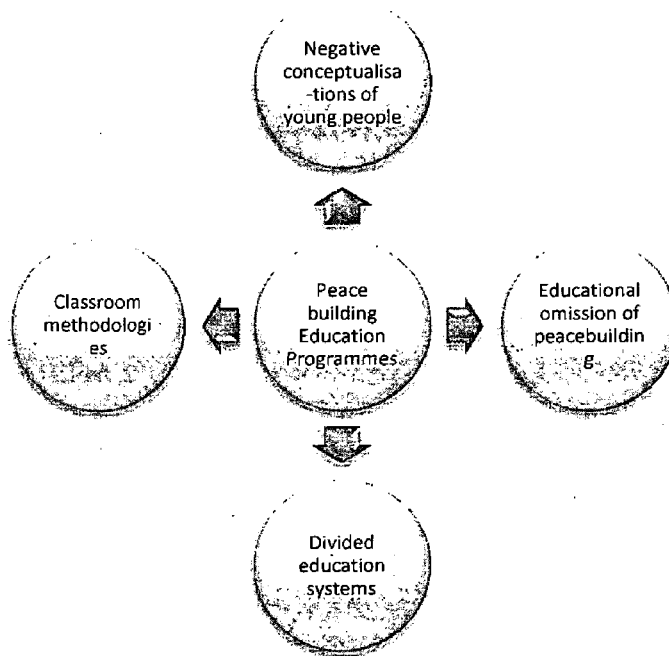


Figure 6: Peacebuilding education and conflicting factors

On one hand these conflicts represent clear illustrations of the importance of peacebuilding education as a space for young people to learn about conflict and peacebuilding. On the other hand, these tensions illustrate the significant challenges faced by peacebuilding education programmes.

### 8.2.1 Challenging the omission of conflict alone

Programme developers held clear perceptions about the complex and contradictory relationship between education and conflict. These critical perspectives were open to the converse potential of education as a means of supporting both positive and negative conflict. There was no evidence that programme developers perceived existing schooling to support any of the more active forms of negative conflict, such as educational practice supporting denigrating stereotypes (Bar-Tal, 1996, 2008; Davies, 2005a; Firer & Adwan, 2004; Du Preez, 2014) or promoting militarisation (Davies, 1999, 2002; Gor, 2003; Najcevska, 2000).

Participants argued that there was a lack of space within the formal education system for young people to learn about conflict. The young women in Willow Class

also complained about the lack of opportunity for them to learn about conflict and peacebuilding. There was important evidence of these young people themselves countering the omission of conflict from the curriculum, as they chose conflict as themes for projects in lessons outside of the Peacebuilding Schools programme. The case study of Peacebuilding Schools provides insight into the challenge to omission, but it is important to note that the programme took place within the TY programme, which is already recognised as a space for conflict-related learning (Wilson, 2008). The absence of conflict-related learning from schools limits the space for young people to learn about peacebuilding (Arlow, 2004; Cole, 2007; Davies, 2005a) and may leave spaces which can be filled by extremism (Sánchez Meertens, 2013).

Whilst the peacebuilding programmes in this research can legitimately be viewed as an active challenge to the omission of conflict from schools in NI and RoI, it is important to note the risks of overstating the potential of such initiatives (Salomon & Cairns, 2010). The programmes offer an explicit space for young people to explore conflict and peacebuilding, yet despite the best efforts of programme developers, they are often short term projects which reach a small proportion of young people across the island of Ireland. Therefore incorporating the extensive corpus of research in the field of education and conflict itself presents a huge challenge.

Recent research suggests a widening of the focus of peacebuilding education in recent years. There has been a movement from predominantly personal conflict-resolution approaches (Salomon, 2004, 2006) towards a consideration of multiple levels of conflict (Davies, 2005a; Harris, 2004; Levy, 2014). Research, influenced by the work of Galtung, has also extended a focus beyond direct violence to consider how themes such as inequality and lack of social cohesion, perpetuated through structural and cultural violence, can be addressed by transformative forms of education. This field has deepened, as research has sought to bridge the gap between the theory and practice of

peacebuilding education, including exploration of specific forms of peacebuilding education exploring HR, dialogical approaches and encounter. Whilst the peacebuilding programmes in this study represent a challenge to the omission of conflict from classrooms across the island of Ireland, the space they are afforded is often limited. The challenge of mobilising the widening and deepening literature on peacebuilding education into restricted spaces on the curriculum is a huge undertaking. With insufficient time to explore what is a complex and sometimes controversial theme, there is a risk that programmes are unable to sufficiently meet the needs of learners, and in providing incomplete or partial understanding of a complex issue, perpetuate the very harm that they so determinedly seek to avoid. More space is needed within the curricula of both jurisdictions to ensure that the weighty responsibility for teaching young people across the island of Ireland about conflict is not left on the shoulders of the peacebuilding educators in this study. Their work should form just one part of the collective responsibility for peacebuilding and peacebuilding education across the island of Ireland. Whilst peacebuilding citizenship education may represent an important opportunity for young people to explore conflict and peacebuilding, it is imperative that it is considered as only one part of the broader educational response to violence (Bajaj, 2015; Bickmore, 2005a; Reardon, 1988).

### **8.2.2 Active learning methodologies and safe spaces for learning**

Active learning methodologies promote the meaningful participation of young people within the learning process (Jeffers, 2008; McMorrow, 2006; Waldron et al., 2011). Their employment was seen by participants as an important means of ensuring that young people played a central role in the educational process within each peacebuilding programme. A deeper connection to the principles of Freirian pedagogy was elicited by some programme developers. At other times, the use of active

methodologies was connected to the promotion of young people's voice and their influence in the development and evaluation of certain programmes (Lundy, 2007). Smith (2003) suggests that citizenship education programmes developed by external organisations, experienced tension between their inquiry-based approaches and the content-based approaches found within schools. Within this study a particular tension for programme developers appeared to be young people's lack of experience in participating in active methodologies. As a central tenet of peacebuilding education, teachers should be supported in the development of active methodologies (Bryan & Bracken, 2011).

An integral part of the participatory methods employed by the programmes was the development of what participants described as a "safe space" for young people's involvement in the learning process. Creating a safe space is recognised as an important aspect of CE which addresses controversial or sensitive issues (Andreotti & Warwick, 2007; Cusack, 2008; McClean & Hilker, 2011). However, within this study it was unclear how these spaces were theorised and practiced, beyond the incorporation of active participatory methods such as role play, discussions, debates and dialogue activities. The concept of "safe spaces" within education approaches which address sensitive and controversial issues, in particular those addressing the legacies of colonialism in the UK, has recently received media attention (Anthony, 2016). Further research is needed to explore how such "safe spaces" are defined, both by educators and learners, and how this concept affects difficult forms of citizenship education.

### **8.2.3 Educational systems and structures**

An increasing body of research has illuminated how certain educational policies and practices may contribute towards negative conflict, which perpetuates direct violence and operates as a barrier to building positive peace (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000;

Davies, 2004a; Smith & Vaux, 2003). Participants perceived that aspects of educational systems and structures in NI and RoI served as a barrier to transformation towards positive peace on the island of Ireland.

This study revealed that peacebuilding education programmes across the island of Ireland are not only concerned with the cessation of direct violence, but also engage with equality and social cohesion, the hallmarks of positive peace. The existing literature identifies the size of the challenge faced by those seeking transformation of direct and structural violence (Ardizzone, 2004; Davies, 2004; Smith & Vaux, 2003; Smith Ellison, 2012). However, programme designers were realistic about the limited potential of small-scale temporary peacebuilding programmes to affect transformative change. In this regard, participants' perceptions echoed existing research which has cautioned against an overemphasis on the potential of education to overcome violent conflict (Brown, 2011; Gill & Niens, 2014b).

Gill and Niens (2014a) argue that transformation requires a change in educational systems and structures, as well as the teaching that takes place in classrooms. Indeed, the programmes each operate within divided education systems which themselves present a barrier to transformation (Gallagher, 2010; Leonard, 2007; Lodge & Lynch, 2004). Certainly, there was little evidence that programmes were able to influence the education systems from within, and this may explain why a number of programmes had recently prioritised professional development of teachers, as a step closer to enacting transformative aims. Without systematic change there will remain a question as to whether peacebuilding education programmes operating within existing educational structures are reinforcing educational and therefore societal norms (Davies, 2010).

#### **8.2.4 Conflicting conceptualisations of young people as active citizens**

This research has explored the key theoretical frameworks guiding peacebuilding education practice (Harris, 2004; Whitehead, 1989) and offered a contribution towards the gap between the theory and practice within the field of education and conflict (Tomlinson & Benefield, 2005) with a specific focus on programmes developed for schools across the island of Ireland. An engagement with the experiences and perceptions of young people was a key principle, and a means by which the practice of peacebuilding education was explained and understood by programme designers. In this regard, a learner-centred framework can be seen as a prominent theoretical foundation for peacebuilding education within this context.

The focus on the lives of young people appears intrinsically connected to how young people were perceived by the programme developers. Peacebuilding programmes in this study conceptualised young people as active and participatory citizens. Mirroring existing research, programme developers spoke positively of young people's engagement with GCE themes and of their potential as active citizens (Biesta, Lawy & Kelly, 2009; Osler & Starkey, 2003; Westhemier & Kahne, 2004; Lawy & Biesta, 2006; Kinlen et al., 2013). However, programme developers perceived a clear tension between this positive image of young people, and negative conceptualisations of young people in broader society. Programme developers suggested that the latter conceptions of young people focused on negative forms of behaviour, and positioned young people as incomplete citizens incapable of meaningful citizenship practice. These negative conceptualisations were perceived to be particularly noticeable in political and media discourses, with a subsequent impact on the lives of young people.

A number of programme developers suggested that in certain cases, these negative conceptualisations led to young people often being fully or partially excluded from citizenship practices, including those connected to peacebuilding. At other times,

these conceptualisations resulted in young people being targeted by approaches to citizenship education which attempted to control their behaviour, or the responsibility to behave. Programme designers perceived that their peacebuilding programmes stood in contrast to forms of citizenship education recognised by research as focused on creating obedient population (Tyack & Cuban, 1995; Johnson & Morris, 2012). This research also suggests that these peacebuilding education programmes present a more complex and realistic conceptualisation of young people, which avoids placing the entire responsibility for overcoming conflict on their shoulders (Gill & Niens, 2014b), yet offers young people collective responsibility through involvement in the planning, design, implementation and evaluation of programmes.

An exploration of the Peacebuilding Schools programme illuminated some of the experiences and perceptions of Willow Class. These young women portrayed a clear challenge to the negative conceptualisations of young people. The members of Willow Class were clear in illustrating their desire to learn more about conflict and peacebuilding, specifically in the context of Palestine and Israel. Here, this study builds on existing research which identifies young people's desire for peacebuilding education (Davies, Harber & Yamashita, 2005; Niens & Reilly, 2010; Yamashita, 2006). Elsewhere, the students in Willow Class revealed complex definitions of peace, which combined abstract themes, such as human rights (Hakvoort, 1996), placed emphasis on the importance of reducing violent conflict, but also considered the importance of equality, social justice, and therefore positive peace (Galtung, 1975). Just as these conceptions of peace may provide important foundations for Willow Class' engagement with peacebuilding, it is imperative that negative conceptualisations of young people do not inform policy and practice connected to forms of CE or peacebuilding education.

### **8.3 Local as Post-Conflict, Inclusive and Connected to the global**

Recent research has provided an increased focus on the local dimensions of peacebuilding as a means of developing approaches to conflict transformation rooted in the lived experiences of citizens (Mac Ginty, 2015; Mac Ginty & Richmond, 2013). Through a focus on “the local”, peacebuilding education programmes in this study shed light on young people’s understandings of experiences of conflict. The key findings in relation to “the local” are addressed in the following section. Firstly, I consider local connections to the Irish conflict as a matter for young people across the island of Ireland. Secondly, I further develop the case for inclusive forms of peacebuilding practice to encompass the diverse identities of young people across the island of Ireland. Thirdly, I identify important connections between local conflict and distant conflict, which informs local-global learning. Finally, I consider how local understandings shape the implementation of human rights frameworks within peacebuilding practice.

#### **8.3.1 The island of Ireland as post-conflict?**

An analysis of conflict on the island of Ireland reveals how from an epicentre of historical colonisation, episodes of violent conflict have shaped the identities and social structures within NI and RoI, culminating in the period of violence between the late 1960s and the late 1990s known as “the Troubles” (Akenson, 1970, 1973; Darby, 1995; Dunn, 1986; Rankin, 2007; Smith, 2001, 2003). As the setting for the majority of most recent violence, NI is recognised as a post-conflict society (McCully, 2006) and the ongoing challenges faced by young people in dealing with the legacies of violence are well documented. However, it is important to note that the border region of the island has been affected by recent violent conflict (Hayward, 2007; Ó Gráda & Walsh, 2006; Patterson, 2013; Ralaheen, 2005; Todd et al., 2005).



In an NI context, peacebuilding programmes engagement with young people revealed the challenges of living in a divided society, and the importance of addressing local issues such as ongoing sectarian violence and repeated conflicts concerning commemoration and the symbolism of conflict in the form of flags. Whilst existing research suggests that addressing young people's sectarian attitudes is an important focus for CE in NI (Niens, O'Connor & Smith, 2013) programme developers reported that young people in RoI expressed sectarian attitudes openly, and perceived that addressing these perspectives warranted urgent attention.

The programme developers within this study revealed that whilst many young people in NI are faced with dealing with the legacies of violent conflict, there are also a number of young people from RoI, and particularly the border region, who are also dealing with personal connections to the Irish conflict. In both jurisdictions, peacebuilding programmes unearthed how young people's perspectives were shaped by violence for example, by the deaths of direct family members or the imprisonment of a parent involved in an illegal organisation. Again, these peacebuilding programmes were positioned as a short term engagement with the huge task of supporting young people in dealing with the individual and communal legacies of direct violence.

Bickmore (2012) argues that educational approaches may unearth unexpected negative tensions, and one programme developer explained how her programme attempted to engage with "underlying whispers" which were present in the local community in the border region of RoI. These attitudes are closely connected to the Irish conflict, and certainly represent an ongoing challenge to social cohesion within RoI, as well as relationships across the island of Ireland. The experiences of peacebuilding educators in this study reveal that whilst the local contexts may vary, the violent conflict which has shaped the history of both NI and RoI continues to influence

how many young people in both jurisdictions understand conflict. As Miller and Affolter (2002) explain:

For individuals and communities, however, there may be no clear point when “reconstruction” stops, since the consequences of conflict, like shrapnel, penetrate deep into minds and hearts, to be worked out over a lifetime and beyond, and affecting relationships and identities for generations. (p. 5)

Violent conflict has shaped identity and relationships across the island of Ireland, and thus the lives experiences of young people there. As a result, peacebuilding education programmes have sought to engage young people in a manner which can be described as “effective responses attuned to local histories and conditions” (Davies, 2004b, p. 230). This context-specific approach recognises the proximity of young people in areas which have existed in close proximity to violence, both within NI and in the border regions of RoI (Salomon, 2002, 2006).

The development of peacebuilding programmes for schools across the island of Ireland draws heavily on the experiences of educators and programmes developed within NI. This study highlights the acute need for a measured contextualisation of peacebuilding education approaches. As conflicts are rarely fought between countries, a consideration of actors outside of the demarcated zones of conflict is required. In certain respects, a focus on “the local” through a lens of the lives of young people illuminates these complexities.

Finally, in engaging with this range of experiences of the Irish conflict, a broad focus on positive peace appeared to provide educators with the opportunity to tailor programmes to the needs of the young people at the centre of the programmes. This approach encompasses peacebuilding to challenge direct violence and move towards a negative peace, but it also provides the opportunity for young people whose lives are

further removed from direct violence, particularly in southern regions of RoI, to consider how equality, social justice and social cohesion may support a positive peace.

### **8.3.2 Inclusion within the local**

Whereas national-oriented forms of citizenship education are criticised for a failure to develop practice inclusive of minority ethnic students (Tully, 2009; Scott & Lawson, 2002), the inclusion of the perspectives of young people from marginalised backgrounds is recognised as an important issue for GCE (Banks, 2004) and peacebuilding education (Bickmore & Parker, 2014; Bickmore & Kovalchuk, 2012). However, in this study, a significant minority of programme developers questioned the extent to which young people from minority ethnic backgrounds were considered in the design and practice of peacebuilding education. This has important implications for how “the local” is considered within peacebuilding and citizenship education, or more specifically, who is excluded from these spaces (Schierenbeck, 2015).

Both NI and RoI have experienced an increase in ethnic diversity over the past twenty years (Devine, 2005; Smith 2003). Young people from minority ethnic backgrounds may have particular experiences of both the Irish conflict and conflicts in other regions of the globe. Aside from their basic right to inclusion within peacebuilding GCE, the experiences of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds would enrich the peacebuilding education process (Bickmore, 2012; Gallagher, 2004). There is an urgent need to ensure the inclusion of young people from a minority ethnic background within the planning and practice of peacebuilding education, and to consider how the perceptions and experiences of young people can contribute towards peacebuilding. Ultimately, a failure to include young people from minority ethnic backgrounds is failure to engage with the full range of factors underpinning a positive peace (Niens, O’Connor & Smith, 2013).

### **8.3.3 Connections between the local and the global**

GCE may offer the opportunity for young people to consider local peacebuilding issues as well as cosmopolitan global themes (Kupermintz & Salomon, 2005; Reilly & Niens, 2014). McCully (2006) argues that focusing on distant contexts may allow young people in NI to explore violent conflict without the need to immediately engage with controversial local and national issues. In addition McCully (2008) also suggests that a global focus may support a meaningful reflection on local issues.

The Peacebuilding Schools programme drew a number of interconnections between the Israel-Palestine conflict and factors in the UK and RoI. However, members of Willow Class who demonstrated an understanding of the complex geo-political context of the Israel-Palestine conflict did not connect their experiences with the Irish conflict. A number of programme developers suggested that in focusing on conflicts further afield, peacebuilding education programmes had provided young people, particularly from NI, with a deeper general understanding of conflict, without having to consider more controversial local issues. Whilst such an approach may have provided a foundation for young people to reflect back on the Irish conflict, it is also important to identify that a number of programme developers made strong arguments that any focus on distant issues of conflict should highlights issues of interconnection and interdependence. Whilst connecting local and global themes is recognised as an important aspect of peacebuilding education (Synnott, 2005; Niens & Reilly, 2010; Reilly & Niens, 2014) further research is required to explore whether distant conflict-related issues being taught as a means of local reflection comes at the expense of interconnection, interdependence and critical GCE (Andreotti, 2006; Bryan & Bracken, 2011).

A focus on cosmopolitan forms of GCE must not ignore young people's attachment to their political or local communities (Niens & Reilly, 2012; Parekh, 2003).

In an important vignette, one programme developer explained how a young participant on the Peacebuilding Schools programme revealed that her father had flown an Israeli flag from the roof of their house. The flying of Israeli or Palestinian flags in NI represents an allegiance taken up by Unionist and Nationalist communities respectively which reinforces existing conflict (Hill & White, 2008; Nolan & Bryan, 2016). This example has a number of implications. Whilst exploring conflict in another context may appear to avoid problematic local issues, there are occasions where local and distant conflicts are linked. In such circumstances, even if the connections are symbolic, peacebuilding education should consider young people's existing understandings and experiences of distant conflicts and their connections to local issues. Certainly, peacebuilding education programmes must ensure that in teaching about distant conflict young people are not strengthening stereotypes of national and transnational groups, and in doing so forming allegiances which reinforce negative conflict (Davies, 2005a; Davies, Harber & Schweisfurth, 2002).

#### **8.4 Young People's Position and Engagement Throughout a Network of Responsibility**

Despite maintaining a positive conceptualisation of young people as active citizens, the peacebuilding programmes in this study avoided an overemphasis on the responsibility for young people to enact transformative change (Salomon & Cairns, 2010; Gill & Niens, 2014b). Instead, participants placed young people within a wider network of collective responsibility for peacebuilding. Esquith (2010) identifies the importance of mapping such networks of responsibility and this section explores young people's responsibility for peacebuilding, in relation to the responsibilities of parents and families, the governments of NI and RoI, and finally European level.

#### **8.4.1 Young people's responsibility**

The peacebuilding education programmes within this study conceptualised young people's responsibility for peacebuilding as what Birnbacher (1999) describes as a forward facing responsibility, or responsibility for the future. Programme developers were also clear that this responsibility was shared with other individuals and groups. This echoes research which suggests that the scope and practicality of cosmopolitan obligations necessitates a complex model of responsibility (Heater, 2004; Miller, 2002).

Despite the suggestion that causal responsibility may support individuals to take action (Dobson, 2006), programme developers were opposed to the idea of any backward facing responsibility, including any collective responsibility in relation to membership of particular groups. The rejection of backward facing responsibility in most cases originated from participants' perceptions that such a focus was sometimes applied within schools as a prerequisite for being awarded human rights. Giri and van Ufford (2004) argue that rights-based frameworks require responsibility to be enacted and indeed, within the curricular of NI and RoI, human rights and social responsibility are paired (Niens & McIlrath, 2010a). However, there is strong criticism of any overemphasis on responsibility at the expense of rights (Howe & Covell, 2010; McEvoy, 2007). This study reinforces the argument that when positioned alongside HR, responsibility is an obligation to uphold the rights of others (Bar-Tal, Rosen & Nets Zehngut, 2010) and educational policy and practice should reflect this. Certainly, a focus on the responsibility to uphold the rights of others would provide an opportunity to ensure that HRE approaches are action-oriented (Bajaj, 2011; Waldron, 2010).

Despite the measured reasons for avoiding backward facing forms of responsibility, it is important to consider that some young people from NI and RoI had family members who had been both victims and perpetrators of violence. Whilst the inclusion of victims' narratives within the peacebuilding processes has so far been ad

hoc (Emerson, 2012), there are important questions as to how the individual responsibility for actions, which cannot be divorced from the lived experiences of young people, are addressed as matters of responsibility. Research in NI examining educational approaches which explore the narratives of republican and loyalist ex-prisoners (Emerson, Orr & Connolly, 2014) may provide important perspectives in this regard. Finally, at a broader level, there are also questions as to how complicity in violent structures which damage peacebuilding through limiting the rights of others, are included within such a framework (Applebaum, 2012; Young, 2006).

#### **8.4.2 Parents and families**

Dialogue which develops conversation around difficult or possibly opposing views, is recognised as a key opportunity for positive conflict (Broome, 1993; Hamber & Kelly, 2004). An increasing body of research has deepened understanding of the role of such dialogue within peacebuilding education approaches (Davies, 2005a; du Preez, 2014; Reardon & Cabezudo, 2002; Gill & Niens, 2014a). Although dialogue between students is a common focus of such research, Quaynor (2014) also suggests that student-teacher interaction represents an important form of peacebuilding dialogue. Whilst the peacebuilding programmes in this study each included a focus on student-student dialogue, the case study of Peacebuilding Schools programme provided important insights into the peacebuilding dialogue taking place between young people and their families.

Parents influence how young people understand violent conflict (Bell, Hansson & McCaffrey, 2010; Connolly, 2004; Fraser, 1973; McCully, 2006) and there have been calls for research to explore such intergenerational dialogue (MacGill & Hamber, 2009; Sánchez Meertens, 2013). Although the case study exploring Willow class' involvement in the Peacebuilding Schools programme does not consider the intergenerational

dialogue connected to local conflict, it does provide an insight into dialogue between young people and their families (Hammad, 2011).

A number of young people in Willow Class discussed controversial issues with their families. For some of these young people, these interactions represent an ongoing feature of family life. For other young people, the topics and themes explored within peacebuilding or citizenship education are not discussed. For the former group, families may serve as a source of information which contributes to young people's understanding of conflict. However, young people also describe how they have informed parents of the particular conflict-related issues which have attracted their attention or stimulated their emotions. In a number of important situations, young people described how these family dialogues represent spaces for positive conflict and interruptive democracy. Here, the young people of Willow Class revealed their agency within family settings as they challenged and influenced the perceptions and understandings of their parents. This study calls for the recognition of the varied nature of young people's intergenerational dialogue in relation to conflict and other global themes. For some young people, the family represents an important space for the development of peacebuilding skills and attributes. Of course, there remains a need for an exploration of intergenerational dialogue connected to local conflict-related issues.

#### **8.4.3 Young people and the governmental responsibility for peacebuilding**

Research has highlighted the importance of the vertical relationships between citizens and governments both in the enactment of democracy and in the peacebuilding processes (Lederach, 2004; Osler & Starkey, 2010). The young women in Willow Class perceived the Palestinian and Israeli governments to hold the majority of responsibility for the cessation of conflict in the region. However, they also suggested that the Irish government held some responsibility for peacebuilding. Willow Class revealed how



they had attempted to engage with the Irish government through letter writing and an online petition, however no dialogue emerged from this approach. The young women appeared unsure as to what else could be done. Critical active citizenship requires a movement beyond a simple awareness of government bodies (Westheimer & Kahne, 2004) and there appears a clear need for young people's relationships with governments and state bodies, as avenues for potential action, to be explored by peacebuilding education and CE more broadly. Willow Class desired to make a change, and should be supported in taking action to identify and enact the responsibilities of government in matters of peacebuilding. Whilst their interaction with the Department of Foreign Affairs illustrates one potential avenue along the vertical relationship between young people as citizens and the state, further exploration of the mechanisms by which young people might seek accountability from elected officials is required. Most importantly, the enthusiasm with which the young people in Willow Class described their interaction with government appeared as an incident of huge potential. Young people's perceptions call for methodologies which facilitate a deeper exploration of the power held by young people and undertaking and learning from action as processes, within a framework of collective responsibility.

In addition to local and national government, it is also important to consider the position of European government within any network of responsibility. Representations of Europe and the European Union are important themes within citizenship education across the continent (Engel, 2014; Hammond & Looney, 2000; Kerr, McCarthy & Smith, 2003; Lapeyese, 2003). Within an NI context, the use of European identity provided an important alternative to national citizenship (Smith, 2003). In a significant minority of peacebuilding programmes European identity represented a benign form of citizenship. However, a number of recent publications highlight the troubling interconnections between European policy and violent conflict across the globe (Global

Witness, 2015; Park, 2015; Valero, 2015). Whilst there are questions about their enactment, there are frameworks of rights and responsibilities at European level (Ross, 2015). As a dimension of GCE, European citizenship must have a critical peacebuilding foundation which calls to account policies and practices which perpetuate negative conflict and inhibit peacebuilding. There is a need for European identity to be meaningfully connected to young people's lives (Osler, 2011), and a development of the vertical channels of peacebuilding between young people and their elected officials at a European level may be one possible avenue.

### **8.5 Young People and Peacebuilding Action**

In exploring the experiences and perspectives of programmes developers and young people involved within programmes, this study seeks to meet calls for a deeper investigation of educational approaches which support peacebuilding action (Davies, 2005a). Despite a desire to move beyond the passive forms of citizenship action which Davies (2008) describes, the majority of peacebuilding programmes in this study found engaging with more direct forms of action a challenge. The following section addresses the key forms of individual and collective action addressed within programmes. I then explore important examples of “modelling resistance to violence” displayed by educators and young people. Finally I consider the challenges of supporting young people as they seek to make an ongoing contribution to peacebuilding action.

#### **8.5.1 The limits of action for young people**

Transformative peacebuilding education supports individual and collective forms of action (Davies, 2008; Gill & Niens, 2014a), and the programmes in this study revealed an engagement with action at both levels. At an individual level, a number of programmes emphasised individual action as political tolerance of the perspectives of others. At times, this action included supporting the rejection of violence through

influencing other young people. Action may be framed by young people's local spaces (McCully, 2012) and a key consideration for programme developers was that action would ultimately take place in young people's schools and local communities. There are two important implications here. Firstly, programme developers revealed that young people held strong perceptions about the appropriateness of certain forms of peacebuilding action. For example, young people on the Peacebuilding Schools programme in NI had rejected certain forms of action as they suggested that these would be negatively perceived by other young people in their local community. The programme was sensitive to these perceptions, supporting young people to explore forms of action which were deemed more appropriate. This particular incident highlights that predetermined forms of action may be rejected by young people. Secondly, a number of programme developers queried whether an emphasis on peacebuilding action within local communities was appropriate for all young people. For example, how peacebuilding action may be perceived by the local communities of young people living in interface areas in NI. Programme developers were concerned that involvement in such actions could place young people in potentially harmful situations. This represents a rejection of any overemphasis on the role of young people within peacebuilding (Gill & Niens, 2014b; Salomon & Cairns, 2010) and highlights the importance of placing their experiences and perceptions at the centre of any development of peacebuilding action in this context.

In the case study focused on the involvement of Willow Class in the Peacebuilding Schools programme, Mr. Bradley, the class teacher, expressed his reservations about the class taking action outside of school. This suggests a conceptualisation of young people as becoming-citizens who lack the capacity to take action on the basis of a solid understanding of complex global issues, despite the depth of understanding young people displayed. Although programme developers in this study

were explicit about the potential of peacebuilding education to create positive opportunities for young people to learn about conflict, there was a clear understanding of the role that education can play in perpetuating negative forms of conflicts. With this in mind, it is unsurprising that a minimal requirement for programme developers, and Mr Bradley in particular, was that the educational approaches would do no harm. The importance of ensuring that education does not reinforce negative conflict is recognised within existing research (Davies, 2010).

### **8.5.2 Collective peacebuilding action through action projects and the TY**

Action projects provide opportunities for learners to connect their learning on particular themes to actual action (Kinlen et al., 2013), and were viewed by participants as important spaces for the development of action-related learning. However, a number of programme developers perceived an imbalance between the use of action projects in NI and RoI, where a compulsory requirement in the latter was perceived to have stimulated opportunities for deeper engagement. However, even where there was a recognised curricular space to connect peacebuilding education with the curriculum, most participants were clear that in general, there was a lack of time available to them.

The TY in RoI is recognised as an important space for GCE (Honan, 2005) and the programme developers in this study shared this perception. However, they were also explicit that the successful inclusion of peacebuilding education programmes within the TY was dependent on the commitment, skills and availability of teachers, as is argued elsewhere (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Honan, 2005).

The majority of programmes placed little focus on the forms of collective action, such as campaigning and demonstrating (Davies, 2006, 2008) however the Peacebuilding Schools programme was a notable exception to this. Through the commitment of Mr. Bradley, Willow Class was afforded the opportunity to take part in

the programme throughout their TY programme. This year-long engagement provided young women with the opportunity to investigate the Israel-Palestine conflict and explore spaces for both dissent and action (Davies, 2005b; 2011). Whilst collective action is rarely explored within GCE (Bryan & Bracken, 2011), Willow Class explored collective action through the development of a mini-NGO. Through this outlet, Willow Class organised awareness-raising assemblies for other students, designed and promoted online petitions and created social media awareness, in the form of online blogs.

Davies (2011) questions the extent to which schools will support active citizenship connected to protest and a number of programme developers perceived that schools would place limitations on campaigning or demonstrating. However, the Peacebuilding Schools programme provided spaces for young people to consider how protest may support the goals of their mini-NGO. This engagement with demonstration presents an important alternative to the GCE approaches centred on obedient activism common within school-based GCE in an Irish context (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Gleeson et al., 2007).

It is also important to note that some young people in Willow Class were engaged with non-violent civil resistance operations outside state-defined channels of political participation, in the form of boycott (Chenoweth, Gallagher & Cunningham, 2013). These actions are beyond the “light touch” individual activism recognised by Bryan (2013) and a clear demonstration of young people taking action based on perceptions of complicity and interdependence in relation to global issues (Bryan & Bracken, 2011).

The exploration of action and in particular collective forms of action appears to be restricted by the limited time available to peacebuilding GCE. Where time is available, within the TY programmes for example, peacebuilding education programmes have provided young people with an important opportunity to consider

how collective action can be developed. More spaces need to be made available for young people to engage with educational approaches which support the development of critical active citizens and further research which explores action as an educational process is required.

### **8.5.3 Modelling resistance to violence**

Throughout this study, programme developers highlighted the importance of the commitment of classroom teachers in getting peacebuilding programmes into schools. Participants also identified that often engagement depended on teacher confidence, echoing existing research (Bickmore, 2005; Bryan et al., 2009; Davies, 2005b; Davies, Harber & Yamashita, 2005; Dillon & O’Shea, 2009; Yamashita, 2006). The perceptions of programme developers suggest that further training opportunities are essential to support teachers in dealing with difficult GCE themes (Bickmore, 2005; Honan, 2005; Niens & Reilly, 2010).

Research has revealed that some teachers are willing to engage with transformative forms of education (McCully, 1998; Kitson & McCully, 2005; Kitson, 2007) and the programme developers certainly demonstrated an ongoing engagement with such educational practices. A number of participants revealed actions during peacebuilding programmes which can be described as “modelling resistance to violence” (Davies, 2005b, p. 368). Mr. Bradley often modelled his citizenship practice through his actions in Parkview School. On a number of occasions, the young people of Willow Class had noticed, and placed importance, on his resistance to violence, for example their reference to his actions in getting other staff members to sign the class petition. Within this case study, it is also important to note that during their awareness-raising assembly, the actions of Willow Class not only displayed peer learning associated with some peacebuilding education practice (Pruitt, 2008; Salomon, 2011)

but can also be seen as “modelling resistance to violence” to the younger students within Parkview School. The impact of citizenship action on others, especially within a collective context is clearly an important factor for consideration.

#### **8.5.4 Ongoing engagement with peacebuilding citizenship**

There is need to explore young people’s perceptions of how they might apply their conflict-related knowledge and understanding (Davies, 2005a; McEvoy-Levy, 2006). A number of programme developers identified that supporting young people’s ongoing engagement with active citizenship was a key consideration for programmes. This was perceived as important in light of the need for ongoing peacebuilding on the island of Ireland, but also due to broader challenges, such as violent conflict elsewhere.

The Peacebuilding Schools programme sought to provide young people with an alternative to the charity-based approaches to GCE which dominate Irish educational practice (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Gleeson et al., 2007). Yet despite this clear theoretical perspective, which was reinforced through practice, young people in Willow Class could not imagine future citizenship action outside of the volunteering or missionary framework (Bryan, 2013; Fanning, 2002). This has two important implications. Firstly, there is a clear need for the development of GCE alternatives which move beyond but also contest the frameworks of charity, which not only influence educational practice but also appear to frame how young people imagine their future citizenship action. Secondly, this study builds on the argument from Bryan et al. (2009), which suggests that providing examples of successful social movements may support young people with insight into possible actions. Perspectives of dissent and non-violence are recognised as important components of peacebuilding education (Davies, 2005a) but also offer an alternative to the presentation of violent conflict and war as matters of routine (Davies, 2005a; Sánchez Meertens, 2013; Firer, 2002).

## 8.6 Conclusion

This chapter has considered the key findings which have emerged from this study, where appropriate suggesting their implications for educational policy and practice as well as highlighting areas for further research. There are a number of original contributions to knowledge and recommendations for future research.

The chapter argues as to the need for an increased space for peacebuilding citizenship education which supports positive conceptualisations of young people and challenges the omission of conflict from the formal education system. Peacebuilding education will continue to be limited whilst it operates within divided education systems. A commitment to systematic transformation is required in both NI and RoI.

A focus on the local dimension of young people's lives reveals that dealing with the legacies of violence, in the form of family experiences, community attitudes and sectarian perspectives are important issues for those concerned with peacebuilding in NI and RoI. It is imperative that peacebuilding education engages with the inclusion of young people from a minority ethnic background both at a theoretical and practical level. Engagement with the experiences and perceptions of young people must continue to be a factor in the contextualisation of inclusive peacebuilding education approaches.

Positioning young people with a broader network of collective responsibility provides an important opportunity to consider how young people may take peacebuilding action. There is a need to recognise the varied nature of young people's engagement with citizenship-related intergenerational dialogue, yet for some young people it represents an important opportunity for the development of skills connected to positive conflict. Whilst the connections between young people and bodies at governmental and European level provide possible avenues for citizen action, further exploration of how young people may explore their power within these networks is required.



Finally, this study illustrates how educators perceive the limitations of peacebuilding action; however, this reinforces the need to place young people's perspectives on action at the centre of citizenship education. The limited opportunities for young people to explore action within the formal education systems of NI and RoI is recognised, yet the exploration of Willow Class' experiences within the Peacebuilding Schools programmes offers an important insight into how young people experience collective and more critical forms of action.

## **Chapter 9: Conclusions**

### **9.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins with an overview of the study, highlighting the key frameworks and themes explored throughout. This is followed by a consideration of the contributions of the study in relation to the central research questions. The chapter then defines the implications and recommendations of the study. I conclude with a transparent exploration of the study's limitations, before making recommendations for future research in this area.

### **9.2 Overview of the Study**

This study sought to investigate the theoretical frameworks underpinning the design and practice of peacebuilding GCE programmes designed for schools across the island of Ireland, with a particular focus on how action was conceptualised and developed within the programmes. Through a series of semi-structured interviews with key informants who had been involved in the design and delivery of these programmes, the study sought to gain an understanding of the relationship between the theory and practice of peacebuilding education in this context. The study explored one programme in greater detail, as a critical case study. Here the study sought to illuminate the practice of peacebuilding education, and of the utmost importance, explore the perceptions and experiences of young people participants.

As well as setting the context of the study, the first chapter provided an introduction to the aims of the study, and the central research questions were identified. Chapter two presented a critical analysis of the relationships between forms of citizenship education and violent conflict. The chapter considered the evolution of GCE as a response to violent conflict, and as an alternative to forms of citizenship education deemed damaging to peacebuilding. The chapter explored the development of

citizenship education in NI and the RoI and in doing so investigated the complex relationship between education and conflict on the island of Ireland.

With the context set, chapter three provided a critical investigation of the literature which considers how conflict is taught about within schools, both in an Irish context and beyond. The chapter built upon Davies' (2005a) Typology of Teaching about Conflict through Citizenship Education, to consider not only research exploring peacebuilding education, but also research which explores how educational structures, policies and practices may perpetuate violence and fuel negative conflict. This review of the literature revealed the need for research which explored the theoretical foundations of peacebuilding education, investigated the implementation of theory into practice, but that also shed light onto the perceptions and experiences of young people.

Chapter four explored the development of qualitative research, drawing upon ethnographic methods in order to explore the central research questions at the heart of this study. With a specific focus on reflexivity, this chapter provided an explicit connection between the theoretical perspectives guiding the study, the central research questions and the qualitative design.

The next two chapters presented an overview of the peacebuilding education programmes and an analysis of the fundamental theoretical foundations which shaped their design and practice. Chapter five explored how young people's experiences were central to the development of peacebuilding education programmes. This chapter also considered how "the local" presents an opportunity to consider the possibilities and limitations of peacebuilding education. Chapter six investigated how programmes considered the responsibility for peacebuilding action, with young people positioned within broader networks. Chapter seven focused on an analysis of the critical case study, exploring how theoretical foundations are implemented into educational practice, and most importantly, how young people perceived and experienced their participation

in peacebuilding education. Chapter eight provided a synthesis of the most significant findings emanating from the study.

### **9.3 A Response to the Central Research Questions and Contributions to the Field**

Whilst the previous chapter provided an in depth discussion of the key findings from this study, I will return briefly to consider the central research questions which have guided this research.

*1) What theoretical frameworks underpin the design and practice of peacebuilding citizenship education programmes developed for schools across the island of Ireland?*

*a) What theoretical frameworks do educators employ in facilitating peacebuilding learning?*

This study explored the key theoretical principles underpinning peacebuilding education programmes seeking to provide a deeper understanding of the programmes and of the frameworks which guide their practice (Bajaj, 2004; Gill & Niens, 2014b; Salomon, 2004, 2006). The study revealed a number of important frameworks guiding the educational practice within programmes (Harris, 2004; Whitehead, 1989), however learner-centeredness appeared as a key theoretical principle for each programme. Grounded in a positive conceptualisation of young people as capable of agency and participation in peacebuilding, young people's perceptions and experiences were at the centre of programme design and development.

*b) What is the relationship between theory and practice in the development of these programmes?*

This study offered a contribution towards the recognised gap between the theory and practice of peacebuilding education (Tomlinson & Benefield, 2005) through an exploration of the means by which programme designers have developed theoretical frameworks into educational practice. For each of the programmes, active participatory

methodologies provided the connection between the learner-centred frameworks and educational practice. These methodologies enabled programmes to contextualise their practice; exploring “the local” as understood and experienced by young people. Certainly programmes referred to the importance of young people’s personal biographies, which at times included personal and familial connections to violent conflict. This approach also revealed the importance of young people’s connections to local community, and the connections between these spaces and issues of conflict both within an Irish context but also within conflicts further afield.

*c) What is the relationship between these programmes and the schools, education systems and wider societies that they serve?*

The study identified the key points of conflict between peacebuilding education and aspects of the wider education and societal systems. The findings suggest that peacebuilding education programmes across the island of Ireland had indeed encountered a number of conflicts in the development of opportunities for young people to learn about conflict and participate in peacebuilding citizenship. Positive conceptualisations of young people which underpinned practice within programmes were perceived to contrast with negative media conceptualisations. Whilst the peacebuilding programmes provided a valuable opportunity to learn about conflict and peacebuilding, participants perceived their work as a challenge to the omission of peacebuilding citizenship from the formal curriculum. However, the lack of time afforded to the peacebuilding education programmes appears to severely limit the depth to which such programmes are able to reach. As such there may appear a risk that peacebuilding education programmes engage in shallow practices which may underpin negative conflict. Finally, there are important questions about the inclusion of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds. A failure to include the perspectives and

experiences of these young people may mirror nationally-oriented forms of citizenship, which themselves can be seen as a barrier to social cohesion and therefore positive peace.

2) *How is action conceptualised and experienced within peacebuilding GCE programmes?*

a) *How is the theme of action addressed within peacebuilding GCE programmes?*

Peacebuilding action can be seen as a challenge to the daily practices which underpin negative conflict. For those programmes involved in a longer term engagement, collective forms of action were viewed as important objectives. Action projects provide an important opportunity for the development of such peacebuilding action but engagement remains variable, and may be less prevalent in NI. Often during TY programmes, a small but significant number of programmes supported young people to engage with higher degrees of active challenge to negative conflict, which Davies (2004) terms “interruptive democracy” (p. 212). These included political action such as protest and demonstration.

The nature of action depended to a large extent on the specific context or “the local”. A number of programmes developed their focus on action around the perspectives of young people. They considered the issues that mattered to young people, the specifics of what young people wanted to change and the forms of action that young people wanted to undertake. In certain programmes, action was perceived as inappropriate, or indeed potentially harmful to young people. Other more critical forms of action were perceived as possible sources of conflict with schools, for example protest or demonstrations.

b) *How are the roles and responsibilities of young people conceptualised within peacebuilding GCE programmes?*

It is important to note from the outset that programme designers displayed an awareness of the danger of any overemphasis on the roles and responsibilities of children within peacebuilding processes (Gill & Niens, 2014; Salomon & Cairns, 2010). However, this did not prevent a deep consideration of the roles and responsibilities that young people may have. Participants rejected any backward-facing forms of responsibility, which are often aligned to blame. Instead, responsibility was conceptualised as forward-facing, or as responsibility for the future. Amongst programme designers, there was awareness that peacebuilding education represented a difficult form of citizenship education and that conflict remains a complex and contested issue. Rather than placing individual responsibility on young people, the programmes positioned young people within a broader network of shared responsibilities for peacebuilding. These networks included a number of other actors, including other young people, families, local communities and governments. Young people's relationships with these actors were viewed as potential spaces for peacebuilding citizenship action and holding others to account in meeting their responsibilities. Whilst there was evidence of certain actions occurring within these networks of responsibility, often these avenues appeared underdeveloped.

*c) What are young people's perceptions and experiences of action in peacebuilding education programmes?*

This study also offered a contribution to the field by providing a focus on peacebuilding education through an educationalist lens, which encompasses the perspectives of young people themselves (Winthrop & Kirk, 2008). It provides a deeper understanding of young people's perspectives on peacebuilding, and their roles and responsibilities herewith.

The clearest evidence of young people's perceptions and experiences of peacebuilding education programmes was garnered through the observations and focus group

interviews with the young women participating in the Peacebuilding Schools programme in Willow Class of Parkview School. These young women perceived that conflict was omitted from the formal curriculum and criticised the lack of opportunity to learn about the theme. In spite of these barriers, the young women had increased their knowledge through television and online media, and in some cases family discussions. Willow Class perceived that there were limited avenues for peacebuilding action which engaged with governments, and doubted their power to influence change in this regard. However, the study revealed complex and dynamic relationships between young people, their peers, teachers and families, and the forms of action that took place within these spaces. Finally, the aspirations of young people in the class illuminated the challenge of developing ongoing forms of sustainable action outside of the traditional frameworks of charity and volunteerism.

#### **9.4 Implications and Recommendations**

Through an exploration of the perceptions and experiences of educators involved in the design and delivery of school-based peacebuilding education programmes, and a case-study of the Peacebuilding Schools programme, this study has revealed a number of the possibilities of peacebuilding education programmes, but has also unearthed a number of challenges for such programmes and the education systems of NI and RoI.

##### **9.4.1 The need to strengthen opportunities for young people to participate in peacebuilding education in NI and RoI**

The provision of opportunities for young people to develop their knowledge and understanding of conflict, critical thinking, multi-perspectivity and in some cases citizenship action through peacebuilding education programmes was perceived by educators to stand in stark contrast to the opportunities provided within most schools in NI and RoI. The educators involved in this study suggested that peacebuilding



education remains underexplored within both jurisdictions. Sharing this perception, the young people of Willow Class, who mirrored the inquisitiveness of other young people as to the causes and consequences of conflict (Davies, Harber & Yamashita, 2005; Niens & Reilly, 2010; Yamashita, 2006), also perceived a lack of opportunity for young people to learn about conflict and peacebuilding. These peacebuilding education programmes represent an important response to the absence of conflict-related education from schools in both jurisdictions (Niens & McIlrath, 2010b). This contribution can be seen as challenging the omission of conflict from the school curriculum

(Arlow, 2004; Cole, 2007; Davies, 2005a; Sánchez Meertens, 2013) and as such requires ongoing support. However, it is important to note that these programmes engage with a multi-layered and complex issue (Levy, 2014) through a relatively small optional provision, which relies heavily on the commitment of classroom teachers. This study builds on the findings of Niens and McIlrath (2010b) in calling for a deeper and more prolonged commitment to exploring the Irish conflict, peacebuilding and the peace process within citizenship education in both NI and the RoI. Providing opportunities for young people to engage with peacebuilding education and to develop non-violent approaches to resolving conflict, should be a priority for those concerned with ensuring peace at both a local and global level.

The development of discrete curricular spaces for conflict-related learning may be an important approach supporting the inclusion of peacebuilding education in schools. For example, the optional Leaving Certificate in Politics and Society, forthcoming in September 2016, represents an important addition to the curriculum within RoI, particularly with its focus on “resolving conflicts” (NCCA, 2016, p. 8). However, it is imperative that curricular spaces for conflict-related learning are addressed a manner which challenges the militarisation of societies, critiques

perceptions of war as inevitable, and offers meaningful inclusion of the perspectives of individuals and collectives who have sought and continue to seek peaceful non-violent means of resolving conflict (Davies, 2005a).

Whilst each of the programmes in this study was limited by the time afforded to citizenship within the national curricula of both jurisdictions, a number perceived that for post-primary schools within RoI, the TY programme offered a considerable space for young people to engage with peacebuilding education. TY is recognised as a space for conflict-related educational opportunities (Wilson, 2008) and this study has provided an insight into the practice of one such approach. The critical case study of the Peacebuilding Schools programme exposed the possibilities and challenges of teaching and learning about conflict within the formal education system. In particular, it revealed how the TY programme can offer young people a highly meaningful extended engagement with peacebuilding education. However, it is important to note that despite the potential of TY in this regard, the provision of the TY programme remains optional and within some schools selective (Jeffers, 2008; Smith & McCoy, 2009). The TY may represent an important learning space for some young people, but there is a clear need to ensure that all young people are afforded the opportunity to engage with peacebuilding GCE within this space.

#### **9.4.2 The need for peacebuilding education across the island of Ireland to engage with young people's attitudes, perceptions and experiences**

Although violent conflict on the island of Ireland has shaped both the societies of NI and RoI (Akenson, 1970, 1973; Darby, 1995; Dunn, 1986; Rankin, 2007; Smith, 2001, 2003) addressing the consequences of conflict through education is recognised as an important focus within NI (Niens, O'Connor & Smith, 2013) yet remains underexplored in RoI (Niens & McIlrath, 2010a). Learner-centred approaches employed

by a number of programmes provided insight into how conflict was understood by young people involved in the programmes. Whilst particular issues related to the Irish conflict, such as those connected to flags, were restricted to NI, certain experiences, such as deep familial connections to the causes and consequences of violent conflict, were also shared by young people in the border regions of RoI.

Sectarian attitudes were also considered an issue for programmes operating in NI and the border region of RoI, an area which has its own history of involvement in the Irish conflict (Hayward, 2007; Patterson, 2013; Todd et al., 2005). It is also important to note how some young people participating in peacebuilding education programmes in the border region of RoI were perceived to place great weight on engaging with conflict and peacebuilding, specifically in an Irish context. Elsewhere in the RoI, peacebuilding programmes had engaged with negative attitudes formed as a result of the Irish conflict. The range of experiences highlighted by educators reveals how the impact of violent conflict has had, and continues to have, an impact on the attitudes and understandings of young people across the island of Ireland. This reinforces the need for a deeper commitment to peacebuilding education which supports young people to develop a more complex understanding of conflict, challenges attitudes which underpin violence and supports the development of peacebuilding citizenship practices.

A number of programmes included specific focus on violent conflict beyond the island of Ireland. Using GCE approaches to explore the interconnections between local and global issues provided an important lens for some programmes to explore conflict. Such an approach addresses a recognised gap between local and global conflict-related issues (Davies, 2005b) but also revealed how negative interconnections between local and distant conflicts maybe particularly explicit in the lives of some young people. This has important implications for educational approaches which consider learning from distant conflicts, particularly in post-conflict societies (McCully, 2006). Certainly, any

approaches which consider distant conflicts should ensure that both positive and negative interconnections between the local and the global, particularly as understood and experienced by young people, inform the development of practice.

A number of educators identified that operating within an all-island framework presented a challenge to working with loyalist unionist communities in NI (Greer, 1996; Whyte, 1983). An important means of securing this engagement was through making clear connections to the GFA. Whilst connections have been made between peacebuilding education and the GFA (Pollack, 2005; Smith, 2003, 2011) little is known about the manner in which peace agreements are employed (Dupuy, 2008). This study suggests that engagement with the GFA provided educators with a number of opportunities. Firstly, the GFA provided means of developing the role of education for peacebuilding in NI and RoI. Secondly, the GFA provided an important justification for peacebuilding education, and in particular for those programmes focused on HRE, in light of the strong human rights emphasis within the agreement. Thirdly, the GFA provided an opportunity for the development of relationships between teachers and young people in both jurisdictions. The implications here are twofold. This study provides an insight into how formal peace agreements may be meaningfully connected to peacebuilding education practice. However, maintaining the peace process remains an ongoing issue for the governments of NI, RoI and the rest of the UK. As such, educational approaches which attempt to strengthen the relationships across the island of Ireland require an ongoing commitment.

#### **9.4.3 The opportunities of positioning young people within a network of shared responsibility**

This study has revealed the complex networks of responsibility considered by educators involved in the design of peacebuilding education approaches, but also by the

young people of Willow Class participating in one such programme. Positioning young people within a wider network of responsibility may offer a number of opportunities. The inclusion of young people within such a network builds upon the positive conceptualisations of young people as active and participatory citizens which have underpinned the peacebuilding programmes within this study, and have been observed within the Peacebuilding Schools programme. This approach challenges negative conceptualisations of young people and provides the opportunity to place young people at the centre of the learning process.

Whilst there are questions of approaches which overemphasise young people's responsibility in relation to issues such as peacebuilding (Gill & Niens, 2014b), this study suggests that rather than placing the entire responsibility for peacebuilding on the shoulders of young people, this responsibility should be considered a shared endeavour. This approach avoids any overemphasis on young people, whilst at the same time remaining open to a consideration of other actors within this network (for example, peers, teachers, schools, parents, and governments), their associated responsibilities, and the potential avenues of action between young people and these actors.

Longer term engagement with peacebuilding education, such as in the case study of the Peacebuilding Schools programme, offers young people the opportunity to consider how they may employ their knowledge, understanding and skills within collective peacebuilding actions. However, even where a programme presents alternatives to obedient citizenship (Bryan & Bracken, 2011; Gleeson et al., 2007) the position and power of young people within formal schools may limit the forms of political action they can engage with. Outside of school, some young people explored participation in political forms of collective action such as boycott. However, these young women were unable to imagine future action outside of a missionary or charitable framework (Bryan, 2013; Fanning, 2002). There is a need for critical GCE

which contests these dominant frameworks but that also provides young people with an opportunity to consider a variety of potential avenues for future citizenship action.

#### **9.4.4 The need for education for peacebuilding as well as peacebuilding education**

Peacebuilding education must be one part of the broader educational challenge to negative conflict (Bajaj, 2015; Bickmore, 2005a; Reardon, 1998). In addition to the pedagogically driven peacebuilding programmes at the centre of this study, there is a need to consider how the broader governance of education systems contributes towards peacebuilding. Existing research has revealed how educational structures and policies can be complicit in perpetuating negative violence and preventing peacebuilding (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000; Davies, 2004; Smith & Vaux, 2003). As much as the educational structures of RoI and NI have been shaped by violent conflict (Akenson, 1970; Darby, 1995; Dunn, 1986; Rankin, 2007; Smith, 2001), this study suggests that aspects of the education systems in both jurisdictions work in opposition to peacebuilding education and, as such, present a barrier to positive peace.

The denominationally divided educational structures of NI represent a huge barrier towards conflict transformation and building a positive peace (Gallagher, 2010; Leonard, 2007). Whilst the development of the Shared Education platform within NI represents a *transformation of sorts*, this study would agree that such an approach should be viewed as a step on the way towards an inclusive education system which supports peacebuilding (see Hamber, 2014).

An exploration of education across the island of Ireland through the lens of peacebuilding raises implications for education structures in the RoI. Whilst this education system cannot be so easily connected to the stark divisions which have underpinned violent conflict on the island of Ireland, participants in this study have

suggested that divisions in the school system of RoI, whether it is in relation to school ethos and patronage or fee-payment (Lodge & Lynch, 2004), represent a barrier to social cohesion, equality and thus peacebuilding. Education for peacebuilding should go “beyond the cessation of violence and conflict and [address] structural and cultural violence, [emphasising] the concepts of local and global peace” (Reilly & Niens, 2014, p. 72). Whilst the peacebuilding programmes within this study represent an engagement with local and global peace, there remains an imperative for those tasked with the governance of education systems in both jurisdictions to ensure that beyond classroom teaching, education systems and structures are transformed in a manner which supports peacebuilding (Gill and Niens, 2014a).

### **9.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Study**

Throughout this research, I have engaged with a process of reflexivity, illustrated in chapter two, as a means of engaging with how my position as a researcher influences this study (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2000; Berger, 2013; Finlay, 2002). Whilst this reveals how my identity as researcher has shaped this study, it is also important to consider other possible limitations of aspects of this research.

The study involved exploring the theoretical frameworks which underpin the design and practice of 13 peacebuilding education programmes developed for schools across the island of Ireland. From the outset, there are certainly limitations as to the extent that this study can be generalised. Indeed, the specific context of NI, the RoI and more broadly the island of Ireland in relation to the Irish conflict and the specificity of educational systems, render generalisations problematic.

Whilst every effort was made to recruit the greatest range of programmes into the study, the voluntary nature of participation may suggest that those educators most interested and enthusiastic about peacebuilding education would dominate such a

sample. Whilst the sampling of the programmes through a snowball technique was open to the inclusion of those outside of the initial network, the limitations of such an approach are highlighted in chapter four.

For 12 of these programmes, semi-structured interviews with key informants provided the basis for the part of the qualitative study. Whilst these interviews provided an important insight into the theoretical frameworks employed in the design of programmes, this study offered an understanding of the practices of these programmes as perceived by educators, and triangulated against programme documentation, rather than of observed practice. As Bryan and Bracken (2011) observe, “what some teachers say they do when teaching global citizenship and what actually happens in the classroom needs to be entertained” (p. 255). As such, the depth of research in this part of the study was limited.

One programme, Peacebuilding Schools, formed the single case study for this research. This provided an opportunity for interviews with a classroom teacher involved in the implementation of the programme, observation of the programme in action, and a series of focus group with programme participants. Certainly this opportunity offered an important insight into the gap between the theory and practice of peacebuilding education, and a depth of study not possible in the remainder of the programmes. Whilst the time spent collecting data was the maximum which my access to the site would allow, the study of this programme would have been enhanced by an extended time in the field. It is also important to note that the case study considered one class in one school in the RoI. The failure to gain access to a peacebuilding programme as practised in a school in NI, and of course the perceptions and experiences of young people from NI, represents an important limitation to this study.

The focus group interviews with young people represented an important opportunity to explore the perceptions and experiences of these participants outside of



the classroom. The limitations of focus groups, such as individuals moderating their opinions or dominate interactions (Smithson, 2000) were considered and the structure of these approaches and the ensuing analysis of associated data (detailed in chapter four) sought to mitigate these incidents. Whilst a single case study within a highly contextualised peacebuilding education programme renders broad generalisations problematic, the perceptions and experiences of the young women from Willow Class provide important insights.

### **9.6 Opportunities for Future Research**

This study has provided an exploration of how peacebuilding education programmes are conceived and practised in post-primary schools in the RoI and NI. Within the study, Ciara, a student in Willow Class of Parkview School explained of young people, “I think we have a lot of power but we just don’t know how to use it.” With respect to the findings of this study, and the existing literature in this area, I suggest that there are a number of interconnected opportunities for future research which considers young people’s exploration of power and positive conflict in relation to making the world a less violent and more peaceful place.

This study reiterates the need for an exploration of how the practices and cultures of schools influence peacebuilding education (Levy, 2014). School-based ethnographic research which considers the range of potential spaces for learning about conflict is required. In RoI, the new Politics and Society Leaving Certificate course identifies “acknowledging differences and negotiating and resolving conflicts” (NCCA, 2015, p. 29) as a key learning objective, and may provide an important avenue for exploring how teaching about conflict is framed within teacher education and within an exam-based system.

Further research is needed to explore how “safe spaces” (Andreotti & Warwick, 2008; Boostrom, 1998; Cusack, 2008; McClean Hilker, 2011) for peacebuilding citizenship education are conceptualised, constructed and experienced. Insights from educators and learners may support an exploration of how this concept affects difficult forms of citizenship education. A number of important questions may include: what are the rules of “safe spaces” and how are they arbitrated? What are the implications for difficult forms of CE if a “safe space” constitutes somewhere where learners are free from discomfort or offence? How does the concept of “safe space” affect the participation of young people from marginalised backgrounds?

This study reiterates the call for the inclusion of marginalised voices within peacebuilding education (Bickmore, 2012; Gallagher, 2004). Further research is needed to explore the perceptions and experiences of young people from minority ethnic backgrounds, in relation to learning about conflict. Such perspectives may offer important insight into young people’s understanding of relationships between local and global issues connected to conflict and peacebuilding.

Undertaking an in-depth exploration of young people’s involvement in peacebuilding movements outside of the formal education system could enable the development a number of findings from this study. Such an approach could support the exploration of young people’s involvement in non-violent positive conflict and collective action outside of the formal education system. It could potentially serve as a means of exploring young people’s peacebuilding action within local spaces which are affected by violent conflict. Building upon the findings from this study, alongside existing research into intergenerational learning (MacGill, Smith & Hamber, 2009; Sánchez Meertens, 2013), peacebuilding movements may be an important spaces to consider young people’s involvement in intergenerational dialogue and the transfer of peacebuilding knowledge. The interaction with social media, as well as the international

aspects of certain movements, may provide insight into alternative networks of global citizenship.

Finally, collaborative action research with young people could build on the findings of this study to further “map” the networks of peacebuilding responsibility. Such research could explore young people’s perspectives on the potential avenues for citizenship action at local, national, European and global levels.

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## **Appendix A: Plain Language Statement – Teachers & Programme Designers/Deliverers**

### **Who is conducting this study?**

My name is Benjamin Mallon and I am a PhD student from St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin. I am conducting a research project titled "Cross-border education for reconciliation on the island of Ireland". This study is interested in exploring educators' experiences of developing and delivering peacebuilding education programmes.

### **What does the study involve?**

You are invited to take part in a study which explores your experiences of teaching about issues of conflict and peace, as well as your involvement in educational initiatives. Involvement in the research would involve taking part in an interview on two occasions over the course of a term. These interviews would be no more than 90 minutes in length, and would take place at a time and place that suits you. These interviews would be about your experiences, and would not require any preparation on your part. With your permission, the interviews would be recorded so that what is discussed can be listened to again. Also, as the project is focused on how young people learn about conflict, it would be useful to observe the teaching and learning about peacebuilding themes in your classroom. As with the interviews, no additional preparation would be needed for such observations.

### **Are there any potential risks from involvement in the study?**

All research carries some possible risks. In this study, one such risk might be that you feel uncomfortable talking about particular experiences. If this were to happen, you are free to not answer a question if you don't want to, can finish the interview at any point, and are free to stop involvement with the study at any point.

### **What are the benefits to participants involved in the study?**

The benefits of the study is that it will help to understand young people's experiences of learning about conflict, and in doing so might help to support those individuals and organisations facilitating this learning. You will not receive any payment for involvement in this study.

**How will you ensure and data protection?**

Whilst the confidentiality of information is only protected to the limits of the law, whatever is discussed in the interview will not be communicated to anyone else except for when there is an immediate risk of harm to you or another person. In such a circumstance, this would be discussed with you first. With your permission, the interviews will be recorded to enable a more accurate record of your experiences to be kept. Recordings can be stopped at any time. These recordings will be written up by the researcher and you will be given a pseudonym to hide your name, and to make it more difficult for anyone to identify you. Any recordings will be password protected and stored within a locked cabinet that only the researcher can access. When the research is complete, the data files and write ups will be permanently deleted. Data collected in this project will not be used for any purpose other than that described within this information sheet.

**Is participation in this research voluntary?**

Involvement in this study is completely voluntary. Participants do not have to answer any question they don't wish to, they may terminate an interview at any stage, and withdraw from the study at any point.

**How do I find out more about the study?**

If you have any questions or wish to discuss any part of the study, please contact:

Benjamin Mallon,  
Room B137,  
St Patrick's College,  
Dublin 9.

Tel: [REDACTED]

Email: benjaminmallon3@mail.dcu.ie

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Administrator,  
Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities,  
Room C214  
St Patrick's College,  
Dublin 9.

Tel [REDACTED]





## **Appendix B: Plain Language Statement – Parent Information**

### **Who is conducting this study?**

My name is Benjamin Mallon and I am a qualified teacher and PhD student from St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. I am conducting a research project titled "peacebuilding education for reconciliation on the island of Ireland". This study is interested in exploring young people's experiences of peacebuilding education initiatives and learning related to issues of conflict and peace.

### **What does the study involve?**

Your child will be invited to take part in a study which explores their experiences of learning about issues of conflict and peace, as well as their involvement in peacebuilding educational initiatives. Involvement in the research would involve being in a class which is observed by the researcher over a number of lessons, as well as a taking part in a small group interview with other children. The interviews would be no more than 60 minutes in length, and would take place at a time and place that suits the children involved. These interviews would be about the children's experiences, and would not require any preparation on their part. With your permission and the permission of the children, the interviews would be recorded so that what is discussed can be listened to again by the researcher.

### **Are there any potential risks from involvement in the study?**

All research carries some possible risks. In this study, one such risk might be that a young person might feel uncomfortable talking about particular experiences. If this were to happen, they are free to not answer any question they don't want to, can finish the interview at any point, and are free to stop involvement with the study at any point. If at any time during the research there is any indication that a participants safety or well-being is being negatively affected, the research will be suspended until the issue has been addressed.

### **What are the benefits to participants involved in the study?**

The benefit of the study is that it will help to understand young people's experiences of learning about conflict, and in doing so might help to support those individuals and

organisations involved in this learning process. Participants will not receive any payment for involvement in this study.

**How will you ensure and data protection?**

Whilst the confidentiality of information is only protected to the limits of the law, whatever is discussed in the interview will not be communicated to anyone else except for when there is an immediate risk of harm to your child or another person. In such a circumstance, this would be discussed with the child first. With your permission and the permission of the children, the interviews will be recorded to enable a more accurate record of their experiences to be kept. Recordings can be stopped at any time. These recordings will be written up by the researcher and children will be given made up names, or pseudonyms, to hide their real names, and to make it more difficult for anyone to identify them. Any recordings will be password protected and stored within a locked cabinet that only the researcher can access. When the research is complete, the data files and write ups will be permanently deleted. Data collected in this project will not be used for any purpose other than that described within this information sheet.

**Is participation in this research voluntary?**

Involvement in this study is completely voluntary. Participants do not have to answer any question they don't wish to, they may terminate an interview at any stage, and withdraw from the study at any point.

**How do I find out more about the study?**

If you have any questions or wish to discuss any part of the study, please contact:

Benjamin Mallon,  
Room B137,  
St Patrick's College,  
Dublin 9.

Tel: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Administrator,  
Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities,  
Room C214  
St Patrick's College,  
Drumcondra,  
Dublin 9.

Tel: [REDACTED]



## **Appendix C: Plain Language Statement – Student Information**

*Thank you for taking your time to read this form. Please read each point carefully. If you have any questions, ask your teacher or the researcher.*

### **Who is doing this study?**

My name is Benjamin Mallon and I am a student from St. Patrick's College, Dublin. I am conducting a research project titled “ peacebuilding education for reconciliation on the island of Ireland”. I am interested in finding out about young people's experiences of learning about conflict and peace.

### **What does the study involve?**

You will be invited to take part in a study which explores how young people learn about conflict and peace in peacebuilding projects. If you agree to become involved you will firstly be in a class which is observed by the researcher over a number of lessons, as well as a taking part in a small group interview with other children. The interviews would be no more than 60 minutes in length, and would take place at a time and place that suits you. You wouldn't need to prepare for the interview at all. With your permission the interviews would be recorded so that what is discussed can be listened to again by the researcher.

### **Are there any risks to being involved?**

All research carries some possible risks. In this study, one risk might be that you might feel uncomfortable talking about certain things. If this were to happen, you should let the researcher know. You are free to not answer any question; you can finish the interview at any point, and are free to stop involvement with the study at any point.

### **What are the benefits to participants involved in the study?**

The benefit of the study is that it will help to understand young people's experiences of learning about conflict, and in doing so might help to support teachers and organisations involved in teaching about such topics. You will not receive any money or gifts for involvement in this study.

### **How will the research be kept confidential and the information kept safe?**

Whatever is discussed in the interview will not be communicated to anyone else except for when there is an immediate risk of harm to you or another person. In such a

circumstance, this would be discussed with you first. Information will be kept confidential as long as the law does not decide otherwise. With your permission, the interviews will be recorded to enable a more accurate record of your experiences to be kept. Recordings can be stopped at any time. These recordings will be written up by the researcher and your names will be replaced by made up names, or pseudonyms, making it difficult for anyone to identify you. Any recordings will be password protected and stored within a locked cabinet that only the researcher can access. When the research is finished, the data files and write ups will be permanently deleted. Data collected in this project will not be used for any purpose other than as described within this information sheet.

**Is participation in this research voluntary?**

Involvement in this study is completely voluntary. You do not have to answer any question you don't wish to, you may stop an interview at any stage, and you may withdraw from the study at any point.

**I am interested in taking part in this research. What do I do next?**

You may want to discuss what you have read with your friends. Your teacher or the researcher will provide you with details about what to do next. It will involve reading and signing a consent form. Remember, keep this information sheet safe and if you have any questions, just ask!

**How do I find out more about the study?**

If you have any questions or wish to discuss any part of the study, please contact:

Benjamin Mallon,  
St Patrick's College,  
Dublin 9.

Tel: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Administrator,  
Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities,  
Room C214

St Patrick's College,  
Drumcondra,  
Dublin 9.

Tel: [REDACTED]



## **Appendix D: Informed Consent Form – Teachers & Programme Designers/Deliverers**

**Study Title:** Peacebuilding Education on the island of Ireland

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

My name is Benjamin Mallon and I am a qualified teacher and PhD student from St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This study is interested in exploring young people's experiences of peacebuilding education initiatives and learning related to issues of conflict and peace. It is hoped that the study will help to understand young people's experiences of learning about conflict, and in doing so might help to support those individuals and organisations facilitating this learning.

### **What does the study involve?**

You are invited to take part in a study which explores your experiences of teaching about issues of conflict and peace, as well as your involvement in peacebuilding educational initiatives. Involvement in the research would involve taking part in an interview on two occasions over the course of a term. These interviews would be no more than 90 minutes in length, and would take place at a time and place that suits you. These interviews would be about your experiences, and would not require any preparation on your part. With your permission, the interviews would be recorded so that what is discussed can be listened to again. Also, as the project is focused on how young people learn about conflict, it would be useful to observe the teaching and learning about peacebuilding themes in your classroom. As with the interviews, no additional preparation would be needed for such observations.

### **How will you ensure and data protection?**

Whilst the confidentiality of information is only protected to the limits of the law, whatever is discussed in the interview will not be communicated to anyone else except for when there is an immediate risk of harm to you or another person. In such a circumstance, this would be discussed with you first. With your permission, the interviews will be recorded to enable a more accurate record of your experiences to be kept. Recordings can be stopped at any time. These recordings will be written up by the

researcher and you will be given a pseudonym to hide your name, and to make it more difficult for anyone to identify you. Any recordings will be password protected and stored within a locked cabinet that only the researcher can access. When the research is complete, the data files and write ups will be permanently deleted. Data collected in this project will not be used for any purpose other than that described within this information sheet.

**How do I find out more about the study?**

If you have any questions or wish to discuss any part of the study, please contact:

Benjamin Mallon,  
Room B137,  
St Patrick's College,  
Dublin 9.

Tel: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Administrator,  
St Patrick's College,  
Drumcondra,  
Dublin 9.

Tel: [REDACTED]

**Confirmation of Understanding:**

Please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question).

*Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement? Yes/No*

*Do you understand the information provided? Yes/No*

*Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study? Yes/No*

*Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions? Yes/No*

**Informed Consent:**

I am aware that if I agree to take part in this study, I can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Study have been completed. I have read and understood the information in this form. The researchers have answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to take part in this research project.

**Participant's Signature:**.....

**Name in Block Capitals:**.....

**Witness:** .....

**Date:** .....



## **Appendix E: Informed Consent Form – Parents/Guardians**

**Study Title:** peacebuilding Education on the island of Ireland

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

My name is Benjamin Mallon and I am a qualified teacher and PhD student from St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. This study is interested in exploring young people's experiences of peacebuilding education initiatives and learning related to issues of conflict and peace. It is hoped that the study will help to understand young people's experiences of learning about conflict, and in doing so might help to support those individuals and organisations facilitating this learning.

### **What does the study involve?**

Your child will be invited to take part in a study which explores their experiences of learning about issues of conflict and peace, as well as their involvement in peacebuilding educational initiatives. Involvement in the research would involve being in a class which is observed by the researcher over a number of lessons, as well as taking part in a small group interview with other children. These interviews would be no more than 60 minutes in length, and would take place at a time and place that suits the children involved. These interviews would be about the children's experiences, and would not require any preparation on their part.

### **How will you ensure and data protection?**

Whilst the confidentiality of information is only protected to the limits of the law, whatever is discussed in the interview will not be communicated to anyone else except for when there is an immediate risk of harm to your child or another person. In such a circumstance, this would be discussed with the child first. With your permission and the permission of the children, the interviews will be recorded to enable a more accurate record of their experiences to be kept. Recordings can be stopped at any time. These recordings will be written up by the researcher and children will be given made up names, or pseudonyms, to hide their real names, and to make it more difficult for anyone to identify them. Any recordings will be password protected and stored within a locked cabinet that only the researcher can access. When the research is complete, the data files and write ups will be permanently deleted. Data collected in this project will not be used for any purpose other than that described within this information sheet.

**How do I find out more about the study?**

If you have any questions or wish to discuss any part of the study, please contact:

Benjamin Mallon,  
Room B137,  
St Patrick's College,  
Drumcondra,  
Dublin 9.

Tel: [REDACTED]

Email: [REDACTED]

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Administrator,  
St Patrick's College,  
Drumcondra,  
Dublin 9.

Tel: [REDACTED]

---

**Confirmation of Understanding:**

Please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question).

*Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement?*

*Yes/No*

*Do you understand the information provided?*

*Yes/No*

*Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?*

*Yes/No*

*Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?*

*Yes/No*

**Informed Consent:**

I am aware that if I agree for .....(name of child) to take part in this study, they can withdraw from participation at any stage. There will be no penalty for withdrawing before all stages of the Study have been completed. I have read and understood the information in this form. The researchers have answered my questions and concerns, and I have a copy of this consent form. Therefore, I consent to allow.....(name of child) to take part in this research project.

**Parent/Guardian Signature:**.....

**Name in Block Capitals:** .....**Name of Child**.....

**Witness:**.....

**Date:** .....





## **Appendix F: Informed Consent Form – Student**

*Dear student, thank you for expressing an interest in taking part in this study. Although your parent/guardian has given consent for you to participate, it is just as important that you consent to be involved. To show that you consent, please carefully read, and then sign this form.*

**Study Title:** Peacebuilding Education on the island of Ireland

### **What is the purpose of the study?**

My name is Benjamin Mallon and I am a student from St. Patrick's College, Dublin. I am interested in finding out about young people's experiences of learning about conflict and peace. I hope the study will help to improve understanding of young people's experiences of learning about conflict, and in doing so might help to support teachers and organisations involved in teaching about such topics.

### **What does the study involve?**

You will be invited to take part in a study which explores how young people learn about conflict and peace in peacebuilding projects. If you agree to become involved this would include being in a class which is observed by the researcher over a number of lessons, as well as a taking part in a small group interview with other children. These interviews would be no more than 60 minutes in length, and would take place at a time and place that suits you. You wouldn't need to prepare for the interview at all. With your permission the interviews would be recorded so that what is discussed can be listened to again by the researcher.

### **How will the research be kept confidential and the information kept safe?**

Whatever is discussed in the interview will not be communicated to anyone else except for when there is an immediate risk of harm to you or another person. In such a circumstance, this would be discussed with you first. Information will be kept confidential as long as the law does not decide otherwise. With your permission, the interviews will be recorded to enable a more accurate record of your experiences to be kept. Recordings can be stopped at any time. These recordings will be written up by the researcher and your names will be replaced by made up names, or pseudonyms, making it difficult for anyone to identify you. Any recordings will be password protected and stored within a locked cabinet that only the researcher can access. When the research is

finished, the data files and write ups will be permanently deleted. Data collected in this project will not be used for any purpose other than as described within this information sheet.

**How do I find out more about the study?**

If you have any questions or wish to discuss any part of the study, please contact:

Benjamin Mallon,  
St Patrick's College,  
Dublin 9.  
Tel: [REDACTED]  
Email: [REDACTED]

If you have any concerns about this study and wish to contact an independent person, please contact:

The Administrator,  
Office of the Dean of Research and Humanities,  
Room C214  
St Patrick's College,  
Drumcondra,  
Dublin 9.  
Tel: [REDACTED]

---

**Confirmation of Understanding:**

Please complete the following (Circle Yes or No for each question).

- |   |               |
|---|---------------|
| <i>Have you read or had read to you the Plain Language Statement?</i>       | <i>Yes/No</i> |
| <i>Do you understand the information provided?</i>                          | <i>Yes/No</i> |
| <i>Do you understand that involvement in this study is voluntary?</i>       | <i>Yes/No</i> |
| <i>Do you understand that you can pull out at any point?</i>                | <i>Yes/No</i> |
| <br>  |               |
| <i>Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?</i> | <i>Yes/No</i> |
| <i>Have you received satisfactory answers to all your questions?</i>        | <i>Yes/No</i> |

**Informed Consent:**

**IMPORTANT:** Before signing this consent form, make sure you have read and understood the Information Sheet that you have been provided with. Read this form carefully, and if you are happy to be involved, please sign and complete the section below.

**Student Signature:**.....

**Name in Block Capitals:** .....

**Witness:** ..... **Date:** .....



## **Appendix G: Interview Schedule - Programme Designers/Deliverers**

**Date:**.....

**Location of Interview:**.....

**Interviewer:** .....

**Interview Code:** .....

**Notes:**

### **Consent Confirmation:**

*Remind the participant of the voluntary nature of participation in the research project, and that at any point they may ask to move to another question, or ask for the audio-recorder to be turned off. On the record, confirm written permission via the Informed Consent Form and in the case of participants under the age of 18 years, the Informed Parental Consent Form before confirming pre-interview verbal consent.*

### **Introduction:**

*To reiterate the information you have already received in the Plain Language Statement, I am interested in finding out more about your experiences in relation to peacebuilding education programmes addressing issues of peace and conflict. I will start by asking some questions about your background and about your previous experiences as well as your current employment to build up a picture of you. This will be followed by some questions about your experiences and perceptions of peacebuilding educational initiatives.*

[REDACTED]

### **Interview Questions:**

*Firstly I would like to ask you a few questions about your current situation.*

#### **Part 1: Background Information**

- a) Can I start by asking you to talk about your current involvement with peacebuilding and/or peace-related education initiatives? (Probe: full-time/part-time/ permanent/ temporary/ length of employment)
- b) Can you tell me what your primary role and responsibilities are?
- c) Can I ask about where in Ireland your work is currently based? (Probe: RoI/NI)
- d) More generally, how long have you been working within the area peace/conflict, development and social justice? How long have you been involved within the education sector?
- e) How do you view the relationship between education and wider societal issues?
- f) Do you have any thoughts on the role of education in relation to issues of peace and conflict?

[REDACTED]

*Now I would like to find out more about the peace-related/cross border education initiatives you have been involved in.*

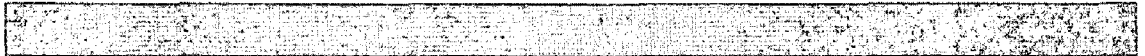
#### **Part 2: Conception of Initiatives**

- a) Could you give a brief description of the educational initiative?
  - b) Can you explain your role within the particular peacebuilding project?
  - c) Can you explain how the project came about? (Probe: individuals and groups; location; relationship to pre-existing projects; organising/funding body)
  - d) Was the initiative part of any wider programme or project? (Probe: peace process; community-level)
  - e) How would you describe the general aims of the initiative? (Probe: definitions)
  - f) Were there any particular approaches which informed how the initiative was designed initially? Were there approaches that were avoided? (Probe: theoretical underpinning; sources of information).
- [REDACTED]

*And now I would like to focus more on the young people involved in the initiatives.*

### **Part 3: Initiatives in Practice**

- g) What type of schools/young people were involved within the project? (Probe: religious ethos; location of school; gender; socio-economic/class; age of young people; diversity; inclusion)
- h) How were these schools/ young people selected? (Probe: geographical regions; interfaces; historical)
- i) Did the peacebuilding education project fitted in to existing curricular? (Probe: curricular; extra-curricular; subject; content area)
- j) Was the project in any way adapted for use in different schools? Can you explain how this adaptation took place?
- k) In light of the project, can you identify any connections between aspects of the national curricula in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland?
- l) Likewise, can you describe any aspects of the curricula that did not match up so easily? If such disconnects occurred, how were they overcome?
- m) Do you feel that there are there any aspects of the curriculum or education system that such peace projects are working in opposition to?



*I now have some questions on the content of the education programmes.*

### **Part 4: Learning Objectives and Methodology**

- a) What would you identify as the key learning objectives for the project? (Probe: attitudes, knowledge, skills - negotiation; problem solving; critical thinking; communication)
- b) Can you describe the teaching methodologies that were employed in achieving the learning objectives of the project?
- c) Can you describe the content that the project dealt with project? (Probe: collective narratives; conflict; peace; causes; consequences; global; local; identity; diversity; learn about; learn from)
- d) Which resources did the project employ? (Probe: textbooks; workbooks; online material)

- e) How would you imagine that young people would apply the learning from the peacebuilding border projects? (Probe: participation; activism)
- f) How successful do you consider peacebuilding educational initiatives in general to be?
- g) How would you describe the biggest challenges in undertaking peacebuilding educational initiatives?
- h) Under what conditions do you think that successful programmes can be achieved?

Finally, I have some questions on one particular area, responsibility.

### **Part 5: Responsibility**

- a) In your previous experiences within education related to issues of peace, conflict and social justice, has learning about “responsibility” ever formed part of a particular approach?
- b) What do you understand by “responsibility” when it occurs in the context of education initiatives which are aim to address issues of peace/ conflict/ social justice?
- c) What would you consider to be the challenges of learning about responsibility?
- d) What skills would you consider most important for young people to develop in order to make a contribution towards addressing issues such as peace, conflict and social justice?

### **Interview Conclusion & Debriefing**

- I have come to the end of the questions.
- Is there anything that I have not asked that you feel you have not had the opportunity to say or that is important for me to know?
- If you have any questions about the project, please refer to the information sheet which has all my contact details. Feel free to contact me at any point.

**Additional Notes:**



## Appendix H: Interview Schedule - School Teachers

**Date:**.....

**Location of Interview:**.....

**Interviewer:** .....

**Interview Code:** .....

**Notes:**

### **Consent Confirmation:**

*Remind the participant of the voluntary nature of participation in the research project, and that at any point they may ask to move to another question, or ask for the audio-recorder to be turned off. On the record, confirm written permission via the Informed Consent Form and in the case of participants under the age of 18 years, the Informed Parental Consent Form before confirming pre-interview verbal consent.*

### **Introduction:**

*To reiterate the information you have already received in the Plain Language Statement, I am interested in finding out more about your experiences in relation to peacebuilding education programmes addressing issues of peace and conflict. I will start by asking some questions about your background and about your previous experiences as well as your current employment to build up a picture of you. This will be followed by some questions about your experiences and perceptions of peacebuilding educational initiatives.*

---

### **Interview Questions:**

*Firstly I would like to ask you a few questions about your current situation.*

#### **Part 1: Background Information**

- a) Can I ask you to tell me about the school you are working in? (Probe: religious ethos; location of school; gender; socio-economic/class; age of young people; diversity; inclusion)
- b) Can you tell me what your primary role and responsibilities are?
- c) Can I start by asking you to talk about your current involvement with peacebuilding education initiatives?
- d) More generally, how long have you been working within the area peace/conflict, development and social justice? How long have you been involved within the education sector?
- e) How do you view the relationship between education and wider societal issues?
- f) Do you have any thoughts on the role of education in relation to issues of peace and conflict?

---

*Now I would like to find out more about the peace-related/cross border education initiatives you have been involved in.*

#### **Part 2: Conception of Initiatives**

- n) Could you give a brief description of the educational initiative?
  - o) Can you explain your role within the particular peacebuilding project?
  - p) Can you explain how your involvement in project came about? (Probe: individuals and groups; location; relationship to pre-existing projects; organising/funding body)
  - q) How would you describe the general aims of the initiative? (Probe: definitions)
  - r) Were there any particular approaches which informed how the initiative was applied initially? Were there approaches that were avoided? (Probe: theoretical underpinning; sources of information).
-



*And now I would like to focus more on the young people involved in the initiatives.*

**Part 3: Initiatives in Practice**

- s) Can you describe the young people from your school involved in the project? (Probe: peace process; community-level)
- t) How were these young people selected? (Probe: geographical regions; interfaces; historical)
- u) Did the education project fitted in to existing curricular? (Probe: curricular; extra-curricular; subject; content area)
- v) Was the project in any way adapted for use in your school? Can you explain how this adaptation took place?
- w) In light of the project, can you identify any connections between aspects of the national curricula in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland?
- x) Likewise, can you describe any aspects of the curricula that did not match up so easily? If such disconnects occurred, how were they overcome?
- y) Do you feel that there are there any aspects of the curriculum or education system that such peace projects are working in opposition to?



*I now have some questions on the content of the education programmes.*

**Part 4: Learning Objectives and Methodology**

- i) What would you identify as the key learning objectives for the project? (Probe: attitudes, knowledge, skills - negotiation; problem solving; critical thinking; communication)
- j) Can you describe the teaching methodologies that were employed in achieving the learning objectives of the project?
- k) Can you describe the content that the project dealt with project? (Probe: collective narratives; conflict; peace; causes; consequences; global; local; identity; diversity; learn about; learn from)
- l) Which resources did the project employ? (Probe: textbooks; workbooks; online material)
- m) How would you imagine that young people would apply the learning from the peacebuilding border projects? (Probe: participation; activism)

- n) How successful do you consider such educational initiatives in general to be?
- o) How would you describe the biggest challenges in undertaking peacebuilding educational initiatives?
- p) Under what conditions do you think that successful programmes can be achieved?

*Finally, I have some questions on one particular area, responsibility.*

### **Part 5: Responsibility**

- e) In your previous experiences within education related to issues of peace, conflict and social justice, has learning about “responsibility” ever formed part of a particular approach?
- f) What do you understand by “responsibility” when it occurs in the context of education initiatives which are aim to address issues of peace/ conflict/ social justice?
- g) What would you consider to be the challenges of learning about responsibility?
- h) What skills would you consider most important for young people to develop in order to make a contribution towards addressing issues such as peace, conflict and social justice?

### **Interview Conclusion & Debriefing**

- I have come to the end of the questions.
- Is there anything that I have not asked that you feel you have not had the opportunity to say or that is important for me to know?
- If you have any questions about the project, please refer to the information sheet which has all my contact details. Feel free to contact me at any point.

### **Additional Notes:**



## Appendix I: Interview Schedule - Students

**Date:**.....

**Location of Interview:**.....

**Interviewer:** .....

**Interview Code:** .....

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**Notes:**

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### **Consent Confirmation:**

*Remind the participants of the voluntary nature of participation in the research project, and that at any point they may ask to move to another question, or ask for the audio-recorder to be turned off. On the record, confirm written permission via the Informed Consent Form and in the case of participants under the age of 18 years, the Informed Parental Consent Form before confirming pre-interview verbal consent.*

### **Introduction:**

*Thank you to everyone for agreeing to be involved in this research project. Like I have already explained when I spoke to you before, and as you have read on the information sheets, I'm interested in finding out about all your experiences in learning about some of the work you are doing at the moment to do with conflict and with your involvement in the peacebuilding programme. I will start by asking some questions about your backgrounds, and then some questions about your experiences in school.*

### **Interview Questions:**

#### **Part 1: Background Information**

- a) Can I start by going around the room and asking each of you to give a brief introduction? Can you tell me what your name is and the date you were born on?
- b) And can I ask do you all live in the local area?
- c) And what is it like living in this area?

#### **Part 2: The School**

- a) How would you describe the school?
- b) Can you tell me about what subjects you do? (Probe CSPE, History, English, SPHE).
- c) What are your favourite subjects?
- d) What makes these subjects most enjoyable?

#### **Part 2: Peacebuilding Programme**

- a) Can you describe the peacebuilding programme that you are involved with at the moment?
- b) How long have you been involved?
- c) What parts of the programme have you enjoyed?
- d) Which subjects are linked to the peacebuilding initiatives?
- e) Are there any parts you have found difficult/challenging?
- f) What have you learned from your involvement so far? Have you gained any particular skills or knowledge from your involvement?
- g) Do you think that the programme has changed your mind about anything?
- h) Have you had any contact with young people in other schools through the programme? Can you describe your relationships with the other young people?
- i) Do you think peacebuilding programmes are useful? Can you explain why?

#### **Part 3: Learning about Conflict**

- a) As well as the learning that has gone on in the peacebuilding programme, can you think of any other times in school where you have learned about things to do with issues like conflict?
- b) Can I ask you which lessons this learning to place in?
- c) Can you describe what went on in these lessons? What did you enjoy, and what did you find difficult?
- d) Can you tell me about what you learned?
- e) Can you think about anything outside of lessons that is about issues such as conflict? (For example, assemblies (whole-school/year group), newsletters, posters, displays, school website, and homework).

- f) Was there anything that you thought you would like to know more about?
- g) Do you think it is important for young people to learn about these things? Can you explain why? (Probe any thoughts on future possible actions related to peace).
- h) Have you gained any particular skills or knowledge from learning about this topic?
- i) Do you think young people have the opportunity to make use of the skills and knowledge you have learned?
- j) What opportunities would you like to see developed?

### **Interview Conclusion & Debriefing**

- I have come to the end of the questions.
- Is there anything that I have not asked that you feel you have not had the opportunity to say or that is important for me to know?
- If you have any questions about the project, please refer to the information sheet which has all my contact details. Feel free to contact me at any point.



## Appendix J: Observation Schedule

		<b>Central Research Questions</b>	
<b>Document Code</b>		<b>Sketch of Setting</b>	
<b>Time of Observation</b>			
<b>Date of Observation</b>			
<b>Place of Observation</b>			
<b>Name of Observer</b>			
<b>Participants details (n, m/f, age, ethn.)</b>			
<b>Short Abstract of Observation</b>			
<b>Time</b>	<b>Descriptive (What is happening?)</b>	<b>is</b>	<b>Interpretive (What does it mean?)</b>
<b>Analytical Memos</b>			

## Appendix K: Conference Presentations

- Mallon, B. (2015). *Peacebuilding through Global Citizenship Education in an Irish Context: Connections Between Theory and Practice*. 'Education and Violent Conflict - Lessons Learnt from Ireland and Africa – Development Studies Association Ireland. Kimmage DSC, 2<sup>nd</sup> October, 2015.
- Mallon, B. (2015). *Conflict-related Education on the Island of Ireland: From Theory to Practice*. Paper presented at the Fifth Annual Postgraduate Conference in Humanities and Education, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin, 8<sup>th</sup> May, 2015.
- Mallon, B. (2014). *Conceptualisations of young people in conflict and in peace*. History of Irish Childhood Conference. St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2014.
- Mallon, B. (2014). *Gauging the responsibility for conflict and peace: Cross-border education projects on the island of Ireland*. Paper presented at the Fourth Annual Postgraduate Conference in Humanities and Education, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin, 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2014.
- Mallon, B. (2013). *Young people and the responsibility for post-conflict justice*. Post-conflict Postgraduate Research Day, Trinity College Dublin, 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2013.
- Mallon, B. (2013). *From recollections of the past, to responsibility for the future?: Peace education on the island of Ireland*. International Postgraduate Conference in Irish Studies at Charles University, Prague, Czech Republic 20<sup>th</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> September 2013.

- Mallon, B. (2013). *Peacebuilding education on the island of Ireland: A conceptual framework*. Irish Association of Social Science and Environmental Education, St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin, 20<sup>th</sup> – 21<sup>st</sup> June, 2013.
- Mallon, B. (2013). *Peace education and social responsibility on the island Ireland*. Paper presented at the 2<sup>nd</sup> Limerick Postgraduate Conference, University of Limerick, 6<sup>th</sup> June, 2013.
- Mallon, B. (2013). *Mapping the responsibility for peace: a cross-border curricular inquiry on the island of Ireland*. Paper presented at the Fifth All-Ireland Doctoral Conference, University College Dublin, Dublin, 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2013.
- Mallon, B. (2013). *Gauging the responsibility for conflict and peace: Cross-border education projects on the island of Ireland*. Paper presented at the Third Annual Postgraduate Conference in Humanities and Education, Mater Dei Institute of Education, Dublin, 12<sup>th</sup> April, 2013.

### **Online Dissemination**

PhD studies and the Irish Research Council Scholarship

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LG0-SqkjzKc>

Tell it Straight – Research for diverse audiences

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63e8v\\_uFmKI](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=63e8v_uFmKI)



### Appendix L: Programme pseudonyms & key informants

Programme Pseudonym	Key Informants
Peacebuilding Schools	Eugene
Peace and Reconciliation	Brendan
Progress Peace	Frank & Timothy
Building Peace	Iris
Founding Peace	Brigid
Peace Blocks	Patricia & Eileen
Right to Peace	Colin
Growing Together	Thomas
Transform	Fiona
Peace Initiative	Fergal
Citizens for Peace	Nessa
Pathways to Peace	Barbara
Point Forward	Deborah

Table 4: Programme pseudonyms & Key Informants

### Appendix M: Willow Class Participants' Pseudonyms and Focus Group

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Michelle (16 years of age)	Felicity (16)	Fran (15)
Fiona (16)	Molly (16)	Sinead (15)
Maria (16)	Deirdre (15)	Margaret (15)
Ciara (16)	Bernadette (16)	Belinda (16)

Table 5: Parkview TY - Willow class study participants

## Appendix N: Confirmation of ethical approval



### The project entitled

'From understanding, towards responsibility?: Cross-border education for reconciliation on the island of Ireland'

### Led by supervisor(s)/investigator(s)

Dr Audrey Bryan (Primary Supervisor)  
Benjamin Mallon (PhD researcher)

**Has been reviewed by the St Patrick's College Research Ethics Committee, a sub-committee of the Research Committee, in accordance with the College's protocols and procedures.**

**The Research Ethics Committee is satisfied that the application complies with its ethical standards.**

If in the opinion of the lead investigator(s)/supervisor(s), the application undergoes significant alteration during the course of the study, or if additional instruments are added, the applicant will be obliged to re-submit the application for further review.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ciarán Mac Murchaidh'.

Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh  
Chair Research Ethics Committee  
St Patrick's College, Drumcondra

Date:

21 November 2012