**SLIGO SEMINAR 20th APRIL 2018**

**Slide 1 Cover Slide**

In 1977 a car bomb exploded outside my school. The blast smashed windows and sent silver shards of glass spinning through our classroom. We cursed the fenians as we were led through the wreckage to safety by our teacher… He was the only openly Catholic teacher employed in the school – what was he thinking? how was he feeling?

**CLICK Slide 2 Wall**

Last week with great pomp the great and good celebrated the 20th birthday of the Belfast peace agreement - yet the community division that fed the Troubles endure.

It has been calculated that there were more than 100 so-called “Peace Walls” in Belfast – but these walls aren‘t the only barrier that serve to demarcate the territories of the two dominant communities.

**CLICK Slide 3 Mural 1**

There are many more walls in the heads and the daily lives of the people of NI.

**CLICK Slide 4 Mural 2**

In spite of efforts to encourage Integrated housing 90% of the population of NI still live in ‘single identity’ communities – this figure rises to 93% in urban areas

**CLICK Slide 5 St Pat’s**

Protestants and Catholics do not celebrate the same Holidays

**CLICK Slide 6 12th**

They do not celebrate in the same way.

**CLICK Slide 7 Hurling**

By and large Protestants and Catholics play and watch different sports.

**CLICK Slide 8 Rugby**

The culture and rules of which are generally little understood by those on the ‘other side’.

**CLICK Slide 9 Loo Signs**

Language too has been referred to as a ‘Political Weapon’ – whilst use of the Irish language has been embraced and championed by the republican movement – some Unionists have sought to promote and invigorate the colloquial Ulster-scots dialect.

The current political impasse is based, at least in part, on a disagreement between the two blocs with regard to the introduction of an Irish Language Act.

Culturally and socially the population of NI has been described as being ethnically divided.

**CLICK Slide 10 School Badges**

This separation arguably finds its most significant and enduring expression in schools. The Department of Education annual census recorded that in NI in 2016 93% of pupils attended schools that were significantly separated according to Religion/Community.

**CLICK Slide 11 Johnston and Johnston**

Just as there is separation of pupils so too there is evidence produced from the Centre for the Study of Conflict in the 70s and the Equality Commission in 2003 showed that the divided schools were staffed, on the whole, by a community consistent workforce of teachers.

In a 2015 report, the UNESCO Centre identified that this state of play is supported and sustained through specific areas of policy.

**CLICK Slide 12 Separation of Teachers**

All primary school teachers in NI are required to teach Religious Education (RE);

* + In order to gain employment in Catholic primary schools, prospective teachers need to have attained a Catholic church approved RE teaching certificate (or commit to obtaining this within 3 years of appointment).

Teachers are trained in four separate institutions – two of these are mixed, a third is predominantly Protestant whilst a forth is almost exclusively Catholic.

* + The Catholic teaching certificate is provided as a matter or course for those student teachers who attend St Mary’s and Ulster but only as an additional correspondence course in Stranmillis

In 1976, when legislation was introduced to NI to restrict the practice of religious discrimination in the workplace, schools were specifically excepted from the requirement to promote fair employment in their appointment of teachers.

Research into the profile of the NI teaching workforce was however no longer current. No research could be identified that had taken place into the motivations and experiences of those teachers that had crossed between the two community-religion-ethnically defined sectors of education in NI.

Thus, the research question and related aims were established.

**Click Slide 13 Research Question and Aims**

Can the stories of teachers who have stepped off a community consistent career path create a counter-narrative to challenge the hegemony of the ethnic separation of schools in Northern Ireland?

In line with this question the research four related research aims were drawn up:

1. To discover the composition of the teaching workforce by community identity in the various sectors of mainstream education in NI.
2. To determine the patterns of movement of teachers within and across the community divide.
3. To identify the factors that may serve to moderate teachers’ movement between and across these sectors.
4. To explore the identity and agency of those teachers who have crossed between these sectors

It is widely recognised that Education is a crucial mechanism for the restoration of relationships in post-conflict societies lessons learned from research in Northern Ireland may therefore have potential to be generalisable to situations elsewhere.

**CLICK Slide 14 Research Model**

A mixed methods approach has been employed. Quantitative – an on-line survey to determine distribution and movement of teachers between the sectors – and qualitative – a narrative inquiry with those who had ‘crossed the divide’ to identify the factors that limit movement between and across these sectors and explore the identity and agency of those teachers who have crossed between them.

This paper focuses principally on the qualitative component – however a brief overview of the findings of the quantitative element is required to set the narrative inquiry in context.

The survey was completed by over 1,000 mainstream primary and post primary teachers in NI – that figure represents more than 5% of the current Mainstream teaching population.

This completion rate means that the results are statistically 95% reliable, within a tolerance range of 3%.

**CLICK Slide 15 Community Consistent (P)**

93% of pupils in State schools are non-Catholic.

77% of those who are teaching in state schools had themselves attended a state primary.

22% of those currently teaching in de facto Protestant schools in NI have taken a totally culturally encapsulated professional path – having come through all stages of education within their own community and having only ever taught in schools on their own side.

**CLICK Slide 16 Community Consistent (C)**

DE census figures show that CCMS schools have a pupil profile that is 96% Catholic

86% of those who are teaching in the Catholic sector were educated in that sector.

82% of those Catholic teachers employed in a Catholic school had attended both Catholic primary and post primary schools.

And one third of those currently teaching in de facto Catholic schools in NI have taken a totally culturally encapsulated professional path – having come through all stages of education within their own community and having only ever taught in schools on their own side.

**CLICK Slide 17 Cycles of Self-replication**

Around 1 in 5 teachers in the Protestant sector had followed the culturally encapsulated cycle of self-replication as had around one third of those in de facto Catholic schools.

**CLICK Slide 18 Cross-Over Teachers**

Fewer than 2% of the teachers in Catholic primary schools had not attended a Catholic primary; compared with a 7% Catholic teaching workforce in the Controlled primaries and preps.

**CLICK Slide 19 Qualitative Research**

The survey included a question asking teachers to identify if they had crossed over and to provide contact details if they would be willing to take part in an interview. A matrix was devised to identify a Purposive Sample with a balance between the various sectors and school types. Narrative interviews in line with theory on agency. Coded and analysed using the principles of thematic analysis – the data managed using Nvivo 11.

**CLICK Slide 20 Purposive Sample**

30 of the 90 cross-over teachers who had volunteered to participate were identified to be interviewed – these were selected randomly from within each category; although I did only have 3 volunteers who had been educated at a *de facto* Protestant primary school but were teaching in Primary in the Catholic maintained sector.

**CLICK Slide 21 Agency as Achievement**

A narrative interview schedule was developed in-line with principles outlined in the Biesta et al (2015) model of agency-as-achievement and structured around the teacher’s past (ITERATIONAL), their present work situation (PRACTICAL-EVALUATIVE) and their future plans (PROJECTIVE).

These questions were further developed and tested – and my interviewing techniques honed – by conducting a small number of interviews with retired cross-over teachers.

**CLICK Slide 22 Reflective**

The enduring division of professionals was seen to be maintained by three related mechanisms:

* Policy – as stated earlier but also the manner in which this is viewed and understood by teachers
* Practice – the largely informal apparatus and operation that support the preservation of the status quo
* Perceptions – the way in which teachers themselves understand, internalise and operationalise the perceived limitations on cross-sectoral movement

**CLICK Slide 23 Thematic Analysis**

Alongside Agency-as Achievement two further uber themes were put in place – Reflection – on the factors that maintain separation and the application of agency – to what extent and how are cross-over teachers able to challenge the status quo of educational separateness.

**CLICK Slide 24 Policy CRE**

Teachers were broadly aware of the existence of the policy and the manner in which it restricted employment opportunities in Catholic primary schools – Leah a protestant teacher who has had a succession of short term posts in Catholic schools has been unable to attain a permanent post in any – she had attended the Protestant training college and hadn’t obtained the Catholic certificate.

**CLICK Slide 25 Policy FETO**

Interestingly – the FETO exception was introduced at the behest of Protestant teachers – they were concerned that the Catholic RE requirement excluded P teachers from posts in Catholic schools but Catholics could freely apply to Protestant schools. It is now wrongly seen as protecting Catholic exclusivity. Not aware that the FETO doesn’t apply!

**CLICK Slide 26 Policy ITE**

Division of training is deeply ingrained – colleges are respected institutions which have considerable community backing.

**CLICK Slide 27 Practice**

Many teachers want to return to their former school – jobs are protected within communities – this is seen as being particularly the case in Catholic sector schools.

**CLICK Slide 28 Perceptions**

Self-justification – misunderstandings - confusion

**CLICK Slide 29 Achievement of Agency**

Three components to this uber theme – relating in crude terms to the past, the present and the future

**CLICK Slide 30 Formative**

Constructed on the themes of early family attitudes and experiences – including ‘mixed marriages’

Stories of childhood friendships and encounters with peers from the other side.

Experiences of transfer (and the transfer test) from primary to ‘big school’

And ITE

These themes were developed from data and applied to theory

**CLICK Slide 31 Family**

Perhaps unsurprisingly no one identified their family as being in any way bigoted or sectarian – even having said this many of those interviewed went on to illustrate pervasive attitudes that maintained ethnic separation – this was even more evident when it came to mixed marriage – one interviewee told of a decades long family rift so deep that she was not aware of the existence of an auntie who had married a Catholic until she herself was an adult.

**CLICK Slide 32 Peers**

For some the school bus separated them from their friends

For many others (particularly in rural communities) their first contact with the other side came on the school bus – and this became something of a contested territory.

**CLICK Slide 33 Peers**

For many (in urban environments) there was no contact with the other side at all whilst they were growing up – and no forum where such contact was even a possibility.

**CLICK Slide 34 ITE**

Arriving in teacher training college was for some the first opportunity to engage with the other side in any meaningful manner.

Even then the scope of conversations could be tightly reined-in by a cultural grammar which avoided the discussion of any matter relating to the conflict when in the company of someone who is – or might be – from the other side.

**CLICK Slide 35 Practical-Evaluative**

This component of Agency achievement involves looking at the teacher’s current environment – culture, ethos, relationships and the environment of the school in which they are teaching.

**CLICK Slide 36 Practical-Evaluative**

The data – the stories – that informed this related to teachers motivation to cross-over, the differences that they observed between the sectors and the way that this made them feel.

**CLICK Slide 37 Motivation**

Jobs are hard to come by for the beginning teacher in NI – we train significantly more teachers every year than the number of vacancies that become available – in addition many teachers – unable to get jobs in NI, or places in ITE – leave to train and/or work in GB – every year a high proportion of these teachers apply to posts hoping to return to NI.

Thus many teachers adopt a pragmatic approach (particularly in post primary – not restricted by CRE)

**CLICK Slide 38 Motivation**

Others are unwilling to apply to ‘just any job’ – they have a personal motivation – particularly for working in the Integrated sector.

**CLICK Slide 39 Motivation**

Career development is also a strong motivating factor for some of those who cross over – in this case further promotion in the school at which she had been teaching had been cut off by a recent appointment – otherwise she was unlikely ever to have considered crossing over

**CLICK Slide 40 Components of separation**

Data was coded to six codes – NAME THEM

These were all referred to by interviewees as in some way being indicative of the nature of the divide between the two communities in education

**CLICK Slide 41 Components of separation**

Up until now I have spoken of Catholic and Protestant schools – culturally however it became clear that a more accurate representation may be between Catholic and NI state schools – an asymmetric ethnic divide rather than a purely religious one.

Catholic schools are primarily religious in nature – from one denomination - within a general culture of Irish-ness. Schools on the other side reflect a British outlook – religion plays a much smaller role and that is further subdivided by the presence of clerics from different Protestant denominations on the BoG

Integrated schools attempt to engage with both religious perspectives (and others besides) both state/cultural identities.

**CLICK Slide 42 Experience of Separateness**

This is where I short change you… this research is an ongoing work in progress – I am currently at the writing up stage of my PhD so I am unable to share this with you yet – however what I can comment on is that many teachers expressed

* Wariness in expressing their differentness
* They were reluctant to having their ‘otherness’ exposed to their pupils – or indeed some staff members.
* They expressed discomfort with overt displays within the school setting of Catholicism or British national identity.

**CLICK Slide 43 Projective**

Three themes were identified in the raw data that related to this:

Internal promotion and further employment

External promotion and further employment – out of their current sector

Retirement

**CLICK Slide 44 Projective**

* Many of those who cross feel ‘at home’ and wish to remain – pragmatic choice becomes conviction
* Secular-Catholic cross-over more likely to stay
* Religious-Protestant finds cross-over more likely to stay
* No evidence of a glass-ceiling for C>P cross-over
* Suspicion that ‘top job’ may be difficult for P>C cross-over

**CLICK Slide 45 Expression of Agency**

* Ostrich – tries to hide but fully exposed
* Chameleon – adapts and disguises ‘other-ness’
* Hedgehog – defensive
* Peacock – shows off colours but vulnerable

Peacocks can become hedgehogs!

Crucial to the Achievement of agency for the cross-over teacher is their ability and readiness to expose their other identity and engage pupils and staff in a joint exploration

Their stories can make a difference – but they need to be nurtured and supported by the school.

To summarise:

Education is a crucial mechanism for the restoration of relationships in post-conflict societies yet in Northern Ireland the overwhelming majority of schools are still separated along the lines of the conflict. It is recognised across the globe that teachers play a vital role in preparing pupils for a shared, peaceful future – but whilst much research has been conducted into the impact of this educational division on pupils in NI, nothing was definitively known about the deployment patterns of teachers – or the experiences of those who had crossed the divide to teach on the ‘other side’… Until now!

Teachers here are likely to have been trained in separate teaching colleges whose culture and composition reflects the divide and – almost uniquely within Europe – schools are legally permitted to use a teacher’s religion to discriminate between job applicants.

My research gathered over 1,000 survey responses and has shown that around a quarter of teachers in Northern Ireland have had no professional experience outside their community of origin at *any* stage in their career. Many primary school staffrooms are almost exclusively mono-cultural, but employment patterns in the post primary sector are more mixed than might have been expected. Around 1 in 5 teachers in the more prestigious grammar schools have crossed-over.

Narratives interviews conducted with 30 cross-over teachers drawn from across all sectors showed that whilst many have tried to hide their community identity, others actively used their ‘other-ness’ as a tool to facilitate student engagement with sensitive issues relating to the conflict and the enduring community separation.

In conflict-affected regions teachers’ identities will inevitably be a product of division – but they can also be a valuable teaching instrument – allowing their pupils insight into what might otherwise be an unknown viewpoint. Those cross-over teachers who are prepared to engage with their ‘otherness’ can play an important role in leading the way out of the wreckage of the past.