Culture, Rhetoric, and Reconciliation: The Place of Language in the Northern Irish Conflict and Peace Process (1998-2002)

Jennifer Dougherty
George Mason University, jdoughe1@gmu.edu

Culture, Rhetoric, and Reconciliation: The Place of Language in the Northern Irish Conflict and Peace Process (1998-2002)

Abstract

Alterations in public discourse towards multiculturalism, reconciliation and liberal democracy at the national level in Northern Ireland are evident from 1998 - 2002, but to what end? To what extent did language play a positive role in the Northern Ireland peace process? Recognizing that language does not tell the whole story of the Northern Irish experience of the Troubles or current peace process, the author highlights how language, as a transmitter and constitutor of culture, has played a role as a signifier of potential conflict, peace and progress (or lack thereof). In particular, the author considers several texts including excerpts from speeches given by Noble Prize Winners—the former First Minister David Trimble and former SDLP leader, John Hume; an IRA apology, Bloody Sunday Inquiry and the Belfast Agreement; and several selections from the work of Northern Irish poets Seamus Heaney and Eavan Boland.

Author Bio(s)

Jennifer Dougherty, Ph.D. upon completing a Master's degree in English (from Washington College), received a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship to study in the field of peace and conflict studies. During her year abroad in Londonderry, Northern Ireland, Jennifer had the opportunity to communicate with diverse audiences about conflict and conflict resolution throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. Jennifer received a Post Graduate Diploma in Peace and Conflict Studies from the University of Ulster (Magee College) in June 1998. In 2000, Jennifer co-founded a small nonprofit called Peace Initiatives, Inc. which was dedicated to helping young people develop conflict resolution skills through role plays and simulations. During Peace Initiatives' four year tenure, Jennifer delivered over 60 workshops to over 1000 high school students. Jennifer is currently a PhD candidate at the Institute of Conflict Analysis and Resolution of George Mason University. Having completed all coursework and qualifying exams, Jennifer on track to defend her dissertation this winter and graduate in May 2006. She can be reached at jdoughe1@gmu.edu.

CULTURE, RHETORIC AND RECONCILIATION:
THE PLACE OF LANGUAGE IN THE NORTHERN IRISH CONFLICT
AND PEACE PROCESS
(1998 – 2002)

Jennifer M. Dougherty

Abstract

Alterations in public discourse towards multiculturalism, reconciliation and liberal democracy at the national level in Northern Ireland are evident from 1998 - 2002, but to what end? To what extent did language play a positive role in the Northern Ireland peace process? Recognizing that language does not tell the whole story of the Northern Irish experience of the Troubles or current peace process, the author highlights how language, as a transmitter and constitutor of culture, has played a role as a signifier of potential conflict, peace and progress (or lack thereof). In particular, the author considers several texts including excerpts from speeches given by Noble Prize Winners—the former First Minister David Trimble and former SDLP leader, John Hume; an IRA apology, Bloody Sunday Inquiry and the Belfast Agreement; and several selections from the work of Northern Irish poets Seamus Heaney and Eavan Boland.

Overview: The Changing Landscape of Language

In Northern Ireland, the use of language is governed as much by rules of grammar, as by etiquette, social identity, and norms informed by culture. By indicating one's mailing address, primary school, or family name, one is likely to have signified (intentionally or not) more than geography or genealogy; that is, political, religious, or social affiliations can be deduced from simple conversational elements. Poet laureate, Seamus Heaney (1990) aptly captures this unique form of cultural communication: "Manoeuverings to find out name and school,/Subtle discrimination by addresses/With hardly an exception to the rule/That Norman, Ken and Sidney signaled Prod/ And Seamus (call me Sean) was sure-fire Pape,/O land of password, handgrip, wink and nod,/ Of open minds as open as a trap" (Heaney, 1990, p. 92). The subtlety of sectarian communication can reinforce communal divides and under gird the reproduction of culture in Northern Ireland—but the landscape of language, on the surface, appears to be changing.

Dunn and Dawson (2000) reason that "…language in Northern Ireland is in a constant state of change and evolution: words move around…names of places become symbolic; phrases become part of history; meanings are refined again and again" (Dunn & Dawson, 2000, p. xviii). Beyond being a continually changing

selection process, involving the choice of certain names or labels over others, the use of language constitutes and regulates the specific cultural setting in which individuals feel, or are perceived, to be a part. Language indeed has held a provocative place in the history of Northern Ireland, at times specifying the cultural boundaries of a region where the Irish language is spoken, or solidifying group identity through the use of slang about the "other." As such, language has played and continues to play an integral part of the cultural narrative (re) construction, leaving an indelible mark upon the socio-political landscape of Northern Ireland, evidenced in the Agreement[1] and other "public texts" (that is, those which are written, spoken, or meant to be read aloud).

Beyond literal linguistic differences, the selection and arrangement of terms, symbols, and metaphors plays a part in how cultural messages are created and transmitted, as well as in how the conflict and peace process in Northern Ireland are understood. The stories that are told may become shared and comprise part of the cultural narrative, which informs the path that peace may take. Not everyone has equal access to the media or public at-large, however, so some stories dominate. Additionally, in contexts of conflict, cultural narratives often compete. Alterations in public "discourse"[2] at the national, political level was demonstrated by the use of rhetoric associated with reconciliation, pluralism, and multiculturalism, as the peace process drew on and yet examination of public texts reveals that competing cultural narratives persisted.

This raises several questions: Is the macro-discourse actually changing or are the same messages being transmitted despite the choice of new words? Is an increased use of "conflict resolution" language and "rhetoric of reconciliation" necessary and sufficient to bring about a positive and peaceful cultural change? It is my contention that divisive cultural narratives, constituted by partisan, sectarian, or parochial rhetoric and subtle "othering," remain despite best intentions to equalize or neutralize the contentious cultural narratives which have occupied the Northern Irish cultural landscape. Heaney implies these subtle advances of "othering" in inter-cultural settings, "Smoke-signals are loud-mouthed with us" (Heaney, 1990, p. 92). That is, the inter-subjective meaning of certain symbols, metaphors, and words are deeply rooted within Northern Ireland and may not be as easily discerned by the outsider, transformed by parties to a conflict, nor easily extracted from their cultural roots by lithe politicians.

To delve deeper into the connections among culture, rhetoric, and reconciliation, it is first necessary to illustrate the conceptual framework that guides this article. Recognizing the vastness of literature related to culture and conflict resolution, I will offer the reader a brief literature review of pertinent works. Next, I will highlight the intersection of culture, language and conflict resolution/transformation before turning my attention to a discussion of cultural narrative. Having illustrated the conceptual framework for this article, I return to consider the Northern Ireland context and explore several "public texts." These texts include excerpts from speeches given by former First Minister David Trimble and former SDLP leader, John Hume; an IRA "apology;" the Agreement; and the

Bloody Sunday Inquiry, incorporating selections from the work of Northern Irish poets, Seamus Heaney and Eavan Boland where illustrative. I will close the article by considering the implications of this article for ethnopolitical conflict analysis and resolution.

Culture & Conflict: A Brief Literature Review

In the forward of Avruch's (1998) *Culture & Conflict Resolution*, then-president of the United States Institute of Peace, Richard Solomon commented that while there is widespread agreement among researchers and practitioners alike that "culture matters," the translation of this postulate presents intellectual difficulties. Namely, "Yes, culture matters, but what exactly do we mean by 'culture' in the context of conflict resolution, and how should cultural elements be dealt with?" (Avruch, 1998, p. ix). Some researchers have treated "culture" as a variable in line with sex, age, or another quantifiable demographic indicator. Others treat "culture" as an inescapable—and un-resolvable—source of conflict, concluding that being *different from* another is basically the same as being *in conflict with*[3] them (see Huntington's (1993) "Clash of Civilizations"[4] for a lucid example of this).

Predominantly, theorists have viewed "culture" as a relatively static complex of curious behaviors which are passed on and inherited evenly by members of an (ethnically, linguistically, racially) homogeneous group, and thus seek to create categories into which cultural groups can carefully fit. This introduces us to an important orientational distinction among researchers; namely, speculation about where culture comes from and where it goes. On the one hand, there are those who generalize culture as being more-or-less evenly diffused and passively or unconsciously inherited by members of a population from somewhere outside of themselves (Hall 1977, Huntington 1993, and Weaver 1998). On the other hand, there are those who view members of a group as knowledgeable, active, and deeply implicated in the co-creation, adaptation, transmission, and enactment of cultural beliefs, values, and practices (Avruch 1998, Cohen 1999, and Ting-Toomey 1999).
To illustrate this distinction, consider Hall's (1977) high and low context[5] typology. Specifying communication practices that he observed in a variety of settings, Hall and subsequent theorists have seen fit to carve up a diverse and complex social landscape into a dichotomous world. More recently, Weaver (1998) echoes Hall's approach by developing a continuum along which he places "cultures" so as to highlight their differences[6]. Admittedly, such generalities provide the curious with ease when drawing comparisons among groups. However, in others' estimation—myself included—preserving complexity and nuance are at least as important as comparative ease (Lederach 2005, Avruch 1998). Avruch (1998) differs from the theorists mentioned above, viewing culture as being not necessarily evenly diffused, and finding that individuals may be possessed of multiple cultures (religious, organizational, national, and so on) to varying degrees. Avruch additionally argues that culture should not be conceived of as "timeless" and that one can not gain an adequate understanding of culture simply by observing the enactment of "custom"

(Avruch, 1998, pp. 15-16). Significantly, Avruch links culture and individuals in a mutually adaptive relationship, showing how individuals' social and cognitive processes ensure the fluidity of culture.

Cohen (1999) shares Avruch's conception of culture, writing that it "is not something tangible, a 'thing'; it is not a commodity possessed uniformly by every member of a community, nor is it a set of quaint customs to be learned before a trip abroad" (Cohen, 1999, p. 12). Further, Cohen argues for a powerful, deterministic role of culture saying, "culture permits community, because without it communication, coordinated activity, social life itself, would be impossible" (Cohen, 1999, p. 12). For Cohen (1999), "language is pivotal to cultural identity, since it acts as the communal archive and conveyor belt by which shared meanings are stored and transmitted within human groups down the years from one generation to the next" (Cohen, 1999, p.13). Following this train of thought leads us to a better understanding of continuity and how cultures are preserved. To understand how cultural change occurs, we need other conceptual tools to answer the question: If cultures are not fixed, how and wherefore are they transformed?

Rather than viewing language as a deterministic cultural influence and currency of exchange within a social structure, structurationist views (Giddens 1984, Jabri 1996) remind us that individuals may be both constrained and enabled by their social structure. Since, according to this viewpoint, there is a reflexive relationship between the two, social change—initiated by actors—is a distinct possibility. Social constructionist views offer another useful understanding. Building on the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis[7], Ting-Toomey (1999) finds that language has a transformational ability at the cultural level because, "While the language of a culture perpetuates that culture's traditions, by changing our language habits we can incrementally transform long-standing cultural norms and attitudes" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, pp. 98-99). Further, she finds that intentionally changing "linguistic habits" leads to transformation in "our thinking patterns" as well as to how we relate to different identity groups (Ibid). Where misperceptions, attributional distortion, dehumanization, and group polarization are common features of social conflict, mindful transformations in cultural narrative can create space for peaceful social change. This paper offers one perspective of why when there was a political process that led to a peace agreement that this process did not bring about peace. Namely, despite parties' best efforts to do so, the language of reconciliation was not yet common currency, imbued with shared meaning, and embedded in a common cultural narrative.

Avruch (1991) emphasizes the "necessity to place conflict and conflict resolution processes in a larger sociocultural context and not isolate them from the encompassing worlds-of-meaning in which, in ongoing ways, they remain embedded" (Avruch, 1991, pp. 14-15). Intrigued by the nexus of language, culture, conflict, and conflict resolution, some authors (White 1991, Lederach 1991, and Black 1991) have attempted to examine how parties to a conflict construct and make sense of their social realities (including conflict behaviors, possibilities for

intervention and conflict resolution). One way to vet this nexus is through study of narrative.

Narrative: Linking the Personal and the Cultural

Like other pliable concepts, "narrative" has proven useful to a variety of disciplines. In literature, narrative approaches are designed with the intent of offering a credible source for the tale about to be told. The type of narrator selected can draw the audience closer to the author's mind (think of Virginia Woolf's *A Room of One's Own*) or distance the reader from the author (recall Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*). In the field of psychology, Schafer (1981) introduced the concept of narrative into psychoanalytic discourse. In peace and conflict studies, narrative has been used as a tool of analysts (See Cobb and Rifkin (1991) for example of narrative analysis) and of practitioners (See Winslade and Monk (2000) for example of narrative mediation).

Broadly defined, narrative is a tool for organizing and interpreting experience (Hodgson, 1999). Cultural narrative construction is a sense-making activity: that is, taking new phenomenon or events of the past then (re)framing according to cultural assumptions in order to render those experiences intelligible or understandable in local context which previously had been disordered or incoherent. Carr (1986) views individuals as highly active in cultural narrative formation, "We cast ourselves in an unfolding story and act it out, and because we choose the story and our role in it, we can switch stories at any time" (Stewart et al, 2001, p. 249). Black (1991) observes, "We bring order to that stream [of interaction and experiences] by selecting 'events' that can be linked together in culturally appropriate ways. We make sense of, and in, the social world in which we are so inescapably embedded by creating such narratives" (Black, 1991, p. 161). Synthesizing the aforementioned ideas, cultural narrative can be seen to provide the fulcrum for cultural change and continuity.

Cultural narrative may take the form of story telling or myth-making. Oral history is one way cultural narratives are intentionally passed on using events, metaphor, myth, tone, rhetoric, and other storytelling devices to capture the attention of the audience, to suspend the disbelief of listeners, and to garner fidelity to the author's particular, internally coherent view of the past[8]. But oral history is not the only way cultural narratives are created and transmitted. Indeed, cultural narrative need not be constructed in verbal or written forms alone. The use of symbolic action, rituals, and/or gestures also convey (however indirectly) powerful messages, potentially influencing the path of conflict processes and providing transformational moments in peace processes (Schirch 2005, Mitchell 2000, Kreisburg 2003). For example, in his study of the peace process in Northern Ireland, Pruitt (in press) points to a "benevolent circle" brought about by "gestures of conciliation" (Mitchell, 2000) that interrupted the "conflict spiral that so often underlies the escalation of conflict" (Pruitt, in press, p. 6, Pruitt and Kim 2004). In such a manner, both verbal and nonverbal messages may become inscribed in collective memory and thus constitutive of cultural narrative.

Why narrative matters in terms of conflict resolution is because it is uniquely situated to change the perceptions of parties to the conflict. Cheldelin and Lyons (2003) explain, "narrative strategies change the ways members of a group see themselves in their particular conflict, allowing group members to consider new possibilities for resolution. Thus, the social contexts that influence conflict—often macro-level issues such as culture, race, gender, and class—are important parts of the stories" (Cheldelin and Lyons, 2003, p.261). Tracing cultural narratives during episodes of violent or protracted conflict also reminds us of the role various narrators can and do (intentionally or otherwise) play in cultural change and continuity. While all individuals possess capacity to collude in this process, not all are able to do so to the same degree. That is, top level leadership (heads of government, media moguls, captains of industry) are often powerfully situated (due to greater access to allocative and authoritative resources) to generate, develop, control, and diffuse narratives more so than, for example, the disenfranchised, marginalized members of grassroots communities. With this in mind, the bulk of the texts I will discuss have been extracted from the published speeches and interviews of the politicians uniquely situated to have influenced the Northern Irish peace process in the years 1998 – 2002.

Rhetoric, Metaphor & Subtle "Othering"[9]

The practice of appropriating historical events, popular culture, biblical metaphors, and conflict resolution terminology out of particular context for use as rhetoric is a common practice. Rich with innuendo and ripe for personal or communal associations, it gives the speaker the opportunity to create a context in the presence of a collective body of listeners without having to claim personal responsibility for or authorship of events, ideas, and concepts that predate her or him. Picking and choosing among pregnant and emotive images from the past provide a public speaker with persuasive rhetorical tools. Elaborating on the function of rhetoric, Buckley (1995) writes, "Rhetoric also provides the occasion for social interaction. Statements about the nature of the world occur in interactions that define the identity of participants" (Buckley, 1995, p. 211). Such speech acts, gleaning the maximum utility of culturally or historically loaded terms, are part of the creative cultural — and political — process.

As Dunn and Dawson (2000) point out, "The experience of Northern Ireland indicates that endemic social separation, division, and antagonism ensures that political language takes on locally-characteristic meanings, with finely-wrought distinctions, and that these mutations derive from the stresses and struggles of conflict" (Dunn and Dawson, 2000, p. xxii). Thus, one may appropriate biblical metaphors, manipulate historical narratives, or conjure new terminology to speak of old concepts, believing one's audience incapable of catching the scent of propaganda. However, because cultural identity has so frequently been used as a tool for political gain in Northern Ireland, listeners may be even more sensitized to or critical of the use of what might be perceived as much less loaded (or at least

much smaller) terms—our, we, us, them, they. Heaney (1990) echoes this suspicion, "Expertly civil-tongued with civil neighbours/On the high wires of first wireless reports/Sucking the fake taste, the stony flavours/Of those sanctioned, old, elaborate retorts" (Heaney, 1990, p. 91).

As part of a particularistic, cultural collectivity, individuals are encouraged to identify with their own group members while identifying the "other." Riggins (1997) remarks, "For a person to develop a self-identity, he or she must generate *discourses of* both *difference and similarity* and must reject and embrace specific identities" (Riggins, 1997, p. 4). If we apply Riggins concept of social identity formation to the communities within Northern Ireland, we may see that the process of selection among identities available is one that is grafted with historical narratives and everyday conversations which define and refine self and "other." As Dawson and Dunn (2000) point out, "One of the many social aspects of nearly thirty years of violence in Northern Ireland has been the creation of a new, indigenous, political vocabulary involving an almost continual invention and reinvention of language" (Dunn and Dawson, 2000, p. xvii). With the Agreement in place, movement towards a more peaceful and cohesive liberal democratic society which values its multicultural heritage (in letter and spirit of the words recorded in the Agreement) may seem to be more likely. However, simply altering discourse at the national level and speaking the language of tolerance, multiculturalism and so forth (without addressing real injustices which remain) may be seen as equivalent to a cosmetic lift, and not necessarily the sea change that some had hoped the Agreement signaled. In the next section I will briefly familiarize the reader with the origins of the Northern Ireland peace process before turning to consider the Agreement.

Pre-Agreement Peace Process

Although some designate the acceptance of the Agreement by referendum in May 1998 as the starting point of the peace process in Northern Ireland, a quick survey of its history reveals that the groundwork had begun to be laid much earlier with the work of various peace groups and initiatives. As Martin Mansergh (2003) points out, more than high profile political actors and perhaps paramilitaries, "the overwhelming public desire for peace in both Northern Ireland and the Republic was perhaps the most critical factor of all. It had been consistently displayed over a long period and reflected a great deal of valuable and unsung work for peace by countless individuals and organizations" (Mansergh, 2003, p. 1). While the Anglo-Irish Agreement (AIA) failed to secure a power-sharing arrangement in 1985, the existence of AIA prompted further thought and discussion of what a mutually satisfactory arrangement might look like for the people of Northern Ireland and the political parties who claim to represent them. As Pruitt suggests, "While technically not a part of the peace process, the Anglo-Irish Agreement changed the political landscape in a way that ushered in the peace process" (Pruitt, in press, p. 4).

Additionally, international examples of seemingly intractable conflicts being solved via peaceful and political means (the Velvet Revolution in Prague, the

fall of the Berlin Wall in Germany, the transition to majority rule in South Africa) provided models of what might be possible in terms of a peace process for Northern Ireland. With the creation of the Downing Street Declaration in 1993 and with then-U.S. President Bill Clinton serving as guarantor for peace in Northern Ireland, the early stages of the peace process gathered momentum. While the August 1994 cease-fire declared by the IRA later faltered (culminating in the February 1996 Canary Wharf bombing, which was subsequently followed by an additional ceasefire in 1997), at the time, their declaration arguably occasioned the UDF/UDA cessation of violence.

Cumulatively, these events buoyed hopes for peace and enabled a subsequent political process to unfold in place of armed struggle. Against this historical backdrop, the multi-party talks ensued, culminating in the Agreement. Notably, this peace process ensued first unofficially through back channels (for example, Pruitt reminds, "in late 1990, British Intelligence communicated, through a chain of intermediaries, with Martin McGuiness, Adams' deputy, to explore Sinn Fein's interest in negotiating a settlement" (Pruitt, in press, p. 5). Then the peace process officially emerged with published documents (such as Sinn Fein's "Toward a Lasting Peace" which recognized for the first time the necessity of unionist consent if a united Ireland was to be realized), dialogue, and peace talks among the vested political parties.

The Agreement

A reading of the Agreement reveals that the fluidity of language can pose problems to and hold promise for the development of peace. That is, the malleability of language enabled the Agreement to come into existence. However, its ambiguousness may ultimately (passively) support continued communal division in the implementation phase. Reflecting on how skeptical readers of the Agreement would interpret its text, Ruane (1999) remarks, "Each party sold the Agreement to its supporters on the basis that their fundamental concerns had been, and would be, met" (Ruane, 1999, p. 164). Because of the fundamental contradictions embedded in the Agreement and the political discourse that has emanated from it, some readers are pessimistic about the prospects for lasting peace under the aegis of the Agreement. Ruane summarizes this position, "Those unionists who supported the Agreement did so to achieve the end of the IRA's campaign and to secure the union. The nationalists and republicans who supported it did so to achieve equality and closer links with the South while advancing the process of Irish reunification in the longer term. The difficulty with the Agreement is that it does not—cannot—deliver all of these simultaneously" (Ruane, 1999, p. 163). Dunn & Dawson (2000) also point out that such discrepancies are inescapable because, "...in Northern Ireland words can...allow for a degree of necessary confusion and ambiguity, since the view and aspirations of the two communities often appear to be so irretrievably opposed as to make discussion possible only when hard lines are fudged" (Dunn & Dawson, 2000, p. xvii).

Rife with contradictions as the Agreement may seem and as valid as the aforementioned criticisms may be, there are clauses that seek to validate the various

identity and cultural groups in Northern Ireland. For example, Section I (vi) of the Agreement states that the participants recognized the "birthright of all the people of Northern Ireland to identify themselves and be accepted as Irish or British, or both, as they may so choose, and accordingly confirm that their right to hold both British and Irish citizenship is accepted by both Governments and would not be affected by any future change in the status of Northern Ireland" (in Ruane and Todd, 1999, p. 172). Article 2 of Annex B states, "It is the entitlement and birthright of every person born in the island of Ireland, which includes its islands and seas, to be part of the Irish nation" (in Ruane and Todd, 1999, 174). From the foundation of human rights, self-determination (as far as identity selection goes), and equality, the Agreement has explicitly laid the foundation for a modern liberal democracy in this regard. Yet, although the Agreement may be seen as the advent of peace and safeguard of culture communities, sectarianism, violence, and mistrust remain, as indicated by greater polarization in politics and increased segregation in housing and education since 1998 when the Agreement came into being.

Part of the reason for this problematic juxtaposition may be explained by considering who the parties to the conflict have been and who was involved in the creation of the Agreement. That is, the conflict has been carried out at multiple levels (national, communal, interpersonal), using a variety of methods (violence, debate, collaboration, silence), by a variety of parties (politicians, paramilitaries, community members, and so on) but the Agreement was formulated, pitched, and sold by political elites. Ruane (1999) points out that the greatest promise of the Agreement rests in those men and women who hammered it out (Ruane, 1999, p. 163). Ironically, and perhaps unfortunately, those parties directly involved in the drafting of the Agreement are not currently involved in its implementation (or lack thereof): in May 2005, David Trimble lost the election in his home district and subsequently lost the mandate of his party and John Hume has since stepped out of party politics, while the far extremes—the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) lead by Ian Paisley and Sinn Fein lead by Gerry Adams—emerged victorious in the May 2005 elections. Although the language of equality may be attractive and sonorous to some constituents' ears, it may be less "intelligible" and offer less motivation than the wordsmiths, who rely on such discourse, intended because their constituents' cultural identities are so intertwined with their particularistic life experiences— creating competing cultural narratives (Bridges 1994). Stewart et al. trace the impact of competing cultural narratives, "If history is the creation of explanatory stories, and if communities form around their stories, then some of these narrative groups must inevitably conflict" (Stewart et al, 2001, p. 250). A further reason for a lack of intelligibility or motivation may be that individuals have grown tired of rhetoric and are skeptical that positive social change is possible after the passage of so much time. Indeed, the current post-Agreement phase has seen several years of devolved government (that is, governance is managed from Westminster) and local politics have become further polarized.

Cultural Artifacts of Language

Examining public texts can reveal a shift in the tide of political and public opinion if we consider that these texts are social constructions or representations of reality, which is interpreted, framed, and then shared by a narrator with an audience. As Riggins (1997) points out, discourse is more properly thought of as "artifacts of language through which the very reality they purport to reflect is constructed" and not reality itself (Riggins, 1997, p. 2). In Northern Ireland, as Buckley (1995) points out, "historical accounts…uphold the interests of one group against the other by describing past events in a well-selected frame. [This] framing of the information is…partially structured by a common set of metaphors of invasion and siege" (Buckley, 1995, p. 42). Expressing his frustration at and recognition of the use of the siege of Londonderry as rhetorical fodder for narrative advanced by politicians, Heaney writes, "Where tongues lie coiled, as under flames lie wicks,/Where half of us, as in a wooded horse,/Were cabin'd and confined like wily Greeks,/Beseiged within the siege, whispering morse" (Heaney, 1990, p. 92). The perception of being "under siege" is a common facet in cultural narratives in Northern Ireland and is evidenced in film, poetry, interviews, speeches, and so on.

The widely recognized concept, "siege mentality", when used in the Northern Irish context, may be used to describe the Protestants' fear of encroachment by the Catholic population and to commemorate the siege of Londonderry. However, it may also be used to in the nationalist account of the Plantation period. Cuchulaínn, an Irish, prehistoric, mythological figure has traditionally been seen in Nationalist cultural representations (murals, poetry, song, and so on), but he has more recently been used as a subject in loyalist murals and portrayed as a hero of Ulster (Dawson and Dunn, 2000, p. 66). Figures from mythology or events from history may be re-interpreted, dislocated from one group's narrative and subsumed into another. It may also be used as a form of sectarianism to mobilize groups; this process can be divisive and destructive. The Northern Irish poet, Eavan Boland seems to lament the subversion of myth and metaphor in "What We Lost," "The dumb-show of legend has become language,/is becoming silence and who will know that once/words were possibilities and disappointments" (Haberstroh, 1996, p. 83). However, reinterpretation or reconstruction need not be negative. For example, in April 2006, Northern Ireland's social development minister announced that one million pounds would be allocated to paint over violent sectarian murals with less loaded, more "decorous" murals. Something creative and constructive such as this mural initiative, or other "greening" activities, may inscribe the social and geographical landscape with mutually affirming images and ideas to replace the old glorified visions of sectarian figures and violent acts. However, as *The Economist* is quick to point out "whether anybody dares take up the offer [of painting over other murals] without the permission of the paramilitaries is another matter" (*The Economist* 2006)…reminding us that not everyone is equally powerful (or intimidating) when it comes to modifying elements of narrative.

Along with the appropriation of historical events and mythological figures, the use of the same biblical metaphors, or language of religiosity has been used recently by Unionists and Nationalists alike. In this Christian context, biblical texts provide the opportunity to see similarities with other great sufferers or heroes much in the same way that the *Qur'an* might do in an Islamic context. It can enhance one's sense of self and typify the sense of other according to the biblical or religious metaphor selected. For example, consider Seamus Mallon (SDLP) who referred to the Agreement as a "covenant" rather than a legally binding document. He may have intended to connote the cultural Christian commonality of the parties to the Agreement rather than a social contract among mere citizens (Arthur 2002). These occurrences do not necessarily seem to indicate a definitive shift in culture or an absolute synthesis of the cultural traditions in Northern Ireland (I do not foresee a green, white and orange Union Jack flag or colorless curbstones in the near future). Rather, in keeping with the concept that culture is a fluid, dynamic, and changing, such metaphor use seems to indicate a reinvention and refining of cultural narratives rather than a hybridization leading to *a* "Northern Irish" narrative (although some politicians have advocated a "civic nationalism"[10] to supplant ethnic nationalism). Several questions may here unfold: At what depth does this (re)construction of cultural narrative take place? Who is involved in this process? And what are perceived to be the costs for particular cultural traditions? As will be discussed later in this paper, for residents of Ardoyne and witnesses of Bloody Sunday, competing narratives exist at multiple levels and reveal that costs are high.

"Rhetoric of Reconciliation"[11]

"Zero sum" situations and "win-win" solutions have come to constitute popular conflict resolution rhetoric used by people in many settings to communicate the desirability of one outcome over another. For example, Lord Smith (2000) writes, "There are…long-standing themes in the Northern Ireland situation that have been allowed to shape and determine the apparently intransigent, 'zero-sum' posturings that masquerade as politics, and manage to inhibit or even prohibit progression to a more lasting, peaceful and democratic alternatives" (Lord Smith 2000). In his Nobel Peace Prize lecture, John Hume remarked that both sides need to respect each other so that "there will be no victory for either side" (intended to sound magnanimous and to discourage triumphalism, what Hume describes here actually sounds like a "lose-lose" situation) (Grant, 2001, p. 138). Arthur Aughey (1999) identified an additional phrase borrowed from conflict resolution theory that has become part of the discourse since the Agreement: "confidence building measures" (Aughey, 1999, p. 122). What effect might such rhetoric have?

The tendency towards using such language reinforces the attempt to fuse a meta-culture (namely, civic culture) and create a macro-discourse (in the Focualtian sense) in Northern Ireland which embraces modern liberal democratic concepts (equality and freedom), attempting a shift towards peace and harmony. Aughey (1999) describes this as a move towards political civility, which "involves a style of

politics which acknowledges difference and diversity but also acknowledges a common interest beyond difference and diversity" (Aughey, 1999, p. 123). Meta-culture creation is fostered by elocutionary acts in the realm of politics; as such, it is an inorganic construct, manufactured by political elites who see the *utility* of language associated with multiculturalism, pluralism, and democracy more so than the *intrinsic value* of those ideals to the people whom they represent.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is part and parcel of liberal democratic ideology; "transferred to the North of Ireland, the liberal approach came to be seen as a solution to the deep-rooted sectarian divisions of the society" (Rolston, 1998, p. 254). The underlying assumptions associated with multiculturalism and the model of modern liberal democratic discourse seems to be something like this: if we use the words "equality," "diversity," "mutual respect," "tolerance," and so on, then the interlocutors will hear and internalize these concepts such that our macro-discourse will change the micro-discourse for the better. This may be very presumptuous since some individuals may not be listening that closely to political elites for a variety of reasons. For example, elites may have not represented their interests in the past; or perhaps they used to represent their interests but are now "sleeping with the enemy." Individuals may be apathetic (perhaps understandably so) and/or are not only war-weary, but Agreement-weary because the peace process has been slow to unfold and to deliver on the promises people perceived it would herald. McGarry (2001) also points out, "appeals that are made in civic language are often seen by the targeted minority as ethnocentrism in politically correct garb, an impression that is not always correct, but often is" (McGarry, 2001, p. 127). An excerpt from Heaney's *Whatever You Say Say Nothing* echoes McGarry's recognition of individuals' distaste for thinly-veiled political or journalistic jargon: "But I incline as much to rosary beads/As to the jottings and analyses/Of politicians and newspapermen …Who proved upon their pulses 'escalate,'/'Backlash' and 'crack-down,' 'the provisional wing,'/ 'Polarization' and 'long standing hate'" (Heaney, 1990, p. 91).

The use of buzzwords and phrases as those mentioned above may be perceived to embody an earnest attempt to ensure harmony and/or show an appreciation for the cultural heritages of Northern Ireland. But glossing over the competing narratives in operation within communities may have the effect of denying their potent, particularistic values and experiences. Such a macro-discourse may have the unintended (or intended) effect of smoothing over past wrongdoing and feelings of humiliation in pursuit of peace. In doing so, the speaker, using the rhetoric of reconciliation, conflict resolution and multiculturalism, may seek to alleviate the pressure upon the community she or he represents to answer for past injustices. The July 16, 2002 IRA apology to the families of those victims of paramilitary violence offers a vivid example of either earnest contrition or political maneuvering (or, perhaps, a bit of both): "While it was not our intention to injure or

kill non-combatants, the reality is that on this and on a number of other occasions, that was the consequence of our actions…We offer our sincere apologies and condolences to their families…We also acknowledge the grief and pain of their relatives" (*BBC News*, July 16, 2002).

Reporting for *BBC News*, Kevin Connolly reports the apology may have been meant in earnest, the families of the victims are right to view it with skepticism. While the apology may indeed be sincere, forgiveness is not automatic. Also, the IRA was speaking to at least two different audiences (old enemies and Republican supporters) at a variety of levels (local, national and international) and thus likely sending multiple (both intended and unintended) messages. The response to the apology is likewise varied. Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern remarked, "Today's statement by the IRA is a significant contribution to the process of consolidating peace and reconciliation" (*BBC News*, July 17, 2002). Another man, whose son was killed by the IRA remarked: "In truth, it offers no comfort...That said, I am as active in the peace process as a private individual can be, and from that perspective, I appreciate what they are doing" (Ibid). Despite the public apology the IRA offered and its movement towards disbanding in recent years, Murray (2002) reminds his readers while the IRA may be moving in this direction, "it can't say that for its grass roots yet" (*BBC News*, July 17, 2002). Recall the definition of cultural narrative offered earlier in this paper. The IRA apology is one of the "new phenomenon" people attempt to make sense of, framing it in terms of their cultural beliefs. The case of the Ardoyne conflict highlights the active contestation among narratives.

Ardoyne

Although conflict in this area is not a new phenomenon, international visibility in the press was. From June 2001 through January 2002, some of the Protestant members of the Ardoyne community insisted that Catholic adults, accompanying their children to the Holy Cross school, were using their children as cover so they (the IRA) could "case" their homes and plan organized attacks. The Catholic members of the community insisted that they should not have to take their children in the back door of the school. Both groups' concerns were rights-based (one community asserts its right to protect itself, while the other community insists that their freedom of movement and their children's right to education in a safe environment trumps the other communities' concerns). And both objections were deeply effected by the community members' sense of fear and a pool of unmet needs.

The local narrative of the trigger incident for this lengthy protest involves a Catholic taxi driver running into the stepladder that a Protestant baker was standing on. The driver was on his way to the Holy Cross school. The baker was hanging a British flag. Sennott (2001) writes "This story…is to Protestants along this bitterly divided road a potent image for members of a community who feel that all they hold dear is being kicked out from under them" (Sennott, 2001, p. 1). Note the siege mentality here. The narrative at the national and international level at the time reflected quite a different story. That is, by and large the political leaders and

international press alike decreed that the events were evidential of "loyalist bigotry" and hatred and as such condemned the protests outright…without considering what the events meant to the individuals who experienced them or what the underlying grievances might be. They urged a peaceful and swift solution to the conflict as criticism from abroad mounted. For example, NIO Security Minister, Jane Kennedy said, "The eyes of the world are, once again, looking at the situation here. Nobody can understand what is going on here. How can subjecting four-year-old children to such verbal and physical abuse possibly advance the cause of a community that has a grievance?" (Tanney 2001).

However, as suggested by community leaders such as Anne Bill of the Concerned Residents of Upper Ardoyne, the residents did not intend to traumatize the Holy Cross children through their protest. Their actions, according to Bill were justified and gave voice to deep insecurity and frustration: "Community relations throughout all of Northern Ireland took a step backward because Protestants felt they weren't getting a fair deal under the Good Friday Agreement" (Heatley, 2004, p. 1). Unwilling or unable to address the underlying issues which gave rise to the conflict at the outset, leaders at the national level relied on mixture of blame-placing and black-and-white rhetoric. N.I. Secretary, John Reid gives an example: "It is time politicians in Northern Ireland pointed the finger at those who are guilty of throwing pipe bombs or intimidating children or parents"(Breen and Smyth 2001). Meanwhile, community leaders, a mediation network, and concerned residents embarked on the tedious, grassroots work of reconciling with their neighbors. [Interestingly, *Holy Cross*, a recent, fictional film based on the Ardoyne conflict, was designed to draw attention to "the problems and issues facing these communities reflect issues facing the wider community in Northern Ireland...*Holy Cross* sees the dispute through the eyes of two fictional families and provides an insight into the actions and emotions of those involved on both sides – an insight which goes beyond the blunt images of hatred and anger shown in the news reports of the time" (*BBC News Online*).] Because of its troubled and tenuous existence, the Ardoyne conflict in particular offers us an important reminder that while a peace agreement may fill the political vacuum at the national level, confidence, trust, and fellowship are largely lacking from the text of the everyday lives of those co-existing at such flashpoints.

Walking the Talk?

The Troubles have confronted (and continue to confront) the lower-economic class that occupies interface communities more so than the suburban, cosmopolitan upper-middle class (Bennett 1998). In a representative democracy, elected officials who remain incapable of understanding and communicating the importance of what may be perceived by their constituency as idiosyncratic, particularistic, and intensely personal narratives and experiences, run the risk of alienating their constituents (and quite possibly, of not being elected again). As Ruane (1999) points out that while "party leaders on both sides might discover a

common interest in pursuing the conciliatory line in the interests of overall stability...their supporters are unlikely to be so indulgent. And if the party they support does not deliver, they will switch to another one which will" (Ruane, 1999, p. 164). The May 2005 elections, which saw the victory of both anti-Agreement DUP and Sinn Fein, the political wing of the IRA, speaks to constituencies' disillusionment with the moderate parties (the UUP and the SDLP) who were largely responsible for hammering out the Agreement.

Free elections and political representation in a democratic government, however is not sufficient for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Take, for example, the lingering conflicts surrounding the Ardoyne Road in Belfast. Of course, political elites are not all bad (nor all good); they may indeed intend to bring people together and see their role as one of simplifying complex messages and complicated concepts so as to usher in a new era of peace. However, the unintended affects of such discourse may be that constituencies feel alienated from political representatives who say, on the one hand, that they value multiculturalism, tolerance, and diversity; but on the other hand, who effectively negate in practice—through a lack of structural adjustments—the possibility of recognizing multiple cultures, multiple experiences of the Troubles, and multiple interpretations of what "peace" entails. Two examples of missing structural adjustments, which would support a more inclusive, plural, and democratic society can be found in Northern Ireland Assembly voting procedures and the last census in Northern Ireland.

When operational, the Northern Ireland Assembly members were required to designate themselves as either unionist or nationalist, since the Agreement stipulates that all decisions must be made with the agreement of at least half of the unionist and the nationalist representatives. Essentially, keeping track of members as either nationalist or unionist is part of the safety measures to ensure that there is "cross-community" representation and a power-sharing arrangement. However, a perhaps unintended consequence is then that other parties' votes, such as such as the Alliance Party and the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, are not weighted with the same value. On this issue, Allan Leonard, the General Secretary of the Alliance party remarked, "Indeed, this whole matter came to a head...November [2001], with the vote to elect a new pair of First Ministers (Mark Durcan replacing Seamus Mallon as Deputy First Minister). The first vote failed because the votes of 'others' did not count towards the cross-community consensus required. (Isn't it a bit ironic that the votes of a cross-community party don't count in votes that require cross-community consensus!)" (Leonard 2001).

Such labeling occurred in the last census in Northern Ireland as well. Informants were asked to indicate their religious affiliation. For those who did not, an identity was selected for them based on the name, address, and other personal information; Heaney's description, "subtle discrimination by addresses" here seems apt. David Ford, leader of the Alliance Party, recently noted, "there are some positive signs. In the last census, over 14 per cent of people in Northern Ireland, some 250,000, did not wish to be put in a communal category," however, "The shame is that the Government then categorised them against their will as either

protestant or catholic" (Ford 2003). In the excerpts that follow, the reader will notice the use of such dichotomous identities in the rhetoric used by then-First Minister David Trimble and former SDLP leader, John Hume.

"To Raise Up a New Northern Ireland"[12]

In his speech to Northern Ireland Business and Community Leaders in 1998, then-First Minister David Trimble (1998) remarked, "There is no party that is wholly outside the political process. We can now get down to the historic and honorable task of this generation: to raise up a new Northern Ireland in which pluralist Unionism and constitutional nationalism can speak to each other with the civility that is the foundation of freedom" (Trimble, 1998, p. 71). Although surely intended to evoke feelings of pride and accomplishment among his fellow Unionists, Trimble reinforced the traditional binary opposition ("pluralist Unionism" and "constitutional nationalism") and further defines fault lines by suggesting through his choice of adjectives that pluralism is a Unionist value while constitutionalism is a Nationalist value. It is not clear from his speech how Unionism is actively pluralist, especially since its history shows it to by definition exclusionary. As Gillian McIntosh (1999) reasons, "The rhetoric of unionism often spoke of the 'people' and 'everyone,' but it was an exclusive rather than an inclusive generality" (McIntosh, 1999, p. 221). However, one can infer that his audience understood more deeply this attribution. In sum Trimble delivered the message—unwittingly or otherwise—that there were only two groups involved in the peace process ("There is no party that is wholly outside the political process."), from two different traditions (constitutionalism and pluralism), which will come together and "speak to each other in civility" (Trimble, 1998, p. 71). Beyond placing great faith in the ability of both sides to communicate clearly and civilly, Trimble also remarked, "I believe the Union offers all our people the best prospect of peace and fair play because the Union unites us all into a genuinely plural, liberal, democratic state capable of accommodating social, cultural, and religious diversity" (Trimble, 1998, p. 71). In seeking to stretch the bounds of Unionism to cover all other communities, Trimble's goal seems to be that of assimilation (a long time fear of Catholic/Nationalist communities in Northern Ireland), not pluralism as he purports.

Although he says that the "Union unites us all into a genuinely plural, liberal, democratic state..." this has not been the experience or perception of *all* occupants of Northern Ireland. For example, when a Nationalist interlocutor hears "the Union offers all our people the best prospect of peace..." this statement may be interpreted as exclusionary since it is not clear whether "all *our* people" refers to other Unionists or the balance of the Northern Irish populace. Although Trimble may have mindfully chosen the pronouns "we" and "us," the plural possessive "our," as well as rhetoric that resonates with peaceful and stable liberal democracies, his speech tends towards the universal and papers over the complexities that exist in Northern Ireland society. That is, he seems to be

promoting (perhaps prematurely) the notion of a united Northern Ireland civic culture rather than explicitly acknowledging the cultural identities of the multiple number of groups who have been and continue to be negatively affected by the recent Troubles and the ensuing peace process.

On a similar point, Riggins writes that an "elite speaker's claim to believe in inclusiveness may be undermined by contradictions between words and syntax; a close reading of most political speeches should reveal that the identity of "we" fluctuates depending on the particular rhetorical point the speaker or writer is trying to make" (Riggins, 1997, p. 8). In a later speech given to introduce former President Bill Clinton, Trimble remarked, "we must now get down to the historic and honorable task of this generation: to raise up a new Northern Ireland in which unionists and nationalists work in partnership. I believe we can provide a pluralist Parliament for a pluralist people – a Government by this people – for this people" (Trimble, 1998, p. 79). Here, Trimble echoes the founding documents of the United States and pays tribute to the Americans in his midst. Since he was not speaking to a solely local audience, his selection of a liberal democratic adjective ("pluralist") over a plural possessive ("our") was of necessity. The alliteration of his last sentence and conscious repetition of "people" and "pluralist" leaves the audience with a very specific sounding message without the hassle of having to account for who the people he is talking about are and what pluralism means in practice.

"All Sections Will Be Working Together"

In much the same universalistic and generalized vein, in his Nobel Prize speech, former SDLP leader John Hume remarked that "all sections will be working together" and that "both sections of our people" must learn to respect one another (Grant, 2001, p. 138). In response to Hume's statement, "all of us are asked to respect the views and rights of others as equal of our own," Grant (2001) cynically remarks, "People do not respect others' views as 'equal of our own.' Catholic nationalists don't respect the anti-Catholicism of the Orange Order; many Protestants resent the Catholic Church and deplore the Catholic ethos of much traditional nationalism" (Grant, 2001, p. 139). Grant clearly is critical of what he sees as Hume's overly optimistic attitude and hollow rhetoric. Although focusing on what unites all people in Northern Ireland (namely, human rights), such language can have the effect of minimizing or hiding the particularistic nature of communities in Northern Ireland. Grant later comments that he wishes Hume had, through his language "provide[d] some indication that he is conscious of the complexities and trials of finding the peace and reconciliation he so willingly advocates" (Grant, 2001, p. 140). In using universalistic terms of the modern liberal democratic tradition, both Hume and Trimble—intentionally or otherwise—effectively painted over the complexity that comes with multiple cultural traditions. However, one may say that there is a certain degree of ambiguity, optimism, and bravado necessary in language when political leaders are attempting to build a bridge between divided peoples; additionally, subtlety, complexity, and nuance might induce people to lose

interest. Certainly, the use of simplifying rhetoric is not relegated to politicians in Northern Ireland. Simple messages (the Bush Administration's "War on Terror" motto, "You're either with us or you're against us," for example) are popular political tools designed not so much to educate constituencies as to motivate and mobilize, or at least, garner passive compliance with legislation and policy that advance a political agenda. An outlet designed to unpack complex messages and tap into people's depth of feeling and experience can be found in poetry, music, and drama.

"High" Cultural Content

The use of rhetoric for political purposes at crafting the macro-level discourse is not the only manifestation of language which can provide insight into the culture of Northern Ireland, the Troubles and the peace process. Poetry, prose, and plays may constitute "high" culture, but they are also significant components of cultural narrative, able to give voice to the multiplicity of interpretations of the conflict and peace process, and to exemplify how people make sense of their lived experience. In *Moral Imagination*, Lederach (2005) reasons, "Art, be it Haiku poetry, jazz, or visual art, offers a critically important alternative lens through which one might more clearly visualize the scope and essence of a conflict" (Lederach, 2005, 175). Although Bennett (1998) criticizes writers, playwrights, and poets for rendering work which is "apolitical, disengaged, and skeptical…marked by aloofness, by being above it all, by self-conscious distance from the two proletarian tribes fighting out their bloody, pointless, atavistic war," the work of people like Seamus Heaney, Eavan Boland and others have attempted to make sense of the Troubles and its impact on their lives (Bennett, 1998, p. 199-200).

For example, Heaney (1990) interweaves his frustration at the "famous Northern reticence" and pervasive effects that the Northern Irish conflict has had on the culture of communication that has arisen: "Where to be saved you only must save face/And whatever you say, you say nothing" (Heaney, 1990, p. 92). In addition, writers incorporate their heritage into their work not simply as a useful device, but mindfully to retain their cultural character in the face of conflict. Questing for freedom of expression and deep connection to cultural and experiential roots, Boland writes in "The Muse Mother": "If I could only decline her—/lost noun /out of context,/stray figure of speech—/from this rainy street/again to her roots,/she might teach me/a new language" (Haberstroh, 1996, p. 70). Highlighting the deep connections between nuance and culture, and between language and politics expressed in Northern Irish poetry, Haberstroh (1996) writes, "attuned to the nuances of language, the links between language and culture, and the political implications of the disappearance of the native tongue, some modern poets try to keep Irish alive while writing in English" (Haberstroh, 1996, p. 161). Artists have also sought to capture and express frustration, outrage, and so on related to specific historical events, such as Bloody Sunday.

The place of Bloody Sunday in history has not been relegated to textbooks and legal proceedings. It has been the subject of song ("Sunday Bloody Sunday" by

U2, 1983), poetry ("Butcher's Dozen: A Lesson for the Octave of Widgery" by Thomas Kinsella), and film (*Bloody Sunday* by Paul Greengrass, 2002). Ironically, the Bloody Sunday Inquiry itself recently has become the subject of stage performance (*Bloody Sunday: Scenes from the Saville Inquiry* by Richard Norton-Taylor, 2005) and has been subjected to mixed reviews. While the final report from the Inquiry has not been created and disseminated, thoughts, feelings and experiences appear to have been inducted into the cultural narrative, via artistic expressions, that involves Bloody Sunday and subsequent inquiries into the events of that tragic day.

Sunday Bloody Sunday

On January 30, 1972, a civil rights march in L'Derry ended tragically with the deaths of fourteen civilians. In April of that same year, upon concluding a swift investigation, Lord Widgery exonerated the soldiers involved, claiming that they had been fired upon first and that the tragedy could have been avoided "if there had not been an illegal march, which had created 'a highly dangerous situation'" (*BBC News*, March 24, 2000). As a result of the Widgery Report, no soldiers were found guilty or held accountable for their actions. However, inconsistencies in the report, flawed evidence, and failure to call eyewitnesses for their testimony left many dissatisfied and outraged with the report.

Seeking justice and an accurate account of events, the families of those who had been killed or injured on Bloody Sunday campaigned for a new inquiry. Honoring their request, on January 29, 1998, Prime Minister Tony Blair announced to the House of Commons that a new inquiry would begin later that year. The central task of the Inquiry was to find suitable answers to the questions of why and how were civilians were killed or wounded on Bloody Sunday; it was not a trial designed to find favor of one side or another (*BBC News*, November 2004). Led by an international tribunal of judges, the first hearings of the Saville Inquiry (significantly renamed as the Bloody Sunday Inquiry) began in April 1998; public hearings ensued in March 2000 and concluded in November 2004.

Over its seven-year tenure, the tribunal received written statements from nearly 2,500 individuals and, of that total number, 921 witnesses were called to give oral testimony amassing millions of words and many thousands of pages of data. The witnesses included politicians, the Prime Minister at the time, civilians, police, soldiers and IRA members—the plethora of voices included in the proceedings is encouraging that a meaningful, coherent, and resonant account of the day's events will ultimately come to light. At the close of the Inquiry, it was predicted that the judges would issue a final report the following summer, however, a press release issued by the Inquiry announced: "The report is currently in preparation. It has been necessary for the Tribunal to look at a very large quantity of material so that it is not possible at this stage to give any firm estimate of when the report is likely to be finished" (Barr 2005). As of spring 2006, no final report has been issued. Even so, spending millions of pounds in one of the UK's most expensive legal proceedings speaks volumes about its commitment to learning and to sharing the truth about

what happened on January 20, 1972. Once produced, the Inquiry's findings may become a transformative dénouement for narratives of Bloody Sunday, showing that a formerly repressive, discriminatory, and democratic government can redress grievances and seek justice in both word and deed, albeit decades later.

Concluding Thoughts

Recognizing that language does not tell the whole story of the Northern Irish experience of the Troubles or current peace process, I have attempted in this paper to show how language, as a transmitter and constitutor of cultural narrative, has played and continues to play a role in shaping the path peace and reconciliation may take. Some related questions remain unanswered: Will the ambiguity of some of the language used in the Agreement be a help or hindrance to the peace process in the long run? How and with what effects might the Bloody Sunday Inquiry report have upon competing cultural narratives? A more elaborate examination of public texts, representative of different realms of society, may reveal answers to such questions.

Infusing current cultural narratives with the language and lessons from the realm of conflict resolution may indeed become part of the popular, political, and civic culture. As mentioned previously, Secretary Reid advocated the need to adopt a "new language" to move into the reconciliation phase. This recognition (whether conscious or unconscious) underscores the primary role language has played and continues to play in culture regeneration in the North, but misses the mark in terms of conflict transformation: listening to many voices and crafting insightful analysis of competing narratives are necessary to buttress the narrow bridges that do span the divided communities. Lederach (1997, 2005) advocates such elicitive and imaginative approaches. Since ethnic identity arises through interaction that maintain social boundaries and through consequent competition over resources, the way people speak to each other and the words they choose clearly plays a crucial role in the identity-formation and culture-creation processes (Arthur 2002). The Holy Cross conflict and continued conflicts within interface communities throughout the region suggest that much more listening and responding to needs are necessary, more so than a "new language" of reconciliation without structural adjustments to support the talk. In addition, since many terms currently used in rhetoric by politicians are densely packed with meaning, historical experiences, and emotional connections, creating social spaces for a new cultural narrative to emerge appears to be a necessary (though not sufficient) condition of peace, especially if structural adjustments are outpaced by promises. Recognizing the possibly problematic ties to the past and personal experience in the face of moving on with one's life, Boland writes in "Fever": "…as if silence could become rage,/as if what we lost is a contagion/that breaks out in what cannot be/shaken out from words or beaten out/from meaning and survives to weaken/what is given, what is certain" (Haberstroh, 1996, p. 78).

The emergence of a mid-level discourse, emanating from the work of, for example, Democratic Dialogue (Northern Ireland's first think tank); university

faculty from Queen's, University of Ulster, and elsewhere; grassroots peace organizations which use community dialogue projects, workshops, and conferences, all have created the social space for the exchange of ideas and sharing of stories. The material for exploring cultural narratives and learning where, when, and how they conflict is available and essential for the study of peace and conflict. Accessing, analyzing, and engaging with public texts, is crucial to understanding not only the cultural aspects of the Northern Irish conflict and peace process, it may also be helpful in the study of other ethnopolitical conflicts and peace processes.

References

Arthur, P. Discussant at John's Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Washington, D.C., March 12, 2002.

Aughey, A. "A New Beginning? The Prospects for a Politics of Civility in Northern Ireland." In J. Ruane and J. Todd, (eds.), *After the Good Friday Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland.* Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1999.

Avruch, K. *Culture & Conflict Resolution.* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998.

Avruch, K. "Introduction: Culture & Conflict Resolution." In K. Avruch, P. Black and J. Scimecca, (eds.), *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives.* Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991.

Barr, K. "Final Report" Press release of The Bloody Sunday Inquiry: London, August 12, 2005.

BBC News. "IRA Statement in Full." July 16, 2002, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ ireland/2132113.stm> (April 26, 2006).

BBC News. "Saville Inquiry Judges Retire." November 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/go/pr/fr/-/1/hi/northern_ireland/4034055.stm (April 25, 2006).

BBC News. "Chronology: the Widgery report." March 24, 2000, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/northern_ireland/2000/bloody_sunday inquiry/665100.stm> (April 25, 2006).

BBC News. "Q&A: Trimble elected." November 6, 2001, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/1638655.stm> (April 26, 2006).

BBC News Online. "Holy Cross" <http://www.bbc.co.uk/northernireland/drama/holycross/synopsis.shtml> (April 27, 2006).

Bennett, R. "Don't Mention the War: Culture in Northern Ireland." In D. Miller (ed.), *Rethinking Northern Ireland: Culture, Ideology and Colonialism.* New York: Longman, 1998.

Black, P. "Surprised by Common Sense: Local Understandings and the Management of Conflict on Tobi, Republic of Belau." In K. Avruch, P. Black and J. Scimecca, (eds.), *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives.* Westport ,CT: Greenwood Press, 1991.

Breen, S. and Smyth, P. "North's Parties Told to Work for Peace and Isolate Troublemakers." *The Irish Times*, September 7, 2001

Bridges, T. *The Culture of Citizenship: Inventing Post Modern Civic Culture*. New York: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Buckley, A. D. and Kenney, M. C. *Negotiating Identity: Rhetoric, Metaphor and Social Drama in Northern Ireland*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995.

Carr, D. *Time, Narrative, and History*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986.

Cheldelin, S. and Lyons, T. "Facilitation and Consultation." In S. Cheldelin, D. Druckman, and L. Fast, (eds.), *Conflict*. London: Continuum, 2003.

Cobb, S. and Rifkin, J. "Practice and Paradox: Deconstructing Neutrality in Mediation." *Law & Social Inquiry*, 1991, 16(1), 35-62.

Cohen, R. *Negotiating Across Cultures: International Communication in an Interdependent World*. (Revised edn.) Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999.

Connolly, K. "Peace Means Having to Say Sorry." http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland /2132608.stm>(April 26, 2006).

Dugan, M. "Nested Theory of Conflict." *Leadership Journal: Women in Leadership--Sharing the Vision*, July 1996, (1) 9-20.

Dunn, S. and Dawson, H. *An Alphabetical Listing of Word, Name and Place in Northern Ireland and the Living Language of Conflict*. Symposium Series, (57). Queenstown: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000.

Fetherson, A.B. "Peacekeeping, Conflict Resolution and Peacebuilding: A Reconsideration of Theoretical Frameworks" In T. Woodhouse and O. Ramsbotham (eds.), *Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution*. London: Frank Cass, 2000.

Fisher, W. R. *Human Communication as Narration: Toward a Philosophy of Reason, Value, and Action*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987.

Ford, D. "A Benign Apartheid or a Shared Future?" *Corrymeela Online*. <http://www.corrymeela.org/Articles/a_benign_apartheid_or_a_shared.html > (April 26, 2006).

Giddens, A. *The Constitution of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1984.

Grant, P. *Literature, Rhetoric and Violence in Northern Ireland, 1968-98*. Houndsmills: Palgrave, 2001.

Haberstroh, P. B. *Women Creating Women: Contemporary Irish Women Poets*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

Hall, E. *Beyond Culture*. Garden City, NY: Anchor Press, 1977.

Heaney, S. *Selected Poems, 1966-1987*. New York: The Noonday Press, 1990.

Heatley, C. *Interface: Flashpoints in Northern Ireland*. Belfast: Lagan Press, 2004.

Hodgson, I. "Cultural Narratives and the Construction of HIV." Presented at the 1st Conference of the National HIV Nurses Association, University of Sussex, June 28-29, 1999.

Hunting, S. *The Clash of Civilizations*. New York: Council on Foreign Relations, Inc.,1993.

Jabri V. *Discourses on Violence*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996.

Kamler, H. *Communication: Sharing Our Stories of Experience.* Seattle: Psychological Press, 1983.

Kinsella, T. "Butcher's Dozen: A Lesson for the Octave of Widgery." *Butcher's Dozen*. Peppercanister: Dublin, 1972.

Kriesburg, L. "De-escalating Gestures." <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/disarming_ behavior/, 2003> (April 24, 2006).

Lederach, J.P. *Building Peace,* Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace, 1997.

Lederach, J.P. *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Lederach, J. P. "Of Nets, Nails, and Problems: The Folk Language of Conflict Resolution in a Central American Setting." In K. Avruch, P. Black and J. Scimecca, (eds.), *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1991.

Leonard, A. "Alliance and the Peace Process," Speech delivered to the Institute for the International Education of Students: Dublin, April 8, 2002 at <http://www.allianceparty.org/speeches/30.html> (April 26, 2006).

Lord Smith. The United Kingdom Parliament. Text regarding Northern Ireland Bill for February 9, 2000. <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld199900/ldhansrd/vo000209/text/00209-04.htm> (April 27, 2006).

Malkki, L. *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Mansergh, M. "The Early Stages of the Irish Peace Process." *ACCORD* 1999, 8. <http://www.c-r.org/accord/ireland/accord8/intro.shtml> (April 24, 2006).

McCarthy, Clem. "Introduction: Striking a Balance, The Northern Ireland Peace Process." *ACCORD* 1999, 8. <http://www.c-r.org/accord/ireland/accord8/intro.shtml> (April 24, 2006).

McGarry, J. (ed.). *Northern Ireland and the Divided World: The Northern Ireland Conflict and the Good Friday Agreement in Comparative Perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001.

McIntosh, G. *The Force of Culture: Unionist Identities in Twentieth-Century Ireland*. Cork: Cork University Press, 1999.

Mitchell, C. *Gestures of Conciliation: Factors Contributing to Successful Olive Branches*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000.

Mitchell, S. and Black, M. *Freud and Beyond*. New York: Basic Books, 1995.

Morrissey, M. and Smyth, M. *Northern Ireland after the Good Friday Agreement: Victims, Grievance and Blame*. London: Pluto Press, 2002.

Murray, D. "An Astonishing Apology." *BBC News* Online. July 17, 2002.<http://news.bbc.co.uk /2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/2132907.stm> (April 27, 2006).

Pruitt, D. G. and Kim, S. H. *Social Conflict: Escalation, Stalemate, and Settlement.* (3rd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill, 2004.

Riggins, S. H. (ed.). *The Language and Politics of Exclusion: Others in Discourse.* London: Sage Publications, 1997.

Rolston, B. "What's Wrong with Multiculturalism? Liberalism and the Irish Conflict." In D. Miller (ed.), *Rethinking Northern Ireland: Culture, Ideology and Colonialism.* New York: Longman, 1998.

Ruane, J. "The End of (Irish) History? Three Readings of the Current Conjecture." In J. Ruane and J. Todd (eds.), *After the Good Friday Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland.* Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1999.

Ruane, J. and Todd J. (eds.). *After the Good Friday Agreement: Analysing Political Change in Northern Ireland.* Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 1999.

Schafer R. *Narrative Actions in Psychoanalysis.* Heinz Werner Lecture Series, 14. Worcester, MA: Clark Univ. Press, 1981.

Schirch, L. *Ritual and Symbol in Peacebuilding.* Bloomfield: Kumarian Press, Inc., 2005.

Singer, M. R. "The Role of Culture and Perception in Communication." In G. Weaver (ed.), *Culture, Communication and Conflict.* Needham Heights: Simon and Schuster, 1998.

Senott, C. "Anatomy of Anger: One Tale in Belfast." *Boston Globe.* September 9, 2001.

Smith, T. "Foreword." In S. Dunn and H. Dawson, *An Alphabetical Listing of Word, Name and Place in Northern Ireland and the Living Language of Conflict.* Symposium Series, (57) Queenstown: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2000.

Stewart, C. J., Smith, C. A. and Denton, R. E., Jr. *Persuasion and Social Movements.* (4th ed.) Prospect Heights: Waveland Press, 2001.

Tanney, P. "World Watches in Disbelief." *The Irish Times.* September 4, 2001.

The Bloody Sunday Inquiry. "Frequently Asked Questions." <http://www.bloody-sunday-inquiry.org/index2.asp?p=2> (April 25, 2006).

Ting-Toomey, S. *Communicating Across Cultures.* New York: The Guilford Press, 1999.

Trimble, D. *To Raise up a New Northern Ireland.* Speech to Northern Ireland Business and Community Leaders at Malone House, Belfast, June 22, 1998.

Weaver, G. (ed.). *Culture, Communication and Conflict.* (2nd ed.) Boston, MA: Pearson. Publishing, 2000.

White, G. M. "Rhetoric, Reality, and Resolving Conflicts: Disentangling in a Solomon Islands Society." In K. Avruch, P. Black and J. Scimecca (eds.), *Conflict Resolution: Cross-Cultural Perspectives.* Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1991.

Winslade, J. and G. Monk. *Narrative Mediation: A New Approach to Conflict Resolution*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2000.

Endnotes

[1] In this paper, when referring to the Good Friday Agreement, Belfast Agreement or the Agreement Reached in Multi-Party Negotiations, I will use "the Agreement" for shorthand.

[2] Gleaning from Foucault's concept of discourse, I will use the term as Riggins (1997) outlines it: "…a systematic, internally consistent body of representations," which, being comprised of intertexual meaning and interpretations, "[does] not faithfully reflect reality like mirrors…Instead, [discourses] are artifacts of language through which the very reality they purport to reflect is constructed" (Riggins, 1997, p. 2).

[3] A former professor of mine, Chris R. Mitchell, explained this distinction early on to his 2001 incoming class of PhD students at the Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution.

[4] Huntington (1993) writes, "It is my hypothesis that the fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions will be cultural" (Huntington, 1993, p. 22). And later, "…violent conflicts between groups in different civilizations are the most likely and most dangerous source of escalation that could lead to global wars…" (Huntington, 1993, p. 48). Of the short term suggestions for resisting the supposed inevitable draw towards conflict, Huntington suggests that "it is clearly in the interest of the West… to exploit differences and conflicts among Confucian and Islamic states" (Huntington, 1993, p. 49).

[5] Hall (1977) created the high and low context distinctions; Ting-Toomey (1999) describes, "By low context communication we emphasize how intention or meaning is best expressed through explicit verbal messages. By high context communication we emphasize how intention or meaning can best be conveyed through the context…and the nonverbal channels…of the verbal message" (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p. 100).

[6] To be fair, Weaver recognizes that "as with all typologies, these descriptions never apply to everyone in a particular culture at all times" (Weaver, 1998, p. 74).

[7] Essentially, the idea that language shapes our experiences, perceptions, and actions, linking the individual to "cultural reality" in a complex, reflexive relationship.

[8] For an example of narrative analysis see Liisa Malkki's study of Hutu refugee cultures in *Purity and Exile*.

[9] The term and concepts of "othering" is gleaned from Stephen Harold Riggins' chapter, "The Rhetoric of Othering". See the bibliography for full citation.

[10] For a complete discussion of the concept, "civic nationalism," see McGarry (2001).

[11] This phrase, "rhetoric of reconciliation," was coined by Patrick Grant (2001).

[12] *To Raise Up a New Northern Ireland* is the title of a publication which includes articles and speeches given by First Minister Trimble between the years 1998 and 2000. See the bibliography for the full citation.