

Beirut and Belfast: Two Deeply Divided Cities, their
Schools and Post-War Integration

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the experiences and perspectives of secondary school students in two deeply divided cities: Beirut and Belfast. Thirty students from each city, between the ages of fifteen and nineteen, were interviewed for approximately one half hour each using a set of guiding questions. Interviews were transcribed and coded. Their responses were used in comparative analysis to investigate the similarities and differences between the students in the two cities, and to determine whether or not the level of religious mixing in their respective high schools had any demonstrable effects on their responses.

The study includes discussion of their religious identities, their experiences with people from the other side of their conflict, sectarian hatred, tolerance, thoughts on mixed schools, portraits of life at schools with different levels of mixing, the culture of avoidance, and the relative influences of schools and families.

The research suggests that there is no significant correlation between level of mixing in school and tolerance. Students in mixed schools did not exhibit a higher degree of tolerance and open-mindedness than their peers in segregated schools. Students in Belfast exhibited more sectarian hatred towards one another than their peers in Beirut. There was also more resistance to the idea of mixed schools in Belfast than in Beirut.

A culture of avoidance was found to operate in both societies. All schools in this study, segregated and integrated, choose not to confront the divisive issues of their societies within the school walls. This common practice of avoidance seemed to be more important than the differential levels of social mixing in determining how students responded to the questions. Further research is needed to track the long-term psycho-social effects of integrated schools on their students in order to know if these schools have a special role in post-conflict reconstruction in deeply divided societies.

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Christel McMullan was solely responsible for connecting me with the integrated school, and I wish her much success on her upcoming dissertation, a much anticipated ethnography of an integrated school. Ruarai McCionnaith, my best friend in Belfast, taught me more than I ever thought I could learn from one person.

I was fortunate enough to receive a William and Betty MacQuitty Travel Scholarship that provided me with the financial means to travel to Beirut. The Marshall Aid Commission granted me the scholarship that brought me to Belfast as a graduate student.

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Steve and Cara opened up their apartment to me and functioned as my hosts and roommates for my entire stay in Lebanon. And I want to thank the American journalists at the *Beirut Daily Star*, particularly Tiare Rath and Stephanie Saldana for helping to make my time in Beirut so much fun.

I want to recognize the staff with whom I have worked at Seeds of Peace International Camp and Face to Face/Faith to Faith, particularly the late John Wallach and Melodye Feldman, for their courage and vision to bring young people from opposing sides of some of the most intractable ethnic conflicts in the world together to build human bridges.

INTRODUCTION

Living in Belfast for the past year, it struck me that the city was hovering between a state of war and a state of peace. Contrary to my idealism, it seemed that there was no guarantee the future would bring peace.

A year earlier, I had visited Belfast for the first time in order to help recruit high school students for a conflict resolution/inter-faith dialogue camp I would be working at for the summer. Over the course of that one-week visit, I began to learn about the integrated school movement. My American upbringing and my liberal Ivy League education had led me to assume that integrated education in Northern Ireland was a movement to which I could give my unqualified support. I felt as though proponents were people to whom I could relate and opponents those who were obstacles to peaceful coexistence.

As I began to investigate the origins of integrated education and the research about its impact, I was surprised to find that no one had conducted any sort of comparative study to determine the effects of integrated schools on their students. I resolved to conduct a qualitative study that would compare the experiences and sentiments of a number of students at an integrated school to those of their peers at Catholic and Protestant schools. Under the auspices of my MA program in Comparative Ethnic Conflict, it felt like a natural step to conduct a similar study in Beirut, another deeply divided city that came out of full-scale war only twelve years ago. The results would ideally provide a more generalizable picture than that of a single case study.

The key questions underlying this research are: What effect does going to school in a religiously mixed or integrated environment have on the levels of tolerance and open-mindedness of high school students who grew up in societies of conflict? Do such schools provide the greatest hope for deeply divided societies? Should these societies move towards system-wide integrated education? Are integrated schools making a significant difference in the lives of their students? Is it the responsibility of schools to model conflict resolution practices for their divided society?

I firmly believe that the identity and personal development of the researcher is inextricably bound up with the research process. For that reason, it is of critical importance that I share a bit about my own background and experience conducting this research.

I come from an observant Jewish family in America. I grew up in a religious Zionist home. I lived in Israel for my first year of college and attended the University of Pennsylvania where I focused on race relations in modern American history. In college, I was exposed to the latest thinking in conflict resolution and workshop facilitation as I established and organized dialogues between students from many different racial backgrounds and between Arabs and Jews. I worked at Seeds of Peace International Camp where I first got to know high school students from the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, as well as Israelis, Egyptians, Jordanians and many others. I eventually plan to spend my professional life working in one way or another with the Palestinian and Jewish communities in Israel/Palestine. My time in Belfast was intended to provide me with a comparative perspective on another conflict. I had no previous emotional connections to either side, and hoped I could

learn more about the dynamics of entrenched identity conflict from as many of the protagonists as possible. In Belfast, I was accepted equally as a Jew in both the Protestant and Catholic communities.

This was not the case in Beirut. I knew one Jewish person who had ever set foot in Lebanon and my parents and friends were terrified at the prospect of me traveling and conducting research in a land they perceived to be swarming with anti-Semitism. Several contacts I had made with journalists and academics in the USA, Canada, Lebanon and England warned me in the strongest terms not to share the fact that I was Jewish with any of the Lebanese people with whom I would interact. I received the message that I had to be on guard, that I would be in hostile territory. I assumed that the overwhelming majority of people in Lebanon would not have harmed me in any way had they known about my religious identity, but in light of all the warnings, it did not seem to be worth the risk.

Committed to the highest ethical standards in my research, I had first wondered whether it would indeed be okay for me to continue with my research plan despite the warnings about my personal safety and the probability that none of my interviewees would come to know that I was Jewish. After much deliberation, including with two advisors in Belfast and several professors abroad, I decided that the subject of my research made it unnecessary to volunteer this aspect of my identity and that it would not compromise my research if my interviewees were not aware of my religious identity. Crucially, all of the students in Belfast and Beirut treated me equally as an outsider.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Both Beirut and Belfast are historically polarized cities, with deep divisions reflected in their education systems. Each city has also witnessed severe levels of violence in recent decades, leaving in its wake a tragic legacy of sectarian hatred for the schools to inherit. Before presenting the data from this study, a brief overview of the education literature relevant to this study in both Beirut and Belfast will be presented.

The literature of general interest to the Lebanese case will be mentioned, followed by an overview of specific research projects conducted on university students in Lebanon. Literature on the history of education policy in Northern Ireland, on the development of cross-community projects and on the evolution of the integrated school movement will all be referenced, as well public opinion polls and contemporary issues in education policy.

Zouain's article in the International Encyclopedia of National Systems of Education provides a good summary of the formal system of education in Lebanon, including the number of students involved at each level and sector, as well as information about the Ministry of Education and the Center for Educational Research and Development. Abdullatif K. Hares produced a dissertation in 1986 entitled Education and National Integration in Lebanon. Based on the observation that the Lebanese lacked a unifying national identity, he explained the potential in social studies education for the development of nationalism. He proposed a social studies

curriculum based on his reading of Lebanese history and politics, and suggested the need for multi-ethnic education and the teaching of cultural pluralism.

Munir Bashshur authored an article that surveyed the history of education policy in Lebanon, highlighting the private and government school sectors¹ and arguing that at the outbreak of war, “education was captured and put at the service of the war machine.”² Suzi Novak wrote a critical analysis of the *Plan for Education Reform in Lebanon*, which included the objective ‘to foster national integration and social stability.’ She suggests the Dutch model of pillarization as an example to the Lebanese educational policy makers.³

Massialas and Jarrar’s Arab Education in Transition was a groundbreaking book when it was published in 1991 in that it painted a broad picture of education throughout the Arab world, comparing ways in which different countries have balanced their respective traditions with modernizing educational influences. The book did not address the unique educational issues facing Lebanon as a deeply divided society.

Several Lebanese scholars have surveyed or interviewed a sampling of university students on a variety of topics. No study has focused exclusively on Beirut and none of them have included high school students. Khashan interviewed 2,300 university

¹ In 1967-8, 39.6% of students were in government schools, 36.5% in private religious schools and 23.9% in private non-religious schools (Bashshur 1988). By 1973, 53% of schools educating 56% of students were private (Hares 101). The most recent data from 1998 showed that in Beirut there were 4,704 public high school students and 9,914 private high school students (Interview with Munir Bashshur, Beirut, 2 Apr. 2002).

² Bashshur 1988: 62-63.

³ Novak 2002.

students⁴ towards the end of the war⁵ to examine their political values, their group behavior and their inter-group perceptions.⁶ Antoine Messarra pioneered a six-year long program of research in order to provide the clearest picture to date of the ‘aspirations and orientations’ of the 13-27 year-old population in Lebanon and to suggest concrete actions given the findings.⁷ Muhammad Faour conducted a major study of social values and norms of American University of Beirut (AUB) and Lebanese University students between 1993-1996. His data include individual, societal, familial and political values and issues.⁸ Nimr Freyha recently completed a study on citizenship education and published his findings in March, 2002.⁹

Lebanese educational scholars have yet to interview high school students for their research and no one has studied the impact of different levels of religious mixing at the secondary school level. It is the author’s hope that this study can make a small contribution to the advancement of the field.

In Northern Ireland, the best overview material on the educational system can be found on the website of the Department of Education.¹⁰ Shortly after the outbreak of the modern “Troubles” in Northern Ireland, pilot projects began to use education as a means to build community relations. These efforts evolved in two directions:

⁴ 1,150 Muslims (540 Shi’a, 430 Sunnis, 180 Druze) and 1,150 Christians (450 Maronites, 280 Greek Orthodox, 180 Greek Catholics, 175 Armenians, 65 Protestants).

⁵ The research done in 1988 was surely influenced by the war context.

⁶ Khashan 1992.

⁷ Summary of results published in Messarra 1993.

⁸ Faour 1998. Faour cites two other studies: Melikian & Diab’s 1974 work on group affiliations of AUB students, and Nasr & Palmer’s 1977 study of university students.

⁹ Interview with Nimr Freyha, Beirut, 27 Mar. 2002. Though the book was published in Arabic, Freyha highlighted the significant findings for me. He found the students’ attitudes more positive than he had expected, concluding that this post-war generation hated the war and is more willing to compromise than their parents.

¹⁰ www.deni.gov.uk

cross-community projects within the segregated school system¹¹ as well as the burgeoning parent-driven integrated education movement. Dominic Murray produced a groundbreaking ethnographic study of a Protestant school and a Catholic school.¹²

For nearly twenty years, public opinion polls were conducted that examined parents' attitudes towards the concept of mixed religion, or integrated schools.¹³ With the founding of Lagan College in 1981, the integrated education movement rapidly began to grow to its size of 45 schools with 14,140 students at the time of this writing.¹⁴ A number of scholars have tracked the growth of the movement, and the changes in policy and perception.¹⁵ However, there has been a noticeable absence of research on the effects of integrated schools on their students.¹⁶ One exception was a study conducted by Sean Byrne in 1991 in which he interviewed twenty-four Protestant students, fifteen from a segregated grammar school and nine from an all-ability integrated school.¹⁷ As the movement gained momentum, materials were

¹¹ Crone & Malone 1979; Dunn, Darby & Mullan 1984; Darby 1989; Dunn & Smith 1989; Smith 1990.

¹² Murray provides a thorough history of how the educational system came to be segregated in Northern Ireland. He justifies his study with the following: "There can be no tolerance without comprehension and no comprehension without knowledge. Since schools in Northern Ireland epitomize the segregated nature of the state as a whole, it is vital that in-depth studies are carried out within them in order to gather and publish information about them" (Murray 1985:13).

¹³ Miller 1973; Moxon-Browne 1978; Gallagher & Dunn 1989; Dunn & Cairns 1989.

¹⁴ This is 4.2% of the total school-aged population of Northern Ireland.

¹⁵ Dunn & Morgan 1999; Dunn & Smith 1995; Morgan & Fraser 1999. These articles focus on the historical development of the relationship between education and community relations. They concentrate on numbers, documents and policy decisions. This is the most common type of research to date on integrated education.

¹⁶ Darby & Dunn call for this type of research in their essay in Osborne et al. 1987. They say that looking at integrated schools for "their effect on the attitudes and behaviors of pupils" is very important and will help to answer a host of other questions about the expansion, relevance and effects of integrated schooling.

¹⁷ He began stories and had his subjects finish them, analyzing their level of religious and political identification with the British queen. There was evidence to suggest that some students at the integrated school were more critical of the queen than their peers, thus showing the effect of their integrated educational environment on their political attitudes. Byrne encouraged much more research to be done in this area (Byrne 2000). It was surprising to this author that no other scholars took Byrne (or Darby & Dunn) seriously and pursued such research in the past decade.

produced highlighting its short history and featuring anecdotes and perspectives of parents.¹⁸

There has been fierce resistance to the schools from many quarters of society. Flanagan and Lambkin suggest that the supreme challenge of the integrated education movement will be to convince its skeptics that it is possible to maintain distinct religious identities while breaking down the barriers between the two major religious communities.¹⁹

The most recent research on integrated education has come from a Hofstra University professor, Laurie Johnson, who conducted a landmark study of the current practice of integrated education ‘from the qualitative standpoint of the classroom teacher.’²⁰

Other recent scholarship of interest is on the teaching of history in Northern Ireland schools²¹ and the work of the CCEA to pilot and evaluate citizenship education courses throughout the Northern Ireland school system.²²

¹⁸ See Wilson & Dunn 1989. They include a selection of quotes describing some of the reasons parents sent their children to integrated schools: 1) “I wanted my two boys to go to the same school as the children next door that they played with. It seemed a shame to separate them.” 2) “I’m a bit ashamed to say that my first reason was because the school was so close to my home.” 3) “Ours is a mixed marriage. At the beginning you never think of children, but once they come along you have to take sides. It doesn’t help the marriage. The integrated school was an answer to my prayer.” 4) “My father was shot by the IRA, and I was determined not to be bitter.”

¹⁹ Moffat 1993: 195-198.

²⁰ She arrives at the conclusion that “The preponderance of evidence gathered in this study substantiates the efficacy of IE [Integrated Education] as an enterprise that is succeeding in its efforts to educate students from all religious and ability groups in an ethos that promotes tolerance, interdependence and respect on the part of all its community members (Johnson 2001). This study jumps off the back of Johnson’s conclusion and asks not ‘is this happening?’ but ‘is this enough?’ Should there be a greater emphasis on conflict resolution and trust-building in integrated schools?”

²¹ Margaret Easton Smith 1999.

²² Arlow 2001. For a summary of current developments in the role of schools in the Northern Ireland conflict, see also Gallagher 2002: 21.

This study will be one small contribution to a body of qualitative research that is much needed in Northern Ireland to determine the effects of integrated schools on students, by comparing their responses on a number of questions to those of their peers at Protestant and Catholic schools.

While this study is the first piece of comparative education research on these two deeply divided societies, it also begins to fill the gaping hole among research in both Beirut and Belfast on the effects of different type of school environments on the experiences and attitudes of young people growing up in divided cities.²³

²³ I am aware of the historical timing of my research. Part of the explanation for the dearth of related scholarship is in the relatively short time these societies have been in post-conflict reconstruction. Additionally, as an outsider in both conflict situations, I had the luxury of being able to take risks without needing to worry about funding, department politics, religious identity, etc. I can only hope that this small effort will provide some useful findings for those who will continue to conduct related research in both Lebanon and Northern Ireland.

METHODOLOGY

Thirty high school students from Belfast and thirty high school students from Beirut²⁴ were interviewed for between twenty-five and forty-five minutes. A series of guiding questions (Appendix I) were formulated with the assistance of Professor Tony Gallagher²⁵ in order to ensure subject uniformity for purposes of data analysis.²⁶ All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed word-for-word. The sixty interviews were given between February 21 and April 13, 2002. Since I spent eight months in Belfast and only one month in Beirut, it is likely that there are ways in which the differential depth of my understanding of the two cities is reflected in this study.

North Belfast was selected because it is the part of the city where contemporary violence and sectarianism is at its peak. A Protestant school, a Catholic school and an integrated school²⁷ all in North Belfast were chosen, from which ten students each would be interviewed.

²⁴ According to Adnan El-Amine, one of the preeminent scholars of education in Lebanon, secondary school students have not been the subjects of any recent research. The last piece he knows about is a 1969 MA thesis by Joesef Jabbra (Interview with Adnan El-Amine, Beirut, 26 Mar. 2002). Munir Bashshur of the American University of Beirut says: "It has been a matter of convenience to limit the discussion to universities, since the fragmentation of the university as one identifiable institution with clear boundaries is easier to trace and describe than that of an educational system involving many schools with many sub-systems and boundary lines" (Bashshur 1988: 66-67). To me, high school students seemed to be an obvious population to be studied, for they combine high levels of self-reflection with the inexperience to represent much more than their educational environments and family values.

²⁵ Tony Gallagher is a professor of education at the Queen's Univeristy of B elfast.

²⁶ Each interview was slightly different from the next. As I became more comfortable in each context, new questions became more appropriate and more revealing than some of the pre-arranged questions.

²⁷ Throughout this study they will be referred to as 'the Protestant school,' 'the Catholic school,' and 'the integrated school,' rather than by their proper names in order to maintain anonymity.

Integrated school students were randomly selected during their free period and brought to the library where we spoke in the librarian's office. Five males and five females were interviewed. All of these students were in their seventh year²⁸ at the school. The intention was to see if the students who had been there the longest, rather than students who had only recently transferred into the integrated school environment, reflected different attitudes and perspectives than their peers at the Catholic and Protestant schools.

The principal at the Protestant school passed me to the art teacher who selected the students to send to me in the next room. All interviews were conducted during her class period on successive weeks. There were six males and four females in this sample. Because she had successive classes of differing intellectual abilities, the students selected were probably fairly representative of students of that age in the school.

The principal at the Catholic school encouraged me to spend a day at the school getting to know the teachers and students with whom I would be working. He brought me into a classroom full of students, some of whom would later be interviewed, where I asked them introductory questions, introduced myself and answered their questions. Students were randomly taken out of their classrooms with the permission of their teachers and interviewed during class time.²⁹

²⁸ Seventh year students at this integrated school are seventeen and eighteen years old. All the interviewees in this study are between fifteen and nineteen.

²⁹ While Northern Ireland has a selective system of secondary schools in which the 'top' third go to academic grammar schools, the Protestant and Catholic secondary schools in the sample are non-selective schools. Integrated schools aspire to be comprehensive, all-ability schools. In practice, they find it difficult to compete with the grammar schools for the academically brightest pupils. Thus their student makeup tends to be quite similar to that of the secondary (non-grammar) schools.

In Lebanon, I worked with a variety of contacts to interview students from eight different schools—secular and religious, private and public, elite and non-elite, including twenty Muslims, eight Christians and two Druze students.³⁰ There was one teacher, speaking on behalf of her school, who informed me that her principal did not feel comfortable volunteering his students to participate in such a study.

Two-thirds of the students in Beirut were interviewed in English, and one-third with the assistance of a translator from Arabic. In the case of the Makassed students, Riad, a friend of the teacher chaperoning a two-day Makassed retreat in the mountains, functioned as my driver and translator for all six interviews on one Saturday.³¹ Five of the students at the ULDY, including Wadih, Aly Saad, A.M., C.A.S. and Roula interviewed with Ahmad, their volunteer coordinator, serving as translator.

Students at the Greek Orthodox school in East Beirut and at the evangelical school were interviewed at their respective schools. Wadih, a student at a private secular (*laic*) school in downtown Beirut, was interviewed at the “sleep-in” taking place for several weeks in solidarity with Palestinians.³² Hamzeh, a student at a private Shi’i

³⁰ “Nobody knows the exact size of any ethnic or religious group in Lebanon, although estimates can be speculated. The lone census of 1932 which gave the Christians a slight majority over the Muslims is outdated, and it is dismissed as irrelevant by serious scholars. On the other hand, the claims of Muslim writers and clerics to the effect that Muslims outnumber the Christians by two to one, are clearly overstated” (Faour 39).

³¹ During the third interview, the power went out and the rest of the interviews were conducted under the light of a lantern.

³² My trip to Lebanon came at a very heated time in the region as major suicide attacks by Palestinian terrorists against Israeli civilians during the week of the holiday of Passover were responded to with massive Israeli military incursions into every city and town in the West Bank, reoccupying the Palestinian people, imposing stringent curfews, preventing ambulances from aiding the sick and causing a major humanitarian crisis. There was an outpouring of sympathy all over the Arab world for the plight of the Palestinians.

school and the four students from three different Beirut public schools, were interviewed at the ULDY office on Mar Elias Street. Five students from two different private secular (*laic*) schools were interviewed at a coffee shop.

At the beginning of each interview, participants were asked to read and sign a short contract (Appendix II) and to select a pseudonym for the purposes of the study.

Quotes and ideas attributed to students throughout this paper refer to their chosen pseudonyms. This decision proved especially important because several teachers, school principals, professors and NGO workers would later request copies of the findings.

As with any research employing comparative methodology, I had to make several choices about my sampling. Though students in integrated schools represent only 4.2% of the student population of Northern Ireland, the decision was made to interview an equal number of Catholic, Protestant and integrated school students.

I was able to interview thirty students in Beirut from eight schools covering a wide range of backgrounds. However, I would have undoubtedly tested a more representative sample had I been able to spend several months in Beirut studying the city's educational layout in detail.

Though the same basic questions were asked of all interviewees, it would be a more accurate reflection of the research process to say that I functioned partly as an interviewer and partly as an investigative journalist. I conducted this research, not as an expert, but as a student of conflict. The first several interviews conducted in

each city provided me with information, which once known was not asked of others. In addition to my intention to compare the ir comments, I was piecing together a general portrait from the sum total of all their answers.

One of the challenges of this study was to listen to a great deal of sectarian bigotry, while seeking to gain whatever trust I could in one half hour. In order to provide a space whereby students would reveal their honest thoughts, I sometimes chose to ignore hateful comments. Because I am passionate about issues of cross-cultural awareness and understanding, and am involved with work to break down barriers between communities in conflict, the impracticability of being able to condemn every instance of intolerant rhetoric presented a dilemma for my research process. I probably erred on the side of nonchalance, choosing to play the role of friend more often than that of teacher. It was by no means my intention to endorse prejudiced views while attempting to glean their inner feelings.

After all the interviews were transcribed,³³ every substantive quote or piece of information was coded into one of twelve subject areas. Each topic was then analyzed in order to accurately portray the range and frequency of perspectives. In the end, approximately 60% -70% of the data was used in this paper.³⁴

This study cannot claim to be ‘scientific’ in the sense that decisions were sometimes made in situations far from the purity of the laboratory. Assumptions made about the relationships between cause and effect without certainty about the link can be

³³ This was approximately three hundred pages of material.

³⁴ Topics with rich data that were not included due to word limitations include: attitudes towards politics, separation/inseparability of religion and politics, whether or not they plan to vote when they get old enough, reflections about the peace processes since Good Friday/Taif, and views on the future.

described as the ‘problem of controlling’ identified as one of the major disadvantages of the comparative method. The external validity of this study awaits further research on this subject matter.

Additionally, there is a great deal of conceptual stretching at work in order to merge the data set into a comprehensive analysis. An example is the way integrated education, a term with very definite educational meaning in Belfast, has no parallel in Beirut. In its place, the term ‘mixed schools’ was used in Beirut. Whereas the Belfast schools used in this study fit into one of three categories very neatly, schools in Beirut fall along a continuum of level of mixing and have the additional variable of the frequent asymmetry between school governance and religious identity of students. While this theme is implicitly addressed in the study, the identities being compared (Catholic Nationalist/Protestant Unionist as opposed to Christian/Muslim) have important nuances that significantly affect the general discussion about the meaning and effects of integrated education. Since comparative studies with a small number of cases tend to be better at crafting hypotheses than at testing them, this study leaves more questions for further research than it purports to answer.

DATA/RESULTS

The data collected from the sixty student interviews have been summarized according to broad categories that correspond to the most frequent lines of questioning: identity, experience with the ‘other,’ sectarian hatred, tolerance, thoughts on mixed schools, different levels of mixing at schools, avoidance, schools and families. The findings from each of these bold-faced categories are analyzed below.³⁵

IDENTITY

Most of the Belfast interviewees reflected the overlapping religio-political identities in the Northern Irish conflict. Students at the Catholic school gave short responses to the question about their identities. Alan considered Catholic to be equal to Irish.³⁶ Henrik felt British, but wanted to be Irish. Only one of the ten interviewees at the Catholic school indicated that he attended mass on a weekly basis.³⁷ These ten students showed no evidence of strong Irish identities. A quote from Sean provides an example of the ambiguity at the heart of many of their reflections on identity: “I’m not English, but I’m not Irish either—don’t know what I am.” Another surprising finding was that several of these students were not familiar with the word nationalist, traditionally used to describe the political affiliation of most Catholics in

³⁵ Because this study treats each individual interviewee as a representative of his/her religious community and school, it is important to include here Theodor Hanf’s reminder that people are not just identity categories, but that “deeply rooted personality traits also influence attitudes to life and social environment: caution or openness to change, fear of the future or the lack of it, mistrust or trust in people with whom one lives and works, and above all the sense of passively accepting or actively shaping one’s own destiny and the fortunes of others” (Hanf 1993: 459).

³⁶ This is a perspective shared by Dominic Murray based on the time he spent in Catholic and Protestant schools. “Religion may be seen to be of secondary importance to political affiliation, with the former being merely a convenient or overt indication of the latter...” (30).

³⁷ Church attendance is higher in Northern Ireland than anywhere else in Western Europe, except Ireland. 45% of people attend at least once a week in Northern Ireland (Moffat 196).

Northern Ireland. This lack of vocabulary could indicate a lower level of politicization among the youth than is frequently assumed.

Responses of the students at the Protestant school were also terse. Several students equated being an identified Protestant with hatred of Catholics. When Amy was asked if being Protestant was an important part of her identity, she said: “No, I don’t mind because I don’t have anything against Catholics.” Two students explicitly stated that their Protestant identity meant nothing to them. Dave went as far as saying that “It would be just the same if I was a Catholic.” As was the case with the students from the Catholic school, those at the Protestant school paid scant attention to religion. One of the ten Protestant school students even mentioned the word church, and that was to say that he did not attend church, and therefore that the religious aspect of his Protestant identity is not an important part of who he is.

Students at the integrated school were slightly more sophisticated in their treatment of identity. Joanne explained:

People would just see me as a Catholic because my whole family are Catholics...But if anybody asked me, I wouldn’t say that I was a Catholic. I just don’t want a label. I don’t want to be like every other person in society that labels themselves.

Joanne is one of the five integrated school students who clearly stated that she does not identify with either religion. Some of them said they could not identify with the religion since they did not practice it, while others were taking an ideological stand, refusing to participate in the identity politics of their conflict.³⁸ For example, Paul said “I don’t think I should be identified in that sort of way.” There is insufficient

³⁸ Dominic Murray says that religion in Northern Ireland is best seen as a ‘membership card’ into a ‘cultural club’ (Murray 7).

data to determine whether this finding indicates a greater level of sophistication about matters of identity in the integrated school culture.

Only one of the ten interviewees at the integrated school, a Protestant named Jennifer, described her religious identity as very important to her. As she elaborated, she focused on her political affiliation, strengthening the case made by the thirty conversations in Belfast that there is only a trace of religion in the identities of most Belfast high school students. Lisa, a Catholic, described Protestant identity as wearing [Glasgow] Rangers³⁹ tops and living in a Protestant housing area. Some integrated school students also voiced ambiguous feelings about their identities. Jack responded by saying: “I’m not sure. I don’t really go to church or anything. So I suppose I’m not really—Catholic— completely. But I am part of that group.” Jack’s sentiment that religious identity be reserved for those who practice their religion was echoed by many other respondents.

In the sphere of religious identity, there are some differences between integrated school students and their peers. It seems as though studying in school with people from many different backgrounds explains the relative comfort with which integrated school students discussed their lack of religious affiliations. Additionally, five out of the ten integrated school respondents come from mixed marriages. Perhaps this is the most crucial variable in explaining the choice not to identify with either religion or side in the conflict.

³⁹ Football team traditionally supported by Protestants in Northern Ireland. Ironically, this team and their rivals, Glasgow Celtic, traditionally supported by Catholics in Northern Ireland, play in Scotland.

In sharp contrast to Belfast, the vast majority of interviewees in Beirut described their religious identities as very important to them.⁴⁰ Students at the Sunni Muslim Makassed schools⁴¹ reported being ‘proud’, ‘comfortable’, and ‘sure of my religion’. Muhammad said: “It’s very strong inside my soul.” Tarek also indicated that his religion was very important to him and added that every one should believe in their religion.⁴²

Students at a Greek Orthodox school in East Beirut with a predominantly Christian student body⁴³ were similarly enthusiastic about religion. Jose described religion as very important to him. Carine believed strongly in Christianity. Red distinguished between her internal and external self: “It’s an important part in my interior self. But with my friends, with my parents, it shouldn’t be. Because my religion is just for me. It’s just between me and my God.” Elia’s initial response to the question about the importance of Christianity to her was “Of course it’s an important thing in my life.” But she revealed ambiguity on the matter as she continued: “I’m Christian. I have to be Christian. I have to pray. I don’t pray too much. I don’t go to church too much. I don’t know—I’m Christian.” One of the few Muslims at the school, Angell, said she was proud to be a Muslim.

⁴⁰ This supports data from past studies. A 1996 study showed that religion played an important part in the lives of the majority of Lebanese college students (Faour 133). On a scale of religiousness, 26% of all respondents in Hanf’s study identified as ‘very religious’ and 39% as ‘religious’. One-eighth of the respondents were secularized (Hanf 1993: 481).

⁴¹ A private foundation of the Sunni Muslim community around the world, with a network of schools, hospitals and other social services. Students interviewed on a leadership retreat were from several different Makassed high schools in Beirut.

⁴² In religious schools such as those run by Makassed, tolerance and pluralism take a back seat to basic religious instruction to teach students the beliefs and practices of their religion. Perhaps there are competing agendas: to religiously educate the next generation to remain in a particular community or to educate for common citizenship, diversity and equality? If the two can be reconciled, the chances for conflict resolution in deeply divided societies will be dramatically increased.

⁴³ Six of the 170 students in the high school are Muslims. Overall, in the entire school, there are 783 Greek Orthodox, 297 Maronites, 140 Catholics, 78 Sunnis, 68 Shi’a, 4 Druze (According to interview with the Principal, Beirut, 10 Apr. 2002).

Greater diversity of perspectives was found at the evangelical Christian school.⁴⁴

Three of the respondents said religion was unimportant to them. Amy even said she wished she could take it out of her ID card. One student, Leb, attends church meetings and classes with all of his free time. Among the eight students interviewed, including three Muslims, three Christians and two Druze, were a range of levels of connection to religious identity within each of the represented religions.⁴⁵

Another interesting perspective was gleaned from students at an elite private secular (*laic*) school with an all-Muslim student body.⁴⁶ Both Jack and Mustapha pray five times a day, but denied that their religious identities were important to them. Jack said that he was so open-minded that he was not really practicing Islam in his heart. Mustapha claimed that he could just as easily have been born a Christian and raised that way, so that his observance should not be confused with a strong religious identity. Their classmate Ghida answered:

I'm proud to be a Muslim. I'm proud of what I am. But it's not something I chose to be finally. I can't just say I'm a Muslim—okay, I'm better than others—I mean what's the difference between me and all the others? There's no difference. But you always have to feel proud of what you are, no matter what.

From these three conversations, it seems as though students at their school have an attitude that distinguishes them from their peers at religious schools. These

⁴⁴ Though it is an evangelical school, directed by a Canadian evangelical Christian, the student body of the high school is 65-70% Muslim. (Interview with director of school, Beirut, 9 Apr. 2002).

⁴⁵ According to Khashan's study of college students in 1988, the Lebanese sects from most to least religious were reported to be: Shi'a, Sunnis, Catholics, Maronites, Orthodox, Protestant, Armenians, Druze (Khashan 1992: 46).

⁴⁶ One principal at a *laic* school told me that only ten students out of 1,700 make use of the prayer room he recently built (Interview with Semir Jarrar, Beirut, 8 Apr. 2002).

interviewees revealed greater open-mindedness, self-awareness and even a degree of relativism in their thinking about religious identity.⁴⁷

Several students who are members of the Union of Lebanese Democratic Youth (ULDY) were also interviewed, including three who go to a public school with all Muslim students and one who attends a private Shi'i Muslim school. The ULDY is a communist leaning organization and these students reflected an antagonism towards religion in general, and in their society in particular.⁴⁸ C.A.S., who used to be religious, became disillusioned with Islam by watching the fighting between Muslim groups in Lebanon.

The Beirut sampling seems to show a correlation between strength of religious identity and type of school, with those in mixed school environments reflecting more diversity in their religious attachments. The fact that the Belfast group was generally secular and disinterested in religious practices and ideas while the Beirut group was mostly religious provides an important backdrop for further discussions about the content of these interviews.

EXPERIENCE WITH THE 'OTHER'

⁴⁷ It is noteworthy that the schools in Beirut with the most similar school culture to the integrated schools are the elite schools. In the Belfast context, integrated schools, however, are not the most elite schools, as there is a segregated grammar school system. There is insufficient statistical information in Lebanon to know if there is a correlation between the expense of the school and the level of integration. In spite of my persistence, Munir Bashshur assured me that there is no way to get statistics on the religious composition of secondary schools in Lebanon (Interview, Beirut, 2 Apr. 2002).

⁴⁸ Perhaps these students shared Antoine Messarra's opinion that "Religion is not so much a point of reference for belief and action as it is a convenient alibi providing legitimacy and immunity stamped with the sacred" (Messarra 2002: 173).

Students were asked to discuss the level and type of interactions they had experienced with the other religio-political group in their conflict. This included meaningful conversations, personal violence, stories passed down by their parents, and relationships across sectarian lines through work or hobbies.

There were interviewees across the sample that had no substantive interactions with the 'other' up to this point in their lives. Alan from the Catholic school said he had never spoken to a Protestant, while his classmate James described his only contact with Protestants being mutual verbal and physical abuse on the street next to his school. John from the Protestant school admitted that he did not know any Catholics. Integrated school students like Joanne reflected on the fact that she had never met any Protestants before coming to an integrated school as a teenager and now her best friend is Protestant. Her classmate Seifer, recognizing that he could just as easily have been in a dramatically different environment, replied: "I have friends, cousins and stuff, [who] go to Protestant schools. They don't even talk to Catholics. They just think they're some other different kind of race or something, aliens or something."

Students from many different backgrounds at several different schools in the Beirut sample shared this perspective.⁴⁹ Amila and Muhammad, both from Makassed, shared that they did not know any Christians. Just as Joanne in North Belfast did not have friends from the other side until coming to a mixed high school, Carine, raised in East Beirut, described how she had never met a Muslim until coming to her

⁴⁹ One scholar in Beirut pointed out that the proponents of integration cannot rely on universities since only a fraction of students attend mixed universities such as AUB or USG. Many do not attend universities and those that do mostly go to the Lebanese University, which is segregated with separate campuses in East and West Beirut (Interview with Nada Nasr, Beirut, 12 Apr. 2002).

school at the age of fourteen. Hamzeh, a Shi'a Muslim had never met a Christian until he enrolled in a *laic*⁵⁰ school when he too was fourteen. Wadih described his upbringing as one of a 'tribalistic Shi'a mentality' that took him years to change.⁵¹

Some students have had a different experience. Two students at the Catholic school described their work environments as mixed and consider their Protestant colleagues at work to be mates. With a passion for cars that transcended politics, David found himself getting very close to a Protestant who shared his interest. And Henrik has found in football a language that cuts across religious and political boundaries.

Football has broke down barriers for me, if you want to say. It gives me a chance to learn about Protestants and what they think of life. To be honest, I know a lot of Protestants and they have the same outlook on life as me.

Fewer Protestant students shared stories of inter-group mixing, but two of the female interviewees mentioned connections to Catholics. Morgan has an aunt who lives in a mixed part of Belfast and has many Catholic friends as well as a cousin who attends an integrated school. Whitney-June is one of several Belfast interviewees who spoke about CB radio as their outlet across sectarian lines. She made several close friends over the years, including one who lived on the all Catholic Falls Road. They would occasionally meet each other in the central part of the city. Whitney-

⁵⁰ Private, secular.

⁵¹ The 1988 college student data revealed that Sunnis (82.3%) and Maronites (84.4%) were the most likely to have a best friend from their own sect. 55.9% of Shi'i Muslims had a best friend who was also Shi'i and 38% of them had a best friend who was Sunni or Druze. 40% of Protestants and 34.3% of Greek Orthodox students reported having a best friend who was not Christian (Khashan 1992: 77-79). In Faour's study six years later, 32% of Greek Orthodox and 27% of Maronite college students had a best friend who was Muslim. 18% of Shi'a and 16% of Sunnis had a best friend who was Christian (Faour 126).

June also shared her thoughts on working in a nursing home where Catholics and Protestants get along well.

You wouldn't say 'she's a Catholic and I don't like her' or 'she's a fenian'⁵² and I'm not cleaning her bum' or something. You just have to get along with everybody and you have to work together. It was brilliant... One of the girls there I have become really really friendly with her. She's a Catholic, but she is absolutely brilliant. I love her to bits-just brilliant!

There is insufficient data to draw sweeping conclusions about the differences between the students at the Catholic and Protestant schools, but this study would lead to a cautious assertion that students in all Catholic areas seem to have more positive interactions with Protestants than vice versa.⁵³

Three students from the Catholic school and six students from the Protestant school mentioned involvement in at least one cross-community activity organized by their school. They ranged from a choir to outdoor adventures to trips to the USA. Few students viewed these programs as opportunities for meaningful cross-community interaction. Chris from the Protestant school said about his upcoming trip that he hoped he would be able to spend time only with the Protestants. While such programs may have provided minor increases in the tolerance levels of some participants, they showed no evidence of transforming students in any significant way. As a general rule, the students who are chosen to be participants by their schools have already demonstrated a lack of ill will towards the other group.⁵⁴ Their

⁵² Derogatory word for Catholic

⁵³ While there is no literature dealing with the topic, there is now a widespread perception among academics and political commentators in Belfast of a growing trend of Protestant alienation. For a brief treatment of the issue of the decrease in support for Good Friday in the Protestant community, see the May 2002 report of the Devolution Monitoring Programme at www.democraticdialogue.org/devo/d0502.htm.

⁵⁴ This was shared with me by students at both the Catholic and the Protestant schools with comments such as "They would never choose me because I am bitter" or "They pick me because they know I'll behave."

trips tend to confirm what they already felt –that there is no real difference between Catholics and Protestants, but that in the real world in which they live, it is generally unsafe for them to see each other outside of the confines of a supervised program. Such programs have limited impact on the students, given the deeply divided nature of the communities in which they live.⁵⁵

Only a few students in Beirut discussed positive interactions and experiences with peers from the other group. Doudou goes to a private secular (*laic*) school with all Muslim students and her mother was raised in France as a Christian and taught her to treat all people equally. Roula attends a public school with all Muslims, but she went to a Christian school when she was young and now has Christian friends from her work as a waitress. Some interviewees may be so accustomed to interactions across sectarian lines as to deem them unworthy of particular mention. Conversely, it may be the case that most Beirutis talk as if relations between Muslims and Christians are fine, when in fact few of them have meaningful relationships across sectarian lines.

A third element of this discussion about experiences with the other is the stories told in their houses about family members and friends shot and/or killed.⁵⁶ Students in both conflicts who heard details about the deaths of loved ones at the hands of the other side generally exhibited much less tolerance and open-mindedness towards an integrated and convivial future. In the Belfast sample, ten out of thirty students (six

⁵⁵ In the first formal evaluation of the Education for Mutual Understanding program, a Northern Ireland wide initiative intended to infuse the curriculum with tolerance and cross-community understanding, it was found that there was minimal progress made in dealing with controversial issues (Arlow 3). The question of avoidance will be addressed in a later section of this paper.

⁵⁶ 475 (or 3.7 out of every 1000) people between ages 15-19 have been killed in the Troubles in Northern Ireland between 1969-1999 (Gallagher 2002: 22-23).

from the Catholic school and two each from the Protestant and integrated schools) knew people who had been shot and killed.⁵⁷

In sharp contrast, only one student in Beirut discussed the death of a family member in connection with the war. Don Dido, a Makassed student, had an uncle who was kidnapped, tortured and killed by a militia. Though they did not choose to share them, many of the students in Beirut have stories like this one.⁵⁸

Three students in the Belfast sample shared how their families have been forced to move out of their houses due to paramilitary violence. There tends to be a stereotype in Belfast that students who attend integrated schools are removed from the day-to-day violence of the conflict. In this study, more integrated school students have been 'put out' of their houses than their peers in the religiously segregated schools.⁵⁹ Paul's family was forced to leave their house only two weeks before his interview when a group of Protestants threw petrol bombs and glass bottles at their home. Emma's home in the Protestant area of Rathcoole was attacked in 1997 and slogans were written all over the walls. This made them relocate to the more mixed Glengormley area. Johnny, a Protestant school student, has had to move four times due to IRA violence. He has witnessed fifteen IRA men

⁵⁷ Of those under 18 years of age killed between 1969-1999, 62% were Catholics and 19% were Protestants (Gallagher 23).

⁵⁸ Khashan found that 27% of Shi'a students, 13.6% of Greek Orthodox, 12.1% of the Sunnis, 7.2% of the Druze and 6.2% of the Maronites reported a member of their nuclear family hurt because of the war (Khashan 1992: 55). Faour found that 40% of AUB students personally witnessed the death of a family member or friend, while 43% cited damage to family property (Faour 3). The discrepancy in these two studies is most probably related to the difference in the environment in 1988 war-torn Beirut and in 1995 post-conflict reconstruction. There was probably a greater willingness to share traumatic stories years after the war had ended.

⁵⁹ Paul and Emma from the integrated school, Johnny from the Protestant school and no students from the Catholic school.

kicking in his door, the windows in his home smashed, and petrol bombs thrown inside.

Though being forced to move houses is the most dramatic form of personal experience with the conflict, many of the Belfast students interviewed had been beaten up simply for being Protestant or Catholic. Stephen from the Catholic school has been beaten on several occasions and said this was true of most of his friends as well. Dave from the Protestant school was beaten up by a group of Catholics on his way to his mate's house. Paul, the same integrated school student who had been recently put out of his house, has been attacked and beaten up many times just for being a Catholic. Proving that these students experience violence as an ordinary part of their week, Jonathan, a Catholic school student, explained:

Yesterday, the Huns⁶⁰ started throwing over at my windows, and they break them and I was only on down the road, trying to throw back at them just to make them stop. And the cops came and passed, so they did, and just drove on past while they were throwing at our windows.

Strikingly, not a single student from Beirut described similar experiences with personal violence. None of them were beaten up for being in the wrong neighborhood or being the wrong religion. No one discussed being involved in rioting or having their homes attacked by local militias.⁶¹ Two female interviewees shared family stories. Sara, a Christian who lives comfortably in predominantly Muslim West Beirut, told of an early war memory she had of a bomb being placed in her brother's room. Carine shared the fact that a Muslim militia had kidnapped her father during the war for three weeks. Don Dido's father and Farah's mother each

⁶⁰ Derogatory term for Protestants

⁶¹ Whereas North Belfast is a patchwork quilt of areas, exacerbating community level violence, Beirut has been a divided city between East and West. Nonetheless, from the outset of this division, much of West Beirut has been mixed. East Beirut continues to be nearly 100% Christian.

narrowly survived the horror of Black Saturday⁶² through the generosity of Christian friends.

SECTARIAN HATRED

With the foundation provided by discussions of identity and personal experiences with the 'other,' it is appropriate to explore why these high school students believe that their two communities hate each other. Some interviewees from both the Protestant and the Catholic schools provided explanations for the prevalent hatred and others said that the hatred was there and they did not know why. Integrated school students, on the other hand, did not seek to explain or justify the hatred that exists. They either did not talk about hatred or felt grateful for being in a mixed environment that prevented them from adopting the hatred they believed to prevail in segregated schools.

The Catholic school students provided three separate reasons for Catholic hatred towards Protestants. Alan said he hates Protestants because they kill innocent Catholics for no reason except for the fact that they are Catholics. Pat described the way his peers learn the hatred from older people on the streets who he and his friends observe slagging [making fun of] Protestants. And Stephen added: "I just don't like Protestants...Just the way they get on. They're all bitter and hate all

⁶² December 6, 1975 has come to be known as "Black Saturday." Four Christians were shot dead and one wounded in a car outside the Lebanese Electricity Company headquarters in east Beirut by a Muslim militia raiding party. Christian Phalangists set up a roadblock on the ring road and killed the first 40 Muslims they caught. When news of this action reached West Beirut, Muslim militias along with their Palestinian allies set up roadblocks and began killing Christians. In the hours that followed around 350 civilians from each side had been murdered. This was the first major massacre of civilians in the war and started a vicious cycle of kidnapping, revenge and retaliation. From this point on, after combatants of each faction conquered territory from their rivals, they routinely killed civilians.

Catholics, so why should we like them ones.” And he closed with a sentiment confirming that he believed Catholics had the moral high ground in saying: “See that there Holy Cross thing – Catholics wouldn’t do that to Protestants. That’s why people hate them.”⁶³

Some of the Protestant school students talked about hating Catholics just because they were brought up that way. Johnny made a more substantive contribution when he asserted that the hatred was rooted in the events of the past. Many of his classmates seemed unaware of the historical dimension. These teenagers inherited a multi-generational conflict, but the majority of them participate in it with little or no knowledge of the historical or political context.

In some cases the Lebanese students gave similar explanations to those of their peers in Belfast. Elia from the Greek Orthodox school in Beirut sounded a lot like Johnny from the Protestant school in Belfast when he offered:

Maybe we need some time because they have not easily forgotten the war in Lebanon. I wasn’t living during the war. I didn’t feel the war so I have no problem with Muslims. But maybe this man—his father has died in the war and he hates the Muslim people.

Elia’s classmate, Red, admitted that she believed Christians were far more open-minded than Muslims, one common example of the superiority complex many Christian Beirutis feel towards their Muslim neighbors. Aly Saad, a Muslim public school student shared two common stereotypes his friends at school have of Christians: that all of them are fundamentalists and that they are sexually

⁶³ From September 3-November 23, 2001, a group of Protestants prevented Catholic children at the Holy Cross primary school in North Belfast from walking to school in order to protest the presence of a Catholic school in what is now a predominantly Protestant area. There were reports of protesters spitting and throwing human excrement at the children, as well as displaying pornography.

promiscuous. Unlike in Belfast, the Lebanese seemed to have common traits they associated with one another that could aid in understanding the roots of their sectarian hatred.

Rasha from the very mixed evangelical school complained that in Lebanon every one, including her own mother, focused on someone's religious identity before their individuality. Pac, who moved from Kinchasa, Zaire to Lebanon spoke of how upon arrival he did not know what Muslims and Christians were, but was labeled a Muslim and told that Muslims were different than Christians and that the two groups hated each other. Leb described the historical context for some of the hatred between Druze and Christians: "In the mountains beside us, Druze made the Christians leave. We have this very rooted hate and it made him[his friend] also hate Muslims. I would have had a very different opinion if I had only known Christians." Leb credited his religiously mixed school environment with making him an open-minded person.⁶⁴

Doudou, a student at a *laic* school with all Muslim students conceded that young people are less close-minded than their parents because they did not live through the war, but that neighborhood segregation limits the extent of open-mindedness even among the youth.⁶⁵ At another point in the interview, Doudou made a comment that could probably just as accurately reflect the situation in Belfast. She felt that the problem in Lebanon is that people know how to talk, how to flatter and how to get

⁶⁴ Faour found in his study that "The most significant determinant of the intensity of sectarianism is the extent of religiosity" (144).

⁶⁵ While there is clear evidence from this study that there are high levels of tolerance even among students in segregated schools, there is insufficient data to determine whether or not there is a limit to the depth of tolerance possible without a lack of daily interaction across confessional lines.

along on the surface, but that one never really knows how the other person feels on the inside.⁶⁶

In general, the students in the more mixed schools in Beirut had more sophisticated reflections on the issue of sectarian hatred than their peers in mono-religious environments. Also, the interviewees in Belfast expressed more hatred than those in Beirut. This may have been due to differing cultural norms of communication rather than actual levels of hatred.

TOLERANCE

Having investigated the hatred described in these two conflict-ridden areas, it is now appropriate to examine the significant body of evidence below that indicates a high level of tolerance among young people in these two cities.

Between the twenty students interviewed at the Catholic and Protestant schools, fully half of them said in one way or another that there was no difference between Catholics and Protestants. Some selections from interviews at the Catholic school include: “We’re all the same. We’re all the same people,” and “At the end of the day, we’re all human beings and we have a right to live.” Pat reflected his awareness, no small feat in a deeply divided society, that there are two sides to every

⁶⁶ Khashan asked participants to rate their perceptions of other groups on the thermometer scale of warm/neutral/cold; the following percentages are those from each sect who felt cold towards other groups (Khashan 1992: 72-73).

- Sunnis ----- 76% Shi’a, 60% Catholics, 54% Maronites
- Shi’a ----- 89% Druze, 75% Maronites, 73% Sunnis, 70% Catholics
- Druze ---- 73% Sunnis, 64% Catholics, 51% Maronites, 17% Shi’a
- Maronites --- 81% Shi’a, 70% Sunnis, 67% Druze, 23% Orthodox
- Orthodox ---- 78% Shi’a, 64% Druze, 45% Maronite, 15% Sunni

story. Alan recognized that there are good Catholics and bad Catholics, just as there are good Protestants and bad Protestants.

The Protestant school, like the Catholic school, is rumored to be a bastion of sectarian hatred, with the kids coming from some of the most troubled estates in the city. But many of them exhibited a high degree of tolerance when asked about Catholics. Amy saw no difference between the two groups and said there was no point in fighting. Andrew concentrated on how stupid it was that there was such bloody violence over religion. Having grown up in Scotland where he had many Catholic friends, he could not comprehend why the two groups continued to fight. In discussing how superficially judgmental her friends at school were for slugging her just for spending time with Catholic friends, Petrina said “it does my head in.” Two other Protestant school students described the common humanity of Catholics and Protestants and the need to treat every one equally.

Some of the integrated school students elaborated on this point of view. Emma lashed out:

It's so stupid that somebody would hate you because of your religion. I don't understand it...They should just accept it. You want something different—okay. But you're still the same person. You're not like an alien or anything. You're the same people. You even like the same film. You just happen to have a different belief in something and you shouldn't hate each other for it and I really hate that. That's something I hate—that people hate each other for that.

Not every one at her integrated school felt the same way. For example, Jennifer admitted that all the sectarian comments do not bother her because she has gotten used to them. In sharp contrast, Joanne is not only disturbed, but lets people know.

If they[my friends] were to say something bad about the other religion, I would say 'What are you doing that for? You don't even know that person so what are you calling them names just because they're Protestant' and I would really shout and scream.

The range of their comments highlights the fact that there is no one type of student at an integrated school.

It is noteworthy that several of the students at the integrated school expressed gratitude to their school for providing them with an environment that is less bigoted than the segregated schools of their peers. As Seifer, a Protestant student remarked, "I am glad I went to school here. At the Protestant schools, people are bigoted." A big believer in integrated education, Joanne believed that it was the segregated school environment that was to blame. She recognized that she too would be bigoted if she had gone to a Catholic school:

I know people that go to Catholic school but it's not their fault because it's all they know. It's all they've been taught. They haven't been taught about the other religions. They just automatically feel bitter about them and think that they're different and that they're the ones doing the wrong. Whereas it's both sides that are wrong all the time.

Integrated school students were no more frequently anti-sectarian than their peers at the two segregated schools. But when they elaborated, they illuminated more dimensions of their tolerance and the hatred around them than would have otherwise been understood.

The vast majority of the students in Lebanon illustrated high levels of tolerance. They painted a collective picture of a generation of Lebanese who feel very little antagonism and share a hope that Christians and Muslims can peacefully coexist.⁶⁷

Several students made similar comments to the ones heard in Belfast. Statements such as “We are people and they are people,” “People are just people,” “Every person is like the other,” “I don’t look at religion. It doesn’t matter,” and “They are Lebanese and we are Lebanese.” Carine, whose father was kidnapped during the war took it one step further: “We don’t have to make a difference between Christian one and Muslim one. We have to live equally. We have to treat each other like we’re the same. We don’t have to do what the last generation did.” This theme of not repeating the violent mistakes of their parents was echoed in many of the Beirut interviews. There was a spirit across the religious spectrum that the young people of Lebanon have no interest in fighting and have no problems living together.

A few students spoke about God and the Quran to textualize these sentiments. Don Dido from a Makassed school gave the quote from the Quran: ‘you have your religion and I have my religion’ to illustrate his position that Christians and Muslims should each believe and practice freely. Pac added: “We’re all people, the same God. We’ve all got one God.” Moustapha, a practicing Muslim who attends a *laic* school elaborated: “Because in religion, you have to respect the other religion. It’s not ‘this religion is best’ and ‘this one is better’ and ‘this one you are more free.’— No! All religions are the same.” Ghida from Lycee offered:

⁶⁷ Findings from the first phase of “The Rising Generation” study suggested that even while the war was still going on in 1988, 54% of 1,500 young people surveyed adhered to tolerance, pardon and respect, and were willing to make peace with others, live with them and share (Messarra 1993).

What's the difference between a Muslim and a Christian anyway...I've always said to myself and I've always been told that as long as you don't kill, lie, rape, steal or whatever, you're a good person—that's what makes you a good person. You have to be honest and everything.

Two students, Roula from a Muslim populated public school and Soush from the evangelical school displayed the greatest sophistication in their thinking about the conflict. Soush was raised in the Druze community but has become a believing Christian during her time at the evangelical school. Perhaps it is this religious journey that has enabled her to see things as she does.

When people are talking about the civil war and they're probably Muslims, they say 'ooh the Christians did so much to us. They killed us. They chopped us. They bombed us.' A lot of stuff, other than the raping and stuff. So I would be listening and I would be angry. I mean 'how could somebody be so mean?' But when you think about it, we also did the same thing. We also killed and raped and slaughtered and stuff like that. So you can't really blame anybody. You just have to let go.

Roula suggested a perspectivist analysis of one particular issue that is symptomatic of the types of cross-cultural misunderstanding rampant in Lebanon. She described how most Muslims feel judgmental towards Christians for drinking alcohol and going out to clubs because it is forbidden according to Islam. But she recognized that drinking is not forbidden in Christianity and that it is therefore not wrong when Christians drink. Roula correctly acknowledged that most people judge others from their own shoes, rather than attempting to understand things from the other person's perspective.

No correlation was found in this study between tolerance and level of religious mixing in school.

THOUGHTS ON MIXED SCHOOLS

The previous sections described elements of the biographies and attitudes of the interview sample. The focus will now shift to the schools themselves. Students at schools with only one religious community were asked how they felt about mixed schools. Students at mixed schools were challenged to discuss their thoughts on integrated education.

Some students had difficulty imagining such schools and appeared never to have considered the issue of religious mixing in schools. Others were acutely aware of the segregation of schools and the impact it was having on their conflict.⁶⁸ While opinions across the spectrum could be found within each country group, a stronger resistance to religious mixing in the schools was voiced in the Belfast sample.

Of those who expressed unequivocal opinions in the Catholic school, three were very supportive of the notion of schools where Catholics and Protestants would learn together, and three were proponents of the maintenance of separate school systems. Interestingly, Pat, who had previously admitted that he hated Protestants, was one of the three proponents of integrated education. "Integrated schools are the thing of the future," he said indicating his desire to see a change in the hate that surrounds him.

⁶⁸ According to A.E.C.W. Spencer, "Segregated education did not cause the Northern Ireland conflict. It simply prevents cultural and structural developments that could be expected over two generations to create an effective conflict resolution system. It directly reinforces segregation in marriage, in work and in housing, in politics, recreation and the mass media. It obstructs the emergence of a shared identity. It directly reinforces cultural misconceptions, stereotypes and prejudice. Indirectly it legitimizes social discrimination and structural alienation, and it undermines the social foundations of potential conflict resolution systems" (Osborne, et al. 100).

At the Protestant school, there was a split largely on gender lines, with all four females endorsing the concept and all but one of the males imagining that such a school would be dangerous and full of fighting. Six of the interviewees from the Protestant school and four of the students at the Catholic school associated the idea of an integrated school with fighting. Sam boasted, “If the boys in this school would go to [name of integrated school] instead of here, there would be no Protestants left.”

Those who expressed antipathy for the notion of mixed religion schools admitted that were they to attend such schools, they would probably become friends with people of the other religion. They still preferred to keep the two groups separate.⁶⁹ Alan favored the idea of integrated education, but himself would not go to school with Protestants. When Stephen was probed on why he didn’t want things to change, he said, “Because the wee Protestants, bitter Protestants, would be living next door to me and all. I wouldn’t like that.” For most of these students, the resistance to integration seemed to stem from fear.

Morgan, a student at the Protestant school who lives on the Shankill Road and thought that integrated schools only existed in mixed areas, innocently declared that she would go to one if it opened in her neighborhood.

Cuz I mean you have your American schools over in America and they’re all mixed, aren’t they? You have your Blacks and everything. You’s ones would be alright with it. Why shouldn’t we be?

⁶⁹Flanagan and Lambkin argue that the ‘great untested hypothesis’ of the debate on integrated education is whether it is possible for Catholics and Protestants to gain a common identity in school without losing their separate religious identities. “The central issue is whether or not a point is reached inevitably in the process of integration—past the stage of polite neighborliness—at which further progress can be achieved only by the surrender of separate religious identities in the interest of a common identity and shared loyalty to the same school” (Moffat 202).

Andrew, also at the Protestant school, who spent some of his childhood in Glasgow, and recently won an award named after Princess Diana for his involvement in cross-community work, said: “I think it’s good, them getting people to work together—different religions. Cuz then it might stop all this and they’ll be able to knock them big barrier walls down and they’ll be peace instead of fighting all the time.” None of his male classmates agreed. Chris assumed his feelings towards Catholics would end up getting him into fights constantly. This was the most common sentiment at the Protestant school about integrated schools.

John listed some of the impressions he had of integrated schools that illuminated the stereotypes of integrated schools in contemporary Belfast. Firstly, he thought that all integrated schools were grammar schools. He then explained that this was the reason none of the students there riot. He believed that integrated schools provide a better education and the chance of getting a better job. And he said that integrated schools get more money from the government and look nicer. Though none of these four assertions are factual, John, attending the lowest achieving school in Northern Ireland, imagined integrated schools to be the opposite of his school. Another student remarked that students who attend integrated schools go there due to the proximity of the school to where they live, and not for any other reason. This claim was supported by at least two integrated school interviewees.

Integrated school students were unanimously in favor of integrated education, with common responses that integrated education “builds bridges,” “is the only way

forward” or “represents a chance for peace.”⁷⁰ For Joanne, integrated schools represent the freedom to choose what to believe.

Interviewees in Beirut came from eight different types of schools, with varying degrees of religious mixing.⁷¹ Students from across the spectrum of level of mixing in their schools spoke very enthusiastically about mixed schools. Akram and Amila from the Makassed schools felt positively toward mixed religion schools. Akram was under the impression that “mixed schools have a much better education”⁷² while Amila thought they would help people understand each other better. Farah shared:

My school had a project with Ain Turra, a Christian school. We met students from there. It wasn't strange. We felt comfortable with each other. We visit each other. We are friends now. There is no problem. It is very important to let us meet Christians.

While Don Dido said he would have no problem at a mixed school, he was the only Lebanese interviewee who thought there would be fighting at such a school. “In my opinion, if I couldn't convince him with reason, I would convince him with force.”

⁷⁰ According to the first principal at the integrated school used in this study, “Our basic premise is that education can and does make a difference, and it can change society” (Moffat 52). There were essentially six different rationales provided by the early leaders of the movement in support of integrated education: parents have the right to choose a type of education; every public opinion poll since 1967 has shown majority support for integrated education for their own children; parents realize that only way for their children to have the chance of escaping from sectarianism is to be exposed to ‘the other sort’; strengthening the middle ground in society, which has historically been very weak and therefore provided little aid in resolution of the conflict; the contact theory – primary face to face social interaction, extended over long period of time, cooperative in nature, pursuing a common goal, with equality of status and no competition for scarce rewards, and a system of group support; the theological imperative – Christianity demands love for the neighbor (Osborne, et al. 101-105).

⁷¹ At least three types of mixed schools exist in divided societies. The first is where a minority submits to the dominant cultural ethos; the second is a secular mixing, with religion being the safeguard of the individual outside of school; and finally an inter-faith mixture where families and religious organizations actively co-operate in religious education of their children (Osborne, et al. 199-200).

⁷² Several people told me that the Muslim elites in contemporary Lebanon all went to Christian schools.

Doudou from a *laic* school felt strongly that mixed schools are the only way for the country to progress. Sara, the only Christian student in her class at a *laic* school, was an emphatic proponent of mixed schools, though admittedly she had never experienced them. “To have a good country, to have a united country, the people should hold hands. They will never ever ever be together if this division between them is still there.” The four public school students that were interviewed, all of them secular Muslims active in the communist ULDY, unanimously endorsed mixed schools. A.M argued that mixing in high school reduces the level of sectarianism. Aly Saad criticized his school for teaching him only about one religion and culture and favored an alternative model that introduces students to many different cultures and religions.⁷³ Growing up, he believed that all Christians had red noses and he heard once from a Christian friend that she thought all Muslims had small tales. These are the kinds of stereotypes born of ignorance that he believed mixing could redress. Roula’s position was expressed more directly: “I think if we had mixed schools, we would go better toward peace and understanding. If we stay in divided schools, we could reproduce another war.”

Amy, like most of her classmates at the religiously mixed evangelical school, believed strongly in mixed religion schools, but suggested that the problem is not the existence of Muslim schools and Christian schools, but the lack of religiously mixed student bodies. She cited her own school as an example of a Christian school, but one that is mixed and where people from different religions interact without

⁷³ One professor at Universite St. Josef, who teaches a course entitled ‘a survey in dialogue on public concerns’ and has published widely in French and Arabic, told me he doesn’t believe in the idealism of integration or the America-Canada-ladenness of the term multi-culturalism. He advocates *inclusion*. “Inclusion is somewhere between multiculturalism and integration. It is based on acceptance of the other and continuous dialogue with him. Inclusion is how to live with less fear” (Interview with Abdo Kais, Beirut, 4 Apr. 2002).

difficulty. This is an issue, unique to the Lebanese case, of the frequent asymmetry between school governance and the student body.⁷⁴

Carine and Jose both attend the Greek Orthodox school in East Beirut. Each grade in their high school contains two or three Muslim students, but the vast majority of the student body is Christian. Their feelings, based on upon limited exposure to the Muslims in their school, holds a clue to what is probably a mainstream position among their peers. Jose appreciated the fact that he knew a few Muslims, but would simply never feel comfortable in an environment with many more Muslims. “I don’t see myself getting around with other people, with another religion. It’s not that I make a difference, but I am not used to them, to their ideas, to their manners.”

Carine reluctantly yielded her sentiment that some Muslims at school is positive, but many more would turn into a negative. She would not like her school to become half Muslim and half Christian. “Even if we say that we don’t have a difference with them—we don’t want to think that way, but I think that in the deep bottom of every one there is still a feeling of the difference that exists between them.” While few of the interviewees articulated something of this sort, many of them may share Carine’s thoughts. Contradictory statements that emerged from interviews with Alan and Stephen at the Catholic school and Chris and Whitney-June at the Protestant school illustrate a similar phenomenon that has taken shape in the attitudes of high school students in these two divided cities. They have come to understand that mixing is the only chance for progress, but they are deeply rooted in societies that present them with many obstacles to prevent such mixing. They

⁷⁴One expert on education in Lebanon told me about a Catholic school in Nabitiyeh, a city in South Lebanon, with 3000 students that are all Muslims. It was a Christian community before the war and the nuns stayed there and continue to run the school (Interview with Nimr Freyha, Beirut, 27 Mar. 2002).

express ambivalence towards integration because too much enthusiasm would place them on the margins of their divided society.⁷⁵

DIFFERENT LEVELS OF MIXING AT SCHOOLS

To complement the last section, students at segregated schools described elements of their school cultures that are juxtaposed with the descriptions of students at more mixed schools. Aly Saad, a public school student, shared a story that demonstrated the seriousness of the religious divide:

One day in my school the sheikh came into the class saying that ‘I know that all of you are Muslims and we have doctors, and when you are sick, even when you are in a grave situation, you are not allowed to go to a Christian doctor. You have to go to a Muslim doctor.’

Hamzeh, who attends a private Shi’i school⁷⁶, with both Amal and Hizbullah supporting Shi’i families, conveyed his observation that “The Hizbullah guys I know at school—if a chance came to them to go fight, they are going to go fight. They find it interesting to hold the gun and shoot.” Hamzeh also shared his frustration with school for not caring about teaching open-mindedness and tolerance. “They never brought a Christian person to our school and taught us about them.” Stories like the ones from Aly Saad and Hamzeh provide the supporting evidence for sentiments expressed by other interviewees. Jack, who attends a secular school with all Muslims, expressed strong hostility towards religious Muslim schools. Soush and

⁷⁵ For preeminent Lebanese Christian Scholar Antoine Messarra, the values developed by a school are more important than the degree of social integration. Because politics is confessional, the schools are deeply politicized. When it comes to coexistence, Messarra argues, the government has bad values. The depoliticization of the schools and universities is more important than social mixing (Interview with Antoine Messarra, President of the Lebanese Foundation for Permanent Civil Peace, Beirut, 4 Apr. 2002).

⁷⁶ Article 10 of the Constitution of 1926 referred to the right of ‘religious communities’ to have their own schools (Bashshur 1988).

Rasha who attend a predominantly Christian school explained that they would be much more narrow-minded if they were in school only with Christians.

Attention now shifts to the portrait of mixed schools provided by the students at them.⁷⁷ Some of the students' comments are critical and even overtly cynical, while most are enthusiastic. Wadih posed a serious challenge to all who are interested in questions of mixing the religions in schools.

It's not just a matter of love each other. We do not hate him/her to tell us love him/her. The question is: do we really hate each other or why do we hate? When we know the answer of why do we hate, then we can find a solution, not just bring students to the same school, saying love each other.

For Wadih, simply throwing people together into a classroom who happen to come from different religious backgrounds is irrational. It is only a worthwhile project if it is a well thought out and substantive one. According to Red, a student at the Greek Orthodox school, there are several reasons to be critical of her own school. She described two people she knows, one of whom is a Christian Phalangist and the other a Muslim Hizbullah supporter. They talk in school as if they're good friends. She screamed: "He is going home to burn their flag. It's not going well. Even if you're together here, if it's not coming from the inside, nothing will matter." On whether her school is mixed, she said: "We say that it is a mixed religion school, but when you are here, you can't say it anymore. When you look around you and you see all these crucifixes and things, just look around and no—it isn't really a mixed

⁷⁷ Khashan outlines four types of inter-group relations traced in the literature. See Allport 1954 on inter-group perceptions; Hagner & Pierce 1994 on inter-group interaction; Oloyede 1987 for views on secularization; Stolzenberg 1990 on inter-group communication (Khashan 1992: 26).

school.” Red’s burning message was about the way the school does not deal with difference:

We’re so different. Every one is different...I would like that if we were in a school where we could express these differences. We are different, but we’re always obliged to say ‘oh, we’re all brothers.’ We’re not—we are different and it’s not bad. They have to understand that it’s not bad to be different in the same place... It’s not about being like them or making them be like us—it’s just about working together, living together, [and] being friends.⁷⁸

Elia is an unusual Christian classmate of Red’s. He was raised in Canada and feels that this gave him a perspective very different from that of his Lebanese peers. He has a very close friend who is one of the few Muslims in his class. Elia admitted that when he is among only Christian friends, he feels that they do not like Muslims. He also suggested that the stability and the lack of fighting in his school may depend on the rather small number of Muslims there. Leb, one of the 30% of Christian students at the evangelical school divulged the fact that most of the Christians at the school only hang out with other Christians.

Students at the integrated school in Belfast also made a few critical comments about integrated schools. Emma discussed the change in admissions policy over the years. She alluded to the fact that the only students who were accepted in the early years were those committed to the idea of integrated education. Once the movement

⁷⁸ One study in 1973 looked at the experience of Muslim pupils in Christian schools and Christian pupils in Muslim schools. The results were that “In all cases the pupils showed attitudes in conformity with the general political trend in their community irrespective of the school they were attending. A Muslim in a Christian school remains, politically speaking, a Muslim, and a Christian or a Jew attending a Muslim school remains a Christian or a Jew in his basic political persuasion” (Hanf 1980: 229).

gained momentum and integrated schools became publicly funded,⁷⁹ anyone could enroll. This has shifted a large percentage of the student base at the integrated school to students who come either because of the proximity of the school to their homes or as a better alternative to grammar schools than the average secondary school.⁸⁰ Thomas supported this tempered portrayal of his school, very different from the one usually seen on television specials:

Not every one who comes to this school believes in integrated education, and that's a fact. I know they don't like to admit it, but it's a fact. A lot of people just come because it's a good school. Whenever people go outside, they do go out rioting and they do go out fighting.

Most of the students at the integrated school had only positive words about their school. Emma talked about a friend of hers who “was brought up in a Protestant area with the loyalist frame of mind, but out of her own free will, she came here... from meeting other people at this school, she became more open-minded.” Paul exclaimed: “When you're in school you're just a person. You're not a religion.” Repeating the commonly held sentiment amongst his classmates, Seifer differentiated the experience of students at his school from that of their peers.

They [integrated schools] make a difference. People I know – if they met some Catholics – they wouldn't be thinking the same way they do. I don't understand. I tell them they're [Catholics are] just normal people.

⁷⁹The Education Reform Order of 1989 encouraged the development of integrated schools, created a mechanism for funding them and obligated the government to support and promote integrated education (Smith 1995: 175).

⁸⁰Schools in Northern Ireland are divided in at least two significant ways. There are three parallel school systems serving mainly Catholic, mainly Protestant and mixed enrollments. The mixed, or integrated, schools serve about 4% of the total pupil population. The second form of separation is at the post-primary level when pupils are divided between grammar schools and secondary schools. Grammar schools are permitted to select their pupils on academic grounds, so these schools tend to have a socially more advantaged intake and higher status. There are Catholic and Protestant grammar and secondary schools. The integrated schools seek to be inclusive of all pupils and hence are mixed in terms of gender and ability, as well as religion.

Thomas, in spite of his cynical comments could not refrain from saying that if he had gone to a Protestant school, he would have become more sectarian. “Integrated education has made me respect people and different religions. I think I would maybe have a bigger chip on my shoulder because the way I’ve been brought up.”

Students at the evangelical school, with roughly 70% Muslim enrollment, had similar feelings about their experiences in a mixed religion school. Leb talked about the importance of schools like his in teaching young people how to coexist. Omar said that his fellow students come from tolerant families. “The parents who teach their kids to hate other religions would not put their kids in this school. The only ones who put their children in these schools believe in equality.” In a comment that sharply distinguished the Beirut context from the Belfast context, Omar provided his own rationale for why it is important to meet people from another religion. “If someone only knows about his own religion, when he sees other religions, he would know which one is better so he could switch to it.” In Beirut, as opposed to Belfast, many of the interviewees cared deeply about the search for true religious beliefs.

One of the interesting findings at both the integrated school in Belfast and the evangelical school in Beirut was the number of students who mentioned how much they loved their teachers. Integrated school students raved about being able to call their teachers by their first names and the friendliness of the school’s atmosphere.⁸¹

⁸¹ While none of the students at the Protestant school expressed any positive feelings towards any of the school’s authority figures, two Catholic school interviewees mentioned that they loved their teachers. In addition, the way the principal and his staff at the Catholic school welcomed me into their school was exceptional. They encouraged me to spend a few days at the school interacting with the students informally before interviewing them.

As to whether the students at the integrated school felt they were making a minor contribution to reducing the level of conflict between Catholics and Protestants by attending an integrated school, interviewees were mixed. Seifer said he was just going to school where his father chose for him to go. Jennifer, frustrated with the point, exclaimed: “Everybody makes a big deal about it [integrated schools], but it’s not a big deal...It’s just a normal school. You just come here and learn.” Dennis took a middle position, arguing that his contribution was “Staying out of trouble. One less person fighting.” For Penny, Joanne and Emma, their attendance at an integrated school was their way of trying to do something positive. They emphasized the importance of effecting one person at a time and of raising their kids not to hate the other group.

One of the major surprises of this study was that a Christian evangelical school serves as the model of inter-faith coexistence in Beirut. Druze, Muslim and Christian students all shared their love of their school. Despite the mandatory daily participation in Bible study and chapel hymns, a school with a 70% Muslim majority is masterfully engineered by a Canadian evangelical Christian principal. Amy spoke of her love of chapel. “I’m not a Christian, but I love going to chapel. I don’t think I’d like to miss a day of chapel. It’s a good thing for your personality. It’s moral, it’s got morals and everything. It’s not just singing to Jesus.” Omar, a practicing Muslim, said “It’s different than Muslim schools. Here they teach you morals.”⁸²

⁸²I asked the principal if the goal of his school was to convert Muslims to Christianity, and he told me that he loves Jesus and wants to spread his teachings. Even if the government told him that he could not mention Jesus in school, however, he would continue to try to influence the kids for the good by discussing cheating, honesty and integrity.

The school is an unabashedly Christian school with mostly Muslim students, and every one feels comfortable and treats one another as equals. Can an integrated school be successfully run by one religious denomination, particularly a proselytizing one? Contrary to standard western thinking, it appears so.

Before moving to the next section, it is worth mentioning that many of the interviewees who endorsed the idea of mixed religion schools were asked how they would feel about forced system wide integration. In a very surprising finding, there was greater support for the idea of forced integration amongst Catholic and Protestant school students than among their peers at the integrated school. While several integrated school students hoped for the growth of the integrated school movement over time, not a single one believed forced integration to be the right path. They cited the importance of choice, the threat of increased violence and the fact that many more students would not come to school.

Of those who expressed a strong opinion on the matter in Beirut, nine students were in favor of system wide integration and seven students were opposed.⁸³ Proponents included students from Makassed, the evangelical school and two *laic* schools. Of the seven who felt strongly that it should not be done, three were from the Greek Orthodox school. Amila from Makassed summarized the position: “It shouldn’t be forced on us. It should come spontaneously. Between each other, we should take the first steps and begin to talk with each other without being forced. It should come naturally.” In the words of Wadih, “When you have a mixed school that is imposed,

⁸³ Echoing the sentiments of some of the students, one leading scholar said, “It is impossible to ban Hizbollah schools. Freedom of choice is important. The key is to create a viable alternative in the public school system. You don’t resolve things by forcing people” (Interview with Nada Nasr, Beirut, 12 Apr. 2002).

the people will go there and isolate themselves and fight. But if you let people integrate naturally, they will produce the mixed school.” Many of the students felt that all schools should be mixed, but were weary of a government decision to do this when the government itself is divided along religious lines under the consociational structure.⁸⁴

AVOIDANCE

Over the course of this study, it was discovered that avoidance of controversy is a widespread practice in the mixed schools under investigation. Many students at the schools with mixed populations had clearly internalized the schools’ decisions to keep religious and political controversy out of their schools. Four out of ten integrated school students specifically said they favored the avoidance of contentious issues. A similar percentage of students at the mixed schools in Lebanon agreed.

Their argument was simple and obvious to them. Keep controversy out of school.⁸⁵ There is no point in discussing things about which people have strong and adversarial opinions. Rasha described how she didn’t talk about religion with any of her Muslim friends because she was afraid of offending them. Conversations, such

⁸⁴ According to one leading scholar, good public schools would have to come into being to create a situation where schools could integrate more. And until it is more realistic for schools to integrate, work must be done with existing schools to build ties between them. This, of course, is exactly what has been attempted in Belfast under the auspices of Education for Mutual Understanding with very limited success. In the end, though, she believed that very good public schools will naturally bring in people from private schools; and thus that the real solution to the problem of segregation is in having a good public school system (Interview with Nada Nasr, Beirut, 12 Apr. 2002).

⁸⁵ “Children in a mixed school environment may be aware of the out-group and avoid controversial political and religious issues to preserve harmony and avoid intercommunal conflict. Sensitive and taboo issues may be avoided by Protestant and Catholic children to preserve peace and tranquility within the integrated school context” (Byrne 96).

as the one that broke out in her Arabic class a week earlier about the future of Palestinians in Lebanon, could be destructive to friendships. When Paul suffered a tragic spate of events that forced his family to leave their home, he also chose to keep silent at school out of fear of offending either his Protestant or Catholic friends. Though she is Muslim, Angell, a student at the Greek Orthodox school, spoke of the pointlessness of certain conversations. “When I feel that I’m near someone from Hizbullah or Amal,⁸⁶ I get out step by step. I cannot have a conversation. I can’t do anything.”⁸⁷ Soush in Beirut and Jack in Belfast agreed that it was best to leave the difficult conversations outside of the school walls.

Lisa voiced the sentiment that the conflict in Belfast was being dragged out due to the insistence of some people to bring up the past.

There’s all these people that hold a grudge against all these other people and there’s always gonna be people that bring the past back up—like that Bloody Sunday⁸⁸ thing—on TV—I know it was an awful thing to happen, but they shouldn’t have brought it all back up because it started a lot of things...We should just forget about everything and move on.

Most of her Catholic peers in Belfast would have been horrified by Lisa’s insinuation that their safeguarding the memory of a tragedy in Catholic nationalist history was serving as an obstacle to peace and stability. Lisa did not even suggest

⁸⁶The two main political parties supported by the majority Shi’i Muslim community.

⁸⁷Incidentally, in his latest response to critics of consociationalism, Arend Lijphart admits that there is no place for individuals or groups who reject the premise that society should be organized on an ethnic or communal basis. Angell, a Muslim living amongst Muslims, including family members in Hizbullah, attending school with mostly Christians, has no comfortable place in contemporary Beirut.

⁸⁸Bloody Sunday refers to January 30, 1972 when soldiers from the British Army’s First Parachute Regiment opened fire and shot dead thirteen Catholics who were participating in a march to protest against the policy of internment without trial that had been introduced on August 9, 1971. Soon after the events, the British-government appointed Widgery Tribunal found all of the soldiers not guilty. The Bloody Sunday Inquiry was opened by Tony Blair in a statement to the House of Commons on January 29, 1998. The hearings continue at the time of this writing. There were recently a number of documentaries and docudramas commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the events.

the clichéd ‘forgive and forget’ approach. She would like every one to forget and move forward.

Another student committed to integrated education, Joanne, offered her feelings about the potential pitfalls of conversations where people deal with difficult issues.

Sometimes it’s not good to be honest because you do hurt people’s feelings. There’s people in this school who have very strong views and they shouldn’t tell them because it’s not fair-do you know what I mean? They’re bad views.

“Bad views.” Joanne has attended the integrated school for the better part of her life. She has not learned how to dialogue with people who vehemently disagree with her. One is left to wonder how great a service a school like hers is offering to Belfast.⁸⁹ Perhaps at this stage of the conflict, the very fact that Protestant and Catholic children are interacting in school is laudable progress.⁹⁰

Another group of students in Beirut⁹¹ explained that it is forbidden to talk about religion or politics in school. As Jose from the Greek Orthodox school said, “We

⁸⁹ Though Laurie Johnson found a great deal of evidence supporting the claim that many teachers in integrated schools seek to avoid controversy in their classrooms, she also discovered many instances of engagement with the difficult issues. “... the teachers and schools that have taken a proactive stance in addressing these issues in the classroom were quite convinced that learning activity that supports the integrated ethos of the school can be successfully imparted while remaining mindful of minority group sensitivities. These teachers have seen that through relevant instruction and dialogue in the classroom, students can build the necessary tools to problem-solve, negotiate differences and make responsible choices not only in their integrated school setting but also in society at large.” See the ‘Promising Practices’ section at the end of her paper for many examples of such constructive engagement.

⁹⁰ Laurie Johnson tells an anecdote at one integrated school where symbols of cultural identity were treated as inherently problematic. She critiques the handling of the issue in saying that “cultural identity was not addressed as a positive force to be celebrated and shared as part of the learning experience but as a problematic factor that was best neutralized.” As Lambkin and Flanagan have said, the reputation integrated schools have created for being afraid to deal with difference is one of many reasons integrated schools have so many critics on both sides of the religious divide.

⁹¹ There is comparatively sparse analysis on this issue of avoidance in the Lebanese educational literature. However, one study reflected, “Every effort has been made to expunge controversy from the classroom. Those very issues which students should be encouraged to discuss and explore with their teachers are the ones which have been deemed inappropriate subject matter for the classroom.

have different ideas, different opinions, but we don't talk about it a lot. Because it's forbidden to talk about that." Leb juxtaposed his experiences hanging out with his Christian friends outside of school and with his mixed group of friends at the evangelical school. "When we are in a group of Christians, we talk about it. But when we are all mixed, every one has his beliefs and we can't talk about it."

In a related point, when Maalmak was asked if his parents lost any friends in the war, he quietly said, "We don't ask about this." There seem to be unwritten rules that dictate the lack of conversations about sensitive issues in Lebanese society. It may be possible to say about contemporary Lebanon that there is a culture of avoidance.⁹² Many of the Lebanese interviewees spoke as if they lived in a perfectly normal and peaceful society. To the extent that there were political and/or religious cleavages, most students treated them as problems of their parents' generation or of political leaders. A few students distinguished themselves by sharing other perspectives. Red, a passionate student at the Greek Orthodox school, gave her analysis of avoidance:

Well psychologically it's more comfortable to say that it's over, everything is good, we're living together, we're having barbecue on Sunday—It's so easy, but if they think deep inside, they will know it isn't easy. If you had to tell your son some story, you won't tell him about civil war, you'll tell him that everything is okay. It's easier. It's nicer. But it's not a good way to do it. Because to forget doesn't mean to heal. In a few years, it will be back. Maybe less. Because it's always in there. You're just forgetting it. You're just seeing other things. If you're not looking at it, it

Until Lebanese educators correct this attitude, schools will continue to breed prejudice and hatred instead of co-operation and mutual respect" (Hares 1-2).

⁹²The term 'culture of avoidance' was used by Barbara Lomas to describe Northern Ireland (Fearon 1997). Dominic Murray's finding that Rathlin and St. Jude's, a Protestant and Catholic school respectively, also ignored sensitive issues in the classroom supports the argument that Northern Ireland generally, and not just the integrated school environment, is a culture of avoidance (Murray 125).

doesn't mean it doesn't exist. That's all you're trying to do.

Two of her classmates agreed with her. Angell said "Because in Lebanon they talk that everything is going well and it's not true." Elia added: "The politicians say 'everything is all right. Everything is all right. Everything is all right.' But nothing is all right." Were these three students unduly pessimistic or simply the most candid interviewees?⁹³

At the integrated school, it is clear that avoidance of heated political conversations is not the only level at which the culture of avoidance manifests. Effects of this approach lead the school to sweep things under the table that are deeply traumatic for certain individuals in their community. Full of guilt and worried about tarnishing the reputation of the school, Emma shared a terrible incident where someone copied her work and took credit for it. Worse than the incident itself, Emma was saddened by the way the school handled it. "I remember my art teacher saying to me, 'let's keep this between the four walls.'" Emma was not the only student at her school that complained that their principal was more concerned with the public image of her school than with the students' welfare. After much hesitation and pent-up emotion, Paul burst out: "I have been through a lot in the last year and have a serious trouble in my house and no one ever came up to me and offered me any advice, any help, any counseling or nothing."⁹⁴

⁹³ According to Christian Lebanese scholar Antoine Messarra, a logic of dissimulation rules in Lebanon according to which "thought is composed of mental reservations which conceal rather than reveal the truth" (Messarra 2002: 169).

⁹⁴ Fearon's research shows that in many cases, the problem of avoiding controversial issues reveals the trouble adults, including teachers and youth workers, have in dealing with difficult issues.

The culture of avoidance has also led to three surprising examples of lack of information. Lisa explained that students do not really learn anything about the differences between Protestantism and Catholicism because they do not want students to get confused about their beliefs. Jack had no idea whether or not there were any political parties that drew from both Protestant and Catholic constituencies.⁹⁵ Seifer could not remember the name of Danny, a twenty year-old graduate of his school who was on the cover of every new spaper after being brutally shot dead by a loyalist paramilitary group a few months earlier.⁹⁶ By being committed implicitly to a school culture of peace and stability, the faculty⁹⁷ at this integrated school have seemed to forego active engagement with the issues that most plague their society.⁹⁸ Is there potential for the integrated school movement in Northern Ireland to transform itself into a politicized agent of social change?

Four of the ten integrated school students felt there should be more discussion about the difficult issues.⁹⁹ They had concrete suggestions about how to begin. Joanne, who had earlier spoken about the pitfalls of honesty, came to recognize that her

⁹⁵ I was surprised that students at the integrated schools in Northern Ireland were not exposed to the people in the political system that seemed like obvious role models to them for representing in politics what they stood for in school: namely, the dismantling of the segregated, sectarian structure dividing society.

⁹⁶ Two masked gunmen killed Danny McColgan on January 12, 2002. A postal worker, he was shot dead when he reported to work in the predominantly Protestant Rathcoole section of North Belfast. The UDA took responsibility for the murder. Several news stations did stories at Hazelwood the following Monday since Danny had recently graduated.

⁹⁷ Many teachers admitted that one of the main reasons they don't engage with contentious issues is because they have no experience with diversity training or conflict management techniques. Those who try have to rely on their own materials. This leads Laurie Johnson to suggest that there be circulating materials within the integrated school movement to help teachers deal with difficult issues.

⁹⁸ While concrete suggestions of how to do this are beyond the scope of this study, it may be time to wed the literature on conflict resolution with the curriculum in mixed schools in divided societies. For reading on conflict resolution, see Thompson et al. 1993; Rubin & Sandeer 1991; Burton 1990; and Fogg 1985. For specific reading about education and conflict resolution, see Kohis & Knight 1994; Deutsch 1993; Bretherton 1987; and Kneidler 1984.

⁹⁹ In one study, 79% of young people expressed interest in learning about politics in school (Fearon). Recent research has shown that approximately 1/3 of students had classes that dealt with the issue of sectarianism (Smyth 2000).

school should offer more discussions on politics. Lisa believed there should be a class at school devoted to what is happening in the community. Paul pleaded through tears: “I feel a counselor would be a great help for students that are living in predominantly whatever religion it is, when they see all the trouble and when they come to school they just can’t say anything about it, so yeah a counselor would be great.” Penny isolated the way in which her school may not be fulfilling its potential:

Cuz if they’re coming in here and just not talking about it and going back home and seeing all the troubles, coming in and not talking about it, they’re just going to see that one side and they’re never going to see the other side. But if they come in and talk about it with the other religion, they could start seeing the other side.¹⁰⁰

Is it worth the risk of destabilizing the bubble in these mixed schools with intensive conflict transformation workshops? Or is it best to leave these issues outside—even though there is hardly an opportunity for students to discuss them across sectarian lines ‘outside.’¹⁰¹ This debate is pointed at the heart of the culture of avoidance permeating Northern Ireland and Lebanon in their efforts to reunite their divided societies.¹⁰² Mixed schools, by beginning to address the segregation at the heart of the problem in these two societies, have become the symbolic targets of the accusation of avoidance.

¹⁰⁰ Penny suggested conversations similar to the one we were having—what it’s like to live in Belfast and go to school at Hazelwood, how things could change, etc. This illustrates why I walked a fine line in my role as interviewer between journalist, researcher, therapist and agent of social change.

¹⁰¹ One excellent example of serious cross-community work is the Spirit of Enniskillen. For a recent analysis of their approach to conflict resolution among young people, see French 2001.

¹⁰² Speaking to a conference in Oslo in 1996 about the Lebanese and larger Arab world, Messarra could just as easily have been speaking about Northern Ireland: “In both private and social life the source of conflicts in Lebanon, as well as in other Arab states, is in fact *what isn’t said* as a result of social traditions in lying to one another, compromise, lack of sincerity and openness. The controversial issue is never stated. The center of controversy is in undeclared backgrounds. All Lebanese and Arabs in general are brought up in their families, schools, environment and in political business in a way not to raise problems—clearly, honestly and respectfully and later not to face these problems...Therefore we have to educate people to raising problems as they are and facing them honestly, objectively and respectfully. This is one of the first requirements of education in terms of conflict’s confinement” (Messarra 1996: 7-8).

SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES

Over the course of the interviews, students were asked to consider the relative influences of their schools and their families on their views towards the ‘other.’ A wide range of responses was given, with the majority position being that the home served as a more powerful determinant of attitudes than the school.¹⁰³

Students who exhibited both tolerance and intolerance towards the other group credited their parents with their ideas. Amy from the Protestant school believed her open-mindedness came from her parents. Sara from a *laic* school in Beirut was certain that her tolerance was a product of her upbringing. The same goes for Angell, one of the few Muslims at the Greek Orthodox school, who remarkably had an aunt who attended the school a generation earlier. On the flip side, Chris talked about how his Mom, like he, did not like Catholics and Whitney-June similarly described her mother as a woman who taught her to differentiate between Catholics and Protestants.

Doudou, a student at a *laic* school reasoned differently. She believed that she was at an age where her peers did not really want to listen to their parents, and that the

¹⁰³ This data serves as further evidence for a case built in the literature on the relative weight of influences on the development of youth. “...if the political orientation of the school is competing with other socializing agencies demanding the students’ loyalty, or competing with an interest perception of students in opposition to the school’s orientation, the school tends to be on the losing side. Thus there is hardly reason to believe that education can change attitudes and opinions in cases of deep cleavages and conflicts characteristic of plural societies” (Hanf 1980: 229). According to research done by Adnan El-Amine, “The impact of school stops at the door of the house.” If a school has an ideological position it is trying to transmit to students and it contradicts the ideas of the house, then the school will have no ideological impact (Interview with Adnan El-Amine, Beirut, 26 Mar. 2002).

ideas coming from school were in fact more likely to be internalized. Amila from a Makassed school agreed that there is a tremendous potential among schools to influence for the good.

There are a lot of problems because of the schools, because they are not integrating with each other. If schools would force Christians and Muslims to be together inside of the school, we would have to understand each other, bear each other and learn from each other. Schools have a lot of influence.

Jennifer, who had been one of the most hostile interviewees at the integrated school shared a brief anecdote about a classmate of hers from Ballymoral, a Protestant estate in North Belfast, who was very bigoted at first but has become far more tolerant as a result of his time at school.

At least two students, one in Belfast and one in Beirut, spoke about the fact that they developed tolerance and open-mindedness despite coming from more narrow-minded families. Petrina explained exasperatedly: “No my parents aren’t like me. My parents don’t agree with the things I do. They don’t think the same as me.” Roula too said that she was different than her family, that they think about whether someone is Sunni or Shi’i. She understood this discrepancy to be rooted in their respective life experiences.¹⁰⁴

The weight of the evidence suggested that students felt that their parents’ attitudes were more influential than schools could ever be. Emma explained that those who riot are usually following the example of older siblings or parents who have done the same. Don Dido from a Makassed school offered: “I don’t think there is any family

¹⁰⁴ For the pivotal role of the family in transmitting social norms and values, see Hyman 1959. For an example of the literature that suggests other influences may be stronger, see Hess and Torney 1965.

in Lebanon that hasn't lost somebody in this war, so the tension is there and the hatred is there inside the family."¹⁰⁵ In most cases, this hatred is not something that can be undone by superficial mixing in school, without serious and sustained attempts at conflict resolution. Omar from the evangelical school put it succinctly. "They don't change when the school says something." Sean at the Catholic school concurred: "I suppose the school can't really change the people that go to the school...If they hate Protestants, then that's the way it's gonna be." Several of the students expressed the perspective that it is not the role of the schools to teach values such as tolerance and open-mindedness.¹⁰⁶ But if such values are not coming from the home, does the school have the right or even the responsibility to fill that role?

A few students in the mixed schools had a complementary experience that solidified the values they learned at home. For these students, their parents' decisions to send them to mixed schools were an extension of the values with which they raised their children. In trying to figure out why she developed an unusually high level of open-mindedness Amy in Beirut admitted: "To be fair, I think it's mostly thanks to my parents and the way I was raised, but this school does not go against that. It supports that a lot." These are the students who make it sound as though there is no conflict around them. Their experiences have shown them that there is no problem treating every one equally and living and learning with people regardless of their

¹⁰⁵ Many scholars discuss the pre-war integration that existed in schools. Christians and Muslims routinely went to school together. However, some believe that war and the segregation of neighborhoods and schools that resulted illustrated that integration failed in the face of deep-seated religious and cultural differences. See Bashshur 1988: 57-58.

¹⁰⁶ Some research suggests that schools in Lebanon have been too focused on passive learning and lacking in the development of critical thinking. "Schools nowadays in Lebanon and in the Arab region as a whole do not have a great influence on behaviors as they depend upon memorizing and dictating. So the pupil pours all what he has learned by heart at the exam and he, in fact, acquires his behaviors on his way from home to school, with his life companions, in the neighborhood where he lives, in his environment, through what he reads, hears, sees and lives" (Messarra 1996: 8).

religious background. They have found that the conflict around them is 'silly' or 'pointless.' But one of these students, Joanne, could understand why the family is more influential than the school:

I think the people that go to this school and don't change while they're here, I think it's cuz of their family...If my family really made me an outcast because I didn't want to be a Catholic, it would really hurt me. So you'd want to please your family. Your family is there for life...if you have your family's support, it's a lot more easier, whereas if you don't, it's very hard. Because you'd have no mommy, you'd have no home, you'd have no money.

Though there were several examples of students who broke from the teachings of their parents, the educational work being done in mixed schools was not usually enough to combat prejudice and intolerance learned at home.

CONCLUSIONS

This study was conducted in order to compare the thoughts and experiences of high school students in two historically divided cities, and to assess whether or not the degree of religious mixing in their schools had any tangible effect on their perspectives. In summary, interviews with these sixty students found no significant differences in responses based on the level of mixing in school.

There was no correlation between level of religiosity and type of school in Beirut, with more secularism identified in the homogenous and heterogeneous elite schools. Students in Belfast from all three schools identified minimally with the religious aspects of Catholicism and Protestantism.

In the section on experience with the 'other,' it was found that Catholics were more likely to have had positive interactions with Protestants than vice versa. One third of the Belfast sample, six of which were Catholic school students, reported the murder of a family member or friend.

In terms of sectarianism, students in Belfast expressed more hatred towards the other group than their peers in Beirut. The Catholic school students were slightly more aware of the historical context and 'reasons' for their hatred than the students in the Protestant school. Integrated school students tended not to speak about sectarianism at all. Students in Beirut from all types of schools downplayed present levels of prejudice expressing a collective commitment not to repeat the mistakes of their parents.

In a very significant finding, students at integrated schools were no more anti-sectarian than their peers at Catholic and Protestant schools. No tangible evidence of the impact of their mixed educational environment could be gleaned from their reflections on tolerance. Students from the segregated schools were just as likely to report open-mindedness and to stress the similarities and equality between the two groups. High levels of tolerance were exhibited throughout the Beirut sampling, with no respect to level of mixing in school.

There was more resistance to integrated education in Belfast than in Beirut, with approximately two-thirds of the males at the Belfast Protestant and Catholic schools arguing that there would be high levels of violence at mixed schools. Among the students currently in mixed schools, there was widespread support and encouragement for an increase in the number of mixed schools. Several students in both Beirut and Belfast contributed insightful criticisms of their schools that provided a window into some of the ways in which many mixed schools fall short of their potential. There were a range of perspectives on whether or not attendance at mixed schools was considered a minor contribution to reducing the level of conflict in their communities. Several students from mixed schools offered that they themselves or close friends of theirs owed their tolerance singly to their attendance at their schools. There was mild support for forced system-wide integration among several Catholic and Protestant school students, but not among integrated school students. Nearly half of Lebanese respondents favored forced integration.

In the most significant finding of this study, a culture of avoidance was identified in the mixed schools in both Belfast and Beirut. Contentious issues that sustain the deep divisions in society are ignored or consciously avoided with a focus instead on the maintenance of peace and stability in school. Students in these schools reflected a wide range of opinions on the value and/or danger in this approach.

Approximately half of mixed school students have internalized the argument that it is best to leave divisive political and religious issues outside of the school walls, while a minority voiced the need for active engagement with the conflict. Mixed school interviewees painted a collective picture of school life in which every one is treated equally, religion is not discussed and controversy is avoided. The very fact that there are schools that educate students from opposing sides of violent conflicts in the hearts of Beirut and Belfast is deserving of praise. But these schools are vulnerable to criticism for failing to confront the most important issues in their divided societies.

The final section of the paper was about the students' perceptions of the relative influence of their schools and families on their attitudes. The vast majority of interviewees believed schools to be of less importance than values from home in the formation of their perspectives. The two students who mentioned breaking from the sectarianism of their parents during their high school years both attend religiously segregated schools.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁷ Having heard repeatedly about the power of parents compared to schools, I am led to conclude that there needs to be either serious parent participation in coexistence workshops or school values that emphasize the new generation uniting against their parents when it comes to their attitudes towards others. Mixing every one in schools will not lead to the reduction of hatred so long as home values trump school values. One suggestion for a further research would be to determine if there is a correlation between the personal biographies of parents and the attitudes of their teenage children. Are the parents who teach their children that every one is the same usually those who were not directly affected by the violence? In other words, are parents' experiences with sectarianism predictive of their children's attitudes?

According to this study, students in segregated schools in divided societies are just as likely to be tolerant and open-minded as their peers in mixed schools. Despite the higher level of social mixing across confessional lines in mixed schools, students are not receiving any more training in cross-cultural awareness or conflict resolution than their peers at segregated schools. This suggests that in the current environment, serious programs aimed at building deeper levels of tolerance among students in segregated schools could be even more effective at reducing levels of violent conflict than the current service provided by most mixed schools. The author of this study hypothesizes that the ideal combination for conflict reduction and management in the education systems of deeply divided societies is religiously mixed schools infused with conflict resolution and trust-building activities.¹⁰⁸

Both Belfast and Beirut are at an early stage of post-conflict reconstruction. Any non-confrontational interactions across sectarian lines must be seen as progress. However, in order for each society to move towards lasting peaceful coexistence, there must be a significant shift towards active engagement with the issues of the conflict in all schools.¹⁰⁹ Mixed schools are in the position, due to their inclusion of students from both sides of the conflict, to provide the most dramatic type of conflict transformation.

¹⁰⁸ Laurie Johnson calls in her paper for the Department of Education in Northern Ireland to support research that would measure the psychosocial effects of integrated education on its students over a long period of time. I echo Johnson in encouraging this type of research. My guess is that a longitudinal study of the impact of mixed schools will not show dramatic evidence of impact given that the schools have yet to establish mechanisms to transmit conflict resolution theory and practice that would differentiate them from their peer institutions.

¹⁰⁹ One possible set of underlying principles for teachers in Northern Ireland and Lebanon to help them make this transition can be found in Banks et al. 2001.

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Appendix I

Guiding Interview Questions (Beirut interviews were adapted from this framework)

Can you state your full name, your age and your make believe name for this interview?

Do you think of this school as a Catholic/Protestant school?

Do you think of this school as a loyalist/nationalist school?

What do you like most about the school? What do you like least about the school?

Can you tell me a little bit about the neighborhood you live in?

Would your friends from home and school be the same?

Is there anything about home life and school life that is different in terms of the environment? Is it hard for you to go back and forth between these two worlds in any way?

Would you say you're kind of a different person at this school than you are at home? For example, the kinds of people you hang around with, your hobbies, cultural activities, etc.?

Various people have gone to lots of trouble to try and open up integrated schools, and we see on the TV that some people say there should be more of these schools. Do you agree with this? What difference do you think integrated schools make?

What, if anything, do you think you have missed out on by not going to an integrated school for the last five years?

How do you think you might be a different person today if you had been in an integrated school for the last five years?

Some people say that integrated schools cause more harm than good—what do you think?

Do you feel that going to your school has anything to do with the conflict between unionists and nationalists in Northern Ireland?

Would you think of yourself as any less of a Protestant/Catholic if you went to an integrated school? Would you think of yourself as any less British/Irish if you went to an integrated school?

How important is your Protestant/Catholic identity to you?

Do you believe Protestant schools, Catholic schools and integrated schools should all receive equal funding from the government and be treated equally?

How would you feel if the government forced all schools to be integrated, with Catholics and Protestants going to school together?

Do you ever talk about religion or politics in your English or history classes? Do you talk about the differences between Catholics and Protestants in school?

Have you learned about any other conflicts in the world at school?

Do you think that it is important for people at your school to talk about politics?

Would you prefer this school to feel like a separate world from North Belfast or deal head on with the issues you face outside of school? Why?

Do any of the teachers provide opportunities for students to talk about the violence in North Belfast?

How in your opinion could this school do more to combat sectarianism or help North Belfast progress away from the conflict?

When I say “the Troubles,” what comes to mind for you?

Do you think religion and politics can be separated in Northern Ireland?

What do you think about the issue of policing in North Belfast?

Tell me your thoughts on the peace process. Do you believe there is progress being made towards peace?

When you can vote, which party do you think you will vote for? Why?

What does the ideal future for Northern Ireland look like to you? Do you feel a sense of responsibility to do something with your life to work towards that vision? Do you feel like you can make a difference?

Is there anything else you want to share with me?

Appendix II

Contract

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study on education in Northern Ireland and Lebanon.

I will be asking you a series of questions about your experiences at school and your political ideas. This is a survey for me to learn about your beliefs, your hopes and your honest thoughts on this school, as well as what it is like for you to live in North Belfast in 2002. This is your chance to be as honest and critical as you want to be about your school. I will not share any of what you say with your teachers or principal. Some of the issues may be difficult to talk about. If any question makes you uncomfortable, you always have the right to tell me that you do not want to talk about it. You have my word that everything you share with me will be kept completely anonymous and will in no way endanger you or be held against you. The information will be used in my study to better understand integrated education.

I will be tape recording this interview in order that I do not have to take notes while we talk. This will help the conversation flow more naturally and will ensure that I do not misquote you in my research.

I want to inform you that other students in your class will be interviewed, in addition to students from State controlled and integrated schools in Northern Ireland, as well as Muslim and Christian schools in Lebanon.

I would like you to choose a name for the purposes of this conversation, so that when I write about something you said, your identity remains anonymous. This is my guarantee that when we finish this conversation, nothing you said to me will ever be identified with your name. Please write the name you want to use for this study here: _____

If you have any questions before we begin, please ask me now.

Signature _____ Date _____

Appendix III

School Profiles

Ten students were interviewed at a Catholic boys secondary school serving a community in North Belfast with high levels of social disadvantage and the lowest academic performance in all of Northern Ireland.

Ten students were interviewed at a Protestant co-educational secondary school serving a community in North and West Belfast with high levels of social disadvantage and very low academic performance.

Ten students were interviewed at a post-primary integrated school in North Belfast. Five of them were male and five female. Four of them came from mixed marriages, while three were Catholic and three were Protestant.

Eight students were interviewed at an evangelical Christian school with 65% -70% Muslim student enrollment, 25% Christian and 10% Druze. Three Christians, three Muslims and two Druze were interviewed, five of whom were male and three female. The school is located nearly one half hour outside of the center of Beirut.

Six students were interviewed at a leadership retreat for students in the Sunni Muslim Mukassed schools in Beirut, two of whom were female and four of whom were male. There are no Christians in these schools.

Five students were interviewed at an elite Greek Orthodox school in East Beirut that has six Muslims in a total high school population of 170. Four Christians, both Maronite and Orthodox, as well as one Muslim were interviewed.

Four students were interviewed at one of the best private secular (laic) schools in the city, serving an elite middle class community of Muslims.

Four students, three males and one female, were interviewed from three different public schools in Beirut, all of which draw from the most disadvantaged communities in Beirut.

One student, the only Christian in her class at an elite private secular school in West Beirut, was interviewed. One student at a private Shi'i Muslim Amiliyeh school was interviewed. And one student at a mixed secular school in the center of Beirut was interviewed.

Appendix IV – Rioting¹¹⁰

One of the features of the students' lives in Belfast that most distinguished them from their peers in Beirut is the culture of rioting. Riots between groups of Catholics and Protestants, usually young people, are a mainstay of modern Belfast in spite of the official diplomatic moves towards peace since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement. There was no evidence at all of Christian-Muslim street violence in Beirut.

Of the ten males interviewed at the Catholic school, four were frequent participants in rioting. They were candid and boastful. They talked about the rush they got from it and the fact that it was the most fun thing they did. When pushed, they reflected on the downside of it—the injuries, the fear, the danger. They had a difficult time imagining life without rioting. They were unanimous about the fact that rioting had nothing to do with politics and everything to do with the fact that they have nothing better to do. Alan said “They’ll just always be riots. You have to riot.” Asked why, Alan said, “Because it’s just the best thing going.” These males reflected an unbelievable sense of boredom with their lives. Sam sadly admitted: “But there’s not really anything to do for young people. That’s why all the riots and things like that happen.” As if he was sneering in the face of a roomful of politicians, James said: “See when people [politicians] are doing all them talks—How can they stop people from rioting? Nobody’s going to listen to them ones...Most of the time I go up there and riot for the fun of it and that’s it.” In case there was any doubt as to the

¹¹⁰ Though the subject of rioting is not directly related to the topic of integrated education, I could not pass up the opportunity while interviewing these students to gain insight into the riots from their perspectives. It of course turned out that their comments were highly instructive and would probably come to surprise some local politicians and experts on the conflict.

motivations of the rioters, Stephen cleared it up with “I don’t know what politics really is. I just know about them ones [Protestants]—and rioting.”

Five out of the six male interviewees from the Protestant school admitted that they too rioted frequently. John sounded much like his peers at the Catholic school: “Just for something to do we do it really. Because there’s nothing really to do around this area.” A few of them emphasized their bravado in saying things such as “I think it’s exciting watching riots. I like it. I like watching people beating other people. I think it’s cool.” Or “It’s—funny...You get good craic.” Samuel had a similar suggestion to his peers at the Catholic school. “I think it should be more things for younger people like youth clubs and all. See now—younger people don’t really go somewhere. They just run about the streets. That’s when all the trouble starts—when there’s all young ones running about.”¹¹¹ When asked follow-up questions, the machismo gradually gave way to more balanced reflections. Chris looked sad in saying: “It’s good at the time, but then, like after it’s not. Your community is a mess. There’s all this stuff lying all over the place.” He, like many of his classmates, would like Northern Ireland to be more peaceful. In the meantime, he and his friends riot because they have nothing better to do.

The good news about the riots is that they are not just another chapter in the ongoing and bitter conflict between Protestants and Catholics. They are not politically motivated, though they occur under the guise of the modern-day Troubles. Living in communities with significant social disadvantage and rampant unemployment, many

¹¹¹ This is a particularly significant quote considering Samuel was the most guarded and uncomfortable of all sixty interviewees. He seemed to be hiding his personal life and details more than anyone else. He looked at me in a highly suspicious way throughout the conversation. This was one of the only full sentences he articulated in the entire interview. For this to be one of the few things he said emphasizes the pervasiveness and importance of this insight.

of the interviewees feel trapped and hopeless. Their rioting is an expression of the absence of purpose and goal-driven activities in their lives. Henrik, the footballer from the Catholic school who was recently signed by the Leicester club in England, said: “As long as there’s sport and there’s stuff for me to do, keeps me off the streets rioting.”

Three out of the ten integrated school interviewees mentioned the participation of members of their school in the riots. Additionally, Lisa disclosed that when she was a first year student at her integrated school, she herself used to riot. While the extent of participation in rioting seemed to be far greater in the Protestant and Catholic schools, the students at the integrated school were by no means untouched by the Belfast pastime.

Appendix V—The Police

Belfast interviewees were asked to discuss their views towards the police.¹¹² For the purposes of this study, the primary concern was to see if there were any patterns between type of school and attitude toward the police. It was found that Catholic school students had significantly more hostility towards the police than their peers at the Protestant school. Remarkably, five out of ten Hazelwood students had positive things to say about the police.

Of the eight Catholic school respondents who thought negatively about the police, two used the word ‘hate,’ two concentrated on the perception that the police treated Catholics unfairly and three simply called them names like ‘bigots’ or ‘scumbags.’ It should be noted that three of these students were optimistic that changes being brought about as a result of the Patten Report would lead to significant improvement in the police force, including a fifty-fifty Catholic-Protestant ratio. One of their classmates intended to join the new PSNI the following year.

Comments about the police at the Protestant school were far more temperate. While one student felt they were unfair to Protestants and another complained that the police were scared of Catholics, most concentrated on the fact that nobody liked the police or that the police were caught in the middle. None of the Protestant school

¹¹² Over the course of the Troubles, Catholics have generally viewed the police as hostile to their cause, an instrument of the British state in maintaining the occupation of Northern Ireland. In recent years, Protestants have begun to feel that the police have turned on them. One of the recent changes made to the policing was the change of the name of the police service from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). For further reading about the issue of policing in Belfast, see John McGarry and Brendan O’Leary, *Policing Northern Ireland*, Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1999 or Graham Ellison and Jim Smyth, *The Crowned Harp*, London: Pluto Press, 2000.

students called the police any names and unlike their peers at the Catholic school, few showed strong feelings aroused by the question. Chris, who had earlier made several anti-Catholic sectarian comments displayed that he had a fairly advanced level of awareness. “We see them as if they’re on the other side. They see them as if they’re on our side. The police just can’t win. They’re always stuck in the middle.”

Students at the integrated school, by and large not only refrained from criticizing the police, they even had a host of compliments. Jack liked the police. His classmate Jennifer had a cousin in the police. Lisa felt that the police were just there to help. Seifer mentioned his respect for the work the police were doing. A resident of the all Catholic Cliftonville section of North Belfast, Joanne’s passions were stirred by the question about the police:

That annoys me because the ones that go out and fight with the police, if their house got burgled, they would phone the police for them to go out and help them. Or if somebody came in and shot through their windows, they would phone the police. And that really, really annoys me because they go out and throw bricks at them and they victimize them and they shout and scream at them, but they turn to them whenever there’s something wrong.

Even if some of her peers at the segregated schools may have shared this analysis, they did not say it in their interviews. One is led to believe that her integrated school has provided an environment whereby Joanne has learned to think as an individual and now feels comfortable contradicting the dominant position of her community.

Appendix VI—Moving Out?

One of the distinguishing elements of the Beirut interviews was their universal complaints about the economic situation in their country. While the Belfast students interviewed were some of the most financially disadvantaged young people in Northern Ireland, they did not speak about the economy or jobs. With a few minor exceptions, they did not discuss the possibility of leaving Northern Ireland.

The Beirut interviewees had many connections to the world outside of Lebanon.¹¹³ Thirteen of the thirty students interviewed were born or had spent significant parts of their lives outside of Lebanon. Their birthplaces included Cyprus, Colombia, Ivory Coast, France, Jordan and Saudi Arabia. They have lived in Canada, Zaire, the USA, Gabon and Spain. Perhaps their global experiences, explained, in part, the fact that so many of them imagined moving out of Lebanon in the near future.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ In general, the Lebanese are more international and cosmopolitan than the people of Northern Ireland. But this sample is also further skewed in that direction as some of the schools in this study are amongst the most expensive private schools in Beirut. On the other hand, the students from Belfast come from some of the lowest income situations in all of Northern Ireland.

¹¹⁴ One third of Beirut interviewees (ten students from six different schools) intend to leave Lebanon. Many of them expressed sadness about this, citing the economy and/or the political situation as their reason for moving. Several of these students have family members living in other countries.