



Too Young to Notice?

THE CULTURAL AND POLITICAL AWARENESS OF 3-6 YEAR OLDS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

by Paul Corrolly, Alan Smith and Berni Kelly

Community Relations Council



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Executive Summary

The Report

This report presents the findings of a survey of a representative sample of 352 children aged 3 to 6 drawn from across Northern Ireland. It is the first report of its kind to provide a detailed insight into the cultural and political awareness of young children.

The children were shown a range of objects and photographs representing some of the most common events and symbols associated with the Protestant and Catholic communities in the region and were asked what they knew about each one. The children's responses were then coded and statistically analysed.

The Main Findings

The report identifies four main levels of awareness among children of this age range and organises its findings in relation to these:

1. Preference for particular cultural events and symbols

From the age of three, Catholic and Protestant children were found to show small but significant differences in their preferences for particular people's names, flags and in terms of their attitudes towards Orange marches and the police. Five and six year olds also showed differences in terms of their preferences for particular combinations of colours and football shirts.

2. Awareness of particular cultural events and symbols

Differences between Protestant and Catholic children in relation to their preferences for specific events and symbols does not necessarily mean that they are actually aware of their cultural and/or political significance. The report therefore analysed the children's comments to assess their levels of awareness of each of these events and symbols.

Just over half (51%) of all three year olds were able to demonstrate some awareness of the cultural/political significance of at least one event or symbol. This rose to 90% of six year olds. The children demonstrated the greatest awareness of the cultural/political significance of parades (49% of the sample), flags (38%) and Irish dancing (31%). One in five (21%) were able to demonstrate awareness of football shirts and of the violence associated with the conflict more generally.

3. Tendency to identify with a particular community

Such levels of awareness cannot, in themselves, be taken to imply that the children see themselves explicitly as a member of either the Catholic or Protestant communities. The children's responses were therefore analysed further to identify any instances where the children directly made reference to their membership of one of these two groups.

Overall, while only small numbers of three and four year old children demonstrated some identification with either the Protestant or Catholic communities (5% and 7% respectively), 13% of five year olds did, rising sharply to just over one in three six year olds (34%).

4. Tendency to make sectarian statements

Finally, just because some children may see themselves as being part of one of these two communities, this does not mean that they are necessarily prejudiced or hold sectarian attitudes. The children's responses were therefore analysed to identify any explicitly sectarian and/or prejudiced comments that they may have made about the other main religious tradition.

While such comments were rare among three and four year olds (only 1% and 3% being found to make such statements

respectively), the tendency to express sectarian statements appeared to increase quite significantly for the older children with 7% of five year olds being found to do so and 15% (just under one in six) of all six year olds.

In analysing the responses of the children, three particular factors appeared to be influential in increasing children's awareness and attitudes in relation to these matters. These were: the family, the local community and the school.

In some ways, the fact that the family and local community have an influence on the attitudes of young children is a rather obvious point. However it does highlight the limitations of strategies aimed at addressing prejudices and discriminatory behaviour among children that are not oriented towards the family and local community.

As regards the role and influence of the school, the most significant finding from the study is the rapid rate of increase in the proportions of children beginning to identify themselves with one particular community and also to make sectarian comments at the ages of five and six. The fact that these represent the first few years of compulsory schooling is unlikely to be a coincidence. Further research is required to help us understand the precise ways in which schools contribute towards children's increasing awareness and attitudes at this early age. However it certainly seems reasonable to suggest that one explanation is likely to be the *de facto* segregated nature of the school system itself. It remains the case in Northern Ireland that only a handful of children (4%) attend integrated schools. The vast majority (96%) continue to attend schools that are either Protestant or Catholic.

For any child, entering school for the first time represents a significant milestone in their lives. It is likely to be the first time that many will begin to interact with much larger numbers of other children and also to come under the influence of their older peers. When such environments are overwhelmingly Catholic or Protestant in their ethos, then it is not surprising to find that they represent a fertile learning ground within which children's awareness about cultural and political events and symbols as well as the attitudes and prejudices that often accompany these increase rapidly.

Implications

The report concludes with a discussion of the implications of these findings for community relations work with young children. It reaches three broad conclusions:

1. Children, from the age of three, should be encouraged to explore and experience a range of different cultural practices, events and symbols and to appreciate and respect difference and cultural diversity.
2. From about the age of five onwards, children should be encouraged to understand the negative effects of sectarian stereotypes and prejudices and to be able to identify them in their own attitudes, where appropriate.
3. For such strategies to be successful, nurseries and schools need to find ways of engaging and working closely with parents and the local community and, where appropriate, connecting with community relations and cultural diversity initiatives in the wider community.



Preface

The Cultural Diversity Committee of the Community Relations Council (CRC) has been working since 1990 to support cultural and educational initiatives which address the diversity of the communities living in Northern Ireland. Many of the individuals working on such projects, and those involved in the schools Education for Mutual Understanding programmes, expressed the view that sectarian attitudes were evident in some children by the time they reached primary school or playgroups. This research report was commissioned by the Community Relations Council in order to consider this general assumption, and to provide a basis for future initiatives with young children which might increase understanding and acceptance of the cultural diversity that is part of contemporary life in the north of Ireland.

One of these initiatives is CRC's Cultural Diversity Group's most recent collaboration with Channel 4 entitled *Sarah and the Whammi* - a part realistic, part fantasy drama for infants, set in Northern Ireland and promoting respect for differences. This series and its accompanying training programme, co-funded by CRC and Peace I, address many of the complex issues identified in this report. Together they represent a significant resource for those involved in such important work with young children.

Since assuming statutory responsibility for the provision of an education schedule in 1993, Channel 4 Television has prioritised the production of high quality Personal Development/EMU/Citizenship resources tailor-made for Northern Ireland schools. From the outset the Channel has made a point of establishing creative partnerships and collaborations with a range of agencies involved in cross-community and conflict resolution work in Northern Ireland.

CRC and Channel 4 (4Learning) are delighted that their Early Years collaboration *Sarah and the Whammi* was voted Best Educational Programme at the 2002 Celtic Film Festival in Quimper, Brittany. We commend this resource - the TV series, accompanying training video, children's storybook, teachers' guide and online parents' material to all those interested in addressing key issues identified in this present report.

Maurna Crozier
on behalf of the Community Relations Council

Peter Logue
on behalf of Channel 4

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We are indebted to all of the schools and nurseries who co-operated in this study for their kind help and support. Most of all, we would like to thank the young children who took part in this research and their parents/guardians who gave their permission for them to be interviewed. Without them none of this would have been possible.

Paul Connolly

Alan Smith

Berni Kelly

May 2002

Introduction

Background

Since the beginning of the 'troubles' in the late 1960s in Northern Ireland, the plight of children has been a central concern for social researchers. From the early 1970s through to the mid-1980s, a large number of research studies were conducted aimed at understanding the effects of the conflict on children's attitudes, identities and their general sense of well-being. A number of detailed summaries and discussions of the importance of this work have already been produced and are provided elsewhere (see Cairns 1987; Gough *et al.* 1992; Trew 1992; Cairns and Cairns 1995; Cairns *et al.* 1995; Connolly 1998).

For the purposes of this present report, two particular trends are worth noting. The first is the lack of any substantive research study on pre-school children. A handful of studies have included a focus on five- and six-year-olds (see Jahoda and Harrison 1975; Cairns *et al.* 1978, 1980; McWhirter and Gamble 1982). The findings of this work offer a few important insights into children's understanding and awareness at this age. While they do not appear to recognise the political significance of different colours (Jahoda and Harrison 1975), children of this age do have some awareness of the violence that surrounds them (Cairns *et al.* 1978, 1980) and about half of the six-year-olds were able to recognise at least one of the terms 'Protestant' and 'Catholic'. Beyond this, however, we know very little else about how the conflict has impacted upon the lives of children of this age. Moreover, we know nothing at all about what effects, if any, it has had on those younger than this (i.e. three- and four-year-olds).

Second, the research effort seems to have almost completely dried up since the mid-1980s. As Trew (1996) has pointed out, very little work on the impact of the 'troubles' on children has been undertaken or published since Cairns produced his seminal review of the research in 1987 (Cairns 1987). With the emergence of the paramilitary ceasefires and the development of the 'peace process', much has changed since the 1970s and early 1980s, when most of the existing research was carried out. It would not be appropriate, therefore, to attempt simply to apply the findings of this work to the current situation that young children find themselves in.

This present report aims to address these two points. It is based upon a major research study of a representative sample (n=352) of three to six year old children drawn from across Northern Ireland. The report aims to offer, for the first time, an insight into the impact that the continuing violence and community conflict is having on the awareness and attitudes of children in their early years.

Methodology

The particular approach that has been devised and used with the young children in this study was chosen with the limitations of the existing research on children in Northern Ireland in mind (see Connolly 1998, 2000). Almost without exception, the research that has been produced to date has adopted a relatively structured, experimental design with children being given particular tasks or puzzles to complete. These have typically included: being asked to sort a collection of differently coloured shapes and also rank a selection of figures dressed to represent a range of social roles, including that of policeman, soldier, Catholic priest and Protestant minister (Jahoda and Harrison 1975); recall a list of names read out randomly that included some that are stereotypically Catholic and Protestant (Cairns 1980; Houston *et al.* 1990); and being shown a number of photographs of individuals and being asked whether they felt that they were Irish/not-Irish or British/not-British (Stringer 1984).

One of the problems with such approaches is that they impose adult ways of thinking on children and then tests their awareness in the light of this. While certain people, specific combinations of colours and particular names may be significant for adults, it cannot be assumed that they will be equally significant for children. It could be that the conflict and the divisions that arise from it may be equally significant for children but that they think about and understand these using alternative cultural symbols and markers to adults. There is a danger; therefore, that unless research focuses on the children's own perspectives it may well underestimate the influence of the conflict on children's lives.

One way of addressing this concern is to use more unstructured, qualitative methods which would involve simply allowing children the space to talk about what concerns them. This is an approach currently being used by one of the authors (Connolly) in a separate Government-funded research study being conducted with small groups of children aged three to eleven in Belfast (see Connolly and Healy 2002). It is hoped that such work will offer a greater appreciation of the ways in which children, themselves, come to construct their understanding of the conflict and the words and symbols they use to express this.

However, one of the problems with this type of qualitative, small-scale study is that it is impossible to generalise from the findings to the population as a whole. The awareness and understanding of the specific groups of children interviewed in Belfast cannot simply be claimed to be representative of all children in the city, let alone to be applicable to children from other towns and villages in the region.

Given the complete lack of research to date, a need exists therefore for a broader 'mapping exercise' that can attempt to bridge this gap between adopting a more qualitative and unstructured approach that allows the words of the children themselves to predominate and one which is large-scale enough to produce findings that can be generalised to the population as a whole. It is this task that the present study has set itself.

The present study draws its inspiration from evaluative research used with Israeli and Palestinian young children (see Cole *et al.* 1999a, 1999b). This research aimed to assess the impact of *Rechov Sumsum/Shara'a Simsim*, a television series created by the *Children's Television Workshop* with the aim of reducing ethnic prejudice among preschool children in the Middle East. It adopted an approach that used a variety of ways of eliciting young children's perspectives. Such perspectives were recorded and then coded and analysed statistically. It is this general approach that has been used in the current study.

In essence, a random sample of 352 children was chosen from across Northern Ireland. The sample was stratified to ensure that it was representative in terms of gender, religion, age, social class and area of residence. The children were accessed via local primary schools and nurseries and written parental permission was gained for each child before the interview was conducted.

Each child was interviewed individually. They were shown a range of cultural and political symbols and photographs of individuals and events related to Northern Ireland. These included: Union Jack and Irish Tricolour flags, Celtic and Rangers football shirts, different combinations of colours and photographs of an Orange march, an Irish dancer, a handgun and a police landrover. For each item, the child was asked whether they knew what it was and then two further prompt questions - "what can you tell me about it?" and "what else

do you know about it?" The children's answers were recorded verbatim and were consequently coded and statistically analysed.

In order to ensure that as wide a selection of items were used as possible, covering the range of young children's experiences, an extensive pilot study was carried out involving 65 young children. This provided the opportunity to test the relevance of the items being used and to ascertain whether there were any symbols/events that the children made reference to but which were not covered by an existing item. Full details of the sample and of the specific methods used in the study can be found in the Appendix I. Appendix I also includes a brief discussion of the ethics of this type of approach.

A Note on Generalisation

This study has been designed so that the findings presented in this report can be generalised to the population of young children as a whole in Northern Ireland with a high degree of confidence. In other words, it can be accepted that the data reported here are representative of the attitudes and awareness of young children more generally in the region.

There are a number of widely accepted statistical tests that have been developed over the years that help us to determine whether it is 'safe enough' to claim that a particular finding gained from a sample is likely to be representative of the broader attitudes and awareness of the population as a whole. In such cases we claim that the finding is 'statistically significant'. For those who are technically minded, all the results of the statistical tests used in relation to the findings reported in this present study are provided as footnotes.

Following generally-accepted convention, we have only reported those findings that are 'statistically significant' in this report. Two points need to be made in relation to this. First,

we can therefore be confident that all of the findings discussed in the chapters to follow are likely to be representative of the attitudes and awareness of young children as a whole in Northern Ireland. Second, when we state that certain differences or patterns among children are 'not statistically significant', this does not necessarily mean that no differences or patterns exist. All it means is that we cannot be confident enough to conclude that the differences/patterns found among the children in our sample are likely to be found among children as a whole in Northern Ireland. It is for this reason that we have chosen not to report any findings that are not statistically significant.

Structure of the Report

Children's awareness and understanding of the conflict and of the community divisions surrounding them can manifest itself at a number of different levels. These levels are reflected in terms of the organisation of the chapters to follow.

Preferences for Different Cultural Events and Symbols

At a most basic level, young children may show a tendency to prefer certain symbols or events compared to others. This could involve, for example, Catholic children preferring the Irish Tricolour flag and Protestant children preferring the British Union Jack flag. Any significant differences found between the preferences of Protestant and Catholic children would show that the divisions around them are having some impact upon their own attitudes and emerging identities.

This is the focus for Chapter One which discusses the differences that were found among the three to six-year-olds in terms of their preferences for items such as football shirts, flags, particular colour combinations and their like/dislike of Orange marches and the police.

Awareness of the Cultural/Political Significance of Particular Symbols and Events

Just because it may be found that there are significant differences between Catholic and Protestant children in terms of their preferences for certain flags or football shirts, this does not mean that the children are necessarily aware of the cultural or political significance of their choices. The tendency for Protestant children to choose the Union Jack over the Irish Tricolour, for example, may simply reflect the fact that they are more familiar with the former; given that the kerbstones of their local streets may be painted in the colours of that flag and, moreover, the flag itself may be flying from some of the lampposts on those streets.

Alongside testing the children's preferences, therefore, it is also important to ascertain the levels of awareness that the children actually have of the cultural and/or political significance of the symbols and events they have expressed preferences for. This is the focus for Chapter Two which outlines and discusses the levels of awareness that the children exhibited of a range of events and symbols and how this awareness develops with age.

Tendency to Identify with a Particular Community

In turn, while children may demonstrate an awareness of the cultural and political significance of certain events and symbols, this does not necessarily imply that they then see themselves as belonging to one of the two main religious traditions in Northern Ireland. This is a separate process and one that provides the focus for the first part of Chapter Three. In this chapter outlines the extent to which children see themselves as belonging, in one form or another, to either the Protestant or Catholic tradition and how this develops with age.

Tendency to Hold and Express Sectarian Prejudices

Finally, while a child may see themselves explicitly as Catholic or Protestant, this does not mean that they will necessarily be prejudiced against those from the other religious group. Again, group membership and the holding of prejudiced attitudes are separate processes. It is the latter which provides the focus for the second part of Chapter Three. The chapter focuses on the extent to which children made unsolicited prejudiced comments about those from the other main community and how the tendency to do this develops with age.

Summary and Conclusions

The final chapter, Chapter Four, draws together and summarises the main findings discussed in the previous four chapters and explores the implications of these for our understanding of how the conflict and community divisions that exist impact upon young children's awareness and attitudes. It also considers the implications of these findings for the development of community relations work with young children.



1

Young Children's Preferences for Cultural Symbols and Events

Introduction

This chapter outlines the extent to which young children's preferences for particular cultural events and symbols seem to be influenced by the continuing communal divisions in Northern Ireland. As part of the research, children were shown a range of relevant symbols and photographs. After being asked what they knew about them, they were either asked whether they liked them or not or, where two items were involved (i.e. Celtic and Rangers shirts), whether there was one they liked the best and, if so, which one. The children's responses to each item are discussed below.

Colours

Two tests were used to ascertain the extent to which children's preferences for particular colours may be influenced by the communal divisions that exist. The first involved placing 10 differently coloured counters on the table in front of the children and asking them to choose their favourite three colours. The process was then repeated but this time they were asked to choose their least favourite three colours. On both occasions, the children were then asked why they had chosen the colours they had.

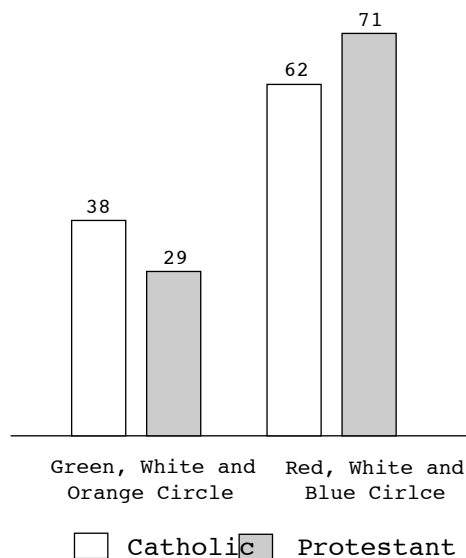
Overall, political and cultural factors associated with the conflict exerted only a marginal influence over the choice of colours. Rather, the most significant factor associated with choice was gender, with boys being more likely to choose blue as one of their favourite colours (57% compared to 24% of girls) and girls more likely to choose pink (77% compared to just 13% of boys²). Reasons typically given for choices of colour tended to be either gender-related (i.e. "because they're boys'/girls' colours") or, most commonly, that they were "light" or "bright" colours (for the most favourite) or "dark" and "dull" colours (for the least favourite).

No significant differences in choice of colour were found between Catholic and Protestant children except for the colour red, where Catholics (56%) were more likely to choose it as one of their favourite colours than Protestants (45%).³ However, no pattern emerged in the Catholic children's answers as to why they had chosen this colour. In fact, none of the children made reference to anything associated explicitly with the Catholic or Protestant communities.

The second test involved showing the children two coloured circles. Each circle was separated into three equally-sized segments with each segment coloured differently. The first circle was coloured red, white and blue while the second circle was coloured green, white and orange. The children were then asked if there was one they liked the best and, if so, which one. As before, they were then asked why they preferred the one that they did.

83% of the children responded that they liked one better than the other. Of these a small but statistically significant difference was found in the choices of Protestant and Catholic children for the sample as a whole.⁴ As Figure 1 illustrates, Catholic children were more likely to choose the green, white and orange circle than Protestants and, conversely, Protestant children more likely to choose the red, white and blue circle than Catholics.

FIGURE 1:
3-6 Year Old Children's Choice
of Coloured Circle (%)



Two points are worth noting from these results, however: First, the differences were relatively small and, second, both Catholic and Protestant children were much more likely to choose the red, white and blue circle. From the children's subsequent answers to the question why they preferred this particular circle, it appeared that its popularity tended to reflect the fact that the colours were considered "brighter" and "lighter" than the green, white and orange of the other circle.

When analysed further, it was found that the gender and social class backgrounds of the children had no significant influence over their choice of coloured circle. Moreover, for both Catholic and Protestant children respectively, there was no discernible nor statistically significant relationship between age and choice of coloured circle. In other words, the children's patterns of choice of coloured circle did not change with age. Also, when examining differences between Protestant and Catholic children within each of the four age groups, only the differences among the six year olds were found to be statistically significant.

Overall, these findings suggest that young children choose their most and least favourite colours for a variety of reasons and that the cultural and political factors associated with the communal divisions in Northern Ireland do not tend to play a particularly significant role in this. However, this is not to suggest that children are unaware of the cultural and political significance of certain combinations of colours. Indeed the evidence suggests that a small but noticeable tendency is emerging among young children to begin to make choices in relation to their favourite combination of colours that reflect those traditionally associated with their community. Such a tendency is only significantly noticeable from the age of six however.

Names

In terms of names, the children were shown six different hand-drawn figures of people that looked essentially the same. Each figure was given a name, three of these names were ones associated largely with the Catholic community (Seamus, Fionnuala and Sinead) and three with the Protestant community (Craig, Alison and Stewart). Among other questions, the children were asked whether they liked each of the names or not.

Overall, for the sample as a whole, small but significant differences were found in the preferences of Catholic and Protestant children for two of these names: Sinead and Stewart. The findings are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. As can be seen, Catholic children were more likely to say they liked

FIGURE 2:
3-6 Year Old Children's Preference for the Name Sinead

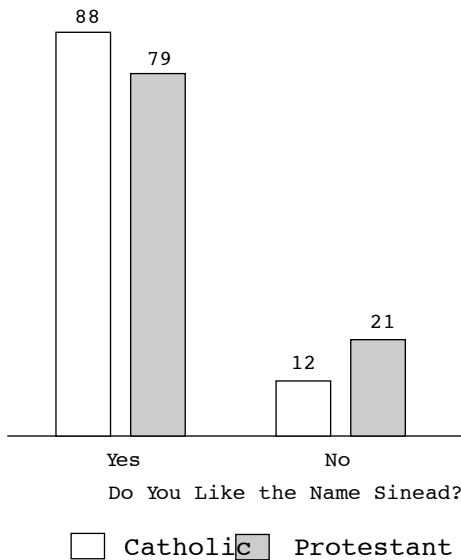
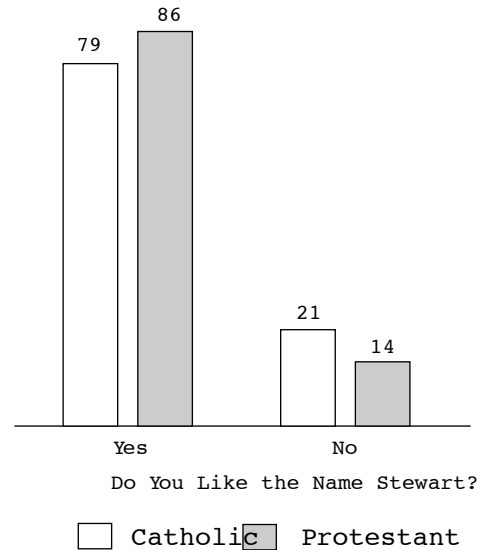


FIGURE 3:
3-6 Year Old Children's Preference for the Name Stewart



the name Sinead than Protestant children.⁵ Conversely, Protestant children were more likely to state that they liked the name Stewart than Catholic children.⁶

In relation to the effects of age, it could reasonably be assumed that these differences in preferences would increase with the age of the children. However, when analysing the effects of age on Protestant and Catholic children's preferences, in turn, no discernible nor statistically significant pattern emerged.

When examining differences between Catholic and Protestant children within each of the four age groups, some significant differences emerged for the four year olds and six year olds. As can be seen from Tables 1 and 2, differences existed between Protestant and Catholic four year olds in relation to two names (Seamus and Sinead) whereas for six year olds, differences existed for three names (Craig, Alison and Stewart) with differences in relation to a fourth (Sinead) reaching statistical significance.

Table 1: Four Year Old Children's Preferences for Particular Names			
Name	Religion of Child	Do You Like The Name? (%)	
		Yes	No
Seamus ⁷	Catholics	85	15
	Protestants	64	36
Sinead ⁸	Catholics	93	7
	Protestants	80	20

Table 2: Six Year Old Children's Preferences for Particular Names			
Name	Religion of Child	Do You Like The Name? (%)	
		Yes	No
Craig ⁹	Catholics	71	29
	Protestants	86	14
Sinead ¹⁰	Catholics	89	11
	Protestants	77	23
Alison ¹¹	Catholics	80	20
	Protestants	95	5
Stewart ¹²	Catholics	73	27
	Protestants	91	9

As can be seen, all of these differences followed the predicted pattern of Catholics being more likely to prefer typically Catholic names and Protestants being more likely to prefer typically Protestant ones. This pattern was also found in relation to the names not listed in the tables opposite. However, because the differences between Catholic and Protestant children were smaller for these names they were not statistically significant.

As discussed in the introduction to this report, we could not therefore be confident that these findings reflected real differences in the population of young children as a whole in Northern Ireland and thus they have not been reported here.

No significant differences were found for the three or five year olds. For the three year olds, no clear pattern was discernible even within the very small differences that existed. Thus Catholic children were found to be slightly more likely to prefer some of the Protestant names and Protestant children slightly more likely to prefer some of the Catholic names. However, these differences were marginal.

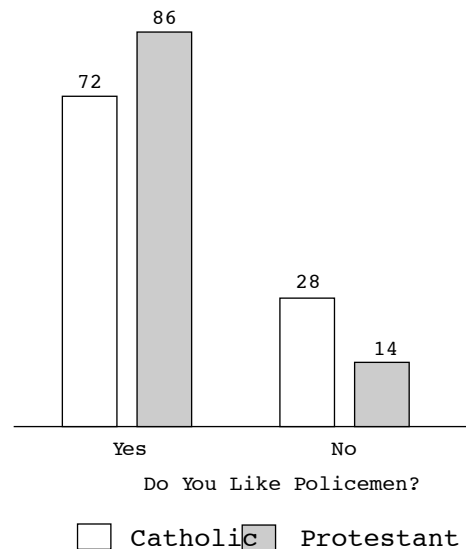
For the five year olds, a clearer pattern did exist in terms of expected preferences for five of the six names. However, because of the relatively small nature of both the differences and of the sub-sample (n=85) these differences were not statistically significant.

Overall, the picture that appears to emerge from these findings is that, from the age of four, young children are beginning to develop a small but significant tendency to prefer names associated with their own cultural tradition.

The Police

During the interviews, children were asked what a policeman was and also what they knew about policemen. Following this they were asked whether they liked policemen. While the majority of both Protestant and Catholic children stated that

FIGURE 4:
3-6 Year Old Children's
Attitudes Towards the Police (%)



they liked the police, a significant difference in attitudes did emerge as illustrated in Figure 4. As can be seen, Catholic children were twice as likely to state that they did not like policemen compared to Protestant children.¹³

As before, no discernible nor statistically significant relationship emerged between age and attitudes towards the police for either the Protestant or Catholic children. In other words, these attitudes were not found to change noticeably with age. Significant differences in attitudes towards the police appeared to begin at the age of three with Catholic three year olds being more than twice as likely to state that they did not like the police compared to Protestant children of the same age (34% compared to 15% respectively).¹⁴

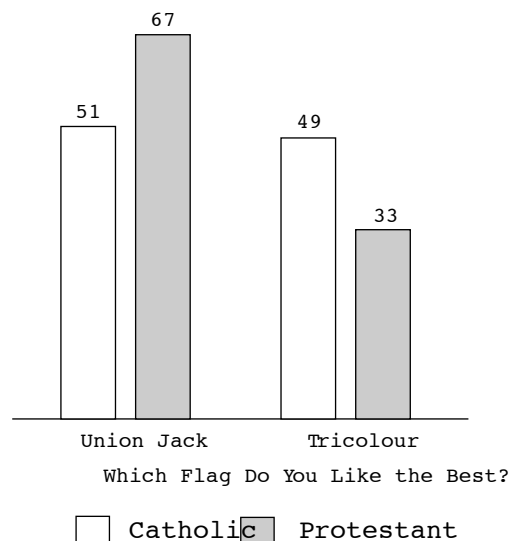
No statistically significant differences were found in relation to the effects of social class on the children's attitudes towards the police. However gender did exert a significant influence. Girls were just over twice as likely to state that they disliked the police compared to boys (29% compared to 14% respectively).¹⁵ When simply comparing the attitudes of Catholic and Protestant boys, no significant differences were found to exist. However, when comparing the girls, it was found that Catholic girls were more than twice as likely to dislike the police compared to Protestant girls (39% compared to 18% respectively).¹⁶

Overall, the evidence suggests that a tendency exists for young children's attitudes towards the police to reflect the broader differences found among the Protestant and Catholic communities. From the age of three, Catholic children were more likely to state that they disliked the police compared to Protestants.

Flags

During the interviews, children were presented with two small flags - the Irish Tricolour and the Union Jack. After being asked what they knew about each of them, they were asked if there was one they liked the best. The 82% that stated they did were then asked which one they preferred. The children's responses are illustrated in Figure 5. As can be seen, significant differences were found in relation to the preferences of Protestant and Catholic children. While Catholic children were nearly as likely to prefer either the Irish Tricolour or the Union Jack, Protestant children were twice as likely to state that they preferred the Union Jack compared to the Irish Tricolour.¹⁷

FIGURE 5:
3-6 Year Old Children's
Preferences for Flags (%)



Again, these differences were not found to change significantly with age for either Protestant or Catholic children. Differences were found among three year old children which were, interestingly, more pronounced than for the sample as a whole. 64% of Catholic three year olds preferred the Irish Tricolour and 59% of Protestant children of the same age preferred the Union Jack.¹⁸

Social class was found to exert a significant influence in relation to Protestant children's preferences. For Protestant children, 74% of those from working class backgrounds stated a preference for the Union Jack compared to 50% of those from middle class backgrounds.¹⁹ A similar but less marked difference in social class was also found among Catholic children in the sample. However, given the problems coding social class (see Appendix 1) and thus the small size of this sub-sample (n=62), the differences did not reach statistical significance.

Finally, gender also had a significant influence on the children's choice of flags. For the Protestant children, the boys were more likely to choose the Union Jack (78%) than the girls (57%).²⁰ However, for the Catholic children, it was the girls that were more likely to choose the Irish Tricolour (58%) - the flag associated with their community - than the boys (38%).²¹ Indeed, as these figures suggest, the majority of Catholic boys actually preferred the Union Jack (61%).

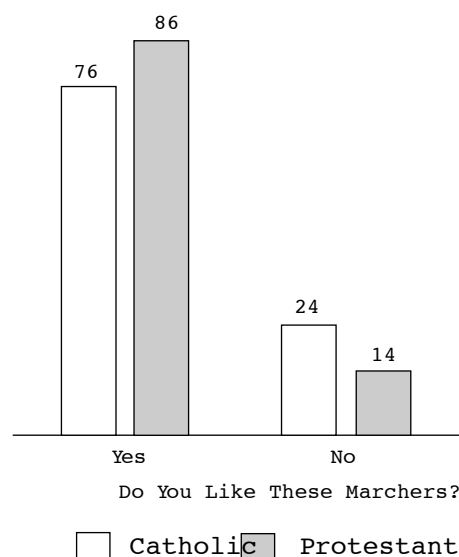
Overall, the evidence suggests that from the age of three, a tendency exists for children's preferences for particular flags to reflect those of their respective communities. This is particularly noticeable for Protestant children who were more likely to choose the Union Jack than Catholics.

Orange Marches

During the interview children were shown a photograph of an Orange March. Besides being asked what they knew about

the marchers, they were asked if they liked them or not. The responses are illustrated in Figure 6. As can be seen, small but significant differences were found among Catholic and Protestant children. While an overwhelming majority of both Protestant and Catholic children stated that they liked the marchers, Catholic children were more likely to state that they did not like them compared to Protestant children.²²

FIGURE 6:
3-6 Year Old Children s
Attitudes Towards Orange Marchers



As before, these attitudes did not change significantly with age for either Protestant and Catholic children. Again, significant differences were found to first emerge between Protestant and Catholic three year olds whose differences were found to be more pronounced than for the sample as a whole. For the three year olds, 97% of Protestant children stated that they liked Orange Marchers compared to 82% of Catholic children.²³

While no significant differences were found among the Protestant or Catholic children in relation to gender, differences were found among Protestant children, but not Catholics, in relation to social class. Working class Protestant children were much more likely to state that they liked Orange Marchers (90%) than middle class Protestant children (64%).²⁴

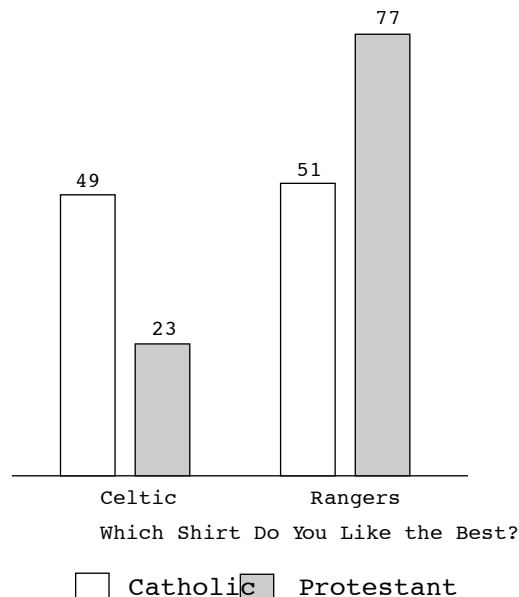
Overall, the evidence again suggests that from the age of three, a tendency exists for the young children's attitudes towards Orange Marches to reflect those of their respective communities.

Celtic and Rangers Football Shirts

During the interviews children were also shown small replicas of both the Celtic and Rangers' football shirts. As well as being asked what they knew about each of these, they were also asked whether there was one they liked the best and, if so, which one. The responses of the 78% who said there was one they liked the best are illustrated in Figure 7. As can be seen, while Catholic children were again relatively evenly split between those who preferred the Rangers shirt and those who preferred the Celtic shirt, Protestant children were over three times more likely to state a preference for the Rangers shirt than they were for the Celtic shirt.²⁵

In terms of age, a statistically significant relationship was found

FIGURE 7:
3-6 Year Old Children's
Preferences for Football Shirts



in relation to Catholic children but not Protestant children. While Protestant children's preferences for the Rangers shirt remained relatively stable across the age groups, the preferences of Catholic children for the Celtic shirt increased with age. While 38% of three year olds stated a preference for the Celtic shirt, this rose to 66% of six year olds.²⁶

With regard to each age group, no significant differences were found between Protestant and Catholic three year olds. However, differences were found among the five and the six year olds and the differences among the four year olds were approaching statistical significance.

Social class was found to exert an influence on Catholic children's choices of football shirt but not Protestants'. Working class Catholic children were nearly twice as likely to choose a Celtic shirt (55%) compared to middle class Catholic children (28%).²⁷ Similarly, gender was also found to exert an influence but this time for Protestant children and not Catholic children. Protestant boys were found to be more likely to choose Rangers shirts (88%) than Protestant girls (67%).²⁸

Overall, the evidence suggests that a tendency exists for young children's preferences for football shirts to also tend to reflect those of their respective communities. On this occasion, however, such a tendency would appear to begin a little later, among four to five year olds. However, by the age of six, such preferences are clearly marked with two thirds of Catholics choosing Celtic shirts (66%) and over three quarters of Protestants (79%) choosing Rangers shirts.²⁹

Conclusions

The overall picture emerging from this chapter is that a small but significant tendency exists for young children's cultural and political preferences to begin to reflect those of their respective communities. From the age of three Catholic and Protestant children are beginning to develop differing attitudes towards such matters as people's names, the police, flags and Orange marches. Within the next year or two, children are also beginning to develop small but significant differences in their attitudes to football shirts and particular combinations of colours as well.

The fact that working class children were likely to show stronger preferences for flags and football shirts than their middle class peers suggests that locality may be an influential

factor; it is certainly not surprising to find that children who live in communities where the flying of flags, the painting of curbstones and the wearing of particular football shirts are commonplace are likely to begin to develop preferences for these things from a very early age.

As stressed in the introduction, however, we cannot read too much into the differences found in this chapter in relation to the preferences of Catholic and Protestant children. Such preferences for certain flags or football shirts may simply reflect a greater familiarity with these items rather than an actual awareness of their cultural and political significance. It is therefore important to spend time examining the actual extent to which the children are aware of the significance of the choices they have made and it is to this that the following chapter turns.

2

**Young Children's
Cultural and
Political Awareness**

Introduction

This chapter reports the children's awareness of the cultural and/or political significance of a variety of symbols and events associated with the community divisions that exist in Northern Ireland. More specifically, their awareness of seven specific items was measured: colours, the terms Catholic and Protestant, flags, Orange marches, Irish dancers, football shirts and conflict-related violence. The purpose of this exercise was simply to gain an appreciation of when each of these cultural symbols and events first begins to register within young children's social worlds. Each of these items is discussed in turn before an examination of how the children's overall levels of awareness develop and change with age.

Colours

As described in the previous chapter, the children were given two tasks related to colours. The first involved them choosing their three most favourite and then their three least favourite coloured counters from a selection of ten. The second involved them choosing which coloured circle they liked the best - one coloured red, white and blue or one coloured green, white and orange. After each of these choices they were asked why they had made the choice they had.

Their answers were recorded verbatim and then coded in relation to whether they demonstrated any awareness of the cultural and/or political significance of any of the colours. Awareness in this sense was defined in relation to whether they recognised that certain colours were representative of particular groups (namely Catholics or Protestants), specific nations/countries (namely Ireland or Britain/England) or football teams associated explicitly with the cultural divide in Northern Ireland (most commonly Celtic and Rangers but also, to a lesser extent, teams in the Irish football league and also Gaelic football teams).

Overall, just 5% of the sample demonstrated some awareness of the cultural/political significance of particular colours. This finding tends to support that of the previous chapter that colours do not appear to play a particularly significant role in representing/symbolising community divisions for young children. Some of the comments made by the children that demonstrated some level of awareness are included in Box 1.

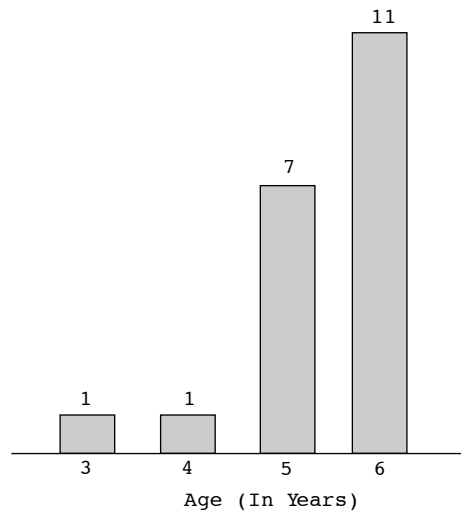
Box 1: Examples of Children's Awareness of the Cultural/Political Significance of Particular Colours

Children's answers to the question why they had chosen certain colours as their favourites:

- "Cos my favourite team has it on them - Celtic" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)
- "That's Ireland and Irish" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)
- "Cos it has my favourite colour - Tricolour - that's the Irish flag - looks like the colours" (Catholic Boy, Aged 5)
- "It isn't a Fenian colour and I like them colours [red, white and blue]" (Protestant Girl, Aged 6)

In terms of age, as illustrated in Figure 8, the tendency for some children to develop an awareness of the cultural/political significance of colours did not really begin to emerge noticeably until the age of five. Finally, while no significant differences in awareness were found between middle class and working class children, differences were found in relation to religion. As indicated in Box 1, the proportions of Catholic children demonstrating some awareness (8%) was higher than the proportions of Protestant children (2%).³⁰

FIGURE 8:
Children's Awareness of the Cultural/Political Significance of



The Terms Catholic and Protestant

As part of the interview, children were shown six hand-drawn figures of people looking essentially the same. Each person was introduced by their name. After being asked whether they like their name or not an additional piece of information was offered. For four of the six figures, this involved telling the child what their occupation was (i.e. "Seamus is a cook"). For the other two, it was explained that "Sinead is a Catholic" and "Alison is a Protestant" respectively.

For all of the figures, once this additional information was given, the children were then asked whether they knew what a 'cook' was or what a 'Catholic/Protestant' was. They were then asked what they knew about them (i.e. about cooks, Catholics, Protestants etc.). As before, the children's answers were recorded verbatim and, in relation to the two figures that were described as Protestant and Catholic, consequently coded in relation to whether they demonstrated any awareness of the cultural and/or political significance of the terms Catholic or Protestant.

In relation to the children's answers to these specific questions, awareness was defined in terms of either: recognising the religious significance of Catholics/Protestants, associating Catholics/Protestants with other symbols or events (i.e. flags, football teams) or being able, without prompting, to associate the two terms together when being asked about one of the terms. In addition, the children's awareness of these terms was also noted if they mentioned one or both of them while discussing other events (i.e. Orange marches, flags etc.). Typical examples of children's responses that demonstrated such awareness of the terms are provided in Box 2.

Box 2: Examples of Children's Awareness of the Terms Catholic and Protestant

Children's responses to "What is a Catholic?":

- "A person who might go to a church" (Protestant Girl, Aged 6)
- "They have Catholics and Protestants" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)
- "A person who's not a Protestant" (Catholic Girl, Aged 6)
- "He likes Celtic" (Protestant Boy, Aged 5)

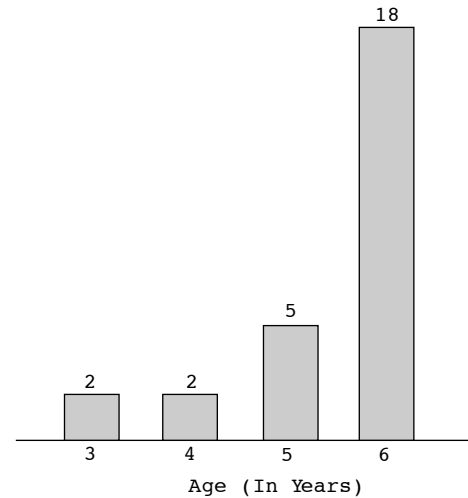
Children's responses to "What is a Protestant?":

- "Yes, that's what we are - Protestants" (Protestant Girl, Aged 6)
- "Somebody that lives here. The flag is red, white and blue. They support Rangers" (Protestant Boy, Aged 6)
- "They go for the blue and white and red flag" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)

Overall, only 7% of the sample as a whole demonstrated some awareness of one or both of these terms. Also, this awareness of names did not appear to develop significantly until the age of six, as illustrated in Figure 9. As can be seen, nearly one in five of the six years olds demonstrated some awareness of the terms Protestant and/or Catholic. No significant differences in awareness were found in terms of the religion, gender or social class background of the children.

Flags

FIGURE 9:
Children's Awareness of the Terms Protestant and Catholic



As described in the previous chapter, the children were also shown, in turn, two small flags - the Union Jack and the Irish Tricolour. For both, the children were asked if they knew what they were and also what they knew about them. As before, their answers were recorded verbatim and consequently coded in relation to whether the children demonstrated any awareness of the political or cultural significance of one or both of the flags or not.

Indications of awareness in this sense were if a child recognised that the flags were associated with: certain groups (most commonly Protestants or Catholics but also the army or police), particular nations or countries (namely Ireland, Britain or England), certain events (i.e. marching) or specific

football teams explicitly associated with one of the two communities (most commonly Celtic and Rangers but also Linfield and Gaelic football teams such as Antrim and Armagh). In addition, an indication of awareness was if the child could name the flag properly (i.e. a Union Jack or a Tricolour). Typical examples of children's responses that demonstrated such awareness are provided in Box 3.

Box 3: Examples of Children's Awareness of the Cultural/Political Significance of Flags

Children's responses to the Union Jack:

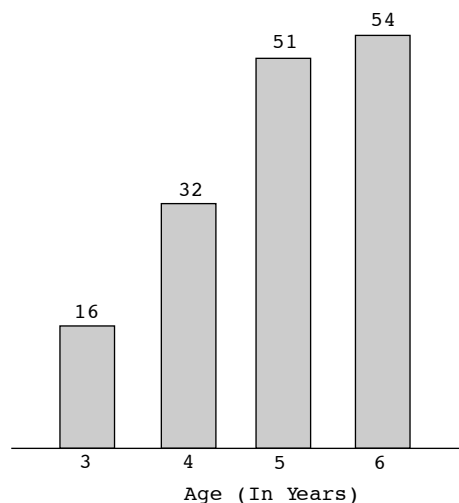
- "A flag - a Rangers one" (Catholic Girl, Aged 3)
- "The Union Jack" (Protestant Boy, Aged 4)
- "An Army flag" (Catholic Girl, Aged 4)
- "It's a Protestant flag. Its red, white and blue. Its up on lamposts" (Protestant Boy, Aged 6)

Children's responses to the Irish Tricolour:

- "Football flag - Celtic" (Catholic Boy, Aged 4)
- "I've seen it in the bands. You wave it. The band carries big flags" (Catholic Girl, Aged 3)
- "It's for Ireland. I have a big massive one in my Grandma's. I take it to football matches" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)
- "Armagh flag" (Catholic Boy, Aged 5)

Overall, over a third of the children in the sample as a whole (38%) demonstrated some level of awareness of the cultural/political significance of one or both of the flags. As illustrated in Figure 10, this awareness also appeared to increase with age. While about one in six of three year olds demonstrated some awareness, over half of six year olds did.

FIGURE 10:
Children's Awareness of the Cultural/Political Significance of



While no significant differences were found among the children in relation to religion or social class, gender did appear to exert a significant influence. Boys were found to be more likely to demonstrate some awareness of flags (46%) compared to girls (30%).³¹

Parades

During the interviews, children were shown a photograph of an Orange march. The marchers were in traditional dress (black suits, bowler hats) and no band was present. The children were asked whether they knew what these people were doing and then what else they knew about them. As before, the answers were recorded verbatim and then consequently coded in relation to the children's awareness of the cultural and/or political significance of the march.

Awareness was indicated by the children's ability to offer relevant information about the march that did more than just describe what is in the photograph. Being able to state that they were 'marchers' or that they were carrying flags therefore did not constitute awareness. Rather, what did indicate awareness was the ability to recall and use terms commonly associated with marches (most notably describing it as a 'parade' or a 'band'). In addition, a small number of children were able to offer additional information demonstrating greater awareness such as being able to correctly identify the marchers as Orangemen and to associate them with church.

Overall, nearly half of the children in the sample as a whole were able to demonstrate some awareness of parades (49%). Examples of typical comments are provided in Box 4.

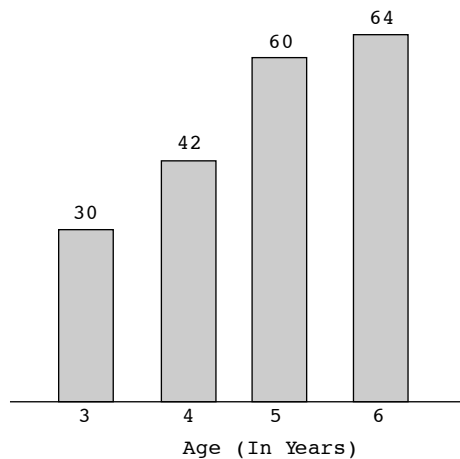
Box 4: Examples of Children's Awareness of Parades

Children's descriptions of a picture of an Orange March (no bands or musical instruments present in the picture):

- "Playing a band. They play drums and trumpets and flutes and they wave flags" (Protestant Boy, Aged 3)
- "They're making a band. Their music's too loud because there's loads of people in it" (Catholic Girl, Aged 4)
- "They're in a band. They play music. One time I saw a band and there was fireworks at night time" (Protestant Boy, Aged 4)
- "An Orange parade go past our house. My brother said there was bad boys behind them" (Catholic Girl, Aged 6)
- "They're making a parade. I was in a parade and I was a baby and got lifted up" (Protestant Boy, Aged 5)
- "Having a parade. They're holding up stuff. They're Orangemen" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)

As Figure 11 illustrates, children's awareness of parades tends to increase with age.³² While just under a third of three year olds demonstrate some awareness, this rose to nearly two thirds of six year olds. While no significant differences were found between the children in terms of gender or social class, religion was found to exert an influence on levels of awareness. While 59% of Protestant children in the sample as a whole demonstrated some awareness, only 39% of Catholic children did.³³

FIGURE 11:
Children's Awareness of the
Cultural/Political Significance of

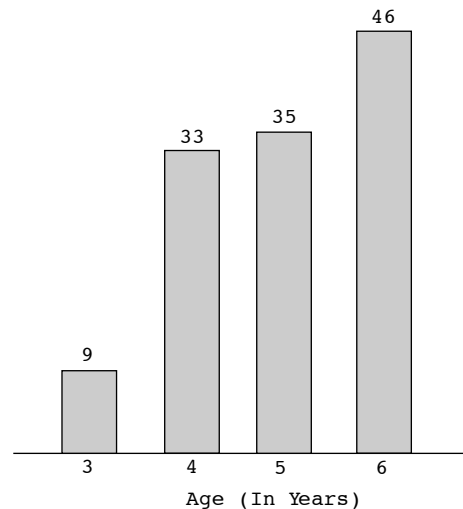


Irish Dancing

The children were also shown a photograph of an Irish dancer. The girl was wearing a traditional dress. The children were asked if they knew who she was and then what else they knew about her. The answers were recorded verbatim and consequently coded in relation to whether the children demonstrated any awareness of the cultural or political significance of Irish dancers. Awareness was simply indicated by whether the child could correctly identify the girl as an 'Irish dancer' and/or offer further information (such as she dances in Ceillis).

The vast majority of children who demonstrated some awareness did so by correctly identifying the girl as an Irish dancer. Overall, 31% of the sample demonstrated some awareness. As Figure 12 shows, this awareness increased significantly with age. While only 9% of three year olds were able to correctly identify the dancer, nearly half (46%) of six year olds could.³⁴

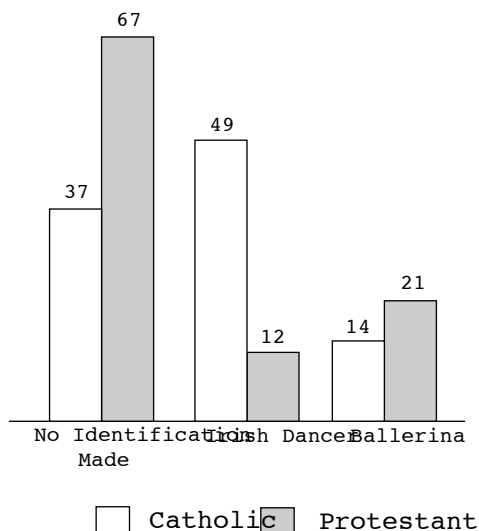
FIGURE 12:
Children's Awareness
of Irish Dancers (%)



While no differences in awareness were found in terms of social class, there were significant differences in terms of gender and religion. As regards the former, girls were nearly twice as likely as boys to identify the dancer correctly (40% compared to 22% respectively).³⁵ As regards the latter, Catholic children were much more likely to correctly identify the dancer (49%) compared to Protestant children (12%).³⁶

In relation to the differences between Catholic and Protestant children, it is interesting to note that while Catholic children were more likely to identify the dancer as an Irish dancer, Protestant children were more likely to identify her as a Ballerina. As Figure 13 shows, while Catholic children were over three times more likely to identify her as an Irish Dancer than a Ballerina, Protestant children were 50% more likely to identify her as a Ballerina rather than an Irish Dancer.³⁷

FIGURE 13:
Differences in 3–6 Year Old Child
Identification of an Irish Dancer b



Football Shirts

During the interviews, the children were also shown small replica football shirts for Celtic and Rangers in turn. For each of the shirts they were asked whether they knew what they were and also what else they knew about them. As described in the last chapter, they were then shown both and asked if there was one they preferred and, if so, which one. As before, the children's answers were recorded verbatim and then coded in relation to whether they demonstrated some awareness of the cultural or political significance of one or both of the shirts or not.

Awareness was demonstrated by the children being able to either correctly identify one of both of the shirts correctly (i.e. as Celtic or Rangers shirts) or associate one of the shirts with a particular group (namely Catholics or Protestants), a country or nation (i.e. Ireland, Britain or England) or another cultural event associated with one of the two main religious traditions (i.e. St Patrick's day). Typical examples of the awareness demonstrated by the children are given in Box 5.

Box 5: Examples of Children's Awareness of Football Shirts

Children's descriptions of the Celtic replica football shirt shown to them:

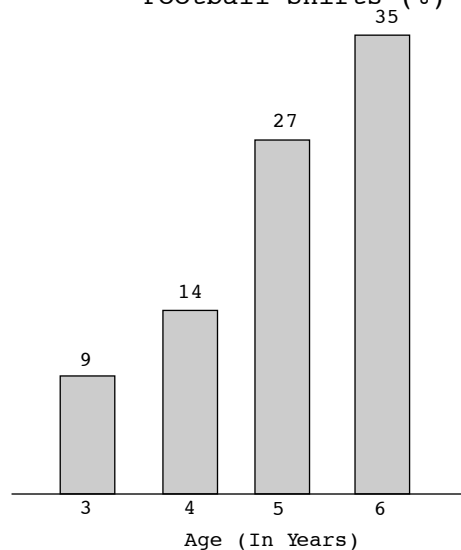
- "Celtic team" (Catholic Girl, Aged 3)
- "That's my favourite team. I have one of them Celtic tops. My dad took me over to see them on Saturday" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)
- "A Catholic wears it because they support it. Footballers play in it. Wee boys wear it" (Protestant Boy, Aged 6)

Children's descriptions of the Rangers replica football shirt shown to them:

- "Rangers" (Protestant Boy, Aged 4)
- "A football shirt. It's probably for the Protestant players - it looks like one" (Catholic Girl, Aged 6)
- "A marching jumper. The marching boys wear it when they're marching" (Catholic Boy, Aged 5)

Overall, just over one in five of the children in the sample as a whole (21%) demonstrated some awareness of one or both of the football shirts. As Figure 14 illustrates, this awareness also increased with age. While just under one in ten three year olds demonstrated some awareness, this rose to just over a third of six year olds. Differences were also found in relation to the influence of religion, gender, social class and area of residence. As regards the former, Catholic children were more likely to demonstrate some awareness of one or both of the football shirts (26%) compared to Protestant children (16%).³⁸

FIGURE 14:
Children's Awareness of
Football Shirts (%)



As regards gender, boys were more likely to demonstrate awareness (26%) compared to girls (16%).³⁹ However, the greatest differences were found in relation to social class. Working class children were much more likely to demonstrate some awareness of Celtic or Rangers tops (27%) compared to middle class children (7%).⁴⁰ Finally, those living in urban areas (25%) were more likely to demonstrate awareness of the football tops compared to those living in rural areas (15%).⁴¹

Conflict-Related Violence

Finally, the children's responses to all of the questions in the interview were analysed and coded in relation to whether they made any reference to violence related to the conflict in Northern Ireland. Items in the interview that were most likely to elicit responses that demonstrated some awareness were those related to the police and a photograph of a handgun that was shown to children. A significant proportion of the children referred to "baddies" and "bad people" in response to these two items. On such occasions, the children were then asked who these "baddies" or "bad people" were. Many of the instances of children demonstrating awareness of violence relating to the conflict occurred when elaborating upon these terms.

Awareness of conflict-related violence was demonstrated only if the child made reference to paramilitaries or mentioned a violent activity or event that was directly related to the conflict i.e. bombs, shooting (but not if the child was being shown the picture of the handgun) and stone-throwing. Typical examples of the responses provided by children who demonstrated some awareness are illustrated in Box 6.

Overall, 21% of the children in the sample as a whole

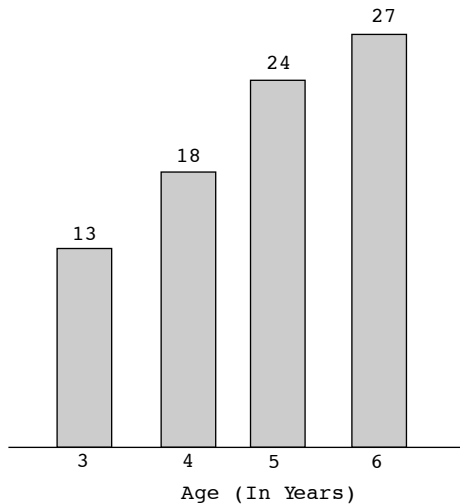
Box 6: Examples of Children's Awareness of Conflict-Related Violence in Northern Ireland

Comments that the children made when asked what they meant when they used the term "baddies" or "bad people":

- "They shoot police and the army jeep and it's all smoke. They would use guns for doing crime and shooting windows" (Catholic Girl, Aged 6)
- "They kill and burn cars" (Catholic Girl, Aged 3)
- "They fight and hurt people badly. They wear masks too" (Protestant Girl, Aged 6)
- "Bad boys shoot too. They throw lots of stuff at them [the police]" (Protestant Girl, Aged 3)
- "IRA and Fenians - they rob and sometimes they shoot people. they have masks on" (Protestant boy, Aged 5)
- "Shoot with guns. Throw stones. Light fires" (Protestant Boy, Aged 4)
- "They do bad things like set places on fire. Sometimes they wear black masks" (Catholic Girl, Aged 6)
- "They hurt people and all and they go around with guns and shoot people and try to kill them" (Catholic Girl, Aged 6)
- "They have guns because they're bad. They kill people because they're bad. They wear a wee black mask to cover their eyes" (Protestant Boy, Aged 4)
- "They're put in jail. They shoot your house" (Catholic boy, Aged 4)
- "They throw stones. The peeler went on and they kept throwing. They were children too" (Catholic Boy, Aged 5)
- "Gunmen - wear black masks" (Catholic Boy, Aged 5)

demonstrated some awareness of violence related to the conflict. As Figure 15 illustrates, this awareness increased with age. While a little over one in ten three year olds were able to demonstrate some awareness this rose to just over a quarter of all six year olds.⁴²

FIGURE 15:
Children's Awareness of
Conflict-Related Violence in Northern



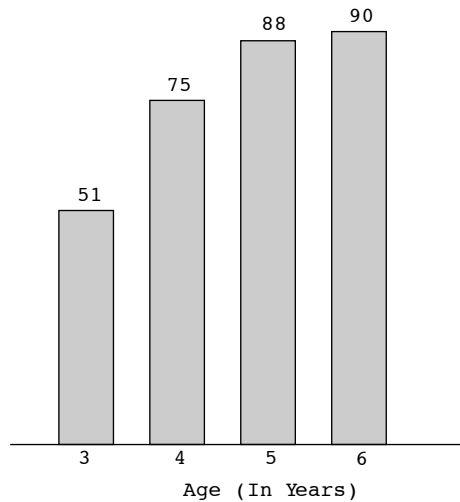
No differences in awareness were found in relation to religion or social class. However significant differences were found with regard to gender: Boys were more likely to demonstrate awareness (26%) compared to girls (15%).⁴³

Overall Levels of Awareness

So far the chapter has outlined children's awareness of the cultural and/or political significance of a variety of symbols and events associated with Northern Ireland. It is clear from the above that young children's awareness can be triggered in many different ways. In order to gain an overall insight into the extent to which children's awareness is beginning to develop at this age, a calculation was made of the proportions of children who demonstrated an awareness of the cultural/political significance of at least one symbol or event shown to them.

Overall, 76% of the children in the sample as a whole could demonstrate some awareness. As can be seen from Figure 16, this also increased significantly with age.⁴⁴ Just over half of all three year olds could demonstrate awareness of at least one item. This rose to nine out of ten of all six year olds. Interestingly, no significant differences were found between the children's levels of awareness in terms of either religion, gender or social class.

FIGURE 16:
Proportions of 3–6 Year Olds Demonstrate Awareness of the Cultural/Political at Least One Symbol or Event Associated Northern Ireland (%)



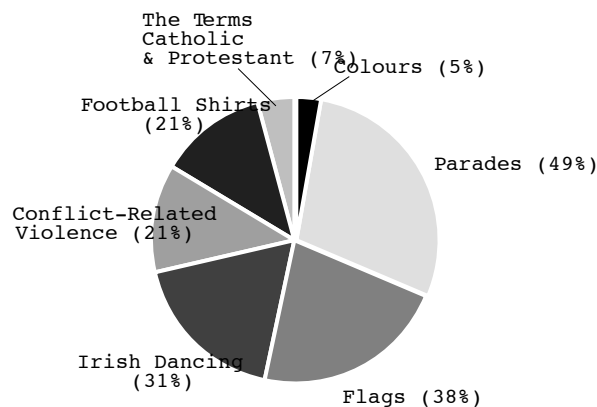
Within this, the number of symbols/events that a child could demonstrate awareness of also increased with age.⁴⁵ As can be seen from Table 3, the average number of incidents a three year old could demonstrate awareness of was 0.82, whereas this rose to 2.6 for six year olds.

Table 3: Average Number of Cultural Events/Symbols That Children Demonstrated Awareness Of		
Age	Average Number	Standard Deviation
3	0.82	1.09
4	1.42	1.13
5	2.14	1.44
6	2.65	1.83

The standard deviations quoted in the table provide an indication of the variation in levels of awareness within each age group. Basically, it tells us that two thirds of children are able to demonstrate an awareness of the average \pm one standard deviation. For example, we can see from Table 3 that two thirds of six year olds will be aware of 2.65 ± 1.83 separate events/symbols (i.e. between 0.82 and 4.48 events/symbols). Similarly, we can see that the variation in awareness among three year olds is much less with two thirds of them being able to demonstrate an awareness of 0.82 ± 1.09 (i.e. between 0 and 1.91) cultural events and/or symbols.

Figure 17 compares the differing events and symbols in relation to which the children were most likely to demonstrate an awareness of. As can be seen, the three most significant symbols/events in relation to the social worlds of young children appear to be the parades, flags and Irish dancing. The age of the child was not found to have a significant influence on the relative importance of each of these symbols and events.

FIGURE 17:
The Most Common Events/Symbols That Children Demonstrated An Awareness:



*Percentage of children able to demonstrate awareness of each item shown

Conclusions

As stated in the introduction, the purpose of this chapter has been simply to gain an understanding of when the various cultural events and symbols associated with the communal divisions in Northern Ireland begin to register in young children's social worlds. The findings reported in this chapter suggest that children in their early years are already being introduced to and are developing an awareness of a range of different events and symbols. The most significant of these appear to be the parades and flags. Irish dancing, football shirts and the violence itself were also fairly significant.

Overall, just over a half of three years olds were found to have developed an awareness of the cultural/political significance of at least one symbol or event. By the age of five, the vast majority of children were able to demonstrate an awareness of between two and three symbols/events. Of course it needs to be stressed that such an awareness may be extremely limited.

For some of the children it may be little more than an ability to correctly name a particular symbol or event.

Furthermore, from some of the children's quotes it is clear that this awareness appears to arise from two particular sources:

the family and the local community. Some of the children talked about how members of their own family would have flags in their own houses, would wear particular football shirts and/or would take them to Irish dancing and/or to watch the local parades. Also, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, the simple presence of particular flags and/or parades in local areas and also the incidents of violence that occur there are all strong and influential sources of awareness for these children.

It is interesting to note that very few children made reference to the television when talking about specific symbols or events.

This is obviously not simply due to the fact that children do not watch television. It is more likely to be a reflection of the fact that such symbols and events are most likely to be shown during local news and current affairs programmes - programmes that children of this age are unlikely to either watch or to be interested in.

There are two key points to make from this chapter overall. The first is simply that there is ample evidence that such symbols and events are at least beginning to register in young children's social worlds. The second point is that such an awareness, however limited initially, forms the basis upon which children come to build more detailed and elaborate understandings. Certainly, some of the quotes reported in this chapter taken from the children themselves illustrate what they are at least capable of knowing and believing at this early age.

Ultimately, as their awareness of the cultural events and symbols associated with particular communities deepens it can provide the basis upon which children begin to define themselves in relation to their membership of certain groups (and thus also, by default, in terms of their distinctiveness from others). And this can, in turn, provide the basis upon which children begin to develop stereotypes and prejudices about those groups that they perceive to be different from themselves. It is the extent to which this is already evident among the children in this study that provides the focus for the next chapter.

3

**Young Children's
Identification With Particular
Communities and
Development of Sectarian
Prejudices**

Introduction

While the majority of young children may be developing a growing awareness of specific cultural events and symbols associated with particular communities, this does not mean that they necessarily tend to identify themselves with those communities. As stated in the introduction to this report, awareness and in-group identification are two distinct processes. Moreover, an identification with a particular group does not then, necessarily, lead to the development of prejudiced attitudes.

With this in mind, this chapter is organised into two parts. The first examines the extent to which the children in this study explicitly defined themselves as members of a particular community, The second then explores the extent to which these children held sectarian attitudes and opinions.

Identification with Particular Communities

The children's answers to all of the questions asked in the interviews were analysed for evidence of whether they explicitly identified themselves, without prompting, with a particular group or community. A child was recorded as doing so if, on at least one occasion during the interviews, they did one of the following:

- Claimed group membership directly (i.e. "I'm a Catholic/Protestant" or "I'm British/Irish");
- Inferred the existence of a particular group and also their membership of it indirectly (i.e. "That's *our* colours" or "That's *my* flag"); and/or
- Stated that they liked something because it was associated with a particular group (i.e. "I like that flag because it's British" or "I like Celtic because they're Catholic").

A range of illustrative examples of children identifying with a particular community are provided in Box 7.

Box 7: Examples of Children's Self-Identification with a Particular Community

Responses to question "why do you prefer that coloured shape?"

- "That's Ireland and Irish" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)
- "It's the colour of our flag [Union Jack]. It's got my favourite colours" (Protestant Boy, Aged 6)

Responses to question "what is a Catholic/Protestant?":

- "I'm a Catholic" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)
- "Yes that's what we are - Protestants" (Protestant Girl, Aged 6)
- "We are all Catholics and we don't like the Prods" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)

Responses to question "why do you like that flag the best?":

- "It's my flag - there's one like that at the house" (Protestant Girl, Aged 3)
- "That's our flag" (Catholic Girl, Aged 4)
- "It's the one of our country" (Protestant Boy, Aged 4)
- "Because it's a good flag. Because I'm Catholic and it's a Catholic flag" (Catholic Girl, Aged 6)
- "That's our flag. It's a Protestant flag. I think you call it a Union Jack" (Protestant Girl, Aged 6)
- "It means that it's a Northern Ireland flag. It's on lampposts outside my house. It's to tell people that this is Northern Ireland" (Protestant Boy, Aged 6)

Responses to question: "do you like/not like these [Orange] marchers?":

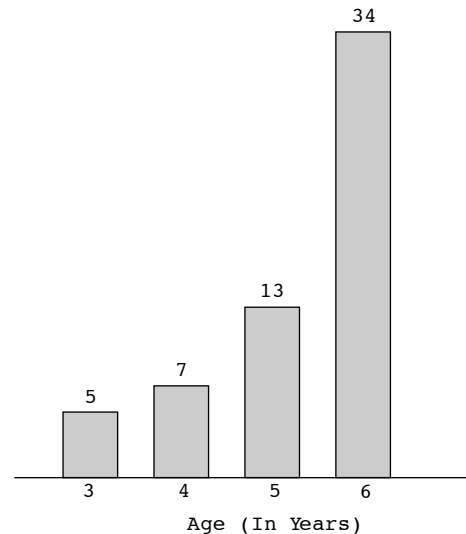
- "They're not my land ... they've got all the colours that I hate" (Catholic Boy, Aged 5)
- "Cos they're also Protestants as well. That's all I know about them" (Protestant Girl, Aged 6)

Responses to question: "why do you prefer this [football] shirt?"

- "Protestants wear it. They support Rangers. Footballers wear it. I've got the new kit - it's red, white and blue- I've got the other kits" (Protestant Boy, Aged 6)
- "Because it's a Catholic one and I like the Irish team" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)

Overall, 15% of the children in the sample as a whole demonstrated a tendency to identify with a particular group or community. As can be seen from Figure 18, such a tendency increased significantly with age.⁴⁶ Only a handful of three and four year olds demonstrated some identification with a particular community (5% and 7% respectively). It was not until the age of six that the tendency became noticeable. By this age, one in three children (34%) tended to see themselves as being a member of one community or the other.

FIGURE 18:
Proportions of 3-6 Year Olds Self-Identifying with a Particular Community in Northern Ireland (%)



In addition, no differences were found among the children in relation to the effects of religion or social class on their tendency to identify with a particular community. However, there were small but significant differences in terms of gender. Boys were found to be more likely to see themselves as a member of a particular community (19%) compared to girls (10%).⁴⁷

Development of Sectarian Prejudices

As already stressed, this growing tendency for young children to begin to see themselves as members of a particular community does not necessarily lead onto them developing sectarian stereotypes and prejudices about the other community. In order to measure the extent to which this latter tendency was evident, the children's answers to all of the questions in the interview were also analysed in relation to whether they made, without prompting, a sectarian comment.

In this sense, a sectarian comment was defined as any comment that included any or all of the following:

- the use of sectarian terms (i.e. "Fenian", "Prod");
- a negative stereotype about the other community (i.e. Catholics or Protestants) or a group of people associated with the other community (i.e. Orangemen, Irish Dancers); and/or
- a statement that s/he "didn't like" or "hated" a particular event, symbol or group of people because they were associated with the other community.

A range of illustrative examples of children identifying with a particular community are provided in Box 8.

Box 8: Examples of Children's Expressions of Sectarian Attitudes and Prejudices

Responses to question "what do you know about Protestants/Catholics?":

- "They [Catholics] rob" (Protestant Girl, Aged 4)
- "It's a bad person [Protestants] because they want to kill all the Catholics" (Catholic Girl, Aged 6)
- "Catholics are the same as masked men, they smash windows" (Protestant Girl, Aged 4)
- "Catholics don't like Protestants and that's why they don't like them - they're bad" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)
- "Catholics are different from ordinary human beings because they are badder. Throw bottles at windows. The police come after them. They make petrol bombs, get petrol at garages, throw them and they blow up" (Protestant Boy, Aged 6)

Responses to question "why do you like that flag the best?":

- "Has my two fave colours on it [green and orange] and that one's just yucky [referring to Union Jack]. I hate English and I love Irish" (Catholic Boy, Aged 6)
- "It's the Fenian flag [Irish Tricolour]. It's only bad people that have that colour of flag and that's all I know about that flag" (Protestant girl, Aged 6)

Responses to question "why do you like/not like the [Orange] marchers?":

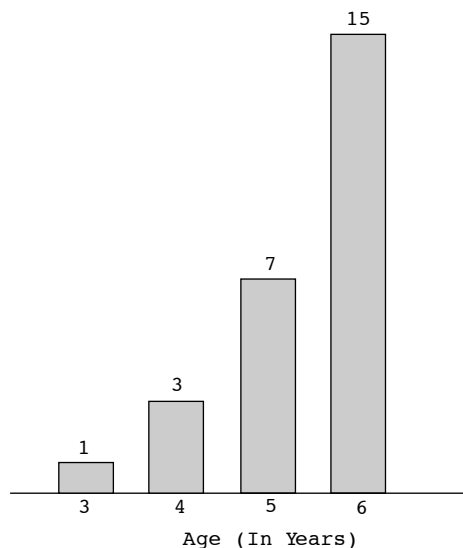
- "I like the people who are ours. I don't like those ones because they are Orangemen. They're bad people." (Catholic Girl, Aged 4)
- "They're Orangemen. Because they're going to kill us. They wanted to kill us anyway" (Catholic boy, Aged 6)
- "Because they're Protestants and they're bad because they want to kill the Catholics" (Catholic Girl, Aged 6)

Responses to question asking child for clarification when they used the term "baddies" or "bad people":

- "[They're] IRA and Fenians - they rob and sometimes they shoot people. They have masks on" (Protestant Boy, Aged 5)

Overall, 7% of the children in the sample made sectarian comments such as these without prompting. As can be seen from Figure 19, this also increased significantly with age.⁴⁸ It rarely occurred among three and four year olds and was most likely to take place with six year olds, with just under one in six making sectarian comments during interviews.

FIGURE 19:
Proportions of 3-6 Year Olds Make Sectarian Comments Without Prompting



While there were no significant differences found between Protestant and Catholic children in relation to their tendency to make such comments, significant differences were found in relation to social class and gender. As regards the former, while 6% of working class children made sectarian comments, none from middle class backgrounds did.⁴⁹

In relation to gender, boys were much more likely to make sectarian comments (11%) compared to girls (3%).⁵⁰ This latter point confirms the findings of recent research on racist harassment in Northern Ireland where boys were found to be much more likely to hold racist attitudes and also to instigate harassing behaviour than girls (see Connolly and Keenan 2001). It certainly suggests that any interventions aimed at addressing prejudiced attitudes and behaviour (whether sectarian or racist in nature) need to include a focus on the negative effects of masculine sub-cultures among boys.

Conclusions

Overall, it is clear from the evidence presented in this chapter that children's self-identification with a particular community and also their tendency to express sectarian attitudes do not appear to significantly emerge until the ages of five or six. By the age of six, a third of children see themselves as a member of one of the two main communities and about one in six make sectarian comments without prompting. For those that are younger, the evidence suggests that while they are capable of identifying with a particular community and also of holding and making sectarian statements, this only tends to occur among a small number of children.

Again, the influence of the family and of the local community are evident in some of the children's comments. Moreover, it is

particularly noticeable that the sense of group identification and the tendency to make sectarian comments appear to increase most significantly during the first few years of schooling. This increase may be due partly to simple developmental factors (i.e. children developing their ability to recognise that they are members of a particular group and their ability to discriminate).

However, it may also be partly related to their attendance at school. Identifying the particular ways in which schools may contribute to children's awareness and attitudes is beyond the scope of this present study. However, it is important to remember that starting school represents a significant milestone in young children's lives. It is a time where many will come to interact with other children in much larger numbers for the first time and also to come under the influence of their older peers. Given that Northern Ireland operates a *de facto* segregated school system where the vast majority of schools are either Protestant or Catholic, then schools can too easily become fertile learning grounds for young children where they soon develop an awareness of themselves as part of a particular community and develop prejudiced attitudes about others.

4

Summary and Conclusions

Introduction

This final chapter provides a brief summary of the key findings of the present study and then discusses some of the implications of these for our understanding of how the conflict and continuing communal divisions tend to impact upon young children's social worlds. It concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of the findings for community relations work with children in their early years.

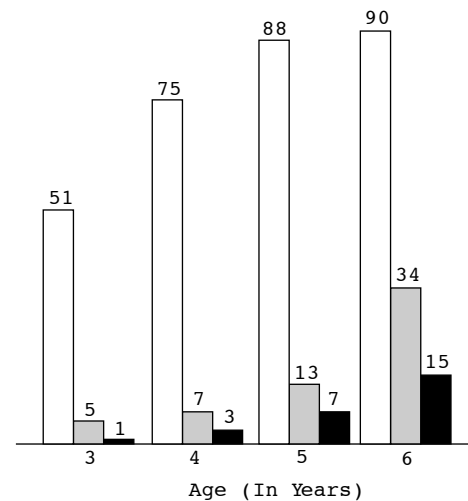
Summary of Key Trends

The previous chapters have provided evidence relating to children's awareness of and attitudes towards a range of cultural and political events and symbols associated with the conflict in Northern Ireland. In terms of the children's awareness of the cultural/political significance of particular events and symbols, it is clear that this differed significantly in relation to the specific items they were shown. Parades, flags and Irish dancers appeared to be the most common factors that children of this age demonstrated awareness of. In contrast, they were only able to demonstrate a relatively limited awareness of the cultural/political significance of the terms Catholic and Protestant and also of particular colours.

While such variations were evident, an overall attempt has been made to identify how young children's awareness and attitudes develop with age. A summary of the main findings is provided in Figure 20. As can be seen, the tendency for young children to demonstrate an awareness of the cultural/political significance of certain events and symbols and their tendencies to identify themselves with a particular community and also to hold and make sectarian attitudes are essentially separate processes. While one may tend to feed into the other, it cannot be claimed that just because a child demonstrates a general awareness of cultural events and symbols, this necessarily means they will see themselves as a member of a particular group. Similarly, just because they see themselves as

a member of a particular group, this does not mean that they will inevitably hold and express sectarian stereotypes and prejudices.

FIGURE 20:
Overall Levels of Awareness,
In-Group Identification and Sectar
Prejudice Among 3-6 Year Olds (%)



□ Awareness ■ Group Identification ■ Sectarianism

This is clearly evident from Figure 20. While the majority of children in the sample demonstrated some awareness of the cultural and political significance of particular events and symbols, a much smaller proportion either identified themselves with a particular community or expressed sectarian comments.

With regard to age-related differences, it is clear that by the time children reach the age of six, the conflict and community divisions that exist are having a significant impact upon their social worlds. As shown in Chapter Two, the vast majority (90%) could demonstrate an awareness on average of just under three separate cultural and/or political events and symbols. Moreover, a third tended to see themselves as belonging to a particular community and one in six made sectarian comments without prompting.

While five year olds tended to demonstrate broadly similar levels of awareness, their tendencies to identify with a particular community and to express sectarian statements is less. However, and as can be seen from Figure 20, these two latter tendencies are certainly evident and are clearly emerging at this age.

For three and four year olds, while the majority are clearly aware of the cultural and political significance of at least one event or symbol on average, their tendency to see themselves as a member of a particular community and also to make sectarian comments are quite limited. The general picture that appears to emerge therefore is that this is a time in children's lives where they are becoming increasingly aware of the cultural and political events surrounding them. This is particularly noticeable by the fact that small but significant differences in cultural/political preferences are emerging among Catholic and Protestant children at the age of three in relation to such matters as attitudes towards the police, particular flags and towards parades.

For a very small number, this developing awareness provides the foundations upon which they already have begun to identify with a particular community and/or develop sectarian attitudes. However, for the majority, it represents the foundations upon which a significant minority tend to develop community identities and prejudiced attitudes over the following few years.

Overall, it needs to be stressed that these figures are likely to be underestimates of the true levels of community identification and sectarian attitudes among young children. Because of the indirect means of measuring these two tendencies, their identification was based upon the children making unprompted statements. For most of the children, the interview was the first and only time that they had met the adult that was interviewing them. Clearly, many will have been guarded and may well have chosen not to say certain things.

Sources of Awareness and Attitudes

Clearly, children will pick up such awareness and attitudes from a range of differing sources. However, the findings presented in this report point to three particularly significant sources:

The Family

It is not surprising to find that the family should be so influential in relation to young children's attitudes and general levels of awareness. For very young children, parents/guardians and older relatives tend to play a central role in their social and moral education. Much of their interaction with the outside world will be facilitated by and mediated through family members. This is clearly evident from some of the comments made by the children who talk of grannies having flags outside their houses, mummies taking them to Irish dancing and brothers being in bands.

The Local Community

Beyond the immediate contact with family members, the other most significant source of influence for young, preschool children will be the local community. It is the local community that the child will see through her or his window and will walk through and possibly play in. It is not surprising, therefore, that children from specific working class and urban areas were more likely to demonstrate greater awareness. The concentration of events/symbols within these particular areas is bound to increase the awareness and attitudes of the children that live there.

The School

Two particular points are worth making with regard to the influence of schools. The first is that their influence is only partial. The fact that *preschool* children were found to be developing awareness and particular attitudes indicate the significance of factors beyond the school - most noticeably the family and local community. It is therefore important to recognise that schools, alone, can never be regarded as the whole problem nor the whole solution to the problem of community relations.

However, and this is the second point, children's tendency to see themselves as part of a community and to make sectarian statements did seem to increase significantly between the ages of five and six - the first couple of years of compulsory schooling. As mentioned in the previous chapter, this is the time when children are first exposed to a much larger number of children and also to the influences of their older peers. Given that Northern Ireland operates a *de facto* segregated school system where the vast majority of schools are either Protestant or Catholic, then schools can too easily become fertile learning grounds for young children where they soon develop an awareness of themselves as part of a particular community and develop prejudiced attitudes about others.

At the very least, therefore, schools need to ensure that they develop and foster an inclusive ethos. They certainly have a responsibility to encourage meaningful cross-community contact and to create an environment within which difference and cultural diversity are valued and respected.

Implications for Community Relations Work with Young Children

The findings of this report clearly show that the conflict in Northern Ireland, and the community divisions that underpin it, are impacting upon young children's social worlds. The general picture is that the majority of children in Northern Ireland are being introduced to and becoming aware of various cultural and political events and symbols from the age of three onwards. Moreover, while they are also able to begin identifying themselves with particular communities at that age and also holding sectarian attitudes, these two tendencies do not begin to emerge among the children noticeably until the ages of five and six.

There are clear implications arising from this for the development of community relations work with young children. More specifically, the findings tend to support the arguments made by one of the present authors elsewhere (see Connolly 1998, 1999) and allow three broad conclusions to be drawn:

1. It seems appropriate that children, from the age of three, should be encouraged to explore and experience a range of different cultural practices, events and symbols and to appreciate and respect difference and cultural diversity.

Clearly, the findings presented here suggest that children are already beginning to learn about such matters. As the findings indicate, unless efforts are made to encourage children to understand and appreciate diversity, they will

soon learn and apply the sectarian frameworks of others. As shown above, at least one in six of the six year olds in Northern Ireland have already learnt and are willing to express sectarian attitudes.

One understandable response to this first conclusion is that there is still a sizeable proportion of children who have little if any awareness of the broader divisions that exist. Any type of community relations programme along the lines suggested here will encourage them to think in these terms and thus may become counter-productive. The answer to this is that it simply depends upon how it is done. What is being suggested here is simply that children are encouraged to learn about and explore the diversity of traditions and cultures that surround them. This, ultimately, reflects a good, well-rounded education.

It is interesting to note that such an approach is widely accepted with regard to race and multicultural education where it is regarded generally as a good idea to encourage children to experience as wide a range of cultures and practices as early as possible. So long as it is done sensitively and appropriately, there is little concern that this will encourage children to be racist. In a similar vein, there is no necessary relationship between encouraging children's education and understanding of the differing cultures and traditions that exist in Northern Ireland and their likelihood of developing prejudiced and sectarian attitudes. On the contrary, if young children are encouraged to appreciate and respect diversity then they may well be less likely to develop negative attitudes in the future.

Ultimately, it is true that any community relations programme will increase young children's awareness and understanding of the differences that exist in Northern

Ireland. However, if that understanding is characterised by a positive and open attitude to diversity then this is surely something to be welcomed. It is certainly far better than simply leaving children to learn about other communities from their peers.

- 2. From about the age of five onwards, children should be encouraged to understand the negative effects of sectarian stereotypes and prejudices and to be able to identify them in their own attitudes, where appropriate.*

As argued in detail elsewhere (see Connolly 1998), there is now a growing body of research evidence to suggest that children of this age certainly have some of the key social and moral skills to begin to be able to understand that saying and doing certain things can be harmful and to also appreciate how it might make others feel. Given that sectarian attitudes are beginning to significantly emerge among five and six year olds, it would clearly be an appropriate time to begin to explore some of these themes and issues with young children. Moreover, this would certainly fit into the existing preschool curriculum given its emphasis on prosocial behaviour and on encouraging children to respect and understand the feelings of others.

- 3. For such strategies to be successful, nurseries and schools need to find ways of engaging and working closely with parents and the local community and, where appropriate, connecting with community relations and cultural diversity initiatives in the wider community.*

This final point simply reflects the central role that the family and the local community play in influencing the awareness and attitudes of young children as shown in this report. It is certainly not realistic nor fair to expect nurseries and

schools to shoulder the total responsibility of encouraging greater understanding and awareness among young children. Indeed, unless parents and the local community are part of this then not only is such an initiative unlikely to succeed but it is also quite possible that it will attract significant opposition within some local areas.

Overall, it is beyond the scope of this present report to begin to suggest how these broad proposals might be addressed in practice. Some general suggestions have been made elsewhere (see Connolly 1999). However, it is clear that a great deal of planning and development needs to take place to ensure that any approaches taken are appropriate and sensitive. Pockets of good practice can already be found in some areas while there are a number of organisations that can offer advice and support to those wishing to develop a community relations strand to their work with young children.

More fundamentally, we now need a wider debate about early years education and the role of cultural diversity and citizenship within this. At present, the biggest obstacle to developing a community relations programme for young children has been the widespread belief that children of this age are just too young to know or learn about cultural differences. However, the evidence presented in this report shows that this is far from the case. Children from the age of three are already beginning to develop an awareness of the cultural events and symbols that surround them. By the age of five and six a significant proportion are already acquiring negative attitudes.

The focus of the debate should therefore not be on *whether* anything should be done but rather on *what* precisely should be done. It is hoped that this present report will help encourage, and also provide a valuable contribution to, such a debate.

Notes

1. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[1] = 39.530$.
2. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[1] = 146.906$.
3. $p = 0.037$, $\chi^2[1] = 4.328$.
4. $p = 0.05$, $\chi^2[1] = 2.700$ (one tailed).
5. $p = 0.010$, $\chi^2[1] = 5.421$ (one tailed).
6. $p = 0.044$, $\chi^2[1] = 2.931$ (one tailed).
7. $p = 0.013$, $\chi^2[1] = 4.919$ (one tailed).
8. $p = 0.035$, $\chi^2[1] = 3.312$ (one tailed).
9. $p = 0.050$, $\chi^2[1] = 2.714$ (one tailed).
10. $p = 0.065$, $\chi^2[1] = 2.294$ (one tailed).
11. $p = 0.015$, $\chi^2[1] = 4.736$ (one tailed).
12. $p = 0.017$, $\chi^2[1] = 4.457$ (one tailed).
13. $p = 0.002$, $\chi^2[1] = 8.693$ (one tailed).
14. $p = 0.035$, $\chi^2[1] = 3.317$ (one tailed).
15. $p = 0.001$, $\chi^2[1] = 10.194$.
16. $p = 0.003$, $\chi^2[1] = 8.760$.
17. $p = 0.002$, $\chi^2[1] = 8.175$ (one tailed).
18. $p = 0.025$, $\chi^2[1] = 3.882$ (one tailed).
19. $p = 0.050$, $\chi^2[1] = 2.694$ (one tailed).
20. $p = 0.008$, $\chi^2[1] = 7.059$.
21. $p = 0.018$, $\chi^2[1] = 5.629$.
22. $p = 0.016$, $\chi^2[1] = 4.602$ (one tailed).
23. $p = 0.023$, $\chi^2[1] = 3.964$ (one tailed).
24. $p = 0.016$, $\chi^2[1] = 4.661$ (one tailed).
25. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[1] = 20.336$ (one tailed).
26. $p = 0.040$, $\chi^2[3] = 6.801$ (one tailed).
27. $p = 0.017$, $\chi^2[1] = 4.539$ (one tailed).
28. $p = 0.004$, $\chi^2[1] = 8.321$.
29. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[1] = 16.042$ (one tailed).
30. $p = 0.022$, $\chi^2[1] = 5.217$.
31. $p = 0.003$, $\chi^2[1] = 8.630$.
32. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[3] = 26.601$.
33. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[1] = 14.353$.
34. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[3] = 29.702$.
35. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[1] = 13.017$.
36. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[1] = 56.005$.
37. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[1] = 56.395$.
38. $p = 0.028$, $\chi^2[1] = 4.835$.
39. $p = 0.016$, $\chi^2[1] = 5.806$.
40. $p = 0.005$, $\chi^2[1] = 7.810$.
41. $p = 0.023$, $\chi^2[1] = 5.188$.
42. $p = 0.048$, $\chi^2[3] = 6.378$ (one tailed).
43. $p = 0.015$, $\chi^2[1] = 5.917$.
44. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[3] = 47.176$.
45. $p < 0.0005$, $r_p = 0.457$.
46. $p < 0.0005$, $\chi^2[3] = 37.476$.
47. $p = 0.014$, $\chi^2[1] = 5.992$.
48. $p = 0.002$, $\chi^2[3] = 14.952$.
49. $p = 0.044$, $\chi^2[1] = 2.933$ (one tailed).
50. $p = 0.003$, $\chi^2[1] = 8.936$.

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**Appendix I:
Methodology**

Introduction

This appendix provides further information in relation to the methodology employed for the present study and also technical details in relation to the sample used.

Methodology Employed

Access to children was gained via local primary schools in the first instance. The choice of primary schools is described below. If a school did not have a nursery attached, the local 'feeder' nursery was approached to enable access to three (and at times four) year olds. For each school, eight children were interviewed in total - a boy and a girl from each of the four age groups (3, 4, 5 and 6). The children were chosen randomly from those present in the school/nursery. Each fieldworker ensured that the school principal was aware of the contents of the full research instrument being used. Some schools did not wish the picture of the handgun to be used and, in such cases, it was simply omitted from the interview. Written parental consent was also obtained before each child was subsequently interviewed.

Each child was interviewed individually, usually in a separate space/room within the school or nursery. The fieldworker was given a number of general questions to ask the child first (about television programmes and games) in order to put them at ease and develop a rapport with them. The fieldworkers were then required to follow the instructions contained in the research instrument precisely to ensure that the same questions were asked in the same ways, and in the same order, with each child. Interviews typically lasted for about 15-20 minutes. Children's responses were recorded verbatim and were then consequently coded and analysed statistically (see below).

Details of the basic elements of the research instrument have been described in the main chapters of this present report together with the methods for coding responses. However, a full copy of the research instrument and of the items used is available on request from Paul Connolly (University of Ulster).

Choice of Sample

A multi-stage stratified sampling method was used in order to produce a random sample that was broadly representative of the population of young children in terms of religion, gender, social class and area of residence.

The first stage of the sampling method involved the selection of 44 primary schools. The sampling frame comprised all (Protestant) controlled and (Catholic) maintained primary schools in Northern Ireland. Because of their small numbers, integrated primary schools were not included in the sampling frame. The sampling frame was then stratified in relation to three variables:

- Schools that were either: controlled or maintained;
- Schools that were in the following three Education and Library Board areas: Belfast; Western and Southern; or North-Eastern and South-Eastern; and
- Schools where the proportions of children receiving free school meals were either: 0-11%; 12-25%; 26-100%.

On the basis of existing data of the breakdown of schools in

relation to these three variables and their specific values, it was decided to approach 44 primary schools with the characteristics outlined in Table 4 in order to obtain a broadly representative sample.

For each of the cells (e.g. maintained primary schools in Belfast

Table 4: Sampling Technique								
% Free School Meals	Belfast Board		Western and Southern Boards		NE and SE Boards		Total	
	C	M	C	M	C	M		
0 - 11%	1	1	3	3	3	3	14 (32%)	
12 - 25%	1	1	3	3	3	3	14 (32%)	
26 -100%	1	2	3	3	3	4	16 (36%)	
Sub - Total	3	4	9	9	9	10	21 (48%)	23 (52%)
Total	7 (16%)		18 (41%)		19 (43%)		44 (100%)	

C=Controlled Schools, M=Maintained Schools

with the proportions of children receiving free school meals between 26-100%), all schools that met the criteria provided the sub-sampling frame from which the relevant number of schools were chosen randomly (e.g. two schools in relation to the previous example). Only four schools approached refused to take part in the research (mainly due to lack of time and/or other research currently being conducted in the school). In such circumstances, that school was removed from the sub-sample and a second school chosen randomly to replace it.

For schools that did not have a nursery attached (and thus could not provide access to three year olds), the local 'feeder' nursery was approached in order to interview the required number of three year olds. None of the nurseries approached refused to participate in the study.

The second stage of the sampling method involved eight children being chosen from those within the school - a boy and a girl from the four age groups (3, 4, 5 and 6). Within each of these groups (i.e. all four year old boys) each child was chosen randomly from the children currently registered that met the specific age and gender criteria.

The Sample

The final sample consisted of 352 children (i.e. eight children from each of the 44 primary schools and/or local 'feeder' nurseries). Within this, 50% (175) were boys and 50% (177) girls. 52% (180) were Catholic and 48% (169) Protestant - reflecting the overall proportions of children of this age attending Maintained and Controlled schools respectively (data on the religion of three children were missing). In relation to age, the sample was almost evenly divided in terms of three (87), four (88), five (85) and six (89) year olds (data on the age of three of the children were missing).

The breakdown of the sample in relation to area of residence is provided in Table 5.

Table 5: Area of Residence of the Sample			
District Council Area	No. (%)	District Council Area	No. (%)
Antrim	16 (5%)	Fermanagh	8 (2%)
Armagh	30 (9%)	Larne	8 (2%)
Ballymena	8 (2%)	Limavady	8 (2%)
Banbridge	6 (2%)	Lisburn	16 (5%)
Belfast	97 (28%)	Derry/ Londonderry	40 (11%)
Castlereagh	16 (5%)	Newry and Mourne	16 (5%)
Coleraine	16 (5%)	Newtownabbey	8 (2%)
Craigavon	23 (7%)	North Down	8 (2%)
Down	17 (5%)	Omagh	8 (2%)
		Total*	349 (101%)
*Location data missing for three respondents. Percentages do not add up to 100 due to rounding.			

Finally, the social class background of the sample was coded using the National Statistics Socio-Economic Classification (NS-SEC). The data gathered to enable coding comprised the current occupations of the child's mother and father. Unfortunately, the data gained in relation to this was either missing or of insufficient detail to accurately code the social class background of 141 (40%) of the sample. Of the remaining 211, their social class backgrounds are detailed in Table 6.

Table 6: Social Class Background of the Sample

Main Category	Sub-Category	No.	%
Middle Class	Higher Managerial and Professional Occupations	15	7
	Lower Managerial and Professional Occupations	29	14
Intermediate Class	Intermediate Occupations	13	6
	Small Employers and Own Account Workers	44	21
Working Class	Lower Supervisory and Technical Occupations	21	10
	Semi-Routine Occupations	25	12
	Routine Occupations	36	17
	Never Worked and Long-Term Unemployed	28	13
Total		211	100

Given that the eight sub-categories listed in the table cannot be treated as comprising an ordinal scale, it was decided to condense the categories into the three suggested by the Office of National Statistics as indicated. Two points should be noted in relation to this. First, the descriptive terms 'middle class' and 'working class' were used instead of 'higher' and 'lower' occupations as these make more sense for most readers. Second, it was decided to include the final sub-category ('Never Worked and Long-Term Unemployed') in the main 'Working Class' category.

All calculations concerning the effects of social class on the sample in the main report involved straight-forward comparisons between the two categories - middle class and working class. Unfortunately, however, because of the relatively small size of these two sub-samples (44 and 110 respectively), some of the differences found tended not to reach statistical significance.

Coding of the Children's Responses

Once the data had been collected, the children's responses were analysed and key themes and issues were identified regarding the nature of the children's awareness and also their tendency to demonstrate group identification and to make sectarian statements. Definitions were then devised for use when coding each child's responses in relation to these three factors. The definitions are provided in the main body of this report. Two members of the research team then independently coded all of the data in relation to the definitions agreed. The respective codings were then compared and it was found that there was a high level of agreement between the codings thus indicating a strong degree of inter-coder reliability. For the small number of cases where there were differences, an agreement on the interpretation of the relevant definition was reached and this was then reflected in the final definition used.

Ethical Considerations

Finally, the methodological approach used does raise some important ethical issues regarding consent and the potential that the interviews may inadvertently increase the children's cultural and political awareness rather than simply assessing it. As regards the former, consent was gained on three levels. First, the formal written consent of the parent/guardian for each child was gained before they were approached for interview. Second, each child was asked whether they would like to be interviewed. If any child refused (which none did), then the fieldworkers were instructed to respect this and not to pursue the interview any further. Third, and during the interview, the fieldworkers were acutely aware of the child's reactions to each of the items they were shown. If the child demonstrated any signs of awkwardness and/or were unwilling to discuss a particular item, then the item was removed and the interview quickly progressed onto the next item.

As regards the other main concern, the interview was designed carefully with the potential danger in mind that the interview process itself could simply act to increase children's cultural and political awareness and understanding. To avoid this, children were only shown items that could already commonly be found around them and/or that they were likely to have seen before at some point. For each item, great care was taken not to divulge any information about that item to the child. In such cases where a child was not familiar with a particular item, therefore, their understanding of it would not have been increased through their participation in the interview. Moreover, given the number of different items they were shown and the small amount of time spent on each, it is unlikely that the interview would have added significantly to their awareness of any particular item.

**Appendix 2:
Useful
Resources**

There are some useful resources that currently exist aimed at helping to address sectarian prejudice and encourage understanding and respect for diversity among young children in Northern Ireland. These are listed below. Up to date information on what is available can be obtained from:

Community Relations Resource Centre
21 College Square East
Belfast BT1 6DE
Tel: (028) 9022 7555

Sarah and the Whammi

A 10-part drama series produced by Westway Films for the Community Relations Council and Channel 4. It is aimed at Early Years and Key Stage 1 and set in Northern Ireland and aims to promote understanding and respect for differences. The series is being screened on Channel 4 and is also available to buy on video. It is accompanied by a comprehensive teachers' guide, story book and online resources. For more information contact Channel 4 on 08701 246 444.

The Ulster Wean's A - Z

Commissioned by the Community Relations Council, this resource includes an A - Z book, a companion volume (written by Kate Murphy) and a wall frieze all attractively illustrated by Philip McIvor to reflect the diversity of cultural symbols, events and places in Northern Ireland. A CD-ROM is also currently being developed by the Nerve Centre (Tel. 028 7126 0562) that will provide a visually-engaging interactive resource designed for classroom use. As well as learning about the alphabet, young children will have the opportunity to learn about aspects of Ulster Wean's lives through categorised environments on the CD including: space and places; language; story; music; symbols; and sport and games. For more information contact the Community Relations Information Centre on 028 9022 7555.

Community Relations Work with Preschool Children

This is a short booklet written by Paul Connolly and published by the Community Relations Council. It summarises the available research evidence on prejudice and young children and assessing its implications for doing community relations work with young children. The booklet makes a number of recommendations about appropriate ways of addressing sectarianism among young children and encouraging them to understand and respect cultural diversity. Copies are available from the Community Relations Information Centre (Tel. 028 9022 7555).

Fairplay: Talking with Children About Prejudice and Discrimination

This is a short booklet written by Paul Connolly and jointly published by Barnardos and Save the Children. It has been produced specifically for parents and aims to increase their understanding of prejudice and discrimination in Northern Ireland and offers practical advice on how they can talk to their children about this. For copies and further information contact the Parenting Matters Project at Barnardos on 028 9049 1081 or Save the Children on 028 9043 1123.

Games Not Names

This is a resource book produced by PlayBoard and supported by the Community Relations Council. It discusses the nature of sectarianism among children and how this negatively impacts upon their play. The book provides advice on how to promote acceptance, understanding and respect for others among children. Playboard have also developed short training programmes for play workers to accompany the book. For more information contact Playboard on 028 9080 3380.

The Anti-Bias Curriculum

This book has been published by the Early Years Committee of the Northern Ireland Council for Integrated Education (NICIE). It is a resource for all those who have responsibilities for children's learning in schools, especially principals, teachers and classroom assistants. It provides practical advice and guidance on the development of an 'anti-bias curriculum' as an essential aspect of a school's ethos and practice. For copies and more information contact NICIE on 028 9023 6200.



Community Relations Council

