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Protestants and the Irish language in Northern Ireland

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Protestants and the Irish Language in Northern Ireland

Gordon William McCoy

**Thesis submitted for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy at the Faculty of Arts,
Queen's University Belfast, in May 1997.**





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GLOSSARY

- Alliance Party:** A non-sectarian party which supports the Union with Great Britain for 'pragmatic' rather than 'ideological reasons'; the party is 'unionist' in that it supports the Union because the majority of people in Northern Ireland do so, not because the party is ideologically committed to the Union.
- 'Andersonstown News':** A nationalist newspaper produced in west Belfast.
- Anglo-Irish:** The Anglican nobility in Ireland.
- Anglo-Irish Agreement:** A treaty signed by the British and Irish Governments in 1985, giving Dublin a consultative role in the affairs of Northern Ireland.
- Ascendancy:** The Anglican nobility in Ireland.
- 'Belfast Telegraph':** A newspaper which has a moderate unionist editorial line.
- Britain:** That part of the United Kingdom which excludes Northern Ireland, also known as Great Britain.
- Catholic:** Someone who identifies himself/herself as a member of the Holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church, or is commonly identified as a member of that Church..
- Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU):** A department of the Northern Ireland Office, established in 1987 to improve community relations and advise the Secretary of State on the conflict in Northern Ireland.
- Christian Brothers:** A Catholic teaching order, which places a high value on the teaching of Irish in its schools.
- Church of Ireland:** The Anglican Church in Ireland.
- Community Relations Council (CRC):** A publicly-funded body which promotes reconciliation work between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.
- Constitutional Nationalist:** Someone who wishes to unite Ireland by peaceful means.
- Cultural Traditions Group (CTG):** The cultural unit of the Community Relations Council.
- An Cultúrlann McAdam/Ó Fiaich** ('The McAdam/Ó Fiaich Cultural Centre'): An Irish language centre in west Belfast. The centre is named after Robert McAdam, a nineteenth-century Protestant who spoke Irish, and Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich, a twentieth-century Catholic cleric who was an Irish language enthusiast.
- Cumann Chluain Ard** ('The Clonard Society'): An Irish language social club in west Belfast.
- Democratic Unionist Party (DUP):** A political party in Northern Ireland characterised by a strident support of the Union. The DUP is led by the Reverend Ian Paisley, a fundamentalist preacher.
- Éire:** The official constitutional name for independent Ireland between 1937 and 1949.
- Fenian:** A pejorative term for a Catholic.
- 'Frameworks of the Future':** Joint London-Dublin proposals for the future of Northern Ireland, published in 1995.
- Gael:** An Irish-speaker; an Irishman; a Catholic.
- Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA):** An organisation dedicated to the cultivation of Ireland's indigenous sports.
- Gaelic League:** An organisation dedicated to the revival of the Irish language.
- Gaeltacht:** Remote rural districts in the west of Ireland in which the Irish language is spoken as a community language. These districts are collectively known as the Gaeltacht, although the term can be used to describe one such district. The Gaeltachts have been separated from one another by English-speaking areas for centuries, and have developed their own dialectal variants of the Irish language. By the twentieth century there were three major dialects of Irish; Ulster (Donegal), Munster (Kerry) and Connaught (Connemara).
- Gall:** An Englishman; a foreigner; a Protestant.
- Galltacht:** The English-speaking area of Ireland.

Glór na nGael ('Voice of the Gaels'): An all-Ireland organisation which promotes the spoken use of the Irish language. The Belfast headquarters of *Glór na nGael* are located in west Belfast. The organisation has taught the Irish language to mixed groups of Protestants and Catholics in the Ulster People's College since 1989.

Home Rule: A limited form of self-government for Ireland.

Integrated School: A school in which Protestants and Catholics are educated together.

'Irish News': A newspaper with a constitutional nationalist editorial line.

Irish Republican Army (IRA): The largest republican paramilitary group in Northern Ireland. In 1970 the IRA split into two groups; the smaller Official IRA, which declared a truce with the British government, and the Provisional IRA (colloquially known as the 'Provos'), which continued the military campaign against the British presence in Ireland. The Provisional IRA declared a cease-fire on 31 August 1994.

Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB): A predecessor of the IRA.

Loyalist: A unionist who believes that paramilitary force should be used to resist Irish nationalism. A folk concept of the term is more vague, and often all working-class Protestants are referred to as 'loyalists'. Loyalist paramilitary groups declared a cease-fire on 13 October 1994.

(Irish) Nationalist: Someone who seeks the unification of Ireland.

'News Letter': A Belfast newspaper which supports the Union.

Northern Ireland: The name of the formal political unit created by the Government of Ireland Act.

Northern Ireland Office (NIO): The British government department responsible for the administration of Northern Ireland since 1972.

Oideas Gael ('Education of the Gael'): An Irish language college in Glencolmcille, south Donegal.

Orange Order: A Protestant organisation, linked to the Ulster Unionist Party, but dating from the late eighteenth century. The organisation takes its name from William III (William of Orange), whose victory over James II in 1690 ensured Protestant succession to the English throne.

Protestant: Someone who identifies himself or herself as a member of the many Protestant churches in Northern Ireland, or is commonly identified as a member of one of those churches..

Republic of Ireland: The formal political unit established in 1949.

Republican: Someone who justifies or justified the attempt to unify Ireland by armed insurrection.

'Republican News': The official organ of the Irish Republican Army.

Sectarianism: Stigmatisation of the religious and political beliefs of others in Northern Ireland. Sectarianism operates at three levels: the level of ideas (prejudicial beliefs); individual action (intimidation and harassment); and the level of social structure (social and economic institutions).

Sinn Féin ('Ourselves'): A political party formed in 1905 to campaign for a united Ireland. The party split between pro-Treaty and anti-Treaty factions in 1921/2. A rump of republicans continued to support the IRA. Since 1970 they have been known as Provisional Sinn Féin, or simply Sinn Féin.

Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP): The main constitutional nationalist party in Northern Ireland.

Stormont: The seat of parliament for Northern Ireland between 1921 and 1972.

Tiocfaidh ár Lá ('Our Day Will Come'): A well-known republican slogan.

Townland: An ancient sub-division of land in Ireland; some townlands are only a few acres in size. Most rural Irish dwellers are very conscious of their townland names, although they have less significance in urban areas. Townland names are disregarded by many public authorities.

- Ulster:** The northernmost provincial unit in ancient Ireland. Many unionists equate Ulster with Northern Ireland, while nationalists consider the province to include counties Cavan, Donegal, and Monaghan, which are presently part of the Irish Republic.
- Ulster Arts Club:** A social club for individuals interested in the arts, which is located in south Belfast. The club has had an Irish language society since 1993.
- Ulster Defence Association (UDA):** The largest loyalist paramilitary group in Northern Ireland, formed in 1972.
- Ulster People's College:** A cross-community centre in south Belfast. Irish classes have been held in the college since 1989.
- Ulster Unionist Party (UUP):** The largest unionist party in Northern Ireland, which governed Northern Ireland from 1921 to 1972.
- Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF):** A loyalist paramilitary group. The early UVF was formed to oppose Home Rule. Since the 1960s another paramilitary force of the same name has been operating in Northern Ireland.
- ULTACH Trust:** A state-sponsored organisation which funds Irish language projects in Northern Ireland, particularly those of a cross-community nature.
- Union:** A reference to the political union of Ireland, latterly Northern Ireland, with Great Britain, stemming from the Act of Union in 1800.
- Unionist:** Someone who wishes Northern Ireland to remain a part of the United Kingdom.
- United Irishmen:** A late eighteenth-century republican movement, which had both Catholic and Presbyterian members.
- United Kingdom:** The political unit consisting of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, formerly Ireland as a whole.

INTRODUCTION

The Irish language has been associated for many centuries with the Catholic and nationalist traditions in Ireland, yet Protestants and unionists have always expressed an interest in the language. Therefore, this thesis is concerned with members of an ethnic group who learn a language that is not commonly associated with that group, and indeed is often identified with another ethnic group. This study addresses four key questions. Why did Protestants want to learn a language that was not commonly associated with them? To what extent could they identify or not identify with Irish? Did Protestant learners of Irish generate representations of the language that reflected their particular world-views? When Protestants expressed an interest in Irish, did this interest alter the nature of their relationship with their co-religionists and Catholics?

The thesis draws on concepts of ethnicity, symbolism and discourse, as well as the literature on nationalist and unionist ideology in Northern Ireland. I examine both individuals and social networks of Protestant Irish learners and the means by which they integrated with and/or distanced themselves from Catholic Irish speakers. An historical perspective is used to introduce the discourses and ideologies involving the Irish language that are central to my analysis, and I demonstrate how history was moulded and presented to fit the needs of proponents of the language¹. I show how Protestant learners adapted and transformed discourses of the Irish language to suit their particular needs.

This work also contributes to the growing literature in anthropology which challenges the tendency to homogenise concepts such as 'ethnicity' and 'culture'. I describe a process of cultural creativity whereby individuals or groups of learners re-worked their conceptions of Protestant identity and culture on account of their unique experiences and perceptions. I show how they interpreted their Protestantism in ways that differed widely from the common generalisations about Northern Irish Protestants in the media and academic publications. However, the learners exhibited many ideational and behavioural patterns that reflected the experience of being Protestant in Northern Ireland. Therefore my micro-sample of learners provides insights on macro-level socio-political issues in the region.

This part of the thesis is chiefly concerned with outlining and contextualising the subject of study, and delineating the methodological issues involved. I perceive Protestants and Catholics to constitute two ethnic groups in Northern Ireland because they differ in terms of culture rather than race (Wallis et al. 1987)². Both groups are characterised by a high degree of endogamy, separate educational systems, and residential segregation. Allegiance to a church is usually something that one is born with; in Northern Ireland one can be a Protestant or a Catholic without attending church services. A Protestant who renounces his

¹ I will describe the concepts of discourse and ideology more fully in Chapter One, but to put it as simply as possible, I am defining a discourse as a systematised way of speaking or writing about something, and an ideology as a systematised set of political beliefs.

² By describing Northern Irish Protestants and Catholics as *ethnic* groups, I am not denying that they conceive of themselves in *national* terms. I differ from Wallis et al. on this issue, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Two.

Christianity will still be perceived of as a member of the 'Protestant community'; it is literally possible to be a Protestant atheist in Northern Ireland, as individuals are assigned identities based upon religious background³. Thus the terms 'Protestant' and 'Catholic' are used to define a type of ethnic affiliation and/or assignation, rather than personal religious belief.

I will use the following definitions when dealing with material that is specific to Irish issues: *nationalists* seek Ireland's independence from Britain; *constitutional nationalists* wish to unite Ireland by peaceful means; *republicans* justify the attempt to unify Ireland by armed insurrection; *unionists* wish Northern Ireland to remain a part of the United Kingdom; and *loyalists* are unionists who believe that paramilitary force should be used to resist Irish nationalism⁴. There is a rough degree of correlation between religious denomination and political belief in Northern Ireland; on the whole, most nationalists are Catholic, and most unionists are Protestant.

Ethnographic Background

The relationships between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland were and are largely informed by the relationships between Ireland and England. English influence in Ireland stems from the invasion of Henry II in 1177, although the English restricted their strongholds to a few coastal areas before the Tudor conquest. A series of rebellions by the native Irish-speaking population encouraged the English government to contemplate settling large numbers of Protestant planters in Ireland, as the thinly spread English hierarchy could not ensure the security of the region. The most successful scheme was begun in 1603, during the reign of James I. James's plantation was based on the Northern province of Ulster, and involved the introduction of large numbers of English and Scottish lowland settlers to the region. After the ending of the official plantation in 1613, Scottish and English settlers continued to pour into Ulster. The settlers prospered, although the Presbyterians suffered from discrimination by the Anglican (Church of Ireland) nobility, which ruled Ireland from the Irish Parliament in Dublin. The English administration feared that repressed Presbyterians would unite with Catholics in rebellion against the Crown. The contemporary Protestant population in Ireland is descended from the Scottish and English settlers, as well as a number of native Irish who converted to Protestantism.

The rebellion of the native Irish in 1641 paved the way for the consolidation of the Plantation in the wake of their defeat. The Cromwellian conquest of Ireland (1649-50) and the victory of William II in 1690 destroyed the power of the Gaelic chiefs. The native Irish, who for the most part retained their Catholic faith, suffered as a series of Penal Laws (1695-1728) subjected them to economic dispossession and political exclusion. Nevertheless, they

³ For example, the Fair Employment Commission, which examined cases of sectarian discrimination in the workplace, would assign individuals to a religious group whether they identified with that group or not.

⁴ Folk concepts of the term 'loyalist' are more vague. Often all working-class Protestants are referred to as 'loyalists'.

continued to live in all parts of the island. In Ulster, many Irish stayed on as tenants of the new estates, despite official disapproval, as not enough British tenants could be found.

In 1800 the Act of Union abolished the Dublin Parliament and created the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. In the north-east of the island Protestant-owned industries and commerce flourished. Strong economic links developed between Ulster and the industrial centres of Clydeside and Merseyside. These links underpinned the support of Northern Protestants for the Union. In other parts of the island, industrial development was slow, and Catholics remained on the land or migrated to the urban centres in search of work. Catholics were committed to the abolition of the Union, and in the late nineteenth century they agitated for Home Rule (a separate legislature for Ireland) or complete independence from Britain.

In the north, Protestants of all classes and denominations united to oppose Home Rule, fearing control by a Catholic-dominated parliament in Ireland. Paramilitary groupings of both nationalists and unionists armed themselves for conflict. Following Irish guerrilla warfare against the British forces in Ireland, Westminster decided to grant Home Rule to most of Ireland in 1920. The Government of Ireland Act partitioned Ireland, resulting in the creation of the Irish Free State, which was given dominion status within the British Empire. In 1949 the Free State declared complete independence from Britain and became the Republic of Ireland. The Government of Ireland Act made provision for six counties of the north-east of the island, known as Northern Ireland, to remain within the United Kingdom. Northern Ireland was almost exactly two-thirds Protestant and one-third Catholic, and was governed by a unionist majority at Stormont parliament near Belfast. Although the Government of Ireland Act prohibited religious discrimination of any kind by Stormont, discrimination against Catholics took place in many sectors of society, including housing and employment. The British government interfered little in Northern Ireland's affairs for the fifty years following partition.

In the late 1960s nationalists campaigned for the reform of Northern Ireland, and in 1969 serious conflict erupted between nationalists, unionists, and the British security forces. In 1972 the British government prorogued the Stormont administration and introduced direct rule from London. Thereafter the Northern Ireland Office assumed the ultimate responsibility for the governing of Northern Ireland. The British government represented itself as a neutral arbiter in the conflict and introduced legislation to combat discrimination against Catholics and/or nationalists.

From the 1970s onwards the nationalist population was divided by supporters of the constitutional nationalist Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP) and supporters of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), which embarked on a military campaign to end British rule. In 1994 the IRA called a cease-fire and negotiations to bring about a settlement to the conflict intensified. Nationalists claimed that they should be granted 'parity of esteem' for their political aspirations and cultural beliefs in a reformed Northern Ireland.

From the 1970s most of the unionist vote has been divided between the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), which takes a much

stronger right-wing line than its rival. The DUP interprets Northern Irish politics as a 'zero-sum' game; any gain for nationalists is perceived to constitute a loss for unionists and vice-versa. A minority of liberal unionists are attracted to the Alliance Party, which accepts the Union with Britain, but is more prepared to address nationalist grievances than the other unionist parties. In the late 1960s loyalist paramilitary groups began a military campaign to maintain Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom. Since the introduction of direct rule many unionists have feared that the British government wishes to disengage from Northern Ireland. This fear grew in 1985, when the British and Irish Governments signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement, giving Dublin a consultative role in the affairs of Northern Ireland. The publication of the joint London-Dublin 'Frameworks of the Future' documents in 1995 did little to allay unionist suspicions, as they propose greater institutional co-operation between the two parts of Ireland.

Territorial Identifications

Most terms that are used to describe the partition of Ireland are politically partisan and reflect the ideological positions of nationalists and unionists. In this section I will describe the neutral terms used in Irish politics, followed by the unionist and nationalist designations. I will use the neutral terms to describe the divisions of Ireland in my work.

'Northern Ireland' is the term used to describe the part of Ireland still governed by Britain and is the name of the region that is recognised in international law. The term is contentious, as many nationalists believe that if they use it they are implicitly accepting partition. However, the term is used by many political commentators and academics; therefore I believe it approaches a degree of ideological neutrality. In everyday conversation in Ireland, many people call Northern Ireland 'the North' and the Republic of Ireland 'the South'; people in Northern Ireland are referred to as 'Northerners', and those who live south of the border are called 'Southerners' (I use the capital letters 'N' and 'S' in 'North', 'Southerners' etc. to indicate contemporary political divisions in Ireland).

Unionists often refer to Northern Ireland as 'Ulster'. Ulster was one of the four provincial divisions of the Gaelic order in Ireland. British edicts of 1603 defined the province of Ulster as encompassing the northern counties of Armagh, Antrim, Cavan, Londonderry, Donegal, Down, Fermanagh, Monaghan and Tyrone. During the Home Rule crisis unionists saw the overwhelmingly Catholic counties of Cavan, Monaghan, and Donegal as a threat to their potential dominance in the north-east; therefore they were excluded from Northern Ireland during the partition of the island. Unionists often equate the six counties of Northern Ireland with Ulster. Unionists also refer to Northern Ireland as 'the province', since they perceive the region to be a province of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. By describing Britain as the 'mainland', they reinforce the notion that Britain is the 'mainland' of Northern Ireland. The Southern state is called the Republic, in accordance with

its legal name. Unionists also call the republic *Éire*, the Irish word for Ireland, as it makes the 'South' seem foreign and alien.

Nationalists reject the equation of Ulster with Northern Ireland, as the latter excludes the three counties of the ancient province. They often refer to Northern Ireland as 'the six counties' and the Republic of Ireland as 'the twenty-six counties'; both terms deny the status of full nationhood or statehood to both legislatures, pending the unification of Ireland. Nationalists also refer to Northern Ireland as 'the North of Ireland', thus denying the validity of the border between Northern Ireland and Donegal, the northern county of the Republic of Ireland.

The Irish Language

The Irish language is one of a group of Celtic languages, which include Scottish Gaelic, Manx, Welsh, Cornish and Breton. Scottish Gaelic, Manx and Irish are known as Q-Celtic languages because they retain the /kw/ sound of Proto-Indo European, writing it as *q*, later *c*; Welsh, Cornish and Breton are referred to as P-Celtic, because /kw-/ developed into /p-/ (Crystal 1993: 302). Today Irish is coming under increasing influence from English in terms of the morphology, syntax and lexicon of the language.

It is not certain when the Irish language arrived in Ireland, but a series of invasions is archaeologically detectable, and it can be said with fair certainty that by 300 BC, the Celts were dominant in Britain and Ireland (Ó Murchú 1985: 9). Irish expansionism brought the Gaelic language and culture to the Isle of Man and Scotland; although they were originally dialects of Irish, Scottish Gaelic and Manx have diverged so much from their mother language that they are commonly referred to as separate languages. While the 'native' Irish and their language were able to absorb the invasions of the Norse and the Anglo-Normans, the English invasions of the thirteenth century heralded a long period of decline for the language.

The plantations introduced a large number of English speakers to Ireland. Most of the Scottish planters spoke Scots, a variety of English. However there is evidence that some of them spoke Scottish Gaelic, which at the time of the Plantation was mutually intelligible with Irish; in certain cases it appears that some were monolingual in Gaelic⁵ (O'Rahilly 1988: 163-4; Richardson 1711: 13-14; Scott 1993; Blaney 1996). Since Irish remained the language of the majority population, it is feasible that Protestants acquired the language to communicate with monoglot Irish-speakers. Despite the intentions for the plantation schemes, Irish natives continued to reside in all parts of the country; young Protestants learned Irish from nurses, household servants and tenants. However, as the number of monoglots fell, the need and opportunity for newcomers to learn the language declined as a consequence (Barnard 1993: 247).

⁵ Until the nineteenth century many commentators collectively referred to Irish and Scottish Gaelic as 'Irish' or 'Erse'.

Where settlers were in the majority the onus would have been on the Irish to learn English. In areas of high settler density in east Ulster there is some evidence of assimilation of natives in terms of personal names, language, religion and the adoption of new cultural practices (Robinson 1994: 87). In poorer upland regions of the area which is presently known as Northern Ireland, the native Irish lived on relatively unmolested. In these areas a small number of native speakers of Irish survived until the mid-twentieth century.

By the twentieth century the Irish language was spoken as an everyday community language in remote rural districts in the west of Ireland. These districts are collectively known as the *Gaeltacht*, although the term can be used to describe one such district (see map in Appendix One). The *Gaeltacht* is often visited by Irish language enthusiasts to improve their fluency in the language, and a network of Irish language summer colleges has been developed to cater for them.

The *Gaeltachts* have been separated from one another by English-speaking areas for centuries, and have developed their own dialectal variants of the Irish language. By the twentieth century there were three major dialects of Irish: Ulster (Donegal), Munster (Kerry), and Connaught (Connemara). The Republic's government developed a standardised grammar, spelling and orthography for the language, which draws upon the three dialects. Attempts to standardise the spoken form of Irish have had less success. The most prestigious dialect of Irish in the early years of the Southern state was the Munster variety, followed by a widespread swing to Connaught Irish in the 1950s and '60s; the latter variety had the advantages of having the greatest number of native speakers, and occupied an intermediary position between the two other dialects (MacNamara 1971: 72-5). Donegal Irish is preferred by Irish language enthusiasts in Northern Ireland, as the Donegal *Gaeltacht* is physically closer to them, and the dialect of Donegal is closest to that which was spoken in the area now encompassed by Northern Ireland.

In the *Galltacht* (English-speaking region), Irish is learned and spoken by thousands of language enthusiasts. In *Galltacht* districts in which a large number of Irish speakers are concentrated, attempts are being made to create 'neo-*Gaeltachts*', in which there are increased opportunities to speak the language in domestic, educational, and work domains. These are in a precarious stage of development, and it is not known whether they can ensure the survival of the Irish language if it becomes extinct in the *Gaeltacht*.

Although over a million people regularly claim a knowledge of the Irish language in census returns in the Republic of Ireland, commentators agree that the number of fluent speakers of Irish is much smaller than this. Hindley estimates that there are between 8,000 and 10,000 native speakers of Irish in the Republic with sufficient attachment to Irish to transmit the language to their children (Hindley 1990: 251).

In the late twentieth century most Irish people have little or no knowledge of the language, but Irish is still 'present' in the background of their lives. The Irish language has had a profound influence on Hiberno-English, or the dialect of English which is spoken in Ireland. Furthermore, most of the placenames of Ireland have Irish-language roots. From the fourteenth century the English administration in Ireland forbade the use of Irish language

surnames, and many families dropped the prefixes '*Mac*' ('son of') and '*Ó*' ('descendant of') from their surnames, as well as translating (or mis-translating) them into English. The result is that many people in Ireland with English names may erroneously assume they are of English ancestry but may not be (Bell 1988: 2).

The name that the Irish language has for itself is *Gaeilge*, which is pronounced 'Gaelic' in Northern Irish⁶. Some speakers of the language refer to it as 'Gaelic' for this reason. Some unionists prefer the term 'Gaelic' as they are uncomfortable with the word 'Irish', and the former term provides a semantic link with Scottish Gaelic. I will not refer commonly to the Irish language as Gaelic, as this might confuse Irish with Scottish Gaelic, its sister language. I use the term 'Gaelic' in an historical sense, but the reader will be aware whether I am referring to Scottish Gaelic, Irish Gaelic, or both.

The Irish Language in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland most Protestants did not learn or speak Irish; the vast majority of Protestants conceived of the language as unsuitable for modern life, and/or associated the language with Catholicism and nationalism. Although many Protestants assumed that all Catholics had some knowledge of the Irish language, government statistics have shown otherwise. In 1987 the British government carried out its first survey on the Irish language, which noted that over a quarter of Northern Ireland's Catholics had some knowledge of Irish, compared with just 2% of Protestants (Sweeney 1988: 24). The survey noted that there was extensive interest in the language in (Catholic) west Belfast, but that over half of those with a knowledge of the language were unable to converse in Irish at all and well over a third were unable to comprehend spoken Irish (ibid.: 10, 23). The report concluded that Irish was little used outside the educational context (ibid. 24). In the 1991 census 142, 003 people claimed to have a knowledge of Irish, comprising approximately one quarter of the Catholic population and less than 1% of the three main Protestant denominations (Department of Health and Social Services 1993: 1, 28).

The reasons for the differing levels of knowledge of Irish among Protestants and Catholics will be examined in the following chapters. Here I will provide a brief outline of Irish language activities in Northern Ireland. Most schoolchildren attended schools which were segregated on the basis of religious affiliation, and many residential districts were also segregated on a religious basis⁷. The Irish language was introduced to many Catholics during their primary- or secondary-school years, and until the late 1980s some Catholic secondary schools insisted that all their pupils study for Irish language 'O' levels. Catholic pupils were

⁶ *Gaedhealg* is the original form of the word, and *Gaeilic* (Gaelic in English orthography) is a more modern form, which is influenced by the dative form of the original. *Gaeilge* is the genitive form of *Gaedhealg*, and the former has been substituted for the nominative form of the word in Connaught and Munster Irish.

⁷ State-controlled education was open to Protestants and Catholics, though overall the vast majority of pupils were drawn from the Protestant community. The Catholic Church received government funding to run its own primary and secondary schools. Protestants and Catholic children were educated together in a number of integrated primary and secondary schools, but they represented a tiny percentage of the overall number of pupils in Northern Ireland (McGarry and O'Leary 1995: 186).

also sent to study the Irish language in summer colleges in the Gaeltacht. Catholics who maintained an interest in Irish during their schooldays, or acquired an interest in the language when adults, had a wide choice of classes to choose from in Catholic districts of Northern Ireland, which catered for differing levels of fluency in the language. They may also have attended many Irish language events organised by Irish language societies which operated in Catholic areas. These included seminars, musical events, and dramatic productions. The 1980s witnessed a tremendous growth of Irish language revivalist activities. In the 1980s there was also a growth in Irish language courses available to adult learners of Irish in the Gaeltacht.

In some Catholic/nationalist districts, notably west Belfast, a large number of Irish speakers attempted to create a 'neo-Gaeltacht'. This included a number of Irish language-medium primary schools, an Irish-medium secondary school, and a number of work and recreational schemes. West Belfast became the centre of the Irish language revival movement in Northern Ireland. This movement consisted of Irish speakers who were actively engaged in promoting the language as well as defining its ideological significance. Almost all of the members of this movement were Catholics, and many were engaged in full-time employment in Irish language activities.

Many of the revivalist activities in west Belfast and other nationalist areas did not include Protestant Irish speakers. In Protestant schools the Irish language was never a subject on the curriculum, although a small number of grammar schools offered introductory courses to the language. Until the 1980s, the small number of Protestants who wished to learn the Irish language often had to choose between learning Irish in the Gaeltacht or Catholic districts of Northern Ireland. Many Protestants had little knowledge of the Irish language until the highly-publicised revival of interest in the language in the 1980s. Since then the number of Irish language classes which were located in neutral or Protestant areas grew⁸. This was due to an increased awareness of the language as a result of the revival, the growth of adult education, cultural elements of community relations programmes, and an attempt by Catholic speakers of Irish to expand the interest in the language beyond their own community. These classes catered for 'complete beginners' and learners who had some rudimentary knowledge of the language, but Protestants who wished to develop their fluency in the language had to travel to the Gaeltacht or advanced classes in Catholic districts. For various reasons, most of which were associated with the Northern Irish conflict, most Protestant learners were reluctant to travel to Catholic areas. They restricted their interest in Irish to adult language classes, media broadcasts, and self-instruction manuals and audio-visual aids. Many Protestant learners of Irish that I encountered were unable to acquire fluency in the language, which is why I often refer to them as *learners* of the Irish language, rather than *speakers* of

⁸ The concept of neutrality in Irish language circles will be discussed in later chapters. Here I refer to venues where both Protestants and Catholics feel they can frequent without having their religious or political views offended.

it⁹. Few Protestant learners of Irish considered themselves to be part of the Irish language movement, which they perceived of as being a wholly Catholic and/or nationalist in ethos. Although the number of Protestant learners of Irish was increasing during the time of my fieldwork, they constituted a tiny fraction of the total percentage of Irish speakers in Northern Ireland, and were regarded as newsworthy 'novelties' by the local media institutions.

Protestant learners of Irish were of particular interest to the ULTACH Trust, a state-sponsored organisation dedicated to the development of cross-community projects involving the Irish language (ULTACH is an acronym for Ulster Language, Traditions and Cultural heritage). The Trust also aimed to strengthen the existing Irish language revival by lobbying state bodies and the public sector to increase funding to Irish language projects. ULTACH differed from many language projects in that the organisation's offices were located in the centre of Belfast, and were considered to be accessible to both Catholics and Protestants.

Methodology

This work is not a community study, as the learners I encountered were scattered throughout Northern Ireland, and were often unacquainted with one another. The learners did not constitute a 'community', but articulated local community identities and felt themselves to be part of a larger Protestant community in Ireland and/or Northern Ireland. The larger these 'communities' were, the more they became symbolic and mental constructs, rather than physically or geographically based-ones (cf. Cohen 1993).

In Northern Ireland Protestants and Catholics, including Irish-speaking ones, were segregated from one another in residential, educational, and recreational domains. This division often occurred at the local community level, as small communities were often composed of members of one religious group, and neighbourhood networks of kinship and friendship informed the social process of everyday life. Most Protestants, including those who learned Irish, socialised and recreated mostly in the company of other Protestants. However, I have studied a number of people who chose to cross cultural, ideological and physical boundaries between Protestants and Catholics in a highly segregated society. My study analyses the cross-cutting mechanisms that allowed Protestants to cross these boundaries, and the structural impediments that hindered them from doing so.

The lack of a sense of identity *between* Protestant Irish speakers of Irish is significant, considering that many Irish speaking Catholics considered themselves to be part of the Irish language movement and the language 'community' in Ireland. Occasionally, Protestant learners of Irish banded together to form small interest groups for the specific purpose of learning Irish and/or discussing the language. Bailey (1969) and Boissevain (1974) describe the dynamic manner in which individuals choose to alter their lives by banding together in social networks for specific purposes. By forming small networks, Protestant learners enabled

⁹ I do not wish to introduce a dichotomy between Protestant *learners* of Irish and Catholic *speakers* of the language; the vast majority of the latter speak Irish as a second language. Children who were raised in Irish often had better English (Kabel 1995: 16).

themselves to pool their resources and knowledge about the Irish language, provide each other with mutual support, and overcome some of the practical and ideological obstacles they encountered. I will demonstrate how this process occurred, although for the most part I was engaged in studying a category of persons who remained unknown to one another. When I use the term 'group' to describe relationships between Protestant Irish speakers, I am referring to interest groups, or networks of individuals who mobilise for specific purposes.

I do not regard historical and other secondary sources as 'background' or 'scene-setting' material, as they are an integral part of my analysis. Historical sources are used to describe past Protestant interest in and hostility to the language, and the discourses therein can be shown to have contemporary relevance. Secondary sources are also used to examine the historical and contemporary views and activities of Catholic speakers of Irish. I draw upon secondary sources to describe the Irish language movement, before comparing it with the scattered individuals and small networks of learners of whom I had first-hand experience.

In order to meet a large number of Irish-speaking Protestants, I decided that I would carry out fieldwork in a fairly large area, which comprised the Belfast and North Down areas (see maps in Appendices). The contrasting nature of the locations permit a comparison between town and country districts, as well as an analysis of differing class interests and experiences. The areas chosen also have the highest concentration of Protestants in Northern Ireland, as well as the largest number of Irish classes with a cross-community potential. The 'field' had obvious benefits for myself as I have lived in both areas and am well acquainted with them. Intensive fieldwork was carried out between October 1992 and December 1994. However, I continued to gather data from publications after this period, and I have kept in touch with those learners who became my friends. As a consequence, there is no abrupt 'cut-off' point to this study, but most of the fieldwork material relates to the period before the paramilitary cease-fires of August and October 1994.

Although I am Protestant Irish-speaker, I encountered no co-religionists who had learned the language until I began my fieldwork. I contacted many learners through the ULTACH Trust. I visited the head offices of this organisation many times, and had many informal chats with the staff, who provided me with articles, books, and information on Irish language events and seminars. I continued my own language learning activities, frequenting Irish language courses, debates, and press launches, both in Northern Ireland and the Gaeltacht. In these locations I increased my knowledge of the Irish language revival movement and occasionally met other Protestant learners of the language.

I attended four Irish classes in south and central Belfast, which are regarded as neutral areas in which members of both communities would feel safe to venture in (see map in Appendix Four). I joined beginners' level classes as I assumed that most Protestants would be at the early stages of learning the language. The classes I enrolled for were in: the Ulster People's College (October - December 1992); the Linenhall Library, (October 1992 - June 1993); and the YMCA (January 1994 - January 1995). I also enrolled in an advanced class in the Ulster Arts Club in January 1994, and I remain an active member of the club's Irish Society. In the Arts Club I met and befriended Protestant learners who were attending the

beginners' and intermediate classes. Three of the learners in the Arts Club began to meet for informal classes in the home of a Protestant who was fluent in Irish. I was already well-acquainted with this individual, and was willing to help when he decided to provide a small class for his friends in his home. I provided him with some teaching materials, as well as dropping in on the class from time to time.

I had a problem in defining my role in the Irish classes, apart from those in the Arts Club. As I was fluent in Irish, I found it difficult to assume the role of a 'complete beginner'. In one case I was acquainted with the teacher, who felt very uncomfortable with my presence in the class, and despite my reassurances was very relieved when I finally left. Other teachers were less wary and even used me as a resource person to help members of the class with their pronunciation.

I played an active part in constituting my object of study by helping Protestant Irish speakers to find learning materials and language classes. I also taught the Irish language to Protestants on an individual and collective basis. In terms of this study, the most important class that I taught was for a group of working-class Protestants in the Glencairn estate in the Greater Shankill area of Belfast. It is in this venture that my role as a researcher involved in the creation of his object of study is most apparent; without my willingness to teach the class may not have been held at all.

The ULTACH Trust also introduced me to a network of nine learners from the North Down area. The group organised two Irish language weekends in the area, in which I was an active participant. I also arranged to meet three members of the group on a weekly basis. After a year I and two of the group joined the Irish classes in the Ulster Arts Club. I also accompanied these two learners on a course in the Donegal Gaeltacht.

In total my work is based on the experiences of eighty-one learners, including myself. I encountered many of the learners on a one-off basis, and have little knowledge of them apart from interview situations. Sixty-six of the learners agreed to taped interviews, though in some cases these were merely formal entrées to more useful informal interaction. The interviews were semi-structured, allowing respondents to freely articulate the issues that were important to them. However, I used a questionnaire when conversation ground to a halt, and I wished to ensure that I had covered all the issues I wished to address (see Appendix Six).

Taped interview material was useful as I was particularly interested in looking for key words and phrases that would allow me to determine the discourses that the learners were using. On the other hand, as I also wished to observe situational aspects of behaviour and identity, 'one-off' interviews were of limited value. However, I believe that I acquired enough data of both types to inform my analysis adequately.

On some occasions I was not able to carry out interviews, tape-recorded or otherwise. I devote a chapter to the Glencairn class, and interviewed three out of the six core members of the group when the class had ended. I would not countenance bringing a tape-recorder into the classroom as the learners were fearful of the media attention that was directed towards them. However, the length of time that I spent with them ensured that I was able to gather a large quantity of data. I interviewed all the learners in the North Down group. The prison

authorities did not permit me to interview loyalist prisoners who were serving jail terms, but prison officers were willing to distribute questionnaires to them, seven of which were completed and returned. I was also able to interview two ex-prisoners who had learned Irish.

I assured my informants of their anonymity, and certain information is omitted to protect their identities. When I refer to a learner using only a forename, I am using a pseudonym. The Irish language scene in Northern Ireland is quite small, and Protestant Irish speakers are of great interest to their Catholic counterparts. However, their experiences and views may not always be welcomed by the Irish language movement; many Protestant learners felt uncomfortable with the associations of the Irish language with republicanism and/or constitutional nationalism. While attempting to identify with the Irish language to some degree, many learners felt that they were simultaneously observing a Catholic and/or nationalist culture that was alien to them. Protestant learners of Irish felt that they could discuss their difficulties with me because I was a fellow Protestant, and they did not wish to offend the Catholic speakers of Irish with whom they socialised with in order to learn the language. At many times I felt I was being used as a confidante, a 'confessor', or even a therapist (cf. Caplan 1992: 80). This was partly due to my perceived neutral stance as an anthropologist, which guaranteed the anonymity of my informants, as well as an 'objective' interpretation of their experiences!

In this work I concentrate on some learners of Irish at the expense of others. This is partly due to the fact that I became better acquainted with some of them. The chapters on the Glencairn and North Down groups are both large case studies, as they illustrate the differing world-views and experiences of working- and middle-class Protestants in Northern Ireland; these differences are reflected in the ways in which they talked about the Irish language. Although the reader will note that the individuals described have their own idiosyncrasies, I am only claiming that case studies are 'telling', rather than 'typical' (Ellen 1984: 239).

I will discuss texts provided by individuals in the 'present tense'; an example of this style would be, 'In the above text the speaker asserts...'. Quotations supplied by persons who are deceased will be discussed in the past tense. Discourses of the Irish language will be discussed in the present tense, as they often span several centuries. Apart from these literary conventions, I have decided to avoid writing about the Protestant learners I encountered in the 'ethnographic present'. This is for three reasons. Firstly, situational analysis tends to lead a writer to use the past tense. Secondly, the vanity of assuming that an ethnography will reveal truths that stand the test of time has been questioned by post-modernist theorists (e.g. Davis 1992). Thirdly, as I write (or wrote!) this work negotiations to bring about an end to the Northern Ireland conflict are continuing. Some commentators believe that the republican movement has abandoned its wish for a united Ireland in the short term, and is prepared to settle for a reformed Northern Ireland. Since the paramilitary cease-fires of 1994 more republicans have 'recognised' the professed Britishness of Northern unionists, and have abandoned the belief that they are 'closet' nationalists whose 'real' Irish identities are obscured by Westminster manipulation. If republican ideology is in such a profound state of transformation, and if the 'troubles' are really coming to an end, then the views of some of

the republicans whom I quote may be considered to be outmoded in the light of recent developments.

The Problem with Motive-Mongering

Although I will say that many Protestant learners attempted to *incorporate* the Irish language within their notions of nationalist and Protestant identity, I am wary of attributing their *motives* to learn Irish to macro-level issues such as these. When interviewed, many Protestants said that they were learning Irish for reasons which seemed petty in comparison with their opinions on national identity; for example, some told me they were interested in Irish placenames, or the English dialect of Ireland, or had a general interest in languages, and/or found learning Irish 'fun'. Of course, in representing the Irish language as 'fun', one may incorporate the language with popular concepts of leisure, with their socially acceptable hedonist justifications for behaviour.

In speculating about why Protestants learned Irish, I have occasionally been led to consider motives that were not articulated by the learners themselves. For example, I noticed that many learners lived alone, or seemed to wish to escape a restrictive home environment. No learner alluded to such 'explanations' to account for their motive to learn Irish, and I was reluctant to pry into the personal circumstances of my respondents. Furthermore, such speculation does not explain why the individuals concerned chose to learn the Irish language in particular.

Many learners could not fully explain their interest in the language, and I feel that in drawing upon popular discourses or explanations, they may have been engaging in a process of post-rationalisation. This is not to say that many learners did not *eventually* come to associate their interest in the Irish language with socio-cultural developments in the Protestant/unionist community, for example. However, the attempt to find 'real' or unconscious motivations for action is more the task of the social psychologist, than the social anthropologist.

My Role as Ethnographer

I decided that I would adopt a position of advocacy in my research, which would involve helping Protestants who display an interest in Irish to learn the language. I am also shedding light on a group of people who are often reluctant to discuss their experiences in public. In a way I am supplementing the tradition of anthropologists who 'passively' advocate on behalf of sub-groups in mainstream cultures by writing about them, thereby publicising their causes (Paine 1985: xiv). This approach also helped to assuage feelings of guilt which arose from intruding into the privacy of the learners, becoming friends with them, yet giving nothing in return for their help. Thus I agree with anthropologists who feel that they owe their informants something more tangible than references in dissertations and published articles.

An advocate approach is a way to 'pay back' the community studied (Van Esterik 1985: 62).

My decision to engage in advocacy anthropology altered the nature of my research 'subjects', as I helped Protestants who wished to learn Irish. Therefore, I needed to account for my relationship with my work, examining the observation of participation as well as partaking in participant observation (Tedlock 1991). A reflexive approach is also necessary as I myself am an 'ethnic' Protestant. Thus I locate the researcher within the research in two ways: as an advocate and as a subject of study.

Post-modernists insist that no writers, including social anthropologists, can remain objective in their approach (e.g. Clifford and Marcus 1986). Although I agree with this view, I believe that the effort to be objective is a worthwhile one, and I have attempted to be as unbiased as possible. However, I realise that personal bias cannot be left out of this account; as the author I select from my primary data who to represent and who to omit from my work (Rabinow 1986: 246).

Therefore I will outline my own bias, and the discerning reader may find evidence of it in the following chapters. My political outlook is unionist in that I wish Northern Ireland to remain a part of the United Kingdom; indeed my world-view is similar to that of many of the middle-class Protestants that I describe in this study. I understand, but do not agree with, the associations of the Irish language with Catholicism and nationalism. I do not believe that the Irish language is naturally the vehicle of any ideology, including Irish nationalism. However, I hope that I understand the views of Irish speaking nationalists better than some of the unionists whom I describe in this work. Furthermore, the supervisor of this thesis is from a Catholic nationalist background, and has been glad to illuminate and challenge the unionist 'baggage' and 'hidden agendas' in draft copies of this work.

Outline of the Thesis

The structure of this thesis is as follows. Chapter One introduces the main theoretical issues involved, and also the global discourses and ideologies which have particular relevance to this work. In Chapter Two I outline the nature of Protestant identity in Northern Ireland, examining issues of class, national identity, stereotyping, and power struggles. Chapter Three analyses Protestant attitudes to the Irish language from the English conquest of Ireland until the late 1960s. This chapter also introduces many of the discourses of the Irish language that are a central part of this thesis. Chapter Four introduces the 1980s revival of the language revival in Northern Ireland, the process of cultural competition, and recent struggles to define the meaning of the Irish language. Chapter Five examines the extent to which Protestant learners identified or did not identify with the Irish language, Catholic Irish speakers, and other Protestants. Chapters Six and Seven examine two groups of working- and middle-class learners. I present my conclusions in Chapter Eight.

CHAPTER ONE

Language, Identity, and the Structure/Creativity Debate

In this chapter I will relate the classic actor/structure debate in anthropology to the issues of language, culture, ideology, and ethnicity which are central to my work. The first part of this chapter is concerned with the concepts of ideology, discourse, ethnic identity and culture. The second part will introduce the specific global discourses and ideologies concerning language which have their particular variants in Ireland.

Discourse and Ideology

Discourse

The way in which people talk about language is related to their experiences and world-views. In my work I delineate a number of discourses associated with the Irish language and consider them in terms of the beliefs of those who utilise them. I interpret discourses as forms of social practice, manifested as written or spoken texts; discourses cannot be non-verbal. The concept 'discourse' is a 'multi-faceted notion' (Grillo 1989a: 19). Social scientists describe discourse as a process, but also talk about discourses on certain subjects. Kay Milton distinguishes between the processual and substantive meanings of discourse (Milton 1993: 23). The former has been elaborated by Foucault (1972, 1982) and other French social scientists. In a processual or constitutive sense, discourse refers to the constitution of reality through communication; discourses do not simply reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct them:

This entails that discourse is in active relation to reality, that language signifies reality in the sense of constructing meanings for it, rather than that discourse is in a passive relation to reality, with language merely referring to objects which are taken to be given in reality (Fairclough 1992: 42).

Thus discourses are not merely groups of linguistic signs, but practices that systematically form the objects of which they speak. A constitutive discourse is characterised by certain constraints and conventions, which make it possible for certain statements but not others to occur at particular times, places and institutional locations. Discourses constitute or transform subject positions, or positions of subjectivity and subjection, through a process which Althusser refers to as 'interpellation' or hailing (1971: 163). In Althusser's famous example, a policeman yells 'Hey, you there!' at a 'suspect', and the hailed individual becomes a *subject* as he turns round, recognising that the call was addressed to him, and that 'it was *really him* who was hailed' (ibid.). The individual has subordinated himself to the policeman.

In Fairclough's example, when the label 'patient' is used to describe a woman in childbirth, she is being portrayed as helpless, sick, and passive, rather than being able to give birth herself (Fairclough 1989: 103).

Discourses are not equal in influence and have different evaluations according to their proponents; they are judged on the grounds of reason or madness, truth or falsity, attributions of authorship, and their genealogy (Foucault 1981: 54-8). A dominant discourse can constrain the nature of its competitors in that any resistance must bear relevance to that which it resists; the nature of the reply has been pre-determined (ibid.: 57). Adrian Peace demonstrates how environmentalists failed to prevent the construction of a chemical plant in east County Cork as their discourse of popular political opposition was overcome by the dominant scientific discourse of the plant's supporters (Peace 1993). The discourse of 'medical science' dominates our views of health. Academic discourse, with its appeals to authority through the use of direct quotations, and the representation of the author's opinion as 'facts', dominates many areas of knowledge.

The substantive sense of discourse refers to a field of communication defined by its subject matter. The discourse is defined by its content; we can identify discourses *about* art, health, and politics. Social scientists simultaneously use both the substantive and constitutive meanings of discourse; for example 'political discourse' is not just communication *about* politics (the substantive sense), but also the process by which our understanding of politics is constituted through such communication (the constitutive sense) (Milton 1993: 23).

A third meaning of discourse, which is mostly employed by sociolinguists, is concerned with the micro-politics of personal interaction. This form of discourse analysis involves describing the strategies that individuals use to pursue their goals, revealing the socio-cultural knowledge which actors employ to achieve 'cultural, subcultural and situational specificity of interpretation' (Gumpertz 1982: 3).

The meaning of a discourse may be determined 'from outside' by its relationship to other discourses, therefore a discourse can fulfil an ideological role by explicitly referring to one thing while implicitly referring to another (Thompson 1984: 137-8). The complex interrelationship of discourses is referred to as 'interdiscursivity' by Michel Pêcheux, who asserts that the nature of the phenomenon is often unknown to the articulators of discourse, who perceive themselves to be the source of meaning (Fairclough 1992: 31). A discourse has variably open boundaries between itself and other discourses. This suggests that discourses 'channel' rather than 'control' discursive possibilities (Purvis and Hunt 1993: 486).

Bloch's approach to traditional political language shares common features with the processual concept of discourse. According to Bloch, such oratory is so formalised that it shows little variation of vocabulary, syntax, and style. Such speech styles are used by those in established positions of authority as tools of coercion (Bloch 1975: 24). One would assume that formalised speech, and the positions of power inscribed therein, could only be challenged by other formalised speech, in the manner of a dominant discourse; thus dissidence is stifled. Critics of Bloch claim that traditional oratory combines elements of creativity and

formalisation. Furthermore, in addition to fixed styles of oratory, there are others which allow for more flexible and creative exchange between speaker and audience (Parkin 1984: 351).

Similarly, commentators have noticed differing interpretations of discourse which roughly correspond to the structuralist-interactionist debate in social anthropology. In Foucault's processual approach an individual cannot be treated as the origin of meaning, but is constituted in advance by systems of social relations, language and the unconscious. This approach excludes the individual as a creative agent in any meaningful sense by construing the subject as an artefact of power rather than an agent of power (Connolly 1984; Thompson 1984: 251-3; Fairclough 1992: 57-63). Yet individuals are self-reflective, and choose from alternative discourses as part of a process of social change (Thompson 1984: 252). Fairclough's pregnant woman may refuse her interpellation as a 'patient', discharge herself from hospital, and give birth by herself elsewhere. A sick individual may reject the dominance of concepts of health by the discourse of medical science, and choose to describe his illness using alternative discourses of aromatherapy or acupuncture.

However, a solely transactional approach to discourse, involving the free interplay of ideas, ignores the fact that discourses are grounded in social structures (Fairclough 1992: 66). Certain groups in society have access to certain discourses, whereas others do not (Frazer and Cameron 1989). In my work I will adopt Norman Fairclough's approach in advocating a dialectical relationship in which social subjects are shaped by discursive practices, yet are capable of shaping and restricting these practices (1992: 45).

People can genuinely know and feel two contradictory things at the same time, using differing discourses to describe the same phenomenon. For example, Elizabeth Frazer and Deborah Cameron (1989) discovered that a group of girls in a youth club did not have one unitary and consistent attitude to lesbianism, but drew on opposing discourses. On certain occasions they described lesbians as 'disgusting', drawing on the populist authoritarianism of the tabloids. At other times they said that lesbians should be allowed to do what they like, thus drawing on discourses of liberalism, with its emphasis on the freedom of the individual. These discourses are drawn upon according to the social distribution of knowledge and their prestige and acceptability, with regard to the social situations in which they are used (ibid.: 37). There is not one authentic and essentialist opinion that research can elicit from subjects; human experience is ambiguous and each opinion must be fully contextualised (Frazer 1992: 109).

In my work I assume that people may consciously choose between discourses in order to achieve their goals or justify their actions. I have decided that discourse analysis provides a useful approach to my topic. Despite the fact that many of the learners I studied were not acquainted with one another, some of them talked about the language in similar ways. The discourses they used may have existed for centuries, although they could have been re-constituted to fit changing circumstances. In particular, Protestant nationalists learning Irish often drew upon discourses of the Irish language that had been constructed by their Catholic counterparts.

Social scientists often use the terms 'discourse' and 'ideology' interchangeably. Ideology and discourse are similar in that they are concerned with the idea that individuals 'participate in forms of understanding, comprehension or consciousness of the relations and activities in which they are involved' (Purvis and Hunt 1993: 474). Discourse often represents ideology in communicative practice:

Ideology functions to legitimate power imbalances, and smooth out contradictions and disjunctions between appearances and reality. Language is usually seen as the medium in which ideology is manifest, and as the tool through which ideology works to obscure reality, to instil beliefs or worldviews in subjects, and to impose frameworks on our apprehension of the world (Frazer and Cameron 1989: 26).

Foucault's approach to discourse, in examining forces of categorisation and control embedded in language, widens our perspectives on the realms of ideological control; for example, it challenges the Marxist tendency to concentrate on economist forms of domination (Rabinow 1986: 257). However, the term 'ideology' is concerned with forms of consciousness which condition the way in which people 'become conscious of their conflicting interests and struggle over them', while discourse theory involves examining the central role of language in conveying social experience and constituting social subjects (Purvis and Hunt 1993: 474, 476)¹⁰. By ideology I refer to a set of political beliefs which pertain to the 'macro-level' exercise of power at the level of social institutions; I wish to avoid run-away interpretations such as 'everything is ideological'.

Ideologies are action-oriented, mixing facts, description and analysis with moral prescriptions and technical considerations of prudence and efficiency (Thompson 1984: 78). Furthermore, ideologies are always defined in opposition to others and thus involve the rejection of competing beliefs (*ibid.*). Ideology is most powerful when its nature is disguised, and it succeeds in manufacturing consent or acquiescence, obviating the need for coercion (Fairclough 1989: 92). The power of ideology lies in its capability of being naturalised, of appearing to be common-sensical and universal. Ideologies attempt to condense contradictory qualities to create a coherent whole, but they can also be ambiguous in nature, embracing a possibly contradictory set of themes which are drawn upon by their proponents in differing circumstances (Howe 1994).

Discourses are ideologically invested when they pertain to such relationships of subordination/domination. For example, the discourse of science becomes ideological when it is used to subordinate others, as in Peace's analysis of the enquiry into the proposed chemical plant in County Cork. When discourses do not concern such relationships, they are not

¹⁰ My concept of discourse is in keeping with that of Norman Fairclough (1989, 1992), who approaches discourse in terms of language use, whereas Purvis and Hunt maintain that other forms of social semiotics are involved.

'ideological'; '...discursive practices through which subjects are constituted and repositioned may have, but do not necessarily have, ideological effects' (Purvis and Hunt 1993: 484). For example, I would not interpret a discourse of food which represents cooking and eating as a leisure pursuit as 'ideological'. However innocuous a discourse may seem, we must be aware that it may be *used* in an ideological manner. Ideology differs from discourse in that ideology may be enacted in non-verbal ways, whereas my definition of discourse excludes forms of social semiotics which are not linguistic.

The exercise of power through language, which is a chief concern of discourse analysis, is important when we consider how Irish speakers labelled or imputed motives for learning or using the language. Learners drew on 'acceptable' motives to explain and rationalise their interest in Irish to themselves and others, though they may have regarded the expressed motives of others to be spurious:

A satisfactory or adequate motive is one that satisfies the questioners of an act or program, whether it be the other's or the actor's. As a word, a motive tends to be one which is to the actor and to the other members of a situation an unquestioned answer to questions concerning social and linguistic conduct... The control of others is not usually direct but rather through manipulation of a field of objects. We influence a man by naming his acts or imputing motives to them - or to 'him' (*sic*) (Wright Mills 1984: 16-17).

Bourdieu describes how Parisian artists must claim not to be interested in art for financial gain in order to become successful (Bourdieu 1986). They must persuade others that they are interested in art 'for art's sake'.

An ideological and discursive approach enables me to relate my small sample of learners to global issues such as nationalism, pluralism, and modernism, and issues specific to Northern Ireland, such as the relationship between Protestants and Catholics. The discourses invoked by the learners often reflected their ideological outlooks. Nevertheless, I am aware that individuals may draw upon discourses which may not be associated with their political views¹¹.

The Limits of Discourse

Although I use discourse analysis in my work, I am aware of the shortcomings of the approach. A concentration on discourse may lead a researcher to overlook practices and events in historical time and space (Jenkins 1993: 247). Furthermore, an elaboration of discourses without an adequate description of their relationship to the exercise of power may lead one to assume that all discourses are equal in currency and influence; discourses may

¹¹ This is a central feature of Camille O'Reilly's analysis of the Irish language revival in west Belfast (1996). For example, O'Reilly provides a case study of a republican Irish speaker who favours a politically ambiguous cultural discourse of the Irish language, rather than one which associates the language with his political outlook (ibid.: 142-3).

seem to 'float above' the societies in which they are used. This is a criticism that I would level at Tony Crowley's analysis of discourses involving the Irish language (Crowley 1996). His work *Language in History* draws upon many literary sources to delineate the discourses involved, but he makes no attempt to contextualise them or assess their influence. Some discourses are restricted to elitist and intellectual circles, whereas others may achieve widespread popularity. Furthermore, I am loath to treat Protestant learners of Irish as mere vehicles of discourse and ideology. Therefore I attempt to 'ground' the opinions and practices of Protestant speakers of Irish within their overall experience of living in Ireland/Northern Ireland. I describe discourses *and* the people who constructed and employed them in my work.

Discourses are social constructs that people use to talk about ideas, events and things. However, Protestant learners were often unaware of discourses involving the Irish language, and they were repelled by some of those of which they *were* aware. Rather than articulate discourses that have been invoked by others, they groped for ways in which to express their own unique interpretations of the language. A useful method of depicting this process is provided by Gudeman and Rivera's *Conversations in Colombia* (1990). This work is organised around three sets of conversations on the economy in rural Colombia: the authors' conversations with small-scale agriculturists; discussions between the authors about the information gathered from their interlocutors; and thirdly, they place the interviews in the context of economic theorists from the past, including Aristotle and eighteenth-century Physiocrats. They posit the existence of multiple conversational communities, including peasants, European economists, and classical philosophers, which are engaged in a two thousand year old conversation about the economy. They suggest that the peasants' views of the economy are 'conversational carryovers' from an earlier European model (ibid.: 37).

Gudeman and Rivera's approach has its advantages. The sense of fluidity and open-endedness suggested by the term 'conversations' allows for the process of change, or conversational transformation (ibid.: 73). The authors demonstrate how the peasants' economic model differs from that of the earlier economists, and how *elements* of earlier economists, such as Marx, are appropriated (ibid.: 77, 94-96). Economic models are built around metaphors, which are ambiguous in nature (ibid.: 41). The authors encounter 'voices in the air', the textual conversations of earlier economists, and 'voices on the ground', the articulations of the peasants, which contain fragments of the former as well as innovations (ibid.: 8-9). This method accounts for the simultaneous articulation of new and old ideas, which represents an advance on the concept of 'discourse'; the latter appears fossilised, homogenising, and reductionist in comparison. I find the approach useful in that it allows me to describe the process by which fragments of conversations (or discourses!) were appropriated by Protestant learners.

Gudeman and Rivera's thesis has been criticised for a number of reasons, two of which concern us here. The authors do not interrogate their historical assumptions about the interaction between folk models and those of the economists (Rosebury 1992: 184; Rappaport 1992: 906) Furthermore, the peasants are represented as invoking the same model; the only

'countervoice' in the book is that of an economist (Gudeman and Rivera 1990: 167). In considering the views of the learners, I found myself in a quandary; if a learner's statements seemed familiar to me, could he/she have been echoing a textual 'voice in the air', or a popular 'voice on the ground'? For example, many of the arguments, accusations, and discourses involving the Irish language in the late twentieth century are remarkably similar to those of the nineteenth century. Some of my respondents were aware of the latter, having read a great deal about cultural politics in Ireland. However, if I choose to 'hear' a 'voice in the air', I may give the appearance of a sense of continuity which is false. I am afraid that I must be a little more modest than Gudeman and Rivera in attributing the sources of the views I heard. Regarding the issue of countervoices, my category of learners differed from one another so much that I believe I am in no danger of imposing conformity on diversity. I have drawn extensively upon the anthropological literature on individuality and social creativity to capture the contestations implicit or explicit in their conversations.

Culture, Ethnicity, and Community

Culture and Ethnicity

I shall now distinguish between the terms 'ideology' and 'culture'. Some commentators, by referring to ideologies as systematised sets of beliefs, echo the British anthropological definition of 'culture'. In my terms, ideology differs from culture in that the former is solely concerned with competing interests and forms of domination, whereas the latter is not.

I must distinguish between this anthropological concept of culture and the more common folk conception of the term. The latter indicates a standardised, literary-based, and educationally-promoted 'high culture or great tradition, a style of conduct and communication endorsed by the speaker as superior' (Gellner 1983: 92). Buckley and Kenney refer to this meaning of culture as 'expressive culture: specialist knowledge of ceremonial or ritual, knowledge of history, and specialist skills such as dance, sport, or music' (Buckley and Kenney 1995: 9). One difference between the anthropological and the folk concept of culture is that for many people 'expressive culture' has only a small impact on their daily lives - the cultivation of this culture is left to 'tradition-bearers' or 'curators' who become a focus of allegiance (Buckley and Kenney 1995: 10-13). In this work the most common use of the term 'culture' will refer to the folk concept of the word, though I will occasionally refer to the anthropological sense of culture in my analysis.

A central concern of my work is the process by which elements of expressive cultures which are associated with particular ethnic groups are adopted by other groups. Anthropologists have demonstrated how cultural traits are fetishised by ethnic and national groups (Cohen 1986; Handler 1988; Kapferer 1988). Stigmatisation of minority groups often results in the retention of minority languages, which may be abandoned as social mobility

increases. On the other hand, minority languages may derive their prestige from their stigmatisation by majority groups, and become registers of resistance (Hewitt 1986: 114). Indeed, minority languages may be powerful in their own domains, offering alternative versions of reality that have an appearance of autonomy (Grillo 1989b: 228). However, individuals or groups who share a language may not share a common form of cultural communication as they invest the language with different, even competing ideologies. A series of cultural mis-matches can occur as language enthusiasts attempt to incorporate other speakers within their imagined speech community (see MacDonald 1989).

Language is not simply an index of group identity but can be used as a means of socially signifying that identity (Hastrup 1982). Members of ethnic groups may use language in a symbolic fashion to retain group identity. In America symbolic ethnicity, an 'ethnicity of the last resort', involves little more than a taste for ethnic foods or ethnic television programmes in the absence of a practised culture (Gans 1979). Thus a member of an ethnic group may express group solidarity by expressing an attachment and/or speaking a few words of the symbolic language of that group, though he/she may not be able to speak the language fluently.

If a language symbolises the identity of a particular ethnic group, its speakers may wish to restrict access to the language to maintain the group boundary (Hewitt 1986; cf. Handler 1988: 156). However, an ethnic identity is only one of many social identities a person may have; enduring trans-ethnic bonds may be formed on the basis of age-group fellowship, trade and personal friendships (Erikson 1993: 30, 153). Localised community identities can be more meaningful in everyday interaction than ethnic or national ones (Cohen 1986). Language may be ethnically neutralised when it achieves widespread transethnic currency (Fishman 1989: 191).

It is clear that the Irish language has become part of the symbolic ethnicity of the Catholic population of Northern Ireland. However Irish is also part of the cultural inventory of the more secular Irish nationalism, which regards Protestants in Ireland as part of the Irish nation. Thus nationalist Irish-speakers were reluctant to deny Protestants access to the Irish language. If Catholics were simply ethnic chauvinists, they should have resented Protestant interest in Irish; if they were 'true' Irish nationalists, they should have encouraged this interest, in order to convince Northern Protestants of their Irish identities. A problem arose when *nationalist* speakers of the language guarded the language from *unionist* encroachment. Furthermore, one would expect cultural mis-matches to occur when Irish speakers of different political and/or religious outlooks encountered one another. In contrast to the influence of ethnic chauvinism, I shall outline instances in which a shared interest in Irish could overcome political and religious differences.

The False Homogeneity of 'Culture'

In recent decades a growing body of literature challenged some anthropological concepts of cultures as discrete and bounded units which display internal homogeneity.

Deterministic theories which depict individuals as constructs of culture have been abandoned for approaches which depict people as culturally creative and agents of cultural change (e.g.s. Cohen 1994a; Lavie et al. 1993a). Cultures are the product of a dynamic interplay between innovation and tradition; each generation selects, elaborates and transforms the tradition it inherits (Lavie et al. 1993b: 5). Furthermore, although individuals may share elements of a culture, they may interpret them differently; they may even talk past each other, in a dialogue of the deaf (Cohen 1994a: 116). One may engage in culture to express oneself to oneself, rather than to others; culture provides a vocabulary for self-expression, as well as for public discourse (Cohen 1994a: 145). Cohen acknowledges the influence of structure and choice in his consideration of culture. Culture (like discourse) may channel, but not control meaning. He defines culture as:

a framework of meaning, of concepts and ideas, within which different aspects of a person's life can be related to each other without imposing arbitrary categorical boundaries between them... Culture makes available the metaphoric terms, makes some more or less compelling or appropriate than others, but leaves their manipulation (and even, possibly, their invention) to thinking individuals... Culture requires us to think, gives us forms - metaphors, dogmas, names, 'facts' - to think with, but does not tell us *what* to think: that is the self's work (1994a: 96, 139, 154).

Ulf Hannerz, in his discussion of anthropology's analysis of culture, mentions three interrelated aspects of the phenomenon: ideas and modes of thought; forms of externalisation, or the ways in which meaning is made available to the senses; and the social distribution of culture, the ways in which the former aspects are spread over a population and its social relationships (1992: 7). According to Hannerz, anthropologists have tended to concentrate on the first and second dimensions of culture, and have devoted the least attention to the third. The interactionist approach of Hannerz emphasises the culturally creative individual, as well as the spread of cultures beyond territorial boundaries. Therefore, in examining culture in the late twentieth century, some anthropologists have emphasised the process of cross-fertilisation between cultures, which accelerated due to increased travel and the growth of the mass media (Fardon 1995; Hannerz 1992, 1996). Hannerz calls the mass media 'machineries of meaning... that contribute greatly to making the boundaries of societies and cultures fuzzy' (1992: 26, 30). Thus an analysis of culture must acknowledge the organisation of diversity, and the impact of cultural collisions:

The major implication of a distributive understanding of culture, of culture as an organization of diversity, is not just the somewhat nit-picking reminder that individuals are not all alike, but that people must deal with other people's meanings; that is, there are meanings, and meaningful forms, on which other individuals, categories, or groups in one's environment somehow have a prior claim, but to which one is somehow yet called to make a response. At times, perhaps, one can just ignore

them. Often enough, however, one may comment on them, object to them, feel stimulated by them, take them over for oneself, defer to them, or take them into account in any of a number of other ways (Hannerz 1994: 14).

The reference to groups having a 'prior claim' to culture refers to the expressive culture of ethnic or national groups, which regard such culture as their own 'intellectual property' (Harrison 1992). However, aspects of an ethnic group's culture may become commodified, and bought and sold in the marketplace. Smith describes how a culture that symbolises a group's identity becomes part of a shallow cosmopolitan, global culture, which divorces ethnic culture from ethnic identity:

It boasts no history or histories; the folk motifs it uses are quarried for surface decoration of a present- and future-oriented 'scientific' and technical culture... Its pastiche is capricious and ironical; its effects are carefully calculated; and it lacks any emotional commitment to what is signified (Smith 1991: 158).

However, anthropologists do not perceive the increased cross-fertilisation of cultures as a process that will lead to a global village of cultural uniformity. Hannerz is aware of the limits of the process of global communication, and recognises that local face-to-face interaction is more meaningful for millions of people than a diffuse cosmopolitan culture (1996: 27). Subcultures, even 'microcultures' which may be restricted to a few dozen people, continue to exist (Hannerz 1992: 77). Globalisation of culture does not lead to greater homogenisation, but contributes to a process of creativity and increasing diversity, leading to cultural hybridity and creolisation; unique mosaics or collages are created at cultural interfaces (Hannerz 1996). When groups are attracted to 'alien' meanings, rituals or artefacts, they appropriate and reinterpret them according to local perceptions (Howell 1995).

Hannerz insists that we take four factors, or 'frames', into account when we examine culture¹²(1996: 69-70). First of all, the 'form of life', or ordinary routinised day-to-day interaction in households, work places and neighbourhoods. Secondly, the state, which attempts to impose homogeneity through the cultural construction of its citizens, but introduces diversity through its metropolitan centre. Thirdly, the market, in which consumers are exposed to a greater spread of cultural preferences. Finally, cultural movements, which are engaged in persuading and proselytising the unconverted. In terms of methodology, Hannerz cites Abu-Lughod, who recommends: a concentration on practice and discourse, revealing misunderstandings, improvisations, and strategies; an awareness of the connections between cultures; and a refusal to generalise by telling stories about particular individuals in time and space (1996: 31).

A major theme of my work will be to describe how Protestants invested the Irish language with their own distinctive meanings in a process of cultural hybridity. They

¹² Barth proposes a similar model in the analysis of ethnicity, when he proposes an examination of interpersonal interaction, collectivities, and states (1994: 21).

constructed cultural mosaics which combined elements of Britishness, Irishness, and 'Ulsterness'. In recent years, they have been helped by the British state, which promoted a degree of cultural relativism and pluralism in Northern Ireland. The commodification of Irish, in the form of self-instruction materials, videos, and learning courses has resulted in a greater accessibility to the language. This has lessened the importance of gate-keeping encounters between Protestant learners and a language movement that imagined Irish as part of the Catholic and/or nationalist tradition. I argue that in Northern Ireland the Irish language was not de-ethnicised when it was adopted by Protestants; rather, they often interpreted the language in terms of their own ethnic and political visions.

The Nature of Ethnicity

Historically, anthropology has tended to ignore the distinctive experiences and beliefs of individuals, generalising them into collectivities. Individuals were discussed in terms of social roles and public persona; they were depicted as case-studies of a larger phenomenon. For example, an anthropologist would be reluctant to portray an individual as sullen or pompous in terms of personal attributes; such feelings were described if they were characteristic of public performances. More recently, transactionalists have perceived personal identity as tactical postures formulated by the individual in relation to an other. These tendencies in anthropology ignored the concept of the individual as having selfhood, the ability to critically reflect upon and direct one's personal circumstances and beliefs (Cohen 1994a; cf. Herzfeld 1991). I have studied a number of people who were not, in terms of their interest in Irish, typical members of their ethnic groups. Furthermore, they were often not aware of one another and therefore were more inclined to construct different meanings involving the Irish language, although they drew upon collective ideas of self-identity, especially national identity. Their interest in the language stimulated them to reflect upon received notions of culture and national identity.

Many forms of identity, including ethnic and national allegiances, can be situational in nature (Fischer 1986; Smith 1986: 166; Cohen 1994a); Smith observes that it is 'a common feature of modern political life' for people to believe that they belong simultaneously to two "nations" (1986: 166). Okamura notes that ethnicity is situational in nature, subject to cognitive aspects (choice and strategy) and structural aspects (constraints imposed upon actors) (Okamura 1981).

However, the cognitive aspect of ethnicity can be influenced by the structural aspect, since individuals or groups may internalise categorisations imposed by others. Individuals manipulate their social identities, undercommunicating their ethnic ones in non-hostile interethnic encounters. This happens in situations in which they have a shared field for transethnic co-operation. In addition, individuals express their own identities and beliefs in social interaction, but what they will say will be also related to how they expect interlocutors to react. Being-for-others may take precedence over being-for-self (Cheater 1987: 167). Thus

people may draw on different, even contradictory, social identities; in this process they may or may not be aware of their lack of consistency.

Barth's introduction to *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries* (1969) contains three central tenets: that ethnicity is a form of social organisation; that the focus for investigation should be the ethnic boundary that defines the group rather than the 'cultural stuff' that it encloses; and that it is important to acknowledge the process of self-ascription and ascription by others. This interactionist and situational approach to ethnicity challenges essentialist concepts of the term which concentrate on 'objective' criteria such as a shared language or history.

Barth's concept of ethnicity represents a tremendous advance on the primordialist interpretation of the phenomenon; for example, history became not the objective source of ethnicity, but a contested element in its construction. However, Barth's approach is flawed in certain respects. Jenkins asserts that Barth has concentrated on the importance of individualistic voluntarism and internal group definition at the expense of the process of ethnic categorisation by others, which is in a dialectical relationship with the former aspects of ethnicity (Jenkins 1994). Vermeulen and Govers (1994) challenge the disengagement of ethnicity from culture implied in Barth's approach. In their view, ethnicity is bound up with culture, as it is related to cognitive systems and the consciousness of ethnic culture. It is meta-cultural in that it involves reflection upon the culture of one's own group and that of others. Furthermore, the articulation of ethnicity involves the *use* of culture by a group of people to differentiate themselves from others (ibid.: 4).

Cohen claims that ethnicity has come to mean the politicisation of cultural identity (1994a: 119-120). He criticises the contrastive approach to ethnicity for being too preoccupied with boundary-maintenance and the construction of group identity in opposition to other groups. Attention must be given to the positive attribution of concepts of identity to the self, rather than negative reflections on 'who we are *not*' (ibid.: 120). Ethnicity thus involves an internal dialogue that must have significance for its individual and collective bearers. One would be mistaken to assume that all constructions of identity, including ethnicity, involve merely tactical postures, and that all aspects of identity are constructed in opposition to those of others. Cohen illustrates the salience of internal definition by citing Salmond, who argues that Maori selfhood is constituted through the relationship with ancestors and kinfolk, rather than in opposition to European encroachment (ibid.: 129). Cohen argues that the study of ethnicity requires the study of consciousness, which in turn leads us to examine the perceptions of individuals. People differ in the manner in which they imagine their ethnic community, 'The ethnic group is an aggregate of selves each of whom produces ethnicity for itself'. (1994b: 76) However, individual members of an ethnic group often attempt to reconcile their contradictory experiences with their conceptions of shared ethnicity; if they fail, they may become 'unbalanced' (Cohen 1994a: 35).

I consider Catholics and Protestants to constitute two ethnic groups in Northern Ireland, although I am not denying that they subscribe to national identities; indeed, ethnic and political allegiances often overlap in Northern Ireland (see Introduction and Chapter Two). Barth's concept of ethnicity raises an important question in the examination of

Protestant learners of Irish. What if ethnic Protestants decided to adopt the 'cultural stuff' of another ethnic group in Ireland? Following Barth's thesis, they remained Protestant if, in their own eyes, they retained the boundary between themselves and Catholics. However, ethnic co-members may have accused them of crossing the boundary, of not playing the same game (cf. Barth 1994: 12; Cohen 1994a: 176). Thus some co-ethnics may have chosen to portray Protestant learners of Irish as deviants who crossed conceptual boundaries between Catholics, Protestants, unionists and nationalists. However, this implies an ascription of these boundaries, irrespective of the beliefs of the individuals concerned. Individuals may consciously re-work boundaries, regardless of how their limits are socially determined. Unionist learners of Irish often crossed physical boundaries between nationalists and unionists, but they may have incorporated the language within their understanding of unionism; in fact their greater interaction with nationalists may have served to confirm the ideological gulf between themselves and other speakers of Irish. Whether their peers accepted these re-worked boundaries is another matter. On the other hand, unionist learners often experienced a lack of fit between their conception of unionism and the Irish language, resulting in a feeling of isolation and inconsistency.

Community and Culture

I have already indicated that Protestant learners of Irish do not constitute a 'community', but articulated local community identities and felt themselves to be part of a larger Protestant community in Ireland and/or Northern Ireland. The larger these 'communities' are, the more they become symbolic and mental constructs, rather than physically or geographically based-ones (Cohen 1993). Bounded and wholly integrated communities no longer exist in Western society, but the desire to express a sense of belonging associated with such communities remains a strong one. Tönnies distinguishes two types of society or community: *Gemeinschaft*, a type of community dominated by kinship and moral bonds; and *Gesellschaft*, a social order where impersonal contractual relationships predominate, as in urban industrial society (Tönnies 1955). The search for *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are reflected in differing forms of nationalism (Grillo 1989: 64-65).

At this point it is necessary to speculate on the impact of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* on an individual's conception of culture. It would appear that someone who lives in a society (or part of a society) characterised by *Gesellschaft* is more open to the adoption of greater cultural diversity. Hannerz prefers to use the term 'cosmopolitanism' to describe such a process. However, he insists on a narrower definition than one which is used to describe people who travel a lot. Some travellers, such as businessmen and certain tourists, are irritated by cultural difference, and would prefer their ports of call to be more like home. Cosmopolitanism entails a greater involvement with other cultures on their own terms:

A more genuine cosmopolitanism is first of all an orientation, a willingness to engage with the Other. It entails an intellectual and esthetic openness toward divergent

cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity. To become acquainted with more cultures is to turn into an *aficionado*, to view them as artworks. At the same time, however, cosmopolitanism can be a matter of competence, and competence of both a generalized and a more specialized kind. There is the aspect of a state of readiness, a personal ability to make one's way into other cultures, through listening, looking, intuiting, and reflecting. And there is cultural competence in the stricter sense of the term, a built-up skill in maneuvering more or less expertly with a particular sense of meanings. (Hannerz 1996: 103).

Hannerz is aware that the cosmopolitan individual is selective and may embrace an alien culture without becoming committed to it, 'All the time he knows where the exit is' (1986: 104).

Hannerz has less to say about 'locals', the contraries of cosmopolitans. Presumably they are more reminiscent of *Gemeinschaft*, and are less willing to engage with other cultures. While locals are more content with 'everyday' culture in their own communities, Hannerz suggests that cosmopolitans take home for granted, and become bored with familiar faces and places (ibid.: 110).

Cosmopolitans are more likely to be middle-class than working-class; therefore the class positions of Protestant learners must be examined. I do not define class solely in terms of control over money capital or the means of production, but will adhere to a definition of class which takes account of the differences between social groups in terms of social honour, education and prestige (Giddens 1993: 219). Possession of wealth normally confers high status, but there are many exceptions. For example, individuals from aristocratic families may have high social esteem even when they have lost most of their wealth. Students in third-level education usually have very low incomes, but market researchers often categorise them as 'middle-class', as students are expected to acquire high-status and high-income occupations with their qualifications. I find that class positions often reflect lifestyles and opinions that are not directly related to the simple distribution of wealth.

The distinction between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* is a useful method of examining the social organisation of culture in Northern Ireland. Working-class people tend to live in communities that are built up over several generations, and in which relationships of kin, neighbourhood, occupation and friendship overlap (Milroy 1987: 50, 61). The density of these relationships results in their operating as norm-enforcement mechanisms, producing a homogeneity of values. Thus we can discover 'urban villages' in cities, (Gans 1962; Burton, F. 1978). Middle-class people place greater emphasis on their personal friendships, have greater social mobility and live in districts characterised by relative anonymity. They have more opportunity to separate the worlds of kinship, residence, work, and recreation. Less moral pressure is exerted on middle-class people in their residential districts by their neighbours. Bailey (1969) and Boissevain (1974) describe the dynamic manner in which individuals choose to alter their lives by banding together in social networks for specific

purposes. I would suggest that this process is more highly developed among middle-class people. I am not suggesting that working-class districts can be described as *Gemeinschaft*-type communities, or that middle-class districts can be viewed simply in terms of *Gesellschaft*; elements of *Gemeinschaft*/*Gesellschaft* exist in both working- and middle-class areas. However, working-class areas tend to demonstrate many features that are reminiscent of *Gemeinschaft*, while middle-class districts appear to suggest conditions more similar to *Gesellschaft*.

Global Ideologies and Discourses of Language

In the previous sections I described concepts such as 'discourse' and 'ideology' in terms of their usefulness as analytical tools. In this section I will consider the particular discourses and ideologies that are germane to my thesis. I will provide the reader with a description of the global ideologies and discourses which have particular variants in Ireland. I will also provide a schematic diagram of the discourses which will be discussed in later chapters.

In a previous section I discussed the nature of ethnicity. Ethnicity and nationalism are closely related terms: both are described as means of social classification, in that they involve assumptions that human beings are organised in groups that differ in their conceptions of culture and origin; and both stress the internal homogeneity of a given people and its differentiation from others (Verdery 1994: 49). Some anthropologists have even claimed that nation-building produces ethnic groups (ibid.: 45). It follows that much of what I have said about ethnicity and its relationship to culture can be applied to that of nationalism.

Nationalism and Language

When a language becomes associated with an ideology it is objectified as having certain qualities and may become a metaphor for a separate reality. Therefore a language may symbolise an ideology. However symbols have multiple semantic associations at individual and societal levels (Turner 1967). Ideologies attempt to constrain the multiplicity of meaning that a symbol may acquire. If a language represents an ideology it can become a stake in a social struggle as well as medium of that struggle.

Before the age of European nationalism dominant elites made few systematic efforts to impose their language on their subject populations; administrative languages were used by officialdoms for their own inner convenience (Anderson 1983: 93). Rulers mixed a policy of benign linguistic neglect with a belief that their own languages were superior; their principal concerns with their subjects were often restricted to peace-keeping and tax-collection (Edwards 1994: 125).

The advent of nationalism in Europe heralded a transformation in attitudes towards language and nationality. However, the nature of nationalism itself is disputed. Commentators on nationalism are divided as to whether a nation must, by definition, seek a separate state. Gellner defines nationalism as 'a political principle, which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent' (Gellner 1983: 1). On the other hand, such a definition excludes many widely recognised 'nations', such as Scots, Catalans and Basques, that are 'politically conscious', yet do not unanimously demand separate states (Gallagher 1995: 717). Furthermore, it is important to distinguish between nationality and nationalism. Fishman describes nationality as:

a more advanced degree and inclusive scope or scale of effective organisation and of elaborated beliefs, values, and behaviours than those that obtain in the case of ethnic groups (Fishman 1972: 4).

Handler stresses the territorial and behavioural aspects of nationality, and finds that the ascription of Québécois national identity is based upon 'the relationship of an individual to a particular locality or territory, and a style of living or code for conduct to which the individual must adhere' (Handler 1988: 33). The behavioural element of nationality does not include political separatism, according to Fishman; nationality is 'neutral with respect to the existence or non-existence of a corresponding political unit or polity' (Fishman 1972: 4). Fishman defines nationalism as:

essentially conscious or organized ethnocultural solidarity which may or may not be directed outside of its initial sphere toward political, economic, and religious goals (ibid.: 4).

Therefore Fishman disagrees with Gellner on the relationship between nationalism and state formation. The debate on the definition of nationalism often focuses on cultural nationalism, the desire for national cultural autonomy rather than independent statehood. Certainly, cultural issues are of crucial importance to many national movements. Nationalism involves the objectification of culture, transforming it into the property of a particular group:

It allows any aspect of human life to be imagined as an object, that is bounded in time and space, or (amounting to the same thing) associated as property with a particular group, which is imagined as territorially and historically bounded. Moreover, possession of a heritage, of culture, is considered a crucial part of national existence. (Handler 1988: 142)

This process of objectification involves the transformation of aspects of folk culture which are traditional, spontaneous, and uncritical; they become 'discrete things' which are self-consciously studied, catalogued, and displayed (ibid.: 64, 67; see also Herzfeld 1991).

This culture must be protected from the claims of others, which entails a process of inventory, acquisition, enclosure, and 'creative labelling' (ibid.: 156-7). Cultural protectionism is part of the negative vision of nationalism, 'a pervasive fear of pollution and contamination' as the result of contact with other nations; 'There is no place for imprecision, for mixture, for hazily defined boundaries (Handler 1988: 46, 48). Other groups within a nation are 'minoritized'; their cultures are folklorised and appropriated to the national culture, and are rendered politically harmless in the process (ibid.: 178).

Hutchinson claims that cultural nationalists perceive the essence of nations to lie in their distinctive civilisations, rather than their distinctive politics: 'Since a civilisation is a spontaneous social order, it cannot be constructed like a state from above, but only resuscitated from the bottom up' (Hutchinson 1987: 8-13). Some people express dual identities, having cultural-national identities and political-national identities: 'a Breton nation within France, a Catalan nation within Spain' (Smith 1991: 138). Smith notes that some nationalist movements demand greater political autonomy rather than secession, and dubs these movements 'neo-nationalist' (Smith 1981: 55).

Political nationalists use the distinctiveness of native culture to legitimise secessionism and independent statehood. As cultural revivalism often fails to extend beyond the educated strata, cultural nationalists are often forced to abandon communitarian strategies for state-oriented ones to institutionalise their programme in the social order, which paves the way for the rise of political nationalism (Hutchinson 1987: 16). Thus some political nationalists believe that cultural nationalism precedes the demand for political independence.

Nationalists often highlight the role of language in the cultural distinctiveness of nations. They objectify language as the beautiful expression of the national consciousness (Fishman 1972: 63-4). Languages are also used to express a link with a glorious past, to create a native literature, and to form contrastive self-identifications with other nations (ibid.: 40, 44-52). Language is used by traditionalist clerical elements as a vehicle for religion, but secular nationalists view language as a symbol uniting elements of a nation divided by religion (ibid.: 55). Linguistic determinism is the view that a language expresses and creates a distinct and autonomous system of thought. This is an important element of German Romantic nationalism. Fichte and Herder claimed that the world was divided into distinct nations, which were differentiated from one another by language. Herder argued that if a man spoke a foreign language, he would lead a debilitating and artificial life, estranged from the intuitive sources of his personality (Kedourie 1994: 58). German romanticists believed that language was not only a guarantor of nationality but the repository of national identity (Crowley 1996: 125). However, political and cultural nationalists are not agreed on the importance of the state in protecting and reproducing national cultures.

Anthony Smith demonstrates how nationalisms have recognisably different civic and ethnic manifestations (1981, 1991). The ethnic and civic ideologies reflect a dualism at the heart of every nationalist movement, which has aspects of both models in varying degrees.

Civic nationalism involves a territorial concept of the nation, which attributes nationhood on the basis of birth and residence (Smith 1991: 117). The nation is also

conceived of as a community of laws and institutions with a single political will; emphasis is laid on the equality and equal access of all members of the nation, irrespective of ethnic origins (ibid.: 117). Civic nationalists may be hostile to traditional ethnic distinctions, which they believe hinder socio-economic cohesion and progress. They are modernist and assimilationist, preferring the erosion of primordial, communal bonds leading to a standardised mass culture and a modern, participant society (Smith 1981: 2, 152).

Ethnic nationalism, on the other hand, attributes membership of the nation on the basis of descent and genealogy (Smith 1991: 11). The place of law in the civic model is taken by the adherence to vernacular culture, language and tradition (ibid.). Ethnic nationalists struggle for the formation of culturally homogenous nations; such movements mobilise distinct communities in the name of submerged cultures threatened by modernisation and dominant elites (ibid.: 124). The national homeland is celebrated as the ancestral home of a particular community.

In my work I will adhere to Fishman's definition of nationality and nationalism, the distinction between political and cultural nationalism provided by Hutchinson and others, and Smith's distinction between ethnic and civic nationalism. Yet I must finish this section by once again balancing macro-level perceptions of social organisation with micro-level perceptions and behaviour; the delicate balancing of structural constraint and individual creativity is vital to the examination of Protestant learners of Irish. Commentators often conceive of nationalisms and states as forms of organisation that impose homogeneity and attempt to diminish people's consciousness of their individuality. However, there are strong countervailing forces to this trend. Local community identities are often more meaningful for people than more abstract national ones, and local experience mediates national reality (Cohen 1986). Individuals and groups filter conceptions of nationality through their own experiences and perceptions. They may even oppose state bureaucrats by using national rhetoric against them (Herzfeld 1985, 1991). I have outlined the disputes on the nature of national identity and nationalism; they provide enough material for many contests on the 'genuine' nature of patriotism and nation-building in Ireland. Protestant learners had many different versions of national identity to choose from. Furthermore, they often produced their own variants of national identity to suit their individual experiences and perceptions.

Discourses of Language and Nation

In this section I will identify the discourses which express the differing nationalist approaches to culture. The cultural nationalist discourse embraces the claim that the regeneration of the national culture is more important than the creation of an autonomous state (Hutchinson 1987: 9). The cultural secessionist discourse is the articulation of the belief that indigenous culture plays an important role in the struggle for political independence. This discourse also includes the claim that separate political administrations are necessary to protect and foster national cultures; the state is the 'protective shell' of the nation (Smith

1971: 178)¹³. Advocates of the cultural secessionist discourse are nationalists, but not all nationalists use the cultural secessionist discourse, as they may be more concerned with political autonomy than cultural protectionism.

At this point it is necessary to distinguish discourses of culture and language from the ideologies that are related to them. While the cultural nationalist discourse puts culture above politics, I have found that it is not invested with any particular political ideology; in Ireland both unionists and nationalists articulated this discourse. The cultural discourse of the Irish language, in which the language is discussed in terms of its relationships to Irish history, games and music is not ideological *per se*. This is because one can invest this discourse with unionist or nationalist ideology. The cultural secessionist discourse is invested with nationalist ideology, since it links culture to political separatism. Discourses that are not invested with particular ideologies may be utilised to ideological *effect*; for example, a unionist could use the cultural nationalist discourse to separate Irish culture from Irish nationalism, thus disempowering the arguments of nationalists who claimed that Ireland must be politically independent in order to maintain its culture.

Monolingualism and Multilingualism

The civic model of nationalism is associated with the Enlightenment, a movement opposed to the Aristotelian-Christian approach to the world, with its emphasis on the role of religion, tradition, and feudal aristocracy. The Enlightenment 'scientific' model of government was based upon the principle that all individuals could make sense of the world and should participate in its governance, rather than relinquish their authority to religious or political elites. The nation was conceived of as a body of citizens brought together by a shared set of legal and governmental institutions. This definition of the nation was not overtly concerned with language, though it may indicate an assumption of linguistic unity (Grillo 1989: 30). However, in revolutionary France 'enlightenment' became the process by which educated townsfolk sought to replace the dialects of rural people with standard French. Through such a process the people would become 'informed citizens, able to participate on equal terms, without intermediaries, in the political process' (ibid.: 32). The revolutionaries believed that a monolingual French policy was an egalitarian one as it made many aspects of society accessible to all citizens. The diversity of dialects was associated with the feudal policy of 'divide and rule' (ibid.: 35).

The Enlightenment view of language precedes the modernist discourse of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Proponents of modernist discourse oppose malign 'traditions' with a benign process of 'progress', manifested in increased industrialisation, widespread literacy, market economies and democratisation. Minority cultures are regarded as an obstruction to the full participation of every citizen in the affairs of the state on an equal

¹³ Smith uses the term 'ethnicist' to refer to this type of nationalist (Smith 1971: 176). While not all political nationalist movements are secessionist, I feel that the term is appropriate in the Irish case, as Irish nationalists wish (ed) to secede from the United Kingdom.

basis. The process of modernisation entails the abandonment of minority languages and dialects in a process of 'universal communication which serves to unite everyone into a homogenous harmony' (Williams 1992: 102). The popularity of evolutionary theory strengthened the advocates of modernism, who argued that the elimination of minority languages was part of a natural process of linguistic selection (ibid.: 100). Dominant languages are 'depoliticised' by labelling them as languages of wider communication that were the benevolent carriers of progress. In modernist discourse the dominant language is not represented as an agent of social control or subordination (ibid.: 102). Minority languages are regarded as handicaps that impair individual mobility. The failure of minority language speakers to improve their lot is blamed on their lack of knowledge of the majority language; 'Inequality is explained in culturist terms of language rather than being viewed as related to social structure' (ibid.: 130).

The rationalism of the Enlightenment was opposed by the Romantic movement of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, which was associated with European ethnic nationalism. The Romantic movement was characterised by an interest in the idea of 'national character' and 'national genius' and a love of nature which expressed a disillusionment with the artificialities of urban life. Medieval literature was viewed as a repository of national distinctiveness; in Britain this movement was expressed in a revival of interest in the works of Shakespeare, Spenser and Milton (Smith 1991: 88-89). The past became the storehouse of golden ages that would serve as exemplars for collective regeneration in the present. Romanticists emphasised the importance of indigenous folklores and languages. The monolingual, future-oriented, and cosmopolitanism Enlightenment view of language was opposed by the romantics' cultural discourse of language, with its emphasis on the historicity of languages and celebration of rural lifestyles that was associated with them.

The ideologies of unionism and nationalism in Ireland have been influenced by the above processes. Irish nationalists cherished the Irish past, especially the ancient culture and language of the island. Many of them were concerned with the use of this culture and language to express an Irish identity, and were less worried about their utility in the modern world. Unionists often employed modernist discourse, being less sympathetic to the cultivation of cultural 'survivals' and endangered languages. It follows that unionists and nationalists differed widely in their attitudes to the revival of the Irish language.

Pluralism

Pluralist discourse arose out of the need to categorise social systems in colonial territories, and reflected the re-orientation of anthropology and sociology away from the study of allegedly homogeneous, insular, integrated, consensus-based societies. Indeed, it is now claimed that such societies never existed (Jenkins 1988: 181). Pluralism is used to describe situations where different racial and ethnic groups are consolidated into political or governmental units. It is necessary to distinguish between *pluralism* and a *plural society*; the latter term, which has pre-occupied anthropologists, is descriptive and 'theoretically vapid...

going no further than the extensive cataloguing of concrete situations by reference to a classificatory scheme of ideal-typical plural societies' (Jenkins 1988: 181).

I do not propose to draw upon the anthropological concept of plural societies in this work. Rather it, is more important to analyse concepts of pluralism which are related to issues of ethnicity and culture. In this context pluralism refers to the desire of ethnic groups to preserve their distinctive cultures, and the acceptance by governments of the merits of such a desire (Gleason 1984: 221).

In an article on culture and pluralism (1984), Philip Gleason suggests that there are two main types of pluralism in the United States. The first to appear was a pluralist version of assimilation; tolerance of the diversity of culture in tandem with an ideological consensus on democratic values (Gleason 1984: 227). Cultural pluralism was presented as 'an enlightened and liberal means of achieving the goal of assimilation' (ibid.: 228). During the ethnic revival of the mid-sixties in the United States, ethnicity became a means for mobilising group energies to enforce group demands, leading to claims for public authorities to address the grievances of the group in question. This approach involved calls for community control of institutions such as schools and adequate recognition for ethnic groups in the dominant institutions of society; Gleason refers to this as subsidised pluralism, as the state was expected to bear the cost. Advocates of subsidised pluralism denounced the cultural pluralism of early liberal assimilationists as 'hypocritical' and 'crass assimilationism' (ibid.: 249). The semantic obscurities of pluralism were aggravated as pluralism was ritually invoked in support of the most diverse positions.

Gleason claims that contemporary Americans face a crisis regarding the demands of ethnic groups, and his article concludes by outlining Gordon's typology of pluralist ideology (1981). Liberal pluralism, or the pluralism of the 1940s and '50s, is based upon democratic individualism:

...it envisages ethnic and racial relations as falling outside the scope of legal coercion or direct government control, except that the state is supposed to prevent discrimination. Racial and ethnic groups have no standing in the polity and no legal rights as entities in themselves... Equality is understood in terms of equal opportunity for individuals, regardless of racial or ethnic background, not in terms of equality of outcomes for groups considered collectively. Officially, liberal pluralism prescribes tolerance and a laissez-faire policy with respect to the perpetuation of structural differentiation and cultural distinctiveness among the groups composing the population (Gleason 1984: 252).

The newer corporate pluralism

envisages formal standing before the law for ethnic and racial groups; recognizes group rights in the political and economic spheres; and makes the enjoyment of rights by individuals conditional, to some extent, on whether they belong to specified

groups. In respect to equality, corporate pluralism would require proportionally equal outcomes for groups rather than equality of opportunity for individuals. And without explicitly rejecting the need for national unity, it would foster structural separatism and cultural and linguistic differentiation among the constituent groups in society (ibid.: 252).

Gordon's models are ideal types, and there can be degrees of pluralism which are neither entirely liberal or corporate. For example, the British government heavily subsidised Scottish Gaelic broadcasting, education, and the arts in 1990s, yet the language had no legal status and was not used in the dominant political institutions of Scotland. This state interventionism suggests a government-subsidised corporate pluralism, yet the absence of legal status for Gaelic suggests a liberal pluralist approach.

There are flaws in the liberal pluralist approach which are not considered in Gleason's article. In this approach, the state itself is portrayed as benign and non-interventionist, yet what is the core culture that it seeks to reproduce? If it is the culture of a majority group, which may not perceive itself as an *ethnic* group, is the state not discriminating against the cultures of others? On the other hand, corporate pluralism could lead to the disintegration of a unifying culture necessary for a state to survive. Corporate pluralism implies an acceptance of cultural relativism, and whether or not we regard all cultures as equal, we must recognise the unequal allocation of status and power between groups in most societies. Discourses of pluralism can be invested with ideologies that disempower or empower ethnic groups; the South African government legitimised apartheid and 'homeland' policies by claiming that they were pluralist (Jenkins 1986b: 182). In recent years sociolinguists in America and Britain have warned against educating black children in the dialects of their communities, since a lack of standard English may place them at a disadvantage in the job market.

While there are aspects of Gleason's article that pertain only to American political life, there is much that can be used elsewhere. The fear of pluralism as a form of assimilation echoes the concerns of Quebec nationalists that the Canada government was attempting to folklorise their culture in order to render them politically harmless (Handler 1988: 178). A world-wide version of liberal pluralism incorporates aspects of ethnic culture within a shallow global culture, which consists of a huge *bricolage* constructed from the plundering and de-ethnicising of folk memories and identities.

The adverse reaction to the processes of automisation and cultural homogenisation have contributed to the rise of ethnic revivalism in the western world. This can lead to ethnic nationalism; thus forms of corporate pluralism can become fully-fledged nationalisms. When ethnic groups use articulate their demands in terms of corporate pluralism, dominant groups fear ethnic segregation and secessionism.

Gleason and Gordon demystify concepts of pluralism, but the popularity of pluralist discourse is in part due to its investment with different ideological positions. Pluralist discourse has overcome the discourse of assimilation in the Anglo-American world partly

because it is so ambiguous. Nowadays pluralism seems synonymous with democracy and liberalism, yet the exact meaning of the term escapes many.

In my work I will demonstrate how nationalists, unionists, and the British government adopted pluralist discourse to argue the moral superiority of their positions. Pluralism in Ireland was as ambiguous as it was in America; and some interpreted the adoption of pluralist discourse by unionists and nationalists as strategies designed to outflank rather than accommodate political opponents (Ruane and Todd 1996: 108). The British government's pluralist approach engendered suspicion in both communities, as both nationalists and unionists suspected state pluralism of concealing an assimilationist policy that would be disadvantageous to their positions.

Discourse Categories in This Thesis

Considering the variety of discourses that appear in this work, it may be useful to present them in the form of a schematic diagram. Although I have already delineated most of the global discourses of language, the reader will notice that I introduce their Irish variants here. These discourses will be described as they occur in the thesis. Global discourses appear in bold print, followed by their Irish versions, which are underlined.

Global Discourses

Cultural Discourse: Language and culture are related to one another; language is viewed as containing elements of a nation's culture.

Cultural Secessionist Discourse: Culture, including language, is an important part of a nationalist movement's struggle for political autonomy.

Cultural Nationalist Discourse: Culture, including language, is more important in terms of sustaining and expressing national distinctiveness than political separatism.

Modernist Discourse: The erosion of old ethnic and communal bonds is a necessary step in the creation of a standardised mass culture and a modern, participant society.

Pluralist Discourse: Multiple cultural systems or subsystems can co-exist within a single political unit.

Irish Variants

Cultural Discourse: The Irish language is discussed in the context of Irish customs, games, music, history, and traditions. The lifestyles of rural native speakers of Irish are romanticised. Irish political issues are not part of this discourse.

Cultural Secessionist Discourse: The Irish language is an integral part of the movement to end British rule in Ireland.

Cultural Nationalist Discourse: Irish culture, including the Irish language, is a more important aspect of Irish nationality than political separatism.

Irish Pluralist Discourse

Common Heritage Discourse: The Irish language is the common heritage of the people of Northern Ireland.

CHAPTER TWO

Protestant Ideology and Lifestyles in Northern Ireland

This chapter will examine the social scientific literature on Protestant identity and Protestant/Catholic interaction in Northern Ireland. Despite the many different denominations in Protestant religious life, there are many integrating mechanisms in the form of kinship, work and recreational networks. Intermarriage across denominational boundaries is generally acceptable and Protestants of all denominations attend the same schools. Nevertheless, there are many divisions within Northern Protestantism, which often reflect class tensions.

This chapter will draw upon the anthropological literature on Northern Ireland, which consists of rural village studies and urban ethnographies. The former concentrate on integrative forces and peaceful co-existence, while the latter acknowledge inter-communal violence and the impact of the 'troubles'. In examining the experience of being Protestant in Northern Ireland, Irish anthropology demonstrates certain strengths and weaknesses. Peaceful Protestant-Catholic interaction in rural areas has been adequately explained (Harris 1972; Leyton 1974; Buckley 1982; Larsen 1882a; Larsen 1882b). These ethnographies also add much to our understanding of Protestant and Catholic stereotypes. However, urban ethnographies tend to examine the impact of the 'troubles' on Catholic districts (Burton 1978; Sluka 1989; Buckley and Kenney 1995)¹⁴. Feldman's *Formations of Violence* (1991) concentrates on the narratives of paramilitary group members, most of whom are republicans, and little attempt is made to relate them to the views of 'non-combatants'. There is no anthropological study depicting the relationship between loyalist paramilitaries and their 'host' communities in an urban *or* a rural area. To examine this relationship, we must look to the works of sociologists and political scientists (e.g.s Nelson 1984; Bruce 1994a). Bruce (1986) and McAuley (1994) provide insights into the relationship between religious fundamentalists and the Protestant communities they live in. In its micro-level community studies Irish anthropology has largely ignored macro-level issues such as the nature of nationalist and unionist ideologies and the construction of British, Irish and Ulster national affiliations. To examine these, we must again turn to the works of political scientists such as Jennifer Todd (1987, 1988, 1996) and Arthur Aughey (1989).

It has been argued that Northern Irish Protestants comprise an ethnic group, rather than a national one, whereas Catholics in the region are both, as the latter's sense of ethnic distinctiveness has developed into a clearly national consciousness (Wallis et al. 1987: 301). This is because Catholics express a strong Irish identity, whereas Protestants are divided between Ulster, Irish, and other identifications. However, Smith has demonstrated that many people believe they belong to two nations (Smith 1986: 166). It is difficult to distinguish between ethnicity and nationalism; for example, Ruane and Todd state that the Protestant British identity is 'a primary ethnic identity in its own right' (Ruane and Todd 1996: 58).

¹⁴ The community studies of Buckley and Kenney's work examine Protestants living in a peaceful area, and Catholics living in a strife-torn district of Belfast.

What is more important is that many Northern Irish Protestants *believe* that they belong to one national group or another. To categorise them as *merely* an ethnic group would be to disregard their self-definitions. In this chapter I will explore Northern Protestants' national affiliations.

Most academic study of Protestants has tended to focus on its extreme fringes such as loyalist paramilitaries, religious fundamentalists, and bandsmen (Coulter 1994: 2). Middle-class Protestants, whose expressive culture is less 'mediagenic' than their working-class counterparts, seem to have been largely ignored. However, Jennifer Todd's work (1987, 1988) has enabled an analysis of unionism that prevents the overcommunicating of the former at the expense of the latter.

While the Protestant middle class is largely absent from the academic literature on Northern Ireland, 'fringe' individuals are hardly mentioned at all. Ruane and Todd highlight the complex and individualistic nature of Protestant identity, citing as an example fundamentalist Protestants who are deeply suspicious of Roman Catholicism but who would be quite open to a united Ireland if it guaranteed religious liberty (Ruane and Todd 1992: 79). 'Marginals' include Protestants who are agnostic in religion and support a united Ireland. Such individuals may be anchored in the Protestant community by virtue of residence or religious beliefs. Other marginals include individuals who have no interest in Northern Irish politics or religion, and embrace alternative (ecological, feminist, gay, or mystic) lifestyles. Furthermore, in Northern Ireland political ideologies seldom reflect the ambiguous and contradictory beliefs of 'ordinary' people (Ruane and Todd 1996: 60). Ruane and Todd claim that each community in Northern Ireland has relatively permeable boundaries and marginals have old networks and allegiances to draw upon (1992: 89).

The academic literature does not fully explore the nature of Protestants' Irish identities, and ignores Protestant nationalists completely. It remains to be seen how unionist Protestants express their Irish identities and how, for example, Protestant nationalists relate to other Protestants and to Catholics who share their political outlook. I will explore these issues, and their relationship to the Irish language, in the following chapters.

In this chapter I will also draw on literature (for example conference reports, the writings of unionist intellectuals, and journalists' articles) that has not been produced by social scientists, as I believe it contributes to a greater understanding of the nature of unionism. In parts I will supplement the published material with my own knowledge of Protestant lifestyles in Northern Ireland.

Any analysis of political and cultural issues in Northern Ireland must explore the ideology of sectarianism. Sectarianism is an aspect of group conflict over socio-economic and political resources. In a folk concept of the term, sectarianism is 'expressed in negative stereotypes, and pejorative beliefs and notions about members of the other religion' (Brewer 1992: 362). In Northern Ireland, these usually refer to stigmatisation of the religious *and* political beliefs of others. However, sectarianism operates at three levels: the level of ideas (prejudicial beliefs); individual action (intimidation and harassment); and the level of social

structure (social and economic institutions) (Brewer 1992: 362-3). Therefore sectarianism exists where patterns of inequality are structured by mechanisms additional to religion.

This chapter is divided into three main parts. The first part will distinguish between Protestants in Northern Ireland in terms of class affiliation. The second part will examine aspects of Protestant/Catholic stereotyping, avoidance, and the concept of 'telling'. The third part addresses Protestant national identities, and their concomitant 'imagined communities' (cf. Anderson 1983). The fourth part examines the political and cultural crisis in contemporary unionism.

The Protestant Working Class

Culture and Ideology

The Presbyterian ethos that dominated northern Protestantism has traditionally been one of restraint. This ethos did not encourage the reading or the writing of imaginative literature (Lyons 1979: 130). In this scriptural culture the sermon was 'a major, perhaps the major, cultural experience shared by the whole community' (ibid.: 128). Much of the literature on Protestant identity emphasises the interdiscursivity of Protestant religious and political beliefs. Protestants contrast their religious freedom with that of the Catholic Church, whose insistence on the role of human mediators in the relationship between an individual and God is seen as evidence of clerical authoritarianism (Harris 1986: 177). This sense of religious liberty is reflected in political self-conceptions of Protestants as 'proud individualists', 'free and equal and subservient to no-one' (Nelson 1984: 17).

Orange marches are a central part of the culture of many working-class Protestants. The Orange Order is an exclusively Protestant organisation which was formed in the late eighteenth century to protect Protestant interests. It takes its name from William III (Prince of Orange) whose victory over the Catholic King James II in 1690 ensured Protestant succession to the English throne and the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland. The victory is commemorated by the Orange Order every Twelfth of July, when a large number of Orange processions are held. Smaller parades are also held throughout the summer in parts of Northern Ireland. They articulate community rivalries, help Protestants to overcome inter-denominational tensions, and allow working-class lodge members to upbraid their middle-class brethren in an environment of Orange egalitarianism (Harris 1986: 163-165, 195; Larsen 1982b). The processions affirm the dominance of Protestants over Catholics, particularly in Orange marches through Catholic areas. Catholics view Orange marches as demonstrations of territorial control (Larsen 1982b: 288-289).

Jennifer Todd's delineation of Ulster loyalist¹⁵ ideology encompasses the beliefs of the Orange Order, the Democratic Unionist Party, religious fundamentalists, and the

¹⁵ Todd uses the term 'loyalist' in a different sense than myself; while she implies that the term could be applied to any working-class Protestant, I use the term to denote a Protestant who supports the use of paramilitary force

Protestant working-class (Todd 1987: 3). She claims that Ulster loyalist ideology is largely informed by the evangelical fundamentalist religious tradition. Ulster loyalists believe that a Protestant ethos must permeate all social, political and educational institutions; a nationalist or Catholic influence compromises the purity of the state. When an Ulster loyalist fights for God, he or she fights for Ulster, and vice-versa. The religious concept of sin parallels the political threat from nationalists; 'Sin is thought of as a blot or a stain, passed on as if by contagion and requiring purification and removal of the source of the stain' (ibid.: 5). Roman Catholicism, which is identified closely with the IRA, is the significant Other for Ulster loyalists; both have strongholds in the Republic of Ireland, which is perceived as bent on the destruction of the Northern state (ibid.: 7). Ulster loyalists regard refusal to compromise as a sign of honesty; this principle applies to Catholics as much as themselves. Compromise leads to defeat and destruction. Politics is therefore a zero-sum game in which the gains of Catholics are detrimental to the interests of Protestants and vice-versa. (ibid.: 10).

Many working-class Protestants hold sectarian views that are not based on theological principles. Sectarianism in Northern Ireland is not confined to the ideological sphere but is embodied in social institutions, including segregation in education, politics, and work and leisure activities which reflect and determine ideological differences (McAuley 1994: 46). Hence sectarianism should not be conceived of solely in terms of personal pathology or ideological or cultural realms, but in the material realities of society in Northern Ireland (Coulter 1995: 60; Brewer 1992). Sectarian polarisation results in inter-community competition in housing, employment, security and social justice as well as on the constitutional issue (Coulter 1995: 7).

The forces of secularism have eroded the belief systems based primarily on religious principles in the Protestant working-class community. Gillespie et al. notice that many young Shankill Protestants are ignorant of the basic premises of Christianity, and religious practice on the Shankill 'has experienced an enormous decline over the past 20 years' (Gillespie et al. 1992: 128). Many churches have closed due to secularisation and migration, and youths openly flout Sabbatarian values, playing football on Sundays (ibid.: 128). For many Shankill youths religion is unimportant in the theological sense; 'Protestantism' is 'a crude mixture of selective theological dogma, anti-Catholicism and pragmatic loyalism' (ibid.: 135). Despite the process of secularisation, religious identity remains part of Protestant symbolic ethnicity; many working-class urban men who do not attend church encourage their wives and children to go to religious worship (Bruce 1986: 263).

McGarry and O'Leary attribute Protestant fear of Catholics in Northern Ireland to the perceived Catholic disloyalty to the state and support for the IRA, rather than religious beliefs (McGarry and O'Leary 1995: 205). Some loyalist paramilitaries have shown a willingness to accommodate Catholics if they accept the Union (ibid.: 200). 'Zero-sum' unionists may believe that any concession to nationalism endangers unionism, but this may reflect the view that these two political ideologies are irreconcilable, rather than a belief that Catholicism is

to combat Irish nationalism. I distinguish between the two uses of the term by referring to *Ulster* loyalists when I discuss Todd's work.

inherently evil. Since working-class Protestants believe that the IRA wishes to kill them or drive them from their homes, they do not require a religious mind-set to perceive republicans as 'evil'.

Any possible sympathy with the Catholic laity, perceived as 'brainwashed' by the IRA or a scheming church, is compromised by the suspicion that all Catholics, no matter how conciliatory they seem, are plotting to overthrow Northern Ireland (Nelson 1984: 59). Many working-class Protestants believe that Catholics/nationalists are winning the Northern Ireland conflict and that a British withdrawal is inevitable; fears of a British desire to withdraw and the rise of nationalist paramilitary and constitutional power have fuelled an apocalyptic vision of the future (Nelson 1984: 30-1; Bruce 1994a: 37-71).

Whatever the cause, many working-class Protestants hold sectarian views; the precarious political and demographic situation (see below), competition for jobs and housing, the rejection of nationalism, and fear and loathing towards republicanism renders interaction with Catholics as difficult for many secular working-class Protestants as it is for religious fundamentalists. The fear of pollution or contamination by Catholic belief-systems is endemic in the Protestant working-class.

Work

During the Stormont era Protestants had an occupational culture, infused with a Calvinist work-ethic (Bell 1990: 182; Bruce 1994: 59). However, since the late 1960s this culture has been challenged by widespread unemployment. In Belfast between 1961 and 1971 employment in manufacturing dropped by over 70%; three quarters of the workforce in this sector were drawn from the Protestant working-class community (Shirlow and McGovern 1995: 22-3). For many of these Protestants heavy industry (especially ship-building and engineering) not only formed the basis of their economic well-being, but also of their sense of community identity. While manufacturing employment has fallen by over 70%, employment in the public sector increased by 158% (ibid.). However, many of the jobs in the public sector required skills and educational qualifications that working-class Protestants did not possess. Therefore their chances for finding employment were reduced and they became ghettoised in their own communities (Bell 1990: 2).

Working-class Protestants also discovered that government anti-discrimination forced them to compete with Catholics for an ever-decreasing number of jobs. Many working-class Protestants deny that anti-Catholic discrimination existed, blaming Catholic unemployment on their unwillingness to work (McGovern and Shirlow 1995: 25). They concluded that government grants and work-schemes were being channelled into Catholic areas to reduce support for the IRA. Furthermore, they wondered why the British seemed to reward Catholics which supported a paramilitary organisation which bombed Protestant-owned industries and prevented foreign companies from investing in Northern Ireland (ibid.). The belief that their economic plight was caused by Catholics contributed to loyalist paramilitary attacks on

Catholic workers; in the words of one loyalist spokesman, 'Catholics can't expect to blow up our industries and then take our jobs' (ibid.).

The occupational culture of Protestants was infused with the ideology of *laissez-faire* conservatism which militated against the growth of community-self help groups and a reluctance to rely on the welfare state. Thus 'working-class' Protestants who are unemployed fear being stigmatised as 'lazy', emphasise their working history, and assert that they spend their time productively, either in looking for jobs or in acceptable household activities (Howe 1994).

Community and Territory

In Northern Ireland local community identities can be as important in day-to-day interaction as 'national' ones. There is a complex interplay between macroterritorial concepts such as a 'united Ireland' or a 'British Ulster' and microterritorial constructs such as the community, the neighbourhood and the street (Feldman 1991: 27).

Community identity in Protestant working-class districts is built up over several generations and located in networks of kin, class, religion, residence and occupation (McAuley 1994: 45). These communities are often self-contained, organised around the extended family and friendship networks, reinforcing geographical stability and cultural homogeneity. Thus there is a close interaction of family, work and recreation networks. The density of these networks results in their operating as norm-enforcement mechanisms, producing a homogeneity of cultural values (Milroy 1987: 50, 61).

Burton (1978) outlines the effect that living in an urban *Gemeinschaft* has upon its residents¹⁶. In such an urban village, a large amount of social control is exercised, as everyone knows a great deal about everyone else. Community deviance, such as drug use, homosexuality, and thieving, can lead to various forms of physical abuse or even expulsion. The emphasis on difference between the communities serves to minimise the difference within them, and during the 'troubles' internal solidarity was strengthened by the fear of invasion and attack from outside. The disadvantages of the urban *Gemeinschaft* are many: claustrophobia; the feeling that one is living in an 'urban prison'; fear of leaving the district in case of attack; and an almost 'congenital inability' to communicate across the religious boundaries as each community engages in a dialogue with itself (ibid.: 67, 92).

Sectarian intimidation at the beginning of the 'troubles' led to the flight of Catholics from Protestant districts and vice-versa, resulting in the creation of many working-class enclaves populated solely by members of one ethnic group. The 1991 Northern Ireland census revealed that fewer than 7% of the population lived in council wards with roughly equal numbers of Protestants and Catholics (McKittrick 1994: 40) In thirty-five out of Belfast's fifty-one wards the inhabitants were almost all members of one religious grouping (ibid.: 41).

¹⁶ Burton describes life in a Catholic district in his work. I am not claiming that Protestant and Catholic *Gemeinschaften* share the same characteristics; for example, far more Catholics have been subjected to harassment by the British army than Protestants. I am suggesting that features such as mechanisms of social control and fear of strangers can be found in both Catholic and Protestant working-class districts.

Many districts became dangerous territory for members of the opposite religion; the transgression of territorial boundaries is likened to a form of contamination by Feldman:

The entire symbology of purity and impurity which impregnated the polarities of ethnicity received a reifying substantiation in the inside/outside division of social space (Feldman 1991: 35).

Protestants relate the territorial insecurity of their local communities to fears of the de-Protestantisation of Northern Ireland as a whole (see map in Appendix Two); young working-class Protestants are turning to loyalist street-politics on account of high unemployment and a sense of pressure from neighbouring Catholic areas (Ruane and Todd 1996: 61). Working-class Protestants feel that they are losing the battle to control the religious make-up of disputed districts. McKittrick summarises the changing religious map of Northern Ireland as follows. Protestants are leaving the south and west of Northern Ireland, or pulling back into 'fortress towns' such as Banbridge. They have largely abandoned the centre of Londonderry, Northern Ireland's second city, and moved to the east bank or further away, to the town of Limavady. In Belfast there is a steady movement away from the north of the city to the outlying towns of Newtownabbey and Carrickfergus. The west of Belfast has traditionally been the home of most of the city's Catholics. The Protestant population is dwindling in the southern area of the city, leaving only east Belfast and the adjacent north Down as Protestant strongholds (ibid.). The small Protestant enclaves that have been left behind have become increasingly introverted and insecure (Holloway 1994). Even in east Belfast, working-class Protestants fear the overall de-Protestantisation of Belfast (McAuley 1994: 129-30).

The centre of Belfast is regarded as more or less neutral as it is composed of business, commercial, and entertainment premises, and is not residential; both Catholics and Protestants avail of the facilities in this district. Parts of the south of the city are also regarded as neutral as they have large 'mobile' populations (most of the city's students live here), and many residents wish to live in a religiously 'mixed' area.

The micro-level communal insecurities of Protestants can be related to their perceived position in Ireland and the United Kingdom. Although Protestants feel that they comprise the majority in Northern Ireland, they are a minority in Ireland as a whole. Furthermore, Northern Ireland's Protestants are a minority in the United Kingdom. Therefore they feel that they are vulnerable twice over, for they believe the Irish majority to be hostile, and the British majority to be unreliable friends (White 1991: 101).

While tensions between Catholic and Protestant urban districts are often very high, shared community identities and work activities provide Protestants and Catholics in many parts of rural Northern Ireland with a means to overcome macro-level religious and political divisions. Anthropology in Ireland has provided ample evidence of peaceful co-existence between Catholics and Protestants, particularly in rural areas. Harris' study of a small rural community reveals a common culture of shared work, communal identity, egalitarianism,

neighbourliness, farming skills, and modesty (Harris 1986: 121-131). Leyton cites integrating factors such as descent from common ancestors, common humanity, regional identity, shared notions of kinship and class, and overlapping membership of voluntary associations (Leyton 1974: 194-7). Much of the evidence regarding integrating forces in Northern Ireland is derived from rural studies and reflects a *modus vivendi* which has arisen from the close geographical proximity between Catholics and Protestants; however segregation in urban areas is more pronounced, especially since the outbreak of the 'troubles' (Donnan and McFarlane 1983: 133). This urban/rural dichotomy is partly reflected in rural attitudes to sectarian violence, which is blamed on 'outsiders' or 'hotheads' (McFarlane 1986: 192-3). It has been demonstrated that in certain situations people in Northern Ireland undercommunicate their national and ethnic identities, preferring others based on concepts of community that facilitate interaction across the religious and political divide.

The Protestant Middle Class

Culture and Ideology

Like their working-class counterparts, middle-class Protestants have not been encouraged to read or write imaginative literature; Protestant intellectual activities were channelled into theology, law, history, medicine and science (Lyons 1979: 130). Today there are a small number of Protestant writers, although they are relatively few in number, and are sometimes hailed as exemplars for the Protestant community as a whole.

Middle-class Protestants are more likely to define themselves as 'British' in larger numbers than their working-class counterparts. They see the constitutional link with Britain, not Protestant religiosity, as the mainstay of individual freedom; they claim that British institutions embody freedom, individual liberties, democracy and justice, whereas the Irish state and nationalism seek to impose uniformity (Todd 1987: 18-19). Therefore to oppose Britishness is to oppose democracy and freedom. British identifiers have a sense of the benignness and naturalness of British institutions, symbols, citizenship, material culture and standards of living. They watch British television, read British newspapers, and feel themselves to be provincial if they do not know what is happening in London. They perceive the British presence in Northern Ireland to be benign and progressive, as demonstrated by new roads, hospitals, schools and industry (Todd 1988: 12).

State ritual is central to the reproduction of the British identity; Poppy days, the national anthem, the flag, royal walkabouts, and the conferment of OBE's, MBE's and other honours (Todd 1987: 15). Many middle-class Protestants have little time for the Orange Order, which they may treat with condescending amusement or disdain (Harris 1986: 166-197; Todd 1987: 19)¹⁷. They feel that a knowledge of English culture, history and public

¹⁷ In my experience many middle-class unionists prefer to leave Northern Ireland during the annual Twelfth of July demonstrations.

affairs is essential for a civilised person. Todd claims that they regard the Irish language, literature and history as obscurantist and insular; 'There is no understanding of the value of preserving the Irish language and little interest in historical traditions or Gaelic games' (ibid.).

Unionist intellectuals claim that they have no need for nationalism, which involves a totalising way of life. They explain their form of unionism as a rational political ideal, within which there is scope for a broad range of cultural and national affiliations, particularly since Britain is such a multicultural country. John Wilson Foster counterpoises Ireland's form of 'German romantic nationalism' with 'secular, pluralist British culture' (1995a: 60). Arthur Aughey decries the uniformity of the Irish nation-state, opting for a political allegiance that allows any expression of cultural values that one likes (Aughey 1989: 17). These views reflect the tendency in contemporary Western society to positively evaluate pluralism and reject authoritarian or mono-cultural discourses; they are also reminiscent of the contempt civic nationalists have for ethnic ones.

Middle-class Protestants have a wide variety of cultural affiliations, perhaps a little more than Todd would allow for. At one end of the spectrum, integrationists may register a distaste for the 'parochial self-indulgence' of local cultural pursuits (Aughey 1989: 28). However, some unionist intellectuals express an attachment for a 'non-political Irishness' (Kennedy 1995: 35) or an 'Irish cultural heritage... shared by everyone in Northern Ireland regardless of politics' (Cadogan Group 1992: 14). Even Arthur Aughey, the champion of integrationism, recommends the learning of Irish as a means to cultural enrichment in a recent work (1995: 15). Other commentators have noticed a greater willingness to express an Irish cultural identity among young unionists (Gillespie et al. 1992: 165-6; Pollack 1993: 97).

Sectarianism is less prevalent among the Protestant middle-class; in middle-class circles friendships between Protestants and Catholics are common (Larsen 1982a; Todd 1987). Catholic and Protestant interaction is also facilitated in middle-class circles which have been 'shielded from the ugliness of communal violence' (Todd 1987: 17). However, social etiquette forbids the discussing of contentious political or religious issues, except in situations in which inter-community conflict is the explicit subject of dialogue (Larsen 1982a; Harris 1986)

The 'other' for middle-class Protestants are those who oppose their liberal orientation, and are consequently defined as intolerant, backward-looking and parochial. These include working-classes Protestants, who are stigmatised as Orange bigots (Harris 1986: 101,167). Constitutional nationalists may be perceived to have some good qualities, but they are distrusted (Todd 1987: 22). Middle-class Protestants are slow to recognise nationalist complaints about discrimination and repression. Such claims are ignored or dismissed as they would challenge the British claim to impartiality and fair play (ibid.).

Work

Middle class Protestants have benefited materially from British economic policy in Northern Ireland. They have been employed in the growing service and public sectors, for example in security-related occupations, as a consequence of the rapid growth in public administration and counter insurgency measures after 1972. Therefore, for economic reasons they have become even more drawn into the mainstream of British life in recent years (Coulter 1994: 19). The British subvention of the Northern Ireland economy has created a 'dependency culture' where private enterprise is weak (McKittrick 1994: 47).

Shirlow and McGovern claim that development of fair-employment legislation has underpinned non-sectarian middle-class solidarity by increasing Protestant and Catholic interaction in the workplace (Shirlow and McGovern 1995: 17). Middle-class Protestants may avoid competition for work in Northern Ireland by seeking employment on the British 'mainland'. Many Protestants apply to study for degree courses in Great Britain, pursue careers there when they graduate, and never return to Northern Ireland. Others leave for work in Britain when they have completed degrees in Northern Ireland, thus contributing to an overall Protestant 'brain-drain' (Dunn and Morgan 1994: 19; O'Dowd 1991: 168).

Community

Members of the Protestant middle class have fewer affiliations based on physical continuity, and are less likely to develop local loyalties and dense patterns of interaction characteristic of small communities (Milroy 1987: 16). They do not experience the same pressures of family and local community. They live apart from their working-class co-religionists in areas in which they may never speak to their neighbours and may socialise widely outside their home area. They may also live far away from their places of work, driving to them by car if necessary. Catholic and Protestant members of the middle-class may find they have more in common with one another than they have with their working class co-religionists. A study by the social geographer Fred Boal (1971) in two contiguous areas of south Belfast reveals the influence of class in constraining intra-group interaction. While both areas are predominantly Protestant they differ in terms of their socio-economic compositions. The residents socialise apart from one another, send their children to different schools and attend separate churches, even if they are members of the same denomination.

Protestants and Catholics acknowledge an identification with those with whom they share a common class position (Moxon-Browne 1991: 26). Divisions on the basis of class are pronounced partly because in Northern Ireland the middle-classes prefer to live as far removed as possible from areas of inter-communal conflict. As such middle-class Catholics and Protestants often prefer to live with one another in peaceful suburbs than with their co-religionists in troubled areas. Although the middle class in Northern Ireland is divided in terms of national aspirations and religious ascription, it is broadly united in its opposition to

the use of political violence, which overcomes the nationalist/unionist divide to a greater or lesser extent.

Middle-class Protestants share the fears of their working-class counterparts about the rise of the Catholic population; for example, they are abandoning the north, south and west of Belfast to live in the east of the city (McKittrick 1994: 42). However, they live in areas which are relatively peaceful, and have the means to leave these areas for others if they wish.

Avoidance, Stereotyping, and 'Telling'

Protestant-Catholic interaction in Northern Ireland often takes place in an atmosphere of studied politeness. Protestants and Catholics maintain their own institutions, and can limit contact across religious boundaries as much as possible. This segregation can be lauded as necessary and desirable (Harris 1986: 200). Parents are concerned that their children should be socialised in environments which are ethnically 'closed', as they fear mixed marriages resulting from Protestant and Catholic children playing together (Harris 1986: 143, 171). Marriages between Protestants and Catholics are discouraged, even forbidden (Buckley and Kenney 1995: 5-6). However, Catholics and Protestants often find that they have to work together. Some liberals believe that greater contact between the two communities will have the effect of decreasing the tensions between them. The desire for more integration to prevent inter-communal conflict is matched by a fear of absorption by the other side (*ibid.*: 218). Thus fears of pollution and contamination militate against inter-ethnic communication in Northern Ireland.

While Protestants and Catholics often work together and live in the same districts in Northern Ireland, they tend to feel more at ease in the company of their co-religionists (Harris 1986: 148). Etiquette governing rules of interaction between Protestants and Catholics prohibits the discussion of controversial topics (Harris 1986: 146-8; Larsen 1982a, 1982b). These pertain to matters of religious and political belief, although apparently 'neutral' topics of conversation can lead to the 'forbidden subjects'; for example, Harris states that there is a Protestant and a Catholic opinion on any item of world politics (Harris 1986: 147). The result is that Protestants and Catholics can have close and friendly contacts in some contexts, but can manage to remain completely ignorant of one another's beliefs (*ibid.*: 146).

The result can be an outward appearance of unanimity and tolerance in 'polite' conversation; sectarian opinions are voiced in ethnically closed situations (Larsen 1982a). In the words of Steve Bruce:

In Northern Ireland more than in many places, there are two languages spoken. There is what you say in public and in 'mixed' company and there is what you say in private, among your own people. In public, you make the moderate and guarded statements about 'people round here have always worked together and there has never been any trouble'. In private, you express the hurt and the hatred. (Bruce 1994a: vii)

This process encourages the perpetuation of mutual stereotyping, which include elements of religious dogma, supposed racial characteristics and other social observations. Catholic stereotypes of Protestants include beliefs of Protestant money-grabbing, narrow-mindedness, bigotry and lack of culture (Harris 138, 151-152; Donnan and McFarlane 1986: 306). Catholics contrast Protestant bigotry, narrow-mindedness, discrimination and money-centredness with their own tolerance and openness (Buckley and Kenney 1995: 136)¹⁸. Protestants stereotypes of Catholics include beliefs that they are superstitious, scruffy, treacherous, lazy, priest-dominated, Sabbath-breaking, and that they 'sponge off' the Northern state, yet irrationally wish for a united Ireland, even if it were economically disadvantageous for them (Harris 1986: 136, 153, 173-177).

Mutual stereotyping is related to the process which Burton refers to as 'telling'. Telling is 'the pattern of signs and cues by which religious ascription is arrived at in the everyday interactions of Protestants and Catholics' (Burton 1978: 37). It is based upon the social significance attached to name, face and dress, area of residence, school attended, colour, linguistic symbolism, and possibly phonetic use. For example, male Christian names which are Irish, such as Liam or Sean, are likely to be Catholic, as are the names of saints (Burton 1978: 50; Jenkins 1986a: 8). Scottish and English surnames, such as Maxwell and Craig, are likely to be Protestant (Burton 1978: 51)¹⁹. Certain ejaculations, such as 'holy Mother' and 'Jesus, Mary and Joseph' would be used by Catholics but not by Protestants (ibid.: 60).

Religious or quasi-religious medallions often betray the religion of the wearer; in Northern Ireland someone wearing a crucifix would be assumed to be a Catholic. A Catholic would be unlikely to wear clothes (or football scarves) that are coloured red, white, and blue (the colours of the British flag), whereas Protestants are unlikely to be seen in the colours green, white and orange (the colours of the Irish Republic's flag). Catholics are stereotyped as being more informal and 'scruffier' in appearance than their Protestant counterparts (Burton 1978: 53).

Certain pronunciations and the use of various words may reveal the religious identity of the speaker. Catholics usually pronounce *a* as 'ah' and *h* as 'haitch', whereas Protestants say 'ay' and 'aitch'. I have explained how territorial identifications are associated with one politico-religious group or the other; thus a Protestant would be unlikely to refer to Northern Ireland as 'the six counties' or the 'North of Ireland'. Catholics are likely to be able to recite the '*Hail Mary*', and one would be ill-advised to venture into a Protestant working-class district without knowing at least a few verses of '*The Sash my Father Wore*', a popular Orange song.

¹⁸ Many of these stereotypes derive from Presbyterian religious beliefs, which forbade the use of drink, cigarettes, and any work or amusement on a Sunday (Buckley and Kenney 1995: 136)

¹⁹ During an Irish language class on the staunchly Catholic Falls Road, the teacher nearly fainted with surprise when he heard my forename was 'Gordon'. I have become aware that my name sounds very Protestant to a Catholic, although Protestants tend to believe it sounds faintly Scottish, and has little to do with ethnic identification. On the other hand, I have discovered that Protestants believe 'McCoy' to be likely to be a Catholic name, whereas Catholics are not so sure. Therefore, Catholics are certain that I am a Protestant on account of my forename, and Protestants may suspect me of being a Catholic on account of my surname!

The educational, residential, and cultural separation of Protestants and Catholics facilitate the process of 'telling'. Schools are so ethnically divided that employers required to implement fair employment legislation will often require potential employees to indicate the primary school they attended on their equal opportunities monitoring form. Cultural divides appear during and after school hours; Catholic boys learn to play hurley and Gaelic football, whereas Protestant ones learn cricket and rugby. Therefore, a Protestant is not likely to be seen carrying a hurley stick, or a Catholic wielding a cricket bat. The organisations associated with such sports are also ethnically divided. Although soccer is played by both Catholics and Protestants, some teams, especially those based in Belfast, are associated with one religious faction. Therefore the questions 'What school did you go to?' and 'What team do you support' are 'loaded', in that the answer may reveal the religious affiliation of the person addressed.

Telling underpins the ideology of sectarianism. Telling is used to discriminate in terms of jobs and housing, and operates as a 'sectarian litmus test' to detect targets for assassination (Burton 1978: 65). Individuals are adept at 'secularizing their social presentations' by suppressing the characteristics that identity them as Protestants or Catholics. This is especially important when a Catholic ventures into Protestant territory and vice-versa; Burton mentions how Catholic children are given Protestant names to improve their employment prospects, and how Liam, a Catholic, became 'Billy' when working for an almost totally Protestant firm (ibid.: 50, 65).

Telling is used in adversarial social situations to detect a potential enemy, but it is a necessary social skill to avoid a potential *faux pas* in social situations (ibid.: 64). Thus a question such as 'What is he?' is not in itself an expression of religious prejudice, but indicates 'the necessities of social interaction' in Northern Ireland (Harris 1986: 148). Within an atmosphere of danger, telling is used to create personal and local pools of trust and predictability; 'What territory provides in physical terms by minimizing the likelihood of mixed social interaction, telling partially achieves outside of the comparatively restrictive areas. In this sense telling constitutes mental bricks and mortar' (Burton 1978: 66).

Protestant Nationality in Northern Ireland

In this section I will discuss the national and/or nationalist identities of Northern Protestants. Academics are divided as to whether Northern Protestants constitute a nation, part of a nation, or an ethnic group, but Protestants do express Ulster, Irish or British national affiliations that embody distinctive ideological viewpoints.²⁰ I will argue that national affiliations play a key part in the ideology of Northern Protestants.

²⁰ See Gallagher (1995) for a summary of the issues involved.

Academics are divided as to what is the most important aspect of Protestant ethnicity. Steve Bruce maintains that the core of this ethnicity is evangelical Protestantism, and attributes the appeal of the Democratic Unionist Party to the fundamentalist beliefs of its leader, the Reverend Ian Paisley (Bruce 1986: 256-263). McAuley attributes the support of the DUP to their staunch defence of the Union, and their articulation of Protestant working-class interests (McAuley 1994: 58, 79). McAuley defines four elements of Protestant working-class ideology: national identity (which is difficult to define), community identity, sectarianism and class identity (1994: 175). In later talks on the subject, he has developed an ideological hierarchy of the Protestant working-class:

National Identity
Ethnic Identity
Sectarianism
Community
Class
Gender

I agree with McAuley that national identity is of great importance to Protestant working-class ideology. I would extend this paradigm to Protestant middle-class ideology as well; national identity would probably be of greater importance to middle-class Protestants, as they are more secular in outlook. In terms of unionist ideology, nationality can be perceived to be an expressed national affiliation which expresses an opposition to a united Ireland; it can either be expressed as a desire to maintain Northern Ireland's links with the United Kingdom, or a wish to establish an independent Northern Ireland. Considering the predominance of national identity in McAuley's ideological hierarchy, I argue that 'national' identity is a key element of Protestant *symbolic capital*. This is the term used by Pierre Bourdieu to describe the accumulation and use of authority, prestige, and respect in the exercise of socio-cultural power (Bourdieu 1977). Loyalists who have been interned or imprisoned have proven their loyalty to Ulster's cause, and thus have the maximum symbolic capital. They can be more conciliatory in their attitudes than others whose loyalty has not been proven to be beyond reproach (Nelson 1984: 177).

I am reluctant to identify nationality as *the* key aspect of Protestant ideology; clearly religious identity is of central importance also. It would be interesting to discover whether working-class Protestants would prefer a fundamentalist preacher who was an Irish nationalist (thus having a symbolic 'profit' in terms of religious or ethnic allegiance, but a 'deficit' in terms of nationality) to a Catholic with a strong commitment to the Union (who would have a religious 'deficit', but a 'profit' in terms of nationality).

The Complexity of Protestant National Identity

For many Protestants, national identity is situational and complex (Waddell and Cairns 1986). Aughey and Nelson claim that even working-class Protestants can feel Irish at times (Nelson 1984: 12; Aughey 1989: 16-17). A Protestant may feel Irish on holiday in Donegal, British on Remembrance Day, and subscribe to an Ulster identity when she/he feels that the British government has failed him/her. Protestant unionist identity can also have an adversarial context; if a nationalist describes a unionist as 'Irish', the latter may stress his/her British identity to counter the implication that he/she should also be a nationalist²¹. If a nationalist describes a unionist as British, he may imply that he/she is merely a colonist who has no right to live in Ireland; thus the unionist may assert an indigenous identity in reply. Protestants who would not usually describe themselves as Irish may do so in response to anti-Irish racism (Sales 1995: 7). Categories such as 'Britishness' are so ambiguous that individual unionists may endow them with their own meanings; a unionist might say that the Orange Order expresses his/her British identity, though 'other' British people might find the Order to be a peculiarly 'Irish' phenomenon.

I have established that Protestant national identity is situational. It is with this in mind that I now come to establish what the main aspects of Protestant national identity are.

Ulster: National and Regional Identities

The articulation of an Ulster national identity is one which is unambiguously opposed to the concept of a united Ireland. It is proto-nationalist in form, as many Ulster identifiers are content with the constitutional link with Westminster, but maintain that they would continue to oppose a united Ireland in the event of a British withdrawal from Northern Ireland. Unionists often equate the six counties of Northern Ireland with Ulster, represented in titles and usages such as 'The Royal Ulster Constabulary' and 'The Ulster Year Book', the official statistical publication of Northern Ireland (Ó Huallacháin 1994: 39). The unionist usage of the term retains the idea of an inviolable territory, that of Protestant Ulster (MacDonagh 1992: 22, 26).

Todd's 'Ulster loyalist' ideology has as its primary imagined community Northern Protestants, while there is a secondary identification with Britain (Todd 1987: 3). These Protestants are loyal citizens, but their loyalty to the British state is conditional, being dependent upon a reciprocity of loyalty from Westminster (ibid.: 5). Other commentators notice a pronounced attraction to an Ulster national identity among working-class Protestants (Moxon-Browne 1991: 27; Gillespie et al. 1992: 163). Moxon-Browne explains this in terms of disillusionment with English policy in Northern Ireland (1991: 28). Bell attributes the Ulster identity to 'its aggressive assertion of Protestant self-reliance and identification' (1990;

²¹ Thus when republicans use the slogan 'Brits Out', referring to the British administration, unionists assert that they are 'Brits', and claim that republicans want to drive them out as well (Hall 1993a: 36; Shankill Think Tank 1995: 6, 11). Republicans counter this by claiming that both they and the British administration regard Northern Protestants as Irish.

160). Bruce offers a very pragmatic reason for the Ulster identity; while middle-class professional Protestants have skills that are easily transferable to Great Britain, the working-classes, small farmers and small businessmen have nowhere else to go. Even if they contemplate moving to Great Britain, they fear they will be perceived as 'humourless bigots' or 'Paddies' (Bruce 1994a: 72).

Protestants who ascribe to an Ulster identity have difficulty in translating this affiliation into fully-fledged nationalist aspirations. Partition created a Protestant majority in Northern Ireland, but in recent years there is a growing awareness that the Catholic population is rising, and may even outnumber the Protestant population in years to come. Protestants face the prospect of being hemmed into the north-east by a Catholic majority (Holloway 1994: 11).

Ulster nationalists are divided between those who believe that an Ulster identity can incorporate Northern Catholics, and those whose nationalism is an exclusive Protestant one. Those who believe that Catholics are part of the Ulster nation are troubled by the fact that no Catholics would countenance an independent Ulster. Protestant exclusivists face the prospect of identifying with an Ulster that could be much smaller than the present Northern Ireland, thus threatening its territorial and economic viability. Furthermore all Ulster nationalists realise that the Protestant middle class rejects independence, and that the working class does not have the self-confidence to rule the proposed state (Miller 1978: 163; Nelson 1984: 199). Gallagher even claims that middle-class Protestants would prefer to live in a pluralist outward-looking united Ireland, rather than an intolerant Ulster state, dominated by Orangeism and fundamentalist Protestantism (Gallagher 1995: 734). Given the problems of Ulster nationalism, loyalists have great difficulty in providing a physical referent for their defined imagined community (Bell 1990: 22; Todd 1987: 6). Thus Ulster nationalism is 'a reluctant, matter-of-fact nationalism, perhaps a nationalism of despair'. (Miller 1978: 154). For most working-class Protestants an independent Ulster is preferable to a united Ireland, but not to the maintenance of the union with Great Britain.

Many 'Ulster' Protestants dislike the English for their patronising and 'snobby' attitude towards them (Nelson 1984: 51-52; Harris 1986: 188; Todd 1987: 20). Many working-class Protestants feel greater kinship with Scotland, their imputed ancestral homeland, in which they believe their political views are received in a more sympathetic manner than in England (Bruce 1992: 153-154). This tendency would be especially felt by Presbyterians, who regard Scotland as a stronghold of their religious denomination.

Working-class Protestants are more likely to view Ulster in proto-nationalist terms than middle-class ones. The latter often subscribe to a British national identity, but they can express an attachment to Ulster (Todd 1987: 16). They can feel a love of place and a pride in regional distinctiveness, whether of landscape, sport, education, food, or patterns of social interaction. Todd gives as an example the love of the informality of social interaction, shared with working-class Protestants, which serves to distinguish the two groups from the more distant English (ibid.: 16). I interpret this phenomenon in terms of a regional, rather than a national(ist) identity.

Britain

From a unionist point of view, Ireland appears to be a severed part of a single broken land mass 'the British Isles', a sort of 'occidental Japan' (MacDonagh 1992: 31). Unionist historians claim that the Irish Sea and North Channel facilitated rather than hindered traffic between the two islands, which resulted in the people of Britain and Ireland having the same blend of racial origins (MacDonagh 1992: 31-2; McGarry and O'Leary 1995: 101-2). According to Todd, the attachment to Britain is strongest among middle-class Protestants; Great Britain is their imagined community, although there is a secondary identification with Northern Ireland (Todd 1987: 11). The sense of British identity is essentially bound up with being British subjects. Northern Ireland is seen as part of the British political system, national health service, educational structures, legal system, system of labour relations, media, communications and information networks, and financial, industrial and regional economic structures (Todd 1988: 12). Those adhering to a British identity have career paths that lead some of them to seek employment in Great Britain.

Working-class Protestants may derive pride from a British identity. They appreciate the benefits of British social policy in Northern Ireland, such as cheap medical care. They may also experience a sense of pride from aspects of Britishness, such as 'the democratic ideals, the great institutions, the culture, the English language, the world-wide renown and prestige, the Empire, the monarchy' (Hall 1994: 11). Although adherents of an Ulster identity tend to be working-class, not all working-class Protestants subscribe to this identity; at times a sense of Britishness may be more attractive. The British affiliation is the most popular among Northern Ireland Protestants; in a 1989 survey 68% subscribed to this identity (Moxon-Browne 1991: 25).

The British identity of unionists is problematic since the majority of people on the 'mainland' regard them as Irish (Gallagher 1995: 722). For British politicians, unionists' identity as British is questionable, since their attitude to Catholics often lacks the traditional British virtues of tolerance and fair play (Ruane and Todd 1996: 193). Furthermore, in recent years Westminster has demonstrated an increasing acceptance of the nationalist position, especially since the Anglo-Irish Agreement. The qualities of Britishness have not been defined by the British themselves, therefore unionists have no coherent way to articulate their British identities in ways that would be accepted as valid on the 'mainland'. Furthermore, many people, including the 'mainland' British themselves, equate Britishness with Englishness. Many Northern Irish Protestants dislike the English, stereotyping them as stuffy, class-conscious and pompous (Harris 1986: 188). These stereotypes reflect a regional rivalry as far as unionists are concerned, although nationalists may draw upon them to attenuate their separatist beliefs.

Before the partition of Ireland many Protestants subscribed to an Irish identity, which expressed a love of place and/or an anti-British identity. Since partition, and especially since the beginning of the 'troubles', many unionists have become reluctant to express an Irish identity, as they associate Irishness with nationalism. Whereas 20% of Protestants described themselves as Irish in 1968, only 3% were Irish identifiers in 1989 (Moxon-Browne 1991: 25).

Unionists also associate a sense of Irishness with the Irish Republic, which has become a negative reference point for many of them. For secular Protestants, freedom not to live in a united Ireland implies the wish to live in a secular state, not one dominated by religious values, which they perceive the Irish Republic to be. Unionists believe the Irish Republic to be an authoritarian state, characterised by:

physical hostility to Protestants and a wish to remove them by force or by the marriage laws; *cultural separateness* from Protestants (Gaelic, Catholic, anti-British); *political designs* on Northern Protestants ('the takeover'); *economic* impoverishment; *religious dominance* over political life ('Home rule is Rome rule') (Nelson 1984: 31).

Unionist writers paint a bleak picture of life in the Republic, which they portray as a confessional state with a weak economy, still self-absorbed with its Gaelic past (Aughey 1989: 7, 14; Coulter 1994: 7). Unionist hostility to the Irish Republic has increased since 1969, as it is believed to tolerate IRA military training, and to be reluctant to extradite suspected republican paramilitaries to the UK for interrogation.

However, some unionists are not so hostile to the 'South'. Some regard it as a foreign country, but are happy to have business dealings there, and would countenance taking holidays south of the border. They may recognise the positive features of Southern society, but lack a sense of identification with it (Ruane and Todd 1996: 258).

Nevertheless, unionists occasionally express a sense of Irishness (albeit a vague and ill-defined one) in cultural or geographical terms; this is particularly true of the middle-classes. They may articulate Irish identities by supporting the Irish rugby team or Irish athletes at the Olympic games. They will also take holidays in Donegal and Dublin, thereby familiarising themselves with other parts of Ireland (Todd 1987: 16). Furthermore, some unionists have discovered that their views are more welcome in the Irish Republic than among Northern nationalists. Unionist intellectuals often favour the expression of an Irish identity that is compatible with a British one (e.g.s Foster 1995; Aughey 1989).

The Protestant Identity Crisis

Commentators often talk about the 'siege mentality' and 'identity crisis' of Northern Ireland's Protestants. Many Protestants have suffered a loss of confidence as a result of the decline of the Northern Irish economy. There has also been a growing sense of alienation from Westminster, coupled with a fear of upsurge of Northern nationalism. Unionist fears increased in 1985 when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, which gave Dublin a consultative role in the affairs of Northern Ireland. The growing influence of Dublin on British government policy was blamed for: the pressure to redistribute resources from Protestant to Catholic areas; fair-employment legislation, requiring employers to redress discrimination against workers or potential employees on the basis of religious affiliation; the re-routing of Orange parades away from Catholic areas; and heavy-handed attitudes of the RUC towards Protestants suspected of paramilitary involvement (Bruce 1994: 68). Many of these measures affected working-class Protestants in particular.

Protestants' conceptions of themselves as superior to Catholics have been severely challenged since the 1960s. The loss of economic and territorial integrity, attitude to state policy, and loss of ethnic certitude have resulted in unionist physical and psychological retreat. According to Steve Bruce:

... it is hard to see the recent past as anything other than a decline from security to precariousness, from domination to impotence, from potentate to pariah, and from heroic defenders of the British Empire to an international embarrassment (1994: 40).

Unionists occasionally draw on sectarian forms of speech, leading to media conceptions of them as bigoted and intransigent, resulting in feelings of shame (Hall 1994: 22). Thus some unionists mix anti-Catholic rhetoric with a sense of shame derived from a knowledge that it condemns them in the eyes of British and international opinion. Furthermore, many unionists feel inferior to nationalists in terms of political and verbal skills, and the greater capacity Catholics have for independent social and political action (Nelson 1984: 13; Bruce 1994: 62). Catholics succeeded in claiming the moral high ground in the Northern conflict, and have tapped into international forms of civil and human rights with an ease that unionists lack. Nationalists have forged alliances in Irish America, the European Union, the Southern government, and the British Labour party, whereas the unionist case has gained few sympathetic ears outside Ireland (Ruane and Todd 1996: 142).

For many middle-class Protestants the term 'unionist' has a negative resonance, and active involvement in unionist politics is eschewed (Foster 1995a: 59). Foster compares the open espousal of nationalism by many intellectuals and teachers in comparison to the 'closet pro-union teachers and academics', the 'victims of induced guilt and political correctness' (1995a: 59, 1995b: 71). Many middle-class unionists are politically apathetic or are reticent to argue their case, feeling they may be stereotyped as blinkered bigots. Despite countervailing forces there has been an upsurge in unionist intellectual activity since the Anglo-Irish

Agreement, which has contributed towards a greater defining (and in many cases prescribing) of a unionist identity that would be attractive to the Protestant middle-class (Coulter 1994: 18-19).

The anxieties unionists had concerning the growing influence of nationalism are echoed in their attitudes to the resurgence of Irish cultural nationalism. Many aspects of unionist British allegiances can be described as part of unionist culture in the anthropological sense of the word, but they are not what constitutes current folk concepts of 'culture'. Unionists cannot romanticise the excellent condition of Northern Ireland's roads and the good quality programmes on British television. Furthermore, secularism has eroded the attraction of scriptural culture for many Protestants. All in all, many unionists believe that nationalists seem to have much more cultural capital than they do. They feel that their culture and ethnic identity lacks a coherence that 'no amount of political posturing and flag-waving' can hide (Bell 1990: 22). Northern Catholics perceive their Protestant neighbours to be 'intellectual philistines' that have no culture (Harris 1986: 151)²². Protestants have internalised these opinions, and are perturbed by assertions that they have no culture and are not creative (CDPA 1991: 17, 24).

In political debate in Northern Ireland, a sense of history is important to the ethnic certainty of both unionists and nationalists. Many unionists have little sense of their own history as state schools have traditionally preferred teaching English history rather than Irish history (McAuley 1994: 94; Bell 1990: 208). Some even believed that Protestants came to Northern Ireland shortly before World War One (McAuley 1994: 94)²³

Some Protestants believe that Irish history was written by nationalists, who distorted the truth (Gillespie et al. 1992: 165). They resent the use of history by nationalists as a weapon against them (Pollack 1993: 97). Some opt out of historical debate by claiming that it is unfair to invoke 'sins of the past' (Hall 1993a: 26). They say that nationalists should let bygones be bygones, as it is unhelpful to nurture historical grievances in the present conflict (Haslett 1995; Buckley 1989: 187). However, these devices cannot conceal the fact that many Protestants feel insecure as they are largely unaware of their history. Unionists are unsure how to respond to nationalist jibes that they are mere interlopers in Ireland. Many unionists, particularly working-class ones, feel history-less, culture-less and un-intellectual in comparison with their nationalist opponents.

²² A letter-writer in a nationalist newspaper recommended that 'culturally-challenged Orangemen should copy the drinkers who set up the Campaign for Real Ale and instead of squandering their energies invading Catholic neighbourhoods should use them to build a Campaign for a Real Culture' (*Andersonstown News* 20 July 1996, p.16).

²³ In recent years courses in Irish history have been introduced in state-controlled schools in Northern Ireland. Therefore, younger Protestants have greater access to historical material than their elders. However, many schools are reluctant to address contentious issues, such as life in the province during the Stormont era or the outbreak of the 'troubles'. Young Protestants rely more on folk myths to provide information on what is to them more relevant and interesting.

CHAPTER THREE

Language and Nation in Ireland, 1100-1969

In this chapter I will draw on secondary sources to present the history of the Irish language until the 1980s revival of the language in Northern Ireland. I will demonstrate how both Catholics and Protestants represented the language in various ways over the centuries²⁴. This chapter will also introduce some of the discourses on the Irish language that are still current in Irish cultural politics.

The Conquest of Ireland

Before the Tudor conquest of Ireland, the island was almost entirely Irish-speaking, with isolated settlements of English-speakers, concentrated mostly in coastal areas. The Norman conquest of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries introduced a French-speaking nobility and their English-speaking retainers. Outside the Dublin area they were assimilated to the Gaelic ruling class, becoming monolingual in Irish in the process.

In Dublin the Normans gradually abandoned French for Irish and English, which became the language of law and administration in the city. However, the establishment became concerned by the hibernicisation of the Old English, as the Normans were now referred to, and in 1366 the Kilkenny parliament attempted to introduce a measure of linguistic apartheid, accusing the colonists of living 'according to the manners, fashion and language of the Irish enemies' and requiring 'all Englishmen, and the Irish living among them' to speak the English language' (Ó Fiaich 1969: 102).

The very act of speaking Irish was associated with disloyalty to the English presence in Ireland. When Henry VIII was declared king of Ireland in 1541, he demanded that all his Irish subjects speak English (Leerssen 1986: 39-41). Such edicts had little effect beyond the Dublin area and a few outlying districts. Following the Reformation, loyalty to the king entailed not only the speaking of English, but the abandonment of Catholicism for the Anglican Church. Language and religion were equated in the 1537 Act for the English Order, Habit and Language, which commanded the Church of Ireland to 'preach the word of God in English' (Clarke 1994: 82).

The Plantation accelerated the process of cultural colonialism and Anglicisation. Native chiefs who accepted the new order were required to acquaint their children with the English language and customs. Many of the colonists equated the Irish language with anti-British sentiments; Edmund Spenser wrote, 'The speech being Irish, the heart must needs be Irish' (Crowley 1996: 102). Swift equated the eradication of the Irish language with the

²⁴ Before the nineteenth century the term 'Protestant' referred only to Anglicans; Presbyterians were referred to as 'Dissenters'. In this chapter I will use the contemporary meaning of the term, which refers to all Christians who accept the principles of the Reformation. Although there were political divisions between Presbyterians and Anglicans before the nineteenth century, they were united on many theological issues. Thus the term 'Protestant' is used in this chapter to refer to issues on which Anglicans and Presbyterians were agreed.

advance of civilisation, Protestantism, and English rule in Ireland (ibid.: 103). This view is reminiscent of the Enlightenment view of language, with its equation of the abandonment of 'unrefined' languages with the advance of civilisation. In writing about the Irish language Swift and Spenser revealed their belief in linguistic determinism; this is the view that languages shape the thoughts and world views of their speakers²⁵. Thus Swift argued that sentiments conveyed by the Irish language were opposed to the English administration in the island:

I am deceived if anything has more contributed to prevent the Irish from being tamed than the encouragement of their language, which might easily be abolished and become a dead one, with little expense and trouble (Swift, cited in Crowley 1996:103).

For Swift and his peers Irish was a backward language, which hindered its speakers from reaping the benefits of the advance of civilisation; worse still, it was the harbinger and vehicle of seditious thoughts. Thus, centuries before the advent of German romantic nationalism, we discover the equation of the Irish language with Irish nationality and anti-English sentiments, and the English language with English nationality. Advocates of linguistic determinism equated a knowledge of English with an acceptance of English rule, and the Irish language with anti-English sentiments. This was part of the proto-nationalist ideology of the colonial administration in Ireland. It was also part of a symbolic expansionist contest in which the English colonists were attempting to replace the symbols and ideology of the Irish with their own²⁶.

The Penal Laws did not prescribe measures against the Irish language, for by the eighteenth century Protestant, English-speaking control of the dominant cultural, political and economic institutions was complete; the English language was the only language worth having (ibid.: 103). For many Protestants Irish was a language of backwardness and poverty, and English the language of administration, commerce, advancement and modernity. These attitudes reflected the tendency for European elites to connect their languages with the development of scientific, technological, and bureaucratic cultures; subordinate groups who spoke other languages were 'not engaged in the discussion of ideas, or rather what are thought, by the culture, to be ideas' (Grillo 1989b: 220). The inequality of the Irish was blamed on their racial and linguistic inferiority, rather than their suppression by the English; culture and race, rather than invasion and dispossession, was perceived to be the root cause of the plight of the Irish (cf. Williams 1992: 130). Therefore many Protestants and the English deprecated the Irish language in a valuation contest, by diminishing the worth of the language

²⁵ Linguistic determinism has some respectability in the social sciences. The American linguist and anthropologist, Edward Sapir and his pupil Benjamin Lee Whorf, delineated two principles concerning language: linguistic determinism, which states that language determines the way we think; and linguistic relativity, which states that distinctions encoded in one language do not exist in other languages (Crystal 1993: 15).

²⁶ In an expansionary contest a group tries to displace its competitor's symbols with its own in an attempt to absorb the group into its own socio-political identity (Harrison 1995).

in comparison with that of English²⁷. These attitudes were internalised by many Irish speakers, who were anxious that their children should learn English and abandon the use of Irish. Thus the English language proceeded 'by means of "prestige and active consent", rather than domination by coercion and passive consent' in a manner reminiscent of Gramsci's theory of hegemony (Wills 1993: 82).

After the Plantation, the dying bardic order attempted to combat the denigration of Irish. Before the English conquest of Ireland the Gaelic order conceived of itself in cultural, rather than political terms; bards elegised the military prowess of their chieftains among their rivals (Leerssen 1986: 214). For a number of years following the conquest of Ireland, bardic poetry lamented the old cultural order. Later Irish poetry contained religious and linguistic themes which displayed proto-nationalist overtones. Frequent themes of the poetry included a celebration of the pre-invasion Gaelic order, the assertion that the seventeenth-century confiscations were invalid, and an antagonism to the legal authorities (Garvin 1981: 16-17). Religion, nationality and language were associated in Irish language interpellations: *Sasanach* meant both an Englishman and an Anglican; *Albanach* meant both a Scot and a Presbyterian; a *Gall* (plural form *Gaill*) was simultaneously a foreigner, an English speaker and a Protestant; and a *Gael* was a Catholic, an Irish speaker and an Irishman. Irish poetry contained exhortations to drive out the *Gaill*, or 'speakers of the English language', 'in the name of Mary and Patrick' (Leerssen 1986: 278). On the Continent, Counter-Reformation Gaelic scholars concentrated on theological propaganda, using Irish as a means to oppose the English cause in its Catholic aspects (ibid.: 297). Bardic poetry reversed the colonists' polarity of Irish barbarism and English civilisation; English became the language of the uncouth and bullying landlord, and Irish was described as harmonious and well-wrought (ibid.: 288).

Love poems had hidden political texts; thus the language represented 'a form of complicity, a medium for communication between Gaels but hermetically inaccessible to the outsider' (ibid.: 275). Popular Irish language ballads expressed subversive opinions, while their English language 'translations' expressed impeccably loyal sentiments (Garvin 1981: 17). Thus the Irish language was used to express the resentment of the suppressed Irish, while the English language was used in outward appearances of conformity. James C. Scott (1985, 1990) maintains that in encounters between subordinate and elite groups, the former creates a 'hidden transcript' that represents a secret critique of the uneven distribution of power. Thus subordinate groups appear to conform to dominant values in public, though they conceal resistance within subcultural activities whose meanings seem fairly harmless to the uninitiated; concessions of politeness are always political concessions (Scott 1990: xvii). Thus Irish language ballads were part of the hidden transcript of the Irish natives, and their English versions were part of the public transcript of deference and outward conformity.

As such, Irish bards and poets agreed with the English government on the efficacy of linguistic determinism, as they perceived the Irish language to be a vessel of Catholicism and

²⁷ In a valuation contest, a group attempts to diminish the prestige of the opposing group's symbols, while attempting to raise the status of its own (Harrison 1995).

pro-Irish sentiment. As such, it was desirable that the language should be cultivated. This form of linguistic determinism was connected to early manifestations of the cultural secessionist discourse of the Irish language; Irish was associated with the struggle to free Ireland of British rule. Clerics represented the language as a vehicle of Catholic thought (a form of linguistic determinism). The bards attempted to elevate the prestige of the Irish language by portraying it as an eloquent language that was capable of literary expression. Language, religion and literature were invoked for proto-nationalist purposes in Ireland centuries before the advent of European nationalism.

Despite widespread Protestant indifference and hostility to Irish, some educated Protestants took an interest in the language. This interest had three main sources: proselytism, antiquarianism, and revivalism.

Proselytism

Motivations of Proselytisers

In England and Ireland the monarch was the head of the (Anglican) Established Church as well as the head of state; thus loyalty to the state became part of the Church of Ireland tradition. The view that politics and religion should be intertwined, constituting a moral government of the word of God, meant that it was desirable to convert the Irish natives to Protestantism for both theological and political reasons (Hempton and Hill 1992: 184). All Protestants believed that the Catholic Church kept its flock in spiritual darkness by withholding the truth revealed in the Scriptures, for until the twentieth century the Church deterred its congregation from reading the Bible, as it did not encourage individual interpretations that conflicted with canon law. Many Protestants believed in a kind of biblical determinism; if Catholics were to be exposed to the 'truth' of the Scriptures, they would be converted to Protestantism. It was assumed that the teaching of the Catholic Church was so heterogeneous and self-contradictory that it would not stand serious examination. Protestants believed that worship should take place in the vernacular of the congregation, and abhorred the Latin Mass as another mystification of God's word. The close relationship between print, the vernacular, and Protestantism became part of English national self-consciousness (Crowley 1996: 117). To some the 1537 edict proclaiming that all services of the Established Church should be held in English seemed to contradict a central tenet of Protestant faith, since it denied to Irish-speaking natives access to the means of their salvation in the vernacular (Richardson 1711: 36).

Proselytisers and others equated a conversion to Protestantism with allegiance to the English Crown. Although revolts of 1641, 1689 and 1798 interrupted proselytism, in their aftermath missionaries redoubled their efforts, arguing that they were manifestations of the 'anarchic and destructive capacity of human sin' (Holmes 1985: 100). Proselytism, rather than any concession to the political demands of Catholics, was seen as the way of solving Ireland's difficulties (Hempton and Hill 1992: 86). The poverty of Irish Catholics was attributed to

their ignorance and superstitious beliefs, and their being manipulated by a Church dedicated to the perpetuation of its own wealth. Many Protestants believed their better economic circumstances to be proof of divine approbation (ibid.: 19).

Opponents of preaching in Irish invoked linguistic determinism, arguing that greater use of the language would encourage 'disaffection to the King, and disincline to English connection' (cited in Crowley 1996: 120). John Richardson, an eighteenth century Anglican clergyman, denied that the Irish language contributed to political divisions in Ireland, or that the use of it by Protestants would contribute to existing divisions:

The English, Welsh and Cornish Tongues in England do not produce diversity of Religion, among the People who speak them. So in Scotland the Highlanders and Saxons are for the most part of the same Religion, notwithstanding that their Speech is not the same... The Irish Language itself, is a harmless thing in Scotland, and hath not any Marks of the Beast in it' (1711: 18, 21).

By demonstrating that 'Irish' was spoken in Scotland, he endowed the language with a potential Protestant image, as Gaelic was used by Highland Presbyterians as a medium of worship. By discussing the Irish language in the context of Scottish Gaelic, Richardson was connecting the language to the British 'mainland', thus suggesting the close linguistic and political connections between Scotland and Ireland. Richardson's representations of the Irish language constitute an early example of a Celtic image of the language, which relates it to Welsh, Cornish and Scottish Gaelic²⁸. Richardson denied that speaking Irish could influence one's opinion:

Preaching in the Irish Language is not an Encouragement of the Irish Interest, any more than preaching in French in England is an encouragement of the French Interest; For the Irish Papists who can Speak English, ever were, and still are as great Enemies to the English Interest, as the Irish Papists who cannot speak English... Wherefore it is very Evident, that it is the Popish Religion, and not the Irish Language that is repugnant to the English Interest in Ireland (1711: 6).

I Answer, that the different manner of communicating our Thoughts of any Thing to others, doth neither alter the Nature of the Thing, nor our Thoughts and Notions of it; Otherwise different Languages would be the Causes of Men having different Conceptions of Other Things, as well as of Religion; whereas altho' there be great variety of Languages in the world, yet we have reason to believe, that all Men agree in their Apprehensions and Conceptions of Many Things... (1711: 17)

²⁸ It is unlikely that Richardson was aware of the relationship between Welsh, Cornish and Irish, as this was not proven until after his work had been published.

Religion, not language, was the cause of 'disaffection to the King', since English-speaking Catholics were no more enamoured of the Crown than Irish-speaking ones. The increasing numbers of Catholics who spoke English, but remained opposed to English rule, brought into doubt the plausibility of linguistic determinism. Richardson claimed that the Irish language was not a vehicle of Catholic theology, and could be used for Protestant worship, as the 'Highlanders' had shown. Furthermore, he asserted that there was one objective reality that all men perceived in the same way, although they expressed this reality in different languages. Language reflected a social reality that was independent of it. Richardson was expressing his belief in the principle of linguistic autonomy, the argument that language is independent of thought; people have thoughts, and then they put them into words²⁹. He used the concept of linguistic autonomy to oppose the cultural secessionist discourse of the Irish language.

Other proselytisers agreed with Richardson; Connellan equated the spread of English by means of proselytism in Irish with the promotion of 'a closer unity between the subjects of both countries' (Crowley 1996: 122). As Crowley puts it, 'Irish was to be made the language of "loyalty and peace", rather than a badge signalling radical difference' (ibid.). Thus Richardson and Crowley wished to engage Irish speakers in a proprietary contest, by representing the language as one that expressed not opposition, but *loyalty* to the English Crown³⁰.

Richardson argued that government edicts 'abolishing' the Irish language were ineffectual, and only served to provoke anti-English feelings (Richardson 1711: 21-22). Proselytisers were keen to demonstrate that the language was widely spoken in Ireland, and that as a consequence 'the harvest is great', as Whiteley Stokes put it (Stokes 1806: 11). It was often alleged that preaching in Irish would encourage the greater use of the language. Richardson was of precisely the opposite opinion; proselytism in Irish represented 'the most effectual way to Diminish the Use of it hereafter', as converts would learn English in order to avail of the new opportunities for employment open to them (Richardson 1711: 21). Some Presbyterian proselytisers of the nineteenth century viewed the language in strictly utilitarian terms, as a means of conversion, and exhibited no desire to cherish or preserve it (Stothers 1981: 84).

Proselytisers often had a sympathy for the Catholic laity, though they were hostile to their clergy. For some evangelists, particularly those who accepted that salvation was possible within the Catholic Church, preaching the gospel was an end in itself and did not represent a

²⁹ Proponents of linguistic autonomy argue that language reflects a social reality which is essentially independent of it. They are opposed to the view that there are multiple 'realities' which are created and reflected in language. In particular, critics of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis point out that successful translations can be made between languages, and that the distinctions of one language can be explained using another language. If a language lacks a word for something, its speakers will still be able to grasp the concept involved (Crystal 1993: 15).

³⁰ In a proprietary contest a group attempts to monopolise its symbols, and treats the efforts of another group to copy or acquire them as an act of hostility. A precondition of a proprietary contest is a consensus among the rivals on the prestige of the symbolic property for which they compete. Thus a proprietary contest is the reverse of a valuation contest as in the former the prestige of the symbol is unchallenged but its ownership is contested, while in the latter the reverse occurs (Harrison 1995).

tactic for conversion. Despite their avowed intentions of such evangelists, Catholic clerics remained suspicious of their activities, interpreting any form of preaching to their congregation by Protestants as deriving from a desire to proselytise.

Evangelical Efforts

In the Church of Ireland, which was characterised by a theological and organisational hierarchy, the efforts of a local clergyman to proselytise in Irish often depended on the goodwill of his bishop, and the efforts of a bishop depended on the goodwill of his Archbishop. It was often the case that all three would not agree on the need to preach in Irish. Nevertheless the Church established a fine, if somewhat sporadic, record in publishing the scriptures in Irish; the first book to be printed in Irish, which used a type provided by Queen Elizabeth, was a Church of Ireland catechism, published in Dublin in 1571. Despite the Convocation of the Church of Ireland agreeing in principle to the need to proselytise in Irish in 1634, 1703 and 1709, little effort was made to pursue the policy on an effectual basis (Richardson 1713: 24-39). Richardson failed to convince the exchequer to fund Irish language publishing and preaching.

Presbyterians also expressed an interest in proselytism in Irish. Concentrated in the north-east of Ulster, the Presbyterian Church virtually constituted a 'state within a state' (Hempton and Hill 1992: 16). The Church was essentially democratic in nature; congregations selected their own ministers, who were allowed to follow their own judgement. However, this often resulted in factionalism and secession arising from internal doctrinal disputes, which often interrupted missionary activities.

In 1826 the Presbyterian Church established the Home Mission, which in its early years concentrated on fellow Presbyterians in the south and west of Ireland. Until 1830 the mission received little funding, and complained of Synod indifference, partly due to a preoccupation with doctrinal disputes. In the 1830s a new period of evangelism in Irish began, reflecting a world-wide upsurge of missionary activity; the Home Mission followed the trend by attempting to proselytise Catholics. The Presbyterian Church sent out missionaries, employed scripture readers to visit people in their homes, and published and distributed bibles and tracts. Much of this work was done in the medium of Irish.

In 1818 the Church of Ireland formed the Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the Medium of their Own Language (the Irish Society) to establish charity schools for Irish speakers. Although the society claimed to respect religious differences, evangelists believed that the revelation of scriptural truth in the classroom would open Catholic eyes. Furthermore, the Protestant belief that the Bible was the cornerstone of education ensured that religious affairs would occupy a central place in the curriculum. Catholic priests doubted the proclaimed 'educational' role of the schools and condemned them as aiming for the conversion of their congregations, forcing many of the schools (which had no buildings of their own) to meet in secret (Hempton and Hill 1992: 56-7).

In the 1830s the Presbyterian Home Mission established a number of charity schools throughout Ireland, although most of these were concentrated in remote Irish-speaking districts of Tyrone, Antrim and Derry. The mission denied that it was interested in proselytism, although Catholic priests thought otherwise. As few Presbyterians spoke Irish, Catholic teachers were employed, and were paid after being questioned by an inspector who was usually a clergyman or a converted Catholic. Several of these teachers eventually joined the Presbyterian Church. The pupils, who were mostly adults, often had to run the gauntlet of the community and the local priest. The teachers were even worse off, torn between the fear of excommunication and a need to alleviate their poverty through employment in the schools. The schools were dealt a devastating blow in 1846, when Hugh O'Donnell claimed that in his capacity as an inspector in the Glens of Antrim for three years he had given false returns to his employers to secure his and the teachers' positions (Ó Buachalla 1978: 111)³¹. The revelation strengthened the hand of opponents of the schools, who thought that it was too risky to employ Catholics, and that little would be achieved in terms of proselytism. Both Anglican and Presbyterian charity schools were felt to have been rendered redundant by the introduction of the national system of education in 1831, which permitted only English-medium education. The 1846-9 famine in Ireland, during which many thousands of Irish speakers died, brought an end to the charity schools programme.

The Failure of Protestant Evangelism in the Irish Language

By the early eighteenth century many Protestants believed that the Irish language was dying and it was unnecessary to proselytise in the language. Proselytisers were placed in the ironic position of claiming that there were many speakers of Irish, but that evangelism in Irish would contribute to the death of the language. The government and Protestant congregations doubted that many conversions could be effected, and refused to contribute substantial sums to preaching or publishing in Irish. Although Richardson claimed that Catholics were ripe for proselytism, he and other evangelists made few conversions; between 1703 and 1789 only 5,500 Catholics officially converted to the Established Church (Bardon 1992: 170).

Protestant denominations tended to regard each other as rivals rather than allies in their approach to proselytism, and within each Church there were strong countervailing forces opposed in principle to evangelical approaches to Catholics. The Church of Ireland hierarchy tended to oppose proselytism and was suspicious of pan-denominational missionary groups and the populism of Methodist preachers, who were seen as undermining Anglican doctrinal and temporal authority (Hempton and Hill 1992: 58-68). It was also feared that if efforts at conversion succeeded, the Church would be swamped by native Irishmen, who would demand a native government (Stothers 1981: 33). Presbyterians were divided between the 'Old Light' Calvinists, who believed they were Heaven's Elect, and subscribers of the 'New Light', who rejected Calvin's concept of predestination, and felt that every man should be allowed to follow his own conscience. Elements of both groups rejected proselytism; the 'Old

³¹ For a full English-language account of the Glens dispute, see Blaney 1996, pgs. 110-118.

Light' Presbyterians viewed Catholics as irredeemably damned, while followers of the 'New Light' thought it presumptuous to convert Catholics, as they felt they could attain salvation within their own Church. When the Presbyterian Church accepted that the Catholic Church was a Church of Christ in 1861, proselytisers were in a dilemma, recognising that the Catholic Church was Christian, yet at the same time attempting to evangelise the members of that church (ibid.: 91).

Strong anti-Catholic feeling in Ireland, especially in the wake of warfare, militated against missionary efforts. Some proselytisers' hatred of Catholicism was so great that they gave the impression that Protestantism was a mere negation of Catholic teaching, having sprung from a hatred of 'Popery' (Rodgers 1991: 17). The invective and ridicule directed against the Catholic hierarchy by some proselytisers outraged Catholic congregations and their priests, and only served to sour relations between the Churches.

Others viewed preaching in what they felt to be the barbarous language of a backward people as an inherently repugnant activity (Barnard 1993: 245). The language was also associated with rebellion, and preachers who used it were regarded with suspicion, regardless of their political and religious credentials³². Irish was viewed as a kind of contagion; anyone who spoke the language was perceived to be pro-Catholic and anti-English in outlook. Barnard claims that converts were mistrusted as hypocrites, heretics and foreign agents (ibid.)³³. Protestants who understood no Irish fantasised about sinister hidden messages which Catholic translators inserted into their works, and regarded dabbling in the language as a form of contamination (Barnard 1993: 270, 272). Thus many Protestants associated the Irish language with political insurrection. For their part, many Catholics could not read the Irish language bibles and tracts that were distributed to them.

The delicate nature of inter-church relationships in the nineteenth century, given the growing political self-confidence of Catholics, led to the abandonment of proselytism by the Church of Ireland. Wealthy British missionary societies abandoned the publication of Irish language materials, leaving some enthusiasts to publish privately and plead in vain for Church or government assistance.

The main obstacle to proselytism was the strength of the Catholic Church and its widespread support among the Irish peasantry. By the late 1790s a resurgence of the Church's fortunes was under way. The Royal College of Saint Patrick was established at Maynooth for the training of priests, with financial help from the British government. Cathedrals and chapels were built, and religious orders and charities flourished, some of which directed their activities at combating Protestant proselytism. During the Counter-Reformation the Catholic Church viewed the use of Irish as a medium of religious instruction and a bulwark of spiritual

³² In the tense atmosphere preceding the rebellion of 1798, the Reverend William Neilson (1774-1821) was arrested for incitement to treason after preaching in Irish to his Presbyterian congregation at Rademon, County Down. He was released when he translated the manuscript of his sermon. Ironically he eschewed the violence of the rebels and played a calming role in the insurrection (Ó Saothraí 1992: 34)

³³ Hempton and Hill disagree with Barnard on the acceptance of converts by Protestant congregations; Hempton and Hill claim that converts were accepted by their new congregations and were not believed to have retained any lingering inherent inferiority (Hempton and Hill 1992: 183). I suspect that the converted nobility had less problems with their new congregations than converted commoners.

welfare against Protestantism, but by the nineteenth century the church began to see it as a barrier to the temporal advancement of its congregation (Ó Huallacháin 1994: 24); as MacDonagh put it, 'The effect was partly to align Protestantism and Gaelic in one camp, and Catholicism and the expansion of English in another' (MacDonagh 1992: 106). Furthermore, many secular Catholic leaders, such as Daniel O'Connell, argued that the native Irish could advance their positions by learning English.

The hostility of the Catholic Church to Irish seemed to make Protestant proselytism in the language pointless. Catholics who did convert faced the hostility of their former co-religionists and often reverted to their original church. Converts were accused of having adopted Protestantism for material benefit. During the famine of 1846-9 proselytisers were viewed as taking advantage of the poor; one Catholic priest accused missionaries of 'holding out relief for the body' in order 'to infect the soul with impious heresies' (Holmes 1985: 113).

For the native Irish, theological issues were not the only ones at stake. Protestantism was the religion of conquest, dispossession and discrimination, and Catholicism the ancestral religion of sacrifice, suffering and resistance to an alien invader. Catholic folk tales about proselytisers describe sinister meetings in remote locations at which strange figures pay everyone present for agreeing not to attend Mass and to spit on a picture of the Virgin Mary (e.g. MacMeanman 1989: 44-53). Irish language bibles were regarded as conveying heretical thoughts, and were destroyed upon receipt or handed to Catholic priests for safe disposal. Thus many Protestants regarded Irish language tracts as vehicles of sedition, and many Catholics perceived them to be heretical. Given such beliefs, it can be no surprise that proselytism in Irish failed.

Missionary efforts in Irish dwindled as many Catholics abandoned the language for utilitarian reasons. As the Penal Laws were relaxed, and urbanisation and industrialisation increased, Catholics discovered that prospects for their material advancement were increasing. The greater social mobility of Catholics contributed to their rejection of the Irish language (Crowley 1996: 109). By the 1830s, school inspectors and teachers were noting the 'excessive zeal' with which parents co-operated with the national schools policy of Anglicisation by speaking whatever English they had acquired with their children (Ó Huallacháin 1994: 25). Many Irish speakers died during the famine, and other abandoned the language as they were desperate to emigrate to the English-speaking world.

By the end of the nineteenth century Protestantism was also on the retreat in the south and west of Ireland, and in the north it was becoming increasingly introverted and defensive. The New Light movement had been defeated in the Presbyterian Synod, leading to the convergence of Presbyterianism with conservatism, doctrinal orthodoxy and anti-Catholicism. The dis-establishment of the Church of Ireland, educational competition, agrarian violence, the Home Rule movement, and the perceived danger of nationalism to the economic superiority of industrial Belfast led Protestants to fear that their whole way of life was threatened by an resurgent self-assured and politically active Catholicism. In this climate Protestant evangelism was more concerned with shaping Protestant identity and recapturing the leadership of the Protestant community than changing religious allegiance. Protestants of

all denominations sank their differences in the face of the religious and political threat from the Catholic community.

Antiquarianism

Eighteenth-Century Antiquarianism

It would be mistaken to draw a strict boundary between Irish-language evangelism and antiquarianism; the failed missions fostered enquiries into Ireland's antiquities and indigenous culture (Barnard 1993: 244). Furthermore, Protestant interest in translating the Scriptures into various vernaculars provided the inspiration for the development of linguistics in the seventeenth century (Leerssen 1986: 333). However, some antiquarians were clearly embarrassed by evangelical activity, as their activities increased Catholic suspicion of any Protestant interested in Irish³⁴.

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the educated classes of Europe compared their civilisation to that of classical Greece and Rome. This interest was part of the European Romantic movement which drew on elements of archaeology, philology, literature and folklore. Eventually the indigenous heroes and tales of each 'nation' ousted those of ancient Greece and Rome.

The Romantic movement, coupled with political developments in Ireland, heralded a changing sense of identity among the Anglican nobility. In the early eighteenth century upper-class Anglicans (also referred to as the Anglo-Irish, or the Ascendancy) believed themselves to be Englishmen born in Ireland (Leerssen 1986: 340). However, in the latter part of the century they increasingly came to resent their treatment by their English counterparts as provincial colonial cousins, and some were driven to a degree of fellow-feeling with their fellow Irishmen (Hutchinson 1987: 216). Anglo-Irish writers sympathised with the Irish poor, and blamed their 'backwardness' on English economic policy (Leerssen 1986: 354). Widespread resentment was also caused by the English parliament's policy of using tariffs to curb the Irish economy where it competed with native English industry.

The Anglo-Irish expressed a love of Ireland through the study of landscape art and Irish flora and fauna. Furthermore, they appropriated the Gaelic past for themselves. Scholars of Britain, France and Germany came to the conclusion that the Celts were one of the formative peoples of European culture (Hutchinson 1987: 197). In 1760 the publication of Macpherson's *Ossianic Lays*, based on Scottish Highland folklore, caused a sensation and stimulated an interest in the culture of the native Celts, which were idealised as a mystical race, unspoiled by the artificialities of urban society (Leerssen 1986: 396). Philologists disputed the origins of the Irish language and its relationship to other European languages during the eighteenth century, but connections were made between Irish and Welsh, thus

³⁴ James McDonnell commented on Christopher Anderson's *Historical Sketches of the Ancient Irish*, '...altho' the author be a Scotch Presbyterian... there is none of those absurd reproaches cast upon the Papists, no predictions of their conversion' (Ó Buachalla 1978: 74).

firmly establishing Irish as one of the Celtic languages spoken in the British Isles. Thus Irish was represented as a Celtic language which celebrated the history of the Celts and linked the language to Scottish Gaelic and Welsh.

Anglo-Irish antiquarians believed that the essence and key to legitimacy of national or cultural identities was to be found in the past; to put it simply - the older, the better. They pitted the culture and history of Ireland against the brute force of British economic and military power. They were excited by enquiries into the warriors, seers and poets of Ireland's pagan past, and drew on these discoveries to depict the native Irish as a heroic civilising people. Protestants were attracted to this era as it circumvented an Irish history that emphasised the Catholicism of Ireland; some members of the Ascendancy identified with the aristocratic warriors of Gaelic Ireland, and the Church of Ireland saw itself as the inheritor of the Celtic Christianity of Saint Patrick (ibid.: 216). By identifying with the Gaelic heroes of Ireland, the Anglo-Irish laid claim to the leadership of the Irish people. They hoped to create a syncretic British/Irish identity which embraced the culture of the Irish natives, but validated Anglican rule in Ireland.

Antiquarians were convinced that if a language was shown to be purer than another, it was believed to be older and consequently to have more prestige. Irish was compared to ancient classical languages such as Greek and Sanskrit; some antiquarians went further, claiming that Irish was the pre-Babel language spoken in Eden (Crowley 1996: 99,108-9). Such comparisons led to the development of linguistics and the Irish language became an important subject of study for philological reasons.

Irish romantics stigmatised English as a language of crass materialism and commerce, and described Irish as a lyrical language of emotions, literature and poetry, associating it with a Rousseauesque vision of a rural idyll:

All that is necessary for me to remark is, that there is a sympathy in the Irish language and the Irish airs, so sweetly plaintive, as to appear the operation of the Deity in giving charms to a state of poverty and sorrow. I have sat under a hedge and listened to the rustic songs of those peasants, while at labour, with a pleasure that transcended any I had ever felt at Vauxhall... [Ireland is] the most romantic island in the world (Charles Bowden, cited in Leerssen 1986: 80-81).

Translations of bardic poetry were used to augment the literary image of the language and endow it with historical validity. Literary images of languages were not confined to the Romantic movement; they were also a feature of the Enlightenment. However, in Enlightenment terms, only the cosmopolitan languages of Europe were suitable vehicles of literary expression. The Romantic movement elevated the status of peasant languages such as Irish by endowing them with a literary prestige.

Anglo-Irish antiquarians used the Irish language as a gauge with which to measure the national character of Ireland:

Where the language of any ancient nation is attainable, a criterion is discovered for distinguishing accurately, the more remarkable features of the national character (Charles Vallancey, cited in Leerssen 1986: 427).

The representation of the Irish language as a facet of the Irish national character is characteristic of the period. The Irish 'nation', which had been thought of by the Anglo-Irish nobility to consist only of the country's rulers, now came to embrace the 'natives' as well as the gentry (Leerssen 1986: 354).

Not all antiquarians were content to express a sense of Irishness in terms of a sense of nationality and antiquarian endeavours. In the north, Presbyterian intellectuals resented the political supremacy of the Anglo-Irish, who dominated the Dublin parliament; they sought to establish a period of greater religious freedom and emancipation. Some of them felt that they could use the Irish language to achieve these aims; the radical Belfast paper, the *Northern Star*, remarked in 1795:

By our understanding and speaking it we could more easily and effectively communicate our sentiments and instructions to all our Countrymen; and thus mutually improve and conciliate each other's affections (Ó Buachalla 1978: 30).

Given the nationalist 'sentiments' of the *Northern Star*, Irish represented a means by which Presbyterian radicals hoped to introduce their nationalist philosophy to the native Irish. Some antiquarians discussed the Irish language in terms of a cultural secessionist discourse by linking it to a campaign to end English rule in Ireland.

Some Catholics and Northern Presbyterians, fired by the democratic ideals of the French and American revolutions, formed the United Irishmen, a revolutionary group dedicated to the establishment of a republic in Ireland. Some antiquarians distanced themselves from the rebellion, and may have been more pro-British in disposition; the 1792 Belfast Harp Festival, a celebration of ancient Irish music, may have been timed to provide a counter-attraction to the anniversary of the storming of the Bastille (Blaney 1996: 41).

Though the 1798 rebellion failed, it had a profound influence on the nature of Irish nationalism. Since the time of the United Irishmen, nationalist ideology has attributed the unionism of Protestants to a 'false consciousness' created by British manipulation of sectarian divisions and unionist greed (MacDonagh 1992: 18, 25). The United Irishmen conceived of the Irish nation in a geographical sense, as being coterminous with the island of Ireland; in synchronic terms, of law, of social cohesion, of politics and economy; and in terms of Irish residence or birth, rather than religious affiliation or class. Thus the ideology of many United Irishmen was that of civic nationalism. While some United Irishmen spurned antiquarianism and cultural endeavours, there is evidence that others participated wholeheartedly in cultural activities, including Irish language ones (Thuente 1994). Although the 1798 was influenced by civic nationalism, it would be erroneous to assume that all the United Irishmen had a vision of a monocultural and cosmopolitan Ireland.

Eighteenth-century antiquarians popularised a discourse of the Irish language that is prevalent in the twentieth century. The cultural discourse of the Irish language, which was influenced by European Romanticism, represented the language in terms of its relation to Irish literature, peasant life, history, music and philology. Furthermore, the antiquarians linked the language to a concept of Irish national character and genius.

Nineteenth-Century Antiquarianism

Following the defeat of the rebellion, the British government enacted the Act of Union in 1800, which abolished the Dublin parliament and introduced free trade between Britain and Ireland. Ireland's agrarian economy went into decline, but the industrial north-east of Ulster thrived, linking the economy of the region more to Britain than to the rest of the island. Many Presbyterians were happy with the development and became firmly unionist in outlook; the Irish nation fell 'by default' into the hands of politicised middle-class Catholics (MacDonagh 1992: 17).

Though the majority of Protestants now looked to Britain as the centre of cultural as well as political life, antiquarian interest in the Irish language continued in the first half of the century. Antiquarianism was put on a more rigorous footing, with less fanciful comparisons being made between Ireland and Egypt and India. The scientific analysis of Ireland was begun through the examination of documents, archaeology, and map making. Domestic tourism flourished as journeys to the continent were interrupted by the Napoleonic wars, and the resulting proliferation of guide-books, which enthused about Ireland's round towers and crumbling churches, created a sense of nostalgia for the past and a welcome antidote to the materialism of England (Patten 1991: 110). This was the era of the great German philologists, who in giving Irish an important place in the comparative study of Indo-European languages, raised the status of the language to one worthy of serious scholarly pursuit (Hutchinson 1987: 93).

As Belfast settled down after the after the Act of Union, the intellectual life of the city flowered with the formation of many historical, philosophical and musical societies. Antiquarians were keen to disassociate themselves from the events of 1798 and banned the discussion of controversial political issues from their meetings (Ó Buachalla 1978: 48). The cultural societies regarded themselves as respectable, an opinion shared by many members of the titled gentry who agreed to become their patrons³⁵. Robert McAdam, a notable antiquarian, prepared Irish language mottoes for the visit of Queen Victoria to Belfast (ibid.: 220). It also became common practice in nineteenth-century Belfast to include an inscription in Irish on public buildings (ibid.: 92).

In the nineteenth century the industrialisation of Belfast attracted a large number of Catholics to the city. Few Catholics had lived in the city previous to the 1830s, but by 1861

³⁵ In 1830 the Marquis of Downshire agreed to become the patron of a society explicitly dedicated to the study of the Irish language, *Cuideacht Gaeidhlice Uladh* (the Ulster Gaelic Society), on the grounds that it would 'drive men's minds from speculative discussions and political disputations from which this country has suffered so much' (Ó Buachalla 1978: 73).

they comprised 34.1% of the population (ibid.: 270). Presbyterians had little fear of Catholics when their numbers were small and they remained unobtrusive; but by the middle of the century the demographic shift led to Protestant fears for their control of the city. Religious and political dissension increased, and sectarian riots broke out, often aroused by the inflammatory speeches of street-preachers. Societies such as Irish language organisations that encouraged Catholic and Protestant co-operation dwindled, and after 1860 there is little record of Protestant interest in Irish in the city, apart from a few scattered individuals.

The Revival Movement

Antiquarians provided much of the iconography for Irish cultural and political nationalism; they proclaimed the superior qualities and antiquity of the Irish language, as well as representing the language as a key to the history and character of the Irish people. Furthermore, the belief that political and linguistic practices were legitimised by their antiquity was one that inspired the historicisation of the Irish national ideal in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Revivalists expanded upon the theories of the antiquarians, but Protestant antiquarians, who preferred to talk *about* Irish, were eclipsed by a mostly Catholic movement dedicated to the cultivation of the language as a means of communication. The Anglo-Irish literary élite competed with a populist non-academic Gaelic revival to 'imagine' Ireland. The Ascendancy vision of a syncretic Irish-English culture was eclipsed by one dedicated to the cultural and political dichotomisation of Ireland and Britain.

The Struggle to 'Imagine' Ireland

Both nationalist and unionist members of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy attempted to create an English-language literature based on the aristocratic legends and sagas of Ireland's pre-Christian heroic age. Whatever their political beliefs, the architects of the 'Celtic Twilight' were united in their belief that the Anglo-Irish were the natural leaders of the Irish people, both spiritually and culturally. These elitist and literary projects were eclipsed in the popular imagination by a revival movement which associated the Irish language with Irish nationality and Catholicism. Although antiquarian interest in Irish was swept away by the rising tide of political and religious agitation in Belfast, Irish language societies continued their work in Dublin. These societies had little impact and it was not until the formation of the Gaelic League (*Conradh na Gaeilge*) in 1893 that a movement to revive Irish began.

The League was influenced by the German romantic form of ethnic nationalism, which systematised earlier beliefs about the connections between language, nationality and identity. In Ireland, German romantic nationalism, with its emphasis on the linguistic basis of national identity, had a profound influence on Irish language enthusiasts.

In its early years the Gaelic League's aims were largely dominated by the philosophy of its first president, Douglas Hyde (1860-1945), a member of the Anglo-Irish nobility. Hyde

felt himself to be a member of both the Gaelic and Anglo-Irish worlds, and throughout his life affected the image of a country squire (Dunleavy and Dunleavy 1991: 74,146). As a young man he was fervently anti-English and in favour of violence to rid Ireland of British rule; he often linked the Irish language to this struggle, thus drawing upon the cultural secessionist discourse of the Irish language. However, as time went by, he became convinced that cultural regeneration, the core of which was the Irish language, was more important than political autonomy (ibid.: xviii). Although he advocated Home Rule, a limited form of self-rule for Ireland, he felt that political independence without a Gaelic civilisation was meaningless (Hutchinson 1987: 2). He wished to rejuvenate Irish nationality by the cultivation of the distinguishing features of the nation, which were its language and customs:

Just when we should be starting to build up anew the Irish race and the Gaelic nation... as within our own recollection Greece has been built up anew - we find ourselves despoiled of the bricks of nationality... Imagine for a moment the restoration of a German-speaking Greece... (Ó Glaisne 1991: 97).

For Hyde cultural revivalism was a moral end in itself; nationalism in the highest sense of the word, above creed or politics (Hutchinson 1987: 295). Hyde and other Gaelic Leaguers created a cultural nationalist discourse of the Irish language, which placed cultural emancipation before political independence:

Home Rule, no doubt, is of vital importance to Ireland, but whether it comes in this generation or succeeding generations, although important, is not of vital importance. It is possible for it to wait. *The cause of the Irish language cannot wait* (Martyn, cited in Crowley 1996: 126).

Other advocates of cultural nationalism in the Gaelic League were contemptuous of separatists who put political independence, with its 'green flags and such exteriors', above the cultivation of nationality by means of the Irish language (Crowley 1996: 126). The object of the early Gaelic League can be summarised as follows:

The Gaelic League owes these great successes to the broad basis upon which it is founded. It recognizes in every Irishman a brother regardless of his religion or his politics. On its platform are found working side by side in a spirit of union and brotherly love - Catholic, Protestant, Dissenter, Nationalist, Unionists - and all are actuated by the same desire, to raise from the dust the Language, Music, Games, Traditions, Industries and Glory of Ireland (O'Leary et. al. 1905: 3).

The Gaelic League rejuvenated the cultural discourse of the Irish language, which is characterised by an absence of references to Irish independence and the placing of the

language in the context of Irish music, customs, folklore and games. This discourse differs from the cultural nationalist discourse in that it does not include evaluations of the merits of cultural and political separatism.

The Gaelic League differed from previous movements in that its principal aim was the propagation of '*caint na ndaoine*', the spoken Irish of the contemporary Gaeltacht. Antiquarian endeavours were felt to contribute little to counter the decline of the language or the sense of shame of its speakers. The League continued the work of Irish romantics by idealising the rural lifestyles of Irish-speaking peasants in the western Gaeltacht; this endowed the League with an anti-cosmopolitan *Gemeinschaft* ethos that permeated popular concepts of Irish culture and nationalism (cf. Crowley 1996: 135). The League embarked on an effective campaign to popularise Irish by organising meetings, establishing branches, and holding an annual festival *An tOireachtas*, which drew on the best talent of local *féiseanna* (festivals). Language classes were established, with teachers being trained in summer colleges in the Gaeltacht. The League rapidly became very popular, establishing branches throughout Ireland, and became a major force in socialising young people away from the ideal of a British metropolitan culture to a vision based on the rural Gaeltacht (Hutchinson 1987: 291-2).

Hyde packed Gaelic meetings with members of the Catholic clergy, whom he hoped would influence their congregations to take an interest in Irish. However, the clerical influence on the League was to be at the level of ideology as well as personnel. The Catholic Church saw the League as a means of combating English popular culture and regaining its moral control of the nation. Many clerics believed in a form linguistic determinism, viewing Irish as a vehicle of Catholic doctrine, and one argued that the Gaelic mind was essentially Catholic and unable to express anti-Catholic thoughts such as 'No priest in politics' (Mac Póilin 1994: 19). Thus the representation of Irish as a vessel of Catholic thought became as popular with nineteenth-century clerics as it had been with the Counter-Reformation Catholic Church in Ireland; English was symbolised as a language of morally decadent Protestant enemies (Crowley 1996: 142). The Gaelic League itself was influenced by imputed relationship between Catholicism and Irish, even producing a *Gaelic League Catechism* that mimicked the format and style of the Catholic catechism (ibid.: 141).

The secular wing of the Irish nationalist movement was un-nerved by the association of the Irish language with Catholicism, and viewed the Irish language as a non-denominational means of expressing Irish nationality. They defended their position by alluding to the Protestant nationalist tradition in Ireland; for example, they drew upon the writings of the Protestant barrister Thomas Davis, who linked the destruction of the Irish language with the loss of nationhood and history.

Despite the wishes of secular and other separatists, Hyde maintained that the Gaelic League should be non-political, drawing on the energies and talents of every community on the island. Hyde recommended a consensual, rather than a conflictual approach to the British authorities. His approach was partly informed by his pragmatism, as Irish nationalist politics at the turn of the century was racked by internal dissension.

The government remained conciliatory in its approach to Gaelic League campaigns, especially educational ones, allowing Irish to be taught in intermediate schools and providing bilingual education for Gaeltacht children. However, in educational issues the Gaelic League aroused the enmity of the Anglo-Irish establishment and unionists, who regarded the increased status of the language in schools as the first step towards a separatist Irish-speaking civil service (*Irish News* 23 October 1990, p 7; reprint of an article first published on 23 October 1912). However, in the early years of the twentieth century, other campaigns brought the League into conflict with the state. The League agitated for the right to address mail in Irish and for permission to use the language on vehicle identifications. These and other issues indicate a shift in the League's policy from promoting the communicative use of Irish to its symbolic use (Ó Huallacháin 1994: 58).

The issue revolved around the level of institutional support that revivalists believed that the language should receive. Hyde and his followers, in drawing upon the discourse of cultural nationalism, stressed the need for communal regeneration and the irrelevance of state-centred politics. Others, including advocates of the cultural secessionist discourse, believed that the state had an important role in protecting the language. They argued that the language should have a high public profile and a large measure of institutional support to reflect its status as a national language.

The adoption by the League of symbolic campaigns represented the first challenges to Hyde's authority. In 1905 the Sinn Féin movement was founded to combat nationalist parliamentarians by advocating abstentionism and the creation of an Irish shadow-state. The movement wedded its demand for political independence to the Gaelic League's call for cultural revolution; therefore the organisation was instrumental in popularising the cultural secessionist discourse of the Irish language. Thereafter Hyde's conciliatory approach to the government was challenged within the League by non-parliamentarians who advocated a more aggressive stance. Sinn Féin accused Hyde of being a 'diplomatist', collaborating with government officials on a personal level (ibid.: 394-5); rumours were even spread that he was a unionist (Ó Huallacháin 1991: 11). Hyde was also attacked by clerical dissidents who wished to replace him with a 'clerical Gaelic League with a Bishop at its head' (Dunleavy and Dunleavy 1991: 307). As Hyde's control of the League slipped away, he was reduced to a 'pandering type of constitutional monarch' (MacDonagh 1992: 113-4).

The association of Catholicism, political nationalism and Irish revivalism led to a dramatic expansion in the fortunes of the League; the number of branches rose from 120 in 1900 to 985 in 1906, with a peak membership of 75,000 (Hutchinson 1987: 178-179). Hyde and other Protestants tried to federate the Gaelic League with the Pan-Celtic movement, in an effort to reduce the influence in the League of Catholicism and radical nationalism (Hutchinson 1987: 124). This was a doomed attempt to 'map' Irish in the context of the British Isles; such an image would have been amenable to advocates of unionist British ideology.

Opponents of republicanism were driven from the League by personal abuse and the slow progress of the language revival was increasingly blamed on the government (Garvin

1987: 59). In 1915 the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), a republican secret society, decided to formally alter the nature of the League. At the annual convention of that year a majority voted for the alteration of the League's constitution to devote the organisation to work for a 'free Irish-speaking Ireland' and elected imprisoned republicans onto the national executive. Hyde resigned his presidency, feigning illness and departed, noting in his diary that he had 'a lighter heart than I had known for years' (Dunleavy and Dunleavy 1991: 328).

Hyde had believed that symbolic language campaigns did more harm than good, complaining that agitators for Irish-language national insurance stamps had 'political' motives, and were embarked on an enterprise that would do nothing to increase the number of Irish speakers (Ó Glaisne 1993: 399). According to the Dunleavys, during Hyde's presidency the term 'non-political' implied 'opposing physical force', and 'political' suggested 'inclining towards physical force' (Dunleavy and Dunleavy 1991: 314). Advocates of the cultural nationalist discourse, in claiming that they were solely interested in the survival of Irish, believed that their motives regarding the language were genuine. They accused advocates of cultural secessionism of politicising Irish by subordinating the language's interest to the movement for political independence. These motives were all the more 'political' if they were associated with the use of violence to end British rule in Ireland. Hyde's concept of non-political activity divorced promotion of the Irish language from the exercise of power. However, advocates of the cultural secessionist discourse believed that the link between the language and Irish separatism was natural and consequently 'non-political':

The work of the Gaelic League is to prevent the assimilation of the Irish nation by the English nation... That work is as essentially anti-English as the work attempted by Fenianism or the Society of United Irishmen...

There are two kinds of political questions, one embracing the points of difference between men inside the nation, and the other covering the external relations of the nation with other nations. Movements like the Gaelic League belong to the second class, and endeavour not to be drawn into the controversies pertaining to the first. In that they are wise, but they are not on that account non-political. The Gaelic League does not stand to take sides in the political differences that separate Irishmen into different parties, and therefore it is claimed to be non-political... The Irish language is a political weapon of the first importance against English encroachment; it can never be a political weapon in the hands of one Irish party against another (Fergus MacLede, cited in O' Huallacháin 1994: 66-67).

Nationalist ideology in Ireland has two principles; that the people of Ireland form one nation, and the divisions of that nation are fostered by Britain. The British were 'political' in the sense that they fostered the cultural and political divisions on the island. In this text, which is an example of the cultural secessionist discourse, the Gaelic League is described as 'non-political' in that it is striving for the 'natural' unity of the Irish people; and what is natural cannot be 'political'. Therefore, that which divides (the British administration) is 'political';

that which unites (the Irish language and Irish nationalism) is 'non-political'. The other concept of 'political' mentioned in this text is the divisions of Irishmen in terms of party politics; this does not concern the Gaelic League. In this text the League is described as political only in the context of its opposition to English control in Ireland. However, it provides a rare example of the League being described by a member as 'political', for the other meaning of 'political', that of being divisive, may be inferred by the reader. After 1915 the Gaelic League continued to insist that it was 'non-political' (Ó Huallacháin 1994: 74).

After Hyde resigned from the Gaelic League the most influential revivalists were advocates of the cultural secessionist discourse who believed that political independence was necessary for the survival of the language. They assumed that advocates of the cultural nationalist discourse, such as Douglas Hyde, would come to the same conclusion³⁶.

Unionist speakers of Irish left the Gaelic League as they were disconcerted by the growing nationalist ethos of the organisation. For their part proponents of the cultural secessionist discourse could not conceive how unionists could take an interest in Irish and retain their allegiance to a government which had attempted to eradicate the language; Arthur Griffith, the leader of Sinn Féin, wrote, 'We won't stand for the King's Irishmen using Conradh na Gaeilge. These people are trying to divide the language cause from the country's cause' (Ó Fearáil 1975: 14).

The above statement reveals an ambiguous aspect of Irish nationalist ideology. Protestants are regarded as either colonial settlers, who have no right to determine the future of Ireland, or as an integral part of the Irish nation; if they were the latter they could be persuaded to abandon their British allegiance (Gallagher 1990). Griffith's statement reveals the nationalist pre-occupation with the pollution or contamination of indigenous culture by foreign (in this case unionist) elements, and a wish to protect the language from the claims of others (Handler 1988: 142, 156-7). Thus the Irish language becomes the sole property of nationalists; unionists must be prevented from staking a claim to the language. Yet many Irish-speaking nationalists wished to replace the symbols of the unionist community with their own, including the Irish language. Protestants would become an ethnic minority in Ireland, defined solely in terms of their religious allegiance, rather than part of a larger British nation.

The Creation of a Protestant Gaelic Heritage

The aspect of nationalist ideology which regarded unionists as Irish included a form of historical determinism; unionists could not study Irish history and retain their allegiance to Britain. Thus many revivalists who wished to convert unionists to nationalism by means of the Irish language looked to historical sources for inspiration. They constructed a Protestant (Gaelic) heritage, which they hoped would encourage Protestants to accept an Irish nationalist

³⁶ Patrick Pearse, a leader of the 1916 revolt against the British, championed the cultural nationalist discourse for many years, and was a staunch supporter of Douglas Hyde. Eventually he linked a sacrificial vision of Irish freedom with the struggle to revive Irish; he thus represented the language in terms of the cultural secessionist discourse.

identity and embrace Gaelic culture as their own. Proponents of this history were hostile to nationalists who believed that Protestants were colonists in Ireland. This Protestant heritage was invested with nationalist ideology.

Aodh De Blacam, a prominent republican and convert to Catholicism, suggested the ancient unity of Scottish and Irish 'Gaeldom' (De Blacam 1934: 453). He argued that most of the Protestant planters spoke Gaelic, and were 'interpenetrated with Gaelic influences and largely with Gaelic blood' (ibid.: 444). The 'Protestant minority' that did not speak Gaelic 'could not but pick up the language of the majority' (ibid.: 442). The relics of this original 'Gaelic *stratum*' among Irish Protestants survived in Anglo-Irish literature and some Gaelic poetry (ibid.: 444-5).

De Blacam claimed that Protestants were forced to abandon Irish by emigration, the Protestant Church, and the University of Dublin, though the United Irishmen movement expressed a 'natural' resurgence of Gaelic ideas among the 'common folk' (ibid.: 450). This movement demonstrated 'the more generous impulses of the Protestant people' towards the Irish language, despite the policy of official Anglicisation (ibid.: 454). Religion and the 'Anglicisation of leaders' divided the 'Gaelic world' which was once 'a unit of blood' (ibid.: 453). De Blacam emphatically rejected the equation of Irish nationality with Catholicism, citing the anti-Irish language attitudes of Catholic leaders such as Daniel O'Connell. He claimed that attempts by unionists to conceal the true nature of Irish history would fail since 'the call of the blood must assert itself in the Ulster Protestants some day'; 'truth in history is the greatest of healers' and the key to 'happier unity, spiritual peace' (ibid.: 454).

De Blacam's history of Irish equated authenticity with original states of being; most Irish Protestants were 'originally' Gaelic and presumably anti-English in sentiment, therefore their descendants should follow their example. Traditional nationalist ideology asserts that the unity of the Irish people was and is prevented by the British administration; in a similar vein De Blacam asserted that the Irish nature of 'common' Protestants was withheld from them by religious and political leaders. The political allegiances of unionists were attributed to their ignorance of their 'true' history as a result of the machinations of their leaders. 'True' history and the racial origin of unionists would prevail, leading to the unity of the Irish nation, racially, culturally and politically. Hyde and his supporters had attempted to represent the Irish language as a Celtic one in an attempt to subvert the association between the Irish language and nationalism. However, De Blacam's version of this history had ideological implications that contradicted those of Hyde; De Blacam was suggesting that both Irish and Scottish Gaels were essentially anti-English in outlook.

Earnán De Blaghd (Ernest Blythe), a Protestant who held office in the Free State government, also provided a programme for Irish unity, based upon the essential Gaelic nature of Irish Protestants. De Blaghd blamed the post-1798 conversion of Protestants to unionism on their abandonment of the Irish language (De Blaghd 1955: 135). Therefore if Southern nationalists abandoned cultural revivalism they would prolong partition; only a wholesale revival of the Irish language in the Republic will convince unionists of the merits of nationalism (ibid.: 136). Thus De Blaghd used linguistic determinism to argue for an end

to partition by means of an Irish language revival that would eventually envelop Northern unionists.

De Blaghd's contribution to the Protestant Gaelic heritage is similar to that of De Blacam in many respects, but it adds one important point. Traditional nationalist ideology includes the belief that a British withdrawal was all that was necessary to end partition. De Blaghd questioned this assumption by arguing that there would not be a united Ireland until unionists were enticed to vote for one. De Blaghd was one of the first nationalists to question their traditional beliefs in the 1950s (Whyte 1991: 119).

There were many advocates of the Protestant Gaelic heritage among Irish nationalists. By representing the Protestants of Ulster in terms of their ancient Gaelic past, nationalists circumvented the views of latter-day unionists, the vast majority of whom had no interest in Irish whatsoever. Nationalists often portrayed unionists as political innocents whose ignorance of Irish culture was the source of their support of partition:

Ignorance is at once the bane and the chief characteristic of the Unionist, an ignorance so complete as to be almost unbelievable... He knows neither our language nor our customs, but despises both. Our history, for him, begins with the arrival of the English (Sinn Féin, cited in O'Halloran 1987: 38).

Joyce's *Irish Names of Places* has long been a valued possession in many humble households in the North. If one scratches the surface of Ulster life one comes down at once to the Gaelic tradition... And this will go far to consolidate national unity, based on a common Gaelic culture (Stephens and Johnstone, cited in O'Halloran 1987: 173-4).

The above texts represent a convergence of the politically ambiguous cultural discourse of the Irish language and the cultural secessionist discourse. Exposure to the history of Ireland, its games, customs and language was believed to convert unionists to nationalism upon contact.

Protestant Reaction to the League

The Gaelic League held little appeal for the majority of Ulster Protestants; the League never attracted more than five hundred members in the province in its early years (Bardon 1992: 421). Presbyterians based their culture on the Bible and were suspicious of 'frivolous' non-scriptural activities: preachers regularly attacked dancing and theatre-going (Hempton and Hill 1992: 113,117). Although the scriptural nature of Ulster Protestantism assured at best a cool welcome for Irish language revivalism, Protestants had utilitarian, religious, and political reasons to reject the Gaelic League. Unionists were prone to using modernist discourse, opposing malign traditions and superstitions with a benign process of 'progress', manifested in increased industrialisation and economic growth. An article in a unionist

newspaper, the *News Letter*, entitled *The Gaelic League: its aims and methods*, described Irish as:

to all intents and purposes, a dead language... From a business point of view the Irish language is altogether unnecessary, and that it is worse than useless when it occupies time that could be more profitably devoted to other subjects (*News Letter* 28 May 1904, p.6).

Worse still, unionists claimed that the Gaelic League was attempting to eradicate the English language in Ireland, and make Irish 'the universal language of the country' (ibid.) For advocates of modernist discourse, it was sheer folly to replace the cosmopolitan language of progress with an obsolete one. The attempt to create an Irish-speaking Ireland also smacked of compulsion and cultural autocracy, which offended the Protestant devotion to freedom and individual choice (cf. Nelson 1984: 17). The *News Letter* article continued by deriding the League's claim that it was 'non-sectarian' and 'non-political':

..for at present the great majority of the local branches are hotbeds of political and religious agitation. Their meetings are usually held after mass, or on Sunday evening, and generally the local curate is in the chair. The chief business is usually an address from the chairman, an address bristling with hatred of England and everything English, with exhortations to his hearers to hold fast to the religion and language of their fathers. They are told to look to the future, to that happy day when the English language shall die out in Ireland; for, deny it as they will, the real aim of the Gaelic League is to create an Ireland peopled solely by Irishmen of the Gaelic league stamp, and cut off by impenetrable walls from all intercourse with the heretics without (ibid.)

Thus the 'real' motives of the League were attributed to a mixture of anti-English racism, Catholic supremacism, cultural and social isolationism, and nationalist and/or republican politics. The League's preoccupation with all things Irish seemed to be narrow-minded and insular to unionists, who looked outwards to Britain for social and cultural enrichment. The League's habit of organising events and meetings on Sunday was deeply offensive to sabbatarians. Protestant parents also worried that as involvement with the League involved greater socialisation with Catholics, and that their children would marry Catholics and/or become Catholics themselves (Ó Glaisne 1990: 254).

A correspondent in the *Londonderry Sentinel* warned any unwary Protestant against becoming involved with the movement as he would be 'played as a decoy duck for all he is worth' (Henley 1985: 53). This phrase, which may have alluded to the fate of Douglas Hyde, warned Protestants against being used to provide the Gaelic League with a spurious 'non-sectarian' and 'non-political' camouflage.

Thus unionists objected to the reputed language movement's authoritarianism, Catholicism, Sabbath-breaking, provincialism, insularity, racism, tokenism (in the political

manipulation of Protestant Irish speakers), nationalism and/or republicanism, and commitment to the revival of a dead language. Much of this reflected Protestant religious values and political ideology, and the portrayal of Irish as a dead language is informed by modernist discourse.

Though unionists initially regarded themselves as Irishmen, the association of Irish national identity with Irish nationalism, coupled with the inevitability of partition, led to the strengthening of an Ulster identity in contrast with that of the nationalist south of the country³⁷. The adoption of Gaelic revivalism by Irish nationalism suggested that Ireland would be partitioned culturally as well as politically. By the time the British agreed to a form of self-government in Ireland in 1920 it was certain that Gaelic revivalism would become part of the official ideology of the new state.

The Cultural Partition of Ireland

The Irish Language in the Irish Free State and Republic of Ireland

Eamonn de Valera, the prime minister of the Southern state from 1937 to 1948, envisaged Ireland as a Gaelic-oriented and mainly self-sufficient society, with a largely agricultural economy, in which Catholic religious values would predominate (Lyons 1979: 175). The 1922 constitution declared Irish to be the 'national language', but gave equal recognition to English for official purposes (Hindley 1990: 37). The 1937 constitution reiterated the position of Irish as the 'national' and 'first official language'; English was recognised as the 'second official language' (Ó Huallacháin 1991: 44). Both constitutions asserted the right of any citizen to conduct his or her interaction with the state through the medium of English or Irish. However, most government business was conducted in English. A translation department was formed to provide Irish-language versions of government legislation and to create a new vocabulary for the language.

State-sponsored revivalism involved: the requirement of a qualification in Irish for all secondary-school leaving certificates; the development of special economic and educational facilities for Gaeltacht areas; and the requirement of competence in Irish as a prerequisite for government appointments. The general consensus is that these measures failed to revive the language, and only served to delay its decline. Despite attempts to develop an economic base in the Gaeltacht, the outflow of Irish speakers to the English-speaking world continued unabated.

Protestant reaction to the education and government recruitment schemes was extremely negative. Protestants linked the language revival with the perceived Catholic threat to their survival. Many working-class Protestants emigrated after partition, leaving behind a small upper class element that used 'improficiency' in Irish as an emblem of their superior

³⁷ Basil Brooke commented, 'I am not happy about being called an Irishman because of the 1916 rebellion' (Walker 1993: 14).

social standing (MacDonagh 1983: 124). However, opponents of state revivalism were stigmatised as unpatriotic and tended to acquiesce in public on the issue (ibid.: 120).

In 1973 the requirement of a pass in Irish to attain school leaving certificates was abolished, though the language remained a compulsory subject for study in state schools. The Irish requirement for most forms of public employment was also dropped. The retention of the Irish language qualification for matriculation to the National University remained as the only incentive for secondary-school pupils to learn the language.

In everyday life in the Republic, the government Irish language policy is manifested in a symbolic and 'tokenist' fashion; the language appears on postage stamps and coins, bilingual stationary, and dual language public signs. The government attitude is reflected by the general population, which is favourable towards the language but makes little personal commitment to learning it. Government reports consistently find that the average citizen places a considerable value on the symbolic role of Irish in ethnic identification, although this attitude is coupled with a generally pessimistic view of the language's future and a feeling of its inappropriateness in modern life (Ó Riagáin 1984, 1988, 1994).

The government's attitude to Irish was condemned by some advocates of the cultural secessionist discourse as a betrayal of the language revival. Such attitudes were not shared by the general population. As the Southern state settled down in the years after partition, nationalist fervour declined. Public opinion was not favourable towards the Irish language movement, which was seen as 'excessively nationalistic, even xenophobic', associating Irishness with 'militant and narrow Catholicism' (Tovey et al. 1989: 32). Membership of the European Union encouraged notions of diversity and plurality, and a 'movement beyond narrow homogenising nationalism' (Todd 1994: 156). This change of ethos in the Southern state included efforts to understand the wishes of Northern unionists.

In the 1980s and '90s a revival of interest in the Irish language has taken place in urban areas, largely among the middle classes. Irish-medium primary and secondary schools have flourished, and young enthusiasts have attempted to give the language a modern and 'trendy' image, replacing the isolationist ideology embracing Irish with one which incorporates pluralist and secular beliefs. Attempts were made to define an image for Irish which rejected the associations of the language with the Catholic Church and republicanism (ibid.: 1989). Thus the discourse of cultural secessionism fell into disfavour with many language enthusiasts in the Republic.

The Irish Language In Northern Ireland

Unlike the architects of the Southern state, the unionist government felt little need to justify its political philosophy by reference to a distinctive culture; to do so would have widened the gulf between Northern Ireland and 'mainland' Britain. The public image of Northern Ireland was one that echoed the sentiments of civic nationalism and modernism; the province was to be of a modern, progressive and united part of the British Commonwealth. Literature and the arts were regarded as removed from 'the contagion of the local quarrel',

representing the 'neutral' preserve of the upper and middle classes (Brown 1991: 165). However, the public emphasis on British culture reinforced Northern Ireland's position within the United Kingdom. Ulster identifiers were also catered for; the annual Orange Twelfth of July celebrations became a public holiday. The majority of unionists equated the Protestants of Northern Ireland with the entire population of Ulster (Ruane and Todd 1996: 180). The British ethos of the Northern Ireland state was regarded by many unionists as a 'non-political' reflection of the essential character of the 'province'. Despite unionists' self-idealisation of themselves as progressive and democratic, nationalists were regarded as treacherous to the Northern administration and their wishes were ignored; discrimination against the nationalist population was widespread in many sectors of Northern Irish society (Whyte 1991: 61-4).

The Irish government's Gaelicisation policy was seized upon by Northern unionists as a further justification for partition. Irish revivalism was seen as increasing the impoverishment of the near-bankrupt Southern state, and further evidence of its essentially autocratic nature. The dominant Northern ethos was to be modernist and utilitarian, in contrast to the Southern 'dreamers and idealists, impractical to the point of foolishness' (Kennedy 1988: 183). The *Northern Whig* warned of plans to create Gaeltacht 'reservations', where only Irish could be spoken, and 'the inferior tongue of Shakespeare, Bunyan, Milton, Synge, Yeats and A.E. "verboden"' (ibid.: 178-9). The attitude of the Stormont government to the Irish language was summed up by the Northern Ireland Prime Minister:

What use is it, in this busy part of the Empire, to teach our children the Irish Language? What use would it be to them? Is it no leading them along a road which has no practical value? (Maguire 1991: 44)

Unionist antipathy to the Gaelic revival now had a new element; antipathy to a revivalist state as well as the language movement. English was described as the 'mother tongue of the Ulster people', the 'foreignness' of Irish being accentuated by its promotion by a hostile state (Kennedy 1988: 183).

During fifty years of unionist hegemony in Northern Ireland, the Irish language was to play no part in public life. This principle was enacted in legislation in 1948, when, following a campaign to erect street-signs in Irish in Newry, legislation was enacted forbidding the erection of signs in languages other than English. Nationalists asserted that the Irish language was part of the indigenous culture of Northern Ireland, to no avail; the authorities suspected a hidden nationalist agenda in the nationalist protestations, although requests for the enhancement of the status of Irish were refused on utilitarian grounds (see Cathcart 1984: 119, 248)³⁸. The public transcript of unionist-controlled bodies involved rejecting calls to improve the status of Irish by using 'neutral' utilitarian motives

³⁸ The Irish language movement was hampered by its inability to persuade the BBC that broadcasts in Irish would have a large target audience; during the war the director of the BBC refused to countenance programmes in the language as there were 'no Gaelic speakers in Northern Ireland' (Cathcart 1984: 111).

The Irish language became the preserve of Catholic maintained schools (albeit in the face of Ministry of Education obstructionism) and a small voluntarist movement, consisting mostly of educated Catholics, including many clergymen and schoolteachers. Irish language activities were primarily a private-domain activity, like all other aspects of nationalist culture, which represented part of the hidden transcript of Northern nationalism.

Although Irish language activities involved mostly Catholics, there were different influences within each group, from clerical to socialist. A few groups attracted a fairly substantial Protestant membership; many others remained firmly Catholic in membership and orientation. *Comhaltas Uladh*, the Northern branch of the Gaelic League, was dominated by the Catholic clergy, from which was drawn ten out of the sixteen presidents of the organisation between 1926 and 1970 (*An tUltach Márta* 1972: 6). In a foreword to a publication celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Belfast branch of the League, Cathal Mac Críostáil urged the organisation to try to interest Protestants in the Irish language, warning that a failure to do so would leave a Catholic League narrow-minded in its attitude towards them (Gaelic League 1943: 7).

Most Protestant learners of Irish during the Stormont era were nationalist in their political beliefs. In Belfast the 1940s Protestant interest in the language was catered for in the Ulster Union Club, a Protestant organisation which aimed for the unification of Ireland through non-violent means, and a Gaelic Fellowship which was based in the Belfast headquarters of the YMCA. Elsewhere Protestant learners of Irish represented a minority within classes. Many Protestants attended *Cumann Chluain Ard*, an Irish language club in west Belfast that had a socialist and anti-clerical ethos; this ethos reflected the socialist component of Irish nationalist ideology. As such, *Cumann Chluain Ard* was hostile to the Catholic Church's influence in Irish language circles, and made strenuous efforts to welcome Protestant learners of Irish. It was expected that these learners would be nationalist; a pamphlet describing the aims and purpose of the club stated, '...the language and its natural corollary, Irish nationalism, will take its place in the public life of Belfast' (cited in O'Reilly 1992: 49). The broadly nationalist ethos of Irish language activities was regarded as natural, and therefore 'non-political'. Speeches made at *Féis na nGleann* ('The Festival of the Glens'), the Antrim Irish language festival, often reiterated the ideal of a united Ireland, and the Irish tricolour was displayed. One oration, describing the *Féis* as 'non-political' and 'non-sectarian', received a warm welcome (Clarke 1994: 38).

In the 1960s the Irish language movement resembled a small close-knit community, and Irish speakers were regarded as rather eccentric by the wider Catholic population. In Belfast some Catholic members of *Cumann Chluain Ard* married one another and considered the possibility of raising their children in Irish. In order to facilitate this they set up a small neo-Gaeltacht in the Shaw's Road area of west Belfast to create a supportive Irish-speaking environment.

Conclusion: Symbolising Irish

Past generations of Irish people constructed representations of the Irish language which persisted until the late twentieth century, although they were altered according to the perceptions of the times. The cultural discourse of the Irish language involves symbolising the language as a repository of culture and history; as a language that embodies the romanticisation of the western Gaeltacht; and as a vehicle of literature as well a language worth studying for purely linguistic reasons. The language was and is often represented as a means of expressing an Irish national identity.

These politically 'neutral' interpretations of Irish could be used by either nationalists or unionists, but they were often invested with the ideologies of those who used them. I have shown how nationalists believed that Irish culture could be used to convince unionists to abandon their allegiance to Britain, thus the neutral cultural discourse could be used to ideological *effect*. The Celtic image of the Irish language was used in a similar fashion. Proselytisers used the cases of Scottish Gaelic and Welsh to demonstrate that languages other than English could be used to express Protestant religious thought in the British Isles. Hyde and other Gaelic Leaguers tried to combat the Catholic and separatist connotations of Irish by symbolising it in a Celtic context in order to link the Irish revival to language movements in Great Britain. Nationalist historians who believed that the Celts in Britain were essentially anti-English hoped that unionists would adopt this view when they discovered their Celtic past.

Through the ages the Irish language was used by political and religious opponents to express and convey their ideological beliefs. Many British administrators and Irish speakers believed that the language expressed 'disaffection to the King'. Proselytisers combated the view that the Irish language channelled thought with the assertion that it could convey *any* thought, including Protestant and pro-British sentiments. However, they believed in a type of biblical determinism in the construction of political and religious allegiance. In certain periods in history, Irish language societies eschewed political issues and were patronised by the Anglican gentry, thereby validating English rule in Ireland in an implicit fashion.

From the time of the Counter-Reformation many nationalist intellectuals used a discourse of cultural secessionism to insist that Irish symbolised a resistance to British rule in Ireland. This belief was opposed by advocates of the discourse of cultural nationalism, which places language revivalism above political separatism. However, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the connection between the Irish language and Irish nationalism was naturalised for supporters and opponents of the language alike. For centuries Irish speakers have also used the language to represent a secret means of communicating nationalist sentiments to one another; it conveyed the hidden transcript of disenfranchised Catholics and nationalists. Representations of the Irish language that were compatible with pro-British beliefs were confined to small numbers of Protestant clergymen and intellectuals.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries there was a struggle to interpellate the Irish identity. Competing codes of conduct were elaborated for anyone claiming Irish nationality; it was not enough to claim Irish birth or residence, one had to *behave* in an Irish way (cf. Handler 1988). To be Irish, according to the discourse of cultural nationalism, one had to learn and speak the Irish language; one did not have to be anti-British in outlook. Separatists believed that to be Irish one had to support the movement for Home Rule or complete political independence. According to the cultural secessionist discourse, an Irish person should support the movement for political autonomy *and* speak Irish. As the discourse of cultural nationalism was superseded in terms of popularity by the cultural secessionist discourse, Irish nationality and the Irish language came to be equated with Irish nationalism.

CHAPTER FOUR

Culture, Politics, and the 'Troubles'

In this chapter I will describe the 1980s revival of the Irish language in Northern Ireland and its aftermath. I will delineate the main discourses that accompanied the revival and those that were engendered as a result of changes in political life in Northern Ireland and further afield. The close relationship between the Irish language and Irish nationalism had been largely naturalised by the early 1980s. However, this dominant discourse was challenged as other representations of the Irish language were generated. The British government became involved in defining the symbolic significance of Irish as part of its attempt to address nationalist grievances without provoking unionist hostility. Unionist intellectuals and a state-sponsored Irish language organisation revived conversations and 'submerged' discourses involving the Irish language in an attempt to encourage unionist interest in the language. Both unionists and nationalists blended contemporary ideas about culture with historical material on the language in a process which exhibited elements of continuity and innovation. Northern Ireland became an arena of intense cultural competition as the unionist and nationalist communities sought to augment their political influence through cultural means.

Cultural issues were not important to many of the combatants in the early years of the 'troubles'. The civil rights campaign of the 1960s ignored Irish cultural issues, which socialist elements regarded as epiphenomenal mystifications which obscured class interests. During the first decade of the troubles the republican movement and Irish speakers took little interest in one another³⁹. However, the ethnic form of Irish nationalism soon re-asserted itself. The relationship between republicanism and the Irish language changed dramatically when the hunger strikes focused attention on the prisons issue. Many republican prisoners had learned Irish, despite official disapproval. The language was popular among the prisoners for many reasons; it was used to convey secret messages, reinforce nationalist identity, and to provide a historical link with past generations of Irish people who had resisted British rule (*Republican News* 14 May 1992, p.8). Released prisoners demystified the language for working-class Catholics, who previously had considered Irish language activities to be the preserve of middle-class intellectuals. Sinn Féin formed a cultural department in 1982 to propagate the use of the Irish language as a form of cultural resistance compatible with the 'armed struggle'. This potent mixture of language and politics had a wide appeal in republican areas and the demand for Irish classes mushroomed, until by 1984 there were sixty in west Belfast alone (Ó hAdhmaill 1985: 2).

³⁹ In 1980 an editorial in the West Belfast newspaper, the *Andersonstown News*, which was established by Irish language activists, accused all politicians, including republicans, of ignoring the language (*Andersonstown News* 15 March 1980, p. 4). Bernadette McAliskey, the prominent civil rights activist, accused members of the Gaelic Society at the Celtic Department of Queen's University of being too Gaeltacht-oriented and ignoring the Northern Ireland issue (*Scáthán Samhradh* 1980, pgs. 5-6).

A Register of Resistance

Republicans re-vitalised and to an extent re-modelled the cultural secessionist discourse of earlier separatists. They used linguistic determinism to assert that the Irish language would free Ireland 'from alien thought' as well as 'alien armies' (Sinn Féin 1984: 2). Unionists would also be freed from 'alien thought' by the Irish language; one Sinn Féin member accused the British government of denying Northern Protestants 'the opportunity to discover their heritage and take their place in the Irish nation by not permitting Irish to be taught in state schools' (*Irish News* 17 April 1990, p.4).

Sinn Féin informed Northern republicans that their loss of the Irish language was the result of British oppression, which also reflected the suffering of the nationalist population in general:

...what we are aiming at...(is)...the recovery of our own roots and the ending of the feeling of alienation produces by having in our mouths the language imposed on us by imperialism (Sinn Féin 1984: 6).

Irish was represented as a powerful weapon in the republican armoury: 'Now every phrase you learn is a bullet in a freedom struggle' (ibid.: 4). Sinn Féin introduced new elements to the cultural secessionist discourse by associating language revivalism with the struggle of socialists and ethnic minorities against capitalist Anglo-American cultural and military imperialism. The struggle to revive Irish was also compared with the attempt to revive other Celtic languages in the face of government hostility. In all, these views reflect the tendency for adherents of sub-cultures to reinforce their arguments by drawing on other counter-hegemonic discourses (see Chapman 1992: 228; McDonald 1989: 116). Irish was stripped of its rural Gaeltacht and pious associations and given a modern urban image. Learning Irish was represented as a political act:

...it is our contention that each individual who masters the learning of the Irish language has made an important personal contribution towards the re-conquest of Ireland (Sinn Féin 1984: 2).

The Language Revival in Northern Ireland

Sinn Féin introduced high-profile symbolic campaigns to the Irish language revival in Northern Ireland. The use of Irish on republican wall murals and bilingual street-signs was part of a 'consciousness-raising' exercise to encourage and reflect the upsurge of interest in the language. Murals and street-signs in Irish gave the language a physical presence in nationalist districts as well as representing a linguistic boundary between the two

communities in Northern Ireland. The language signs were also erected as acts of rebellion against the British state, as they were illegal in Northern Ireland, although no-one was prosecuted as a result. Sinn Féin's decision to contest elections in the 1980s brought the Irish language issue into the arena of local government, where republican councillors recommended the implementation of bilingual policies, including the erection of public signs in Irish, the provision of translation facilities and the use of bilingual stationary. These policies reflect the emphasis placed within the cultural secessionist discourse on the role of local and national government in language revivalism. The bilingual policy of Sinn Féin reflected the party's view that the Irish language was a *national* language that could and should be used in communication at local and state government level. These policies were strongly resisted by unionist councillors. For republicans the Irish language derived some of its prestige from the opposition of the authorities to their symbolic campaigns; Irish had become a register of resistance (cf. Hewitt 1986: 114). The republican slogan '*Tiocfaidh ár Lá*' ('Our Day Will Come') became widely known in the nationalist community.

Sinn Féin and radical nationalists transformed what had been a private-domain activity into a public-domain one in an atmosphere of resurgent and visible nationalism. Before the 'troubles', some Irish speakers had used the language to express a hidden resistance to the British presence. In the 1980s the hidden resistance was articulated in public; when subordinate groups openly resist domination, they release pent-up anger and frustration in charismatic acts of symbolic resistance (Scott 1990: 213).

The growing association of the Irish language with republicanism alarmed some non-republican enthusiasts who perceived the language as a means to peacefully express their identity. Some of them emphasised the cultural nationalist discourse of the Irish language as a foil to the use of the secessionist discourse of republicans. They also feared that loyalist paramilitaries would target Irish-speakers for assassination and that the republican image of Irish would narrow the appeal of the language; some have even suggested that the revival of Irish would vanish if a political settlement was reached in Northern Ireland (cf. Hindley 1990: 159-60).

While Sinn Féin had demonstrated that the Irish language could be given a high public profile, not everyone who adopted this approach supported Sinn Féin. Indeed, many Irish speakers in Northern Ireland, including some republican ones, believed that Sinn Féin were only interested in the Irish language as a source of political capital. Republican Irish speakers also used discourses of the Irish language other than that which wedded the language to political separatism; they were as likely as any other Irish speaker to use the cultural discourse of the Irish language (O'Reilly 1996). Sinn Féin provided the impetus for the language revival in Northern Ireland, but the momentum for the revival came from elsewhere.

The 1980s witnessed an upsurge of interest in Irish in the nationalist community which was not influenced by the ideological interpretations of the language by Sinn Féin. The revival mirrored a world-wide ethnic resurgence which transformed minority ethnicity from a social liability to a desirable identity to be achieved (Fitzgerald 1991: 97). The adoption of ethno-cultural activities compensated for the waning influence of religion and occupational

specialisation as sources of self-categorisation; in Northern Ireland republicanism combined with secularisation to weaken the influence of the Catholic Church, leaving the way open for definitions of nationalist identity that were non-religious in form. The language provided a means by which nationalists who felt socially, politically and economically marginalised could find self-respect and a sense of fulfilment.

The associations between the Irish language and Catholic theology were challenged by secular Irish speakers, but some of the latter believed that Irish was a 'Catholic language' in the sense that most Irish speakers were Catholic. An editorial in a Belfast Irish language newspaper announced that the Irish language movement should increase the number of Catholic Irish speakers, as most Irish people were Catholics and few Protestants expressed an interest in the language (*Lá* 24 Aibreán 1990, p.2). The Catholic image of the Irish language persisted, but its secular aspect (most Irish speakers are Catholic) tended to be emphasised at the expense of its theological one (the Irish language as a vehicle of Catholic thought). Indeed, many Catholic parents wished to educate their children in Irish-medium schools as they were non-denominational in ethos, refusing to become connected to the Catholic Church.

Most Irish speakers agreed that Sinn Féin provided the impetus for the language revival, but the momentum for it came from elsewhere. The academic success of a *bunscoil* (Irish-medium primary school) on the Shaw's Road generated a demand for Irish-medium education which surpassed appeals to learn the language based on nationalist ideology (Maguire 1991: 100). Parents were inspired to learn Irish by their children, and they went on to inspire other relatives (*ibid.*: 143). In 1991 the revival movement acquired a new cultural centre in a disused Presbyterian church on the Falls Road, *An Cultúrlann McAdam/Ó Fiaich* (The McAdam/Ó Fiaich Cultural Centre) which housed a café, *An Ceathrú Póilí* (a bookshop), a newspaper (entitled '*Lá*' meaning 'Day'), a *meánscoil* (secondary school), a nursery group and a stage for an Irish language theatre group. Other central institutions of the Irish language movement included *Glór na nGael*, a teaching and publishing organisation, and *Cumann Chluain Ard*, a social club. Both of these were situated on or near the Falls Road in west Belfast.

The Irish language movement eventually hoped to create a community in which Irish-speakers would be catered for from the cradle to the grave, including recreational, educational and career facilities, taking the language out of the realm of part-time voluntarism, hobbyism, and academia. Language activists took great pride in their accomplishments in west Belfast, comparing the success of the revival with the failure of revivalist schemes in other parts of Ireland. The movement, although drawing upon a long tradition of community action, also needed British government funding for its more expensive projects, such as Irish-medium education. Language campaigns were launched to secure state funding for Irish language projects, including Irish-medium schools and a greater presence for Irish in the media. In the early 1990s the movement launched a campaign to restore state funding to *Glór na nGael*, whose grant was withdrawn because of state suspicions that the organisation was involved in paramilitary activity.

The nucleus of the revival movement was located within the Catholic working-class districts of west Belfast. In these urban *Gemeinschaften*, there were the dense networks of social, residential and recreational domains necessary to create an Irish language community. The creation of a speech community requires a degree of convergence in terms of language, values and local solidarity (Williams 1992: 69-70). Thus speech communities create codes for conduct, like nationalist movements (cf. Handler 1988: 36). Catholic west Belfast was characterised by a homogeneity in terms of religious affiliation and political outlook. Nearly all of its residents were nationalist, although they were divided between constitutional nationalists and republicans; the latter had a particularly strong presence in this area.

The language movement's codes of conduct would reflect conditions in west Belfast. It was not enough to simply *speak* Irish; one had to *interpret* the language in a particular manner, and *behave* appropriately. In the following article in a west Belfast newspaper, an Irish language activist defines the difference between an Irish language speaker and 'a friend of the Irish language':

Thousands of people have good Irish in this city. But often they do not understand that it is necessary to do more than have Irish to restore it. The days have gone when the slogan 'speak it and it will survive' was enough.

I perceive the friend of Irish as not only someone who speaks Irish, although that is good, but as someone who helps the Irish language in a practical way as well.

For example, a friend of Irish is someone who attends the Irish language mass; those who register with the Carn Ultach [Irish language lottery]; someone who subscribes to *Lá*, or who writes a letter in Irish to this newspaper.

Those people who attend Irish language dramas and other Gaelic events in Cumann Chluain Ard, or the Mill [Conway Mill, a community centre] or whatever; the person who buys a ticket for the Meánscoil lottery, and those who buy Irish language books in Ceathrú Póilí or who register with the Irish language book club.

The person who speaks out against the denial of rights to Irish speakers, whether in Long Kesh [a prison for paramilitary prisoners], the City Hall [which was controlled by unionists], or in the case of Glór na nGael. That person will support Cumann Staire Uí Fhiaich [an historical society]; the parents who are raising their families in Irish, or the parents who raise a row because Irish is not being taught to their children at school.

The friend of Irish is the person who criticises the GAA [Gaelic Athletic Association; an Irish sporting organisation], or the republican movement for neglecting Irish as quick as he criticises the political and church authorities for their neglect. I also perceive this person as one who is disgusted with every day that passes in which we do not have a Gaelic education and television service (*Andersonstown News* 2 February 1991, p. 19; translated).

In this text the Irish language movement requires Irish speakers to frequent their premises and attend Irish language events in order to support them morally and financially. Irish speakers are urged to raise their children in Irish, send them to Irish medium schools, and support Irish language campaigns; the latter often involves criticising the British government and unionist-dominated local authorities. Irish speakers should also criticise the GAA and Sinn Féin for only expressing a token interest in Irish; the text demonstrates the autonomy of the language movement from these organisations.

Pierre Bourdieu's concept of symbolic capital (1977, 1991) provides a useful means of interpreting the above text. If a speech variety accrues symbolic prestige its speakers will attempt to restrict access to it. Fluency in a language confers linguistic capital which can be used to legitimise or delegitimise power relations, and to exercise symbolic violence in which groups or individuals that do not possess linguistic capital are effectively excluded from communication (Bourdieu 1991). Linguistic capital is used to augment symbolic capital (authority, prestige, respect), thus enhancing a speaker's symbolic profit. The possession of linguistic capital does not automatically lead to membership of important relational networks conferring social capital, which may require a convergence on the values associated with the language and its speakers.

In taking part in the activities described above the Irish speaker would engage in relational networks which would confer social capital. In doing so he or she would also demonstrate fluency in Irish (linguistic capital) and allegiance to the cause of Irish nationalism (symbolic capital). This symbolic capital should be used to remind fellow nationalists of the cultural element of the nationalist struggle.

It would be erroneous to assume that every member of the language movement agreed with all of the sentiments in the above text. In an age of increasing secularism, few would have required Irish speakers to attend mass. Members of the Irish language movement who preferred the discourse of cultural nationalism to the cultural secessionist discourse would consider fluency in Irish to be more important symbolic capital than nationalist beliefs. But the main premise of the text would have been adhered to by most language activists; it was 'good' to speak Irish, but to be part of the language movement one had to support the movement's aims in 'a practical way as well'.

All shades of nationalist opinion supported Irish language campaigns, demonstrating how the language had become part of nationalist symbolic ethnicity. Campaigns for a better status for the Irish language in Northern Ireland demonstrated the interdiscursivity of nationalist discourses of political and cultural inequality in Northern Ireland; it was claimed that the British government *discriminated* against Irish language speakers who demanded *justice* for the language, as they were no longer content to be *second-class citizens*. Feldman argues that 'nationalist discourse' was infused with the concept of deprivation (Feldman 1991: 20).

Pluralism and the Language Movement

In the 1980s the Irish language movement began to represent their aims and requirements in terms of pluralist discourse. The revivalists' aims were reminiscent of corporate pluralism, as they called for the recognition of language community control of institutions such as schools and adequate legal recognition for the Irish language in the dominant institutions of society (cf. Gleason 1984: 252). Language activists used United Nations and European Union directives on the protection of minority languages to argue for a better status for the Irish language. They claimed that Scottish Gaelic and Welsh language projects received more funding than Irish language ones. Thus they drew upon the Celtic image of the Irish language to 'map' the Irish language within the context of the United Kingdom. Constitutional nationalists favoured this approach; John Hume, the leader of the SDLP, saw the Irish language in the context of other European languages. Smyth writes that Hume hoped that the future of Irish would 'be secured by the bureaucratic intervention of a benevolent European community' (Smyth 1991: 144).

Following the IRA cease-fire in 1994, nationalist leaders used pluralist discourse to call for 'parity of esteem' for the nationalist community in Northern Ireland. The language movement associated its own demands with those of nationalist leaders, thus identifying the accommodation of the nationalist movement in Northern Ireland with that of Irish language revivalism. In this context the status of the language symbolised the standing of the nationalist people in Northern Ireland. The language movement represented the Irish language in different ways: as a minority language within the United Kingdom, or as the national language of Ireland.

British Government Language Planning

By the 1980s the British government was in theory better pre-disposed to the Irish language issue than its Stormont predecessor. In the Anglo-American world administrations were replacing strong assimilationist policies with pluralist ones. Post-war immigration transformed Britain into a multi-ethnic community, and Welsh and Scottish Gaelic projects received substantial government support. Furthermore, dominant elites may perceive counter-cultures as 'safety-valves' that release harmless aggression, thus reducing the tendency for subordinate groups to resort to violence and rebellion (Scott 1990: 187). Dominant groups may also choose not to interfere with linguistic counter-cultures if they do not challenge existing relationships of power (Grillo 1989b: 228).

British government policy on the Irish language was influenced by the experience of the UK Commission which was formed to deal with 'race' issues in Britain. The Irish language was dealt with in the context of community relations policy, which involved the improvement of the relationship between Protestants/Catholics and unionists/nationalists in Northern

Ireland. Community relations work involved two approaches. The first, which conflict resolution workers called single-identity work, involved the raising of the self-confidence of population groups in Northern Ireland, as groups with more self-esteem were felt to be more tolerant of others (Frazer and Fitzduff 1994: 30). Secondly, cross-community work involved the facilitation of interaction between the two communities in Northern Ireland, in order that they could identify and address issues of mutual concern.

In 1987 the British government established the Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU) to improve community relations and advise the Secretary of State on the conflict in Northern Ireland. The CCRU became a major source of state funding for Irish language projects and also a conduit for grants made available by the EC. Early projects that received funding included an origin of placenames project at the Celtic Department of Queen's University and the appointment of writers-in-residence at the Celtic and Irish departments of Northern Ireland's two universities. The CCRU did not have a specifically cultural remit, but invited a number of people involved in education, the arts, and communications to discuss cultural issues. This resulted in the formation of the Cultural Traditions Group (CTG) which operated under the aegis of the Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's University. In 1990 the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council was set up as a publicly funded body with charitable status and the Cultural Traditions Group became part of it. The CTG elaborated a discourse of the Irish language that was to become part of the public transcript of the British government.

The Common Heritage Discourse

The Cultural Traditions Group has developed the common heritage discourse, which draws upon the cultural discourse of the Irish language, and has features that resemble liberal pluralist ideology. As such, this discourse does not include references to the legal or communal rights of Irish speakers. Like liberal pluralist ideology, the common heritage discourse prescribes tolerance and a laissez-faire policy with respect to cultural differentiation (cf. Gleason 1981: 252). An influential member of the CTG, Edna Longley, writes:

The literature produced by Ulster people suggests that, instead of brooding on Celtic and Orange dawns, its inhabitants might accept this province-in-two contexts as a cultural corridor. Unionists want to block the corridor at one end, republicans at the other. Culture, like common sense, insists it can't be done. Ulster Irishness and Ulster Britishness are bound to each other and to Britain and Ireland (Longley 1987: 25).

Longley calls for a regional Ulster identity that admits aspects of Irishness and Britishness. This *cultural* identity negates unionist and nationalist *political* attempts to represent Northern Ireland in solely British or Irish terms. This approach discusses culture in terms of a shared Northern Ireland and/or Ulster regional identity.

Longley's approach typified the CTG attempt to popularise an approach of cultural relativism. The CTG argued that a tolerance of diversity and an exploration of shared cultural experience would contribute to a resolution of the conflict in Northern Ireland. The CTG attempted to 'pass' what it called the 'green litmus test', of finding a credible policy on the Irish language:

...clearly it is a language, like any other minor European language, which ought not to die. That is the first thing. It is very special for us in the north, and I wish more would recognise that. It gives us our placenames, our accent, our tongue, the rhythms of our speech...There are many interesting movements within the Irish language and, more and more, these are being opened beyond the immediate tribal stereotypes. This is as good as anything that is being done in culture (Hawthorne 1989: 28).

We strongly valued it as a source of enrichment central to our cultural heritage. Indeed I believed that an effort must be made - by all sides - to release it from misunderstanding and prejudice, not use it as mere graffiti to exclude, confuse or taunt others (James Hawthorne, cited in CTG 1995: 6).

One of the strongest themes to emerge from the 'Varieties of Irishness' conference in 1989 was that there should be greater support for the Irish language. During discussion the view was expressed that the language had unfortunately become associated with Republicanism in the eyes of many Protestants, which was a distortion of its real cultural significance... The education seminar concluded that Irish had suffered from being seen in a politicised context which alienated those who wanted to retain their Britishness (CTG 1995: 24).

These texts are part of a cultural common heritage discourse that symbolises the Irish language as the property of everyone in Northern Ireland. This is opposed to the cultural secessionist discourse of Sinn Féin which associates the language with (militant) nationalism, as well as the anti-revival rhetoric of unionists. When Hawthorne emphasises how the language has influenced the Ulster dialect of English and placenames in the region, he associates Irish with a regional or local identity, rather than a self-consciously national one. This approach challenges the unionist tendency to associate the language with a foreign state (the Republic of Ireland) or political opponents (nationalists/republicans). Opposition to the Sinn Féin-influenced cultural secessionist discourse appears in the references to 'graffiti' (republican wall murals, graffiti and slogans), 'tribal stereotypes', and the reference to the 'politicised context' and the 'unfortunate' association with republicanism. Indeed, the political nationalist belief that the nation and the state should be coterminous is challenged by a leading member of the CTG:

The ultimate expression of a monolithic centralised set of values is of course the nation state, which, it may be argued, has been the bane of European political and cultural development for the last century and a half. (Hayes 1993: 8)

Thus the pluralism of the common heritage discourse is represented as superior to the monocultural cultural secessionist discourse of traditional Irish nationalism. All aspects of Irish culture are regarded as equal in value and should be cherished; one must not be allowed to overcome the others. Pluralist discourse involves an attack on the concept of the nation-state, which is depicted as authoritarian. The common heritage discourse is related to the re-considerations of the symbolism of the Irish language in the Republic of Ireland.

In 1981 the BBC began to broadcast programmes in the Irish language, adopting the common heritage discourse, justifying Irish language programming as part of its policy of recognising distinctive regional cultures. BBC Irish programmes attempted to cater for Irish-speakers without offending the unionist community⁴⁰. Documentary programmes highlighted past and present Protestant involvement in the language and underplayed the significance of republicanism to the language revival.

The 'Two Traditions'

The common heritage discourse was related to the cross-community aspect of community relations work in Northern Ireland. The other aspect of community relations, which is related to the increase of confidence in 'single-identity' groups has spawned another approach, that of the 'two traditions'. This phrase first appeared in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which stated that the British and Irish governments would 'foster the cultural heritage of both traditions' (Hadden and Boyle 1989: 30). By implication, the Irish language became the property of the nationalist community. The joint Dublin-London *Frameworks for the Future* reiterate the two traditions concept in the use of the expression 'parity of esteem':

...any new political arrangements must be based on full respect for, and protection and expression of, the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland and even-handedly afford both communities in Northern Ireland parity of esteem and treatment, including equality of opportunity and advantage (HMSO 1995: 25).

This image of the language is concerned with the institutional recognition of collective rights, including cultural rights; as such it is reminiscent of corporate pluralism. The Irish language movement used the two traditions approach to pressurise the British government for increased funding for Irish language activities; subordinate groups often draw on the ideological terms of reference of the elites to pressurise for change, a tactic which the latter

⁴⁰ This policy has had comic results; in one programme on the revival in Belfast an interviewee twice used the nationalist expression '*na sé chontae*' ('the six counties') to refer to Northern Ireland. The English language subtitle 'translated' the expression as 'here'. On a children's programme, Prince Charles was heard attempting to learn Irish, which he described as an 'extraordinary language'.

find difficult to deflect as they are made to feel hypocritical (Scott 1990: 105). Since the IRA cease-fire of September 1995, the Irish language movement drew upon the language of government declarations by calling for 'parity of esteem' for the two traditions in Northern Ireland in its campaign to secure more government funding for language projects.

Government policy was guided by the recommendations of the state-sponsored Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR) which urged the government to fund Irish language projects, but rejected calls for the creation of a bilingual society on the grounds that Northern Ireland is not a bilingual country, and that such a policy would be too expensive and 'highly divisive' (SACHR 1990: 92). SACHR recommended the lifting of the ban on Irish language street-signs, and the appropriate legislation was eventually enacted in 1994. The British Government claimed that its existing Irish language policy reflected 'a parity of esteem between the cultural traditions of the two main sections of the community' (Letter to Sinn Féin councillor Máirtín Ó Muilleoir from Simon Rodgers, on behalf of the Secretary of State 15/5/95).

The British government's public transcript was contradictory in that the two traditions concept identified Irish with the nationalist community, yet the common heritage discourse denied that the language is the exclusive possession of any community in Northern Ireland. Proponents of the common heritage discourse were ill at ease with the two traditions approach as it involved symbolising the Irish language as the property of the nationalist community, rather than the heritage of both communities in Northern Ireland.

The ULTACH Trust

In the late 1980s the Irish language movement became concerned that CCRU funding was concentrated on the academic environment of the universities, but that voluntary groups 'on the ground' were being denied funding. Given the more favourable funding climate, it was believed that the British government would be willing to fund Irish language projects on a greater scale. Two Irish speakers decided to set up an Irish language charity that would have sufficient expertise to attract funding. The ULTACH Trust was constituted in 1989, and was initially funded by a number of charitable trusts and the CCRU. Since 1989 it has built up a capital fund from sources including the British and Irish governments, the European Community, and the International Fund for Ireland. The object of the capital fund was to ensure long-term independence from funding bodies, the interest from the capital fund being used to fund projects.

The Trust aimed to inspire greater Protestant interest in the Irish language by: the sponsorship of Irish language classes in neutral or Protestant areas of Northern Ireland; the provision of self-instruction resources in the Ulster dialect of Irish; and the provision of English-language lectures on the Irish language in areas in which interest in the language was weak. Half of the trustees of ULTACH were drawn from the Protestant community, and of

these Chris McGimpsey and Ian Adamson were members of the Ulster Unionist Party, and were both elected to sit on Belfast City Council.

The Trust also aimed to strengthen the existing Irish language revival by lobbying state bodies and the public sector to increase funding to Irish language projects. The Trust drew heavily on the Celtic image of Irish, arguing that the language was discriminated against in comparison with Scots Gaelic and Welsh. However, the Trust avoided issues that it deemed to be contentious and unproductive, including some of the symbolic campaigns characteristic of republican language activism. The organisation did not support the campaign to introduce the Irish language into the formal and administrative sectors of Northern Irish society; its second report draws on the work of the sociolinguist Joshua Fishman, who finds 'symbolic splashes to be unproductive' (ULTACH Trust 1994: 12). Thus the Trust was opposed to institutionalised bilingualism, which is a feature of linguistic corporate pluralism, although it supported community institutions such as Irish-medium schools.

The Trust stated that elements of the Irish language movement were intent on linking the Irish language to a 'political' programme:

Not all Irish-language activists are well-meaning, and, for a highly vocal minority, the language is an integral part of a political programme. Sometimes it is in the interests of these groups to encourage unionist alienation from the language, and to identify Irish ever more closely with the nationalist community (ULTACH Trust 1991: 10).

In this text the Trust attempts to minimise the influence of Irish speakers who are opposed to unionists interested in the Irish language by claiming that they are small in number. The Trust described itself using the cultural discourse; its aim was to 'promote the language as a means of cultural enrichment which need not carry any other ideological implications' (ULTACH Trust 1994: 6).

The Trust adhered to the common heritage discourse, regarding the Irish language as the property of anyone who wished to learn it, regardless of political or religious affiliations. While recognising that the present Irish language movement was non-sectarian, the Trust confronted the natural association of the Irish language with nationalism, the hallmark of the cultural secessionist discourse:

While nationalism is a perfectly legitimate motive for wishing to keep the Irish language alive, there are, of course, other alternative motives... Irish speakers, if asked, will generally support the principle that the language does not belong to any particular political or religious tradition. This impulse is entirely genuine, and the Irish language movement is markedly non-sectarian where religion is concerned. The main problem relates to the issue of political identity... This problem arises from the fact that the cultural commitment of many Irish-speakers is inseparable from their political allegiance (ULTACH Trust 1991: 9).

Thus the Trust recognises the interdiscursivity of the non-sectarian ethos of the Irish language movement and secular nationalist ideology. However, the Trust challenges the 'natural' connection between the Irish language and the cultural secessionist discourse. Adherents of the cultural secessionist discourse believed in the immutable link between the Irish language and Irish nationalism; therefore they assumed that unionists could be 'converted' to their cause by means of the Irish language. The Trust quotes Terence Brown:

It has always been the pious aspiration of the nationalist and of the cultural nationalist, that if only the Ulster Protestants could see the error of their ways, once they fall upon the riches of Irish literature, the richness of Irish political culture, they will see that their error is massive, and become converted to Irish separatism, or some kind of Irish independence. That seems to me an improbability (ibid.: 9).

Giving a Voice to Protestant Learners

The organisation was keen to encourage Protestant interest in the Irish language. In particular, the Trust constructed a new version of the Gaelic history of Protestants. This involved popularising information that had only been accessible in the Irish language, unpublished manuscripts, or publications that were out of print. ULTACH was involved in the publication of three major historical works highlighting Protestant involvement in the Irish language: *An Introduction to the Irish Language* (1990), an account of County Down Irish first published by the Reverend William Neilson, a Presbyterian minister, in 1808; the re-publication of an expanded and updated edition of Padraig Ó Snodaigh's *Hidden Ulster* (1995 [1973]), which provides an overview of Protestant involvement in the Irish language over the centuries; and Roger Blaney's *Presbyterians and the Irish Language* (1996), a comprehensive account published in association with the Ulster Historical Foundation. The Trust also produced three pamphlets: one stresses the Scottish Gaelic element of the Plantation of Ulster, as well as outlining the careers of antiquarians who cherished the Irish language (ULTACH Trust n.d.); another is a reproduction of an article on Douglas Hyde's view of the Irish language (Ó Glaisne 1994); and one is a publication of a series of speeches given at a seminar on the Irish language and the unionist tradition (Mistéil 1994).

The Trust was active in channelling knowledge from the past for two reasons. The organisation was attempting to demonstrate to Catholic Irish speakers that they should welcome and encourage Protestant interest in Irish. Furthermore, the Trust hoped to provide an intellectual foundation for an upsurge of interest in Irish among Northern Ireland's Protestants. The organisation hoped that the Protestant antiquarians and language revivalists of former years would serve as exemplars for their contemporary co-religionists. Unlike its earlier nationalist counterpart, ULTACH's Protestant Gaelic history concentrated on *unionists* who had spoken Irish:

When Queen Victoria visited Belfast in 1849, the city fathers stood shouting *Cead Mille Failte* (a hundred thousand welcomes)... So Irish was fashionable among Unionists at one time. (Aodán Mac Póilin, the director of the Trust, cited in *The Guardian* February 9 1993, p. 15).

This is a question (the Irish language debate) which most Irishmen will naturally look at from a National point of view, but it is one which ought to claim the sympathies of every intelligent Unionist, and which, as I know, does claim the sympathy of many. (Douglas Hyde, cited in Ó Glaisne 1994: 4)

The above texts provide an example of intertextuality, or the practice of drawing upon other texts in texts (Fairclough 1992: 84). Intertextuality is used to stress the historicity and concomitant validity of older texts, which may acquire an almost canonical status. Douglas Hyde's struggle to find a place for unionists in the Gaelic League was recalled, validated, and reproduced by ULTACH. The Trust channelled past discussions about Irish into the present in order to attract sympathy for the language from unionists.

The Trust used other methods to encourage Protestant interest in the language. This involved the promotion of the cultural and common heritage discourses. The organisation sponsored a series of lectures in the Linenhall Library in central Belfast which illustrate this approach. In 1993 and 1994 lectures included: a novelist, Seamus Mac Annaidh, speaking on 'The Novel in Irish Today'; a talk on the writers of the Blasket islands, in the western Gaeltacht; and a speech by a leading poet, Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, on 'Writing in Irish - the state of the art'. These talks, in visualising Irish in terms of Irish literature and the western Gaeltacht, discussed the language in terms of the cultural discourse of the language. Another talk by Gary Hastings, a renowned Protestant musician and Irish speaker, described the Irish language influences on the music of the Orange Order. Hastings adopted a position of cultural relativism, refusing to condemn either the 'Orange' or 'Green' musical traditions, and stressed the features these traditions had in common. In doing so, he was drawing upon the common heritage discourse of the Irish language. Other lectures in the series were on the Protestant involvement in the Irish language revival; they represented an attempt to popularise the Gaelic tradition that was being elaborated in the publications of the ULTACH Trust.

The efforts of the Trust represented an attempt to mediate between Catholic Irish speakers and Protestant learners of the language in order to 'imagine' the Irish language in a manner which would be appealing to both. This process precluded direct attacks on the republican involvement in the language revival; although this involvement was abhorrent to many Protestant learners, ULTACH's work brought the organisation into daily contact with many Irish speakers, and the Trust did not wish to jeopardise this work by alienating elements of the revival movement.

The Language Movement and the Common Heritage Discourse

Republicans believed that the British government's language policy reflected its political approach of 'divide and rule', whereby the state intended to split the Irish language movement into two groups; of state-funded constitutional nationalists and unionists on one hand, and marginalised republicans on the other. They argued that state funding for Irish language projects sprung from a desire to undermine support for Sinn Féin rather than an enlightened pluralist approach. Sinn Féin claimed that the British government had not altered its hostility to the Irish language and was attempting to neutralise the 'revolutionary potential' of Irish culture by creating a 'Northern Ireland' culture to which everyone would pledge allegiance (Sinn Féin 1989: 1).

The republican reaction to the common heritage discourse echoes Québécois nationalists' fears that their culture was being folklorised in order to absorb it within a Canadian national culture or render it politically harmless (Handler 1988: 178). This reaction also demonstrates the suspicions of advocates of corporate pluralism that liberal pluralism is an assimilationist technique employed by governments (Gleason 1984: 249). Republicans were hostile to any attempt to divorce the concept of Irish nationality from the separatist movement, the hallmark of the cultural secessionist discourse. While the common heritage discourse could be compatible with nationalist ideologues who insisted that Irish culture belonged to everyone in Ireland, republicans suspected that the discourse's advocates were attempting to disassociate the language from Irish nationalism, or associate it with a regional identity which they interpreted as the product of a partitionist mentality:

The idea of a region has powerful naturalistic connotations, suggesting rurality and rootedness in local landscapes. In addition, regions can be interpreted as the 'parts' of the collective body, and thus their existence can be made to imply the existence of the nation to which they belong. But regionalism also threatens nationalism, since a region is a nation writ small; hence, from a regional perspective, an emergent nation (Handler 1988: 117, n.4).

Thus republicans suspected that the common heritage discourse was being used to incorporate the Irish language within a British context by conferring upon it the inferior status of a regional (Northern Irish) culture, rather than a national (Irish) one. While some revivalists were suspicious of the British government's approach, they argued that state support was needed to fund the revival; therefore it was their right to receive funding. Constitutional nationalists often argued that the government was not doing enough to support the language revival, but many of them broadly welcomed the common heritage discourse, which they hoped would combat the powerful associations of the language with republicanism.

Elements within subordinate groups attempt to 'police' the behaviour and attitudes of those groups (Scott 1990: 130). Thus some republicans attempted to exclude ULTACH from the Irish language movement by representing the organisation as an agency of the state which vetoed funding to projects which involve republican Irish-speakers. The trustees and director of ULTACH were regarded as government spies who vetoed funding for projects that involved republicans to any significant degree⁴¹. Mairtín Ó Muilleoir blamed the ULTACH Trust for the withdrawal of funds to *Glór na nGael*, an organisation whose government funding was withdrawn because of state suspicions that the organisation was involved in paramilitary activity (Ó Muilleoir 1990: 97). The reluctance of ULTACH to become involved in certain campaigns was criticised; when the director refused to support a campaign for the rights of republican prisoners to speak Irish, he was accused of denying the 'civil rights' of Irish-speakers (*Lá 14 Meitheamh* 1990: 3). The reaction of contemporary republicans to the ULTACH Trust mirrors the attitudes of Sinn Féin and the IRB to Hyde and other Gaelic League members, who eschewed symbolic campaigns and advocated a consensual rather than a confrontational attitude to the British state.

The Irish language movement often claimed that the language was the common heritage of everyone in Ireland. Elements of the movement resented the ULTACH Trust's suggestion that the existing language movement did not welcome Protestant interest in the language. The movement claimed that Protestants were welcome to learn Irish, a view that was informed by the non-sectarian aspect of Irish nationalist ideology, which insists that Northern Protestants are part of the Irish nation. Many members of the language movement simultaneously claimed that unionists were welcome to learn Irish and that the language was part of nationalist culture. This view partly reflected the belief that unionists were 'closet' nationalists who would abandon their allegiance to Britain when they learned the Irish language; the *Andersonstown News* claimed that *Glór na nGael*, an Irish language organisation which taught the language to some Protestants, was continuing 'the practical work of uniting the Irish nation, Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter' (*Andersonstown News* 31 March 1990, p.8)⁴². Other nationalists argued that unionists would never take an interest in Irish, and used unionist hostility to the language to emphasise its connections with nationalism; one columnist in the above newspaper described the language as an 'Adam's apple' and 'a poisoned chalice' that the 'loyalist Eves' would never accept (*Andersonstown News* 16 May 1992, p.10). The above remarks reflected the nationalist tendency to depict unionists as part of the Irish nation, or a bastion of a foreign (British) nation.

The differing reactions to the ULTACH Trust reflected dissension within the Irish language movement, which roughly correspond to the political divisions within Northern nationalism. However, opponents of Sinn Féin's language policy were often reluctant to express their opposition in public; they did not wish to be ostracised by republican Irish speakers, and feared being stigmatised as Catholic 'Uncle Toms' who attempted to ingratiate

⁴¹ Mairtín Ó Muilleoir has referred to Aodán MacPóilin, the director of the ULTACH Trust, as '*fear an NIO*' (the NIO, or Northern Ireland Office man) (*Lá 14 Meitheamh* 1990: 3).

⁴² The wording of this quote reflects the language used by the United Irishmen.

themselves with the British government and unionists. Furthermore, members of subcultures often feel that they have to present a united front in public, or their opponents would capitalise on their divisions (Scott 1990: 55-6). Disputes within the language movement were often conducted in the Irish language; the movement maintained a united front in the English language media.

As government grants for the Irish language increased, Irish speakers became more reluctant to use the cultural secessionist discourse in the public domain, particularly since it had become associated with Sinn Féin. The use of the discourse might have endangered funding applications; government policy precluded funding organisations that had political or sectarian policies. Many Irish language projects that received government funding utilised the common heritage discourse and were reluctant to overtly align themselves with political positions. For example, some projects in nationalist areas publicly celebrated the Protestant contribution to the language; the *Cultúrlann* on the Falls road was named after the nineteenth-century Protestant antiquarian, Robert McAdam. Republican Irish speakers felt more comfortable in expressing their political views, including elements of the cultural secessionist discourse, in the Irish language media, since they were inaccessible to hostile loyalists and unionists. Thus the common heritage discourse became part of the public transcript of the language movement, while the cultural secessionist discourse became part of the hidden transcript of some of its members.

The issue of whether the Irish language was 'political' or not became extremely problematic. Many members of the language movement claimed that they had no political agenda and were simply interested in the language for its own sake. In response to unionist accusations of nationalist 'politicisation' of the language, the language movement argued that the language was politicised when the British government and unionists refused to fund language projects:

It is true to say that the state (and its supporters) made the language political by neglecting it, by refusing to fund Irish-medium education...The best way to depoliticise the language is to give it full state recognition, to provide fully-funded facilities to everyone who would like to use it and, through that, to remove it from political hands as much as possible (Pól Ó Muirí, writing in *Anois* 17-18 Nollaig 1994, p.14: translated).

Thus nationalists insisted that the British government was responsible for the politicisation of the language by suppressing it. They often claimed that unionist hostility to the language could be explained in terms of government suspicions of Irish-speakers; therefore the British government was responsible for making the language a political issue (e.g. Ó Muirí 1993: 82).

Unionist Antipathy to the Irish Language Revival

As Irish language projects were mostly the preserve of the nationalist community, some unionists interpreted increased government expenditure on the language as resulting in a loss of resources available to them. 'Zero-sum game' unionists who believed that nationalists gained at the expense of unionists maintained that state support for Irish language projects represent an attempt to placate republicanism which would fail.

The following text consists of a series of excerpts taken from a study involving interviews with 21 unionists, who were mostly working-class, on their attitudes to the Irish language (Kudos: n.d.)⁴³. Together they constitute most of the distinctive elements of the anti-revival rhetoric of the late twentieth century:

- (1) It's Provo [IRA] talk. You hear them on the TV and they start their speeches with that stuff. Maybe it's just so they can understand it because we can't... I mean it is a Catholic thing to me... It is a political statement made by those who speak it. Every time they talk it they are saying up your's.
- (2) They can talk all the Irish they want but it won't be shoved down my throat or my wains [wee ones = children].
- (3) You see them ones speaking in Sinn Fein speaking it all the time and they're always complaining about it not getting fair treatment as if it should... I'm fed up listening to them moaning all the time about civil rights and all that crap.
- (4) I feel that its (the Irish Language) part of a republican conspiracy to make us Irish, no to force us to become Irish.
- (5) I think that the Irish Language crowd are just part of the whole republican thing and they would be more interested in the unification of Ireland more so than speaking another language.
- (6) I think it is an irrelevant language which has no place in the modern world.
- (7) [when asked if Irish should be introduced into the curriculum of state schools]... As a Christian I am fundamentally against Republicanism and Republicans and therefore I would be totally against it being given any contact with my children.

The text reveals a strong association between the Irish language and republicanism; this is often because many Protestants only experienced the language when it was used by

⁴³ The study is an unpublished draft copy, which has no page numbers.

Sinn Féin representatives in media outlets, as demonstrated by excerpt (1). Motives attributed to Irish speakers include: a spurious manipulation of the language to achieve a united Ireland (5); a wish to annoy unionists (1); and participation in a conspiracy to convert unionists into nationalists (4). These points are similar to unionist rejections of the Irish language at the turn of the century. However, the growth of secularism muted objections to Irish language events taking place on Sundays; the secularism of the language movement is also reflected in the absence of references to the participation of Catholic clerics in the movement. The attributed motive of 'annoying' unionists echoes Cohen's concept of negative ethnicity, with its emphasis on oppositional identity and boundary maintenance, rather than positive in-group values (Cohen 1994: 120). The conspiracy theory represents the Irish language as a form of contagion that will erode unionist beliefs upon contact.

Rejections of the language include: it is used by republicans (1, 3, 4, 5, 7); the language is associated with Catholics, not Protestants (1); Irish is being forced upon Protestants/unionists against their will (2, 4); the language is obsolete (6); it is incorporated within nationalist civil rights campaigns (3); the language is incompatible with Christianity, as it is used by republicans (7). These rejections, many of which have changed little in centuries, demonstrate an identification of the language with an (often unpalatable) other ethno-political group, and a belief that the Irish language is dying or dead; the latter view is informed by modernist discourse. Unionists often claimed that the Irish language was 'hijacked' by the republican movement. They resisted the language revival as they felt it was being forced upon them; mere exposure to the language was interpreted as a form of compulsion. A more recent feature in unionist rejections of Irish that appears in the above text includes the association of the language with nationalist complaints about discrimination, which unionists opposed because they believed that Catholics were 'spongers', that discrimination against them does/did not occur, that the civil rights campaign was a republican plot, and the British government was diverting too many funds to nationalist districts (cf. Harris 1976: 174-6). The rejection of the nationality 'Irish' in excerpt (4) indicates an acceptance of the interpellation that equates Irishness with nationalism. Opposition to the Irish language concentrates on Northern republicans, rather than the Southern state's Gaelicisation policy; the IRA had become a more dangerous enemy to unionists than the 'irredentist' Republic.

In the arena of cultural competition in Northern Ireland, unionists believed that their own cultural identity seems less exciting than the Irish traditional music, language and games which appeared on the television screens of Northern Ireland and generated international interest (Dunn and Morgan 1994: 17). The feeling that no-one, including television producers, were neutral in the conflict led many Protestants, especially working-class ones, to conclude that there was a government-orchestrated media conspiracy to 'brainwash' Northern Protestants to the inevitability of a united Ireland. It was felt that this policy is reflected in community relations exercises, where Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage programmes were perceived as spreading 'Catholic EMU and Catholic culture' in state schools (ibid.: 17). These views reflected the Protestant working-class belief

that the British government was culturally conditioning Protestants to the inevitability of a united Ireland.

Positive Unionist Evaluations of the Irish Language

Elements within the Ulster Unionist Party viewed the Irish language issue as one that could possibly have advantages to a unionist position. In 1987 the party published a document proposing devolution for Northern Ireland which attempted to address nationalist grievances. Although the report stated that the party was opposed to an 'Irish dimension' in the North in the form of a constitutional institution, it said that unionists would not object to state funding of 'distinctively Irish cultural activities in Northern Ireland nor to state funding of such activities in proportion to the degree of public participation or interest in them' (UUP 1984: 5). Therefore the Ulster Unionist Party was attempting to allay nationalist alienation by cultural rather than constitutional means, although it did not recommend that the government *promote* Irish culture. The party believed that the funding of private domain 'cultural' language activities did not diminish the public domain British ethos of Northern Ireland. Thus the UUP were willing to consider an element of liberal pluralism which would offset corporate pluralism, or the distribution of political power and decision-making among the diverse groups in Northern Ireland.

The UUP regarded Irish as a cultural resource that should be absent from the exercise of political power. The unionist parties opposed bilingual signs and state or local government sponsored bilingualism, which they regarded as symbols that defined and enclosed territory controlled by nationalists. They opposed nationalist calls for parity of esteem for the two traditions in Northern Ireland which they believed would entail diminishing the British ethos of the region. Some unionists suspected that *cultural* parity of esteem would be used to justify *political* parity of esteem in the form of joint authority of Northern Ireland by the British and Irish Governments (cf. English 1994). Therefore unionists regarded calls for parity of esteem as a nationalist method of circumventing the fact that the majority of the population of Northern Ireland wished to retain the constitutional link with Great Britain.

In the 1990s some unionists became less suspicious of Irish-speakers and their culture; since 1993 the unionist-controlled Belfast City Council tolerated Irish language activities, even permitting Irish language events in the City Hall itself. Generally speaking, more liberal unionists have welcomed the common heritage discourse and the formation of the ULTACH Trust; a Belfast Telegraph editorial hoped that ULTACH would guard against Sinn Féin 'stunts' in Belfast City Council, by 'helping with grants towards non-political bodies run by lovers of the language rather than republican activists' (*Belfast Telegraph* 4 April 1991, p. 10). This quote reflects the common belief that republicans were only interested in the Irish language as a source of political capital, and that 'lovers of the language' had a non-republican outlook.

Some unionist intellectuals have expressed an attachment for a 'non-political Irishness', indicating a desire to differentiate Irish nationality from Irish nationalism (e.g. Kennedy 1995: 35). Unionist intellectuals also adopted the common heritage discourse, recommending that the Irish language should be shared by everyone in Northern Ireland, regardless of politics (Cadogan Group 1992: 14). One unionist intellectual even recommended that Protestants should not be averse to 'subverting the cultural enclosure of the language issue in a positive way' (Aughey 1995: 15). Some unionists that valued the Irish language recommended that unionism should engage nationalism in a proprietary contest to define the meaning of the Irish language. I am not suggesting that they wished to appropriate Irish culture from nationalists, but that they wished to de-invest it of nationalist ideology and represent this culture as belonging to both religious and political traditions in Ireland. In the following sections, I will introduce interpretations of the Irish language that are invested with unionist ideology.

Ian Adamson's Theory of Ulster Nationalism

One well-known attempt to associate the Irish language with an Ulster nationalist identity has been made by Ian Adamson, a Belfast City councillor. Adamson's history delineates a distinctly 'Ulster' identity that could be shared by Northern Catholics and Protestants; he wishes to 'develop the vision of a new and united Ulster to which all can give their allegiance, so we may achieve a government of all the people, by all the people, for all the people' (1982: 108). His works are based on the premise that nationalist historians have deliberately concealed evidence of Ulster's ancient political and cultural links with Britain.

Adamson asserts that the earliest inhabitants of Ireland were not the Gaels, but the Cruithin, who were closely related to the Scottish Picts (1974: 7). The Cruithin spoke a language that was non-Celtic, and possibly non-Indo-European in origin. Indeed, the first Celtic language that was spoken in Britain and Ireland was not Gaelic, but Brittonic, an ancestor of Welsh (1982: 1). The Cruithin were overrun by the invading non-Celtic Fir Bolg (Belgae), who became warrior aristocracies known as the Ulaid and Dalriata; the Ulaid became the dominant grouping, giving their name to the region in which they were concentrated (Ulster). The Ulaid defended their territory from the Gaelic invaders of the rest of Ireland with a series of earthworks. However the Ulaid were eventually overcome by the Gaels, and all the distinct peoples of Ulster eventually became assimilated to Gaelic language and culture. Some of the dispossessed Cruithin emigrated to Scotland, bringing their adopted culture with them. In some areas they settled down to become lowland Presbyterian Scots.

During the Plantation of Ulster the Cruithin returned to their homeland as the Ulster Scots or Scotch Irish. Many 'English' settlers were actually of ancient Celtic stock (ibid.: 66). The planter Cruithin were divided from the remaining 'Irish' Cruithin by religion, resulting in a conflict which ensues to this day.

Adamson appropriates an ancient warrior Cú Chulainn to the Cruithin; he was not of the Ulaid tribe and his boyhood name, Setanta, is cognate with a tribe that inhabited Lancashire

(ibid.: 16). Furthermore Adamson asserts that St. Patrick first preached among the Cruithin, and that Cruithin religious figures were prominent in Ireland's mission to spread Christianity to Europe in the Dark Ages.

Adamson finds the Irish language, or Ulster Gaelic as he prefers to call it, to be as close in form to Scottish Gaelic as to other dialects of Irish (1982: 273); the interpellation associates the language with an Ulster identity, which incorporates a sense of Scottishness⁴⁴. In doing so, He divorces the language from any concept of Irishness suggested by the term 'the *Irish* language'. The distinctiveness of Ulster Gaelic, coupled with the influx of English during the Plantation, had the result of 'perpetuating that ancient frontier between Ulster and the rest of Ireland' (ibid.: 74). Adamson attributes much of the blame for the decline of Ulster Gaelic to Irish nationalism, which ignored the dialect to create a standard Irish with a 'national character' (ibid.: 75). This development is interpreted as the reason why unionists became hostile to 'Gaelic' (ibid.).

Adamson's works attacked Irish nationalist histories on three fronts: firstly, he challenged the assumption that all ancient Irish culture is Gaelic; secondly, he appropriated Saint Patrick to the Cruithin; and thirdly he claimed that Ulster Protestants have as much right to live in Ireland as Irish Catholics, since the Plantation of Ulster was not a conquest by an oppressive people, but a reconquest by a people who had formerly been expelled (Buckley 1989: 193-4).

Adamson's work was enthusiastically welcomed by elements of the Ulster Defence Association (UDA), a loyalist paramilitary group, which used the theory to argue for an independent Northern Ireland⁴⁵. However, although the UDA were content to appropriate Cú Chulainn from nationalist iconography, the republican image of Irish made it too distasteful a language for many members to contemplate. Adamson had represented 'Gaelic' as a language that was once the instrument of conquest. Thus his theory demonstrated an ambivalent attitude to the Irish language; it was simultaneously the language of an alien invader and part of the indigenous culture of Ulster. Therefore why should the descendants of the Cruithin learn the language of their former and present enemies, the Gaels of Ireland? One UDA spokesman commented:

Those who associate with the Gaels should remember that THEY were the invaders and they nearly wiped out the indigenous people, the Cruithin element (*Sunday Tribune* 4 April 1993, Section A, p.13).

Ian Adamson was unnerved by the UDA's supposition that Northern Protestants were the only descendants of the Cruithin; he had hoped that his theory would provide a shared identity for Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (1991: xiii). His work and the UDA's reaction to it revealed disagreements within the independent Ulster lobby; Adamson

⁴⁴ Ulster Irish is 'a cross between the Gaelic of Ireland and the Gaelic of Scotland' (O'Rahilly 1988: 164)

⁴⁵ Bruce found the UDA rank-and-file to be uninterested in the Cruithin theory; one senior loyalist referred to 'the bloody croutons' (1994b: 24).

incorporated Northern Catholics within in his imagined Ulster; the UDA's interpretation of his thesis excluded them.

Although Adamson's works received a mixed reception within the ranks of the UDA, his works, which were both cheap and accessible to a non-academic public, sold well and were re-printed. His works contributed an historical vision to the Ulster identity of working-class Protestants. Michael Hall, a community worker and publisher, attempted to popularise the Cruithin theory in a series of pamphlets directed at Protestant working-class readers (Hall 1986, 1993b, 1995).

Chris McGimpsey: A British Citizen and an Irish National

Chris McGimpsey, who like Adamson was an Ulster Unionist Party councillor, differed from Adamson in that he advocated a shared Irish identity, rather than a shared Ulster one. Describing himself as Irish in nationality and British in citizenship, he asserted that the Irish state was not necessarily coterminous with the Irish nation. For unionists the way forward lies in their Irish past; after all, McGimpsey says, unionism grew out of the Irish Unionist Alliance and The Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union (speaking on *Explorations*, Radio Ulster: 1 August 1989). McGimpsey called for a return to the ideals of the Gaelic League, advocating an Irish identity which would enable unionists to enjoy their Irish heritage once again. He claimed that unionist goodwill towards the language was dashed by nationalists, who subordinated the language to their political objectives. For McGimpsey, a defining moment of Irish cultural politics was Hyde's resignation from the Gaelic League in 1915 and the re-working of the organisation's constitution to call for an independent Ireland (1994: 10). The Gaelic League became a favourite *bête noire* of McGimpsey, who attacked the organisation's activities and constitution on many occasions⁴⁶.

McGimpsey's approach was an attempt to revive the cultural nationalist discourse, which stresses the cultural aspect of Irish nationality, rather than the separatist part of it. McGimpsey was attempting to turn the tables on those who for many years had succeeded in making the cultural secessionist discourse of the Irish language the dominant one. McGimpsey suggested that the original, and therefore more authentic, discourse embracing the Irish language was the cultural nationalist one. McGimpsey also reversed the nationalist oppressor/oppressed dichotomy by interpreting partition as the unionist rejection of a homogenous Catholic Gaelic Ireland for a pluralist multinational United Kingdom. He denounced the homogenous nature of Irish nationalism, and appropriated the morally advantageous pluralist discourse for the unionist cause.

McGimpsey combined the cultural nationalist discourse of the Irish language with the civic concept of British citizenship in an innovative fashion. However, his concept of Irish identity was influenced by the writings of unionist intellectuals such as Jack Foster and

⁴⁶ For example, he stated, 'There are two groups in Loyalist areas learning Irish, and there is no way they will become affiliated to Conradh na Gaeilge with its current constitution.' (*Sunday Independent* 17 May 1993, p. 27).

Arthur Aughey. Furthermore, his interpretation of the Irish language reflected the British and Irish identifications of middle-class Protestants in Northern Ireland (cf. Todd 1987).

Cultural Competition

McGimpsey's approach reflected that of middle-class unionists who wished to express an Irish identity, whereas Adamson provided a personal interpretation of the Ulster nationalist identity, which is a feature of Protestant working-class ideology. However, the views of McGimpsey and Adamson influenced only a small number of Protestants; relatively few were interested in the Irish language.

The close relationship between politics and indigenous culture that is characteristic of nationalism became a dominant discourse (in the Foucaultian sense) that unionists felt they had to answer in its own terms. They engaged nationalists in an innovation contest by creating or re-discovering cultural traditions of their own⁴⁷. The British government funded unionist cultural organisations as part of its attempt to raise the cultural confidence of the unionist community. The state-funded Ulster Society opposed the Gaelic revival's attempts 'to dye Ulster's cultural tartan a solid emerald green' (*New Ulster* Winter 1993: 26). Some unionists attempted to emulate the Irish language revival by calling for a revival of Ulster-Scots, a distinctive speech variety that they claimed was a separate language. Unionists engaged in the innovation contest refused to countenance the appropriation of the Irish language; Ian Paisley Jnr., the son of the DUP leader, writes that 'Irishness is still too awful an abyss to jump into (Paisley Jnr. n.d.: 16).

Conclusion: Re-Symbolising Irish

In this chapter I have shown how the cultural secessionist discourse of the Irish language was reconstituted in the 1980s, incorporating new elements of anti-imperialism and socialism. Opponents of Sinn Féin challenged the association between the Irish language by various means, which included creating a common heritage discourse and re-asserting the cultural nationalist one. The former discourse draws on a global pluralist discourse which exalts the heterogeneity of cultures, and is thus diametrically opposed to much of the purist and isolationist ideology of the early Gaelic League. The common heritage discourse was interpreted by some nationalists as an attempt to divorce the Irish language from political nationalism, thus weakening the cause for a united Ireland. However, the discourse became popular with many influential bodies in Northern Ireland, including government departments, state-sponsored bodies and the media. Some revivalists articulated the common heritage discourse to secure state funding, and as a consequence the public use of the cultural

⁴⁷ Innovation contests involve the invention of new motifs or their importation from other communities in an atmosphere of competitive inventiveness (Harrison 1995).

secessionist discourse diminished in the 1990s. Thus the common heritage discourse became part of the public transcript of many Irish speakers. A corporate pluralist approach, which represented it in terms of the two traditions, was used by the language movement in order to secure a better status for the Irish language in Northern Ireland.

Political opponents in Northern Ireland described the Irish language and related issues in similar terms, although they had different objectives. Republicans symbolised Irish as a Celtic language as they wished to associate it with anti-imperialist struggles in Britain and France. The ULTACH Trust compared Irish with Scottish Gaelic and Welsh as it wished to draw a favourable response from the British government and allay unionist suspicions about the language. The concept of an Irish identity was surrounded by semantic ambiguity; republicans, many nationalists and many unionists conceived of it in terms of an Irish nationalist identity, while some unionists divorced concepts of Irishness from Irish nationalism, including Irish nationality itself. The Cultural Traditions Group described the Irish language as part of the common heritage of Northern Ireland, while republicans insisted the language was the common heritage of the people of *Ireland*. Many groups favourable to the Irish language described themselves in cultural terms and insisted that they had the best interests of the language at heart. Opponents were accused of 'politicising' the language, that is subordinating the language to (party) political concerns.

Many unionists denigrated the prestige of the Irish language using modernist discourse. Unionists who devalued the Irish language highlighted Sinn Féin's contribution to the revival in order to stigmatise the Irish language and its speakers as republican. Other unionists that agreed on the prestige of the language united with the British government and some Irish speakers to contest its symbolic association with nationalism; an example of this was the articulation of pluralist discourses of the common heritage variety. Other attempts to disassociate the Irish language from nationalism were made by unionist intellectuals such as Chris McGimpsey and Ian Adamson, who created distinctively unionist visions of the language. Unionist intellectuals and the ULTACH Trust were engaged in a long textual conversation with the Irish language movement on the nature of the revival (cf. Gudeman and Rivera 1990: 7, 159). ULTACH and the unionist intellectuals hoped that Protestant learners of Irish would join their ranks in the re-newed struggle to dis-associate the Irish language from republican ideology.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Distinctive Beliefs and Experiences of Protestant Learners of Irish

Protestant learners of Irish travelled physically and mentally between two communities in Northern Ireland, yet they could not identify fully with either of them. Their representations of the language often differed from those of Catholic Irish speakers, and the fact that they were learning Irish at all distinguished them from most other Protestants.

Although I examine small networks of learners in this work, most Protestant learners of Irish were unaware of one another. They often attended Irish classes by themselves and did not frequent Irish language events or activities. They had strong kinship, recreational and work links with other Protestants who were hostile or indifferent to the Irish language. Protestant learners often felt uncomfortable with the prospect of venturing into Catholic districts to learn Irish.

At an ideational level, some learners identified their interest in Irish with their distinctive national or religious identities. If the latter was the case, the learners were engaged in a creative process, since 'mainstream' Protestantism has not been associated with the Irish language. The learners often incorporated the language within microlevel concepts of identity, such as personal family histories, as well as macrolevel ones based on territorial or religious affiliations. Other learners felt that their interest in Irish expressed a degree of alienation from elements of the Protestant/unionist community in Northern Ireland. While the learners attempted to connect the Irish language to their ethnic or national identities, many simultaneously felt that while engaged in language learning activities they were 'observing' a Catholic and/or nationalist culture that was alien to them.

In the previous chapter I demonstrated how unionist intellectuals and the ULTACH Trust constructed models of the Irish language which were aimed at encouraging and validating Protestant interest in the language. They drew upon historical material to challenge the naturalisation of the connection of the Irish language and Irish nationalism. Their campaign involved the revival of the cultural nationalist discourse of the Irish language, the promotion of the cultural and common heritage discourses, and the construction of a Protestant Gaelic tradition. In this chapter I examine the effect the work of these professionals had on Protestant Irish speakers 'on the ground'. Since many of these Protestants were only partly aware of the professionals' efforts, they were often only exposed to fragments of discussions, or bits of historical information, rather than fully formed sets of linguistic denominators which could be interpreted as discourses.

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first section deals with the learners' relationship with the wider Protestant community, while the second one explores their encounters with Catholic speakers of the language. The second section introduces a major dichotomy between Protestants who learned Irish as a leisure activity, and Catholic Irish speakers who were engaged in full-time revivalism. I introduce a case study on one learner, James, at the parts of the chapter in which I deem they are most relevant.

The Learners' Relationship with the Protestant Community

Identification with the Protestant Community

Many learners, especially those who lived in working-class *Gemeinschaften*, felt that they could not tell their friends and neighbours about their interest in Irish. This was not always the case. Loyalists who were interned or imprisoned had proven their loyalty to Ulster's cause, and thus had the maximum symbolic capital. Therefore they could be more conciliatory in their attitudes than those whose loyalty has not been proven to be beyond reproach (Nelson 1984: 177). Protestants who learned Irish had to emphasise their unionist credentials to their peers to be tolerated in working-class districts. The unionist with much symbolic profit could learn Irish without fear of censure from his/her own community; thus loyalist prisoners and ex-prisoners could publicise their interest in Irish without fear of being vilified for betraying the unionist cause. The loyalist prisoners who returned my questionnaire informed me that their friends and relatives were indifferent to their interest in Irish; a working-class Protestant with less symbolic capital could expect to become the object of suspicion and possible community punishment.

Therefore, if a working-class Protestant learner of Irish could demonstrate his symbolic capital beyond doubt, s/he would overcome suspicions about his/her learning a Catholic or nationalist language. Ian Adamson told me of an incident which happened while he was living in Sandy Row, a Protestant working-class district in Belfast, before the outbreak of the 'troubles':

When I went to Sandy Row I brought a lot of my books, the Irish Texts Society and all my Gaelic books. I have a complete set of the Irish Texts Society and the Annals of Ulster... I'd all these books and a wee lady down the street, she came in to see if she could do (clean) for me, and look after me, and I said that would be great. But whenever word got about the place about all these strange books, almost like devil worship, people gave me funny looks, you know. They didn't talk to me. So I went to Smithfield (a market) because that's where I always bought everything. I bought this big picture of the Queen, and I put it up on the mantelpiece such that you could see it when you passed the window, and it just (clicks fingers) changed like that - the whole attitude. So I never had any trouble after that and everybody was very pleasant to me in the Sandy Row.

Adamson accrued unionist symbolic capital by displaying a picture of Queen Elizabeth II. As such, he had displayed his solidarity with his fellow Protestants in Sandy Row, who 'forgave' him for his interest in the Irish language, which had been perceived as strange, and even evil. The problem with proving one's loyalty to Ulster or Britain was that it

accrued symbolic capital in Protestant districts, yet it incurred a symbolic deficit in nationalist ones. Working-class unionists often had to go into nationalist areas to learn the Irish language. If their interest in Irish became known to their peers they found themselves in the position of having to overcommunicate their unionism in their own community, but having to undercommunicate it in an Irish language environment. It is significant that prominent unionists who expressed an interest in Irish felt themselves to be excluded from many Irish language circles and found it difficult to find an environment in which to learn the language. Loyalist prisoners who were learning Irish informed me that they could not envisage any situation in which they could learn or use the language when they were released.

Middle-class Protestants were more tolerant of Irish culture as many of them lived in peaceful areas and had non-conflictual relationships with Catholics. They were also physically and financially insulated from the ravages of the 'troubles'. The vast majority of the Protestant learners that I encountered were middle-class. Although middle-class learners had little fear of community punishments for learning Irish, they felt that their interest in Irish was not encouraged or supported in by their friends and relatives. They told me that their pursuit was perceived as odd or pointless. They felt isolated as a result; relatively few formed social networks to learn or discuss the language. Concepts of culture and identity that the learners received when young vied with their attempts to reconsider what they had learned:

In my own circle of friends and family and stuff, it wouldn't be really encouraged, or they wouldn't appreciate it fully, so it's not something that I'm actually going back to, what I feel to be my roots or something... I wouldn't want to be narrow, I mean, exclude friendships (with Catholics/Irish speakers) across the board, or whatever, you know. I'd quite like that, it's just circumstances, and where I live, and *everything*, and work. It just reinforces the circle that I'm in, and there isn't the opportunities, really. Unless the (Irish) class, the likes of the class forces a mix and a broadening, and a changing over, it's forced a change in that sense. Whether it continues, I think it would need to be a conscious effort on my part which might be difficult on a long term basis. I don't know...

I find it strange, because a part of me says, 'Well you're here and you live in this land and it should be part of you', but in a sense at the same token, my background isn't, and therefore it nearly feels that it would always be an 'add on'... It's nearly like learning a foreign language, it's nearly like that, yeah. I would like to feel that I own an Irish culture. I would like to establish it as part of my - but I don't see it in my family background and therefore it's difficult.

The degree to which the learners could identify with the language depended upon the knowledge and discourses of the Irish language that were available to them. The speaker in the above text had just begun to learn Irish. She struggles to identify with the Irish language, but because she feels it is 'new' to her, she cannot appropriate it, as it is not part of her 'heritage'. When I had finished interviewing this learner, I attempted to demonstrate to her

that there was a tradition of Protestant Irish speakers. I did this by showing her a Protestant translation of the New Testament into Irish, whereupon she became tremendously excited, exclaiming (I paraphrase), 'Why did no-one show me this before? Why did no-one tell me about this?' This learner was totally unaware of the Protestant Gaelic tradition before I met her. I attempted to resolve her inner conflict by introducing her to this tradition in a small way.

Middle-class Protestant learners, like their working-class counterparts, lived, worked and recreated in environments in which the Irish language had little relevance. Many Protestants who learned Irish were adults, and were often married with children. Their families did not share their interest in Irish. Frequently, the learners' full-time education had ended, and so they could not contemplate learning Irish in third-level education. Many of the learners told me that they were frustrated at discovering the language so late in their lives. Those learners who could not reconcile their interest in Irish with their ethnic identity felt confused, as the above text demonstrates. They could not harmonise their individual experiences with their group identity, resulting in a feeling of confusion (cf. Cohen 1994a: 35).

Many unionists did not discuss the Irish aspect of their identity in any systematic way that could be definitely identified as a discourse; for example, relatively few unionist learners that I met were acquainted with the discourse of cultural nationalism or Chris McGimpsey's use of it to combine Irish nationhood with British citizenship. Rather, they expressed a wish to learn the language of 'the people of Ireland', or the language 'of this island' or of 'this country'. These terms may or may not indicate a degree of personal affiliation with the language and its speakers; the learners may have felt a difficulty in expressing a sense of Irishness as they were unionist. Some unionists felt that by learning Irish they *were* expressing an Irish identity, but the latter was diffuse and ill-defined; they knew that other unionists felt that they were Irish, and they drew upon this 'voice on the ground' rather than coherent discourses of the Irish language .

However, some Protestants associated the Irish language with their concepts of Protestant and/or unionist identity in a more systematic fashion. In Chapter Four I demonstrated how Ian Adamson and Chris McGimpsey developed interpretations of the Irish language that were compatible with unionism. In the following text, the speaker constructs an history of the relationship between Britain and Ireland that is similar to that of Ian Adamson:

I would come from the unionist tradition, and I could actually use my knowledge of Irish at the moment to defend the unionist position an awful lot better than most of the unionists... the absurdity of Ireland as a sort of Gaelic, Catholic nation and the idea that because the sea is round it that makes it a nation. The language links us with Scotland and with Wales and with Cornwall, and actually England too. England is as Celtic a nation as we are. So I would see the Irish language as linking us with the other Celtic peoples, and I think its a blind spot, this obsession with England as an enemy. The English are the same people as we are, so it seems to me that Irish

language is something which holds the British Isles together. I mean the very word 'British' speaks to me of a Celtic language, you know, and not of English. Old Shakespeare with his England and her sister nations bound together by the triumph of sea. I see the sea as binding nations together. The sea has always bound Kintyre and County Antrim, and for these absurd people to draw a line down there and say, 'This is Ireland and that is Scotland' - that's rubbish.

By describing Irish as a Celtic language, this learner symbolically links the language to the British 'mainland'. He rejects what he perceives to be the attempt of Irish nationalism to substitute an insular Irish identity for one embracing the 'genuine' historical connections between Britain and Ireland. His reference to the sea 'binding nations together' echoes the unionist assertion that the Irish Sea and facilitated rather than hindered population movements between Britain and Ireland in ancient times (MacDonagh 1992: 31-2; McGarry and O'Leary 1995: 101-2). I am not sure if the speaker was influenced by the works of Ian Adamson, but it was not necessary for him to be aware of them. His Celtic image of Irish echoes the historical vision of the ancient unity of the peoples of Britain and Ireland that are a feature of unionist historiography, or unionist 'voices in the air', as Gudeman and Rivera would call them (Gudeman and Rivera 1990: 8-9).

I will illustrate the interdiscursivity of Protestant *religious* identity and the Irish language by reference to two texts which incorporate the language within distinctively Protestant traditions. In the first text, a learner relates her interest in Irish to her membership of the Church of Ireland:

I think there's a very strong feeling in the Church that the Church is the Church which comes through from the beginning of Christianity. I suspect we have a much stronger relationship to the Church of Saint Patrick. You can see far more, a lot of Church of Ireland clergy give their children Irish names, a lot of 'Patricks' and 'Brigids'. And of course part of it can be that Church of Ireland clergy are educated in the south, their divinity school's in Dublin. I never felt this Scottish thing very strongly at all. To me it seems to be an invention, a rejection of Irishness. I mean I do have members of my family who would talk about Scottish things and they would say, 'Oh, I can't stand Irish dancing, I like Scottish dancing.' It seems to me that they're two of the same thing.

In this text the speaker appropriates Saint Patrick to the Anglican tradition in a manner reminiscent of eighteenth and nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish antiquarianism. She would not have needed to have been aware of these antiquarians, as her statement demonstrates how their view of Saint Patrick has become common currency among many members of the Church of Ireland. In asserting her Irishness, the speaker rejects the attraction to Scottish

culture that is common among members of her family and Presbyterians⁴⁸. The second text is taken from an interview with a Presbyterian learner:

I began to think, 'If the Irish language applied to our tradition or the Protestant tradition', and I thought that maybe it did, you know, being Presbyterian, realising that Presbyterians as a tradition, as a denomination, were at various times persecuted as well by the Established Church, and reading somewhere that Presbyterian ministers spoke Irish very fluently, up to a certain point, and the whole notion of dissent within Presbyterianism, of breaking away from the mould.

In this text the Presbyterian speaker relates his interest in Irish to the dissenting tradition of Presbyterianism. Indeed, he could be said to be dissenting from other Dissenters; relatively few of his congregation would have recognised the Irish language as part of their heritage. The learner indicates his knowledge of previous Presbyterian speakers of Irish; thus he has been influenced by the historical material which was being published by the ULTACH Trust. Thus the learner is interpreting a feature of his church in an innovative fashion; at the same time he is tapping into a Presbyterian tradition that was being constructed for his behalf.

The ability to associate the Irish language with versions of Protestant and/or unionist identity depended upon the knowledge that was available to the learners. The learners cited above were educated, middle-class Protestants who were active in church circles. Other Protestants, particularly working-class ones, had less access to information that would enable them to combat the connections between the Irish language with Catholicism and nationalism. In the following case study, a working-class learner discusses his motivations to learn Irish and his image of the language, which was partly informed by the works of Ian Adamson:

The Ulster and Irish Identities of James

James lived on a Protestant working-class estate near the interface with Catholic west Belfast. The community was small, close knit, and many of its occupants believed that Catholics wanted them to move out of the area so that they could take over their homes. Relationships between people on the estate and local Catholic communities were very tense. James was a community worker on the estate. His initial view of the Irish language as a 'Catholic gobbledygook' was challenged when he discovered, to his 'shock and horror', that his mother had been raised as a Catholic, and that her father had taught the Irish language. This changed his attitude to the language enormously:

⁴⁸ Although I have no evidence of this, I believe that Presbyterian belief systems have overcome the distinctive Anglo-Irish nature of Anglicanism in Northern Ireland; thus members of the Church of Ireland may believe that they are descended from Scottish planters.

He had taught it and so I thought of it as an actual language, and I thought, 'I don't think it's fair, you know, that the Catholics have our language', and I thought that was very unreasonable and I, when I expressed the opinion in school I quickly found that it *was* fair and, 'Shut up and mind your own business, and say nothing'. But I had this sort of lasting idea, vague idea, that something had been taken from us, you know. I felt affronted.

James' motivation to learn Irish was based upon his family history, which allowed him to incorporate the language within a tradition of his own. Although he now believed that the Irish language belonged to him as much as it did to Catholics, he soon learned that his peers did not share this belief.

James thought little more on the topic until he was in Romania, helping to build an orphanage. While travelling to the orphanage he and a taxi driver had a conversation which awoke his interest in the Irish language:

He was saying to me, 'Where are you from?', and I was saying 'Ireland', and when I had worked it out geographically so that he knew where Ireland was, he said to me, 'What's the Irish for that?', pointing at a horse, you know, and I had to say 'I don't know', and then I thought, 'Wait a minute, you don't even know your own language you know. That's ridiculous.' So I came home thinking, 'Stuff it, I'm going to learn it. I'm going to learn my language. Why should they take my language? I have as much right to it as they do'.

Thus James had experienced a heightened sense of Irishness while abroad. I believe that Protestants express a distinctively Irish identity when overseas as foreigners are often unaware of the nature of the political and territorial divisions within Ireland; thus James would have confused the taxi driver if he had told him that he came from *Northern* Ireland. While talking to me, James alternated between expressing a geographical category of Irishness and an Ulster national identity, which seemed to express his deepest sense of belonging, including his political beliefs. He told me he would prefer Northern Ireland to be independent, but felt that would be impracticable, and would thus like the region to achieve a degree of federalism within the United Kingdom. He also preferred as much cultural autonomy for Ulster as possible, and expressed an interest in the works of Ian Adamson. James integrated the Irish language into both his versions of Irishness and 'Ulsterness':

If someone says to me, 'What's the Irish for that?', I'll be able to say that in Irish and that's that. And I regard myself in a sense as Irish in that I regard myself as an Ulsterman and as part of the island. It's everything else that I am not terribly happy with, with the way we have been treated by Britain and I think if you're going to establish an identity for yourself I would say, 'I'm a Christian first' (James had strong evangelical beliefs), and then I would say, 'I'm an Ulsterman, and as an Ulsterman I'm

Irish', and it doesn't mean that I want to be involved with the Republic in any sense, but it does mean that I'm from the island of Ireland and perhaps there's a degree of learning identity in learning Irish...

Speaking Irish is not a republican thing to do, it's an Ulster thing to do, and to speak in the Ulster language and to speak Gaelic in Ulster is a thing that Ulstermen should do. I'd like to see them all speaking in Irish.

In the first part of this text, James represents Ulster as a region of Ireland. He identifies himself as Irish in a geographical sense, but adds that he is not an Irish nationalist. In the latter part of the interview James seems to oppose the Ulster and Irish identities, rather than merging them, as in the previous sequence. Also he calls the Ulster language 'Gaelic', thus disassociating it from the word 'Irish' altogether. In various parts of the text James refers to Irish, which refers to the people of Ireland, and 'Ulster Irish' and 'the Ulster language', which refer to the northern part of Ireland. At different times in the interview James identified with these peoples, and their language(s).

James' interpellation of the Irish language as 'Ulster Gaelic' may have stemmed from Ian Adamson's works. However, he may have been influenced by other factors. James attended Irish classes in *Cumann Chluain Ard*, an Irish language club in west Belfast, in which pupils were constantly reminded of the distinctive features of the Ulster dialect of Irish, and were encouraged to speak only that dialect. Whatever the case, James had arrived at an interpretation of the Irish language that was compatible with his political beliefs. His representation of Ulster Irish as 'the Ulster language' would have not have been shared by his nationalist classmates, who would have not agreed to such a form of 'linguistic partitionism'. Rather, their loyalty to the Ulster dialect of Irish expressed a regional identity.

James incorporated the Irish language within his notions of regional and national affiliations, as well as within a sense of family identity. His views reveal the situational nature of unionist national identity and the attraction of the Ulster identity for working-class Protestants (Waddel and Cairns 1986; Todd 1987).

The Learners' Alienation from the Protestant Community

Many learners related their interest in Irish to their lack of a positive sense of Protestant culture. They felt alienated from folk (and some social scientists'!) conceptions of Protestantism in Northern Ireland that focused on religious fundamentalism and Orangeism.

Working-class learners told me that they had Protestant friends and acquaintances to whom they would not reveal their interest in Irish. The Irish language was largely identified with the Catholic/nationalist community; therefore working-class Protestants who learned Irish would be regarded with great suspicion by their peers. There were two related reasons for this. Learning Irish entailed social interaction with Catholics/nationalists, the opponents of the Protestant working-class. Furthermore, Protestant learners of Irish would be viewed as exposing themselves to contamination by Catholic/nationalist belief systems.

Mary Douglas' analysis of the concepts of pollution and taboo (1966) demonstrates how boundary-maintenance is reinforced by religious belief. Religions elaborate the ideal order of society which is constantly threatened by transgressions. Ideas about identifying and punishing transgressions impose system on an inherently untidy experience (ibid.: 5). Anomalous persons pollute themselves and others, no matter how well-intended their actions are. Darby maintains that in communities that are becoming more polarised it is often the marginal people who suffer most (1986: 165). In Northern Ireland these can be people who marry across the religious divide, or remove themselves ideologically or physically from their own ethnic communities by choice. As conflict escalates, the marginal figure is the object of growing distrust as he/she challenges group integrity and values. The more exclusive the group, the greater the threat from the heretic, who blurs the boundary between two opposed groups when the dynamics of conflict are stressing the importance of group closure and exclusivism. Furthermore the marginal person may be held in suspicion by both groups. In Northern Ireland the conflict has been mostly fought by the Catholic and Protestant working classes. Protestant working-class exclusivism militated against unnecessary interaction with Catholics. Anyone engaged in affective interaction with Catholics or who adopted 'Catholic beliefs' could be punished or expelled from the Protestant working-class community. The Irish language and its speakers were identified with the Catholic community; therefore we can assume that Protestants who learned Irish would be regarded with great suspicion by many loyalists. Working-class Protestants who learned Irish were in a perilous position because their peers believe that the Protestant/unionist struggle was being lost (Bruce 1994a: 37-71); therefore the pressure to maintain Protestant social closure and solidarity was all the greater. As such, learners living in Protestant working-class districts often went to great lengths to disguise their interest in the Irish language. I will demonstrate this point by returning to my case study of James.

James' Relationship with his Local Community

James first looked for an Irish language class during the summer months, when most teaching institutions were closed, and the only classes available were in west Belfast. Eventually he opted to go to *Cumann Chluain Ard*. He felt uncomfortable learning Irish in the area, but he was not aware of any other Irish classes. He believed that if his neighbours saw him travelling to the class, they would suspect him of having some secret liaison with republicans. However, he believed that in a sense classes in neutral or Protestant areas would be more dangerous to attend, as he would be more likely to be spotted by someone from his estate.

James was afraid that his interest in Irish would be discovered by other people in his district, and only confided in his girlfriend and parents about it. Although he was an Ulster nationalist and had an interest in the works of Ian Adamson, he was aware that many of his neighbours associated the Irish language with republicanism, rather than Ulster nationalism. James believed that his strong religious beliefs earned him some respect in his community.

However, he said that respect would not be enough to allay suspicions about his loyalty to the local community that would be aroused if his interest in Irish became common knowledge. Although he had a personal stereo, he would not countenance using it to listen to Irish tapes on walks around the estate as the ear-plug might fall out and someone would recognise the language he was listening to. He listened to his Irish tapes at home, with the windows closed, and was careful to hide the tapes and other Irish language material when visitors called. James was in no doubt that he faced serious retribution if his interest in Irish was discovered, and compared his activity with that of a local who was badly beaten for having a Catholic girlfriend. To an extent he understood the attitudes of his neighbours:

That shows you the degree of concern and fear, and having said that, that's not because there are some particularly vicious people on the estate, although there are, but that is an indication of how scared people are. They're afraid of the slightest gap in the shield-wall, that represents the bursting of the dam, and they're not prepared to move sideways even, in case something worse happens. That's not my view, but I sympathise very strongly with that view. It's sad that people are so defensive and that's what it really is. I mean it looks aggressive but it's actually defensive, and that saddens me but I understand how they feel.

James's fears were informed by Protestant working-class ideology, with its rules of exogamy, sanctions against interaction with Catholics, and fear of defeat by Irish nationalism. While James disagreed with attitudes to the Irish language on the estate, he was still a part of that community and identified with it, to the extent that he 'understood' the 'defensive' social sanctions that would be deployed against him if his interest in Irish was discovered. His views suggest that his strong religious convictions did not confer him with enough symbolic capital to learn the Irish language without arousing suspicion.

I have shown the tendency for Irish speakers, Protestant and otherwise, to believe that the Irish language could be used to make others more like themselves. The linguistic determinism that was associated with the cultural secessionist discourse is the most common manifestation of this belief. However, middle-class learners often told me that they believed the Irish language could be used to mellow the political opinions of inflexible unionists. They believed that the Irish language could be used to make working-class unionists more liberal, and thus more middle-class, in their political outlook:

It would be nice to see Protestants accepting we're part of this country. We've lived here all our lives, and our families date back centuries. Like, this language is as much ours, as much a part of our identity, as it is of somebody of a different religion. This language was here before any of this conflict between Protestant and Catholic. I think that's something that would do an awful lot for the advance of this country and the advance of community relations, if Protestants became more aware of the cultural

heritage that they share with their Catholic neighbours... And they lack a real cultural heritage, this nonsense of beating Lambeg drums⁴⁹ on the 'Twelfth', really, it's a bit shallow. They've got something a lot more rich than that. I was trying to tap into that on my own as well, learning Irish... I would like to see some kind of attempt to raise the awareness among the Protestant people of the cultural awareness that they share with everybody on this island, instead of saying 'no' to everything that doesn't wear an Orange and purple sash, which is really what it's become.

GMc.: Did you discuss your ideas with other Protestants?

Learner: Yes, and a number of them agreed with me. But you know yourself, you have two sides or more to the Protestant community. You have your sort of lunatic fringe, the 'no' people, and then there are people like ourselves who have some degree of education and culture and can see bullshit for bullshit.

In this text the cultural discourse, the common heritage discourse, and the 'pagan language' antiquarian view of the language are used to assert the relevance of the Irish language for the Protestant community. The middle-class speaker balances his positive opinion of the Irish language with a negative evaluation of Protestant working-class Orange culture, which is reminiscent of the contempt many middle-class Protestants have for the Orange Order (Harris 1986: 166-197; Todd 1987: 19). The speaker denigrates the Orange culture, which he wishes to replace and/or supplement with the Irish culture. In this way extreme unionists will become more accommodating, like 'ourselves'. However, at the end of the text the speaker expresses doubts as to whether 'the lunatic fringe, the "no people" will ever become more like those who have 'some degree of education and culture'.

This liberal view was often invested with the ideologies of the learners. Unionist learners hoped that the Irish language could be used to create a tolerant unionism that would address Catholic grievances and prevent the disintegration of Northern Ireland. Nationalist learners hoped that by learning Irish, extreme unionists would gradually lose their allegiance to Britain, not re-mould it in another form.

Therefore, some middle-class learners could use their interest in Irish to express a sense of difference from their working-class counterparts. They enjoyed the liberal and tolerant image that they cultivated by learning Irish, and contrasted this with the sectarianism of the Protestant working class. One young member of the Ulster Unionist Party who was learning Irish was part of a movement to sever the party's links with the Orange Order and attract Catholics to unionism. The Democratic Unionist Party was opposed to such moves, as it interpreted unionism in terms of the protection of Protestant interests, particularly those of the working class. The DUP was vehemently opposed to Protestants adopting a sense of Irishness, and the young UUP member told me, with great relish, that a prominent member of the DUP had telephoned him to accuse him of betraying unionism by learning Irish. Thus the UUP member related his interest in the Irish language to the 'new' unionism, which was to be pluralist and admit a sense of Irishness (e.g.s Aughey 1989, 1995; McGimpsey 1994).

⁴⁹ A Lambeg drum is a large drum that is played at Orange demonstrations.

While some Protestants felt that by learning Irish they identified with their own class and differentiated themselves from their more 'boorish' working-class counterparts, other Protestants felt a deeper sense of dissatisfaction with their experience of Protestant culture and politics in Northern Ireland. Protestant learners often complained that knowledge of the Irish language was withheld and excluded from them by the educational system and their peers:

Because of the area that I was came from, I felt that because it's a very loyalist area, I felt they kind of robbed me of a lot of culture and a lot of heritage that was rightfully mine as well.

In the above text the learner is describing her gradual rejection of unionism for nationalism, which was reflected in a growing interest in Irish culture. Many nationalist learners believed that the Irish language provided a non-Catholic means by which they could express their Irish national and nationalist identities:

Learner: Over a period of years when I was at grammar school I started to think, 'Why is this island divided ?' and I think I eventually came up with the idea that it shouldn't be... I think from that knowledge I came round to saying, 'Well, what are the features of Ireland, what are the essential aspects of its culture, and what are the things that people share, that wouldn't necessarily be too one-sided or the other, that wouldn't necessarily belong to one religious group or the other? The biggest feature I could see then was the Irish language, and it was something that needn't necessarily belong to one group or the other.

...GMC.: Can unionists learn the Irish language and remain loyal to Britain?

Learner: I think it's a bit difficult when the government to which the unionists owe their allegiance has done so much to destroy the language over a period of time. If you get into the Irish language and that sort of thing, to a large extent that brings you closer to the Catholic people on this island. It brings you closer to them in a certain way and it encourages you to think in a more sort of Irish way and a more sort of all-island - it gives you an all-Ireland perspective on things..

The concept of linguistic determinism and the cultural secessionist discourse are invoked in the above text. Like their Catholic counterparts, Protestant nationalists found it difficult to conceive how unionists could take an interest in the Irish language and retain their allegiance to Britain. In drawing upon the cultural secessionist discourse, many Protestant nationalist learners seemed to have a popular and accessible way in which to discuss the language. This was in sharp contrast with the vague and fragmentary views of some unionist learners.

Despite the fact that some Protestant learners abandoned unionism, the main ideology of most Northern Protestants, few of them would consider abandoning their Protestant

identities as well; full ethnic transference was a rare phenomenon⁵⁰. The speaker of the above text lived in a Protestant middle-class district, worked in a mostly Protestant environment, and had strong Presbyterian convictions. Church activities played a major part in his social as well as his religious life. Despite his nationalist beliefs, he was firmly grounded in the Protestant community. He only felt alienated from other Protestants on the grounds of political differences.

Irish as a Catholic/Nationalist Language

In this section I describe how Protestant learners felt that in learning Irish they were observing the practices and beliefs of another community. Protestants could not identify with the particular parts of the Irish language that reflected Catholic theology, but they discovered that many Catholic speakers of Irish agreed that they were unnecessary; the forces of secularism had eroded the belief that the Irish language should reflect Catholic thought. One issue that irked Protestant learners was the use of Irish to convey words and images which reflected nationalist ideology; some Protestants, particularly unionists, believed that the common heritage discourse, if applied to the teaching of Irish, would exclude specific references that reflected nationalist ideology. Some nationalist Protestants, who believed that there was a link between the Irish language and Irish nationalism, found some aspects of nationalism abhorrent, particularly republicanism. Many Protestants believed that they were disadvantaged by the fact that most speakers of Irish were Catholic.

The Irish Language and Catholic Theological Values

Part of the Catholic discourse involves the perception that the Irish language itself reflects and inculcates a Catholic world-view. This discourse usually centres around popular greetings in Irish. A common greeting in learners' Irish in Northern Ireland is '*Dia duit*' ('God be with you') and the reply is '*Dia's Muire duit*' ('God and Mary be with you'). Some Protestant learners rejected the use of both, as they believed that the name of God should not be used in a 'flippant' fashion, but should be used only in situations of religious worship. Many others accepted the use of '*Dia duit*' but rejected the response, as they were opposed to Mariolatry. Some divorced the function of the phrases from their original meaning:

One of the things that struck me immediately was the huge influence that the Catholic Church had on the language. One of the first things you learn is the greeting, you know, and what other country in the world says 'God and Mary be with you' ? That

⁵⁰ During my fieldwork, I only encountered one Protestant learner who converted to Catholicism. This learner had been imprisoned for republican paramilitary activity, and felt that he had better live in a Catholic district upon his release. Once he had moved to Catholic west Belfast, he felt that the only way in which he could continue to observe his religious beliefs was to join the Catholic Church; there were no Protestant ones in the district.

was the first thing that struck me. But that was more amusing than anything else. It was shocking in a way, but it was amusing. And in the literature it comes across, the influence of the priests and everything, it's just so strong in the language. But it's really because the people who have been speaking the language are Catholics. So it's logical that it has developed that kind of taint. I just had to get over the boundary of - it's just a greeting, for example, '*Dia's Muire duit*'. It doesn't matter what it originally meant... This language was here before there were any Protestants or Catholics.

In this text the learner belittles the Catholic quality of the Irish language by describing the Catholic greeting as 'amusing' and separating the concept of the language, which is not intrinsically Catholic, from its speakers. By stressing the antiquity of the language, he circumvents the association of Irish with Catholicism. Other Protestant learners described the theological content of the greeting as unimportant by drawing attention to English language salutations such as 'Good-bye', which originally meant 'God by you'. Many Protestant learners found themselves using both '*Dia duit*' and '*Dia's Muire duit*' inadvertently because it was so commonly used by other Irish speakers. In recent years many Protestant learners have discovered that Catholic speakers of Irish also rejected the use of '*Dia duit*' and '*Dia's Muire duit*' for other greetings. Textbooks for learners of Irish have gradually been secularised in the 1980s and 1990s; apart from the common greetings mentioned above, words and phrases reflecting nationalist and Catholic thought have often been omitted.

Other objections voiced to me by Protestant learners included an objection to the Irish word for a Catholic church, '*teach an phobail*' ('the house of the people') which compares unfavourably with the phrase for a Protestant church, '*an teampall Gallda*' ('the foreign or Protestant temple'). Protestant learners were irritated by the interpellations associated with words such as *Gael* and *Gall*; the expression *Gael* was often used to describe a Catholic and/or a nationalist, whether he/she spoke Irish or not; in Donegal Irish the term *Gael* simply denotes a Catholic. I had a personal experience of this in Donegal when, during a conversation in Irish, an old lady asked me, '*An Gael nó Gall thú?*' ('Are you a Catholic [*Gael*] or a Protestant [*Gall*]'). Clearly she did not conceive of me as a 'Gael', whether I spoke Irish or not.

When Protestants became aware of the manifestation of Catholic thought in the Irish language, they realised that they are observing part of a culture with which they could not identify. However, phrases such as '*Dia's Muire duit*' annoyed some Protestants, but they did not deter them from learning the language⁵¹. The fact that the Irish language was mostly spoken by Catholics and/or nationalists was a much greater cause of discomfort to Protestant learners.

⁵¹ Because I consider this issue to be a relatively minor one, I will not pursue it in the following chapters.

The Nationalist Content of Irish Language Events and Classes

Adherents of the cultural secessionist discourse believed that the Irish language contained interpellations that created and reflected a nationalist world-view. However, unionist learners often objected to the 'natural' relationship between the Irish language and nationalism. They frequently complained about Irish speakers' description of Northern Ireland as '*na sé chontae*' ('the six counties'), a nationalist term for Northern Ireland. They also objected to the anti-English racism of Irish speakers and Irish language literature. A common complaint was that republican English-language songs were commonly sung at Irish language events.

In the following text the speaker describes an incident at an Irish language college in south Belfast. The learner attended this particular class as she had heard that Protestants attended it in large numbers. During the class, the teacher introduced the learners to a song which included a line referring to driving out '*na Gaill*' ('the English/foreigners') out of Ireland:

That song that we did, I didn't feel too happy about singing it, I must admit, I really didn't. You see, I think that's from her (the teacher's) background, you know, it's acceptable, but it does feel odd. Maybe I'm reading too deeply into it, or whatever, but it does feel odd, especially the whole analogy of it. And funny enough, I don't know what day that was on, but there was a week's lapse, and Cathal gave me a lift home, and *he* actually brought it up that he didn't feel right in singing it either, and he felt it was out of place in a mixed group, to sing that type of song. Even if it wasn't intended that way, just because of the tones of it, it might be interpreted wrongly. And I appreciated that someone from a Roman Catholic background had differing opinions or whatever, would feel the same about it.

In this text the speaker challenges the right of the teacher to introduce nationalist themes in the class; in particular, the learner may have interpreted the term '*na Gaill*' to refer to Protestants, including herself. In her view, a 'mixed' class should avoid political issues. This would follow the customary etiquette of avoiding political issues in 'mixed' company (Harris 1996: 146-8; Larsen 1982a, 1982b). The speaker feels 'odd' singing the song, both because she does not agree with the sentiments it conveys, but also because she feels strange for having an objection to it; the 'odd' feeling is ameliorated when a Catholic learner agrees with her objections to the song.

Since unionists were a minority in Irish language classes, they often felt they should not offend those who used the language to convey nationalist sentiments; on these occasions they often felt they were intruding upon a culture that had nothing to do with them. Furthermore, because they were in a subordinate position in the classes, they were reluctant to register their disapproval; their objections were part of a hidden transcript which was related

to myself, other Protestant learners, and some sympathetic Catholics (cf. Scott 1985, 1990). Therefore, other Irish speakers remained unaware that they were introducing topics which were considered to be controversial.

However, on some occasions Protestant learners decided to combat the associations between the Irish language and nationalism in public. Although such incidents were few in number, the protagonists felt that had the moral advantage. The common heritage discourse, combined with the rules for 'mixed' interaction, could be used to great effect. In the following text, a learner describes her attempt to change the nature of an evening class in a Catholic secondary school which is located in 'neutral' south Belfast:

Well, there was a new guy teaching the class, and the first night he arrived it seemed to me, I would have thought he would have known St Joseph's would have been a mixed group, because that's the whole point of the class being in south Belfast, that it was accessible to Protestants to go and learn. But in the first lesson he was teaching us to how to say our names, and he put up pictures, photographs of people on the overhead projector on the screen, and he expected us to know Gaelic football stars and Sinn Féin councillors (laughs).

GMc.: Which Sinn Féin councillors?

Learner: Mairtín Ó Muilleoir. That's the only reason why, and I thought that was rather different from *Oideas Gael*'s⁵² view that the language was everybody's heritage, and it was for everybody. But I don't know whether we got our wires crossed, but I really sort of, I was so cross at the end of the class, and there were two other girls who I'd worked out, they were Prods like I was, and so as we were leaving I asked them, you know it's very hard to broach the subject, how they felt about it, and they were even crosser than I was, 'cos I was trying to make sense of it. OK, that's OK, he doesn't even realise that this isn't very friendly to us because the whole culture comes with the language and we don't really know that much, we don't watch RTE (*Raidió Teilifís Éireann*, the Irish Republic's television service) like everybody in west Belfast does. And these two girls were raging and they were really, really angry so I thought, 'Right', and I went back in and the girl who organises the classes was there, and I said I'd like to speak to her and this guy arrived so I couldn't, so she gave me her phone number and I rang her afterwards and gave off. I was really, really incensed, but I wasn't giving up the class, I was quite determined, and after two or three weeks it soon got better.

In this text the Irish language is associated with a culture that is alien to the speaker. She believes that the very mention of Sinn Féin councillors and Gaelic football stars introduces an element of politico-religious particularism to the class. The mention of Irish sport seems to her to represent an assumption that everyone in the class is Catholic; she does

⁵² *Oideas Gael* is an Irish language college in the south Donegal Gaeltacht. The college is particularly interested in attracting Protestant learners of the language. *Oideas Gael* will be discussed in more depth later in this work.

not watch GAA games on television, like 'everyone in west Belfast'. She objects to the Sinn Féin councillor's picture as she does not approve of the association between the Irish language and republicanism. The teacher's approach contradicts that of *Oideas Gael*, the college in which discussions involving Irish politics are avoided by the staff. The speaker protests about the nature of the class, encouraged by the outrage expressed by other Protestant learners and the moral advantage conferred to her by the neutral location of the school.

In short, she openly resists the teacher using the common heritage discourse to combat what she perceives to be the association of the Irish language with Catholicism and republicanism. She uses a discourse drawn upon by the Irish language movement itself to challenge its own assumptions. The learner attests that an adherent of the common heritage discourse cannot continue to associate the Irish language with republicanism and Catholicism. Although she represents a minority in Irish language circles, she has obtained the moral high ground. She deploys the ideological terms of reference of the Irish language movement, which endorses the common heritage discourse, to pressurise for change, a tactic which the teacher finds difficult to deflect as he would be made to feel hypocritical (cf. Scott 1990: 105). In Irish language classes in neutral locations, and at the *Oideas Gael* course, I have noticed a tendency for Protestant students to use the common heritage discourse to resist claims that Irish nationalism and the Irish language were related.

Thus, Protestant learners used the common heritage discourse to combat the associations between the Irish language and nationalist culture in certain circumstances. What culture would replace it? According to the rules of social etiquette in Northern Ireland, political and religious discussions should be avoided in mixed company. Therefore, many Protestant learners, including many unionists, would have been unhappy with elements of language learning that reflected Protestant and/or unionist thought, as these would offend Catholic learners in the class. In mixed classes, Protestants expected teachers to adhere to the cultural and common heritage discourses, and avoid Irish political and religious issues. This was easier said than done, as the above text demonstrates. The very mention of Irish sport, which is part of the cultural discourse, is interpreted as Catholic particularism by the learner. The result would be a sanitised culture, in which 'controversial' topics of conversation were banned, and Irish speakers would be unaware of one another's political and religious opinions, perhaps leading to mutual suspicions (cf. Harris 1976: 146). In classes which were entirely composed of unionists, attempts were made to invest the Irish language with unionist ideology. I will demonstrate this phenomenon in Chapter Seven.

In some situations, for example in classes in Catholic west Belfast, Protestants were reluctant to challenge their teachers, and their public transcript was one of compliance and assent. They would rather leave a class than create a fracas by trying to change its content. If they left classes they indulged in a passive form of resistance which was indicated by their absence. Factors which militated against open resistance included fear of republicans, and learners' fears of being excluded from Irish language classes by a public display of non-conformity.

I will illustrate this point by reference to an incident during a lecture on the Irish language in a neutral venue in central Belfast. I attended the lecture with a Protestant friend who was learning Irish. The speaker, an Irish language speaker from the Republic, criticised 'the cultural cringe' who associated the Irish language with old-fashioned ideas and republicanism; she was making a veiled attack on the associations between the Irish language, militant nationalism and Catholicism that is so common in the Southern Irish language scene (Tovey et al. 1989). A member of the audience interpreted the comment as an attack on Sinn Féin and told her that she should not criticise the party, as it had done 'a lot of good work for the language'. My friend rolled her eyes and shifted uncomfortably in her seat as the speaker nervously shuffled her papers. Later, she expressed her frustration:

Those Southerners don't know what it's like up here. I wanted to say, 'Sinn Féin *did* hijack the language', but people are terrified. You know what it's like in Belfast, everyone gets to know you, and hear what you've said, and if they recognised you they'd point you out. You'd end up getting shot or something. I wanted to stand up and say something, but I didn't have the courage. They say what they like and nobody takes them on.

Culture and Politics: A Voice on the Ground

I have indicated that many Protestant learners were not aware of the debates among Irish language speakers in which advocates of the cultural nationalist and cultural secessionist discourses disputed the meaning of the language. However, the learners drew upon a related dichotomy that was everyday parlance in Northern Ireland. This posits the opposition of the concepts 'culture' and 'politics'. According to this view, that which is intrinsically cultural cannot be political, although culture could be manipulated by self-seeking politicians. In terms of the Irish language, an Irish learner who discussed his/ her interest in Irish in terms of 'culture' may not have been alluding to the cultural nationalist discourse, which argues that the essence of Irish nationality lies in its culture. Neither may he/she have been using the cultural discourse of the Irish language, or the representation of the language in terms of other aspects of Irish culture. Rather the learner may have been simply wishing to differentiate himself/herself from some Catholic speakers of Irish by the attribution of motives for learning the language; 'cultural' motives to learn Irish were pitted against 'political' ones. The learners attributed 'political' motivations to those who they believed were manipulating the language for cynical reasons and were uninterested in the language for its own sake. This approach justified their own interest in the language, as well as interpellating the motives of others in a negative sense (cf. Wright-Mills 1984: 16-17). 'Cultural' motives to learn Irish were attributed to themselves to indicate a genuine concern for the welfare of the language and its future. Thus learners often attributed positive 'cultural' motives for learning Irish to themselves, and negative 'political' motives to political opponents. This often took the form of constitutional nationalist and unionist learners accusing republicans of 'politicising' the Irish language:

I think there's a class in Conway Mill (a refurbished flax mill on the Falls Road) or something, but you're going right into the heart of west Belfast, and I think there's an emphasised political dimension to the learning of it there, which I don't care for. I want to learn the language purely for cultural reasons, not for any other reasons, you know.

Texts such as the ones above may or may not indicate an awareness of the cultural or cultural secessionist discourses of the Irish language. The attribution of 'politicising' the Irish language stems back to the early years of the Gaelic League (Dunleavy and Dunleavy 1991: 314). It was also a feature of the common heritage discourse. However, in contemporary Northern Ireland, people discriminated between cultural and political issues when discussing many aspects of society, rather than merely those related to the Irish language. This culture/politics opposition is an example of a 'voice on the ground' that Gudeman and Rivera would describe as 'thick with history and laden with memory' (Gudeman and Rivera 1990: 190).

The Irish Language as a Sensitive Issue

While many Protestant learners described the Irish language in cultural terms, they were aware that many people regarded the Irish language issue as a sensitive 'political' issue that was best avoided in 'polite' company. In the following text, a middle-class learner relates the reaction of his Protestant work-colleagues to his interest in Irish:

It makes them step back. I think it's bewilderment more than anything else. And some of them don't want to ask any more after that. If they overhear somebody saying, 'How's your Irish class going, Sam?' It's like, well, as if they don't want to go into it any more, or something. It's maybe that they don't know what to ask, you know, they don't know. It's as if they don't know whether it's safe to ask any more than that. If it was German they would probably say, 'Oh yeah, I was in Germany once' and 'Yeah, it's handy', and I don't know, we'd have a wee bit of conversation. But when you say 'I'm learning Irish', it sort of stops there, and you can see all the meanings that go along with that coming down in front of them right away, and you see that's sort of symbolic, 'Irish must mean this, must mean that, and must mean nationalism at least, and republicanism'. They don't really talk about it, and whether or not they feel, 'What's his motive behind it and do we want to go into all that'. And you know, people don't like talking politics. And if a language is associated with politics then they might not want to be led through that back door into a political discussion.

Thus Protestant learners were aware that the Irish language was associated by many of their peers with republicanism and nationalism. The language was a 'political' issue that should be avoided according to the rules of etiquette in Northern Ireland.

If Protestant learners were reluctant to discuss their interest in Irish publicly, they were much less likely to speak in Irish in public places. I can illustrate this point by relating an incident from my own experience. In the first year of my PhD research, I lived in a district in south Belfast that was predominantly Protestant. Most of the original population were working-class Protestants, although a large number of middle-class people of many religious denominations were moving into the area. Because of the working-class presence in the district, I kept my interest in Irish to myself. One day, while visiting a nearby Chinese take-away, I met a member of the ULTACH Trust. A moment of mutual awkwardness followed, as we usually spoke together in Irish, but were reluctant to do so as there were a number of customers queuing in front of us. We began our conversation in English, but switched to Irish when the other customers had left; the shop-assistant was Chinese, and was not deemed to pose a threat. Upon leaving the take-away we switched to English, as there were pedestrians within earshot.

Being Protestant in a Catholic Environment

In the above section I examined the ideological connotations of Protestants learning a 'Catholic' or 'nationalist' language. In this section, I will examine how Protestant learners interacted with Catholics in Irish language classes. I begin by returning to my case study of James, the Protestant who lived on a working-class Protestant estate close to Catholic west Belfast.

James's Experiences of Other Irish Learners

James was unsettled by the location of *Cumann Chluain Ard* and the attitudes of some of the learners, as he was a unionist:

I was never happy with it, I'm still not happy with the *Chluain Ard* because, I don't know, its just perceived, well because of the atmosphere I feel there's a strong, I mean I have no evidence whatsoever, but I feel that there's a strong republican element there which I am not entirely comfortable with. But as long as I'm only there to learn Irish and I don't have to give any more details I'm happy enough to do it... What I did find in the classes was that there's people bringing their political baggage with them and without meaning to, they would make a quip or a comment that would indicate very clearly you know where they stood and you'd be taken aback.

The classes were interrupted by tea-breaks in which the learners engaged in informal interaction. In these situations James felt there was an increased chance that his Protestant

identity would be discovered. However his name did not suggest that he was a Protestant, and he considered that his general appearance, including his 'Gerry Adams' beard⁵³, made him 'Catholic' in appearance. He was so concerned that his Protestantism should remain a secret that he obtained a copy of the *Andersonstown News*, a nationalist newspaper produced in west Belfast, so that he would be able to talk about local events, including GAA matches. He explained, 'If they had said, "Did you see the match?" I would simply have went, "Arsenal or Man. United ?" That would have been a disadvantage!' As he was a quiet, introverted person, people tended to leave him alone and he faded into the background in the classes, a situation with which he was entirely happy. Also he noticed that the level of interaction between the learners was at a 'light level', and that few of them seemed to socialise together outside the classes. Again this worked to James' advantage, as it restricted the possible circumstances in which he would be in the company of the other learners.

Why Protestant Learners Concealed their Religious Identities

James was not only keeping a low profile in the classes and secularising his social presentation; he was actively masquerading as a Catholic, using the 'telling' cues that everyone in Northern Ireland learned. Protestants who attended Irish language classes in working-class nationalist areas were concerned to keep their identities secret for many reasons. Firstly, Catholic Irish speakers may have believed that they were loyalist or security force spies, attempting to infiltrate the republican movement. If this was the case, their lives would have been in danger from republicans. Secondly, Protestants were afraid that Catholic sectarians in the class would have objected to their presence; to make things worse, many Protestants believed that republicans were anti-Protestant (Bruce 1994a: 41). Thirdly, Protestants were unwilling to draw attention to their religious identity as they wished to avoid unnecessary awkwardness in communicating with Catholics; in particular, urban Catholics and Protestants had an almost 'congenital inability' to communicate across religious boundaries on account of the communalism of the urban *Gemeinschaften* (Burton 1978: 67, 92). Last of all, many learners said that they may have been welcome to attend Irish classes as Protestants, but that local sectarians who did not speak Irish may have objected to Protestants venturing into Catholic districts.

The contribution of sociolinguistics is useful in considering the perceived attribution of motives to Protestant learners. Sociolinguists differentiate between instrumental and integrative motives to learn languages. Instrumental motives are utilitarian attempts to learn a language; for example, to pass an exam or fill the requirements of a job (Baker 1993: 90). They do not indicate a desire for ethnic change. Learners with an integrative motive to learn a language wish to affiliate, identify, or even belong to a different language community (ibid.: 90, 96). Some Protestant learners feared that Catholics would attribute instrumental motives

⁵³ A common stereotype that Protestants have about Catholics is that many of them have beards. This is perhaps due to the fact that beards are very popular with aficionados of the traditional music scene in Ireland. Another possible reason is that Gerry Adams, the president of Sinn Féin, sports a beard.

to them (a wish to spy on Catholics), rather than integrative ones (a desire to identify with Catholics/nationalists/Irish speakers).

The dilemma for many Protestants learning Irish in Catholic working-class districts was that if they concealed their ethnic identities, they risked attracting suspicion if their 'cover was blown'. Some thought it would be better to be frank, thus making everyone aware of their Protestantism, and avoiding any awkward or possibly dangerous *faux pas*. Most steered a middle path; they did not mention their religious identity in the classes, but they would not masquerade as Catholics and would admit their Protestantism if asked.

Choosing a Class

In terms of learning Irish, the rewards for attending Irish classes in west Belfast could be great; a wide choice of excellent classes that catered for every grade of learner, as well as a host of Irish language events and activities. However, James and other Protestants who attended classes in west Belfast were the exception, not the rule; most Protestant learners would not countenance travelling in the area. Loyalists often travelled into Catholic west Belfast to attack locals; therefore Protestant learners feared being mistaken for Catholics by loyalist assassination squads if they ventured into the district. Because many middle-class learners abhorred political violence, few of them would consider travelling into Catholic or Protestant working-class districts to learn Irish. Many Protestant learners stressed that they would be made welcome in Irish language classes, but that they would be in danger outside them, where the inclusiveness of the language movement did not apply. Protestants also found that, irrespective of their political beliefs, they would be identified with loyalism or the British state on account of their area of residence and their occupations. In particular, many middle-class Protestants had occupations that were connected to the British state (Coulter 1994). Therefore, they believed that they could not move freely between the different communities in Northern Ireland, as this required a degree of real or feigned political, occupational, and even residential neutrality. Whether they were nationalist or not, they believed they would to be identified with the British state and/or loyalists:

I was always a bit shy of doing it , because I don't know where the impression came from, but I had the impression that I would really have to go into quite nationalist areas to learn it, and I was a bit scared of that. So it was a relief when I heard that the YM. (YMCA, which has offices in central Belfast) offered courses and that was sort of open neutral territory, if you like... (on considering language classes in west Belfast) It's such a small city. It's hard to keep your address confidential, and I think they might assume that this particular east Belfast address might suggest, you know, 'Oh, east Belfast, you know what they think over there'.

This nationalist learner explains her reluctance to travel to classes in west Belfast by referring to her home address. Although she is a nationalist, she is reluctant to travel to quite

nationalist *districts*, where she believes that she will be identified with unionists rather than other nationalists. Protestant nationalist learners often had addresses in districts which would be perceived as 'hostile' by nationalists. In a sense they belonged to the Protestant 'community' more so than a nationalist one. In considering travelling to west Belfast to learn Irish, the learners had symbolic capital in the form of nationalist beliefs, but for some their Protestantism appeared to constitute a symbolic deficit which could not be overcome by a degree of ideological convergence. The fact that few of them were acquainted with west Belfast or its inhabitants meant that they had little social capital. Although Protestant nationalists differed from their co-religionists in that they had rejected unionist ideology, in many ways they identified with and were part of the Protestant community. Thus Protestant nationalists were politically marginalised in their communities, but they were integrated into networks of old allegiances, which were reflected in a sense of solidarity with their communities (cf. Ruane and Todd 1992: 89).

Despite the fears Protestant nationalist learners had in attending Irish language events and classes in west Belfast, some were able to overcome them. Some attended classes in west Belfast in the company of Catholic friends from the area; in doing so, they augmented their social capital and reduced local suspicions of them. Some nationalist Protestants believed that they could identify more with Catholic nationalists than with their unionist co-religionists, and were happy to attend language classes in west Belfast. One Protestant Irish speaker moved to Catholic west Belfast as he felt that the most important social division in Northern Ireland was between nationalists and unionists, rather than Protestants and Catholics. As a nationalist, he felt that he could not live in a Protestant/unionist community as he did not share the political views of its occupants. Protestant learners told me that when they revealed their nationalist views to Catholic Irish speakers they were accepted by the latter.

The various affiliations of Protestant nationalist learners were highlighted or undercommunicated depending on the circumstances; on some occasions they could feel that their Protestant identity was more important than their nationalist one. Before the IRA cease-fire, one learner told me that he felt uncomfortable in the *Cultúrlann* 'because of my religion'; he felt that republicans were sectarian and would resent his presence in the centre. After the cease-fire, he believed that republicans desired peace, and he was content to attend Irish classes in the *Cultúrlann*. As a fellow nationalist, he felt welcome; although he disagreed with republicans, he felt they regarded him as acceptable because of his desire for a united Ireland.

Protestant Learners' Accounts of Catholic Attitudes to Them

As the Irish language was often believed to be part of the Catholic symbolic inventory in Northern Ireland, Protestant learners of Irish found that they are often assumed to be Catholic. This often irritated them as it underlined their distinctiveness from other Irish speakers. In the following text, Adele, who was brought up on the Shankill Road (a Protestant working-class district in Belfast), tells her experiences to myself and Ruth, a fellow Protestant

learner. Adele begins by relating an incident which occurred while she was attending an *Oideas Gael* course:

There was this German girl on our class called Frederika, and she bounced up to me on day and said, 'Oh, you're from Belfast' and I said, 'Yes' and she said, 'Oh, do you know the *Cultúrlann*' and I said, 'Yes, I do, I've been there once or twice', and she said, 'Oh, I love it' and then she started listing all these people [mentions the names of republican members of the language movement], did I know them, all the usual ones and I said, 'Well, I didn't know them personally, but I know who they are'. And she just showed a lack of understanding of the issues involved, you know, it was kind of like you know, 'You're into Irish, therefore you must be a sort of republican Falls Road kind of person'...

And then the *pièce de résistance* came on the second day of the course. In the coffee break I was talking to this American woman, and Frederika was there, and the American said to Frederika, 'Oh do you come to Ireland often?' and Frederika said, 'Yes, I come at least once a year', and all this. And she said, 'I've been to Belfast and I love Belfast, people are so wonderful, and it's great. But the people on the Shankill Road, they're just horrible! They're just such horrible people - one day I went for a walk up the Shankill Road and the people were so horrible and it was just like a slum, you know and everything was so dirty.' And she just went on like this, and I just stood there, and I have to say I felt like a ton weight had come down on my head, you know, I just stood there thinking 'What is the point of going on with this, this constant battle, you're always on the outside...'.

I was saying to Margaret (a friend who was learning Irish), you know, like some other classes I've been to in the Arts Club and the Ulster People's College (Irish classes in south Belfast)... I always felt a wee bit on edge, not massively so, but just enough to make you that wee bit uncomfortable, and everybody would get in with the teacher, but *you* wouldn't be in. You'd always be hanging about sort of not quite knowing what to do. Even at the Ulster People's College, until *you* sort of came (addresses Ruth) I really just came and then went home...

Seán (a teacher at the *Oideas Gael* course) initiated this discussion about the language, 'Did we think it was dying, did we think it was worth reviving and all this'. And I just sat there thinking, you know, Seán and all the others were quoting things that were good, like the *Cultúrlann*, all the newspapers like *Lá*, but I just sort of thought, 'All the things that were quoted were all things that were in west Belfast or you know, your average Protestant, even a liberal Protestant, would feel a bit uncomfortable about'. And I just sat there and I just sort of wanted to say 'Look, you know, this is all very well, but what about me? What about me and my friends and people like me, you know. We are human beings, we are here in front of you. How do we get included in all of this? It's like we don't exist'.

In this text Adele indicates her reluctance to travel to Catholic west Belfast and her lack of identification with those who are involved in the west Belfast revival. The *pièce de résistance* comes when a foreigner, who she expected to be more neutral in outlook, expresses anti-Protestant attitudes. In doing so she makes a terrible *faux pas* in terms of Northern Irish etiquette, but Adele decides that she cannot embarrass Frederika by telling her that she is speaking to a Shankill Protestant; thus she draws upon an etiquette which prohibits embarrassing her interlocutor. Adele's decision does not challenge Frederika's belief that all 'indigenous' learners of Irish are Catholic.

When I talked to Adele on another occasion, she expanded the events related above to elaborate on what she called the 'Catholic tribalism' of Irish speakers. She said that they discussed life in their home districts, arranged to socialise in areas where Protestants were reluctant to go, and discussed GAA matches that Protestants would have little interest in. In doing so, the Catholic Irish speakers created and sustained friendships that were restricted to other Catholics, and Adele was left out of the conversations involved. The Catholics drew upon Burton's 'pools of predictability' of shared background and experience which facilitated intra-Catholic socialisation, alienating Protestants as a result. In such encounters Adele's Protestant identity was highlighted, although she was a 'fellow' nationalist. Adele kept her feelings to herself; they expressed 'the hurt and the hatred' that are restricted to private conversations in Northern Ireland (Bruce 1994a: vii). She only discussed the 'Catholic tribalism' of Irish speakers with other Protestants, such as her Protestant friend and myself.

Adele and some other Protestants told me that they felt they were being excluded in Irish language circles. They expressed a sense of guilt as they blamed themselves for not trying hard enough to 'get on' with Catholic Irish speakers. These feelings of guilt were mixed with a sense that they had little in common with other Irish speakers, except their interest in Irish, which often appeared to be an insufficient basis to form friendships.

Adele's experiences represent a type of 'worse-case scenario' that Protestants related about their interaction with Catholic Irish speakers. Protestant learners felt a sense of difference between themselves and Catholic Irish speakers, but the potentiality to form lifelong friendships with Catholics existed. In the following text, a learner tells how his interest in Irish helped him to overcome sectarian divisions. He describes his experience of learning Irish in an evening class run by the nationalist-controlled Queen's University Students' Union:

I find that one of the great things about it is, I think it actually creates more trust than anything else, especially with young Catholics who are turning against the Church so fast. But it is such a loaded thing, and it has become such a loaded thing, that I find that it breaks down barriers very quickly. When you know Catholics who don't speak Irish at all, the fact that you know it sort of makes them look at you in a much more sympathetic, not sympathetic, but a more trusting way. I find it breaks down barriers that way....

(on going to the class at Queen's University) I was a bit sort of nervy about going, because it was a sort of bad time in the 'troubles', and I thought, 'I'm going to be swamped by this, you know. I'll have to sit putting up with all sorts of stuff.' And in fact consistently I've found that in most Irish language circles they don't care what you are as long as you speak Irish, the love of Irish predominates over everything, and I found the reverse in fact. In fact, one of the other reasons why I was let off with not doing my irregular verbs was I quite often had 'wee pet status' , but I never found, augh, well occasionally in the bar afterwards, when I was talking English to people, you'd find somebody who wasn't, there was certainly none of the teachers in the class, or none of the office bearers of the society, but you'd have a discussion that would get a wee bit fraught. But it certainly wouldn't be, I never had any problem, you know.

In this text the speaker asserts that increasing secularism dissolves tensions between Irish speakers. Political issues arise when the class has finished and its organisers no longer have any control over the issues that will be discussed. The speaker even claims that as a Protestant he is especially welcome in the Irish language environment. Learners of Irish who attended Irish language classes in west Belfast experienced a sense of autonomy of the Irish language movement from nationalism to a greater or lesser extent. They also noticed that their teachers would make great efforts to make them feel welcome; many told me how Catholic Irish speakers denigrated the attitude of the Catholic Church to the Irish language in an attempt to make Protestant learners more welcome. Assertions of the autonomy of Irish language events and classes drew a distinction between the content of the classes and the political affiliations of those who attended them.

In the following text, a unionist university student explains how he related to classmates who did not share his political views while on a Gaeltacht course:

There was a couple of bitter rows with people who were real hard-liners, but most of us got through it with humour. There was a lot of humour between us and we ignored the subject and said it was really a matter of 'You have your idea, I have mine, like, you know, just leave it aside'... When I was in the Gaeltacht I made some very close friends among some of those students and the political issue just fell aside. And we're still very close friends, although if you asked us about our political beliefs, they were completely different... The Gaeltacht just intensified the ones who were friends and the ones who were just acquaintances.

In forming friendships, the speaker and his Catholic friends decided to avoid political issues in conversation, as they would not agree about them. They followed the rules for 'mixed' socialisation in Northern Ireland, and avoided contentious issues. As such, they agreed to undercommunicate aspects of their ethnic identities. 'Hard-liners', presumably extreme republicans, were relegated to the inferior role of 'acquaintances' after some 'bitter rows'. Humour was used to avert conflict between the students; this is a stylistic device often

employed to defuse tense situations (Tannen 1989). The above texts demonstrate how a shared interest how enduring trans-ethnic bonds may be formed on the basis of personal friendships (Erikson 1993: 153)

My primary focus in this research is on Protestant learners of Irish, but at this point I will speculate on the reasons why many Catholic Irish speakers welcomed Protestant interest in the language. Catholics commonly regarded themselves as being less sectarian and more tolerant than Protestants, and they were more in favour of cross-community mixing than Protestants (Ruane and Todd 1996: 76). Nationalist Irish-speakers believed that to deny Protestants access to the Irish language was to symbolically bar them from admittance to the Irish nation. Furthermore, Irish speakers were keen to encourage others to take an interest in a language which they feared was in danger of becoming extinct.

When Protestant and Catholic speakers of Irish met for the first time, they often followed the social etiquette which entailed the avoidance of religious and political topics of conversation (cf. Harris 1986: 146-7). However, Protestant learners often noticed that many Catholic Irish speakers departed from this etiquette, as they felt the need to prove they were not republican. Thus Protestant learners often became the unwitting confidantes of Catholic Irish speakers who bitterly resented the republican image of the Irish language. This process was often two-way; many Protestant learners, especially middle-class ones, felt they had to distance themselves from the loyalist extremists of their own community. As one learner explained to me, 'We need to prove that we're not Orange bigots and they have to prove they're not Provos'. In the absence of such 'proof', Protestant and Catholic Irish speakers often fantasised about each other's political beliefs, leading to incidents which revealed mutual misunderstandings (ibid.).

If Irish was a 'Catholic' language, then Catholics may have looked favourably on Protestants who learned 'their' language. Thus is especially true if Catholics attributed integrative language learning motives to Protestant learners; for example, they welcomed someone who learned Irish to express an Irish identity. On the other hand, if the language was associated with Catholicism, some Catholics may have resented Protestants learning 'their' language. Ethnic chauvinism could overcome a more open attitude based on secular nationalist ideology:

I think that some people that I know that would be Catholic would sort of think it's rather amusing, or sort of maybe, 'What's it got to do with you, somehow.' Do you know what I mean? Sort of, maybe a little bit slightly resentful or something. Just sort of thinking, maybe it's slightly pretentious or something to be interfering with their language, or something, as if it's nothing to do with you'

GMc.: Do they speak it themselves?

Learner: No. There's one particular person who doesn't. Maybe that's it, maybe he's a slight feeling that, maybe he feels that he should. That's why he feels like that. But I felt a bit of a funny vibe, 'What's it got to do with you?'

This issue of ethnic closure and minority language use has been explored by Roger Hewitt in 'White Talk, Black Talk' (1986) which examines the use of Caribbean-based creole by black and white adolescents in London. Some black teenagers oppose the use of creole by their white peers, viewing the development as a further white appropriation of black sources of power - it seems that whites are "stealing our language" (1986: 162). On the other hand, the practise becomes acceptable with white friends (ibid.). In the above text the speaker relates the unease her friend displays when she appropriates what he clearly believes to be an element of Catholic and/or nationalist identity. His disquiet is exacerbated by his lack of knowledge of this part of his symbolic ethnicity; his friendship with the speaker does not overcome his reservations.

The Use of the Irish Language to Masquerade as Catholics

The ideology of 'telling' situated the Irish language within the Catholic symbolic inventory, as many Protestants presumed that only Catholics spoke the language (cf. Burton 1978: 37-67). Protestant learners found that they could masquerade as Catholics by speaking Irish. In some circumstances I have used my own knowledge of Irish to masquerade as a Catholic. On one occasion I was accompanying some friends to a party in south Belfast, when the host realised that he did not have enough alcohol to entertain his guests. We knew that we could obtain some beer in a nearby bar, but this entailed venturing into a nationalist district, and the host was afraid to go as he was a Protestant. Therefore he delegated a Catholic guest and myself to go to the bar; after all, I could speak Irish and therefore 'pass' as a Catholic.

Most middle-class Protestants did not talk about the Irish language in this way, as they would not countenance travelling into Catholic working-class districts where their religious identity may have placed them in danger; the reader will note that I was not compelled to go into such a district, but only did so to obtain beer after the normal closing times for bars. Working-class Protestants, on the other hand, often lived at sectarian interfaces and found themselves having to travel through Catholic districts for less flippant reasons than my own. The differing lifestyles of the learners, based upon their class backgrounds, was reflected in the importance they attached to the use of Irish to 'pass' as Catholics.

Protestant Learners and the Irish Language Revival

In this section I will elaborate upon the attitudes of Protestant learners to the Irish language revival. This often involves the attribution of motives, 'political' or otherwise, to Irish speakers with whom many Protestant learners had little contact. In discussing the aims of the Irish language movement with the learners, I used a document published in 1992 by the Committee for the Administration of Justice (see Appendix Five), which recommended that the British government support the Irish language revival by implementing a wide range of measures, including state-sponsored bilingualism. The CAJ document used European and United Nations charters to argue the case for a high degree of corporate pluralism for the Irish

language in Northern Ireland. The measures proposed include: the right for parents to have their children educated through Irish; the right to use Irish in court and with public bodies; and government support for an all-Ireland television service in Irish. Viewed together, these proposals represented the most far-reaching goals of the Irish language movement.

Many Protestant learners of Irish were not well acquainted with the achievements and goals of the Irish language revival; they were particularly unaware of revivalist activities in west Belfast. Learners often reacted to the document's proposals with a mixture of surprise and disbelief. Their responses echoed the anti-revival rhetoric of Protestants who were indifferent or hostile to the Irish language. Their responses to the document often revealed their own ideological positions:

GMc.: What is the British government's attitude to the Irish language?

Learner: I'm amazed how much they have contributed towards the Irish, and I think that these folk who tell me that they're struggling to set up schools without any government money and, 'How many go to your school?' 'Well, there's six' (laughs).

...GMc.: Do you think that people should be allowed to speak Irish in court (CAJ proposal) ?'

Learner: If they are genuine Irish speakers and can't speak English, then there should be, but to set up dual-language courts in a country where English is the language seems to be an unnecessary duplication. I don't think you can expect the rest of the community to do this. I don't think we can expect the rest of the community to finance our hobby, which is what it is.

GMc.: What about the proposal that the British and Irish governments should co-operate to provide a cross-border Irish language television channel (CAJ proposal)?

Learner: Well, knowing the Conservative government in England, I don't think there's very much money available. It's amazing the amount of money that's poured into this place. I think the Conservative philosophy is coming to the viewpoint of saying, 'We're not going to put so much money into Northern Ireland' and they will find that the money coming here will be used on much more basic essentials than that. That would seem to be a luxury item. We're not a bilingual community at all.

GMc.: What use is Irish?

As far as I can understand it's a great cultural pursuit, it's a worthwhile intellectual exercise, it helps us to express our own identity and thought forms and so on. But what use is classical music? I just don't know. I would find it very hard to answer that question.

In this text we have an example of an Irish learner using modernist discourse to argue against increasing government aid for language projects. The speaker draws on the conservative element of Protestant ideology which opposes state interventionism, and he appears to empathise with the policies pursued by the Conservative government. In the first part of the text he reveals unionist disdain at nationalist complaints of deprivation and

dependence on government hand-outs (Bruce 1994a: 61; Todd 1987: 22). Irish is a 'luxury item', a 'cultural pursuit', like classical music. In short, the speaker is describing the Irish language as a leisure pursuit. This is informed by the process of individualism in the Western world, whereby supreme value is placed on the individual, and society is subordinated to the individual (Howe 1994: 324). The concept of learning Irish for leisure is related to the process whereby hedonist explanations for behaviour are becoming acceptable vocabularies of motives (Wright Mills 1984). The learner uses the leisure concept to describe the Irish language as an individual pursuit that is not within the remit of public funding. This is exactly the representation of the Irish language that the revivalist movement was attempting to refute.

The representation of the Irish language as a private leisure pursuit partly explains Protestant disbelief of the objectives of the Irish language community to create a bilingual community in west Belfast and/or Northern Ireland. Protestant learners lived, worked and recreated in English language environments in which the Irish language had little immediate relevance. They were not engaged in full-time revivalism to create an Irish language community; most jobs involving the Irish language were located in working-class nationalist districts, where few Protestants would consider working. Protestant learners were more concerned with finding appropriate evening-classes than battling with the Department of Education to secure funding for Irish-medium schools. Irish-speaking Protestants were not involved in the creation of a community of language, but comprised a scattered group of individuals who conceived of the language as a leisure pursuit, and made no demands upon the government on the basis of this pursuit. However, this leisure pursuit was different from others in that the learners often believed that Irish was very important to their identities, even if the language did not seem to have much impact on their everyday lives.

Protestant learners of Irish often described some aspects of the revival by the attribution of 'political' motives to those involved in them. In the following texts, the learners express their opinions on the erection of bilingual street-signs:

I would think, 'What's the ulterior motive to putting it into Irish, when I know that it's in English?' And to me I would not see that as trying to promote the Irish language as such, but you reinforce a certain stance.

I'm not sure if the people who live on the streets that have Irish street signs speak Irish themselves, or whether it's a 'fuck you' statement to the authorities.

In the first text the speaker claims that those who erect street-signs are not concerned about the future of the language, but have an 'ulterior motive'. The second text provides a suggestion as to the nature of this motive; a hostility to the unionist and British authorities. The use of Irish in street-signs is described as a form of boundary-maintenance. This echoes Cohen's concept of negative ethnicity, which is little more than tactical postures and the construction of group identity in opposition to other groups (Cohen 1994: 120). In the second text the speaker attempts to reduce the linguistic capital of language revivalists. Fluency in a

language confers linguistic capital which can be used to legitimise or deligitimise power relations, and to exercise symbolic violence in which groups or individuals that do not possess linguistic capital are effectively excluded from communication (Bourdieu 1991).

There is an aspect of unionist ideology that the unionist learners did not draw upon explicitly during my conversations with them. Although many middle-class unionists may consider the prospects of power-sharing with Northern nationalists, they are reluctant to accommodate the nationalist identity in a shared state, as that would pose a threat to their own identity (Cochrane 1995). Therefore the institutional recognition of the Irish language, involving measures such as state-sponsored bilingualism, was anathema to many 'liberal' unionists. In my conversations with them, they preferred to minimise the linguistic capital of the language movement and cited utilitarian motives in objecting to state-funded revivalism. This form of opposition to state-sponsored bilingualism seemed more 'neutral' than one which expressed a desire to maintain the British ethos of Northern Ireland.

The above texts demonstrated that the views of Protestant learners on the language movement were partly informed by their beliefs about nationalism and republicanism. However, the imputed connections between nationalism and certain Irish language projects did not result in unionist antipathy to all aspects of the revival. Many were favourable to the concept of Irish-medium education, although they had reservations about the loss of English language skills by the children involved. One unionist learner was favourable to state endorsement of the language movement's aims *because* the language was associated with nationalism:

I see culture as independent of politics. I see that Northern Ireland is capable of being an Irish entity within the United Kingdom, and a thirty-two county Ireland is a political anathema to most Protestants. Most nationalists living in Northern Ireland, 80-90% aren't really that determined to have a United Ireland, but I think what they really do want, what they would insist on, is a place in the sun, an equal recognition for where they are. Wales and Scotland are culturally distinct areas within the United Kingdom, and maybe Northern Ireland can be as well... I think the best option is some kind of arrangement which retains the link with Britain, but which makes this a decidedly Irish entity, culturally, linguistically, and with not just legal equality but equal promotion of equal people - the recognition of the two traditions.

In this text the Irish language is simultaneously represented as being independent of politics, but is identified with one political grouping. The Celtic image of Irish is invoked to depict it as a minority language of the United Kingdom. The two traditions concept is used to emphasise the distinctiveness of Northern Ireland, and the need to address the grievances of people who are not happy with aspects of the constitutional link with Britain. Promotion of the Irish language is equated with the status of the nationalist community.

The above text illustrates that it was not only the Irish language movement which alternated claims that the Irish language was the common heritage of everyone with

representations of the language as part of the symbolic ethnicity of nationalists. Protestant learners of Irish identified with some aspects of the Irish language, but some manifestations of the language, for example Irish language street-signs, were identified with aggressive forms of nationalism that even some nationalist learners could not identify with. Opinions on the Irish language movement were informed by those related to the nationalist community and its grievances.

Conclusion

We have seen how Protestant learners of Irish crossed the ideological and social gulfs that separated them from Catholics and nationalists. By learning the language they were finding common cause with Catholic Irish speakers and rejecting received concepts of Protestant identity and culture. However, many of them related the Irish language to notions of Protestant and/or unionist identity. The discourses and other forms of knowledge that they used were often only available to certain types of educated and middle-class Protestants. Thus the learners' ability to identify with the Irish language was influenced by their class positions.

The isolation of Protestant learners from one another made it difficult for many of them to find suitable classes and share interpretations of the language that were compatible with their world-views. Some nationalist learners felt comfortable in the knowledge that they would be accepted by Catholic Irish speakers; they could also use the cultural secessionist discourse to express solidarity with their Catholic counterparts. Many unionist learners did not invoke discourses of the Irish language; rather they used fragments of conversations and popular views that may have originated in other social or cultural domains of Northern Irish life. For example, by opposing their 'cultural' motives to learn Irish to the 'political' ones of others, the learners may not have been taking part in the conversation between Irish speakers on the nature of the language, which often consisted of opposing the cultural nationalist and cultural secessionist discourses to one another. Rather, the learners may have drew upon the popular dichotomy between 'culture' and 'politics' which is so salient in Northern Ireland and beyond. Some unionist learners were aware of the views and histories of the language produced by the ULTACH Trust and unionist intellectuals. This knowledge enabled them to accommodate the language to their political and religious outlooks.

Protestant learners' conceptions of the the Irish language were refracted through their own distinct political and religious views; they attempted to reconcile the language with their images of themselves. They would not have been content to accept Catholic interpretations of the language. In the chapters that follow, I will describe how two small networks of Protestant learners struggled to make the language 'theirs'. Given that many Protestants experienced many problems in attempting to learn Irish, I will address the issue of why they made efforts to learn the language at all.

CHAPTER SIX

The North Down Group

In this chapter I will examine the ways in which a group of learners who lived outside the Belfast region discussed the Irish language. I will outline the most important images and discourses which characterised their opinions on the Irish language, and relate these to their class positions, as well as their national and community allegiances. I will demonstrate how the group overcame the associations of the Irish language with Catholicism and republicanism. In the latter part of the chapter I will dwell particularly on interview material with one learner, Kate. The texts drawn from the interview with her demonstrate changes within the cultural allegiances of middle-class unionists, and provide insights into how unionist learners accommodated both British and Irish 'cultures'.

The group of learners described in this chapter live in the northern part of County Down, one of the most peaceful and prosperous regions of Northern Ireland (see map in Appendix Three). The North Down area is predominantly Protestant, and is the home for many civil servants and members of the security forces, many of whom work in the Belfast region. North Down is the home of 'a cohesive, high status group of upper-middle-class British (and to a lesser extent Northern Irish) identifiers from which Ulster identifiers tend to be excluded' (Ruane and Todd 1996: 62). However, each town in the district also has a large working-class population. The principal town in North Down is Bangor and the second largest is Newtownards, often referred to locally as Ards; the town is situated at the top of the Ards peninsula. Other smaller towns in North Down include Comber and Holywood.

The principle learners described in this chapter are: Albert, a retired solicitor from Holywood; Andrew, a retired schoolteacher who lives outside Comber; Harry, a civil servant from Newtownards; Kate, an insurance clerk from Bangor; Sarah, a hospital clerk from Comber; Ben, a docks worker from Belfast, who now resides in Newtownards; Colin, an unemployed man who lives in Newtownards; and David, an electrician from Newtownards. The North Down learners differed in their political outlook: Andrew, Kate, Colin, and Ben were unionists, while Albert, Harry and Sarah were nationalists; when interviewed, Ben declined to inform me of his political outlook. Apart from Harry and David, none of the learners knew one another before they began to learn Irish. Although I became well acquainted with some of the members of the North Down group, I did not consider myself to be one of them as I did not socialise with them as much as they did with one another. Furthermore, during the period in which I was acquainted with the group, I lived in Belfast rather than the North Down area. By the time of writing-up, I had lost contact with the group almost entirely.

Learning Activities of the Group: A Brief Summary

Few Irish classes have been held in the North Down area for most of this century. In Holywood a small Gaelic League branch has existed since the early 1900s. In the 1960s and 1970s a small number of Irish classes were occasionally held in local technical colleges and primary schools in Bangor and Newtownards. Since the late 1980s there has been a huge growth in the provision of adult education in Northern Ireland. In North Down, adult education classes were mostly held in the towns of Newtownards and Bangor. Many of the classes were held in conjunction with the Workers' Education Association (WEA), an organisation which specialises in recreational classes for adults. In the late 1980s the WEA acquired an important venue for its activities in the form of Newtownards Town Hall, which had been converted into an arts centre. In 1989, one of the classes on offer was a course in Irish language and culture, which provided a light introduction to the Irish language and traditional music. The class was organised by a local musician, Tom Clarke. This is the first Irish class that was attended by Andrew, Sarah, Ben, and David. Their teacher encouraged them to meet after the class and practice speaking Irish together; they decided to meet in the back room of 'Rice's', a local bar. David introduced the group to Harry, who had attended an Irish class in Belfast for three years and knew more Irish than the rest of the group. Harry held a rudimentary class in 'Rice's' with the aid of some learners' tapes. The members of the Newtownards class progressed to an Irish language class in Bangor, where they met Kate, Albert, and Colin. Kate joined the group that attended the evening sessions in the Newtownards bar. When the Bangor class finished, Albert, Andrew, Kate, Ben and Sarah enrolled for a GCSE Irish class in the College of Business Studies, in central Belfast; Ben and Sarah did not complete the course. The teacher of the Bangor class informed the learners of the *Oideas Gael* college in Donegal, and David, Kate, Andrew and Albert began to attend summer courses there. One of the teachers of that course, a native Irish speaker from Donegal, was particularly impressed by the fact that Albert and Andrew were Protestants, and offered to come to Northern Ireland to teach them Irish free of charge. Albert and Andrew applied to the ULTACH Trust for a grant to hold a couple of learners' weekends in a Holywood secondary-school; Andrew used his contacts with the school, as his son was a pupil there. At this time I had become acquainted with the group, and joined them for the learners' weekends, teaching a number of 'complete beginners'; the Donegal teacher catered for the level of those who were in the GCSE class. Albert, Andrew and Harry decided to meet in Albert's house every week to speak Irish together. I joined this group, and Harry and I helped Albert and Andrew with their Irish. At the end of 1992, Andrew became anxious to find another Irish class, and decided to go to one at the Ulster Arts Club in south Belfast. I also went to the club, and began to attend advanced classes there. Andrew and Albert also enrolled for an 'A' level class in west Belfast. Eventually Albert and Andrew ceased to attend the Ulster Arts Club, although I remained.

By 1994 the North Down group was no longer meeting to learn or speak Irish. However, Andrew, Harry, Kate, Sarah, David and Ben continued to meet at traditional Irish

musical events; Andrew, Kate and Sarah also attended Irish dancing classes in Bangor. They spoke little Irish to one another at these events. Most of the group continue to visit the Gaeltacht, particularly Andrew and Albert, who continued to attend *Oideas Gael* courses.

Summary of Learning Activities Involving the North Down Group

Ards Art Centre class: Andrew, Harry, Sarah, David, Ben

Bangor class: Andrew, Albert, Kate, Sarah, David, Ben, Colin

'Rice's' Bar: Andrew, Kate, Sarah, David, Ben, Harry.

Albert's House: Albert, Andrew, Harry, (myself)

Donegal Gaeltacht: Andrew, Albert, Kate, David, (myself).

Belfast GCSE class: Andrew, Albert, Kate, Ben, Sarah

Belfast 'A' Level class: Andrew, Albert

Ulster Arts Club classes: Andrew, Albert, (myself)

Andrew was the most dynamic member of the North Down group and was a key player in organising many of the group's activities. He was also the most vocal member of the group, and confessed to being talkative, argumentative and intensely interested in politics; he was an active member of the Alliance Party.

It became apparent to me that a flexibility in terms of an ability or a willingness to travel to Belfast was necessary to improve the learners' Irish. Those that were unable or unwilling to travel to Belfast had great difficulty in improving their Irish, as the North Down area only contained beginners' classes in the language.

Living in North Down: The Learners' Relationships with Local Protestants And Catholics

All of the members of the North Down group, except Colin, were middle-class. They shared many of the attitudes of the of their co-ethnics of a similar income. For example, they had Catholic friends and were adamant that they were non-sectarian (cf. Larsen 1992a; Todd 1987). Although all the members of the group were Protestant, they learned Irish with Catholics in all of the classes they attended; Catholic learners comprised half of those who attended the learners' weekends in Holywood. The non-sectarianism of the group was also expressed by their willingness to visit 'Rice's', the only Catholic-frequented bar in Newtownards. David was insistent that the religious affiliation of the learners in the North Down classes was a matter of irrelevance to them:

I couldn't tell you whether Norman, if it's important, was a Catholic or a Protestant. I just didn't know, and none of us knew, and that end of it didn't interest us at all, it didn't bother us at all.

David and his classmates followed the custom of not engaging relative strangers in discussions about religious or political issues (cf. Harris 1986: 146-8; Larsen 1982a, 1982b); as such religious affiliation was undercommunicated, and became 'unimportant'. At times David extended this outlook to Newtownards as a whole:

This is my way of looking at it, you see. Newtownards people say that Newtownards has always been a very liberal town in its outlook. But its all very well to say that when roughly speaking 90% of the population are Protestant. 'We are the people who can afford to be liberal, 'cos they know their place, they don't bother us, there's not too many of them' [at this point of the interview David appeared to quote the thoughts of other people in the town] This is why Newtownards is liberal. Newtownards is not liberal at all, in my opinion, its not liberal, but there's not too many Catholics, they're not obtrusive, they're not sticking their noses into things, you know.

David believed that few people were interested in Irish culture in the North Down area. Thus Catholics and aspects of the Irish culture, including the Irish language, were tolerated as they were unobtrusive and did not challenge the public Protestant and unionist ethos of the district. Colin, the only working-class member of the group, may have agreed with David when he said that Newtownards was not really a liberal town. David explained:

I think he had to keep it very quiet, he was a bit wary where he lived down in (working-class estate), you see. There's a few bad boys down there, and we could never get him into 'Rice's'. 'Oh,' he says, 'I could never go in there,' he says. 'If some of the fellas saw me going in there'.

Colin told the other members of the group that he could not attend Irish classes in Newtownards for the same reason; thus he preferred the anonymity of the Bangor class. However, in the second year of the Bangor class, Colin's children told his neighbours about his interest in Irish, and he was threatened by them. Therefore he had to discontinue his efforts to learn Irish. Colin's distress about the incident was so great that he declined to be interviewed by me.

The other members of the group were not threatened for their interest in Irish, although Sarah told me that she would be intimidated by her neighbours if she told them of her interest in the language; she lived in a working-class street in Comber. The rest of the learners lived in middle-class districts had no fear of social sanctions being employed against them if their interest in Irish or contentious political views became known to their neighbours. Like most middle-class people, they did not experience the same amount of neighbourhood and family pressure to conform as their poorer counterparts would have. The intimidation of Colin is an example of the greater social control that was enforced in working-class Protestant districts (Milroy 1987: 50, 61).

However, the North Down group was unnerved by an upsurge of political violence in 1993; they feared loyalists may have accused members of the group of betraying the unionist/Protestant community by learning a language that was associated with republicanism. Harry said he felt nervous after an IRA car bomb exploded in Newtownards in July 1993; a wave of anti-nationalist feeling swept the town, resulting in the killing of a local Catholic taxi-driver. On the 25th of October 1993, an IRA bomb exploded on the Shankill Road, killing nine locals as well as one of the bombers. Following the Shankill bombing and a loyalist revenge attack at Greysteel, which killed nine Catholics, many people in Northern Ireland feared a spate of revenge political killings. The bombing contributed to tension in Newtownards and Bangor; Ben and Harry told me that their wives were worried about them going to Irish traditional music sessions during this tense period. Although the North Down learners were unnerved by these events, none of them were intimidated as a consequence of the events of 1993. Apart from Colin, those who ceased to learn the language did so because there were no suitable classes available in the North Down area.

Motivations to Learn the Irish Language

The ways in which the North Down group symbolised the Irish language simultaneously reflected and influenced their identities and lifestyles. In this section I will concentrate on the learners' expressed motivations for learning Irish, before exploring the discourses and images involved in more depth. Here I shall present excerpts from interviews with the group, before delineating the factors they have in common; key words in the texts which suggest discourses have been underlined. The learners were responding to the question, 'When and why did you first want to learn the Irish language?':

Andrew: I suppose I always wanted to learn Irish in some sense or other. I suppose the very first thing was just a fascination with placenames. And I suppose there was a division between wanting to do it and being confronted by it, in the sense that you're kind of suspicious that to do it is some kind of political act, which you don't necessarily want to be part of... I never knew there was any neutral place that you could go to learn it, I mean any time that I met it, apart from hearing it on RTÉ (*Raidió Teilifís Éireann*, the Irish Republic's broadcasting service), anytime that I met it was almost always in a political sense, you know, unless it was placenames, or you came across it in books. I mean I'm an historian, and I've come across it in history, you know, and I'd have to find translations of it, one was aware of its place, and all of that, and the literature as well - and I always wanted to be able to read the poetry... and being in Donegal and hearing it spoken... There was a division between wanting to do it and being confronted by it. It was a challenge to learn it but at the same time the republican tradition of it was screaming at me and there were the oppressive connotations of it in the South.

Kate: Why, I was hoping no-one would ask me that! I don't know why I'm learning Irish. I've always been fascinated with words and the crazy spelling. My father had Irish - the only thing that I remember him saying was '*Cad é mar atá tú?*' ('How are you?'). And then of course on holiday in Bunbeag (in North Donegal). I was there three times a year, four times a year... I always went to it, and now looking back, I know it was Gaeltacht, but then we didn't know, but we heard the language and we saw the writing, and I remember falling madly in love with the word *aisling* (vision), and calling my house that... and the names used to fascinate me on the signs.

Harry: About six or seven years back I was sort of, I was almost by accident looking through books in the shop, you know, language books in particular. I happened to take down *Teach Yourself Irish* and I thought, 'Let's give it a go'.

GMc.: So why Irish and not other languages?

Harry: (laughs) I don't know. God, this is difficult, extremely difficult! I'm not sure I even have an answer to that. I suppose, in a sense politically I've always been slightly nationalist, you know, in that sort of way, I suppose. I think I had been looking for something to do, an extra sort of interest or hobby.

Sarah: I always wanted to learn Irish. It was one of the things we weren't taught. I just always had an interest in it from I don't know when. I think it's because I knew mum had it, but didn't use it, and I resented never having known it... All my interests socially are in the Irish culture, whether it's music or set-dancing. I mean, I travel a lot around Ireland and I spend all my holidays around Ireland, and so I hear it quite a bit... various people I've been in the company of over the years that I've been in Ireland, all over the west, particularly, I hear Irish all the time, and I just love the sound of it, and I want to be able to read it and to be able to read poetry or something... I'm rebellious and outspoken. It's just me. It's just part of my nature and I'm strong about certain things.

...GMc.: Are you fond of going to night classes?

Sarah: Oh yeah. I try to go to some things most years. I'm looking more for leisure courses rather than anything stronger, because I haven't got a lot of time.

David: I've always been aware of it, and always been slightly interested in it, mainly because of archaeology and local history and the placenames thing, plus I'd always been interested in the music - traditional music - and the singing, and you rub up against the two cultures sort of way - you know, you come across it from time to time there.

Ben: About nine years ago I ended up in a wee bar, 'Pat's' in Pilot Street (in Belfast), and I was down with a big German chief officer, and Pat and Fritz started off

speaking in Gaelic, and I couldn't follow two words of it... I just thought it was ruddy ridiculous that this big German could stand and talk away in Irish, and we live in the country and I don't think I could even have said '*Tiocfaidh ár Lá*' in those days.

Albert: I think that to some degree it was the influence of an uncle of mine... He developed into something of an anglophobe, and I think, piecing it together as best I can, that his anglophobia then got him more interested than he would have been otherwise in things Irish... The other factor, I think, would have been the years I spent at Trinity College, Dublin, and I did take some lessons in Irish from a student there while I was doing an honours course in French and German... I am interested in genealogy. I have some interest in the origins of placenames. I think the question that most townland names are derived from Irish, I suppose that could have been a factor. I have a great interest in antiquities of one kind or another⁵⁴... In so far as one can rationally be fond of a country, I am very fond of Ireland... In Trinity I did an honours BA degree in French and German... So there would seem to be a fondness of language in general, which is perhaps difficult to explain, but given that taste exists, it would be natural, I think, to want to learn, as it were, the language of the native inhabitants of one's own country.

The references to Irish in the context of antiquities, archaeology, placenames, genealogy, and history represent attempts to discuss the Irish language in terms of the history of Ireland and/or the local area. Albert, Kate, Harry and Albert cite an interest in Irish literature, and a general interest in languages. When Kate and Sarah say how much they love the sounds of the language, they remind us of the romanticism of the Anglo-Irish antiquarians. The references to Irish literature, dancing, and traditional music is a prominent feature of the above texts. A common subject of this group's discussions of Irish is the western Gaeltacht, present in common references to hearing and seeing the Irish language while on holiday in the Republic of Ireland. The discussion of the Irish language in terms of history, antiquities, music, the Gaeltacht, and a fascination with languages are aspects of the cultural discourse. This discourse was the predominant one that the North Down learners used in their discussions of the language.

In the above texts, Kate, Sarah, and Albert associate Irish with their immediate or remote kin. They make the Irish language 'theirs' on account of it having been spoken by their forbears. Like many other Protestant learners, the North Down group were eager to incorporate the Irish language within their family traditions. Like the Anglo-Irish antiquarians who plundered the ancient myths of Ireland, the North Down learners were keen to validate their interest in Irish in terms of their personal 'origin myths'.

⁵⁴A townland is an ancient sub-division of land in Ireland; some townlands are only a few acres in size. Rural Irish dwellers are very conscious of their townland names, though few Protestants would be aware of their meaning. Townland names are disregarded by many public authorities.

Harry, Albert and Sarah also represented learning Irish as a hobby or pastime. This was another important way in which the learners imagined the language. For example, Albert described himself as having a 'promiscuous' attitude to languages, having abandoned Russian to learn Irish, and he contemplated leaving his Irish class for a Hebrew one when he found the former language to be too difficult. For most of the group, an Irish class was one pursuit among many; one learner, David, abandoned learning Irish temporarily when it clashed with his sporting activities. The identification of the Irish language with recreational time was augmented by the association of the language with holidays in the Gaeltacht.

Harry and Albert's reference to their nationalist beliefs when they discuss the Irish language is reminiscent of the cultural secessionist discourse. Andrew suggests this discourse is an ideological obstacle that he had to overcome in order to learn Irish; he alludes to the 'political sense' of the language, with its 'republican tradition' and 'oppressive connotations' in the Republic. For Andrew, this image of Irish as 'alien' competes with his identification with the language through literary and historical endeavours.

Most of the members of the North Down group were highly educated people who had the inclination and the wherewithal to read widely and travel throughout Ireland. They associated the Irish language with interests in Irish history, music and literature. Albert and Harry had extensive libraries of Anglo-Irish literature and would have been aware of the ways in which antiquarians discussed the language. They were also aware of the debates involving the language at the turn of the century, having read a great deal about Douglas Hyde and his contemporaries. Thus it would not be unwise to assume that the views of Albert and Harry were informed by earlier 'textual conversations' about the Irish language (cf. Gudeman and Rivera 1990: 159).

Among the more individualistic motives to learn Irish are Sarah's explanation for her interest in Irish in terms of personal psychology; she explains her drive to learn the language in terms of her rebellious nature. Ben's desire to learn Irish, resulting from his encounter with an Irish-speaking German, seems to be a highly individual motive indeed. He is made aware that the language is 'his', a fact that he is ashamed of, as a foreigner was being more 'Irish' than himself in his 'own country'.

We have seen how the middle-class learners of the North Down group discussed the Irish language in ways that were very similar to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Protestants. In the following section, I will discuss how they related the Irish language to their community identities and how their search for a venue to learn Irish informed their representations of the language. This section will demonstrate how part of a significant discourse of the Irish language was re-moulded by the learners to fit their needs.

The Transformation of the Gaeltacht

The Gaeltacht, when discussed in the early years of the century, was seen as the fountainhead of the Irish national character. It was to become the inspiration of Catholic, Gaelic and nationalist Ireland. The Gaeltacht was visualised as being religiously, linguistically and politically homogenous.

In the 1980s and '90s the forces of pluralism and secularism eroded the Catholic and nationalist image of Ireland that Gaeltacht colleges presented to Irish-speaking enthusiasts (cf. Tovey et al. 1989). The extent of this erosion differed from district to district. In north-west Donegal, Gaeltacht college activities continued to be imbued with a nationalist ethos, and it was presumed that most Irish learners were Catholic, although the few Protestants who attended the courses there were made welcome.

It was in Glencolmcille, south Donegal, that a transformation in the nature of the Irish summer college took place. *Oideas Gael* had a very different ethos from previous Irish language colleges. The old voluntarist spirit of Irish language colleges, in which teachers worked for nothing, had gone; as a consequence, *Oideas Gael* courses were expensive. Courses in painting, hill walking, set-dancing and archaeology were offered as well as Irish language courses; the concept of 'Gaelic' Ireland was to be a very broad one indeed. Students were provided with entertainment in the evening, including Irish language singing, poetry and set-dancing. The presence of so many foreigners on the courses demonstrated that the Irish language was available to non-Catholics and non-nationalists. The staff avoided mentioning issues that were related to Irish politics, and learners were made aware of services in both the local Anglican and Catholic churches. The language courses aimed to provide the learners with a 'modern' vocabulary to describe everyday life in the late twentieth-century. The ethos of the college reflected the rejection of the cultural secessionist discourse of the Irish language for the cultural one.

The North Down learners often referred to the Gaeltacht when they 'imagined' the Irish language. For example, Harry adhered strictly to the Donegal dialect of Irish. I attempted to speak 'pure' Donegal Irish to Harry, but occasionally he upbraided me for using standardised forms of the language. None of the group attended any Irish language college apart from *Oideas Gael*, so the Gaeltacht became a symbol of pluralism and diversity, rather than the focus of a totalising nationalist ideology. Here I will present more excerpts from interviews with Andrew and Kate on the subject:

Andrew: We got very inspired by Glencolmcille this summer, and I'm totally determined to go on now. There were people from all over the world, and it was just staggering, it was kind of international and kind of ecumenical sort of atmosphere, which was great, you know... I could have stayed there for a couple of months, it was total immersion, we didn't use English at all.

Kate: We had two Americans, (people from) Switzerland, Austria, Brittany, Dublin, Belfast, two from England. Every night *Oideas Gael* organised something... And a fiddler, and of course the famous Lillis (Lillis Ó Laoire, a singer from Donegal), the *sean-nós* singer, he was there, and then we'd a dinner one night and a *céilí*, and then afterwards you went to Biddy's (a local bar)⁵⁵. But every afternoon there was a programme as well. You could have gone hill-walking, if you'd any interest in playing an instrument, you had that, and the famous *sean-nós* singing which I adored... I mean it was "now for something completely different". I have never seen anything like that in my life. I had never heard anything like it. I didn't know those things existed. I'd never been to a *céilí*, and everything was a revelation... (after listening to Lillis Ó Laoire talking about traditional songs) Really, he could have been speaking any language, but it was beautiful you know, it really sounded beautiful, though I didn't understand it.

The Irish language is discussed in terms of an ecumenical and international ethos; a Gael need no longer be an Irishman, a Catholic, or a nationalist. The foreigners add to the attraction of the course, since they contribute to the holiday atmosphere and provide an opportunity to meet people from other countries.

For the North Down learners, the Gaeltacht was a cultural oasis at which they could escape from the nationalist and republican image of the language in Northern Ireland. However, this image of the language was never far away. Kate explains:

It's a very different ball game from a few years ago. Its very Northern... Charles said, 'There's a lot of Irish from the North here, Kate.'... I overheard a lot of conversations. They're very serious, they seem to have this victimisation principle. This talk is alien to me. I've heard songs I find offensive. Why does it have to be part and parcel of it? It'll get Glen (Glencolmcille) a bad name.

Kate's description of Irish speakers from Northern Ireland as 'serious' contrasts with her perception of the Irish language as a leisure pursuit. Nationalist accounts of British oppression, referred to as 'a victimisation principle', make her feel uncomfortable as she is a unionist. She regards such narratives as an un-necessary part of the Irish language 'scene', as it is presented to her in terms of the 'neutral' cultural discourse. Kate is particularly offended by the anti-British content of songs she hears in the public bar, which contrast with the non-political songs she learns on the course. The cultural secessionist discourse, brought to Glencolmcille by 'serious' Irish speakers from Northern Ireland, clashes with the cultural discourse of the college. Kate's sense of identification with the locals is indicated by her belief that the articulation of republican beliefs by people from Northern Ireland would be to

⁵⁵*Seán-nós*, or 'old-style', is an ancient form of singing in Irish unaccompanied by instrumental music. A *céilí* is a traditional dancing event.

the detriment of the district. Kate felt more comfortable among the locals in Glencolmcille than with Irish speakers who lived nearer to her in Northern Ireland.

However opposed Kate was to the republican Irish-speakers, she never challenged them openly. Rather, she tended to undercommunicate her Protestantism and anti-nationalism on the course. Kate told me that Catholics on the course stared at her when she told them that she was from Bangor (which implied that she was a Protestant); she preferred to tell other Irish speakers that she was from County Down (which gave no indication of her religious affiliation). Thus Kate secularised her social presentation by masking the characteristics that would have identified her as a Protestant (cf. Burton 1978: 50, 58). Kate's opposition to the cultural secessionist discourse was a hidden transcript that she revealed to myself and her friends in private, but not to Irish speakers in the public arena of the classrooms and bars of Glencolmcille. Most of the other North Down learners who attended the course followed Kate's example. Glencolmcille was a 'neutral' learning venue for them when Irish political and religious issues were avoided in conversation. However, Andrew adopted a completely different attitude at *Oideas Gael*:

One of the things I did was on Sunday I went to church (laughs). No, I do normally go to church, actually, and I am an attender of church. I wouldn't say that I was an orthodox believer, but I was *determined* to go to church and that was that. I thought about it afterwards, I feel you know, if I was a Protestant learning Irish, I'd *better* be a Protestant learning Irish and not an agnostic learning Irish. And you become conscious of things like that, and you can drift into being a parody of yourself. And one of the most interesting things of all, I got into an argument, not an argument, but a discussion one evening with a girl from Dublin and a Catholic from the Falls Road, and this was fascinating discussion. There was a discussion then about was there a difference between murders carried out by Protestants and murders carried out by the IRA, however regrettable, and neither of them were in favour of anything like that. The fascinating thing about that discussion was that you could understand, it would be, you know, in a bar in Belfast, if you ever got into such a discussion it would be extremely heated indeed. It was conducted in the most friendly and honest way that I'd ever discussed anything, and I didn't find myself bridled once.

Rather than undercommunicate his ethnic identity like Kate, Andrew chooses to accentuate his Protestantism on the course, even to the extent of becoming a parody of himself. In the text Andrew, who believed the IRA to be as sectarian as loyalist paramilitaries, does not shirk from debating the issue with those of an opposite opinion. For Andrew, Glencolmcille represents a neutral venue in which the 'troubles' can be discussed by people from different backgrounds without feeling threatened. The rules of etiquette governing 'mixed' interaction in Northern Ireland can be suspended. Andrew, who was very interested in political issues, was not in the least bit afraid to air his views on the course. He demonstrated none of the guilt that many middle-class Protestants felt in espousing the

unionist cause (Foster 1995a, 1995b). Andrew's behaviour at *Oideas Gael* was unique in terms of the group's attitudes; Kate and the other unionist learners, in addition to avoiding controversial topics of conversation with others, behaved as if they may have been in danger if their political views became well-known. Glencolmcille was 'neutral' for Andrew as he felt he could air his political views without fear of serious retribution; for the others, the district's neutrality was compromised when political issues were raised at all.

A Sense of Place: The Irish Language and the Culture of North Down

In the texts which relate the learners' motivations for learning Irish, Robin, Albert, and David mention the Irish roots of placenames. All of the North Down learners associated the Irish language with their local district. I asked David what he knew of the history of the language. He replied:

Well, that was one of the things, you know. I'm sure people were asking Tom (an Irish language teacher) questions about this here. Somebody says, 'Do you tell me they spoke Irish here?' He says, 'No doubt about it.' He says, 'Irish was spoken all over Ireland at one time'. He said, 'You've only got to look at your names here, your placenames down here, just look at them'.

David incorporates the Irish language within his view of the district's past, and the language is ever-present in the form of placenames and surnames. The North Down sense of place which involves the Irish language was reinforced when the Celtic Department at Queen's University published a volume on placenames of the Ards area; Andrew, Harry and I bought this book. The book was the product of work financed by the CCRU; thus government policy had the effect of magnifying the ability of members of the group to associate the Irish language with their home district.

The members of the group, with the exception of Albert, were particularly interested in Irish traditional music and attended related events in the district. There was a feeling that Irish music was more acceptable locally than the Irish language. David discussed his involvement in a programme for his local historical association:

We're always asking for suggestions, and I said, 'Why not get Tom Clarke to come along and give us a talk on Irish language and culture'. That's the word I was searching for, culture. So Tom came along. You've got to sugar the pill a wee bit here, if you like, you've got to have the Irish language, say, and a bit of music, you know, so that it doesn't appear as if you're propagandising. That's only my opinion about the thing, and it went down very well, you know, and the music helped of course, because music, you know, is infectious.

The presence of the cultural discourse is very strong in this text. David is arguing that the Irish language may appear 'political' when isolated from other aspects of Irish culture. According to David, when Irish is related to other aspects of Irish culture, such as music, the language is transformed into a 'cultural' artefact. Thus the Irish language 'pill' is 'cultural' and not 'political' when it is 'sugared' with traditional music.

In our discussions, Andrew mentioned that an Irish traditional music session was held in the first Ards class, and that all the musicians were local Protestants. Andrew, Kate, and Sarah attended Irish dancing classes in Bangor. Andrew was excited to discover that he could associate these Irish cultural activities with local traditions of the North Down area; thus Irish culture was not recently 'imported' into the district. He was told that every rural parish in the Ards area used to have a fiddler that played at harvest dances which were held in Orange halls. He also became aware of traditional Irish dances and tunes that were indigenous to the Ards area. Thus Andrew linked Irish cultural traditions with his localised sense of place, which included the Protestant experience of living in the area.

Traditionalising Irish: A Protestant Gaelic Heritage

Apart from feeling part of a local tradition or identity in North Down, the North Down group had access to other resources that enable them to 'traditionalise' their interest in Irish, in that they became aware of a wider Protestant Gaelic tradition in Northern Ireland. For example, the group read articles and pamphlets on the tradition that had been produced by the ULTACH Trust. Andrew explained the effect this knowledge had upon him:

Well, its programmes like that, its programmes like the McAdam programme (a BBC production on the life of Robert McAdam, a nineteenth-century antiquarian), and the other articles I've read. All of that makes one feel that you're actually part of a tradition, you know, not breaking into a tradition, not sticking out like a sore thumb... I didn't even know, for instance, that there had been Presbyterian speakers of Gaelic in County Down. You know, things I discovered like that. I discovered that in my own school that Neilson (William Neilson, a nineteenth-century Presbyterian minister and scholar of the Irish language) had taught there and everything. Well, all these things, well, they didn't make any difference to me learning the thing, but there was a way in which you felt a lot more confident. I suppose that I wasn't some kind of lunatic eccentric you know. There's always the danger, a terrible fear of becoming a token Prod or something.

In this text Andrew associates the Irish language with a Protestant heritage (the McAdam programme and the articles), his school tradition (William Neilson), and a local identity (County Down). These have the combined effect of rationalising his interest in Irish in terms of a tradition; even if there were not many contemporary Protestant learners of Irish

that he could identify with, he felt re-assured that many other Protestants spoke Irish in the past. In this way, Andrew circumvents feelings of isolation among Catholic Irish speakers by invoking a Protestant Irish-speaking past. The final sentence in the text echoed fears that early Protestant Gaelic Leaguers would be manipulated by other Irish speakers against their better interests (Hennessey 1985: 53).

The group associated the Irish language with a North Down identity, whether it was in the context of contemporary Irish cultural events, or the local traditions of the area. At certain times these cultural activities tended to sit a little uneasily among the dominant Protestant and British ethos of the district; at one point during his interview, Albert commented, 'We lived in a wee world of our own'. For the group, the Irish language was part of a private-domain culture that did not impinge upon the dominant British ethos of the district. Their sense of local identity, with its 'hidden' Irish heritage, would have come as a surprise to many residents of North Down; the learners interpreted their surroundings in a manner which would have appeared very novel to their neighbours. In Hannerz's terms (1992: 77), the North Down learners constituted a microculture within the district.

The Irish Language as a Catholic/Nationalist Language

I have indicated how the North Down group related the Irish language to their concepts of community identity. In this section I will explore the sense of distance between the group and the language. I will deal with their perceptions of the Irish language as the property of the Catholic community and the group's views of the language revival.

A Catholic Language?

The group seemed unperturbed that most Irish speakers were Catholic. As a network of Protestants learning Irish together, they confirmed for one another that Protestants could learn Irish. They learned the language in what was considered to be a Protestant heartland of Northern Ireland. They encountered an international and economical ethos on the *Oideas Gael* courses. Most Catholic speakers of Irish they encountered were keen to encourage their interest in Irish. This was particularly true of the staff of the ULTACH Trust; the organisation funded the weekend courses in Hollywood.

An incident which occurred during the class in west Belfast confirmed Andrew's belief that many Catholic Irish speakers welcomed Protestant interest in the language. He said that a young Catholic who attended the class had revealed to him that a friend was horrified to learn that there were Protestants in the 'A' Level class; he accused Protestants of 'stealing our language'. Thus the Catholic learner's friend did not want others to learn the symbolic language of the Catholic/nationalist community. Andrew said the other learner joked that his friend could not speak Irish himself, thus reducing the linguistic capital of a Catholic hostile to Protestants learning Irish. Andrew and the Catholic learner asserted the 'neutrality' of a shared experience of learning Irish which refuted attempts by non-Irish speakers to restrict the

potential learners of Irish to religious or political categories of people. Their shared interest had overcome their ethnic divisions (cf. Erikson 1993: 30, 153).

Attitudes to the West Belfast Language Revival

The North Down group did not live far from Belfast, the heart of the Irish language revival. Some of them attended Irish classes in the city, including Catholic west Belfast, but others preferred to avoid the city, preferring to learn Irish in their home district or 100 miles west, in the Gaeltacht. All of the learners, including those of a nationalist outlook, felt a sense of difference from the values and ethos of the west Belfast revival. Although Belfast, including west Belfast, was viewed as a possible location in which to learn Irish, no-one, except Sarah, would contemplate socialising there; she had many friends in west Belfast, and could draw upon a considerable amount of social capital in the district. West Belfast and revivalist activities did not feature very largely in the group's discussions of the language, but the issue was raised by learners who wanted to find new learning venues. When interviewed after the IRA cease-fire, David told me that he finished learning the Irish language when the Bangor class ended because he would not travel to Belfast. He was discouraged from attending Irish classes there for many reasons: he felt unable to masquerade as a Catholic due to his lack of knowledge of Catholic culture; he was unfamiliar with parts of Belfast; he was afraid of the IRA; and he felt ill at ease when he was in the city. His views reflected the tendency for people who lived outside Belfast to stigmatise the city as a source of sectarian and political violence (cf. McFarlane 1986).

In our discussions Harry expressed his concern that in west Belfast he would be perceived as part of the 'establishment' if he told someone of his career in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. Like many other middle-class Protestants he had an occupational association with the British state. The symbolic capital he might incur in west Belfast on account of his nationalism would be overcome by the symbolic deficit he accrued on account of his civil service career. He was aware of the language revival in Northern Ireland, but it had little personal significance for him:

GMc.: What do you know about the Irish language revival?

Harry: I'm aware of it, but I'm not any part of it. Well (laughs) that's silly, I suppose, to say that I'm not any part of it I suppose, I am obviously a part of it, but I'm not a part of the mainstream revivals. I imagine it takes place mostly in the nationalist areas up in Belfast, you know, and maybe some other nationalist areas in the country.

In this text, Harry, a nationalist, distances himself from those who live in nationalist districts; their experiences are remote from his own. Harry had attended a couple of classes in *Cumann Chluain Ard*, but wouldn't go there regularly:

GMc.: So, would you go back to it?

Harry: Oh aye, I would. I wouldn't go regularly, but, because I would be doubtful about the politics of some of the people who went there. Whereas I may be nationalist. I am certainly not in any sense republican in the normal sort of meaning of that word. locally, or any way in favour of violence.

Thus Harry counters any fellow-feeling that he may have had with republicans by asserting that he is firmly opposed to violence. In another conversation Harry told me he would not go to the Shankill Road to learn Irish; although he would be a Protestant in a Protestant district, there would be people in a class there who would support violence to achieve their political goals. In his social activities, the support or non-support for violence was a more important factor for Harry than the ideologies of unionism and nationalism. Thus he felt more comfortable in the presence of non-violent unionists than fellow nationalists who supported violence to achieve a united Ireland. His non-violent attitudes reflected the attitudes of his class towards working-class Protestants, who were regarded as violent bigots (Harris 1986: 101, 167). This 'non-violence' criteria for comfortable social interaction was a feature of the group as a whole; solidarity with peaceful Catholics of the same class often overcame any sense of fellow-feeling with working-class co-ethnics (cf. Moxon-Browne 1991: 26).

The North Down group often castigated both republican and loyalist 'extremists', the 'Others' of middle-class Protestants (Todd 1987: 18-20). Kate believed that the Irish language revival in Belfast was related to the upsurge of republican activity in the city:

GMc.: Do you know anything about the revival in Belfast?

Kate: Not really. We belong to the North Down Gaeltacht (laughs). No, certainly there's a revival in west Belfast, a big interest in Irish-speaking schools. Does Gerry Adams (the president of Sinn Féin) have Irish? Every time he opens his mouth he puts a nail in the coffin of the language for the Prods. I know a guy particularly, who's really interested in Irish, and the other day Gerry Adams said something in Irish and he says, 'That's it.' He finished.

GMc.: Why do you think there's a big interest in Irish in Belfast?

Kate: Political. It's certainly political. It is nothing other than political, they're using the Irish language, they're *abusing* it. Yet nobody minds anyone learning Irish. I think its good that people should know it, but not that way, I don't think it's right. They're entitled to do what they want, of course, but I think its being used politically. It's used in the jails! All the political prisoners in the jails have Irish. They're taking it and making it their own.

Thus Kate places an ideological and geographical barrier between the North Down learners, who learn the Irish language for 'cultural' reasons, and the Irish speakers of west Belfast, who she perceives as manipulating the language for 'political' purposes. The last sentence in the text reveals Kate's belief that republicans are attempting to establish an

ownership of the Irish language; this is reminiscent of the process of nationalist enclosure of culture (Handler 1988: 156-7). As such, she implies that republicans jealously guard Irish from unionists interested in the language. However, her opposition to republicans 'abusing' the Irish language is at variance with her libertarian principles, which permit anyone to learn Irish if they wish.

Andrew and Albert did not share Kate's views on the revival on account of their experiences in west Belfast. Their association of the Irish language with republicanism in west Belfast was challenged when they attended an 'A' level class in the area. Andrew told me that he was surprised to discover that the class was filled with schoolgirls who were seeking extra tuition before their exams; presumably Andrew did not believe that these schoolgirls were republicans. In another conversation Andrew told me that the class teacher had made disparaging remarks about the correctness of some republican slogans in Irish; in particular the teacher had explained that the republican slogan '*Tiocfaidh ár Lá*' ('*Our Day will Come*') had the opposite meaning to the intentions of republicans; the phrase was used by Donegal speakers of Irish when they believed that a disastrous day would befall them. Andrew was amused that an Irish speaker from west Belfast diminished the linguistic capital of republicans. Albert explained this by saying that the teacher loved the language too much to see it mis-used by republicans; like many Protestants, he believed that republicans were only interested in the Irish language as a form of political capital.

For Andrew, some aspects of the Irish revival were more republican than others, especially those that were not grounded in traditional manifestations of the language:

They're (the use of Irish personal names) like these Irish street-names, when only two people on the street can read them! They are pushed at you, just like names such as Daithí Ó Connail (IRA commander). I can't help it, when I hear Daithí I think Daithí Ó Connail.

Andrew attempts to diminish the linguistic capital of republicans who erect street-signs in Irish. He represents Irish street-signs and personal names as a negative and compulsory aspect of the revival by saying that they 'push' the language onto people. Furthermore, Irish language names seemed irrelevant to Andrew; he told me that the members of the group only used their Irish names in a jocular fashion. Many in the group interpreted certain symbolic aspects of the language revival, such as Irish language street-signs, as being irrelevant to their own life-styles; any attempts to give the Irish language a high public profile in North Down would meet overwhelming unionist opposition in the area. The Irish language was part of a private domain leisure activity, rather than a public domain issue, with the attendant implications for the public recognition of nationalism.

The Irish Language and the Political Philosophy of the North Down Group

Every member of the North Down group discussed their interest in Irish in terms of a sense of Irish nationality, although they differed as to the meaning of this sense of Irishness. For Albert, Sarah, and Harry, their Irish identity was an expression of their hope for a united Ireland. Some of the unionist learners said that Protestant identity in Northern Ireland was changing and becoming more open to a sense of Irishness, although they did not equate this development with an abandonment of unionism. Like many British identifiers, they were open to the expression of an Irish identity (cf. Foster 1995a, 1995b; Aughey 1989).

Kate told me that she had a very British upbringing in terms of her family identity and the district in which she lived; on more than one occasion during her interview she likened Bangor to the 'capital of England' and told me that many members of her family has served in the British armed forces. English culture was perceived to be the correct one in Kate's youth; she was even forced to take elocution lessons to enable her to speak with an English accent. For Kate, learning Irish was part of a journey of self-discovery that allowed her to build upon and/or replace the notions of culture she received from her family and community; she said of her childhood, 'If you had an original thought it'd die of loneliness'. In coming to terms with her sense of Irish national identity she drew upon her perceptions of the unionist community as a whole:

We don't know who we are. We are a bastard race. What are we anyway? I'm not fond of the English, Scottish and Welsh. I prefer the Irish, North and South... I think that we're Irish living in Britain. I think that's what I am at the end of it all... I have an identity crisis now that I didn't have when I was younger, but it doesn't concern me that much... I talked with a man on this and at the end of an hour and a half we still didn't know who we were.

Kate's British identity seems compromised to the extent that she dislikes many other 'British' people; the Irish aspect of her national identity is enhanced by her liking for all Irish people. In one part of the text, she identifies with the contemporary crisis in unionism on which social scientists have commented (e.g.s Bell 1990: 22; Bruce 1994a). Yet at the end of this sentence she asserts that such a crisis is relatively unimportant. Later in the interview, Kate returned to the identity crisis of Northern Protestants, including herself. She remarked that more Protestants seemed to be learning Irish. I asked her why this was so. She replied:

The situation in Northern Ireland. I don't think that they know what they are, or else they've never looked to see what they are. And the fact that now we're being ruled by English politicians and we've discovered that we don't like them.

Kate interprets the increased Protestant interest in Irish in terms of a shift from a British to a more indigenous identification; in this text Kate is willing to identify personally with this shift. I asked her about her national identity:

GMc.: What is your national identity, then?

Kate: I'm born in Ireland, so I have to be Irish. I'm Irish because of where I was born and I suppose I'm British too. But you can't be born in Ireland and not be Irish, for God's sake. I'm Irish, I'm British by act of parliament, I suppose, but I mean I can cope with it, I can cope with it no problem. But how can you be born in Ireland and not be Irish? Sure, we're as Irish as the shamrocks, for God's sake. We are! We're not English, and what is British? British is everything, British is a hotchpotch of everything. I'm a British citizen because I was born in Northern Ireland, but I feel myself to be Irish and yet sometimes I don't think I identify any more with the Republic than I do with England. I don't know, you know, I don't feel any more at home in the Republic than I do in England. I feel more at home here. And I think I've more in common with Northern Catholics than I would have with a British Tory or something.

Thus Kate expresses an Irish national identity in terms of her birth on the island of Ireland, and her British national identity in terms of her birth in Northern Ireland. In this text she finds her British identity difficult to express except in terms of citizenship; like many middle-class Protestants, she finds it difficult to identify a distinctive British 'culture'. I assume that she has heard 'a voice on the ground' that expresses a civic concept of British citizenship, but has felt this to be too vague; in the text she has difficulty in harmonising her British and Irish identities in the manner of unionist intellectuals such as Chris McGimpsey. In the last part of this text, Kate expresses a Northern Irish affiliation which indicates a degree of alienation from Britain and the Republic of Ireland. I decided to ask Kate directly about the extent to which she could identify with the Irish language:

GMc.: Is Irish part of your culture?

Kate: Well, to grow up in it, no, never, never, definitely not, and as I look back I'd probably, just what I said you know, basically looking at words and things, but certainly not my culture, but now I sort of think we're very lucky. I feel quite privileged now because I mean you feel the best of both worlds. You extract from both sides what you like best, you know. I haven't come to terms with anything now really. I'm happy to be British-Irish or Irish-British or whatever, you can take pleasure from both. I mean, I take great pleasure in looking at the 'Changing of the Guard' or something like that there... but I mean I sort of feel that now it would be part of my culture, sure, and I take a lot of pleasure out of it, it doesn't mean to say that I can take no pleasure in things that I took pleasure in before. I mean, when they play 'The Land of Hope and Glory' or something, it doesn't mean to say that I shouldn't, I feel quite happy to associate with that, and I've no problems about it. I'd say that the Irish culture would certainly be part of me now, yes, sure, and I'm a better person for it.

In this part of the interview, Kate alternates between a concept of personal culture that is grounded in her childhood experiences, and a type of culture that is linked to her

personal development as an adult; this second culture is more amenable to the Irish language. Kate links the process of learning Irish as part of her development as an adult, which indicates a assertion of autonomy from received notions of identity and culture. However, in the above texts Kate associates her personal maturation with the identity crisis of the unionist community as a whole; she believes that Protestants are adopting a more indigenous 'Irish' outlook as a result of alienation from Westminster's policies. However, Kate is adamant that she is not embracing an Irish nationalist identity at the expense of her British one; the way in which her response is worded suggests that she might have felt that this was expected of her. Rather, Kate has created a syncretic culture that draws upon her notions of Britishness and Irishness.

Kate's dual Irish/British nationality was one that was shared by the other unionists of the North Down group. In our discussions, Andrew often drew upon the writings of literary figures such as Edna Longley (cited in Chapter Four) and Seamas Heaney to distinguish Irish nationality and Irish culture from Irish nationalism. In the above texts Kate finds difficulty in expressing both Irish and British national identities. For his part, Andrew revelled in the situational nature of unionist national identity:

Sometimes I'm British and sometimes I'm Irish. I don't see any contradiction between liking cricket and liking Irish.

Andrew also attributed his sense of Irishness to his having studied at Trinity College, Dublin⁵⁶. He was the most articulate advocate of the common heritage discourse in the group. He expressed his view of the language in a local magazine⁵⁷:

I got the distinct impression that the language was being used as a political flag to wave in my face, just as much as people on "my side" waved Union flags and Orange emblems. It was made to seem that to learn the language would be, of necessity, a political act, the rejection of my tribe and the embracing of another.

...Ulster is often said to be at the crossroads as if we were poised in uncertainty between finger posts demanding irrevocable decisions and threatening dire consequences. But crossroads are meeting places as well as points of departure and taken in that sense my homeland in a (sic) crossroads of extraordinary interest and diversity. Here meet the English, Lowland Scots, Gaelic Irish and Gallic Scots and with them they have brought their languages, music, traditions, religion, customs, industry and politics. What we have inherited is as varied as our skies and the patchwork of our fields. I am greedy; I want the lot.

⁵⁶ Trinity College was the preferred choice of university for many Protestants in both parts of Ireland during the early years of this century. In recent decades the number of Northern Protestants attending the college has dwindled considerably.

⁵⁷ I am protecting Andrew's identity by not revealing the name or issue number of the magazine.

In this classic example of the common heritage discourse, Andrew castigates both unionist and nationalist 'extremists' who enclose cultures that should be shared between them. Rather, there is a cultural mosaic in 'Ulster' that all should avail of in an atmosphere of cultural relativism. Andrew uses this discourse to combat the association between the Irish language and Irish nationalism.

The nationalist members of the group found an Irish identity to be incompatible with a unionist one. On one occasion, Harry said that Chris McGimpsey, the unionist champion of the cultural nationalist discourse, had 'contradictory' and 'confused' feelings. Apart from the ebullient Andrew, the members of the North Down group did not discuss openly, much less debate, their differing interpretations of the Irish language in terms of their political outlooks; they revealed these to me during private interviews. Such debates would have risked a breach with the etiquette for 'mixed' interaction, which on these occasions applied to unionists and nationalists, rather than Catholics and Protestants. Furthermore, few were willing to engage Andrew in what could not fail to be long, drawn-out discussions about issues of Irish politics, identity and culture. The group were happier to castigate loyalist and republican interpretations of the Irish language, thus contributing to in-group solidarity.

A common feature of this group was the belief that the Irish language could be used to 'liberalise' other Northern unionists by making them more sensitive to Catholic/ nationalist culture and beliefs, as well making them more aware of an indigenous culture that they shared with their political and/or religious opponents. When I told Andrew that I was teaching a class in Glencairn, he responded, 'You'll civilise them!' Presumably he meant that the Glencairn learners would become less sectarian, and adopt a politico-religious outlook more similar to his own. Sarah considered the unionist rejection of the Irish language to be the result of a policy of indoctrination:

I feel it's unfortunate that people have this awful narrow view that Irish belongs over the border and that there's a separate entity up here altogether... I think the schools have a lot to answer for. I think from a very early age people should be aware of what their culture is, and what Irish means. I think that's been cut out of the textbooks by the British involvement over the years and that we weren't allowed to hold it. I think that it's very sad that it's been that way, but I think people are brainwashed into thinking that they have a separate identity altogether, and God help them, because they can't be attached to anything, because they don't want to be attached to England either, but they can't accept that they're part of, well I suppose, that's the loyalist side... If the schools used more of it and taught it more to children and gave them some sort of identity, and something to be proud of. I think a lot of people in the North are sort of, they feel inferior because they haven't got anything, and yet they think they're superior. I think they're lacking a lot. I think that's why they're so suspicious of other people, because they haven't got anything of their own... If we could just live together a bit more and learn a bit more about each other and not be so suspicious, it would be a wonderful place to live in.

Sarah suggests that unionists have no identity without the Irish language and culture, as they have no other indigenous culture and English or British culture is alien to them. Britain is blamed for an educational system that deprives Protestants of their Irishness; the school is perceived to have an important role in establishing a sense of identity. The lack of unionists' cultural capital is blamed for their defensiveness and resistance to change. Education in the culture of Ireland is the key to banishing Protestant prejudices and discovering common interests with Catholics. While Sarah's nationalist views may have led her to conclude that Northern Protestants would lose their unionism by learning Irish, the unionists in the group agreed that Protestants and Catholics would 'live together' with in a more affable manner if the former learned Irish. Both nationalist and unionist members of the North Down group believed that the Irish language could be used to make more extreme working-class unionists similar in outlook to themselves.

Conclusion: The North Down Microculture

We have seen how the North Down group reconciled the Irish language with their collective and personal identities. This was facilitated by their residence in an area which had a small, but vibrant Irish cultural 'scene'. Furthermore, because the learners were educated and/or pooled the information they gathered, they were able to appropriate histories, such as that of a Protestant Gaelic heritage, that were not widely available in the public domain. The past was used to bypass the Catholic and/or republican image of Irish and associate the language with local expressions of identity. Both nationalist and unionist members of the group were able to identify their interest in Irish with a change from English- to Irish-oriented identifications among Northern Ireland's Protestants. Their exploration of the Protestant Gaelic past and their rejection of working-class unionist or Protestant culture are examples of the greater ability of the inhabitants of middle-class *Gesellschaften* to reject received notions of identity and define their allegiances and interests for themselves. They epitomised Hannerz's cosmopolitans (1996: 102-111) in their wish to engage with a culture that many of their Protestant counterparts would have regarded as alien. The unionist cosmopolitans of the group were not prepared to disavow their past experiences and beliefs, but created a hybrid British/Irish cultural collage at the interface of nationalism and unionism. In particular, learning Irish provided a means for the middle-class unionists in the group to demonstrate their non-sectarianism and express an Irish identity. They rejected the feigned Englishness of British identifiers, as well as the 'Protestant Ulster' of their working-class counterparts. As such, the language was not alien to the group as residents of North Down, as Protestants, or as unionists.

Since most of the group were middle-class, they could diversify their learning experiences; they could drive to different classes and could afford to attend Irish language courses in the Gaeltacht. Their trips to *Oideas Gael* symbolised the convergence of values of

Southern Irish speakers and Northern Protestant learners; both rejected the traditional associations between the Irish language with Catholicism and republicanism. Furthermore, the unionist learners were glad to discover that *Oideas Gael* did not promote the language as an integral element of Irish nationalism. Although the Southern Irish speakers and most of the North Down group could agree on the 'new' image for the Irish language, the reluctance of the group to meet some Northern Irish speakers of the language symbolised the ideological gulf that lay between them. This was also reflected in the group's desire to learn 'proper' Gaeltacht Irish, rather than any forms which were used by Irish speakers in Belfast⁵⁸. On the whole, the group members were happier to travel 100 miles to Donegal to learn Irish than the twenty or so miles that would have taken them to a class in Belfast.

The republican connotations of the language revival irritated the learners, but it was an irrelevance to them. Some of the learners, such as Kate, believed that the Belfast revival was heavily influenced by republicanism, but they were relatively unperturbed as they did not feel the need to travel to the city. Others, such as Albert and Andrew, braved Irish classes in west Belfast, and came to the conclusion that the republican element in them was not as great as they had feared. The associations of the language with Catholicism or Catholics was not as problem for the group, as they were avowedly non-sectarian, had met many Catholics who encouraged their interest in Irish, and used or constructed images of the language that were 'non-Catholic' in content. They learned and discussed the language in relation to their home district, the Gaeltacht, their family histories, and a sense of Irishness that did not necessarily have to be informed by nationalist ideology. One feature which struck me in my discussions with the North Down learners was their ability to incorporate the Irish language within their strong sense of local identity, which was often more significant for them than a macro-level national one (cf. Cohen 1986; 1994).

We have seen how the North Down learners achieved both social and mental mobility in diversifying their learning experiences, as well as generating and drawing upon representations of the language that were compatible with their world-views. The experiences of Colin, the working-class member of the group, suggest that such flexibility may have been more difficult for poorer Protestant learners. I will examine this issue in the next chapter.

⁵⁸ Belfast Irish is a mixture of Donegal Irish and the simplified standard version of the language.

CHAPTER SEVEN

The Glencairn Class

In this chapter I will describe the creation of a field of study, consisting of an Irish language class, which I taught in the Glencairn Community Centre in the working-class Protestant part of west Belfast. The class comprised 28 lessons in the Irish language held between the 8th of February and the 19th of October 1993. I will demonstrate the extent to which learners' views of the Irish language were informed by Protestant working-class ideology and lifestyles. Fear of Catholics/nationalists, the attempt to create a coherent Ulster identity, and the physical and psychological retreat of northern Protestants are major themes of this chapter. Unlike their middle-class counterparts in North Down, few of the Glencairn learners had access to the information that would enable them to identify with the Irish language. Rather, they used fragments of conversations and elements of folk history to discuss the language. These facts, coupled with the proximity of the republican cultural-political menace, ensured that the learners would experience deep feelings of ambivalence regarding the Irish language. I struggled, sometimes in vain, to help the learners to identify with the language. In this chapter I will concentrate initially on the learners' attempts to identify with Irish, before examining their alienation from the language or particular manifestations of it. Towards the end of the chapter I will concentrate on two learners whose differing views on the Irish language reflected a divergence in attitudes to national and cultural affiliations.

The Glencairn Estate is part of the Greater Shankill area of west Belfast (see map in Appendix Five). The estate has suffered with the rest of the Shankill area from the combined effects of the 'troubles'. The decline of the traditional industries, coupled with redevelopment and suburbanisation, have contributed towards population decline in Protestant working-class districts in Belfast. In the Shankill area the population fell from 30,000 in 1971 to 17,000 in 1981 (Gillespie et al. 1994: 13). Many young Protestants left deprived districts like the Shankill in search of work, leaving behind an increasingly elderly Protestant population faced by a growing Catholic community that needed to be housed outside its traditional territorial boundaries (Bruce 1994a: 50). In the 1980s and '90s Catholic numbers were increasing in north, west and south Belfast, 'surrounding' small Protestant enclaves that became increasingly introverted and insecure (Holloway 1994). The Shankill Road is located in west Belfast, in which most of the city's Catholics live. Tension between the two communities has been high, and paramilitary activity has resulted in a considerable loss of life in both Protestant and Catholic districts of west Belfast.

Glencairn was out on a limb as far as Protestant Belfast was concerned: the land to the west of the estate was mountainous and uninhabitable; to the north lay the mostly Catholic estate of Ligoneil; to the east lay Catholic Ardoyne and the more well-to-do Oldpark area, whose Protestant population was moving out in increasing numbers; and the estate was part of west Belfast, the population of which was predominantly Catholic. To the immediate south

lay the Protestant estate of Springmartin, and to the south-west the Shankill Road area. Only the adjacency of these areas made residents feel safe, but transport to them was easily interrupted by bomb alerts. To its residents, the Glencairn estate appeared be a bastion of Protestantism surrounded by growing Catholic communities.

In 1991 the total population of the Glencairn estate was 3432 (Department of Health and Social Services 1992: 487). The estate comprised approximately 850 homes, 500 of which were poorly-constructed maisonettes. The estate was built in the late 1960s to cope with the overflow of population caused by extensive redevelopment in the Shankill Road area. Following the outbreak of the 'troubles' in 1969, the population of the estate was swelled by an influx of Protestant refugees from mixed-religion areas such as Ardoyne, New Barnsley, and Ballymurphy. Soon afterwards a tenants' association was formed to forge a community spirit and lobby for the improvement of living conditions in the estate. The Glencairn Community Association (later re-named the Glencairn Community Development Association) built its own community centre and began a long battle with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, the organisation responsible for public housing, to upgrade the substandard conditions of the homes on the estate. In 1994 a local survey discovered that the rate of male unemployment in Glencairn had reached 60%, with 84% of local people living on state benefits (*The Citizen* November 1994, p. 4). In the same year the estate had few facilities, apart from the now dilapidated community centre and a small shops-unit, which contained the Glencairn Advice Centre, an adjunct of the Community Centre. The Community Centre provided a drop-in centre and ran a youth club, entertainment schemes for children, and provided work on the state-funded Action for Community Employment (ACE) scheme. The lack of youth facilities and employment opportunities in the estate contributed to social problems, including vandalism, joyriding, and solvent and drug abuse.

The class arose out of an interview with Chris McGimpsey, the ULTACH Trust trustee and promoter of the cultural nationalist discourse. McGimpsey was an Ulster Unionist Party councillor for the area and chairman of the Community Development Association. McGimpsey had been approached by some locals who were interested in Irish, but were afraid to travel into Catholic areas of the city to learn the language, and classes in neutral locations in the south of the city were felt to be too far away. McGimpsey had difficulty in obtaining an Irish speaker willing to travel to the estate to take a class there. Aodan MacPóilin, the Catholic director of the ULTACH Trust, was very enthusiastic about the class, but said that he would be too frightened to travel into the area, especially after dark when loyalist paramilitaries were most active. Thus the locals interested in Irish were in a quandary; they were too afraid to travel to Catholic areas to learn Irish, and Catholic Irish speakers were too frightened to come to Glencairn. I volunteered to teach a class in Glencairn as I was less afraid of travelling into working-class Protestant areas than Catholic Irish speakers would be. I believed that loyalist paramilitaries may have suspected that a Catholic teacher could be a republican spy, and felt that as a Protestant I would be perceived to have more sympathy for the locals.

However, I had reservations about the attitudes of loyalist paramilitary groups to the class and also had a general feeling of unease about travelling in a 'troubled' area of the city. The quickest route to the class entailed travelling through both Catholic and Protestant areas of the city, and as a Protestant Irish speaker I felt that there would be elements in both populations that would bear some hostility to me. In the event nothing untoward happened to me, though I must admit feeling a sense of irony as I drove past graffiti which read 'Irish Out' on my way to the class.

I was made very welcome by the Glencairn learners and immediately felt very relaxed in the class environment. Soon I was only concerned for my well-being while travelling to and from the centre, and while I was taking the class I was worried about the safety of my car. Part of the reason that I felt relaxed was that among the learners were two tough-looking locals, John and Steve, who looked as if they were well equipped to deal with any antipathy I or any of the learners would encounter. This was confirmed later by one learner who said that they would 'look after' me and that nothing would 'happen to me with them about'. The class took place in a friendly environment with much joking and banter between the learners about the Irish language and local issues. The convivial atmosphere was aided by the fact that all of the original class members knew one another.

I assume that the learners were recruited through word-of-mouth, though the class was advertised in *Glencairn News*, a 'free sheet' produced and distributed by the Development Association. As the class became more well-known learners from other areas of the city arrived, including two from east Belfast. However, most of the learners continued to be drawn from the Glencairn estate.

The conversations between the learners and myself provided me with an insight into what it was like to live in Glencairn. The local core members of the class were: Susan, who worked in the Community Centre; Pat, a community worker on the Shankill Road; Peter, a secondary school student; and Dot, a housewife. Later in the year the class was joined by Ann, a local housewife and Pauline, who was self-employed. As word of the class spread two learners from east Belfast joined; Simon, a taxi-driver, and Rita, a shop-assistant. Other locals enrolled for to the class but only attended a few lessons; these included John and Steve, my two impromptu 'bodyguards'. Roger, an ACE worker originally from Bristol, also attended a few lessons.

I taught the Glencairn class on a Monday evening, and travelled to Holywood to meet three members of the North Down group the following day. The contrast between the two districts and groups of learners could not have been more stark; I seemed to be moving between different worlds. The world I was accustomed to was relatively peaceful and prosperous, and the 'troubles' did not seem to impinge upon it in a very direct way. The North Down learners and I were accustomed to avoiding contentious political and religious issues in our conversations. During the Glencairn class, political and religious issues were discussed a great deal, and often in relation to the Irish language. The district was in a 'war zone', as one learner put it, and recent political events were related to the concerns of the area. The language was often discussed in terms of the revivalist activities, that were taking place a few

miles away in Catholic west Belfast. There was a degree of unanimity in the class that was not shared by the North Down group; all the Glencairn learners were unionist. They assumed correctly that I was a unionist; it did not seem conceivable that I, as a Protestant, would have any other political opinion. Since there was a feeling of political unanimity in the class, political issues were not deemed to be contentious among the learners.

The Learners' Relationship with Local Catholic Populations

The learners' discussions about the Irish language were informed by their attitudes to Catholics. These attitudes were in turn informed by territorial, political, and cultural insecurity in terms of the immediate area and Northern Ireland as a whole (cf. McKittrick 1994). Attitudes to Catholics among the class were often complex and ambiguous. Fear and loathing of republicans was mixed with a desire to reach some form of *modus vivendi* which would enable both Catholics and Protestants to continue living in west Belfast.

The learners were aware that it was not pre-ordained that they would have difficult relationships with Catholics, or that they may not have anything in common with them. Class members talked of better relationships between Protestants and Catholics before the 'troubles'; indeed, some of the learners had originally lived in areas that were now entirely Catholic in composition, and had played with Catholic children when they were young. Those learners who were in employment were more likely to have had opportunities to meet Catholics in non-hostile situations. Pat had Catholic friends with whom she had worked with, although she did not visit them in their homes as she feared they might be punished for having Protestant associates; rather, she met them in the 'neutral' city centre. Susan worked with Catholic community workers from other districts to provide aid-relief for Third World countries. Both Pat and Pauline had Catholic relatives with whom they were on good terms.

The learners felt insecure because of the decline of the Protestant community in west Belfast. Feelings of despair were mixed with ones of resolution and purpose. Susan complained that she could name many mixed or Protestant estates that had become Catholic over the years but could not think of a Catholic one that had become Protestant. After she told me this she voiced her determination that Glencairn would not suffer the same fate, 'They'll never get Glencairn'. The feeling in the class was that the Catholic population was growing in terms of population and political assertiveness, both in the immediate area and Northern Ireland as a whole. The class experienced the sense of alienation and powerlessness that was characteristic of many Protestants in Northern Ireland (Dunn and Morgan 1994).

Most of the class shared the common perception in Protestant working-class areas that lack of the public spending on such districts was due to the channelling of funding to Catholic areas in an attempt to appease the IRA (McGovern and Shirlow 1995). Pat tended to attribute the different levels of funding to the Catholic tradition of community action. This point has been raised by Protestant community workers (CDPA 1991); Protestants were not accustomed to making demands upon 'their' government and were unused to getting involved

in community-self help groups (Nelson 1984: 144). Whatever the reason, the learners were convinced that Catholic working-class districts were much better funded than Protestant ones. Housing Executive policy in Glencairn combined plans for demolition of the poorly-built maisonettes with financial inducements to persuade their tenants to move elsewhere. Susan and Jimmy Creighton, the Community Centre spokesman, believed that the British government was depriving Glencairn of facilities and housing as part of an overall strategy to move Protestants out of west and north Belfast. The locals' views on housing issues revealed the Protestant working-class suspicion of the British government, which was perceived of as weak (in appeasing the IRA) or downright treacherous (in destroying the communities which professed their allegiance to the British Crown) (Bruce 1994).

Everyone in the class could recount personal experiences of anti-Protestant sectarianism. All class members believed that many Catholics, particularly republicans, were hostile to themselves and their community. When the learners talked about Catholics, they were often talking about west Belfast republicans, that is, the Catholics which preoccupied their minds most; Catholics and republicans were often equated, and referred to collectively as 'them'. Pat described the atmosphere in the estate as being 'claustrophobic'; travelling outside Glencairn often involved journeying through 'hostile' Catholic areas. Despite their fears, Glencairn Protestants had reason to travel in Catholic areas of Belfast. Their local hospital was the Royal Victoria Hospital, situated on the Falls Road. Hospitals in neutral or Protestant areas were felt to be too far away. They also noticed that there were many large bargain stores in Catholic west Belfast, in which goods were cheaper than in Shankill or city-centre shops. Some of the Glencairn women thought that they would be safer than their men-folk in Catholic areas, and occasionally they made visits to these stores.

During trips into Catholic west Belfast the Glencairn residents attempted to use their knowledge of 'telling' to sublimate their Protestantism. This was difficult to accomplish, as they often did not know what aspects of their behaviour or appearance were regarded by Catholics as 'Protestant'. Susan recalled being stared at in a Catholic store for wearing a British Legion poppy; she had believed the poppy simply commemorated the war dead, but soon realised that it was regarded as a British/Protestant symbol. Class members felt that they had to be able to successfully masquerade as Catholics when travelling in areas such as the Falls Road; Pat commented, 'You can die for being a Protestant or die for being a Catholic, so you don't be long seeing these wee differences, you know'. For people living near sectarian interfaces in Northern Ireland, the ability to pass as a member of another religion was one of the skills necessary for survival (Burton 1978: 37-67).

'Our Language': Learners' Efforts to Identify with the Irish Language

In this section I will outline the attempts made by the Glencairn learners to associate the Irish language with their own identities. These include national, regional and local affiliations, as well as learners' concepts of a Protestant past. Unlike the North Down group, most of the Glencairn learners had difficulty in identifying with the Irish language in a coherent and systematic manner. Rather, they discussed Irish by linking it to local folk knowledge.

Most of the Glencairn learners shared an attraction to an Ulster national identity, a distinctive feature of Protestant working-class ideology (Todd 1987). They attempted to associate Irish with this identity by interpreting the Ulster dialect of the language as one which indicated a degree of linguistic as well as political distance from the Irish Republic; thus they were trying to interpellate the language in the same manner as Ian Adamson. One problem for the Glencairn learners who equated Ulster with Northern Ireland was that the stronghold of Ulster Irish was in Donegal, which is in the Republic of Ireland. Some of the learners were surprised to hear this; clearly they had not associated Donegal with 'Ulster' at all. However, the learners occasionally discussed Ulster Irish in terms of a regional, but not a political identity. For example, Ann said that the people of Donegal were part of Ulster as they spoke English like 'us', and not with a southern 'brogue' (accent). Ann's Ulster identity was expressed in terms of a regional affiliation in this context. I attempted to associate the Irish language with a regional identity by telling the learners that the Ulster dialect of English showed many traces of the Irish language, with mixed results. Some of the features that I spoke of did not exist in Belfast English, but were confined to country districts, and thus seemed to have little relevance in Glencairn.

In other situations the Glencairn learners used the Irish language to express an Ulster regional identity, rather than a national one. On the first night of the class I was asked jokingly by Rosemary to translate the unionist slogan 'Ulster Says No' (which was used to oppose the Anglo-Irish Agreement) into Irish. I translated the phrase as best I could as I wished to demonstrate to the class that they could express their political views in Irish, and that the language was not simply a vehicle of nationalism. In a few instances I taught phrases such as '*Lámh Dhearg Abú*' ('The Red Hand For Ever'; the Red Hand is used by both nationalists and unionists as a symbol of Ulster) and '*Uladh go Bragh*' ('Ulster For Ever') which were used by (Irish) nationalist Irish speakers to express a provincial loyalty, but were reinterpreted by the class to express the political separateness of Northern Ireland from the rest of Ireland. In one instance I translated a unionist slogan without asking; in retrospect I felt that I was battling to overcome the powerful republican associations of the Irish language.

The problem with the Ulster identification of the class was that it was ill-defined. The learners, apart from Peter, had little sense of Irish history as they had encountered only English history at school (cf. McAuley 1994: 94). Glencairn had been visited by Ian Adamson, who had given copies of his book to workers in the community centre. Susan and Peter were decidedly unimpressed; they described the 'Cruithin' theory as boring, confusing,

and too pre-occupied with prehistoric events to have any significance for them. Adamson's Ulster history was of little use to them, but the learners felt a need for a coherent sense of Ulster Protestant history and identity in Northern Ireland. This need was felt by other residents in Glencairn, if graffiti were anything to go by; a message sprayed on the side of the local shop-unit blamed 'English Ascendancy and Irish Chauvinism' for the suppression of the Ulster identity and asked, 'Do You Know Your History?'. This message revealed that the Ulster identity of working-class Protestants expressed a degree of alienation from English/British and Irish nationalist identities (Moxon-Browne 1991: 28).

Members of the class attempted to justify learning Irish by recourse to past Protestant interest in the language. For example, Simon attempted to justify learning Irish by mentioning the rumour that the Apprentice Boys of Derry, who fought attempts by a Catholic army to overrun the city, had spoken Irish. Roger said that he believed that the early Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), which opposed Home Rule, had used the Irish language. This sparked a debate on the World War One Battle of the Somme, in which many UVF members from the Shankill had been killed. Susan told the class that the Community Development Association had just acquired Fernhill House, the Belfast seat of the wealthy Cunningham family, which would be converted into a war museum, of which a Somme exhibition would be an important part. Susan said that the classes in 'Ulster Protestant' history would be held in the house. Susan also told us that the Irish language classes would be moved to the house when it was ready. At that moment Susan spoke of Irish in terms of an Ulster nationalist identity by associating the language with a Protestant/unionist past.

Apart from the examples listed above, the learners were not largely unaware that Protestants had spoken Irish in the past. They had only fragments of memories and scraps of information, which did not seem enough to construct a Protestant tradition of Irish speakers. I did not introduce them in any systematic way to the Protestant Gaelic histories that had been produced by the ULTACH Trust and others, as I felt that I should concentrate on teaching the Irish language; conversations in the classroom often interrupted the Irish language element of the course! In retrospect, I believe that if I had elaborated upon this tradition, I may have given the class a means to identify with other Irish speakers, albeit dead ones. Such an approach may have cushioned their interest in Irish against contemporary Protestant hostility to Irish and the republican associations of the language. On the other hand, the class may have felt that such a tradition had little contemporary relevance for them.

I also tried to connect the Irish language to a sense of local identity by telling the learners that local placenames such as 'Glencairn' and 'Shankill' had Irish language roots; I also translated the name of the community centre into Irish. The class members often discussed the history of the Shankill area and some of its antiquities; the Irish language class seemed to create an atmosphere in which to discuss local history. I am not sure whether everyone in the class was prepared to include the Irish language in this history. For most of the learners the Irish language seemed alien and remote from a localised Glencairn or Shankill identity.

The Cultural Discourse and the Glencairn Learners

I have shown how the cultural discourse was invoked by the North Down group. This discourse was largely absent in the conversations that I had with the Glencairn group. Pat's views of the Irish language were one notable exception to this trend. Her interest in Irish mirrored an interest in all aspects of Irish culture, particularly folklore and Irish literature in English; she had a knowledge of the latter through attending a GCSE English language class. She justified her interest in Irish by claiming that she had an Irish aspect to her nationality. While being interviewed she explained:

I feel that it, it belongs to me, you know. I would never like it to fade away. I mean I'm Irish, I'm British, but I'm Irish. I feel that the Scots are Scots, but they're British and the Welsh are Welsh, but they're British. I'm Irish you know, I feel definitely Irish, but I'm British. So I feel that, I really think that the language belongs to me, the Irish language, and I don't like to think of it becoming a dead language, you know. I wouldn't like it to fade away. I'd like the Irish always to be there.

In this text Pat naturalises the connection between the Irish language and Irish nationality. She interprets the language as part of the diversity of nationalities that contribute to a sense of Britishness; she may be describing the language in terms of 'Celtic Britain'. I was keen to encourage Pat's conceptions of the Irish language in terms of the cultural discourse, and gave her books on Irish folklore and legends. In 1993 the Central Community Relations Unit supplied *Oideas Gael* with a grant to enable low-income learners of Irish to attend the college for a reduced fee. I informed the Glencairn class of the available grants, but most of them were unable to attend the college, as work commitments prevented them from going. Peter, the schoolboy, was unwilling to travel to the Irish Republic. Like many working-class Protestants, he had not travelled to the 'south', and he feared that the locals would be hostile to him.

However, Pat said that she would be delighted to go to *Oideas Gael* and I attended the college in her company for a week during the month of August. Pat thoroughly enjoyed the course, saying that she could not have been made more welcome there. The associations that Pat had made between the Irish language and Irish culture were reinforced on the course, as evening events introduced the students to aspects of Irish music, song and literature. Furthermore, Pat expressed a fondness for Glencolmcille which indicated her love of nature and the friendliness of the locals. Her experience of Gaeltacht Irish also increased her conception of Irish as a 'beautiful' language. All in all, the Gaeltacht experience strengthened Pat's positive image of the Irish language.

Thus Pat discussed the Irish language in terms of the cultural discourse. Few of the other members of the Glencairn Irish class discussed the Irish language in terms of this discourse. Susan may have voiced their opinions when she said that she found traditional music and dancing 'boring'; she also viewed Pat's description of Irish as 'beautiful' as 'over the

top'. Irish culture was often associated with Catholic districts of Belfast; the learners complained that late-night music festivals in north and west Belfast disturbed their sleep. Thus Irish culture was boring at best, and a downright nuisance at worst. For Susan especially, any cultural images of the Irish language were overshadowed by what for her was the contemporary republican image of the language. However, on some occasions Susan and some other learners had attempted to integrate the Irish language into their concepts of Protestant or Ulster culture.

Like Pat, Pauline and Peter rationalised their interest in Irish in terms of an Irish national identity. Peter's Irish identification seemed to be influenced by Chris McGimpsey, as he was often associated with him and was a member of the youth wing of the Ulster Unionist Party. I assume that he adopted McGimpsey's view of the language, which combined a sense of British citizenship with the cultural nationalist discourse. For Susan, Dot, and Simon, an Irish national identity was something that was imposed on them by ignorant English people (cf. Gallagher 1995: 722). Their attempts to relate the Irish language to an Ulster nationalist identity were more fraught with difficulty than the learners who expressed a dual British/Irish nationality.

'Hijacking' the Irish Language

Susan expressed motivations to learn Irish that were linked to the 'troubles'. When interviewed, she explained:

I don't really know why I got interested. I think it was all the talk through nationalists saying it was their language and they sort of seemed to hijack it you know, and there was a sort of a mystique about it you know, 'What is this great language they're all going on about ?'

Susan admits a fascination with an exotic Catholic/nationalist culture, indicated by the word 'mystique'. The fascination with the 'enemy' was a common feature of the group; for example, Simon was a regular reader of *Republican News*, the official organ of the IRA. In the text, Susan associates the language with republicanism, but the use of the word 'hijack' may indicate a wish to 'reclaim' Irish for the Protestant community. The term 'this great language' is indicative of the process of cultural competition in Northern Ireland. Nationalists seemed to have more cultural capital than unionists, as they had more cultural resources (in the folk concept of the word) to draw upon. In this text Susan suggests that she would like some of this cultural capital for herself and her fellow unionists. During an interview with a local newspaper, Dot complained that republicans had shouted at her in Irish; Susan responded by saying that she believed that Irish was part of their culture that had been 'stolen' from them. Therefore Susan attempted to associate Irish with her own concepts of unionist or Protestant culture, especially when she resented the use of the Irish language by Sinn Féin. Susan distanced herself from republican Irish speakers by implying that they had 'stolen' or

'hijacked' the language from Protestants. As such she was prepared to engage nationalists in a proprietary contest concerning the Irish language; she would 'hijack' the language 'back'. Thus Susan was declaring linguistic 'war' on Irish nationalists for control of the Irish language.

The Glencairn Class and the Media

The media expressed considerable interest in the Glencairn class; the issue of working-class Protestants learning a language that was commonly associated with Catholicism and nationalism was highly 'mediagenic' indeed. The learners were interviewed by reporters from national and local newspapers. In the media arena the learners were keenly aware that many unionists would suspect that the Glencairn Irish class had a hidden nationalist agenda; thus they sought to maximise their unionist symbolic capital and to simultaneously distance themselves as much as possible from the nationalist image of Irish, and its republican supporters. One (unnamed) learner claimed, 'It just goes to show that you don't have to be Irish to learn the language, it belongs to us as much as republicans' (*Shankill People* March 1993, p. 4). Jimmy Creighton explained Pat's interest in the language as a quest into the heritage of 'past generations of Ulster men and women'; by learning Irish Pat was contributing to the Ulster Protestant identity that many in Glencairn felt they needed to discover or elaborate upon. He maximised the unionist prestige of the class by mentioning that Peter was a 'young unionist official' who was a 'close confidante of a unionist MP' (*Sunday World* April 4th 1993, p. 16). Media reports about the class also mentioned that the class teacher was a Protestant, thus maximising the social closure of this wholly Protestant class. Thus the class was depicted as being uncontaminated by the presence of Catholics or their belief systems, the 'Others' of working-class Protestants (Todd 1987: 7).

In a *Belfast Telegraph* article on the re-development of the Shankill area, the class and Fernhill House was mentioned as part of an attempt by loyalists 'to find a new sense of identity, apart from their attachment to Britain' (*Belfast Telegraph* 13 July 1993, p. 10). The word 'apart' may have suggested the Ulster identification of working-class Protestants. However, Jimmy Creighton said the article was dangerous, as it suggested that the learners were abandoning unionism; he believed that the word 'apart' suggested a degree of political distance from Britain. His written reply to the article indicated that the planned museum was to examine the links between Northern Ireland and the British Army, and denied the possible contamination of the class with nationalist ideology:

This statement could somehow imply that we are leaning towards the Republic of Ireland. I can assure you this is not so... In some circles it (the Irish language) is not classed as the sole property of the Republican movement (*Belfast Telegraph* 19 July 1993, p. 12).

This statement is another illustration of the attempt to engage republicans in a proprietary contest concerning Irish; the language was not to be the 'sole property of the Republican movement', but of 'Ulster men and women' as well.

Despite their attempts to express their solidarity with the unionist community and distance themselves from the republican associations of the Irish language, the Glencairn learners were unsettled about media coverage of the class. They feared misrepresentation in the media and adverse loyalist reaction to them. Their reaction to newspaper articles about them indicated that they preferred to keep their Irish language activities in the private domain.

'Their Language': Irish as a Catholic/Nationalist Language

This section will examine the sense of distance the learners felt existed between themselves and the Irish language. The class members alternated between expressing a desire to unlock this Catholic and/or republican 'secret language', and feelings of alienation from Irish, on account of the Catholic/republican image of the language. I found the situation deeply ironic because if the republican-inspired revival of the Irish language had not taken place, the Glencairn class would probably not have come into existence either.

Instrumental Motives To Learn Irish

I have indicated that the Glencairn learners were highly sensitive to the 'telling' cues that distinguished Catholics from Protestants. The ability to pass as a Catholic in certain situations was essential for people in Glencairn, as they occasionally needed to travel in Catholic districts. Many of the learners had instrumental motives to learn the Irish language. This involved two main elements; the use of the Irish language to pass as a Catholic, and learning the language to interpret the views of nationalist/republican Irish speakers.

Simon's primary reason for learning Irish was instrumental. He operated his taxi service in the city centre area and often had to take passengers to Catholic areas of the city. He occasionally heard them speaking in Irish and feared that they were plotting to kill him. He told me that he wished to learn the Irish language so that he could understand what Irish speakers were saying about him, and also wanted to be able to speak the language in order to masquerade as a Catholic. Therefore, Simon was not interested in learning the Irish language version of the name of his home district in east Belfast, but asked for the Irish version of Catholic or 'mixed' areas such as Ardoyne or Glengormley. Susan, Dot and some other members of the class agreed that Irish would be useful to know if they were 'caught out' in Catholic areas. When I told Dot that I bought my Irish books in the *Cultúrlann* her response was, 'and you can talk away in Irish if anyone asks you who you are'. The desire to pass as a Belfast Catholic was indicated by the learners' desire to learn Belfast Irish, rather than that of Donegal; I considered Donegal Irish to be 'correct', but most of the learners dismissed it as irrelevant if it differed from the Irish of Belfast.

When asked by suspicious locals to explain her interest in the Irish language, Susan replied that she wanted to find out what 'they' were saying about 'us'. By doing so, she was refusing to identify with the language and was indicating that she was wishing to bolster the community's defences by learning the language of its republican enemies. Thus Susan was attempting to accrue unionist symbolic capital in her area by learning Irish. It did not seem likely that Susan would ever attempt to find out what 'they' would say out about 'us'; this would probably involve a great deal of personal danger to herself. However, this motivation to learn Irish was a useful way of justifying her interest in Irish to suspicious locals.

Many members of the class were convinced that Catholic Irish speakers would be hostile to Protestants learning 'their' language; to paraphrase Simon Harrison, the learners believed that Catholics would resent attempts to appropriate their 'intellectual property' (Harrison 1994). Simon told me that he thought it was best not tell Catholics he was learning Irish as they might think he was trying to 'steal' their language. When interviewed, Pat told me that she would be too afraid to venture into the Falls area to learn the language, as she would be regarded as a 'stranger', possibly even a 'spy':

This Gaelic class was the first available class that I had heard of, that I could go to and feel I was in a safe area, that I wasn't walking in as a stranger and they're thinking, 'Gosh, what is this? Is she in spying?'

Pat told me that when she ventured into Catholic areas the locals fell silent and seemed suspicious of her; suspicion of strangers was a feature of the urban *Gemeinschaften* of Belfast (Burton 1978). She explained her reluctance to travel to Irish classes by saying that strangers were regarded with suspicion, and could be regarded as loyalist or security force spies. Thus Pat believed that Catholic Irish speakers would attribute a 'negative' instrumental motive to learn Irish to her (a wish to spy on Catholics/nationalists), rather than 'positive' integrative ones (a sympathy or identification with nationalists and their belief systems). While the instrumental motive of learning Irish may have accrued symbolic capital in Glencairn, it would have incurred a symbolic deficit in Catholic west Belfast.

Learning Irish precisely *because* it was a Catholic/nationalist language vied with the learners' attempts to identify with the language; the identification of the Irish language with Catholics was one that simultaneously fascinated and irritated many in the class. On one occasion I told the class that many Catholics in Northern Ireland could recite the 'Hail Mary' in Irish. Simon immediately asked me to teach him the prayer, but Peter protested, saying, 'We won't be learning that here'. He resisted the attempt to 'contaminate' the class with Catholic belief systems. Peter was not overly concerned about the need to learn Catholic beliefs or rituals for instrumental purposes. Consequently, he was annoyed at the encouragement of the associations between the Irish language and Catholicism in the class.

Whatever their attitudes to the Irish language itself, the Glencairn learners tended to associate the Irish language revival in west Belfast with the resurgence of Northern nationalism. Their fears about attending Irish language events in Catholic west Belfast echoed other concerns about travelling in the area. When the learners discussed the Irish language revival in west Belfast I tended to remain silent on the issue, both as I wished to hear their opinions, and because I did not wish to deliberately or inadvertently label a Catholic Irish speaker as republican, which may have endangered his or her life if such information reached loyalist paramilitary groups through the local 'grapevine'. At times I was happy to express my belief that some aspects of the revival were not republican in terms of ideology or personnel. I did not agree with views that the revival was simply part of a republican conspiracy to drive the British out of Northern Ireland.

The presence of republicans in Irish language activities confirmed the republican ethos of the revival for the Glencairn learners. At one point Simon asked me if a pirate radio station was broadcast in Irish was 'republican'. I said that I had not heard politics being discussed on the station, to which Simon replied, 'That's what they said in the *Belfast Telegraph*' (a unionist newspaper). However, the disappointed expression on Simon's face told me that he was not convinced that the station did not have a hidden 'political' agenda. In retrospect I feel that I was attempting to counter Simon's equation of republican involvement in the west Belfast revival with the promotion of republican ideology by means of the Irish language.

There were many fears in the class about the diminution of unionist culture at the expense of that of nationalists. In this context the Irish language seemed to become a powerful weapon of anti-Britishness that repelled many learners in the class. Public manifestations of the Irish language were often associated with nationalism; nationalists, and not unionists, used the Irish language in public places.

Particular aspects of the revival, such as the use of Irish language personal names and Irish language signs, were often regarded as manifestations of republicanism. While the Glencairn learners were interested in learning the Irish language versions of their names, they often regarded them with amusement and would not emulate revivalists who used them publicly. Irish language signs were regarded by the learners as a means of asserting nationalist territorial control of an area. Pat told us that she saw an Irish language sign in a butcher's window while shopping 'in town' and remembered thinking, 'Now they've even got Irish signs in the city centre'. When I translated the name of a main arterial route in the city centre into Irish, Peter commented, 'It won't be long until a sign like that goes up'. These examples illustrated how the learners were growing fearful for unionist control of Belfast, a concern shared by many other working-class Protestants (McAuley 1994: 129-30).

Fear for the future of Belfast was reflected in the apocalyptic vision of working-class Protestants; British government betrayal and nationalist victory (Nelson 1984: 30-31; Bruce 1994a: 37-71). In the 1980s and '90s many unionists interpreted the increasing amount of air-

time given to aspects of Irish culture in the broadcasting media in terms of their negative vision of the future (Dunn and Morgan 1994). The increasing amount of BBC broadcasting time given to the Irish language was regarded by many of the Glencairn learners, except Pat, as evidence of a government plan to condition unionists to an eventual British withdrawal. On one occasion Susan said that the language was being forced on them by television and radio stations. Roger associated this with the increased air-time given to GAA sporting activities and the rise in 'Southern accents' in the media. Ann commented, 'The border's only a red line on the map' and Susan replied, 'Why is all this happening? They must be getting ready for a united Ireland'. Susan's reply indicated that she perceived broadcasts in the Irish language as part of the 'greening' of Northern Ireland in advance of a British withdrawal. She believed that the British government was playing a key part in this process. When interviewed, Dot linked the Irish language broadcasting with her belief that the British government was appeasing nationalists:

I think its just for the nationalists that it's on the TV. They're kicking up, so they're getting what they want on TV. Its like everything else. They shout loud enough about it and they'll get it.

Many working-class Protestants believed that nationalist violence was rewarded by greater Government investment, whereas the more docile Protestants were ignored (Nelson 1984: 140-144). The class often compared public funding for nationalist districts with the apparent disinterest of government bodies in Protestant working-class estates such as Glencairn. Indeed, the learners linked the conditions of the teaching environment to the poverty of their estate. When a class was disrupted as a neon light kept failing; Peter commented sarcastically, 'We are the privileged people', referring to the common Catholic belief that Protestants were patronised by the British government. The learners believed that the language revival in west Belfast received substantial government aid, while their own class was held in an unfurnished and deprived environment. the poor teaching conditions were an microcosm of the unionist 'doomsday scenario'; the British government ignored Protestant estates and concentrated its efforts on Catholic districts as it shared the nationalist aspiration for a united Ireland.

During an interview I asked Dot and Susan why there were Irish language programmes on television. Dot said, 'A united Ireland for them ones'. Susan elaborated:

They're trying to prepare the people for it. You know, this is what it's going to be like in the future so, whether you like it or not, 'Just get stuck in there and learn it.' A fella said to me last night, 'How many programmes are on TV regarding Protestants, but how many "diddly-dee" (a contemptuous expression for Irish traditional music) programmes do you see? People sitting playing fiddles and Irish dancing and all this carry-on.' And I think it's, they're trying to subtly brainwash us into believing, 'You're Irish, and you accept it or else' type of thing you know.

In this text Susan symbolises Irish in a manner that was completely different from her approach to media reporters. When talking *to* the media, the Irish language was part of 'our culture' that was 'stolen from us'. When talking about the Irish language content *of* the media, Susan believed that the Irish language was being used to 'convert' unionists into nationalists.

Susan's ambivalent attitude to the Irish language was partly due to her great interest in Northern Irish politics. Her fascination with the republican enemy contributed to her negative opinion of the Irish language. The republican image of Irish was highlighted when she went to Belfast City Hall to hear the results of the local government elections. Susan noted that a lot of Sinn Féin supporters were speaking in Irish and that Gerry Adams began his speech in the language. The City Hall events forced her to reconsider her opinion of the Irish language:

That's what really put me off, you know. Here are these people, all right people say Sinn Féin are a legitimate party, but to me they're IRA, and nothing'll change, that and I sort of started saying then, 'Do I really want to know this, like'.

While learning the Irish language, whether to pose as a Catholic, or to find out what 'they' were saying about 'us', Susan was simultaneously being repelled by the association of the language with republicanism.

Local Attitudes Towards the Irish Class

The Irish class did not arouse widespread hostility from other residents of Glencairn. On the estate there seemed to be little reaction to the class, although the learners occasionally joked about the possibility of being intimidated for learning the language. Dot said that generally speaking there was no animosity showed to the learners on the estate; rather they encountered 'wee sly digs'. Pat told me that the class was never a secret and that she never encountered a negative reaction to her interest in Irish.

The class members did encounter much local hostility on account of their standing in the local community. Many of the members were associated with the community centre which provided services for the local community as well as campaigning on behalf of it. Some of these campaigns brought the community workers into direct confrontation with nationalists, thus enhancing their unionist symbolic capital as well as their solidarity with the people of Glencairn.

Nevertheless, some locals were not pleased with the Irish class, though they stopped short of physically threatening the learners. Peter was told by a suspected paramilitary activist that he was learning a 'bastard language', while Ann complained of having been accused of being a 'spy' by her window cleaner. Thus, some of the locals identified the learners with Catholics and/or republicans by learning Irish. Dot was told by her relatives that she was

learning 'a Fenian language'. She had a crisis of conscience following the killing of her nephew by republicans:

He got shot dead over there at the turn of the road, just over at Ligoneil and at the time it was terrible and all, but then I went to those Irish classes and his mummy says, 'Dot, what are you doing? It's all right for them ones that shot my son, and you're sitting learning their language. It makes you no better than them ones.' You know, it does make you think.

Concerning the reaction of friends and family to the learning of Irish in Glencairn, Dot was in the worst position of all. Considering what had happened to her nephew, and her family's attitude to her interest in Irish, it was understandable that she might internalise their negative attitudes to the language. In learning Irish she appeared to be associating herself with the murderers of her nephew. The social sanctions against speaking Irish were a serious challenge to any wish she may have had to learn Irish as an individual. The pressure to conform to the values of the Protestant urban *Gemeinschaft* were becoming too great to bear. Being-for-others was taking precedence over being-for-self (cf. Cheater 1987: 167).

The End of the Class

1993 was a year of intense political unrest in the Shankill area. In October of that year events on the Shankill finally brought the class to an end. On the 25th of that month an IRA bomb exploded on the Shankill Road, killing nine locals as well as one of the bombers; three of the victims were residents of Glencairn. The following Monday I telephoned Susan to tell her that I did not wish to take the class in the wake of the explosion; some locals may have interpreted the continuation of the class as an insult to the memory of the bomb victims. Susan agreed that it would not be a good idea for the class to continue as feelings were very high in the district. Following the Shankill bombing and the loyalist revenge attack at Greysteel, which killed nine Catholics, many citizens in the Belfast area feared a series of revenge attacks. Restaurants and pubs emptied, shop takings went down, and sports fixtures were cancelled. When I telephoned Susan again on the 4th of November she said Irish was 'a touchy subject' in the area and that no-one had approached the Advice Centre to ask when the classes would be resumed. Susan told me the situation had not changed in January. Therefore I decided to let the matter drop, and only contacted Susan again to arrange an interview with herself and Dot.

When I interviewed Susan it became obvious that her ambivalent attitude to the Irish language had ended. Susan hinted that she had already become disillusioned with learning Irish before the events of October. When I asked her how she found learning Irish, she said:

Very difficult. I felt very stupid at my age starting to learn a language and the more it went on the more I was saying to myself, 'What is the point of all this? Is it going to be any good to me?'

In this text Susan doubts the utility of the Irish language, including her conception of the language as a kind of Catholic shibboleth. Later in the interview Susan gives other reasons for her decision not to learn the language:

Well, I sort of have changed my mind as I went along. As I say I was very interested at the start because of different things that were being said, but once I got into it and started to think about it, then I started to question my own identity, you know, 'What are you? Are you a Protestant, are you an Irish person?' I'm from Ulster and proud of being from Ulster and I don't see why I should apologise to anybody for holding that view.

Susan opposes concepts of Irishness with her conception of 'Protestant' and 'Ulster' identity; her earlier attempts to associate the Irish language with such identities have failed. Susan went on to complain that Irishness was being 'pushed down everybody's throats from all sides' and that she was 'backing off from it':

I'm more entrenched in my own ideas and my own identity, and what they do doesn't interest me, you know, as long as they leave us alone to get on with our lives. And there's no way the church or chapel, whatever you like to call it, is going to dictate to me how I live, and I think that's what they do with nationalists, that they run their lives for them, and nobody's going to run mine.

In this text Susan indicates the Protestant working-class belief that Catholics are controlled by their church, while Protestants, including herself, are not (Harris 1986: 136, 153, 173-7). Her rejection of the Irish language as part of an authoritarian Catholic/nationalist culture is informed by the Protestant virtue of individual freedom (Nelson 1984: 17). Nevertheless, Susan maintained that Protestants had the right to learn Irish if they wished, although she had asked herself who she was pleasing by learning the language. I asked her who she believed she *was* pleasing by learning Irish. She replied:

Well at the time, when I started it I was suiting myself and it was something I wanted to do, but the more I have listened to over the past few months, maybe its because of everything that's went on. The first thing that put me off was the Shankill bomb, you know, and I sat back then and thought you know, 'Why am I doing this? I seem to be going along with these people, people who probably know the Irish language who planted that bomb.' And it sort of, I don't know whether that makes sense to anybody, but it was how I felt you know.

Dot continued:

That's what put me off too. It really did. I felt like I'm betraying my own people (Susan: 'Yes'), betraying my own country by having anything to do with it (Susan: 'Aye'), by learning it.

These texts reveal a strong association between the Irish language and Catholic/republican speakers of the language. Susan said that she was more interested in 'Ulster Protestant culture':

I mean, we have a culture too, that everybody seems to forget about, you know, and I think we should be pushing our own culture, more so than pushing for Irish culture.

Susan's response to the constitutive discourse which linked political belief to cultural identity had changed. She had attempted to engage republicans in a proprietary contest to struggle for the ownership of the Irish language. The problem of this approach was that she had little information to help her, and had made only a few desultory attempts to associate the Irish language with an Ulster nationalist identity. Furthermore, the desire to associate the Irish language with unionism was one she could not accomplish as she was largely isolated among Protestants who associated the language with republicanism. The above text demonstrates that she had abandoned the proprietary contest. Susan preferred to promote an Ulster Protestant culture which did not involve appropriating symbols from Irish nationalism, but one that was more distinct from the latter. This would be in accordance with the views of most working-class unionists, for whom the Irish language was anathema. Thus Susan's alienation from the Irish cultural revival led her to unite with other unionists who wanted to combat Irish nationalism in a process of cultural competition which would involve innovation contests to create new cultural forms, rather than proprietary ones, or attempts to appropriate the culture of opponents.

When interviewed, Pat said that she rarely associated Irish with the 'troubles', and the Shankill bomb only temporarily deterred her from learning Irish:

The only time I saw it connected with the troubles and I felt then it would have been just after a major bombing on the Shankill Road, and so many people lost their lives and the wee guy who planted the bomb, at his funeral, the cameras and the television zoomed up to one of the wreaths and it was written in Irish, and I'm almost sure it was Gerry Adam's wreath, and it was written in Irish, and I felt nearly revulsion, you know, because he was carrying the coffin of the wee guy who blew the people up. It all sort of tied it too close with the Irish and just at that time I associated it with the troubles, you know. That was the only time, 'cos he had used the Irish.

In the quote Pat experiences a momentary revulsion when she identifies herself with republicans on account of their mutual interest in the Irish language. This moment passed; later in the interview Pat spoke of the Irish language in terms reminiscent of the common heritage discourse:

I don't think it should be allowed to be a discriminatory language. It should be for us all. I don't think it should keep the Protestants out, I think we should, it's our language as well, you know. It's for Catholics, it's for everybody, its for people from Ireland.

By saying that the Irish language was for both Protestants and Catholics, Pat was representing Catholic involvement in the Irish language in a non-conflictual sense. This view was absent from Susan's view of the Irish language; she would be appalled at the thought of having anything in common with 'them'.

Susan's views on the Irish language reflect a Protestant working-class fascination with the republican enemy⁵⁹. She had attempted to deprive this enemy of a weapon in its cultural arsenal by attempting to associate the Irish language with an Ulster national identity. Like some other Ulster identifiers, Susan found herself so opposed to republicans that the notion of contaminating herself with 'their' language was distasteful to her; the UDA's interpretation of Ian Adamson's theory is evidence of this phenomenon.

Susan's instrumental motivations to learn Irish, that is the wish to masquerade as Catholics and find out what nationalists were saying about unionists, were not enough to sustain her interest in the language. The instrumental motive was of benefit as it was approved of in her community, did not indicate a degree of ethnic change, and was expressed in terms of bolstering the community's defences by revealing the plans of its enemies. Since few Protestants spoke Irish, and Susan believed that many Catholic Irish speakers were republican, she would have little opportunity to use the language, as she avoided republicans whenever possible.

At times during the interview Susan drew on modernist discourse to describe Irish as 'a dead language'; for her it *was* a dead language, as she would have few opportunities to learn the language if she learned it. On the other hand, the language seems to be part of a virulent public Irish culture promoted by nationalists, treacherous government agencies and the media. This culture, which seemed to have official approval, was perceived by her as replacing the Protestant/unionist identity in Northern Ireland. In this respect Susan interpreted the promotion of Irish as part of an authoritarian attempt to destroy her unionism, so she expressed her freedom by rejecting the language. Her interest in politics also deterred her from learning Irish as she became aware of more situations in which Sinn Féin were using the language. As a consequence, she abandoned the language when republicanism became particularly menacing to her. However, Susan had become disillusioned with learning Irish

⁵⁹ This is a personal observation that I have made. Working-class Protestants seem very pre-occupied with the republican enemy, whereas the latter have little interest in the former; in part, this is because republicans often regard unionists as the dupes of the true enemy, the British establishment and security forces.

before the Shankill bombing, as she found it difficult to learn, so the latter may be viewed as 'the straw that broke the camel's back' rather than the prime factor influencing her decision not to continue learning Irish. In retrospect, Susan justified abandoning the Irish class by referring to the Shankill bombing.

Pat shared Susan's dread of republicans, as well as her suspicion of certain aspects of the Irish language revival, such as Irish language street-signs. However, in expressing a British and Irish identity she related the Irish language and unionism to one another in a harmonious rather than a conflictual sense. Her use of the cultural discourse allowed her to disassociate the Irish language from its Catholic or republican speakers; I had personally encouraged this approach. Whereas Susan's enthusiasm for the language waned as found it increasingly difficult to learn, Pat was encouraged to learn more by her ability to understand it. Although she agreed with Susan that the British government wished to withdraw from Northern Ireland, Pat was less concerned about the amount of Irish language broadcasting in the media, and even enjoyed watching some programmes herself; clearly she did not associate such programmes with a conspiracy to prepare unionists for a united Ireland.

Pat's British/Irish identity, her use of the cultural discourse, her disinterest in learning Irish to pose as a Catholic, and her lack of a zero-sum approach to political and cultural issues were more evocative of the beliefs and experiences of middle-class Protestant learners of Irish than working-class ones. Her representations of the Irish language were closer to those of the North Down group than to Susan's. This demonstrates the dangers of attributing discrete ideologies and Irish language discourses to working-class and middle-class Protestants. Pat appeared to exist at the interface of the Protestant working-class and middle-class worlds. She was avowedly non-sectarian, was very interested in self-education, and through her reading and experiences she had discovered discourses that helped her to identify with the Irish language. But she remained a working-class Protestant, and had suffered considerably with her neighbours and friends from the impact of the 'troubles'; she lived in an area where the danger from republicanism seemed ever-present. Given her circumstances, it seemed remarkable to me that she could challenge and overcome the powerful republican image of the Irish language.

It would be erroneous to assume that the Glencairn learners who expressed Ulster national identities turned against the Irish language because they could not combine them, or that they found the republican connotations of the language too great to bear. I met Simon, a confirmed 'Ulsterman', a year after the Irish class had ended. He confirmed that he was still interested in learning Irish, but that he had been afraid to return to the class in Glencairn after the Shankill bombing. Ann met me in Belfast city-centre on a couple of occasions, and expressed her fond memories of the class and her regret that it came to an end so suddenly. However, although working-class Protestants like Simon, Ann, and Susan may have creatively labelled the Irish language as 'Ulster Gaelic', they were aware that the majority of 'Ulster' Protestants would not have agreed with this term. For the latter, the *Irish* language suggested Irish nationalism and Catholicism. The desire to express solidarity with other working-class Protestants was so great that the learners experienced pressure to accept this

interpellation. This resulted in feelings of ambivalence or an internalisation of negative attitudes towards the Irish language, as was the case with Dot and Susan. In some cases, social structure, in the form of peer pressure, overcame the learners' cultural creativity.

Even if some of the learners did not experience an inner conflict on account of learning the Irish language, events had overtaken them. The rising political tension in Glencairn following the Shankill bomb gave the impression that the local community may have become hostile rather than indifferent to their interest in Irish. No matter how great or how little their interest in Irish was, the Glencairn learners would certainly have faced punishment within their community if they continued to learn Irish after the Shankill bombing.

In the aftermath of the bombing the Shankill '94 community festival was launched to improve the morale of the local population, with Fernhill House providing the venue for some of the events. In November 1994 Fernhill House received a £1 million grant from the International Fund for Ireland towards the construction of its war museum and other facilities. However, the Irish language was to have no place in this renewed attempt to define and articulate a unionist history for the people of the Greater Shankill.

CHAPTER EIGHT

Conclusion

In my introductory chapter I asked four questions. Why did Protestants want to learn a language that was not commonly associated with them? To what extent could they identify or not identify with Irish? Did Protestant learners of Irish generate representations of the language that reflected their particular world-views? When Protestants expressed an interest in Irish, did this interest alter the nature of their relationship with their co-religionists and Catholics? I will conclude by summarising my findings on both the historical and contemporary materials.

I have demonstrated how, over many centuries, Protestants and Catholics have moulded the Irish language to suit their self-images, and how they hoped that they could use the language to make other Irish-speakers more compatible with themselves. My historical approach de-naturalised concepts of the Irish language that seemed universal or timelessly true. The Irish language was a vessel into which differing groups poured their ideologies and counter-ideologies. Moreover, although they may have shared discourses of the language, unionist and nationalist Irish speakers used them to differing ideological effect. Not all discourses of the Irish language had the same currency and influence, and Protestant learners struggled with the image of Irish as a Catholic and nationalist language. However, they often created new images of the Irish language for themselves by associating the language with their own experiences and identities; on many occasions, they interpreted the language in a manner which was distinctly Protestant. This process also reflected their sense of distance from the Irish language movement; Catholic revivalists were long accustomed to discussing the language in a systematised fashion that involved the invoking and re-working of discourses of the language. These discussions revealed their participation in the long debate among Irish nationalists on the role of the language in the construction of an Irish identity. Protestant learners were often unaware of this debate; for some learners, particularly unionist ones, the issues involved had little personal significance for them.

I will begin this chapter by looking at the influence of class divisions on learners' experiences and their opinions about the Irish language. Then I show how Protestant learners of Irish differed from Catholic speakers of the language. I relate the phenomenon of Protestant learners to the Irish language revival and other ethnographies on language movements. I use this issue to discuss the merits and drawbacks of the concept of discourse. Then I assess the contribution I have made to the literature on Protestant ethnicity in Northern Ireland. Finally, I assess the impact of non-nationalist interpretations of the language on the Irish language scene in Northern Ireland.

The Importance of Class Structure and Consciousness

Protestant learners differed in their ability to identify with the language and their own communities. This was often due to their class backgrounds. In this section, I will examine the contemporary learners' relationship with the language, other Protestants, and Catholics in terms of class.

Middle-Class Learners

Middle-class Protestants often felt that the Irish language could be in harmony with their various interpretations of an Irish identity. For unionists, this sense of Irishness was often diffuse; a cultural Irish identity, a regional or geographical identification, or an Irish nationality combined with British citizenship. Although unionist intellectuals such as Chris McGimpsey elaborated the means by which unionists could identify with the Irish language, my conclusions suggest that the learners tended to echo a more vague 'voice on the ground' which asserted that Protestants could be both Irish and British *somehow*. The unspecific nature of this popular opinion may have resulted in feelings of ambiguity, as Sarah's texts reveal. Other learners were nationalist in outlook, and they could draw upon established concepts and discourses which connected the Irish language to nationalism in Ireland.

By learning Irish, many middle-class Protestants introduced themselves to situations in which they would meet more Catholics. Since the learners conceived of themselves as liberal and non-sectarian, they were not averse to this process. However, they were more likely to feel comfortable with Catholics of their own class who tended to share their abhorrence of political violence. Middle-class learners travelled throughout Ireland and had experienced the 'relaxed' nationalism of Southern Catholics. Therefore, they were amenable to travelling to learning venues in the Republic. Many Protestant learners and Southern Irish speakers rejected the relationship between the Irish language, Catholicism, and republicanism. Unionist learners and Southern Irish speakers used pluralist discourse to challenge the relationship between the Irish language and nationalism in Ireland. Furthermore, Protestant learners welcomed the British government's view of the Irish language as part of the shared culture of the people of Northern Ireland. Some of the learners regarded the cultural and common heritage discourses of the Irish language as 'natural' and 'non-political'. Middle-class unionist learners were pleased when the BBC and state-sponsored organisations discussed the Irish language in such terms; this reflected their belief in the benignness of British institutions.

The historical knowledge and literary endeavours of middle-class learners helped them to create or draw upon discourses and ideas that allowed them to associate Irish with their various identities, including national, regional, and religious affiliations. The ULTACH Trust encouraged this process, by publishing accounts of Protestants who had spoken Irish in

the past. Some of the learners disseminated this information within small networks; isolated learners found themselves in a sea of Protestant indifference and/or hostility to the Irish language. The Irish language provided a means for middle-class Protestants to express their liberalism, pluralism, and non-sectarianism. Thus by learning Irish, many middle-class learners differentiated themselves from their peers, but not the liberal values of their peer group. Learning Irish did not alter the nature of the learners' relationships with their Protestant friends and neighbours in any significant way. They did not face social sanctions from their associates, who tolerated their interest in Irish, even if they did not approve of it. Middle-class learners hoped they could use the language to persuade their working-class counterparts to adopt 'middle-class' views on political issues in Northern Ireland.

Middle-class learners constituted an Irish version of Hannerz's cosmopolitans (Hannerz 1986). They relished cultural differences and expressed a wish to engage with the cultures of the Irish 'others'. Like other cosmopolitans, they had the personal ability to enter the cultures of others in a reflective manner; they were also selective, and could disengage from elements of the 'alien' culture when they wished. Thus some Protestant learners adopted the Irish language but rejected Irish nationalism, creating and/or expressing a dualistic cultural allegiance which incorporated elements of both British and Irish identities.

Working-Class Learners

Working-class Protestant learners had many more difficulties than their middle-class counterparts. Their fear of Catholics and/or venturing into Catholic districts prevented them from seeking out Irish speakers who would help them to learn the language. They were simultaneously envious of and repelled by the culture of their republican enemies. Some of them attempted to appropriate nationalist cultural capital for themselves and for the Ulster national identity of the Protestant working class. For some, this was part of the struggle to define a coherent Protestant cultural identity in Northern Ireland. Working-class learners did not tend to use pluralist discourse in discussing Irish. Their opinions, such as claims that the Irish language was as much 'ours' as 'theirs', indicated a resentment of a perceived Catholic/nationalist enclosure of the language.

Frequently, working-class Protestants did not have enough knowledge which would enable them to incorporate the language within the Ulster national identity. They often had only scraps of information and fragments of discourses to work with; these were not enough for some learners, who experienced a lack of fit between the Irish language and their received notions of identity and culture. Working-class learners were often unaware of state-sponsored organisations which wished to encourage their interest in Irish. If they were aware of them, they regarded them with suspicion: some feared meeting Catholic Irish speakers; and many suspected a hidden nationalist agenda in the state's approach to the Irish language.

In attempting to symbolise Irish in an Ulster national context, Protestant working-class learners alienated themselves from nationalist speakers of Irish and many of their Protestant peers, who associated the language with Irish nationalism. They struggled against

many of their neighbours and friends who viewed an interest in Irish with suspicion. The learners came under great pressure within their own communities to reject Irish by accepting the relationship between the language and republicanism. On some occasions, some learners did so, and abandoned learning Irish. Others continued to learn Irish and faced community punishments if they were unable to demonstrate their loyalty to the Protestant community beyond doubt. Given their difficulties, it was not surprising that most of the Protestant learners of Irish that I encountered were not working-class.

Similarities and Differences between Working- and Middle-Class Learners

Many working- and middle-class Protestant learners shared a fear of republicans, included Irish-speaking ones. Many were reluctant to attend Irish language classes or events at which a large number of republicans would be present.

Unionist learners of all classes often perceived the Irish language to be a private activity that should not impinge upon the public British character of the 'province'; they were unnerved by public forms of the Irish language, such as bilingual street signs and the use of Irish language personal names. This was also due to a rejection of certain aspects of the Irish language that were associated with Catholics and/or republicans. Middle-class learners coped with this problem by distinguishing the language from its speakers; they represented Irish as part of a 'benign' culture that was manipulated by malevolent political opponents. They challenged the views of Irish speakers with whom they disagreed. If they felt uncomfortable with some learning venues, they abandoned them and went to others, some of which were hundreds of miles away. They physically and ideologically insulated themselves from republican Irish speakers in the same manner by which they escaped the ravages of the 'troubles'.

Working-class Protestants often felt themselves to be in the front line of defence against republicanism, and they resented the Irish language as it was often used in a symbolic fashion by republicans in the media. Working-class learners differed from their middle-class counterparts in that they had difficulty in dis-associating Irish from Catholic/nationalist speakers of the language. Like other members of their class, working-class learners often perceived these Irish speakers to be their enemies; therefore they experienced feelings of ambivalence arising from their desire to learn the 'enemy's' language. Yet, like other working-class Protestants, they were fascinated with their republican enemies and the use of culture to advance the nationalist position. Working-class Protestants interested in Irish had many practical problems in learning the language; they had little knowledge of how to find Irish classes, and had a restricted choice of learning venues as they often they did not have their own means of transport.

Despite their difficulties, some working-class learners displayed an ability to make the Irish language 'theirs' as easily as their middle-class counterparts. In part, this was due to their access to information about the Irish language that they shared with middle-class learners. For example, some members of the Glencairn class associated their interest in Irish with an Irish

national identity. We have seen how middle-class Protestants had a tendency to express British/Irish identities, and working-class Protestants tended to favour an Ulster affiliation (Todd 1987, 1988). My work suggests that not every learner fitted into this class paradigm. However, I have demonstrated that the 'mental mobility' of some working-class learners was not matched by a physical one; however enthusiastic they were about the Irish language, the fear of social sanctions from both Catholics and Protestants constrained their ability to tell their peers about their interest and find learning venues.

My work suggests that middle-class unionists tended to engage nationalists in a proprietary contest for the ownership of Irish culture. I am not suggesting that they wished to appropriate Irish culture from nationalists, but that they wished to de-invest it of nationalist ideology and represent this culture as belonging to both religious and political traditions in Ireland. Working-class unionists were more prone to engage nationalists in innovation contests by reproducing or creating a culture that was different from that of nationalists.

The Marginality of Protestant Learners of Irish

My thesis examined a category of persons who rejected some of the codes of conduct for their ethnic group. In doing so, they crossed physical and psychological barriers between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. This involved taking risks that many Protestants were not willing to contemplate.

In my work I have used James Scott's work on hidden forms of resistance (1985, 1993) in a novel way, as I have looked at how members of what was commonly perceived to be a superordinate group chose to place themselves in an 'inferior' position to members of a subordinate group. Protestants/unionists dominated many of the economic and political spheres of Northern Ireland, while Catholics/nationalists suffered from many forms of socio-economic disadvantage. However, the latter dominated the Irish language scene, and Protestants found themselves to constitute a minority in this scene.

For centuries many nationalists believed the Irish language could be used to shield their hidden transcript of opposition to the British presence in Ireland, and this transcript became public during periods of open revolt in the twentieth century. Many unionist (and some nationalist) Protestant learners had views on the Irish language that they did not share with Catholic Irish speakers, but they represented a private transcript of which Catholics were not aware. In public, Protestant learners often appeared to assent to the views of Catholic Irish speakers, as they did not wish to offend them and/or be excluded from learning venues. They undercommunicated aspects of their ethnicity that they believed would offend members of the other group. This led to many mutual misunderstandings, since many nationalists assumed that Protestant learners of Irish were nationalist or in the process of becoming nationalist as they learned the language. Occasionally, Protestant learners openly resisted Catholic Irish speakers by drawing upon the latter's terms of reference to make them appear to be hypocritical. Some even attempted to symbolise Irish in ways that were anathema to Catholic

speakers of the language. If they did so in the public domain, they cut themselves off from most means of learning the language, since these involved social interaction with Catholic speakers of the language. Many preferred to keep such interpretations of the Irish language to themselves. In this thesis, I have made this private transcript of Protestant learners public for the first time. Thus, my work may alter the relationship between Catholic and Protestant Irish speakers, as the former will become more aware of the views of the latter.

Since the conquest of Ireland, most Protestants have viewed the Irish language as a vessel of Catholic and nationalist thought. They believed that the language polluted Protestants or unionists who learned it, as the process entailed the adoption of Catholic/nationalist belief systems, or taking part in unnecessary socialisation with Catholics. Protestants who learned Irish were prepared to challenge their peers. They marginalised themselves by engaging in anomalous behaviour; in times of conflict, this behaviour placed them in danger from elements of both communities. Yet many learners interpreted the language in terms which they found compatible with the Protestant identity of Northern Ireland or Ireland. The learners differed from other Protestants by learning Irish, but many expressed their similarity to their co-religionists by viewing the language through distinctly Protestant lenses. This served to distinguish them from Catholic speakers of the language.

Protestant Learners and Language Revivals

Cultural protectionists attempt to construct authoritative canons and codes of conduct that create an illusion of uniformity of purpose (Handler 1988). However, anthropologists have demonstrated how speakers of a minority language may invest the language with different meanings. Chapman shows how Celtic revivals conjured an image of 'otherness' over the centuries; from the rural idylls of the romantic movement to a relationship with 'alternative' pursuits such as yoga and astrology (Chapman 1992). McDonald demonstrates how native speakers of Breton associated the language with family and community identities, whereas members of the language revival movement (which was often composed of secondary bilinguals) visualised the language in terms of a left-wing, anti-bourgeois and self-consciously Breton nationalist struggle (McDonald 1989). This movement attempted to present itself as a unitary entity, although it co-opted other unwilling groups to its propaganda (ibid.: 88-89). Furthermore, internal divisions manifested themselves as different elements in the organisation found themselves at conflict with one another. For example, feminist members of the movement rejected the view that they should adopt passive household roles and marry male militants to 'breed' Breton-speaking children (McDonald 1994: 96). Given the findings of McDonald and Chapman, it should come as no surprise that Protestant Irish speakers would interpret the language in ways which would differ from their Catholic counterparts.

Speakers of minority languages respond in different ways when members of other ethnic groups attempt to learn their languages. I have already mentioned how some black

teenagers in London oppose the use of creole by their white peers, while others regard the practice as acceptable with white friends (Hewitt 1986). One must be careful to distinguish ethnic identity from racial identity in this case; after all, the white teenagers cannot become really 'black'. The situation differs from place to place, according to the priority accorded to language in the construction of ethnicity. Handler identifies birth and behaviour as two aspects of Québécois identity, and describes the process by which the latter became more important than the former; 'to be Québécois one must participate in Québécois culture' (Handler 1988: 36). Basque separatists stress the central importance of speaking Basque; an *abertzale* (Basque patriot) is not defined by birth but by 'performance' (McClancey 1993). Thus the children of Spanish migrants are accepted as *abertzales* if they identify with the Basque movement and learn Basque.

In Wales the situation is more complicated, as some Welsh stress the linguistic aspect of their ethnicity, while others regard birthplace as being of equal importance (Bowie 1993). Some Welsh nationalists welcome any English incomer who learns the Welsh language and culture, while other newcomers find that they are categorised as 'English' despite their fluency in Welsh. The situation is complicated by the fact that many residents of Welsh-speaking north Wales regard the citizens of the English-speaking south as 'English'; in this context the term 'English' refers to those who don't speak Welsh, an ascription which outrages the southern Welsh. Some Welsh learners find they will not be accepted as Welsh because English is their first language, while others acquire fluency, become Welsh, and seek to distance themselves from the 'English' learners.

In Northern Ireland, Irish language revivalists were more similar to their counterparts in the Basque region and Quebec than in Wales; performance rather than birth was more important. In west Belfast, one was respected as an Irish speaker if one was a nationalist, had good Irish, and was dedicated to the language, regarding it as much more than a secondary interest or hobby (O'Reilly 1995). The elision of political outlook with fluency and commitment to the language is important here. Since being Catholic was not important, Protestants would not be expected to change their religious beliefs if they wished to become 'Gaels'. Furthermore, if they were born in Ireland, they could claim Irish nationality, according to the secular nationalist tradition. I believe that the issue of fluency might be a red herring, as most Catholic speakers of Irish were secondary bilinguals who were more fluent in English. Therefore, a Protestant could become a Gael by making an attempt to learn Irish. However, the issue of political allegiance *was* important; many unionist learners felt they did not have the outlook required to become fully accepted by the language movement. The more forthright rejection of republican influences by many Southern revivalists suggests that many Protestant learners, especially unionist ones, may have felt more comfortable in Irish language circles south of the border.

Many Protestant learners of Irish could not be considered to be part of the Irish language revival. They often seemed physically and ideologically removed from the mores and values of the revival in Northern Ireland. They tended to visualise the language as a private-domain leisure pursuit, whereas Catholic revivalists were pressurising for control of

their own institutions, such as schools, and campaigning for greater public recognition of the language. While the Irish language movement defined itself in opposition to perceived notions of Britishness, many Protestant learners of Irish constructed symbolic boundaries between themselves and the revival. This often took the form of rejecting the republican involvement in the revival, and of the self-attribution of 'positive' cultural motives to learn the language against the 'negative' political motives of republicans.

The sense of distance between Protestant learners and members of the language movement is also illustrated by the ways in which they discussed the Irish language. Many Catholic revivalists used the cultural secessionist and cultural nationalist discourses to discuss the Irish language; they were engaged in elaborating, defending, and criticising these discourses in their daily interaction with one another. This was part of a century-old debate on the place of the language in Irish nationalism. Yet many Protestant learners were either unaware of this debate, or it held little significance for them. My work demonstrates how many Protestants did not have access to these discourses, or that they felt repelled by them; for the most part they abhorred the cultural secessionist discourse of republicans. Since most Protestant learners conceived of the language as a private-domain leisure activity, they would have not been attracted to the rhetoric of full-time revivalists, with their call to 'defend' the language and wrest more funding from government institutions.

Furthermore, many Protestant learners were not aware of one another; as a consequence they were unable to pool information and systematise their interpretations of the Irish language in a collaborative manner. Rather, many of them had a 'do-it-yourself' approach to the Irish language; their view of the language was refracted through their own personal and social identities. They created new images of the language for themselves and reflected upon their personal and social identities in a dialectical process. Some of them combined fragments of information with personal and collective identities in successful efforts to make the Irish language 'theirs'; others tried, but felt a lack of fit between their interpretation of Protestantism and the Irish language. Hannerz (1992, 1996) has demonstrated how cultures 'leak' beyond their ethnic boundaries, resulting in the creation of cultural mosaics at ethnic interfaces. I have provided an example of this process, by describing how unionist learners invented a hybrid British/Irish identity in a climate of cultural relativism and pluralism. Therefore, my work adds to the anthropological literature on cultural hybridity, and offers some insights on the dynamics of individual creativity and structural constraint.

Creativity and Discourse

The differences between Protestant learners of Irish and Catholic revivalists of the language can be used to examine the strengths and weaknesses of the concept of discourse. The use of discourse as an analytical tool provided me with a means to link the learners I studied to processes of socio-cultural change in Northern Ireland and beyond. Furthermore, I have demonstrated how politically 'neutral' discourses, such as the cultural discourse of the

Irish language, could be used to achieve ideological goals. My work adds to the critique of the Foucaultian concept of discourse, with its emphasis on the constitution of subjects through discourse.

By examining Protestant learners of Irish in the light of the anthropological literature on cultural creativity, I have found that there are methodological and theoretical problems with the concept of discourse. Since discourses are being continually re-worked and adapted to suit the needs of their proponents, to what extent can we claim that they are *fixed* sets of linguistic denominators? For example, I have shown how republicans inserted the contemporary struggle against Anglo-American cultural imperialism into the cultural secessionist discourse of the Irish language. Furthermore, I have studied a group of people who often had no discourses with which to discuss the Irish language. Discourses are created between people, yet many of the learners I studied had no-one with whom they felt they could discuss the language. To put it bluntly, many Catholic Irish speakers had discourses on the Irish language, but many Protestant learners did not. Because of their relative spatial and ideological isolation, the participation of Protestant learners in the creation of culture was accelerated. They interpreted Irish in ways which may have seemed strange, even abhorrent, to Catholic speakers of the language. The phenomenon of cultural hybridity I have described, coupled with that of the learners' individual creativity, leads to the elaboration of a process which is much more fluid and open-ended than that suggested by 'discourse'.

The concept of discourse *was* useful as I used it to contrast the isolation of Protestant learners from the Irish language revival, with its elaborate representations of the Irish language. Catholic Irish speakers had the benefit of having established discourses to draw upon to rationalise their interest in the language, but this is not to say they were not as creative as their Protestant counterparts.

Protestant Ethnicity and the Irish Language

In discussing ethnicity, Barth recommends a concentration on the ethnic boundary that defines the group rather than the 'cultural stuff' that it encloses (1970: 15). I now return to a central question of my thesis; what if ethnic Protestants decided to adopt the 'cultural stuff' of another ethnic group in Ireland? I have demonstrated the process by which many Protestants learned the Irish language, yet felt no less Protestant for doing so. Only one of the learners whom I encountered became a Catholic, thus transforming his ethnic identity in his own terms. Many Protestant learners believed that their view of the Irish language was harmonious with their ethnic identities; and not a few were willing to recommend the language to their fellow Protestants. Thus I discovered Ulster Protestants who learned Ulster Gaelic; British identifiers learning a language to express an Irish regional identity; and nationalist Irish speakers who felt that they had discovered a secular Irish culture which both Protestants and Catholics could share. To paraphrase Cohen, they were producing Protestant ethnicity and national identity for themselves (Cohen 1994b: 76). Barth has a point; the learners adopted a

language spoken mostly by Catholics, but they often felt no less Protestant for having done so.

I have demonstrated how social life in Northern Ireland cannot be simply reduced to the interaction of two ethnic groups. In Irish language activities, Protestants and Catholics were brought together by their shared pursuit, common class interests, personal liking for one another, and localised community identities (cf. Erikson 1993: 30, 153). Furthermore, the process of cultural creativity that I have described above defies our attempt to delineate the 'objective' characteristics of Protestant ethnicity in Northern Ireland.

This process of creativity was matched, and sometimes overcome, by one of structural constraint. Most Protestants conceived of Irish as a 'Catholic' language that had nothing to do with them. Ethnic categorisation by their co-religionists led many Protestant learners to experience inner conflicts and feelings of ambivalence concerning the Irish language, as they felt they were alienating themselves from the wider Protestant 'community' in Northern Ireland. They could not reconcile their individual interpretations of their ethnic identity with the views of other co-ethnics (cf. Cohen 1994a: 35). On occasions they accepted the views of their co-religionists, and ceased learning Irish.

The anthropology of Ireland has explored many of the integrating mechanisms that militate against ethnic conflict in Northern Ireland (e.g.s Harris 1986; Leyton 1974). Many of these mechanisms were described in terms of small-scale rural solidarities. My work stresses the importance of the analysis of class, and in doing so contributes to the literature on urban middle-class Protestants, who are often neglected by anthropologists in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, my work outlines a process by which interest groups, comprised of both Catholics and Protestants, can work to overcome ethnic differences. However, while some Irish speakers worked to overcome religious and political differences, I have shown how others were engaged in a dialogue of the deaf; they did not share the same 'language' at all.

A Contested Culture

In a post-modern world, ideological absolutism has become unfashionable. Some commentators believe that cultural forms are becoming ethnically meaningless as they are appropriated by many ethnic groups (e.g. Smith 1991). This process has occurred to the Irish language to some extent; for example, songs in the Irish language are used in automobile advertisements in America. In certain circumstances the Irish language is de-ethnicised as it is commodified and 'consumed' across the world. In Ireland, we have seen how pluralist discourse was used to erode the connections between the Irish language and one ethnic group. This process was most advanced in the Republic of Ireland, where secularism eroded the Catholic image of the language, and nationalism became irrelevant for many citizens.

The Irish language has not become ethnically meaningless in Northern Ireland. Those who opposed the traditional relationship of Irish, Catholicism, and nationalism have tended to invest the language with ethnic meanings of their own. In a war situation, cultural

entrenchment and competition between the opposed parties is increased. In many respects, Northern Ireland is a deeply-divided society in which boundaries are expressed in cultural, political and religious terms. The Irish language was perceived as an instrument of 'war' by republicans. A small number of Protestants attempted to create counter-voices that discussed the Irish language in terms of unionist ideology, but my work suggests that this process achieved little success; the language continued to be associated by most people with the nationalist movement. To most Protestants, co-religionists who learned Irish were extraordinary at best, and foolish or treacherous at worst. These attitudes served to distinguish the latter from the former.

However, my work suggests that there were many cross-cutting mechanisms between Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland; for example, many of them shared a rejection of political violence. It is *because* these divisions have been expressed in such violent and destructive terms that many people have attempted to encourage inter-communal contact. Pluralist discourse and the desire for peace have been used to generate representations of the Irish language as part of the culture that could unite both ethnic groups in Northern Ireland, rather than divide them. The number of Irish classes outside nationalist areas grew, and unionists felt that they could learn the language without facing hazardous gate-keeping encounters with nationalist Irish speakers.

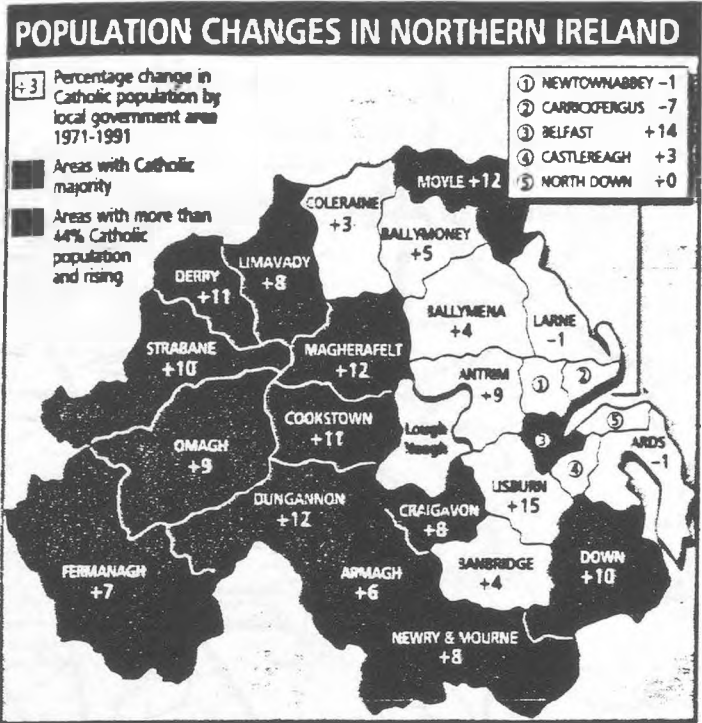
Thus the Irish language became more available to non-nationalists in terms of learning materials and venues, and non-nationalist representations of the language entered the public domain in Northern Ireland. Despite these developments, the vast majority of Irish speakers were nationalists who associated the language with their political views to a greater or lesser extent. Those who attempted to de-invest the Irish language of nationalist ideology drew upon pluralist discourse, which has become a powerful means to exert moral pressure in the Anglo-American world. However much they could identify with global views of culture and identity, they remained discomforted by the fact that in Irish language circles they were regarded as a minority.

APPENDIX ONE: The Gaeltacht



Ireland: provinces, counties, principal towns. The Gaeltacht as 1987

APPENDIX TWO: Population Changes in Northern Ireland, 1971
-1991

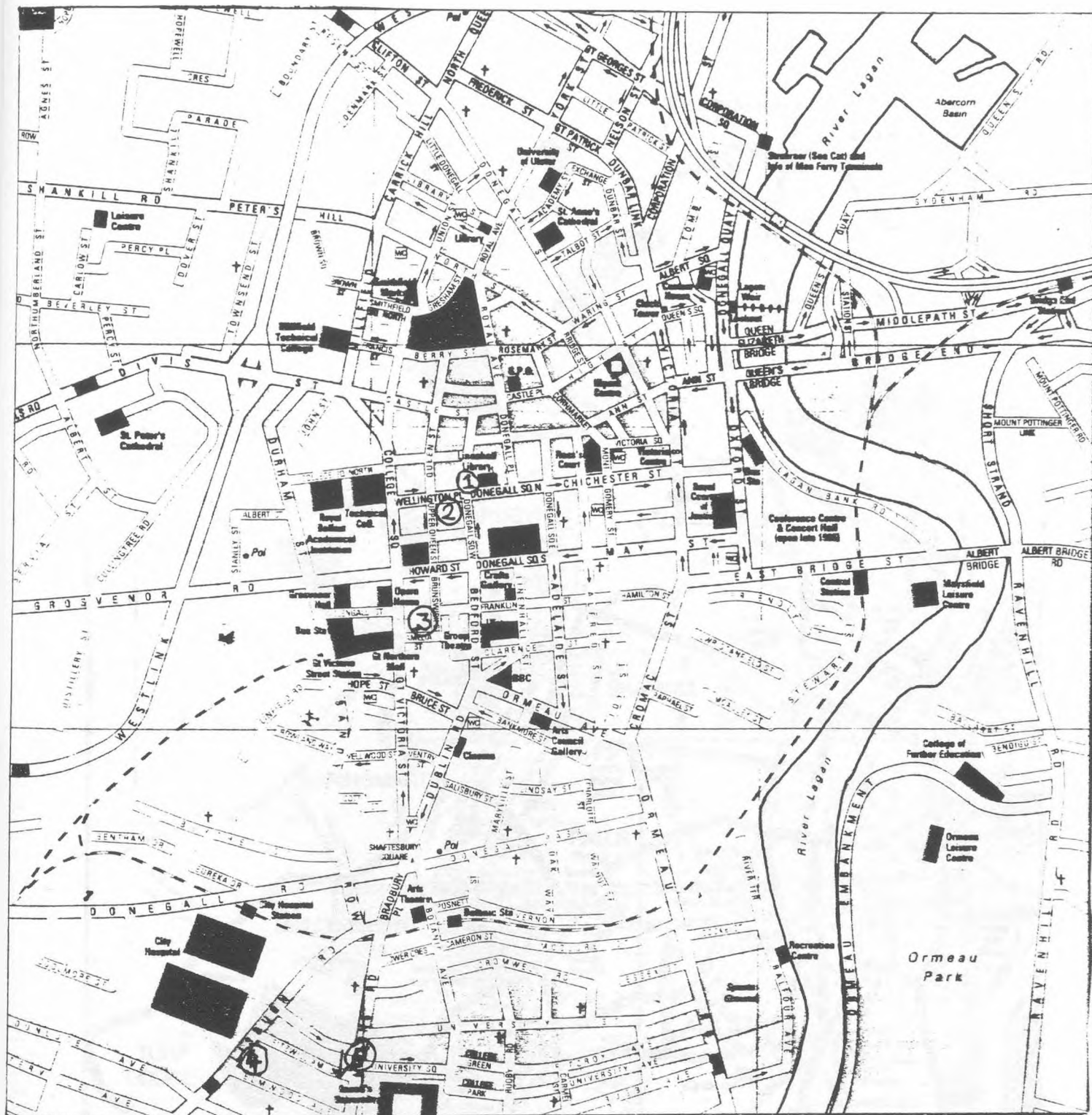


The rising Catholic tide: population changes, 1971-91

APPENDIX THREE: County Down

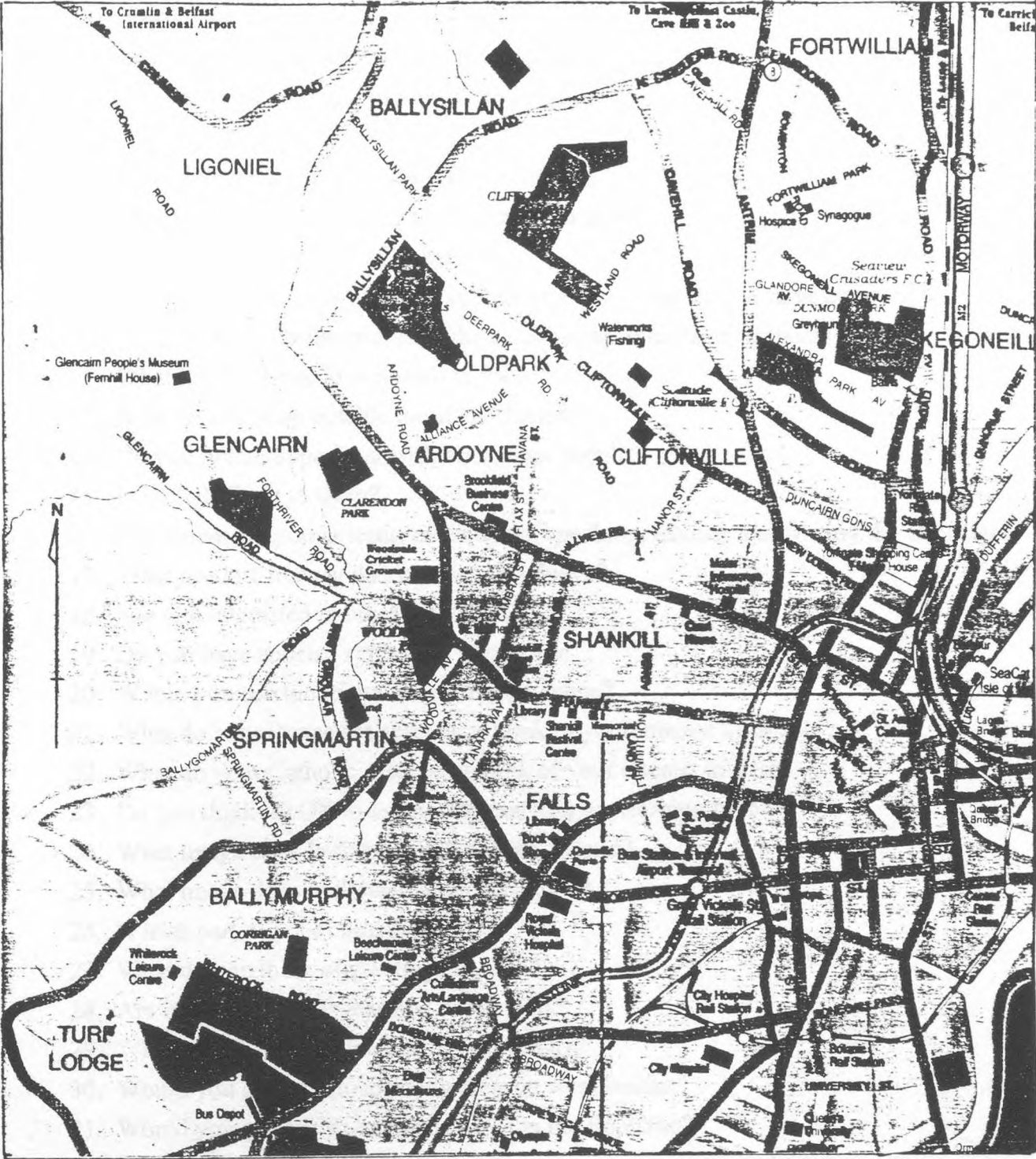


APPENDIX FOUR: Irish Language Classes in Central and South Belfast



1. Linenhall Library
2. YMCA
3. College of Business Studies
4. Ulster Arts Club
5. Direction of the Ulster People's College, Adelaide Park.

APPENDIX FIVE: Glencairn and the Surrounding Area



APPENDIX SIX: Questionnaire

1. What is your age?
2. Where do you live?
3. What is your occupation?
4. What educational qualifications do you have?
5. When did you first encounter the Irish language?
6. How did you react?
7. When and why did you first want to learn Irish?
8. How did you learn about the classes that you go to?
9. What other classes are you aware of?
10. What do you think of the class you are attending/ classes you have attended?
11. Do/did you know the people in the class/classes outside of it/ them?
12. What kind of Irish do you wish to learn?
13. How do you learn outside the class/classes?
14. Do you practise speaking Irish with other people?
15. Is Irish difficult to learn?
16. How fluent are you in terms of listening, speaking, reading and writing the language?
17. What level of fluency do you wish to achieve?
18. Are you interested in other languages?
19. Do you have an Irish version of your name?
20. Would you use the Irish version of your name?
21. What do your Protestant associates think of your interest in Irish?
22. What do your Catholic associates think of your interest in Irish?
23. Do you think it's OK to tell people that you are learning Irish?
24. What image does Irish have in Northern Ireland?
25. What image does Irish have in the Republic?
26. Is Irish part of your culture?
27. What do you think of greetings in Irish?
28. Are other Protestants learning Irish? Why?
29. Where is the greatest interest in Irish? Why?
30. Would you go to Irish-speaking areas in west Belfast?
31. Would you go to Irish-speaking areas in the Republic?
32. What do you think of Irish language programmes on radio and television?
33. What do you think of Irish language street-signs?
34. What is the British government's attitude to the Irish language?
35. What is your nationality?
36. What are your views concerning the future of Northern Ireland?

37. Should the British government support pre-school, primary and secondary education in the medium of Irish for those pupils whose families so request?
38. Should an accused/litigant be guaranteed the right to use Irish in court?
39. Should Irish speakers have the right to use Irish in formal contacts with administrative authorities?
40. Should Irish speakers be entitled to submit written applications in Irish to public services and administrative authorities?
41. Should administrative texts and forms be made available in Irish or in bilingual versions?
42. Should the British government ensure the creation of one radio station and one television channel in Irish?
43. Should public authorities support cultural activities in the Irish language?
44. Should the British government create and finance translation and terminological services in Irish?
45. Should agreements between the United Kingdom and the Republic be used to foster contacts between Irish speakers on both sides of the border?

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