Critical review of an area of literature

Stamping, Clapping and Chanting: An Ancient The Understanding of Peace among Children and Adolescents: A Critical Review of Research

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Contextualisation

Despite the existence in Northern Ireland of an internationally endorsed Peace Process (the 1998 Good Friday or Belfast Agreement), the need for education to play its part in developing a new peace culture and peace consciousness remains as important as ever. In December 1998, the Education Minister established a working group concerned with the promotion of tolerance in schools. The report of this group recommended that there needed to be greater encouragement to regard the development of respect for diversity as a core rather than peripheral element of the school curriculum (DENI 2000).

However, earlier research suggested that the received discourses and assumptions about school effectiveness and school improvement were inappropriate to meeting the challenges of improving school effectiveness for peace within a conflicted society (see, Smith 2001 a; 2001 b). This research confirmed that there was a pervasive "culture of silence" within schools with regard to open discussion on the causes and consequences of social division. There were also other silences and gaps in the story forms available to teachers within schools. When, for example, it came to having a say or being allowed to air their views on issues of relevance to school-based community relations policy and practice, the voice of students and parents were mostly silenced, disqualified or subjugated.

Consequently, I decided to examine the theme of school improvement for peace from a Narrative psychology perspective. That is, from a perspective which gives a central role to the storied nature of human conduct. This stance is a special case of the wider perspective called social constructionism (Wagner and Watkins, forthcoming). A critical review of relevant extant literatures, including the developmental literature on children's and young peoples' understanding of peace, strengthened my view that new paradigm methodologies and methods were required to investigate and make sense of school improvement for peace.

Abstract*: McClernon (1998) suggested that some insight into children's perceptions of the meaning of peace was essential if educators in Northern Ireland (N. Ireland) were to avoid perpetuating the suspicion, bigotry and prejudice that had led to so much violence in the past. However, whilst children's understandings about peace and war had been the subject of developmental research for at least three decades, a critical review of the extant literature revealed a number of shortcomings. For example, only one study having an explicit focus on children's and adolescents' ideas about peace was identified in N. Ireland.*

Furthermore, in recent years, our understanding of human development has profited greatly from research focusing on the exploration of narrative and language as the principal means through which people make sense of themselves and their experiences (see Daiute and Lightfoot 2004). The extant research appeared to reflect none of this scholarship. Rather, it had been conducted within a "natural science" paradigm dominated by oversimplified theoretical underpinnings. The remainder of this paper sets out to develop these issues.

The main body of empirical research

Over the past three decades there have been a number of studies on children's developing concepts of peace and war. The main body of research began in the 1960's and was carried out in countries such as England, Norway, Scotland, Sweden and West Germany (McClernon 1998). Despite this research base, Hakvoort and Oppenheimer (1998) commented upon the theoretically limited and underdeveloped nature of this work as well as the absence of any coherent overview. They also drew attention to the fact that the dominant focus in these studies was actually upon the understanding of war as opposed to peace (Hakvoort and Oppenheimer 1998). Finally, they indicated that most of these studies were carried out in societies that were relatively free from social conflict at the time of study. Only a limited number of studies carried out at times of social unrest, violence or warfare appear to exist (McClernon 1998).

Amongst the different theoretical perspectives used to explain the way in which children develop their understandings, the most frequently used have been Piagetian cognitive developmental theory and theoretical models of political socialisation, Peace investigators have also adopted other developmental theorists whose work reflects Piagetian ideas. Recently, in Holland, Hakvoort and her colleagues adopted a social-cognitive development approach using Selman's (1980) five-stage model of social-perspective taking. They recognised that the Piagetian framework actually referred to cognitive development in non-social contexts. Yet, the concepts of peace and war were social phenomena the understanding of which developed through social experience. Consequently, they hypothesised that a structural relationship existed between children's developing understanding of peace and war and their developing understanding of interpersonal relationships. Finding age-related changes in children's and adolescents' concepts of peace using this perspective prompted them to call for future research that adopted interactionist ideas as well as a more contextual approach.

To date, the main variables adopted to explain observed variations in the extant research can be summarised as follows:

- Internal (fundamental, essential or fixed) categories such as age, gender and children's cognitive abilities (the Piagetian influence).

- The development of interpersonal understanding or role-taking abilities (the Selman framework).

- Response to major events in society.

- Changes in the social environment.

- Socio-cultural differences between countries and socialisation agents.

Some of the major outcomes of peace research between the mid 1960s and 1990s include:

- Children's concepts of peace develop around the age of 7 years onwards and their understanding of the concept of war developmentally precedes that of peace (eg. Cooper 1965; Alvik 1968; Resell 1968; Engel 1984; Rodd 1985; Cretu 1988; Hall 1993).

- Across many different cultural settings, children base their views of peace on three thematic components, for example, positive emotions at an individual level as expressed by social activities such as positive interpersonal interaction and relationships; the negation of war activities at the macro level (absence of war, war activities and hostility, quietness, stillness) and the negation of war at a micro level (absence of quarrels, absence of quarrel activities). Galtung (1969, 1985) described the two latter themes, based on the absence of war, as "negative peace". By contrast, "positive peace" was more of a dynamic process of reconciliation aimed at the integration of and collaboration between groups or nations (Galtung 1985). Oppenheimer (1995) attributed the degree of violence which was acceptable in a society as influential in leading children to understand peace as dependent on the existence or non-existence of war.

- From a Piagetian perspective, it was expected that as children matured, systematic qualitative changes would take place in children's thinking resulting in the development of more abstract concepts of peace that referred to human attitudes and democratic processes. Studies in Malaysia (Mohammad 1996), Australia (Hall 1993) and Israel (Spielmann 1986) demonstrated changes of this nature in children's understanding. The shift from concrete to abstract representations of peace also appeared to mark a shift from negative to positive conceptions of peace.

- No conclusions have yet been reached regarding gender differences in the ability of male and female children to verbalise their understandings of the concept of peace nor in the content of their concepts (Cooper 1965; Hakvoort 1996; McClernon 1998; Hakvoort and Oppenheimer 1993).

- Some evidence has been advanced for the impact of societal events. For example, Spielmann (1986) assessed Jewish and Arab children's understanding of peace and war before and after the visit to Israel of the Egyptian President, President Anwar Sadat. Among the 9-14 year olds, the essays before Sadat's visit were optimistic, seeing peace as a form of Utopia and as the fulfilment of every wish. This Utopian view of peace changed to a more realistic one after Sadat's visit (see, also McClernon 1998).

Research on Northern Irish Children's ideas about peace

Insights into children's ideas about peace emerged indirectly from research having a focus upon the psychological impact of conflict upon children. For example, McWhirter (1982) found that the majority of children condemned violence when asked to write about it. However, the authors believed that children in N. Ireland had built up a certain amount of resilience to violence and had become habituated to it over time; thus distorting their ideas about peace (McClernon 1998). This suggestion was refuted by Hosin, McClenahan and Cairns (1993) who asked adolescent students in N. Ireland to write essays entitled "My Country". The participants in this study were twelve and fifteen year-old Protestant children attending religiously segregated schools seen in either 1980 or 1991. The results demonstrated that, whether the children had grown up in the 1970s or 1980s, political violence was the one feature of N. Ireland they were most likely to mention. However, qualitative analysis highlighted some differences in how the adolescents perceived violence at the two times. In 1991, the students were more likely to mention violence in the context of a wish for peace. In other words, despite the fact that the twelve and fifteen year-olds who wrote their essays in 1990 had lived all their lives in a violent climate, they had not habituated

to the violence nor lost their desire to live in a peaceful society (McClernon 1998). A second study by McClenahan and Cairns (1993) reinforced this conclusion. Here a section of the Rokeach Values Survey containing statements alluding to certain social ends or goals (terminal values) was administered to eleven and fourteen year-olds equally divided between males, females, Protestants and Catholics. The authors found that all the students, except for boys in the older age group, placed a world at peace in the first position of importance (McClernon, 1998).

To the best of my knowledge, the first N. Irish research to take an explicit focus on the ideas of children and adolescents about peace was undertaken by McClernon (1998). In part fulfilment of her Doctoral studies, McClernon took the opportunity of studying the influence of social events on children's and adolescents' ideas about peace, in particular, the changing political climate which prevailed over the period of the Provisional IRA cease-fire of August 1994. The first part of her work was a cross-sectional two-sample design using questionnaires to examine the concepts of peace (also concepts of war and strategies to attain peace) among young people aged 14-15 years before and after the IRA's declaration of cease-fire. The sample was drawn from three Protestant schools in two rural areas. The second part used a longitudinal design to measure changes in children's concepts during the period of the cease-fire. Concepts of peace, war and strategies to attain peace were elicited from a sample of 28 children aged 8-10 (McClernon 1998).

The most consistent theme to emerge from this study as a whole was the fact that the largest percentage of children from the two age-groups described peace as the absence or negation of war. This was the case amongst the adolescents both before and after the cease-fire and amongst the younger children for the duration of the cease-fire. Prior to the cease-fire, peace was observed by the adolescents to involve positive emotions at a global level (e.g. cooperation and bilateral relationships between nations, 32%) with hardly anyone mentioning universal rights (2%). However, after the cease-fire, bilateral relationships became less apparent (10%), whereas issues such as justice, freedom and democracy (ie., universal rights,15%) became more salient (Hakvoort and Oppenheimer 1998). Although this represented an age-related change from concrete to more abstract views of peace, McClernon (1998) was not able to come to a firm conclusion about this effect since it might also have represented a response to the post cease-fire reduction in the media emphasis on active aspects of the search for peace. Indeed, McClernon (1998) argued that children of both age-groups were responding to their socio-political and media environments. In the case of the adolescent group, the strong emphasis on disarmament after the cease-fire echoed the interest of the television stations and the newspapers on the issue of handing over terrorist arms during the early weeks of the cease-fire. This interpretation of children's preoccupation with post-cease-fire disarmament as media-inspired was supported by the finding that the adolescents expressed an equally high level of interest in newspapers and television news before and after the cease-fire (McClernon 1998).

The second study found that N. Irish children's concepts of peace were not too different from children in other peaceful societies. In this respect, the findings were in contrast to Spielmann (1986) who carried out research in violent Israeli society. Spielmann found that nine and ten year-olds tended to stress the more active factors of peace, whereas children in N. Ireland stressed passive aspects (McClernon 1998). There were however differences of emphases in the N. Ireland results from the three dominant thematic components of peace found in previous research. For example, among the N. Irish children, the negation of war at an individual level appeared to be less important than a positive evaluation of peace. McClernon (1998) argued that the N. Irish children's relatively frequent use of war related images, whilst at the same time offering a positive evaluation of peace, stemmed from the particular kind of peace which existed at the time in the province. This was where an emphasis was being placed on the existence of a cease-fire and a peace process while at the same time the instruments of war (paramilitary weapons), the threats of further violence

and on-going brutality were ever present. It was possible that this apparent contradiction in N. Irish society influenced children's views (McClernon 1998). Northern Irish children in this study were less likely than children in peaceful societies to relate the concept of peace to positive aspects such as social activities in the immediate environment (Hakvoort 1996).

The McClernon, Smith and Cairns (2001) study

This paper was based upon data gathered as part of a wider research study I undertook designed to explore key institutional factors implicated in effective school-based community relations work; as seen from the perspective of the main groups having a stake in the success of schools (see Smith 2001 a & 2001 b). As part of this larger study, students were asked to write a short poem in class entitled "What Peace means to me". Participants were 809 children (482 females and 327 males) from six religiously segregated primary schools (mean age 7.08 years) and three segregated secondary schools (mean age 11.61 years) in the West of N. Ireland.

Three research questions were explored in this study, which was undertaken in the wake of the popular endorsement (by peoples from both parts of Ireland) of the Good Friday or Belfast Peace Agreement. First, based on extant research, it was hypothesised that students would base their views about peace on the absence (negation) of war and thus on its negative dimension. In other words, confirm that peace remained a second-order phenomenon in N. Irish society dependent on the existence or non-existence of war. Second, a gender-based difference in the content of students' descriptions about peace was predicted. Based on the work of Hagglund (1996) and Gilligan (1992), it was expected that girls would show evidence of a more caring and interpersonal attitude to others, and tend to emphasise the importance of positive emotions in the immediate environment in their stories. Third, it was expected that older children (key stages 2-3) would use more varied and complex descriptions of peace than those in the younger age group (key stage 1).

The poetic narratives were read and views about peace scored according to the method used by McClernon (1998) in her Doctoral research. That is, a slightly modified version of the categories of peace derived from Hakvoort and Oppenheimer 1993 (see, Table 1).

Category		
1	War-related images	Thinking about war, war activities (not the answers which refer to the negation of war)
2a	Religion/church	Christmas, Heaven, God, angels, symbols eg clasped hands
2b	Material Related	Giving presents to people, building houses, organising free festivals
2c	Nature	Taking care of nature, trees, wildlife, anything that has to do with the protection of nature
2d	Colours associated with peace	
3i	Positive emotions at an individual level	Being nice, playing together, being friends, be: happy, companionable, love, happiness
3g	Positive emotions at a global level	Head of the Government meets with friendly nations: conferences, all soldiers are friends, collaboration in the whole world, economy and commercial relations are important because when nations exchange trade there will be a form of dependency between the countries and people will not easily start a war

Category		
4i	Negation of war at an individual level:	No quarrels between people or friends, no quarrel-activities, no fights between peers, absence of a row, all activities to solve quarrels
4g	Negation of war at a global level:	Absences of war, war activities and hostility, no fighting (when the children do not mention individuals), no shooting, calm, quietness, inactivity, stillness. Important for this category: the goal of the activities the child describes is to solve a global conflict, although the child might decide to point at individual activities to reach this goal
5a	Disarmament:	Stop having or reduction of nuclear weapons, bombs, army, throw away all weapons and guns (the child must really point at the reduction of armament)
5b	Freedom for the [political] prisoners in prison in Northern Ireland and England	
6	Human Attitudes	No discriminations, respect/accept other people the way they are, tolerance, no hatred of others. Emphasis on the principle of equality between people
7	Universal Rights	Liberty, freedom of speech and press, right to demonstrate, no dictators, taking care of democracy, having fair elections, justice
8a	Positive evaluation of peace	Peace is good, we should have peace in Northern Ireland, child wishes for peace
8b	Negative evaluation of peace	Peace is no good if it means the others have won: rejection of "peace at any price"
9	Reference to paramilitary groups	IRA, UDA, UFF, INLA, UVF
10	Ceasefire	Specific mention of Northern Ireland ceasefire

Table 1: Response Categories used by McClernon, Smith and Cairns (2001)

In the coding of students' responses, eight major thematic categories were derived for associations with peace. Coding was based on multiple coding units for each child which meant that they could provide responses in more than one category, but each response could be assigned to only one category. Because most students provided more than one view of peace (and therefore, more than one category) each category was treated as a separate variable. For coding purposes therefore, each category became a nominal variable with two values. When a student used a particular category/variable, it was given the code 1. If the category/variable was unused, it was coded 0. Hiloglinear analysis (see Gray and Kinnear, 1998) was carried out on the images used by the children in their poems, with the independent variables gender and age. Further tests using analysis of variance (see also Gray and Kinnear 1998) were carried out on the number of times children used each image.

The students in this study were found to be well able to articulate their concepts of peace. As expected, the dominant theme was seen to be the position of peace as secondary to war. This was interpreted as evidence of the influence of social institutions such as the family, peer-group and media. Two other dominant themes were observed in the data. The first was an emphasis on positive emotions at an individual level which was a common theme found by other researchers into children's ideas about peace e.g., "if peace was people it would be my family because no matter what they always forgive". The second was the frequent use of

war-related images such as "our city is getting ruined, people fighting everywhere, they can't see the other point of view and nobody wants to share". This image, which was not a common theme in previous research carried out in other countries, had nevertheless been observed by McClernon (1998). As mentioned above, McClernon interpreted this emphasis on war-related images as evidence of the confusing effects of social events on children's understandings. That is, N. Irish children's ideas about peace had been distorted by their perception of the state of peace in N. Ireland.

A considerable number of children (32%) used religious images to depict peace. Previous studies of N. Irish children's ideas about peace had shown no such emphasis even though religion has great salience in N. Ireland (Rose 1976; Cairns 1991). The interpretation put on this was that it was due, in some part, to the poetic medium used to elicit the children's ideas. However, explanations in terms of the nature of the research methods used offered no ready insight into a further unpredicted finding from this study. This was the greater tendency of females to offer religious images. One explanation offered here was that this was consistent with the finding that females adhered more closely to religion than males (Argyle and Breit-Hallahmi 1975; Francis and Wilcox 1996). This possibility was strengthened by the observed interactive effect between gender and age. Amongst the younger children, the gender differential was 60% female compared with 40% male. In the older group, the gender differential increased to 73% females compared to 27% male. The data consequently reflected not only a possible gender-based religiosity differential but also previous observations that a favourable attitude to religion increased with age (Argyle and Breit-Hallahmi 1975).

The second prediction, that girls would express positive emotions on an individual level more than boys, was upheld in this study. Of the 52% of children who described positive emotions at an individual level (category 3i), 62% were female compared with 38% who were male ($x=7.2$, df=1, p<.05). This was interpreted as demonstrating a response by the children to the influence of dominant processes of socialisation, in which girls were given more encouragement to adopt supportive and caring attitudes towards other individuals. This observation was in contrast to the finding of McClernon (1998) who reported no gender differences in the understanding of peace amongst 8-11 year-old N. Irish children. However, since the present study involved 820 students compared to only 53 in the McClernon study, the criterion of "generalisability" or external validity was felt to be more compelling.

The final hypothesis that older children would use a greater number of more varied images to describe peace was only partially confirmed in this study. No effect for age was observed on the number of images used by the individual children. Certain images however appeared significantly more often in the poems of the older children, and these tended to be the more sophisticated and abstract images of peace. Older children, for example, referred more often to peace as a colour, and to the destruction of weapons. Of the 11% of students who described peace as a colour (category 2d), 80% were in the older age group ($x=34.75$, df=1, p< .01). Of the 8% who mentioned the disposal of weapons (category 5a), 46% were from the younger age-group ($x=19.08$, df=2, p<.01). Children from the older age-group were also more likely to refer to ideas based on human attitudes, such as tolerance and equity and to the destruction or abolition of weapons. For example, of the 10% who referred to human attitudes (category 6) 41 % were from the younger age-group ($x=6.99$, df=2, p<.05). Whilst the trend in this study appeared to echo the work of researchers such as Cooper (1965), it was concluded that the evidence for age-related changes in the understanding of peace was not conclusive.

Basic Assumptions and Beliefs underpinning the extant research

In his work on the structure of scientific revolutions, Thomas Kuhn (1970) demonstrated the way in which scientific evidence was largely guided by a paradigm of understanding that was central to a field at any given time. As he reasoned, a scientist carried out research and interpreted findings in terms of a set of prior assumptions shared within a particular community. The political scientist Schattschneider reached the same conclusions when he remarked that "the assumptions we make tend to determine what we investigate, what kind of techniques we use and how we evaluate the evidence" (Schattschneider, 1948, p 2).

In this sub-section I take another look at the research outlined above, this time focusing more explicitly upon its underpinning set of basic beliefs or assumptions. I will suggest that this research has been constructed within a "natural science" paradigm and the modernist faith in individual minds, rationality, objectivity and truth. Consequently, it is not the most useful way of constructing knowledge about human development that is so reliant upon the socially Grafted tools of language and communication (Gergen 2000;Watkins 1999).

A paradigm may be viewed as a set of beliefs that guide action based on ontological and epistemological assumptions that are intrinsic to a methodological position (Blakie 1993). Ontology refers to the claims or assumptions that a particular approach to social enquiry makes about the nature of social reality. In other words, ways of conceptualising the nature of human beings and society. The epistemological question refers to assumptions about the very basis of knowledge, its nature and form and the relationship between the knower and what can be known (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Finally, the methodological question asks what approaches will give you the knowledge you seek and how your approaches can be justified (Ernest 1994).

Table 2 summarises my thoughts on these three questions in relation to the above research. This research appeared to be grounded in dualist ontology in which the individual actor and society were seen as two components of a dichotomy (Burr 1995). On the other hand, commentators have suggested that future research is needed to account for human psychological functioning in terms of social interaction. That is, where the relationship between people and environment is viewed as a dialectic one and both parts are potentially modifiable by their mutual and reciprocal interaction. Efforts to overcome this strict demarcation of person from world can be traced to theorists such as Vygotsky (1978). However, emphasising human social relationships and accounting for psychological functioning through the lens of social interaction also foregrounds the role of language and discourse as a vehicle through which the self and world are articulated (Gergen 2000). The view of people as users and manipulators of language and discourse for their own purposes appears to be one sidelined by the traditional perspectives taken in both research literatures concentrating as they do on the "in-here" world of subjectivity versus the "out there" world of objects (Burr 1995).

Assumptions	Critical Analysis: Methodological Features
1. Ontological	dualist (demarcation of person from world) ordered and rational view of the world apprehensible reality subject as repository of facts influenced by Piaget's views on cognitive development
2. Epistemological	absolutist (truth can be obtained) fixed, reified or objective knowledge values excluded and influence of researcher denied
3. Methodological	conventional quality criteria fragmentation of data some loss of richness of insight and idiosyncrasy of views

Table 2: Some basic assumptions and beliefs in the extant research on children's views about peace

The extant research also appears to universalise the experiences of people by using fixed, fundamental or essentialist categories such as that of gender. Somers and Gibson (1998) argued that such essentialism created "totalising fictions" (p 55) whereby single categories of experience over-determined any number of other cross-cutting differences. They drew attention to the need to take into account contradictions and divisions within identity categories and the construction of local and specific realities.

Essentialist discourses were described by Somers and Gibson (1994) as a defining feature of the worldview grounded in the Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries and the industrial and scientific revolutions of the 19th century; in other words, the age of "the Modern". Hevern (1999) remarked that the modernist worldview believed in the power of the natural science paradigm to reveal the world as it really existed and that such knowledge would lead to a rationally-grounded future of abundance, justice and universal peace (Hevern 1999). However, Cockburn (1998) considered essentialist discourses to be dangerous political forces designed to shore up differences and inequalities and sustain dominations. It operated through stereotypes that fixed identity in eternal dualisms such as women victim, male warrior, trusty compatriot or degenerate foreigner (Cockburn, 1998).

Research into children's and adolescents' views about peace, including my own, reflect on the continued influence of Piagetian cognitive development theory. Piaget (1954) described cognitive development as a series of discrete stages, each defined in terms of a specific cognitive structure (or unique way of understanding the world) and associated with an approximate age-range. The following brief account is after Short (1999).

According to this theory, Short (1999) recounts, most children under the age of seven are incapable of logical thought, since they tend to be seduced by appearances and thus unable to conserve; nor can they regard experience from any point of view except their own. Short (1999) remarked that this "preoperational" stage was clearly an obstacle to the reversibility of thought required for logical reasoning. During the time between the ages of 7 and 11, Piaget believed that the average child developed the ability to reverse actions mentally though only in so far as they referred to "concrete" situations; the concrete operational stage. At this juncture too, most children managed to focus their thoughts on more than one aspect of a situation simultaneously and thus were in a position to relate ideas to one another. However, it was not until the ages of 11 years and older (the formal operational stage) that children could normally think in the abstract and consequently discuss political and other controversial issues without recourse to their own experience (Short 1999).

It seems fair to conclude that it is partly because of the popularity of sequential developmentalism that children below the ages of seven or eight have rarely been included

in the research on peace and war. Hakvoort and Oppenheimer (1998) described two research waves focused on the understanding of peace and war among children and adolescents; the first took place between the early 60's and early 70's and the second from the early 80's onwards. Twenty-one research studies were included by these researchers in their review of this literature out of which only six involved children under the age of seven. Of relevance here is Connolly's (1998) methodological critique of research into children and racism. He argued that an elaborate self-fulfilling prophecy existed whereby the assumptions held about children were more often than not simply reconfirmed through the way particular methods were employed and /or the way that data was collected and interpreted. One of a number of criticisms surrounding Piaget's work was the issue of conceptualising children's development as sequential structured stages. It was believed that this led to an underestimation of children's abilities. Pollard and Tann (1993) remarked that psychologists, such as Donaldson (1978) and Tizard and Hughes (1984), demonstrated that children's intellectual abilities were far greater than those reported by Piaget. Such findings emerged when children were observed in situations meaningful to them. In such circumstances, they also showed considerably more social competence at younger ages than Piaget's theory allowed (Pollard and Tann 1993).

Collecting data on children's views has mostly involved the use of standardised questionnaires and structured or semi-structured interview schedules (Harkvoort and Oppenheimer 1998). In Cooper's (1965) study, for example, English children between the ages of six and sixteen provided written replies to a questionnaire. Shortly after this study, Resell (1968) used translated and revised versions of Cooper's measure to elicit concepts of peace and war from children aged ten to seventeen in Sweden. Mercer (1974) used items from Cooper's questionnaire to elicit ideas about peace from Scottish children aged twelve to seventeen (McClernon 1998). This use of structured data-collection procedures presents an image of the research subject as a passive vessel of answers (or repository of facts) waiting to be tapped (see also, Holstein and Gubrium 1995).

There was a strong sense of ontological realism in these methods; in other words, of there being an apprehensible "reality" or knowable world capable of being elucidated. Social reality appeared to be constructed as a set of social facts that could be identified and verified without requiring further interpretation. The world of objects was seen from the researcher's point of view and there was an assumption that subjects were interpreting the issue in the same way as the researcher. There appeared too to be a sense in which the social world was conceived of as a fragmented place where subjects were torn away from their social contexts. Beliefs such as these were reflected, I believe, in the way in which I chose to analyse and code the data in my first study (McClernon, Smith and Cairns, 2001). As can be seen from Figure 1 below, scoring was based on pre-set categories with the text being excavated and dissected line by line by the researchers.

Cuba and Lincoln (1994) suggested that epistemological questions were constrained by answers given to ontological issues. Since this research base appeared to adopt a realist ontology, the epistemological assumption involved perceiving knowledge as fixed, reified or "objective"; for instance, knowledge which existed as a separate world to which access had to be gained for knowledge of things (Popper 1972). Furthermore, under such circumstances, the position of the knower becomes one of objective detachment or value freedom in order to discover "how things are" (Cuba and Lincoln 1994).
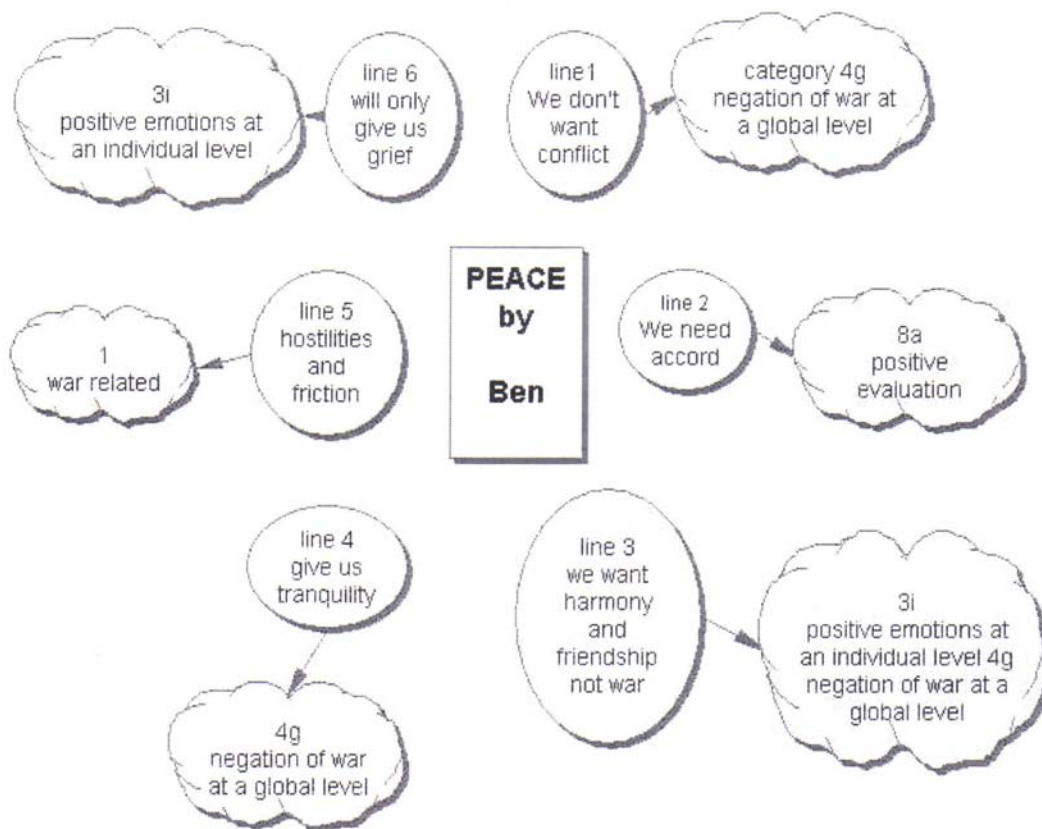
Figure 1. Scoring of Peace Poems in McClemon, Smith & Cairns (2001)

This imperative for detachment was evident in the lack of engagement by McClernon, Smith and Cairns (2001) with issues of underpinning values or assumptions and the influence these might exert. Pierre Bourdieu, in an interview with Wacquant (1989) eloquently expressed my concerns on this point:

> *'What distresses me when I read some works by sociologists is that people whose profession is to objectivise the social world prove so rarely to be able to objectivise themselves and fail so often to realise that what their apparently scientific discourse talks about is not the object but their relation to the object- it expresses resentment, envy, social concupiscence, unconscious aspirations or fascinations, hatred, a whole range of unanalysed experiences of and feelings about the social world'* (Wacquant, 1989, p 33)

When one subscribes to a view that treats the world like the natural world, then investigations will necessarily be directed at the analysis of relationships and regularities between selected factors in that world (Cohen and Manion 1994). Not just any methodology is now possible! Quantitative approaches designed to discover general laws now appear to some researchers to be appropriate. Bryman (1989) included the following as characteristics of quantitative designs: because it rendered theoretical concepts observable and testable, quantification is seen as the sine qua-non; preoccupation with the development of measurement devices; fleeting contact with the people being studied and a clear concern to follow the methods and procedures of the natural experimental approach. The methodological imperative is governed by the need to avoid contamination of the particular "slice of reality" being studied. The

appropriate quality criteria then become the conventional benchmarks of rigour; in other words, internal validity, external validity and objectivity.

My own study with McClernon and Cairns illustrated the way in which the data was fragmented for analytical purposes. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) quoted Robert Frost as having said that a poem was the shortest emotional distance between two points i.e. the speaker and the reader. Yet, in this case, complex human stories in the poetic dimension of language were subject to a process of quantification and reduction to categories. Scott (1996) suggested that the reduction involved in quantification always occasioned intentionality and therefore some measure of distortion or loss of richness of insight.

Conclusions

The peace research described in this paper was constructed within a natural science paradigm and its core beliefs and assumptions appear to have mostly remained unchallenged and taken for granted. However, what seemed clear was that there was a need for a new approach to research that addressed the following general issues. First, the need to take account of human psychological functioning in terms of social interaction. Second, particularly within a violently divided society like N. Ireland, to adopt a research methodology that advanced a concept of humanity that stressed community relationships; as opposed to individuality. This would then be consistent with the principles set out in the Good Friday or Belfast Agreement as endorsed by the majority of peoples on the island of Ireland. Third, to acknowledge the power of language and discourse for creating social worlds. Finally, to take a more nuanced and complex view of the world. Thus far, as Krutsen (2002) remarked, surprisingly few peace researchers and academics had drawn upon these types of methodological insights to write about peace and war.

Acknowledgements

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