“A TIME TO BE TOUGH, A TIME TO BE TENDER:” EXPLORING THE PARADIGMS AND EFFECTS OF MASCULINITIES IN POST-CONFLICT NORTHERN IRELAND

by

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A THESIS

Presented to the Conflict and Dispute Resolution Program
and the Graduate School of the University of Oregon
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Science

September 2017

THESIS APPROVAL PAGE

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Title: “A Time to be Tough, a Time to be Tender:” Exploring the Paradigms and Effects of Masculinities in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland

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Degree awarded September 2017

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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Conflict and Dispute Resolution Program

September 2017

Title: "A Time to be Tough, a Time to be Tender:" Exploring the Paradigms and Effects of Masculinities in Post-Conflict Northern Ireland

This thesis examines the paradigms of masculinities during and after Northern Ireland's conflict to understand how societal transition from intrastate conflict impacts males' identities and mental health. Focusing on fieldwork conducted predominately in Derry/Londonderry and applying masculinity theories, this thesis explores the experiences of males aged 29 to 40 who grew up during the 1990s' peace process. Social and mental health professionals and community and youth workers have expressed concern for the mental health and well-being of this population of men, as well as young men born after the peace process. With this concern in mind, this thesis argues that the continuous presence of contested images of masculinity that existed prior to the conflict and that emerged during the conflict, along with the cultural practice of silence, has resulted in an ambiguous understanding of masculinity in the post-conflict era, and has had a negative impact on males' mental health.

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I wish to express my sincere gratitude for Dr. Baxter's guidance and support in the preparation of this thesis. I also thank Profs. Cohen and Montague for providing their valuable insight and feedback. I thank my family and friends for their unconditional love and support. I am greatly appreciative of the mental health, community, and youth work professionals I interviewed in Northern Ireland who provided me critical information for this thesis. I thank my friends in Northern Ireland who always make me feel at home and were eager to help me throughout my fieldwork. Most of all, I am incredibly grateful for the men who were willing to tell me their stories and discuss sensitive topics. Thank you for your time and allowing me to share your narratives, and I hope you find this thesis to your liking.

For Oisín and Pearse

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CHAPTER I

MISSING OUT ON THE TROUBLES

I could be a hero
Live and die for their important cause
A united nation
Or an independent state with laws
And rules and regulations
That merely cause disturbances and wars
And that's what I have got now
All thanks to the freedom-seeking hordes
Lyrics to "Wasted Life," Stiff Little Fingers[1]

Poster Boys of the Troubles

As a teenager, punk rock was an ideology that strongly resonated with my identity of resisting political and social conformity. I listened to bands from across the pond that established and nurtured the genre in the 1970s and 80s, including the Stiff Little Fingers from Belfast. I was naively unaware of where they were from or what inspired their gripping songs that I enjoyed so much. I just knew their satirical lyrics solidified my adolescent perception of the world. When I visited Northern Ireland for the first time in 2013, I was introduced to the landscape the Stiff Little Fingers always wrote songs about, a landscape that had previously meant nothing to me. The lyrics to "Wasted Life" and other songs I knew became real and more meaningful. These songs were captured visually by the massive murals found across neighborhoods in different cities and towns. I began to develop an understanding of how the young men in this punk band and other young people who grew up in 1970s and 80s, saw Northern Ireland during the region's modern conflict, colloquially known as "the Troubles."[2]

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[1] Stiff Little Fingers. 1979. "Wasted Life." *Inflammable Material*, Rough Trade, London.
[2] Heron, T. 2016, December 2. "Alternative Ulster: how punk took on the Troubles." *Irish Times*. Retrieved from https://www.irishtimes.com/culture/books/alternative-ulster-how-punk-took-on-the-troubles-1.2890644.

Tourists now gaze in wonder at these provocative images that visually present the cultural narratives of parts of the Catholic and Protestant communities. Despite ethnonationalist differences, I noticed a common theme between the communities' murals. Many of the murals include fallen soldiers and veterans of old wars, others were more relevant to the Troubles, commemorating paramilitary volunteers and posturing the iconic and menacing gunman. However, it was the controversial "Petrol Bomber," painted by the Bogside Artists in Derry, that captivated me. This mural was the painted rendition of a now famous photo from the conflict, the image of a young boy (the artists' cousin) armed for a riot—gas mask on and petrol bomb in hand. Despite being located in a historic area, this mural is surrounded by houses, where boys the same age as the one in the mural constantly pass on their way to school or into the city center.

Poster boys of the Troubles. Left: "Petrol Bomber" by the Bogside Artists, Free Derry Corner. Photo Credit: Author, March 7, 2013. Right: "We Seek Nothing but the Elementary Right Implanted in Every Man: The Right if You are Attacked to Defend Yourself", East Belfast. Photo Credit: Author, June 15, 2017.

As I watched young people walk past this mural, I had a budding curiosity to learn about the experiences people from my generation had growing up in Northern Ireland in the 1990s. I wanted to research these narratives and tried to ask people their perspectives, but after conversing with people during guided tours and night outings in different cities across the region, I learned there was a specific population causing concern among police, community and youth workers, and mental health practitioners—males in their mid-teens to mid-30s. From these conversations, I learned a couple serious issues concerning males in Northern Ireland: first, males aged late-teens to mid-30s had shown rising rates of suicide since the end of the Troubles in 1998; and second, young men in some communities continued to be at risk of becoming victims of paramilitary punishment beatings and shootings.[3] I wondered if the militarized images of the gunman and "Petrol Bomber" had any impact on this population as poster boys for what was expected of young men in Northern Ireland during the conflict. These images are postured in almost a glorified manner and are ever-present in many spaces where young men pass daily, and I wondered if young men today felt they "missed out on the Troubles" (McGrellis, 2011, 28).[4]

Reflecting on these experiences from this visit and the concerns people had about young men, I developed a research project that focused on the identities and perceptions of masculinity of men who were adolescents in Northern Ireland during the 1990s. I

[3] Forss, A. 2016, August 10. "The enduring legacy of paramilitary punishment in Northern Ireland." *Insight on Conflict*. Retrieved from https://www.insightonconflict.org/blog/2016/08/enduring-legacy-paramilitary-punishment-northern-ireland/.

[4] McGrellis' comments on some young people's romanticizing of the Troubles, which she states has been reported by "community workers in Belfast" (28). Her longitudinal research has shown that some young people are "enticed into paramilitary groups and gang, hoping to attain similar status, respect and position within their community thirty years from now" (28).

wanted to understand if and how these experiences had impacted this population's mental health today and the transgenerational understanding of masculinity between this population and young men growing up in the current post-conflict period. In the development of this project, I found that young people were a prime concern for international organizations, as well as academics and local social service and mental health professionals, and there was ample research focused on young people throughout the Troubles. However, there were notable issues with these initial studies, as they only introduced the different gendered experiences that young men and women dealt with, rather than analyze the complexities and impact gender has on people's daily life. Additionally, later research that referenced these initial studies used the data as a continuous narrative of the young people's lives in Northern Ireland, rather than taking into consideration the transgenerational differences of growing up in conflict, transitioning, and post-conflict periods. Furthermore, while there is substantial literature on men's experiences during the Troubles and growing academic attention to studying young men in this region today, there is limited analysis focused on the male population that grew up in the transitional period of the conflict in the 1990s and early 2000s.

Inspired by the murals I saw depicting militarized men and boys, and with men aged 25-29 having the highest rates of suicide in Northern Ireland, I wanted to understand if and how the conflict factored into this disconcerting social phenomenon among this age group (Scowcroft, 2017). Therefore, I focused my attention initially on men aged 27-38, as they would have been between 11-18 during critical political events that took place in Northern Ireland during the 1990s. Because adolescence is a significant period of development, in which self-exploration of identities and the formulation of opinions, I

was interested in how the violent and complicated landscape of Northern Ireland affected young men during this time, and transpired into their adulthood. This initial project has continued for the last three years, but I have shifted focus from the mental health component to greater attention to the role gender has had on boys and men's experiences during and after the Troubles.

The academic field of examining masculinities is still relatively new, and is heavily underdeveloped in relation to conflict, peacebuilding, and transitional justice, particularly within the context of Northern Ireland (Hamber, 2016). This thesis, then, is meant to contribute to the development of this subject by sharing the narratives of men I have met with and interviewed the last couple years. My focus was not exclusively on the young men who were involved in the conflict during the 1990s. Rather I was interested in young men's everyday experiences throughout the 1990s, and learn what influenced their identities and masculinities. This thesis reflects on interviews I conducted beginning in 2014 and followed up in 2016 during 13 weeks of fieldwork in Derry/Londonderry (henceforth Derry for readability). During my time in Derry, I also interned with a local family and youth support agency, working predominately with a group of young men and women ages 8-13 from Catholic, Nationalist housing estates. In this thesis, I mention a few observations I made during my internship working with young and older boys from my group, a group from Protestant, Unionist housing estates, and some time I spent with young men in their late teens. I will now turn to the contextual background of Northern Ireland's origins and the Troubles, as well as an overview of the impact the conflict had on boys and men during and after the Troubles. I

then discuss the methodologies I used to collect my data and provide an overview of the following chapters of the thesis.

A Wee Country: Synopsis of Northern Ireland's History

17th-Century: Plantation of Ulster

Violence is rooted in Northern Ireland's social and political history, spanning across several centuries. Beginning in the 17th-century, with the encouragement of the British crown, wealthy English and Scottish merchants developed privately-owned plantations across Ireland on seized land and settlers migrated to the island to work on the plantations, establish communities, implementing a "loyal British garrison" that would control periodic uprisings from the native Irish (McKittrick & McVea, 2002, 2). These plantations were predominant throughout the region of Ulster, the northeast province of Ireland, where the Ulster Scots/Scots-Irish ethnic group emerged and Protestantism gained a permanent presence in Ireland. In the late 17th-century, King James II sought to reclaim the power of Catholicism during his reign, but the concern of a Catholic dynasty led to the nobility of England supporting the Dutch Prince William of Orange's "invasion" of England and Ireland (Bardon, 1992, 150).

With the threat of William's army, James II fled to France in 1688, leaving the throne absent. William was declared King of England, Scotland, and Ireland in February 1689, and the Williamite War in Ireland between James II and the newly-crowned King William began with the Siege of Derry in April 1689 (151). The city of Derry (officially titled Londonderry during the colonization of Ireland) resides on the River Foyle and is known as the "Walled City," as stone walls and seven gates were constructed to protect English and Scottish settlers (129-130). However, with James II's oncoming attack, 13 apprentice boys are said to have closed the gates to prevent the advancement of his attack

(152).[5] The siege was relieved on July 30, 1689 and James II's efforts in Ireland came to a violent defeat by William at the infamous Battle of the Boyne in July 1690 (161-164).[6]

1916-1921: Easter Rising and the Irish Free State

King William's victory secured Protestantism throughout Great Britain and Ireland, which polarized the people in Ireland not only by religion, but also politically and economically. The opposing national identities culminated in the early 20th-century, as the pressure for Home Rule in Ireland increased, which Unionists (mostly Protestant) adamantly opposed, as they felt it threatened the "Union with Britain, and as a prelude to complete Irish independence and the ending of Protestant and British domination of Irish affairs" (McKittrick & McVea, 2002, 3).[7] Furthermore, the success of linen, shipbuilding, and engineering industries in the northeast of Ireland, particularly around Belfast, was disconcerting to Protestants, who felt Home Rule would impact their economic success and the relationship Ireland had with Great Britain (Bardon, 1992, 405). Therefore, when the British government introduced a Home Rule bill in 1914, Unionist leaders responded by smuggling thousands of arms and ammunition from Germany and formed the Ulster Volunteer Force as an "unofficial Protestant militia" (McKittrick & McVea, 2002, 3).

By 1916 at the height of WWI, the demand for Irish sovereignty from Great Britain turned violent. With Great Britain at war in Europe, assisted by thousands of

[5] Descendants of the apprentice boys organized the fraternal organization the Apprentice Boys of Derry, which annually commemorates the Relief of Derry in August with the largest parade in Northern Ireland.

[6] The victory of William the Orange was inspirational for the establishment of the fraternal organization the Loyal Orange Institute, or the Orange Order. Every July 12th in Northern Ireland, the Orange Order hosts a series of parades commemorating the Battle of the Boyne, which has led to violent contestation and protest between Catholic and Protestant communities.

[7] Unionists support the union with Great Britain; whereas, Nationalists support autonomy from direct British rule.

Irishmen, Irish Republicans mobilized and fought against British troops in Dublin during Easter week in 1916. The "Easter Rising" ignited the political and militant movement toward an independent Ireland, with the Irish Republican Army (IRA) forming in 1918 (McKittrick & McVea, 2002). Through the IRA's violence and heightened political pressure, Great Britain passed the Government of Ireland Act in 1920, partitioning the 32 counties of the island into two governing regions, Northern Ireland and Southern Ireland (Bardon, 1992, 477). Northern Ireland consisted of 6 out of 9 counties of the Ulster region, where a Unionist majority was present and accepted a devolved government (478). However, in the remaining 26 counties, Irish Nationalists rejected this act and continued to fight for their independence, which was finally granted through the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921, forming the Irish Free State (483-484).

1922-1963: "A Static Society"

McKittrick and McVea (2002) refer to the decades between the Anglo-Irish Treaty and prior to the Troubles as a "static society", where "Unionist dominance, Catholic powerlessness, and Westminster disregard survived relatively untouched even an event cataclysmic as World War Two" (22). During this time, Unionists solidified their political majority through gerrymandering constituent lines without "Westminster supervision" (McKittrick & McVea, 2002, 8-10). Additionally, the reconfigured police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), was made up of more than 90% Protestants, granting job security for many Protestants. The RUC was met with complaints by Catholics, due to the force's "military character", which that had "very often an intimidating effect" (11).[8] Protestants also made up the majority workforce in both the

[8] The RUC was replaced by the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) in 2001 to provide communities policing that is more equally representative of both Protestant and Catholic communities.

civil and private sectors, leading to more than double unemployment rates for Catholics (Bardon, 1992, 639-641). Catholics also dealt with housing issues, where local councils oversaw housing construction and zoning, granting homeowners and their spouses two votes in local government (McKittrick & McVea, 2002, 12). Tenants or lodgers were unable to vote, affecting poorer communities' representation within local constituencies.

1964-1994: Civil Rights Movement and the Troubles

Becoming fed up with social and political inequalities, Catholics began organizing civil rights demonstrations in 1964, seeking equal representation economically and politically (McKittrick & McVea, 2002). Over the next few years, tensions between Catholics and Protestants escalated, especially in working-class communities. This unrest culminated into violence beginning August 12, 1969 during the Apprentice Boys of Derry's annual parade of the Relief of Derry, when "Catholic youths" of the Bogside started antagonizing paradegoers by throwing "nails and stones" (Bardon, 1992, 666). Between August 12 to the 14th, the two communities rioted against one another and the RUC. Known as the Battle of the Bogside, the three days of intense rioting is considered the start of the Troubles (670).[9] By August 15, British troops were deployed to take over security in Northern Ireland and maintain civil order, and for three decades, Catholic and Protestant communities in Northern Ireland experienced perpetual riots, raids, shootings, and bombings (McKittrick & McVea, 2002, 248-249). During this time, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA or IRA), an offshoot of the Original IRA and the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) were the predominant Republican paramilitary

[9] This brutal riot was triggered by the Apprentice Boys of Derry's annual commemoration of the Siege of Derry, where they traditionally marched along the city walls. The Derry Citizens' Defence Association organized residents from the Bogside community to confront the parade.

organizations to represent Catholic communities and their fight for sovereignty from Great Britain (McKittrick & McVea, 2002, 59). Among Protestant communities, especially working-class, the Ulster Defence Association (UDA)[10] and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) were important Loyalist paramilitary groups who defended their communities from the IRA and attempted to protect their cultural identity and Protestantism in Northern Ireland (Shirlow, 2012, 12-13).[11]

Detailed statistics on the numbers of men and women involved in paramilitary organizations is limited. However, Ulster University's International Conflict Research Institute (INCORE) has compiled extensive information about Northern Ireland and the Troubles in an online database, Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN).[12] CAIN states that the exact numbers involved in Republican paramilitaries are not certain, particularly for the IRA, which operated through a clandestine cell system to avoid detection by security forces. CAIN estimates that the IRA reached its peak numbers around 1,500 active members during the mid-1970s and declined to 500 by the 1990s. CAIN notes the INLA have had several thousand members. CAIN notes the UDA had extensive membership at the peak of the conflict in the mid-1970s, estimated between 30,000-50,000. The UVF had a smaller following at 1,500 (according to their leader Gusty Spence) in 1972 (Cusack, McDonald, 2008, 101). While these groups fought against one another, they also fought against the RUC and the British military. Despite Protestant communities receiving more support from these security forces, Loyalist paramilitaries

[10] Also known as the Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF).

[11] Irish Republicanism is an ideology in favor of an independent Irish republic; whereas, Ulster Loyalism is an ideology centered on maintaining the ethnonationalist status quo of Ulster Protestants.

[12] INCORE, http://incore.ulster.ac.uk/about/; CAIN, http://cain.ulster.ac.uk/cainbgn/index.html.

were still considered illegitimate terrorist operations, and members were susceptible to arrest and imprisonment (Mulcahy, 2006). Catholic communities had a historically violent relationship with the RUC, resulting in hostility and mistrust towards state-governed policing that continues today (2006).

1994-1998: Road to Peace

Beginning in the 1990s, paramilitary organizations began to shift away from their militant sectarian agenda and towards the political, with the intention of ending decades of intrastate violence. An initial ceasefire took place in 1994, which was later broken by the IRA, and then reinstated in 1996 (McKittrick & McVea, 2002). Throughout the 1990s, respected politicians and community leaders from both communities came together to negotiate peace. Prominent leaders from the Protestant community included: David Trimble, Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) leader and the first First Minister of Northern Ireland; and David Ervine, leader of the Progressive Unionist Party and former member of the UVF. Prominent leaders from the Catholic community included: John Hume, long-time politician and leader of the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP); Gerry Adams leader of Sinn Fein; and Martin McGuinness, member of Sinn Fein and future Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland, former leader of the IRA. In the initial stages of the peace process, the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), led by the vehement Rev. Ian Paisley, was also involved, but opposed the negotiation process once Sinn Fein became involved. With former U.S. Senator George Mitchell chairing the peace talks, parties from Northern Ireland, Ireland and the UK came together to produce the Belfast Agreement on April 10, 1998. Commonly referred to as the Good Friday Agreement, this agreement established the current devolved government system in Northern Ireland

and is considered the first step, or breakthrough, in transitioning towards peace in the region (McKittrick & McVea, 2002).

It has been nearly two decades since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement and in many ways, the peace process in Northern Ireland has been effective. Cross-community development, which has heavily involved the participation of former political prisoners and combatants, and various NGOs centered on transitional justice and seeking reconciliation were established to support the peacebuilding process at the communal-level. While the physical presence of violence has been greatly reduced and the paramilitary ceasefires remain intact, the legacy of the Troubles continues to have a daily impact on people's lives. Politically, the Northern Ireland Assembly has been instable, with several collapses and reforms, including in early 2017.[13] Legally, many individuals continue to seek justice for events that took place during the conflict. Most peace walls built during and after the conflict to segregate communities (mostly in Belfast) have not been removed, and most primary and secondary schools remain segregated.[14]

Further, there is the psychological impact of the Troubles. Estimates of physical and psychological injury related to the conflict are between 8,300-100,000 and over 3,600 individuals lost their lives (Breen-Smyth, 2012).[15] In comparison to other modern conflicts, the death toll of Northern Ireland's conflict is not massive. However, the

[13] McDonald, H. 2017, March 26. "Northern Ireland power-sharing talks break down." *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/mar/26/northern-ireland-power-sharing-talks-break-down.

[14] Geoghegan, P. 2015, September 29. "Will Belfast ever have its Berlin wall moment and tear down its 'peace walls'?" *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/sep/29/belfast-berlin-wall-moment-permanent-peace-walls. Department of Education, Northern Ireland. 2015 "Integrated Schools." Department of Education. Retrieved from https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/integrated-schools.

[15] These numbers are uncertain, due to limited research and cultural circumstances.

proximity of violence in proportion to the geographic scale of Northern Ireland, combined with the emotional, physical, and psychological trauma that has culminated since the late 1960s, has left thousands of people impacted by the Troubles. These physical and mental impacts have carried across generations, as the legacy of the conflict continues to affect people today.

Male Victims of the Troubles

Civilians were victims of most of the deaths during the conflict, and Republican paramilitary organizations were responsible for the majority of both civil and combat deaths at 2,153. Loyalist paramilitaries were responsible for 1,080 deaths and both police and the British army were responsible for 365 deaths (McKittrick & McVea, 2002). Deaths within paramilitary organizations and state-sponsored security forces include: 395 for Republican paramilitaries, 161 for Loyalist paramilitaries, 1,012 for all security force. Boys and men were the greatest targets for victims, as more than 3,200 male deaths were recorded by CAIN, 10 times greater than female deaths.[16] Additionally, the age of victims demonstrates that the conflict placed young people, especially young men, at highest risk of physical injury or death, due to their frequent participation in rioting and altercations with paramilitaries and the police (Smyth, 1998). By 1998, the largest group of victims was between 20 and 24 with 716 deaths, 94% being male (46). Furthermore, 20-year old males (civilian or combat), were the most frequently recorded deaths from the Troubles.

In addition to conflict-related deaths, young men were susceptible to punishment assaults via beatings and shootings carried out by both Republican and Loyalist

[16] Gender of person killed, *CAIN*. Retrieved from http://www.cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/tables/Gender.html.

paramilitaries. These organizations acted as the local police force in many neighborhoods, where security forces were slow to respond or were untrustworthy. Paramilitaries would brutally beat or shoot, execute, or exile people as punishment for "anti-social behavior" (i.e. petty thieving, vandalism, joyriding), selling or abusing drugs, or any activity deemed disrespectful to the organizations (Mulcahy, 2006). Data on paramilitary punishments has been collected since 1973, with 6,100 total paramilitary punishments reported between 1973 and 2014 (Torney, May 20, 2016, *RTÉ*). Since 1990, there have been 4,336 reported attacked to the PSNI. Most victims have been Protestants at 58% and Catholics at 42%, and 20-29 has been the most common age group with over 1,900 recorded punishments (Kennedy, 2001). Over 1,700 beatings and shootings have been reported for victims 19 and under, and 98% of total victims have been men and boys (Torney, May 20, 2016, *RTÉ*).[17] This brutal, alternative form of justice was disconcerting during the conflict, but it is more disturbing that it continues frequently in Northern Ireland today, where young men are targeted.

While the Good Friday Agreement was put into action, a dramatic increase in suicide trends emerged and high rates continue through today. Since 1998, the suicide rate in Northern Ireland has increased by almost 90% (Tomlinson, 2013). Between 1998 and 2006, suicide double from 138 reas the number of suicides doubled between 1997 and 2006, increasing from 138 total suicides recorded to 291 (Tomlinson, 2007). Among males, the suicide rate has increased by 82% since 1985 (Scowcroft, 2017), and between 2000-2002, male trends were more than four times greater than female trends (Tomlinson, 2013). There have been 7,271 suicides reported between 1965 to 2012, with

[17] The data also provides a breakdown of age demographics of female victims, who are understudied, but should not be disregarded.

over half reported between 1998 and 2014 (Tomlinson, 2013). The trends for both the overall and male populations in Northern Ireland are comparably greater than Great Britain and Ireland. The current rate is 16.25 suicides per 100,000, with males at 25.24 per 100,000 and females at 7.58 per 100,000. Beginning in 2005, a drastic increase in male suicide occurred, affecting the overall trend, and has not had a significant decrease in subsequent years (Scowcroft, 2017). In 2015, males aged 25-29 had the highest overall rate of suicide, and men aged 30-44 have also shown high rates in recent years (Scowcroft, 2016, 2017). Tomlinson (2013) proposes several reasons why suicide has spiked during the post-conflict era, including: better reporting practices by professionals, changes in domestic lives, and increased substance abuse. Tomlinson also mentions economic hardship, but argues this explanation is questionable, as Northern Ireland experienced a "sustained increase in employment" between 1998 and 2008. In addition to these possible reasons, Tomlinson (2013) states that the "violent conflict of the past" is the "most neglected explanation" for the increasing male suicide rates (9). He also states that further research needs to be conducted from a gendered perspective to understand the rising male trends (Tomlinson, 2012).

Methodology

My predominant method for obtaining data for this research was through individual interviews I conducted with participants who were currently 29-40 and were adolescents (11-18) living in Northern Ireland between 1994 and 1998. I chose this time frame for the significant political events that took place during these four years. I intended to interview 10 to 20 males for this research, with an equal number of Catholic and Protestant men, in order to provide a comparable analysis of their experiences.

However, throughout the data collection process, I was only able to conduct 8 extensive interviews, 5 Catholics and 3 Protestants, with 1 Protestant outside the age-range. Most of the participants were interviewed during my fieldwork in Derry. In my fieldwork, I also interviewed a leading academic, mental health practitioners, and community and youth workers to supplement my knowledge regarding ongoing concerns and issues of young men in their communities. Additionally, because my internship entailed working closely with boys and young men, I have reflected on some of my experiences with these groups to understand the transgenerational differences of childhood and adolescent experiences between my participants who grew up during the peace process, and the boys and young men growing up in the post-conflict era.

I directly contacted all potential and participating subjects and intended to obtain participants predominately through snowball sampling. I recognize the limitations of this process, as peoples' social circles could result in similar experiences and opinions. However, I was optimistic that individual agency and identities would provide complexity to the data sample. In order to start the recruitment process, I reached out to personal and professional contacts who helped me connect with potential participants. I also wrote to several young and older men's organizations throughout Northern Ireland, and posted advertisements in the Men's Health Forum in Ireland's monthly electronic newsletter.

While I did not limit myself to people who had been active in the conflict, it was difficult, nonetheless, to find participants. Online postings and email recruitment was limiting, as several individuals responded, but only one followed through for an interview. Additionally, there were scheduling conflicts when I was in Derry, due to

summer holidays and limits on my time due to my internship. The more significant roadblock I had finding participants was men's hesitancy to discuss the subject matter. In a preliminary conversation, I would thoroughly explain the research and interview process with all potential participants and answer questions. I found that many individuals stated that they did not feel their experiences were as important as their fathers or grandfathers and suggested I to speak with them instead. Others were interested in talking about politics and current state of Northern Ireland, but did not want to share individual experiences related to masculinity or reflect on their mental or emotional health. Additionally, when I asked for additional contacts from participants, many said their friends would be very turned off by the idea, calling it "gay" or "stupid". Despite my struggle to find a sizable sample group, these responses were noteworthy, as they relate to the overall themes discussed in this thesis.

Once a participant agreed to an interview, we arranged a time and location to meet that was comfortable for each of us. Each interview was semi-structured, lasting between 1-3 hours, and with permission from the participant, I recorded the interview with both an audio recorder and by taking notes. I began each interview by asking participants basic demographic questions (see Appendix) regarding their political and religious identities, followed by open-ended questions centered on their experiences of growing up during the 1990s, the impact these had on their identities, understandings of masculinity and mental health, as well as the experiences young men deal with in Northern Ireland today. Two interviews were conducted through Skype and were recorded using Pamela software for Skype. Participants were not compensated for their participation. While I wanted my conversations with participants to develop naturally,

some participants struggled interpreting my questions, particularly on masculinity. Other participants were more focused on the political component rather than on their personal narrative. A couple participants pointed out that they had never before been asked before how the Troubles affected their identity or masculinity, and they considered our conversation an enlightening experience.

After each interview, I transcribed the audio and manual recordings. Each participant received a pseudonym that they are referred by in all transcripts, documents, and writings. I abbreviated names of people or places or replaced them with a general description for confidentiality. To analyze the transcripts, I color-coded themes related to identity, masculinity, politics, and mental health. I cross-analyzed the transcripts to find patterns among the participants' responses and opinions, and found frequently overlapped themes that related to my initial research questions. Upon request by the individual participant, audio and written recordings have been destroyed accordingly. Despite living in different communities, from my analysis, I found many similarities between Catholic and Protestant participants' experiences and opinions regarding masculinity, politics, and the social future of Northern Ireland. Additionally, participants from both communities demonstrated to me the complexity of masculinities in Northern Ireland, and how young men from the 1990s understand masculinity differently than their fathers or grandfathers' generations.

Map of Thesis

Chapter Two introduces the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which seeks to explain the representation and promotion of male dominance in patriarchal institutions. I also discuss Connell's hierarchy of masculinities and the correlation between hegemonic

and militarized masculinities, particularly in relation to Northern Ireland. I then discuss predominant representations of masculinity in Northern Ireland that have established a hegemonic standard that young men generally strive to attain. These images are influenced from traditional expectations and established expectations that developed during the Troubles. Furthermore, I describe the similarities and differences between Catholics and Protestants' conceptualization of masculinity, demonstrating the cultural differences between these ethnonationalist communities, as well as their shared values on defining Northern Irish masculinity. Chapter Two concludes with a background of research related to young people, especially young men, during and after the Troubles. I also introduce the concept of transgenerational trauma that has been beneficial in understanding the mental impact the Troubles has had on male populations. The research that has been conducted on young people and young men exclusively ties into the theoretical framework of masculinities that is central to my research questions.

Chapter Three introduces my findings through discussion of participants' identities and construction of masculinity based on their adolescent experiences during the 1990s. These narratives are organized by how participants engaged with their domestic, communal, and global social spheres and the impact these environments have had on their current identities and opinions today. This chapter focuses on individuals and situations that have been influential to participants today, and explores how traditional and militarized masculinities have impacted this population and how their understanding of masculinity differs from other generations. The expectations participants describe and the social pressure to achieve the hegemonic ideals provide an insight into how masculinities are perceived in the current post-conflict state, in which

there is not a singular paradigm for hegemonic masculinity, leaving the conceptualization of masculinity in the post-conflict era vague.

Chapter Four continues a discussion of findings by examining how the political and social transitions of the 1990s have impacted participants' political opinions and mental health. I examine these topics through the observation of a "pervasive, violent apathy" that a participant I interviewed shared. I reflect on this idea by discussing participants', as well as their families' and communities', reactions to the peace process. I then analyze participants' current participation and opinions towards Northern Ireland's government today, which supported a political apathy among this group. Chapter Four continues by discussing "the culture of silence" in relation to transgenerational trauma and the physical and mental harms males experience. I also discuss the arguable social apathy of boys and men's well-being. Although the men I interviewed did not have prolonged experiences with mental health issues, they contributed to the conversation regarding the concern of male populations' well-being in Northern Ireland.

The concluding chapter brings together the themes discussed in the thesis to understand how masculinities are constructed in a society transitioning from decades of intrastate violence. From my findings, I suggest that the current social and political structures of Northern Ireland have left the transitioned society in an ambiguous state, and that this sense of ambiguity extends to the construction of masculinity in the post-conflict era, in which there is not a new, clearly-defined paradigm of hegemonic masculinity. I argue that among the multiple masculinities that operate with another in Northern Ireland, the masculinities that existed before the Troubles and the masculinities that emerged during the conflict have shown to be problematic as they compete to be the

dominant form of masculinity. I also argue that contested images of masculinity have not only impacted the understanding of being male, but also, these contested images, along with the culture of silence, had a negative effect on young men's mental health. I continue the concluding chapter by discussing recommendations my participants and professionals suggested as next steps for developing support and opportunities for males in Northern Ireland. I conclude with the limitations from this research project, applying this research in other areas that have been affected by intrastate conflict, and questions to be considered in future research, and end this thesis with perspectives participants had on the men of their generation and future generations in Northern Ireland.

CHAPTER II

"A SEDUCTIVE FORCE:" EXAMINING MASCULINITIES AND YOUNG MEN'S STUDIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND[18]

Theories of Masculinity

Hegemonic Masculinity

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) define masculinities as "configurations of practice that are accomplished in social action and, therefore, can differ according to the gender relations in a particular social setting" (9). In the historical context of masculinity, McGaughey (2012) states that the ideals of "manliness" are often affiliated with "physical prowess, proper comportment, and romantic chivalry" (5). Referencing Sexton, Donaldson (1993) builds upon these ideals by stressing the specific male norms of "courage, inner direction, certain forms of aggression, autonomy, mastery, technological skill, group solidarity, adventure, and considerable amounts of toughness in mind and body" (644). These attributes and values are elements of the broader subject of masculinity and do not resonate with all men. While there has been critique that the discourse on masculinity promotes an essentialist framework, many scholars discredit this notion by recognizing masculinity is neither fixed nor singular. There are many *masculinities* and these are "plural, fluid, and historically informed by ideologies of a specific time, place, and social context" (McGaughey, 2012, 12). The primary model for understanding these configurations of multiple musculinities over the last two decades has been through the conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity and subordinated masculinities. These concepts explore the dynamic relationships men have with one another, as well as with women and society.

[18] Title credit: Liam (35).

Crafted out of fieldwork conducted in Australian high schools, Connell utilized Antonin Gramsci's theory of hegemony as a proposed explanation for male social hierarchies that were observed in interviews with male pupils, teachers, and parents (Connell and Messerschmidt, 2005). Through hegemony, Gramsci sought to understand class relations and the ability of the ruling class to maintain its position of controlling power over lower classes by defining ideals and persuading the majority population that "the organization of social institutions" is normal (Donaldson, 1993, 645). Connell (1987) explains further that hegemony does not require force in order to implement social power, nor does it eliminate alternative cultural influences. Rather, hegemony operates as the idealistic standard people accept and work to attain. When considered from a gendered perspective in the configuration of masculinity, hegemony represents the "currently accepted strategy" that is culturally constructed to explain the patriarchy's legitimacy, enabling men to maintain a dominant societal position and keep women subordinate (Connell, 1995, 77). Nagel (1998) states hegemonic masculinity is "more than an 'ideal', it is assumptive, widely held and has the quality of appearing to be 'natural' (247). Therefore, hegemonic masculinity works to validate men's power in society. However, it is only one type of masculinity and is not demonstrated by all men; yet, "most benefit from it" (Donaldson, 1993, 645), and many men are supportive of the institutions and practices that would build their personal sense of hegemony over not only women, but also other men.

Hierarchies of Masculinity

Connell (1995) has proposed other kinds of masculinities in a hierarchy that are continuously influenced by and influential to the current ideals of hegemonic

masculinity: subordinate, complicit, and marginalized. While each of these is subordinate to hegemony, Connell differentiates subordinate masculinity as specifically representing homosexual men, contradicting the heteronormative hegemony. Complicit masculinity seeks to explain the population of men who support hegemony, but do not always exemplify it. This is due to other identities influencing a man's behavior and perception of masculinity, such as communities, marriage, fatherhood, as well as relationships these men have with women. Connell emphasizes class and race as specific structures that represent marginalized masculinity, which is "always relative to the *authorization* of the hegemonic masculinity of the dominant group" and can "exist between subordinated masculinities" (81). Therefore, individuals who are limited by the social dynamics marginalization presents can continue striving towards hegemonic masculinity through other ways, such as obtaining wealth and fame through athleticism or exercising control policing the local community as a paramilitary volunteer. In my interviews, three of these masculinities were mentioned by participants interviews and will be discussed in the next chapter, in order to understand the complexities these masculinities present in interrelation to one another.

Like other cultural constructions, masculinities, including hegemonic masculinity are susceptible to change. When the patriarchy is challenged by other groups, especially by women, but also by subordinate masculinities, cultural responses may replace present strategies, which may establish a new form of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 1995). While my research has not concentrated specifically on women's influence on and relationship with masculinities, it is important to recognize that women are able to challenge the "dominance of *any* group of men" (77). During and after periods of

conflict, gender roles can change drastically. Women may become more active in the public sector and take on the role of primary breadwinner within their households, affecting men's position in these sectors, at least temporarily (Jacobson, 2013), as shown in the context of Bosnia, Uganda, and Somalia (Raven-Roberts, 2013). A change in the division of labor demonstrates one way women can impact the trajectory of hegemonic masculinity in a conflict and post-conflict state.

Nationalism and Militarized Masculinities

As previously stated, force is not *necessary* for hegemonic masculinity to prevail in controlling power over women and subordinate masculinities, but violence can be an integral part of upholding the values that constitute a culture's ideal masculinity. While Connell and other social scholars do not often consider masculinity in relation to political conflict (Hamber, 2016), the institutional structures of formal armies have formulated their own accepted gender systems to establish masculinities that are militaristic, but are not always dominant outside of the establishment. Woodward (2003) lists "physical prowess, aggressive heterosexuality and homophobia, homosociability, and ability to deploy controlled physical aggression" as some of the attributes that distinguish militarized masculinity (44). Some of these traits resonate with other constructions of masculinity, but the accepted institutionalized violence establishes militarized masculinity as its own concept (Higate, 2003).

Yet, within the military, there are multiple roles that do not always (or ever) partake in violence and are "more salient in peacetime" (29); and so, the notion of a militaristic masculinity becomes pluralized, as other factors may be more prominent than physical aggression. Nagel (1998) discusses these factors and the pluralities of

militarized masculinity in its relation to nationalism and the state. Nationalism is a masculine institution that seeks "to achieve statehood and supports collective commonality" (Nagel, 1998, 247). Cultural traits such as "[honor], patriotism, bravery, and duty" are homologous to the language of both nationalism and masculinity (251-252). Within this system, the image of the hyper-aggressive, violent soldier and the disabled veteran are representative of different militarized masculinities, and there are times when one has greater merit than the other; both, however, share nationalist values that promote the hegemony of the state and the institution.

In some societies, militarized masculinities may not be the dominant, accepted system, but for states that promote nationalism and the demonstration of authority through militant organizations, these masculinities become "hegemonic models…and act as arenas for 'achieving' masculinities" (Ashe, 2012, 236). While militarized masculinities are the arenas in nationalist states and during periods of conflict, they are still competing with other masculinities that are deep-rooted in the traditional framework of hegemonic masculinity. Connell's hierarchy has been challenged for not being more conscious of the idea that there may be more than one model of hegemonic masculinity, and these models might challenge one another for dominance, but they might also simultaneously exist and influence men's attitudes and behavior in different circumstances (Anderson, 2009 in Hamber, 2016). This critique contradicts Connell's conceptualization of hegemonic masculinity, but Hamber offers support for deeper analysis on the original concept by discussing Beasley's (2008) proposal of supra and sub hegemonic forms. Beasley explains hegemonic masculinities in vertical and horizontal terms, meaning multiple hegemonic masculinity can exist simultaneously, but as Hamber

(2016) mentions, these masculinities are "constantly negotiated and resisted" based on societal and institutional changes (26). This frame of thought is demonstrated in the relationship between traditional and militant influences in the construction of hegemonic masculinities in Northern Ireland before, during, and after the Troubles.

Masculinities in Northern Ireland

Paramilitaries

It is important to consider militarized masculinities in all forms and contexts, and the influence nationalism has on everyday life and people's perception of masculinity. Although the concept of masculinities has grown in sociological discourse over the past few decades, analyzing masculinities during and after conflict remains an underdeveloped field in the discourse of gender and conflict-related violence, transitional justice, and peacebuilding (Hamber, 2016; McGaughey, 2012). Further, the narratives of paramilitary organizations and guerrilla armies are understudied in the literature on militarized masculinity:

> Although men and masculinity studies has a rich and long tradition in considering the role of masculinity within formal armies…the focus is rather less developed when it comes to thinking about active guerrilla armies (along with child soldiers and many auxiliary civilians in support roles) and the ways that they reconstitute or transform (or not) masculinities as societies move from war to peace (Hamber, 2016, 12).

The role and relationship paramilitary organizations or guerrilla armies have within their communities and with opposing forces, particularly state-sponsored military groups (including police), produces an interesting model of militarized masculinity that could be hegemonic, but also subordinate when compared to other masculinities. Ashe

(2012) states that the idea of *paramilitary* masculinities in Northern Ireland has led to "contestation and struggle rather than expressions of hegemonic masculinities," because of Loyalist and Republican groups' debatable legitimacy and respect received in their communities. Ashe does agree that these groups resonate with state militarized masculinities, as they "were rooted in narratives that associated violent protection of the ethnic group with men" (238). Therefore, despite Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries inconsistent community support (especially among Loyalist operations), their operational structure and political agendas established a militarized masculinity that supported nationalist causes on both sides of the divide. The support for paramilitaries' agendas, however, was not strong enough for paramilitary masculinities to emerge as a hegemonic paradigm.

Nationalism in Irish discourse usually refers to the support and desire for a single, united Irish state and is the rationale for Republican paramilitary groups. However, this concept is also applicable to Loyalist paramilitary efforts to maintain their collective identity and status in Northern Ireland, which they believed could only prosper by remaining part of the United Kingdom. While the concept of nationalism has different meanings to these groups, both resonate with the basic principle. Despite being opposing forces, sharing the ideology of nationalism to a certain degree creates a new hegemonic gender system that promotes militarized masculinities. In many communities, paramilitary organizations became the local protectors and defenders against a shared enemy, providing the men involved in these groups (limited) access to power in both the community and in politics (Ashe, 2012).

Although this protector identity establishes a hegemonic masculinity at the local-level that is often respected (even desired by some men), at the national-level, these informal armies remain subordinate forms of militarized masculinities when compared to the police and formal armies—state-sponsored institutions. From the perspective of these institutions, these informal armies are considered illegitimate examples of masculinity and their armed efforts are often referred as cowardice and ineffectual because they lack the discipline and order that are critical values of true militarized masculinity (Hopton, 2003). Therefore, the hegemony of paramilitaries is not always acknowledged, further challenging these organizations' structure and agendas. As Hopton (2003) states, "the [paramilitaries] may be displaying the masculinist virtues of aggression, domination, and endurance, but glory and respect can belong only to the fighting men whose aggression is controlled and regulated by the state and used to uphold the authority of the state" (114). Regardless of Loyalist paramilitaries' efforts to work with state forces, they were considered illegitimate organizations by the state, and were taken advantage of in state's operations fighting against the IRA and other Republican organizations (Shirlow, 2012).

While state-sponsored institutions do not acknowledge the hegemony of paramilitaries, these organizations often received support from their communities, particularly Republican groups from most of the Catholic community. Paramilitaries were also influential to the local culture by reconfiguring the image of masculinity to a militant form, promoting this image through murals and memorials. The influence paramilitaries had in their communities, particularly among young men, challenges Ashe's comment that these groups were cause of contestation rather than expressions of hegemonic masculinity. There is not enough research, however, to debate the

complicated topic of paramilitaries in Northern Ireland being models of *both* hegemonic and militarized masculinities during the Troubles.

Militarized Masculinities after Conflict

During conflict when militarized masculinities are the dominant, hegemonic model, young men involved in or inspired by these organizations—both formal and informal armies—feel they have a strong sense of identity and purpose. However, once fighting has ceased and the social, economic, and political spheres begin to transition, hegemonic and militarized masculinities are challenged resulting in a "so-called 'crisis in masculinity'" (Lehner, 2011, 68). As Verdeja (2009 in Lehner, 2011) states, "previous, conflict-era identities no longer operate as the primary cleaves in politics, and thus citizens acquire new identities that cut across those earlier fault lines" (65). For males involved in the conflict, this systematic change and redefining the notion of hegemonic masculinity has significant impact on their position in the altered society:

> "Within a post-conflict society there has been a necessary and important role change. The need for the defender and protector has become virtually redundant. The behavior of young men, once lauded and feted, has now become a focus of criticism, violent assault, and/or expulsion from that community" (Harland, 2008, 3).

Not all men struggle in the transitioning society and militarized masculinities may take on a new peacebuilding image. Community activism via development and restorative justice programs has allowed many ex-combatants in Northern Ireland (particularly within some Catholic communities) a redefined position of authority and power in their communities. Yet, many male ex-combatants and young men growing up

in the post-conflict society do not have the same opportunities that were available before or during the conflict. With former, violent masculinities still glorified in many communities through some of the stories shared by former volunteers and imagery found on murals commemorating paramilitary volunteers and activity (despite being considered taboo within the general population), there is an allure among marginalized young men to continue engaging in this kind of risk-taking behavior to feel empowered (Ashe and Harland, 2014). Some individuals have internalized violent behavior, as "growing rates of self-harm and suicide have been identified" (Hamber, 2016) and so, men and boys are faced with the challenge of coping with traditional and new masculinities in the transitioning state, as well as the societal influences that continue to promote militarized masculinities.

Images of Masculinity in Northern Ireland

Scholars studying masculinities in the north and south of Ireland (Ashe, 2012; Hamber, 2016; Harland and McCready, 2010; Lehner, 2011; McGaughey, 2012) note the contradiction between former and current constructions of hegemonic masculinity. While sociology, education and youth studies began to analyze how masculinities are defined and portrayed in different social spheres, McGaughey (2012) states the political, social, and military complexities of the Troubles distracted scholars from considering both historical and present narratives of masculinities in Northern Ireland. However, once a gendered lens was applied to examine these events, the significant role masculinities have on the everyday relationship men and boys in Northern Ireland have both within their communities and with other communities, have become apparent. The presence and impact of masculinities on individuals' behavior and actions has always

existed, and within Northern Ireland, traditional imagery and folklore have created key values that represent being an Irishman. These representations have changed somewhat throughout the decades and have at times been replaced by militarized influences. Both continue to have influence among young men in the post-conflict state. Additionally, both Catholic and Protestant cultures share similar representations of hegemonic, Irish masculinities. The differences in ethnonationalist values, however, have affected how these common masculinities are defined for each community, and the different expectations of Catholic and Protestant men.

The Hardman and Traditional Irish Masculinity

As previously stated, nationalism has a significant role for both Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries' identities and the men involved in these organizations, but this shared identity extends further into Northern Irish history, beginning with the image and notion of the "hardman." Feldman's fieldwork (1991) in Belfast in the 1980s is an early analysis of the changing and competing hegemonic masculinities in Northern Ireland. Although Feldman was more interested in understanding how bodies simultaneously occupy various roles in different spaces, he analyzes individual identities that have had significant presence in Catholic and Protestant communities before and during the conflict, including the traditional hardman.

A hardman is the local bare-knuckled street fighter who is "intimately associated with specific neighborhoods though often enjoying a citywide reputation" (Feldman, 1991, 46). "Being hard" is synonymous with "being a man" in Northern Ireland, as definitive masculine traits, such as being "powerful, strong, brave…and in control of every aspect of their lives" resonate with the hardman persona (Harland, 2010, 3).

Feldman describes hardmen as heavy drinkers, but respectable people within their communities, as they followed an unwritten code of honor by not seeking fights, but not turning from a fight if instigated by another. Furthermore, many hardmen acknowledged violence should only take place in specific public spaces and never directed towards women and children. The code of the hardman establishes a traditional form of hegemonic masculinity that is deeply-rooted in Northern Ireland's culture and is exemplified in both Catholic and Protestant men before, during, and after the Troubles. Former IRA commander Martin McGuinness and the formidable Unionist leader Rev. Ian Paisley are prime examples from Catholic and Protestant communities who personify the values of the hardman through their determination to protect their different ethnonationalist identities and communities (Ashe and Harland, 2014; Powell, March 21, 2017, *Belfast Telegraph*).[19]

The seductive appeal hardmen represent of being both respected and feared continues to be sought after by many young men today who long for acceptance and power. However, during the conflict, this model was challenged by competing, militarized masculinities, and the image of the hardman was redefined by the introduction of arms as the weapon of choice over bare-knuckled fists to resolve and prevent local conflicts. The masked gunman became the new image of what it meant in local culture to being hard, as the presence, power, and influence of paramilitary organizations began to

[19] Paisley and McGuinness became (unforeseen) amicable colleagues serving together as First Minister and Deputy First Minister for Northern Ireland from 2007-2008, before Paisley stepped down due to his health, *Belfast Telegraph*. 2017, March 21. "How Martin McGuinness and Ian Paisley forged an unlikely friendship." Retrieved from http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/how-martin-mcguinness-and-ian-paisley-forged-an-unlikely-friendship-35550640.html.
Powell, J. 2017, March 21. "After Martin McGuinness, peace in Northern Ireland will have renewed pressure." *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2017/mar/21/martin-mcguinness-peace-northern-ireland-ira-good-friday-agreement.

grow. A new model of hegemonic masculinity emerged from the centralization of political agendas in both Catholic and Protestant communities, bringing nationalist and militarized values at the forefront of ideal masculine qualities. Similar to the shared identity of a hardman, many young men were influenced by the Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries' determination and camaraderie, and as a collective, believed the gunman was the image of hegemonic masculinity.

Feldman's interviews with local men on these changing roles is an example of how multiple hegemonic masculinities can coexist, although one remains dominant over the other. In these interviews, men in Catholic and Protestant communities commented on the critical impact guns had not only on this new form of hegemonic masculinity, but also on the changing nature of violence that came with carrying a weapon or being associated with paramilitary operations:

> Each area of the city had its hardman. They were famous…. The paramilitaries put an end to that because once somebody lifted a hand to punch you, you just stuck a .45 up their nostril and they didn't want to fight then. Them days were long gone. My father he would have said, 'If you can't use your fists don't fight.' Pulling out a weapon, that was a whole new ball game, and the hardmen stayed out of it…. There's that generation gap. It's mostly younger men joined the paramilitaries." (Former UVF volunteer, Feldman, 1991, 48-49).

The interviewee's statement recognized the cultural transition throughout the conflict that established a more violent, militarized masculinity disproved by traditional hardmen. Ashe (2012) states "noncombatant men framed combatant men as 'far from hard,' and as dependent on 'a team behind them to impose their will'' (240), meaning

men who embodied the hardman image did not consider men joining paramilitary groups as embodying this image or the traditional values. While local opinion often held the hardman in high regard, the media described hardmen as"fanatic advocates of radicalized violence" (Feldman, 1991, 47), creating a national and international perception of the hardman that became synonymous with the newly recognized gunman. This media description inaccurately portrays the locally respected hardmen, who often disproved of paramilitary activity, considering it cowardly and terrorist, "You couldn't be a hardman if you were willing to terrorize women or young people or engage in petty thieving" (49). Furthermore, controversial figures, such as the infamous Johnny "Mad Dog" Adair compromised both the ideals of a hardman and the philosophy of the paramilitaries (and Loyalism) through heavy involvement in drug trafficking and purposely committing acts of violence to establish his power in the community (Shirlow, 2012).

Green and Orange Masculinities

Although many men in Catholic and Protestant communities share similar identities and are influenced by the same masculinities, the distinction between Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries discourse is important and establishes different understandings of masculinity in the two communities. Regardless of shared identities and masculinities that resonate with being male in Northern Ireland, competing masculinities are prevalent between Catholic and Protestant communities, establishing a complex hierarchy of masculinities that is influenced by not only a person's ethno-nationalist identity, but also by class. Within the Catholic/Nationalist/Republican narrative, attaining hegemonic, Irish masculinity coincides with armed struggle against the British empire. Ashe (2012) describes Great Britain's feminization of Irish men

sparked incentive for mobilization and violent resistance against this image. The (in)famous Patrick Pearse, one of the leading rebels in the 1916 Easter Rising, stated "a nation which regards [bloodshed] as the final horror has lost its manhood" (238). To achieve Irish sovereignty across the entire island, nationalism, militarization, and executing physical violence are key components to the masculinities that drove the Irish Republican movement against oppressing forces, which provided legitimacy to paramilitaries' operations and the population of men who are involved with these organizations. As the PIRA decreed in their first statement in the 1960s, "We will show by our actions that we are the essence of Irish manhood" (238).

The Irish Nationalist/Republicans formed a sense of masculinity that not only fought against Great Britain, but also fought their neighboring Protestants/Unionists/Loyalists, whose own construction of masculinity is pluralized and complex. While Catholic Nationalists and Republicans do have political differences, their ideologies are of the same thread. Unionism and Loyalism, on the other hand, have distinct differences inspired by class relations that complicate the relationship Protestant males have not only with Catholic males, but also with one another. McGaughey (2012) discusses these differences, claiming Unionism reflects an individual's support for the religious and political sovereignty of Protestants in Ulster and Loyalism is centered around sovereignty of Ulster Protestants and Great Britain. This latter notion becomes complicated, as Loyalists have declared they would physically arm and protect their communities from *any* forces attempting to implement their "constituted legislation," including the British government (10-11). Together, both Unionists and Loyalists are against the Irish Nationalist/Republican agenda and their shared cultural practices and

values, such as fraternal organizations, bandsmen and parades, and involvement in formal armed services, establishes Protestant masculinities that differ from Catholic masculinities. The battle between competing ethno-nationalist masculinities in Northern Ireland is a competition for political and social hegemony. During the Troubles—and continuing until today—the controversial Protestant parades, ceremonial gatherings for fraternal organizations, such as the Orange Order and Apprentice Boys of Derry and hyper-masculine "blood and thunder" bands, were (and are) visual displays of both Protestant social and masculine hegemony (Racioppi and O'Sullivan See, 2000).[20]

While Protestant males can come together during these cultural events and collectively express their hegemonic masculinity over Catholics, class divides within Protestant communities create tensions and formulate a hierarchy of masculinities within the Protestant community (McManus, 2015; Racioppi and O'Sullivan See, 2000). These communal divisions would impact not only the legitimacy of Unionist political values, but also Loyalist paramilitaries' agenda during and after the conflict (Shirlow, 2012). Referring to Connell's marginalized masculinities, males of upper- and middle-class Protestant communities were not as directly affected by the economic, political, and social threats the Nationalist/Republican agenda posed to Unionist/Loyalist identity, since they had more accessibility to opportunities outside Northern Ireland. Yet, for working- and lower-class Protestant males who expected employment in the shipping industry and local factories, both their cultural identity and masculinities were at stake, due to the

[20] Parading is not unique to Protestant communities, as Catholics have their own ceremonies; however, Protestant marching season has been historically more contentious for marching through interface areas or Catholic neighborhoods, and celebrating notable events that determined Protestants presence in Ulster, such as the Siege of Derry in 1689 and William of Orange's defeat of King James II at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, *BCC News*. 2014, July 3. "Q&A: Contentious parades in Northern Ireland." Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-27814194.

Catholics mobilization for equal economic and political representation. Therefore, Loyalist paramilitaries fought to protect the hegemony and security of Protestants in Northern Ireland. Yet, as previously stated, paramilitary organizations are not always considered an honorable portrayal of militarized masculinity, and with Protestants having a long history of serving in police and armed forces, this dichotomy of serving the community creates further tension in defining Protestant masculinities. Being affiliated with reputable services, such as the "B-Specials" Ulster Special Constabulary, RUC, or 36th Ulster Division during the Great War promoted not only Protestant hegemony within Northern Ireland, but also differentiated hegemonic and subordinate masculinities within their community (McGaughey, 2012).

Examining Young Men in Northern Ireland

Taking into consideration the traditional and militarized masculinities that are both shared and individually experienced by Catholic and Protestant men in Northern Ireland, there is a range of influences that preceded and continued during and after the conflict and remain present in communities today. These influences, as well as external factors, all relate to a young man's construction of masculinity and impact his behavior and actions in everyday life. In more recent literature (Ashe and Harland, 2014; Harland, 2008, 2009, 2010; Harland and McCready, 2010, 2012, 2014), academics and practitioners use these various hegemonic models to understand the gendered identity of young men born after the Good Friday Agreement. However, applying a gendered framework is a more recent development to analyzing masculinities and young men's experiences during and after the Troubles.

Introducing Masculinities and Young Men's Studies

Throughout the conflict and peace process, scholars within political science, human rights, and legal studies had not considered gender when examining peoples' everyday lives and relationship with the Troubles (Ash and Harland, 2014; Hamber, 2016; Smyth, 1998). Beginning in the late 1990s to early 2000s, social sciences, education, and youth studies introduced gender's significant role in publications on young women and men's experiences and development (McGrellis, 2004, 2005, 2011; Morrissey and Smyth, 2002; Muldoon, 2004; Smyth, 1998). At this time, Smyth (1998), Harland (2008, 2009, 2010), along with McCready (Harland and McCready, 2010) also introduced Northern Ireland masculinities into the discourse of these disciplines. Harland and McCready (2012), McGrellis (2011) and Smyth's (1998) research are noteworthy for their longitudinal studies on young people and young men's experiences throughout the 1990s, acknowledging the gendered impact Northern Ireland's transitional period would have for younger generations.

Smyth's report was published shortly after the Good Friday Agreement as part of the "Cost of the Troubles Study," an in-depth quantitative and qualitative analysis of the conflict's effect on Northern Irish society, and is one of the earliest examples of analyzing young men and masculinities during the conflict. Smyth's report includes statistics on young people's vulnerable position throughout the Troubles based on the number of conflict-related deaths, perpetrators responsible for youth deaths, and paramilitary punishment assaults. Smyth also discussed young people's relationship with the conflict via family members' involvement and/or death, every day engagement with security forces and paramilitaries, and young people's coping strategies. Smyth

concludes with recommendations for developing services and engagement with youth practitioners and policymakers in the services available to this population at the time. Smyth is followed by Harland and McCready's longitudinal analysis of young men in post-conflict Northern Ireland, beginning in the early 2000s. Harland and McCready have predominately discussed young men and masculinities from an educator and youth work perspective, focusing on young men's engagement with their communities, relations with the education and youth justice systems, their mental health, and attitudes towards violence and peacebuilding (Harland, 2008, 2009, 2010; Harland and McCready, 2010, 2012, 2014).[21]

McGrellis' (2011) project involved a 10-year study that examined adolescents 11-18 from the late-1990s to the early 2000s throughout the UK, including Northern Ireland, as they transitioned into early adulthood. Participants from Northern Ireland in this study provided narratives that differed from their British peers, due to growing up in a society that was beginning to transition after three decades of intrastate violence. McGrellis comments on the peace process' significance on this population's development,

> Falling between two generations in terms of experience, culture and history, as well as age, this group of young people journeyed into adulthood during a period of significant political, economic, and social transition. Buoyed by what appeared to be a new dawn that offered new opportunities, they sought to [realize] their

[21] Harland and McCready co-directed Ulster University's Centre for the Study of Young Men. The Centre has evaluated not only young men's needs, but also key issues affecting young men including: risk assessment, crime, substance abuse, trauma, and harmful relationships. The Centre's intention is to inform youth and social work, education, and youth justice training and policymaking that is more conducive to young men. Prof. Harland recently retired from Ulster University, but Prof. McCready is still active with the Centre, https://www.ulster.ac.uk/faculties/social-sciences/schools/sociology-and-applied-social-studies/research.

> desires and reams in different areas of life, including education, work, leisure, and consumption and domestic life (13).

McGrellis discusses how young people in Northern Ireland navigated the transition to adulthood during the peace process by evaluating their sense of risk in and outside of their communities, their access to social, economic, and geographic mobility, and their mental health and well-being. McGrellis also examines how globalization, particularly through the development of the internet, has affected this population's perception of local and international communities and cultures. In my research, several participants discussed experiences in the global sphere as being formative to their identities as men today. McGrellis, however, states not all young men from this generation could access the broader social sphere, due to restrictions of class and, for some, the expectation to be "guardians of territorial spaces and 'policed' boundaries, 'defending' their communities at interface areas" (13).

Young Men and Violence

Scholars in the social sciences and education also discuss the vulnerability of young men as victims and/or perpetrators of violence during and after the Troubles (Crozier, 2001; Harland, 2008, 2009; McGrellis, 2004, 2005; Morrissey and Smyth, 2002; Reilly et al., 2004; Smyth, 1998). Morrissey and Smyth (2002) discuss the victim/perpetrator complex affecting the role of young men in their families and communities during the conflict:

> Males tend to have more direct experience of violence, such as being directly involved in physical attacks or sectarian verbal abuse, whereas females are more likely to be witnesses to such events. Typical family fears for young men were

> that they would be targets of violence, that they would seek revenge for a death or injury in the family, that they would become involved in paramilitary violence, and that ultimately the family would experience another loss (68-69).

Morrissey and Smyth also discuss the impact cultures of violence and militarization throughout the conflict had on young men's relationships, behavior, and emotional expression. While young men are often perceived as perpetrators of violence, they are also victims (Crozier, 2001; Reilly et al., 2004), who are socially encouraged to suppress their emotions (except perhaps anger), which Morrissey and Smyth suggest is correlated to the emergence of a violent culture, "The combination of the fact that young males are the prime target and simultaneously the perpetrators of violence yet are socialized into a kind of stoicism is perhaps related to the reproduction of violence itself" (69).

Smyth (1998) also states socializing in risk-taking or violent activities, such as recreational rioting, joyriding, petty thieving and vandalism, is a way for young men to become recognized by the paramilitaries. Young men engaged in anti-social behavior were (and are) frequent targets for paramilitary punishments, but Smyth also states that young men engaged in these anti-social activities could attract paramilitary leaders' interest in recruiting these individuals into the organizations, as the young men display a "willingness to dispense…life" (75). In some communities, joining a paramilitary organization and attaining a leadership position was considered achieving "masculine integrity in a [militarized] community" (74).

Peacebuilding and Transitioning Masculinities

Harland (2010) states that young men's experiences with violence continue to be an everyday threat to their personal safety and well-being in the post-conflict state.

Harland describes young men's responses as exemplifying a "ceasefire mentality," meaning, "Whether Catholic or Protestant, these young men were unclear as to whether their society was at peace or preparing for war. Their understanding was that while there were paramilitary ceasefires, these could be broken at any moment. Ashe and Harland (2014) discuss the demilitarization and transition of masculinities after conflict, which resonates with the ceasefire mentality that some young men feel today. Ashe and Harland state that as Northern Ireland went through demilitarization as a society, "masculinities were also demilitarized," and peacebuilding emerged as a new notion of masculinity both politically and socially (753-754).

Peacebuilding and demilitarization affected some of the male (and female) population after the Good Friday Agreement in a couple ways (754). On one hand, peacebuilding and cross-community development became economic opportunities for men (previously dominated by women) involved in the conflict and positive images of transitioning masculinities emerged from the movement towards peace (754). On the other hand, many men struggled with reintegration, and limited employment opportunities, and altered domestic environments, which led to "drug abuse, hyper-vigilance, and a continuation of violent, militarized masculinities" (754).

Transitioning masculinities have also impacted "socially marginalized young men" as "the ideals of masculinities can be marked by expressions of hyper-masculinity as young men try to gain respect, independence, and power through physical toughness rather than through building a career" (Ashe and Harland, 2014, 750, 755). For some young men in lower socioeconomic communities, the older men who were involved in the conflict and continue to idealize militarized masculinities can be profoundly

influential on a young man's conceptualization of masculinity and his actions to attain this model. Ashe and Harland further comment that the alluring image of the gunman depicted on some communities' murals is a continuous influence on young men in the post-conflict generation, as newer images of masculinity are not visibly portrayed in communities (755).

The recognition of newer or transitioned images and constructs of masculinity in Northern Ireland is difficult for young men to discern. The dichotomy between images of peacebuilding and militarized masculinities has left young men feeling "stuck" between the conflict and post-conflict eras (Harland and McCready, 2010). Young men in the current post-conflict state also feel "alienated and marginalized from their communities and decision-making processes," as they are more often considered a "social problem" than part of the peacebuilding process (Harland and McCready, 2014, 270, 274), "Peacebuilding, what is peacebuilding? You hear it mentioned on the television but nobody ever talks to us about that. There's no peace in this area" (Harland, 2010, 9).

Scholars who conducted longitudinal research have contributed to the literature on young men in Northern Ireland, and have helped develop the topic of masculinities' influence on young men during and after conflict. However, masculinities in Northern Ireland continues to be an underexplored subject, and further analysis needs to be conducted on male populations who grew up during the transition to a post-conflict society in the 1990s, that is men aged 29-40 today. There is also a lack of attention on generational differences between young men growing up during the peace process and those born after this period. Additionally, scholars have raised concern for young men's underperformance in school (particularly among young Protestant men), and the increase

of self-harm and suicide rates since the Good Friday Agreement (Harland, 2008; McManus, 2015; Tomlinson, 2012), but these concerns have limited analysis on how the Troubles may be a cause for these issues.

Traditional and militarized ideals and the images of hardmen and gunmen are still strong models of hegemonic masculinity in Northern Ireland today. However, the peace process introduced newer representations of masculinity that promoted peacebuilding, and with these three models of masculinity, as well as global influences, it is difficult to define the new paradigm of hegemonic masculinity in Northern Ireland. Participants I interviewed described some of the ways their perception of masculinity differs from older generations, but they also made it clear that older models of hegemonic masculinity that were discussed in this chapter continue to be influential among their peers and younger males growing up in Northern Ireland today. In the next chapter, I discuss the people, environments, and experiences that have helped shape participants' identity as men living in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

CHAPTER III

GROWING PAINS: NAVIGATING ADOLESCENCE AND THE DOMAINS OF MASCULINITY IN A SOCIETY TRANSITIONING FROM CONFLICT

My surroundings were uncomfortable as I settled into my seat for a 2½-hour train ride back to Derry after spending the day in Belfast visiting my friend. Most of the passengers were like me, returning home after the day's excursion, but many were intoxicated and loud, and there was vomit all over the restroom. Despite having a pleasant visit, I felt agitated and physically unwell. Sitting back in my seat to listen to music and take a nap, I looked forward to returning to my cozy room at the university's student housing where I lived most of the summer. The train continued to travel north along the coast and slowly the noise lessened; yet, after an hour into the journey, several groups of people came onto the train and crowded the cars closest to me. I was joined by people of all ages, teenagers to elders, all wearing blue and red, who were accompanied by others—mostly men—in various-colored, militantly-styled band uniforms. They brought bottles and glasses of beer and champagne on board and began singing *loudly*. I was stunned and curious. I knew most of the stops between Derry and Belfast were in predominately Protestant towns and cities, and with it being "marching season," it would not be unusual to see people coming from a parade. I had not as many interactions with people from Protestant communities as I did with Catholics, so it was the perfect moment to observe the pride and aftermath of the controversial tradition of Protestant parades and bands.

It was apparent the passengers who were not with the post-parade party were uncomfortable. Some left their seats, and by the time the train reached Coleraine, the last

major stop before Derry, I was the last one in my car surrounded by drunken men posturing their cultural identity. Everyone else had left the car or gotten off the train. I was joined in my booth by three, middle-aged men. The remainder were younger, standing on and climbing over the seats, climbing onto the carrier shelves, and pushing their way through the cars. They paid little attention to me, except for the man seated directly across from me asked if I was okay. I said I was and he replied, "These boys won't hurt you. Just ignore them, they're idiots." I did not speak with the man further or any of the men near me, which I regret, but it was too noisy and I felt too overwhelmed to carry on a conversation. Beer was spilled on me several times as the men, in a swell of national pride, sang and chanted traditional Loyalist and anti-Catholic/IRA songs. At one point, two of the younger men began to brawl, several fists were thrown, and as the older men seated around me tried to stop the fight, they were pushed back into their seats, crushing me against the window. This debacle was shortly resolved, and everyone laughed and continued celebrating. Once the train finally pulled into Derry, it was near midnight and I was eager to get home. The man next to me grabbed my arm and pushed me through the crowd of men until I was on the platform. Although his actions were forceful, I was the first one off the train and safely. While I was not paid attention to much, but when the man addressed me, I was not harassed or harmed; rather, I was treated politely and with respect.

Reflecting upon this experience, the events from this train ride demonstrated to me the interplay of multiple masculinities. Within an hour, I noticed hegemonic, militarized, violent, and Protestant masculinities operating simultaneously with one another: from bellowing national pride to violently resolving conflict, to being respectful

towards female company, all with an air of bravado and heightened by alcohol. There may have been additional masculinities present that I was not aware of, but the variance in these attributes exemplifies the complexity of this concept, as competing masculinities challenge one another to be the most ideal. However, the masculine attributes the men displayed during the train ride are not exclusive to Protestant Irishmen. Rather, through the interviews I conducted with both Catholic and Protestant men, similar narratives of masculinity were presented by both communities, despite being from different ethno-nationalist backgrounds. The men I interviewed for this research demonstrated and supported the challenges competing masculinities present and provided an insight into understanding how masculinity is conceptualized in Northern Ireland today.

As previously stated, the men I interviewed shared many similar opinions and perspectives that expressed their current identities and outlooks on Northern Ireland today, regardless of growing up in families with various political and religious ideologies. During my analysis of the interview transcripts, I found shared patterns of experiences and opinions related to social and political identities, as well as constructions of masculinity and perspectives on mental health, education, and the current political state of Northern Ireland. These similarities support the collective identity of being young men in Northern Ireland during the 1990s, which partially resonates with their fathers and grandfathers' generations. However, the local events of the peace process and the global social and economic changes of the 1990s distinguishes the generation my research focuses on from both early generations and the young men of the post-conflict period. In various ways, participants' experiences with and relationship to the domestic, communal, and global-spheres have significant impact on their individual and collective identities as

young men in Northern Ireland today. These experiences have influenced participants' opinions on current state affairs and the future of Northern Ireland, as well as their methods of coping with environmental and interpersonal pressures. This chapter explores how participants' identities and masculinities were shaped by people and experiences within the domestic, communal, and global spheres.

Demographics of Participants

Most of the young men I met and spoke with grew up in Catholic communities. I also spoke with a few individuals with Protestant backgrounds. Two Catholic participants were from Belfast, the remaining Catholic and Protestant participants were from Derry—one from the Cityside, the rest from the Waterside and surrounding communities outside of the city. Three Catholic participants mentioned being from marginalized neighborhoods. Other participants (both Catholic and Protestant) alluded to being from middle-class families, but this was unclear and I did not directly ask about their socioeconomic backgrounds.[22] Several participants had traveled and lived outside of Northern Ireland and one was currently living in the U.S. The youngest participants were 29 years old and the oldest was 48, the average age was 34.[23] Only three Catholic and no Protestant participants practiced a faith. Most participants were politically-active

[22] Socioeconomic class has a pivotal role in the relationships among and between Northern Ireland's ethnonationalist communities. In the case of the Troubles, most of the violence took place in working-class and marginalized neighborhoods. Further, many interface areas, or "peace" lines are drawn between Catholic and Protestant working-class areas, creating a contested space that is conducive to sectarian violence. While I did not inquire participants about their socioeconomic background, class can have a significant impact on a man's perception of masculinity and should be considered more in future research.

[23] While the eldest participant did not fall within the target population and grew up at the height of violence during the Troubles, his insight on young, Protestant male's experiences during and after the peace process, as well as his perception on the societal attitude towards mental health are valuable to understanding the differences between Catholic and Protestant young men.

and came from politically-active families, with two from Sinn Fein-supporting families, one SDLP, and three DUP. Only one participant directly supported a specific party and most of the others commented that they support individual politicians who best represent the people and community issues, regardless of party affiliation. Three participants attended majority-Protestant schools growing up, four attended exclusively Catholic schools, and one participant attended an integrated secondary school. All were employed at the time of their interviews and had received higher education training or university degrees, with occupations including: educators, community and youth workers, technicians, and working with the clergy. Several were currently or had formerly served as community activists. A few of the men discussed their experiences with consuming substances, predominately alcohol, and one participant mentioned experience with hard drugs. All of the men had witnessed sectarian violence at one point in their lives, with a few being directly involved in sectarian altercations, and two men described being in violent, non-sectarian situations. Several participants described being indirectly impacted by traumatic experiences, while a few stated being direct victims. While participants presented patterns of similar experiences and opinions, their individual narratives provided unique frameworks that challenge the hegemonic paradigms of traditional and militarized masculinities that were prevalent before and during the Troubles.

Findings: Domestic

Stability

One of the initial questions for this project was to understand how family influenced men's social and political identities. Several participants described secure, supportive family environments that sheltered them from the reality of their surrounding environment. Liam, a 35-year-old Catholic from the Cityside, was a youth worker

engaged with young men and very interested in studying masculinities. He described his home as "stable" and "safe":

> In comparison to other young people, I came from a stable home environment, most of my friends came from a similar environment, which I don't think you would realize how unique that was…you know there was one of my friends whose parents weren't together, everyone's parents were together, but if you look at other friendship groups my age that wouldn't have been the case. So, part of it was that, I was lucky to come from a loving home, safe community, safe environment.

Daniel, a 34-year-old Catholic from the Waterside, was a musician and sound engineer from Derry. His family had a long history of being affected by sectarian violence, but he described his home life as relatively comfortable:

> My upbringing I suppose was idyllic, as much as it could be…my parents are very intelligent, very open, for the most part anyway.

Jacob, a 29-year-old Protestant from the Waterside, was heavily active with the Protestant bands' culture. Jacob discussed his parent's concern for his brothers' and his safety and well-being:

> My parents were always strict and we weren't really allowed to run the streets, my mum always had to know where we were, had to be in at a certain time.

In comparison, even when participants came from a loving and supportive home, the occupation and position of two participants' fathers put their homes under serious security risk. Rob, a 36-year-old Protestant from the Waterside, was an electrician whose father had been a member of the RUC, where he was brutally injured on the job.

Eventually, Rob's family moved away from Derry because of the level of risk in the city. Peadar, a 35-year-old Catholic from West Belfast, was devoutly religious, as he was pursuing monkhood, and as a young man strongly identified with Irish Republicanism. Peadar's father was a well-known Republican and very active with Sinn Fein in his community in Belfast, putting his family at risk both in- and outside the home, "Our car and our family home would've been a target for the occupying forces. And so, being stopped in the car on a regular basis and being harassed and having the home visited and raided wouldn't have been an unfamiliar experience." Liam's father was also well-known in the community as a teacher at a local school, but his home wasn't a target as were those of other participants.

The Culture of Silence

Within the safe spaces of home, participants discussed how their parents would not discuss the conflict, even if their family had been directly affected by it, arguably to secure their domestic space and create a sense of normalcy apart from the conflict. For participants, the everyday presence of violence was a part of life that was accepted, and almost ignored by some participants. Paul, a 48-year-old Protestant from outside of Derry, was a community worker who enlightened me on perspectives Protestants often had during the Troubles and peace process. Paul described the "British mentality" many young Protestants might have been raised with:

> The kind of attitude in my household and that would've probably been reflected of most young Protestants was their parents saying…you go back saying you got attacked, on the school bus, or someone threw a punch at me, a Catholic threw a punch at me at the bus depot, their attitude was, 'Ah fucking stand up for

> yourself! We're British, this is as much our city as it is theirs!' So there was that kind of bravado, that attitude, which meant that most people then didn't mention they got attacked because it would've been seen as weak.

Aidan, a 29-year-old Catholic from outside of Derry, was a youth worker who grew up in a marginalized housing estate, and had many difficult (and often violent) experiences growing up before being mentored by a local youth worker. Aidan stated his parents' withheld conversations about everyday events related to the conflict:

> I was young so we didn't really know too much about it... [my parents] didn't want us [to know], they were afraid that…their generation was almost coming out of it, they were afraid that our generation was going to repick up that banner and were sheltered…the stuff on the news and stuff like that, we didn't know too much about it….It was never discussed or we weren't educated too much on it…we would've heard stories ourselves and we would've made up stuff on our own as kids.

Liam stated the Troubles were a "part of everyday life", where people almost did not want to talk about the daily violence:

> I remember at that time turmoil and people being shot on a regular basis and you would've seen it in the news and you know you were aware of it and I suppose like after a while you just became desensitized to it...also looking back…my family, or my parents, would've tried to shelter us from a lot of that sort of stuff you…and my father's family being from…the heart of the Bogside! From that time-period, there was a culture of like…a kind of culture of silence that you didn't ask questions because like you didn't want to know…it was like a boy's

> club, you didn't ask questions…it was one of those things, the Troubles was one of those things that was *all* around you, but you didn't really talk about it because it was just part of everyday life.

The culture of silence Liam mentions has been observed by academics as a major repercussion of Northern Ireland's conflict. Smyth (1998) states:

> Within the community culture of Northern Ireland the collective memory of the last century and a half contains famine: two world wars, a civil war, tuberculosis deaths, wholesale emigration, and almost thirty years of the current violence (85).

The decades of violence and hardship Northern Ireland has experienced has culminated into what Smyth calls "a taboo of articulation", in which, for children, silence is "an adult set of rules, which relate not simply to political violence, but to loss and catastrophe in general" (85). Silence has developed into a coping mechanism to overcome the various traumas people have endured before and throughout the Troubles. Cairns (1996) compares this coping mechanism to "denial or distancing, in that the reality is distressing and clearly perceived by the individual—the secret is known, but cannot be spoken about, even with those who are closest to you" (in Smyth, 1998, 85). Because violence was so commonplace during the conflict, distancing oneself, not talking about or asking questions about issues related to the conflict allowed people to continue their lives in the midst of the Troubles. The normalization of violence and culture of silence, however, has impacted young people's perception of what actually defined a violent event, and has shown long-term repercussions of coping with the conflict (Smyth, 1998). The repercussions of the culture of silence will be discussed in the next chapter.

Protecting/Defending the Self

Paul's statement of being expected to protect himself is significant. While both young men and women would need to know how to defend themselves and respond accordingly if threatened or in a conflict-related event, the risk of young men being attacked was greater; and so, due to the circumstances, it would be understandable for young men to respond with violence if provoked. From a gendered perspective, the emphasis on violence as a mean to protect oneself resonates with traditional hardman values, where conflict was solved through an exchange of fists rather than words. Both Paul and Rob mention fighting in sectarian-related altercations and the perspective Paul's parents had of defending his British identity demonstrates the interplay between dominate and subordinate masculinities, where young men fight to not be considered weak and subordinate, and young Protestant men fight to defend their social dominance.

For Aidan, fighting was less sectarian-induced and more responsive to bullies in and around school:

> They would call me names and try to take a hand out at me and it got bad that my father, he put me in [martial arts] because he couldn't defend me…and I couldn't fight because they were all bigger than me and I didn't want to fight, but I had to harden up very quickly because, see in my house, I had no brother or anything to come and fight my battles and so I had to…[ended] up getting into a lot of trouble, but not at the start, it was just martial arts, I trained at it and loved it.

While Aidan's father did not promote engaging in violence or picking a fight, enrolling his son in martial arts training was a response to the local environment, ensuring Aidan could protect himself when the situation arose and helped to build his self-esteem.

Father's Inspiration

Aidan's sense of masculinity is heavily influenced by his father, whom he described as a hard worker. It was apparent that Aidan had also been instilled with traditional, hardman values. He stated that his understanding of masculinity was old school and a man "has to wear man's clothes, has to do manly things." However, Aidan's construction of masculinity is complex as his career in youth and community work contradicted the field of manual labor the men in his family—including his father—traditionally worked. He states this type of work was expected of him among his family, "if I wasn't down the side of a road lifting something, then I wasn't working." The values of hard labor and fighting to defend oneself are attributes of the hardman, and are still prevalent within Irish culture for both Catholic and Protestant young men. In addition to Aidan, a few other participants stated their fathers' influence on their understanding of masculinity. Ciaran, a 29-year-old Catholic from Belfast, was a teacher who had taught at both Catholic and Protestant schools. Ciaran said his perception of masculinity stems from his father's belief:

> I'll sum it up to you in one quote [that] my father told me, 'a man who talks behind another man's back is a coward and is no man at all.' And that's very, very, very succinct, but that's exactly how I feel. You know a man should be someone who isn't afraid to say what he wants to say, a man should be somebody who's tolerant, but at the end of the day you know, and it does harken back to old clichés…but I do feel there comes a time when a man does have to be a man.

Liam also said his father was influential to his perception of masculinity:

> In terms of…influences on me, I think that there was definitely—very much so—to be a man, you had to be a man's man…but I suppose my father had a big influence me, you know? He would've been well-respected as such and I know my dad would've been seen as this kind of fighter.

The idea of being a "man's man" or "manly man" was confusing and difficult for participants to define, but it could be understood through the traditional values these men were taught by their fathers. Yet, as discussed in the previous chapter, considering a hardman as the ideal image of masculinity and seeking to attain this image has serious repercussions, as it discourages young men to framing and expressing their emotions and communicate rather than fight to resolve their issues. These repercussions were recognized by participants, who challenged the previously described traditional masculinities they were taught by their fathers, as they began to develop their own sense of identity and being a young man in Northern Ireland. While several participants' understanding of masculinity was influenced by their fathers, fathers represented more than one model of masculinity for their sons. Liam's father worked as a teacher, inspiring him to pursue a career in education and youth work, which does not resonate with the hegemonic standard of hard labor as described by Aidan, but it still represents a level of leadership and respect within the community. For Peadar, his father's ethno-nationalist identity was a catalyst for his social and political identity as an Irish Republican, supporting the nationalist agenda that became prevalent during the conflict.

Transgenerational Relationships

In addition to participants' fathers, who were influential in their conceptualizations of masculinity and other aspects of their identities, some participants

discussed other family members who were crucial to who they are today. For Jacob, both of his grandfathers have been pivotal to his identity. Jacob is heavily involved in the Loyalist band community as both a musician and community worker, which was inspired by his grandfathers:

> I always had an interest in bands, flute music, and orchestras and stuff like that, [my interest] came from my grandda. My grandda was in a band when he was younger and has always been into that type of music, and my dad…and my other grandda were in the Loyal Orders, so they were the Apprentice Boys, the Orange [Order], the Black.[24] They were heavily into them, especially me other grandda, so I would say my two granddas were where I got my influence from, then my dad was next. I think he was in a band when I was younger, but never that I can remember, but he was always in these Loyal Orders and I would always go along with him to parades and stuff.

Jacob described his paternal grandfather as "really strict" and "old school," emphasizing discipline and respect, who presented a strong image of the staunch Protestant male through his active participation in the Loyal Orders and involvement in the local bands. Although Jacob's grandfathers were both active in the Protestant community and demonstrated pride in their Unionist identity, Jacob did not mention their Unionism as something he resonated with, but instead their dedication and hard work, enthusiasm for the band culture, and their encouragement of Jacob's participation in/with the bands. Furthermore, the respect Jacob had for his paternal grandfather was evident as he stated, "You almost call him a chief really because he always wants to know what's

[24] The Royal Black Institution, or Black Institution, is another Protestant fraternal organization.

going on [in the] family." Jacob also noted his father was influential, and so, his perception of masculinity stems from the traditional values and mannerisms instilled by transgenerational models of men in his family, who also actively display their Protestant, Unionist identity.

While most participants mentioned male family members as being influential to their identities, Aidan noted his grandmother was a significant inspiration. Her charity work throughout her housing estate resonated with Aidan's compassion and passion for helping people in need and working with young people. Aidan was the only participant to mention a female figure that inspired his identity. Although Aidan described his own understanding of masculinity in traditional terms, having both male and female role models within his family has broadened his perception beyond the ideals of the hard Irishman, and challenging how hegemonic masculinity is constructed in Northern Ireland.[25]

As the base for all people's personal growth and development begins in the home, many participants described their home lives as supportive spaces, regardless of the external environment. These spaces provided participants the first exposure to what is expected of young men. However, as Aidan stated, "What your parents wanted for you and what happened was two different things because when you're out in society, and how other people act and behave and stuff, that dictates how you have to be." Once societal pressures take precedence in a young man's life, the expectations he has grown up with at home are tested, and have a significant impact on his identity and behavior. The

[25] It is important to note that I did not inquire whether or how participants' mothers, other female family members, or female influencers in general impacted their constructions of masculinity. Therefore, this insight is limiting, but would be beneficial to further understanding the role women play in promoting hegemonic masculinity or alternative masculinities.

expectations from home life may be validated, contradicted, or fall on a spectrum that varies between the two reactions.

Communal

Everyday Violence

In addition to understanding the impact family has had on participants' identities, I was also interested in the role their local communities had during their adolescence. Participants began their reflections by describing their general experiences of growing up in a conflict period. Although the violence of the Troubles was reduced throughout the 1990s, its everyday presence continued, and as previously stated, all participants had been a witness to conflict-related and sectarian violence. Some participants had experienced being physically assaulted or responded to a confrontation in a physical manner to protect themselves, as Aidan described his memory of living in a conflict state:

> We would've seen the presence of the army tanks, always just driving around circles…and they were like big jeeps that the armies would sit out on top of them, and we would've just had constant battles with them all the time, spitting at you and we would've just thrown bricks at them…and they would've shooted stuff at us and we would've shooted stuff back.

Paul described growing up in Derry as,

> Literally very dangerous…bus would stop at bus depot, but going from one bus to the next, you'd literally had to run and literally everyone I knew got beat up by Catholics at the depot, wouldn't be able to walk across town at all! It was really horrendous. One time, there was a bomb scare at the school and they became so regular the headmaster said to me and my friend "can you check to see if there are any bombs?

Other participants actively sought to be distant and avoid violence as much as possible, as Jacob stated:

> You had to watch what you were doing, watch what you were saying, you were never allowed to just go out by yourself around the shops just because their parents were feared because there was people getting attacked and stuff, especially with the schools as well. One of the main schools for Protestant children was an interface on Irish Street, there were days when you were out on the playground, there were people throwing stones, so you had to move or go on, there's people who threw them back as well, but even walking home from school, there might've been groups of them standing and waiting, and they might not have attacked, but they would've called you names and throwing stuff, and then when you were going to school in the morning, there might've been bricks, or from the night before or the road would've been burnt.

For Jacob, he did not understand "the point" in engaging in any violence and avoided confrontation. For Daniel, he came from a quieter neighborhood that would not have dealt with direct of the conflict, but this did not make him naïve to his surroundings, as he described feeling "tense and poised," particularly going into town, and feeling as if he "needed to do something" if he was confronted:

> There was sort of fear, general fear in the streets, you never knew when it was going to kick off, [when] there was going to be a bomb…a lot of looking over shoulders, very, very strong suspicions of whoever you're talking to. Every weekend there would've been rioting with the police, bottom of the street [in Derry]. So you're going into town to play music and you don't know who you're

> meeting, you don't know any of these people. I was far too young, like, I wasn't aware of how it worked, I'm talking at night and on the weekend. I just remember rioting and stuff and it just *really*…sort of a fear of and excitement all mixed [together].

Despite this feeling of unease, Daniel and his friends did not engage with the conflict in a violent manner, and were more focused on their education:

> You would educate yourself to the point where you could deal with the thing in a more civilized manner, which is essentially what the peace process was about, you know, people trying to get along without being violent. My friends, my close friends, [are] all very, very intelligent, and studied [at] the best universities in Ireland…. So, we weren't violent, we weren't out fighting, we were from a quiet neighborhood, and so there was discussion of all these things, but there was no violence.

While some participants confronted the everyday violence, it appears they did so out of self-defense, and none of the men I interviewed described being inspired by the paramilitaries or everyday events to become involved in the conflict. However, for Rob and Aidan, their social circles would have drawn Loyalist and Republican groups' attention. Rob said he hung out with a "bad" group growing up in Derry, actively participated in building and protecting the annual Protestant bonfires, and in general, got himself into "trouble more times" than he cared to remember. Being around a social group who partook in risky behavior would have opened the opportunity for Loyalist paramilitaries to recruit these young men. Similarly, Aidan and his friend's behavior was noticed by local Republican paramilitaries and the young men were sought after to join

the organization. Since the age of 15, Aidan said he received invitations to attend events to become involved. The purpose of the invitations was not apparent to Aidan, but his father recognized the invitations' intention and forbade his son from attending,

> I didn't decide, my dad decided for me and I always think about that because that's a turning point too…if I [had] just went to them and then they would've taken all the passion that was inside me, the thoughts and different leadership skills and things like that and probably groomed [me] into being different, which is mad.

In addition to Rob and Aidan, Liam said he was "one step removed" by having friends or hearing rumors of friends involved in the Republican paramilitaries. All of these participants came from supportive and fairly stable homes, in which their parents would have deterred these men from joining a local group.

Marginalization and Conforming to Peer Pressure

Rob stated that young men joined paramilitaries based on their lack of alternatives as many felt there was no other option, due to lack of employment opportunities, educational support, or personal matters related to their home lives. In addition to political and cultural reasons, the socioeconomic environment of the local community could also persuade a young man to become active in the conflict, as well as engaged in drugs and other violent, anti-social behavior. Aidan described dealing with these issues growing up in a marginalized housing estate near Derry. Drugs were so prevalent, as he explained, young people sold drugs to make money, and would not partake in recreational use until mid- to late-adolescence. Aidan's experience was unlike that of

Peadar, who grew up in the "ghetto" of West Belfast, where, as Peadar described, there was a "complete absence of drugs and other social menaces."[26]

While both Peadar and Aidan came from marginalized communities, they did not necessarily deal with the same issues, and so, their identities were impacted differently by their communal environment. Peadar reports that his local community did not have a profound impact on his identity as it did for Aidan, who felt the need to "toughen up" at a young age. He said, "There was pressure to have this bravado," as he dealt with issues not only within his immediate housing estate, but also outside it at school. As previously stated, Aidan dealt with extensive bullying in both primary and the earlier years of secondary school and he trained in martial arts to learn how to defend himself. He was the only one of his friends to attend an integrated secondary school, where wealthier families sent their children, and he was ostensibly bullied not because he was Catholic, but because he was from a poorer community. Aidan explained that he felt "powerful" once he started to fight back, demonstrating the relationship between marginalized and hegemonic masculinity: Aidan used physical aggression to suppress the former and stepped into a more dominant position that was respected by his peers. Once respected, Aidan explained the bravado developed into a defense mechanism, which he used to protect himself and his friends, who were often potential targets for bullying. Aidan purposely sought friends in need of protection because he detested bullying. Being the protector or defender is a representation of traditional masculine ideals, and is a role that Aidan not only embraced as an adolescent, but continues to practice as an adult. This

[26] Peadar was uncertain if the IRA was responsible for this absence in his community, but it is not implausible, as paramilitaries were often (and continue to be) local enforcers, carrying out punishments to people selling and using drugs or partaking in behavior deemed anti-social by the organizations.

determination to protect and defend people against bullies has carried into Aidan's professional career as a youth worker, which he began pursuing in his late adolescence through the encouragement of a local community and youth worker. Aidan now mentors boys and girls to educate them on the mental and emotional effects of bullying. He teaches his mentees to develop communication skills, in order to resolve conflicts, rather than pursue violent means.

Liam, who was also a youth worker, did not deal with as many personal and communal challenges as Aidan, which he began to pursue youth work by becoming active in the local youth club where his father worked. Liam's (as well as Ciaran and Daniel) description of his adolescence sounded as typical to many other young men's experiences in other parts of the UK and other Western countries by socializing with his peers and working hard in school, where the Troubles did not have a drastic impact on his day-to-day life:

> At the age of 16, I was doing GCSEs (General Certificate of Secondary Education) and stuff and you know…becoming an adult and was interested [in] getting a girlfriend, you know, having a drink…starting to enter that side of life and that age.[27]

Liam spoke extensively about the social pressures of hegemonic masculinity. In his interview, he described conforming to the ideals of masculinity as an adolescent, and how boys and young men continue to face the same pressures in a post-conflict state:

> The main pressures were being heterosexual, being sexually active, you know? Being that kind of hardman, being strong, tough, and having as many female

[27] GCSEs are mandatory exams for all students throughout the UK and Commonwealth after the first couple years of secondary education.

> partners as you can have, and what you're doing with those female partners in terms of trying to have sex. As well as that you should be drinking alcohol, you should be good at sports, that was kind of the pressures that I would've been under. To be fair, I tried to conform to them, the coping was that you tried to adhere to be all those things because if you didn't do that, life would've been a lot harder.

While considering himself a logical person, Liam was still, as he said, "seduced" to attain the hegemonic standards he felt were expected of him, especially by his peers. Daniel also noted the contradiction he felt young men received with attending Catholic schools during the conflict, where you, "have to be strong and be fighting, but you also have to love your fellow man." Other participants described feeling pressures similar to Liam: to be a hard, tough young man, and anything contrary to this image was shunned, particularly being gay or partaking in "feminine activities." As Liam said,

> When I was at school and growing up, being gay was the *worst* thing, the *worst* thing you could've been, you would've been totally ostracized and I know plenty of people who were.

As a boy, Aidan enjoyed traditional Irish dancing and singing, which led to bullying:

> Whenever I was into [Irish] dancing and singing, that's why I got [bullied] because a lot of the other guys would've called me 'poofter' or called me names or tried to bring me down because those [activities] would've been seen as a girly thing.

Peadar also commented on the gay people not being visibly prevalent:

> I mean when I was growing up, the prevalence, the visibility of subcultures, such as people who identify as gay wouldn't have been very prevalent. Whereas, in my later teenage years and year 20s…I don't know what you'd term it…maybe that kind of "metrosexual" identity, where you have the kind of "David Beckham," you know, "pretty boy" dressing up and [an] obsession with fashion. That was pretty common in my early 20s. Today, especially within the past several years, I think [we're] witnessing a reaction against that, in terms of men becoming more "manly" and men growing beards.

From the above comments, it appears gay individuals were not well received, nor would they have been as visible (and generally accepted) as they are today. In comparison, Peadar's comment about male fashion trends is interesting. While the popular style for young men might have promoted a more clean-cut, sophisticated appearance, the expectations of masculine behavior their communities and schools continued to idolize was the hardman bravado, the hegemonic image of masculinity for generations of men in Northern Ireland, and, by extension, any behavior deemed effeminate was subordinated and a cause for stigmatization. Peadar's observation on the current trend moving away from the clean-cut image could possibly be a rejection of any appearance that deviates from the hegemonic image, but it is difficult to determine the merit of his observation.

Communities of Support

Despite the challenges these men dealt with throughout their adolescence, the everyday presence of violence, the fear the Troubles brought, the hardships of living in a low socioeconomic community, and the social pressures and expectations placed on them, most participants had communities that provided sources of support, and promoted

a positive sense of identity and direction into adulthood. For Peadar, it was the Catholic church; for Aidan and Liam it was their involvement in youth clubs and youth work; for Daniel it was his involvement in the music and art scene around Derry; and for Jacob it was the Protestant bands. Jacob's relationship with the bands and Peadar's relationship with the church were especially interesting, due to the strong cultural meaning and traditions these organizations have for the Catholic and Protestant communities.

As previously stated, Jacob was inspired by his father and grandfathers to join a local band as a flutist, but his interest in it was not because of cultural pride or tradition, but rather his genuine interest in becoming a musician. However, participating in the bands has benefitted Jacob in greater ways than he imagined, as he struggled with speech and hearing issues growing up, impacting his communication skills. Having a longtime interest in orchestral and traditional Unionist music, he joined his first band in late adolescence. Dissatisfied with the lack of organization and dedication in this band, he quit and joined a band he has been in for a decade. Because he was so eager to learn, he quickly accelerated as a flutist and was asked to teach new musicians, which he continues to do and greatly enjoys. While Jacob has certifications in computer programming, he was approached by a local organization to become an education and outreach coordinator, attending local schools and teaching young people from both communities the history and tradition of Protestant bands.

The bands are Jacob's central community and have broadened his social circle beyond his home and local community and have helped him develop communication skills. Without the bands and the support he received from family and friends throughout

his involvement with the bands, Jacob believes he would have continued to struggle conversing with strangers, especially large groups:

> Not that I didn't go out of the house, but most nights you're sitting in doing nothing, and so joining the band you're way out in all parts of the country, meeting new friends—[I've] met a lot of people through the band, and especially now, you're meeting people from other bands, and building friendships that way. Also, now I regularly give presentations, so it's built my confidence as well.

Because of the negative reputation Protestant bands receive, Jacob emphasized his identity as a *musician* during his lectures, rather than as a member of a sectarian organization. While participation in the bands is a tight-knit tradition of Protestant Unionists, Jacob's disinterest in Unionist politics, his reasons for belonging to the bands, as well as his response to witnessing sectarian violence throughout his childhood and adolescent challenges the standard young Protestant men were expected to attain.

While Jacob's identity was centered around Protestant band culture, Peadar's main identity was centered on the tight-knit, structured community of the Catholic church. He was the only participant to identity with a religion beyond its ethnonational label, and he devoutly practiced Catholicism from a young age, attending Catholic schools throughout his primary and secondary studies. Throughout his adolescence, Peadar's faith clashed with his strong Irish Republican identity due to the conflicting stance the Catholic church had with Republican paramilitaries and the Irish Nationalist movement. However, after attending a youth retreat in his late teens, he redefined his identity and was inspired to build his relationship with his faith by becoming more involved in the church, pursuing theological studies at a higher learning institution, and

eventually becoming involved in the Catholic Worker Movement. The Catholic Worker Movement is a community of individuals who consider themselves Christian anarchists, follow liberation theological ideology, emphasize pacifism, and offer hospitability to people in need throughout the greater community.[28] Peadar described belonging to the Catholic Worker Movement as an example of the "little communities of light that are interested in the human person" and a place he has felt "at home with the church."

While Catholicism has always been central to his identity, his father's political ideologies had more precedence in his adolescence until he began to discover his own sense of faith and political beliefs. Peadar continues to support the nationalist agenda prevalent during the Troubles. However, his rejection of violence and his self-proclamation as a "Christian anarchist and pacifist" not only suppresses the ideology of militarized masculinity that surfaced during the conflict, but also rejects the traditional masculinities other participants described as influences in their lives. While still inspired by his faith's community and the ideology he was raised with, Peadar's identity represents how the domestic and communal environments impact young men's development. Through self-exploration of their world, the understanding of masculinity is changing today, for some, in Northern Ireland.

Global

Influential International Actors

Although participants' childhoods and adolescence was heavily inspired by their homes and communities, early adulthood brought revelations for many participants on their identities in the new post-conflict state of Northern Ireland. As stated in the

[28] Boehrer III, F. G. (2001). "Christian anarchism and the Catholic worker movement: Roman Catholic authority and identity in the United States." Syracuse U, PhD. dissertation

previous chapter, McGrellis' longitudinal study of young people in Northern Ireland during the late 1990s and early 2000s shows the impact of globalization on young people, as they began to develop a broader understanding and social connection to the world beyond their own communities or country. For most, their global scope developed in their early 20s by attending university, as well as traveling and working abroad. These experiences had significant impact on reshaping their adolescent identities and challenging the standards of masculinity they were pressured to conform to throughout primary and secondary school. Peadar and Aidan's perception of the world began with literature about similar nationalist movement occurring throughout the world. As Peadar explained:

> So growing up, I would've been familiar through reading, but probably primarily through songs, folksongs of conflicts around the world. I would've been listening to political music from South Africa from the ANC and songs about liberation and resistance in Latin America and the Middle East, and so from a very young age, you're brought up with that, [and] that's very influential on me.[29]

Aidan described his admiration for revolutionary figures from different countries:

> I had always wanted to go to places like Cuba because I'm mad about Che Guevara, for years, and people who seek justice, stuff like that. They've always been like superheroes! You know, anything that's sort of good will of people and tries to better mankind. Love all people like that because they are the people that bring about that change.

[29] African National Congress, current leading social democratic party in South Africa. ANC was key opposition party to South Africa's government during apartheid and under Nelson Mandela's leadership, key peacebuilders during the country's transition to peace, http://www.anc.org.za/content/brief-history-anc.

As a proponent of liberation theology, Peadar was firm with his political beliefs, particularly regarding Northern Ireland. While Aidan had always admired revolutionaries, it was his greater advocacy against bullying and his passion for helping people that drew him to revolutionary campaigns in other conflicts. Aidan stated that had he been of an earlier generation, he would have been more inclined to become actively involved in the conflict. Attending an integrated school gave Aidan the opportunity to meet people from other communities, beliefs, and traditions, broadening his perspective of the Troubles from a young age.

Breaking Barriers at University

Paul and Ciaran's experiences going to university also gave them the opportunity to grow beyond the perspectives of their homes and communities. Paul went to university in Great Britain, as many Protestants often do, and commented that, "Traveling always changes perspectives." It was the first time Paul had formally met Catholics, which he felt "was ridiculous, when you look back at it." For Ciaran, attending university was a pivotal experience, as it broadened his perception of Protestants and his national identity:

> Until I was 16 or 17, I definitely identified myself very strongly as an Irish Nationalist, and when I went to university, I expanded, I broadened my horizons as most people do in more ways than one. As far as my cultural or national identity goes, when you're looking at people from different religions or different races, different countries, you start to realize you've been living in a very interior, kind of isolated, small bubble of a few dozen, thousand people. Initially when I started going to university, I met a lot of people from a Protestant background—

> Loyalist and Unionist background—and initially, I didn't want to listen to them, I didn't want to speak to them, I didn't really care to share anything with them, so when they'd speak during lectures, it would annoy me. Some of the things they said, some of the attitudes they had irritated me, and I felt like, I knew they weren't picking on me, but I felt like what they were saying was besmirching the history, just some of things they had said. This was done 1st year of university, 2nd year, 3rd year, I find that when after this, you go out after lecture and you can drink with these people, you could go watch football together, and you see their human beings just like you. I felt more accommodating and willing to talk to them from the other side of the community….and it's a big point in my life—19,20,21—I felt this identity of being Northern Irish.

Ciaran's changing perception of his identity and his emerging sense of what it meant to be "not English, not Irish" but *Northern Irish* is a critical revelation for a young man growing up in the transitioning and post-conflict eras of a conflict state and will be explored in further depth in the next chapter. Ciaran received a teaching certificate after completing his undergraduate coursework and went on to teach in a Protestant school. Unfortunately, Ciaran had several instances where students directed sectarian messages to him, making him uncomfortable and slightly concerned for his safety. Ciaran felt he should leave the Protestant school and now teaches in a Catholic school. Regardless, Paul and Ciaran's experiences during university are important examples of the valuable opportunity to build diverse relationships and broaden perspectives in transitioning and post-conflict societies.

Traveling Abroad and Masculinity

Aidan's insights of being a young man from post-conflict society came during a two-week visit to Bosnia when he was 21, where he was supervising two young people who had received scholarships to participate in a workshop on non-violent conflict resolution and social empowerment. Aidan had recently begun pursuing his career in youth work and was asked to accompany the young men. Initially viewing this trip as a professional development opportunity, his experiences in Bosnia quickly became a turning point not only for his career, but also for self-exploration and personal growth as he entered adulthood. He described the shock of his experiences, from the beautiful scenery surrounding Sarajevo to the people he met at the workshop who had lived through various recent conflicts. For Aidan learning about other peoples' stories and atrocities they had experienced was profound. He explained regardless of their different languages or cultures, everyone had suffered.

Visiting Bosnia also brought challenges to Aidan's conceptualization of masculinity. He met a group of local men early on during the trip, and with his approachable demeanor, was welcomed to drink with them. Aidan described the men were surprised he could match their pace, but after a few days of him spending time with them, the group of Bosnian men became wary of Aidan. The Bosnian men would speak more in their native language around him, and Aidan fell out with the group before he left Bosnia. During his interview, Aidan reflected on this encounter and believed the local men were trying to display their position of power within their community and culture over him, an outsider. Once he showed he was neither impressed nor intimidated by this display of bravado, Aidan thinks he insulted the Bosnian men's masculinity. By not

displaying intimidation, he disrespected the standards of hegemonic masculinity of this culture. This reflection came as an epiphany for Aidan during his interview, as he compared the Bosnian men's behavior to the Irish hardman. Although Aidan was not intimidated by the Bosnian men, he considered their display of masculinity more intense than Irish masculinity. Comparing the two cultures masculinities is an example of the power relations between competing hegemonic masculinities. Each masculinity may be hegemonic in the local context, but when confronted in other contexts, hegemonic masculinity may be challenged and become subordinate to a more dominant, local form of masculinity.

Aidan returned from his travels determined to complete his certifications in youth work to get his career started. His perception of his community and life in Northern Ireland broadened to be conscientious of how it relates to the global sphere:

> I looked at everything that was going on [at home] and looked at me kind of feeling sorry for myself in my own housing estate and the drugs…and realizing that those things [that] would've been the stuff to keep you up all night…when you go to a place like [Bosnia] that you realize then, 'what the hell are you worrying about?' If you look at the bigger picture there's people who've lost their lives, they've been kidnapped, they've been through all these things, but they're still standing and trying to work out amongst each other how they can best solve this without hurting anybody. You realize then the world's a bigger place and the best thing that you look past them small, mediocre problems and look at the bigger picture, and see what you can do for the bigger picture. I was always a big

> thinker, but when I came back from Bosnia, I started to analyze things a lot more…my world became a bit bigger.

When he was 18 and spent some time working in America, Liam also had an epiphany related to masculinity. Although Liam had traveled and lived in other countries, an encounter in New York led him to evaluate the expectation and pressures he grew up with and the negative consequences of hegemonic masculinity. Getting into an altercation at a local pub, Liam and his friend were held at a local police station. Liam said he was in disbelief:

> I remember being in the holding cell going, 'what the *hell* is going on?!,' and at the time, because the two of us was just so *scared*, I remember the two of us being like 'right, no matter what happens, we have to really charge back to survive this.' I remember just thinking, 'what's the point like of fighting and being a hardman and being this kind of, if anyone saying anything I'm going to fight, no matter what, no matter what, I'm going to fight you.'

Although Liam stated that throughout his adolescence he never really understood the purpose of being tough and aggressive, nonetheless, he felt the need to conform to these social standards of masculinity. His skirmish with the law abroad allowed him to reassess what it meant for him to act masculine and he became critical of hegemonic masculinity. Liam described hegemonic masculinity as a "seductive force" that he fell victim to during his adolescence, but has challenged in subsequent years, recognizing its negative consequences and lack of benefits:

> I always say [hegemonic] masculinity is very seductive, being masculine is very seductive, but there doesn't seem to be great usefulness in a dominant, masculine

> person because it doesn't get you anywhere! Being that masculine force it's just so counter-productive because if you're so masculine, and again, I mean those kind of things like *big* and *strong*, tough, non-feminine, heterosexual, white, it leaves a very narrow way of living and how you live your day-to-day life and how you communicate with people, and so it was something that was always a contradiction. I'm supposed to behave this way, but I can't see any point to being this way, I *want* to be able to develop my communication skills.

Liam also commented that by opening up to people and communicating, he received better responses than being aloof. Traveling internationally allowed him the opportunity to not only self-explore, but also work on developing relationships and skills he felt benefitted him more than his attempt to attain the hardman image promoted by hegemonic masculinity. Liam has been working on implementing the experiences and skills he gained from his travels in the everyday work he does with young men.

Conclusion

Experiences within the home and community are key environments to developing young men's identities, as their first exposures to societal expectations and ideals. Most participants described being raised with traditional expectations and images of masculinity from their fathers and/or other family members. The image of the hardman remained prevalent. While being tough and strong were consistent values participants were taught, they were also taught to be honorable and defend themselves. Participants' childhood experiences and upbringings exemplified the generational differences between how they were raised in relation to their parents. Due to the societal desire for the political violence to cease, there was diminishing support and encouragement for young

people, particularly young men, to become active in paramilitary organizations. Parents attempted to prevent this engagement by not discussing everyday events related to the conflict as a way to protect their children and discourage this participation. However, as it will be discussed in the next chapter, this silence has created unforeseen consequences.

Although parents tried to deter their children's engagement with the Troubles, the everyday presence of violence challenges their ability to do so. Growing up surrounded by provocative images of gunman, memorials listing former Republican and Loyalist combatants, as well as stories told by ex-combatants have created a glorified image of the activist that some young men were drawn to during the Troubles. However, this glorification contradicts the efforts that were being made politically in the 1990s to achieve a state of peace in Northern Ireland, and the continuous peacebuilding initiatives today. As discussed in the last chapter, many young men in the post-conflict state are confused by the notion of peacebuilding because it contradicts the violence and militarized images throughout many communities. There is further contradiction in the political sphere, where many participants and others I spoke with throughout my fieldwork said the legacy of the conflict continues to affect politicians' focus and policymaking. As a result, many participants felt disengaged with the political process, describing their attitude as "apathetic." The notion of political apathy will be explored in the next chapter.

Having the opportunity to attend university, even at home, and/or traveling internationally seemed to be beneficial for young people in developing their own sense of identity that is apart from domestic and communal spheres. However, while all participants I interviewed have had the opportunity to engage with the wider national and

international communities, not all men within their generation have had these opportunities. This can potentially impact the dominant influence hegemonic masculinity has on young men's perspectives. Without the chance to explore their identities and broaden their understanding of masculinity, they may remain firmly under the influences of the hardman and/or gunman image. Furthermore, while some participants' actions during their adolescence contradicted the hegemonic paradigm, the pressure to conform and embrace bravado dominant masculinity overcame these men, until experiences in late adolescence and early adulthood enlightened them to rethink their masculine identity. Though participants used traditional rhetoric to describe their conceptualization of masculinity, their attitudes and actions did not always resonate with the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. The people, environments, and experiences that have influenced participants' personal understanding and display of masculinity exemplifies the complexity of multiple masculinities coinciding with or challenging one another.

Despite the continuous presence of deep-rooted, traditional masculinities, the men I interviewed provided an outlook on how masculinity is changing in Northern Ireland, as demonstrated through some of their occupations in socially-oriented fields, their progressive attitudes regarding women (not discussed in this chapter), by their acceptance of diversity, and by encouraging communication not only between communities, but also among young men within their own society. From my experience on a train ride to Derry to the extensive interviews I had with my participants, it is evident to me that masculinity in Northern Ireland is not a simple phenomenon and manifests itself through multi-faceted nuances, reflective in the inter-relationship among traditional and militarized

images of Irish masculinity and various environmental influences, from domestic to international spheres that impact a man's identity and conceptualization of masculinity.

CHAPTER IV

"A PERVASIVE, VIOLENT APATHY:" POLITICAL DISENGAGEMENT AND IMPACTS ON MENTAL HEALTH[30]

It was a warm Monday morning in August, and I was not ready for the work week. I was exhausted after a weekend of socializing, and spending most of Saturday observing the Apprentice Boys of Derry's famous Siege of Derry parade. I waited for my coworker from my internship to pick me up for a group session. Bonfire season was in full swing. Boys could be seen throughout the Bogside and other Catholic housing estates collecting and protecting piles of wood pallets and rubbish to burn, in preparation for the annual celebration of the Assumption of Mary.[31] For our group session, my coworker was going to discuss bonfire safety. When he picked me up, he asked if I had heard about a bonfire being built in the Bogside. I had not heard about this particular bonfire, so he drove towards the city center prior to starting our group session.

It was a remarkable sight. In the middle of the Bogside near the Free Derry corner was a 10-foot construction of pallets and tires blocking the ramp of the Lecky Road flyover. Several young men were guarding the structure from the top, posing in a manner that conveyed, "try and stop us." A large wooden sign was fixated to a pallet, asserting the bonfire's purpose: "You's shouldn't have taken our wood!" My coworker

[30] Title Credit, Peadar.

[31] A Catholic Holy Day of Obligation commemorating Mary's ascension into heaven. Both Catholic and Protestant communities build gigantic bonfire structures to celebrate different holidays, often leading to contestation between the communities. Despite city and housing councils' efforts to improve safety and overall experience, flags of opposing ideologies, politicians' campaign posters, and other sectarian effigies are often added prior to burning. 11th Night, the night before the July 12th celebration of the Battle of the Boyne, is the most infamous. In 2016, 3 homes in the Shankill neighborhood in Belfast caught on fire with the bonfire in close proximity (Preston, July 12, 2016, *Belfast Telegraph*. Retrieved from http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/thousands-turn-out-to-watch-eleventh-night-bonfires-burn-across-northern-ireland-34875571.html.)

said that the wood pallets that the young men had been collecting and guarding throughout the previous week had been confiscated by the police, and the young men's request to build the bonfire on the same spot as the year before had been denied by the local council.[32] However, my coworker's information about these events was disputed when I discussed the event with a Protestant man familiar with the council. He said the residents of Creggan did not want the bonfire, and he thought the protest bonfire was a selfish act of defiance that disrupted the community's residents and image of Derry for tourists in the area.

My coworker and I drove past the growing tower to collect our group of young people from their homes. We visited several housing estates where approved bonfires were being built, all constructed and protected by small boys and teenagers. Sectarian signs with derogatory sayings (i.e. K.A.H, "Kill All Huns"), Union Jacks, and political posters (including Sinn Fein) were piled up, waiting to be added to the bonfire that would burn that evening.[33] It was apparent that young men routinely participated in this annual ritual. I asked the group of young people I worked with what they enjoyed about the bonfires, why boys were collecting materials and were responsible for building the towers, and what was the purpose of the bonfires. Their responses were straightforward: "It's fun, just something to do," "It's great craic," "It's tradition." A couple of the boys in my group commented that the entire ritual was predominately for entertainment: from collecting pallets and tires to constructing and guarding their architectural masterpieces, all in the company of friends. Partaking in this dangerous tradition seems to provide boys

[32] *BBC News*. 2015, August 17. "Police investigate offensive symbols on nationalist and loyalist bonfires." Retrieved from http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-33958611.

[33] Hun is a derogatory word for Protestant.

and young men a sense of camaraderie and a position of value in their communities during these celebrations.

"You's shouldn't have taken our wood!" Bogside, Derry. Photo credit: Author, August 15, 2016.

I was told that young people wanted to build the bonfire in the same location as the year before, but residents in the Creggan neighborhood opposed to it. Regardless, attendance that evening was vast, with about 2,000 people reported in and around the Bogside watching the structure, now adorned with an array of political posters, flags (including Union Jacks, various Loyalist groups, and Israeli) and a poppy wreath.[34] I did not go to the bonfire, but it was reported that a pipe bomb was thrown and residents in the

[34] The poppy is a symbol used to commemorate WWI soldiers. *Belfast Telegraph*, 2016, August 17, "Large crowd attends controversial Bogside bonfire." Retrieved from http://www.derryjournal.com/news/large-crowd-attends-controversial-bogside-bonfire-1-7528755.

area had to evacuate their homes for several hours. The following day was gorgeous, my coworker and I headed to Buncrana with our group for a spontaneous trip. The mood on the radio was sour, as the local station covering the clean-up of the bonfire interviewed residents from Creggan, as well as local politicians. The politicians felt the bonfire was disgraceful and inconsiderate of community members' interests. The interviews with residents expressed otherwise, as a few said they believed that the bonfire did not cause any immediate harm or threaten their community. One resident commented that these events needed more support from police and fire departments to emphasize safety, and ensure sectarian messages were not a part of the ceremony. My coworker agreed with the interviewee and thought young people needed to be included in dialogues with local politicians and councilors.

Situations like the Lecky Road bonfire that could result in dangerous and violent consequences have occurred since the Good Friday Agreement. When I first visited Northern Ireland in 2013, Loyalists from predominately working-class, lower-socioeconomic communities had been protesting (and would continue to protest) in Belfast for months because of the city council's decision to limit the days that the Union Jack flew over Belfast City Hall.[35] The council's decision led to massive protests from the Protestant community, numerous riots, police injuries, and arrests that took place over a year.[36] These protests, as well as altercations in interface areas, the contentious bonfire/marching season, and active dissident paramilitary operations are challenging

[35] *BBC News*. 2014, November 28. "Q&A: Northern Ireland flag protests," http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-20651163.

[36] Greenslade, R. 2013, January 7. "Belfast's rioting loyalists feel abandoned by their politicians." Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2013/jan/07/belfast-rioting-loyalists-politicians-union-flag.

images for a society that has transitioned away from instrastate conflict. My interviewees and other locals I spoke with acknowledged that everyday violence continues for some people. Both said that, despite ongoing violence in some areas, people in Northern Ireland are generally indifferent towards someone's ethnonationalist background, and they blamed politicians for keeping sectarianism and social divisions alive.

In this chapter, I explore in greater detail participants' opinions of and engagement with the current political system, which often appeared frustrated and apathetic. I also discuss participants' reactions, as well as their families and communities, to critical events during the peace process of the 1990s. Further, I analyze the concern of a "pervasive, violent apathy," which Peadar described in his interview. Peadar discussed this apathy in relation to his and the younger generation's lack of political activism, the ongoing sectarian violence between communities, and the increase in internalized violence via self-harm, suicide, and drug abuse in the post-agreement era. With Peadar's statement in mind, and because many participants, as well as mental health practitioners I spoke with, shared concerns for males who were raised during and after the peace process, I discuss the concept of transgenerational trauma in relation to the traditional Irish "culture of silence."

The examination of transgenerational trauma is relatively new in Northern Ireland, and additionally there is limited information on how trauma has affected women, men, girls, and boys differently in the post-conflict era (Hanna et al., 2012; O'Neill, et al., 2015). I propose that the deep-rooted culture of silence, a legacy of Northern Ireland's conflict, and the uncertainty in the post-conflict era may have produced social and political apathy. It is possible that through post-conflict apathy, where traumas of the

past have not been sufficiently addressed, violent masculinities persist in an era of relative peace. The presence of violent masculinities, along with the pressures to attain the standards of traditional hegemonic masculinity, potentially explains why males who grew up during and after the peace process have fallen victim to physical and mental harms.

Political Apathy: The Peace Process and Post-Conflict Politics

Reactions to the Peace Process

In addition to exploring the roles family and community have had on participants' identities, I am interested in understanding how participants' experiences in the 1990s has affected their political opinions today. I asked participants how they reacted to the paramilitary ceasefires and the Good Friday Agreement, key events in the peace process, as well as how their families and communities reacted. Participants described mixed emotions and reactions within their homes and communities. Paul said there was reluctance toward the agreement in the Protestant community, criticizing it as a "sell-out," but he also said those people were "not willing to move forward." He continued by saying that his generation and younger ones were "very supportive" of the Good Friday Agreement, claiming "some agreement was better than none." Peadar's opinions, however, challenged Paul's statement that younger generations supported the agreement, as he felt contempt towards the Good Friday Agreement:

> My father gave me his vote, everybody was able to vote yes or no to the Good Friday Agreement, and my father turned around to me when we were in the voting booth and he said, "This is your future, you vote for me," and I voted no, and I'm very happy that I voted no. I could have never foreseen how right I was in the years that followed in voting no. Obviously at the time there was great

> hysteria for "peace" as it was being called…that this was a transformative point in Irish history and to the war and to armed conflict in Ireland. My father and I were not supportive of that…because it was seen as a copperfastening of British rule in Ireland.

Rob expressed similar cynicism, due to the impact the conflict had on his family. Rob was not against peace, but felt perpetrators needed to be held accountable for their actions, and the Good Friday Agreement did not offer that accountability. Because Peadar and Rob's fathers' occupations put them at elevated risk during the Troubles, the impact this risk had on their families could contribute to Peadar and Rob's negative attitudes towards the peace agreement.

Daniel described polarized opinions of hope and cynicism within his family and community about the Good Friday Agreement:

> There was a great sense of hope, I remember…in the community, but it obviously wasn't very long before that was shattered, you know? The Good Friday Agreement, I mean there was a number of parts to that…it basically involved Southern Irish, Northern Irish, and British governments coming together, and that for certain parts of society, that's a no-no... "we do not deal with terrorists" that kind of thing. So there was…a sort of cynicism in that way, you know?

Daniel was referring to the Omagh bombing as hope being "shattered." The bombing occurred four months after the Good Friday Agreement and killed 29 individuals from different communities in and outside of Northern Ireland, including a pregnant woman and six young people. Daniel did not remember how he felt about the ceasefires, but he recalled how the Omagh affected him, as he felt at the time "all is lost…we're going back

to the 70s." Ciaran also described feeling emotional as a boy observing the 1994 ceasefires being broken:

> I do remember [the 1994 ceasefires] being broken and I remember hearing a news report about how it had been broken, someone had been murdered or a bomb had gone off…something like that, and…I cried because you know whenever a ceasefire's declared, it's obviously supposed to be respected, you know, by both sides of the conflict, but it wasn't! I remember it being a great deal in my home because this idea, "This isn't right when someone has knocked the life out of you," and it's supposed to be a time of peace.

Jacob commented that the failure of the initial ceasefires and ongoing violence throughout the 1990s led his family and community to feel apprehensive about the peace agreement. Although the majority of Northern Irish voted in favor of the Good Friday Agreement, the various opinions both Catholic and Protestant communities had towards the peace process created division and intra-communal tensions, including Loyalist and Republican paramilitaries, which splintered into different factions based on those in support and opposition of the ceasefires and peace talks (McKittrick & McVea, Shirlow, 2012). Ciaran described some of the divisions that emerged within his community and family:

> I remember the Good Friday Agreement…I remember there being a lot of feelings of hopefulness and this would be the end of violence, but when I was around other family members, particularly on my dad's side, there was some hostility towards what this would do because people believe…that it was just going to be more kind of the same and it wouldn't bring really any lasting or, you know, dramatic

> change. Along the terms of the Good Friday Agreement, there were political prisoners going to be released…. Whenever something happens, it polarizes both sides of the community. There was a lot of hostility, "These men are murderers. These men are criminals. These men are arsenals" and then on the other side, "These men are political prisoners. These men are fighting for a cause. These men are defending the community." There's division within my family in regard [to] Republicanism, Nationalism…whether it was an end of any powers with the British state, whether it was recognition of occupation of the six counties, whatever it was, there would've been a very, very, very noticeable divide within my family.

Hope, apprehension, and contempt are typical reactions in a society that has dealt with decades of intrastate violence. By the 1990s, some participants described that they also felt disengaged from the peace process, as the daily presence of violence was considered "normal, just part of life," creating a sense of banality. Aidan did not express opinions about the ceasefires or Good Friday Agreement because these events were not discussed in his home or at school, and he did not think the peace process affected his daily life. Liam said the conflict and current politics were also not discussed at his school, and he was more immersed in being a teenager, and politics were not a part of his identity:

> Politics or the politicians didn't represent who I was or anything like that. For me, politics was always Gerry Adams and Ian Paisley, which was the two leaders of the main political parties, and to me, both of them are as bad as each other.

Political Participation

Although Aidan and Liam felt disengaged from the peace process, they did participate in Northern Irish politics today by voting and staying informed about local and regional politics. Most participants I interviewed were politically active through voting and communicating with local councilors and committees. Their political participation, however, contradicts the apathetic attitude many participants described, which I discuss in the next section. Only one participant said he voted for a specific party, which is reminiscent of older generations in Northern Ireland that have historically voted along ethnonationalist lines (McKittrick & McVea, 2002).[37] Participants stated their parents still identified with one or two political parties that represented these ethnonationalist differences. When it came to the participants' voting patterns, they were more concerned with the quality of representation rather than the quantity of party seats in Stormont.[38] Jacob made a comment on recent elections in Derry:

> It just depends on what [politicians] have to say. I know a lot of organizations in the Waterside that went to SDLP because they get the thing done. Then maybe [voted] DUP, and maybe went to the Ulster Unionist, and they haven't gotten anywhere with it, so as a last sort of chance, they went to SDLP, whose got it sorted. So, it really comes back to that thing of whoever gets the job done.

[37] The main parties in Catholic/Republican/Nationalist communities include Sinn Fein, predominately supported by Irish Republicans and SDLP, supported by moderate Nationalists. In Protestant/Loyalist/Unionist communities, the DUP has been popular among working-class Unionists and conservative Loyalists, and the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) has historically been supported by middle- to upper-class citizens. Other PLU parties include the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP) and Traditional Ulster Voice (TUV). Independent parties include the fifth largest Alliance Party of Northern Ireland, Green Party, People Before Profit Alliance, and Workers' Party of Ireland.

[38] Stormont Estate houses the Northern Ireland Assembly

Paul also said,

> I always vote when I can…[I've] voted Independent and SDLP in the past. I'm more moderate [and] a big frustration of mine is people vote for the party over the personality. They don't look at the policy. If you have an orange sash on a goat, people would vote for it.

Rob expressed a similar attitude that "a politician talking sense" would get his vote. He said he does not always vote DUP and has voted Sinn Fein in the past. Rob also said politics are still "badly segregated with religion" and "to keep an identity, you have to pick a side." Aidan elaborates on Paul and Rob's comments by discussing the division political parties cause at the local level:

> When you elect [politicians], they take on that flag of…speaking for you and on your behalf, so whenever they come out and say something and you voted for them, then you're going to have to agree with them, you know what I mean? I think that's what happens, they obviously control those areas. One of the first questions in the youth work degree is…are youth workers…do they influence social change? Is it social control that they're doing or are they trying to influence social change? I think that for here…it's mainly social control because they're already established…community development groups, community officers, those people who are the be-all and end-all in communities are probably 100% tied into a political party. So, if your community representative belongs to Sinn Fein, DUP, SDLP, or UUP, or whatever it is, then…because they're the person that represent your community, then everybody in that community basically has the same ideas than people who don't.

Having extensive experience in youth and community development work, Paul said that political support for development projects had not always been the case, at least within Protestant communities, and this lack of support impacted some Protestants relationship with their local parties:

> It took until maybe the mid-90s for when the Protestant mentality kind of dropped, and they realized that…if you want to get anything for [your community], we need to get off our arses. I started in [housing estate], one of the first community groups to recognize that, and we learned a lot from the committee structures within the Catholic community here in Derry, in Creggan and Bogside, and replicated programs and a lot of their models. We came up against a lot of opposition, particularly within Unionist political parties who thought we were doing just what Catholics do—begging. It was the political mentality, but a penny hadn't dropped with the Unionist parties, it was their responsibility to try and get these facilities. 'Course that's changed now…in 1996, you couldn't have gotten a Unionist politician to support you in anything, or come to anything, or support an event. *Now*, you have to push them with a broom because they try to jump on the success of [local] progress and claim it for votes!

"Fed Up!": Reactions to Post-Conflict Politics

Paul also stated that the extreme shift from political parties' lack of support of local committees and events to arguably being too involved and seeking credit has created a "kind of extreme apathy" in the post-conflict state. In addition to asking participants' their responses to political events of the 1990s, I asked how they felt about the current political state. While most participants voted, several participants from both

communities, as well as young people from the post-conflict generation I worked with at my internship and met casually throughout my fieldwork, described feeling apathetic toward politics. I asked the young people from the post-conflict generation if they voted, especially since Brexit had just passed. Most said they had never voted, and were not interested in political affairs (though for the teenagers I worked with, they had much to say about American politics). These young people expressed that, regardless of the party, all politicians in Northern Ireland had the same agenda, to, "incite sectarianism and continue old arguments for media attention," rather than to address immediate social needs, such as health care, education, and economic development. While Paul is from an older generation than the other men I interviewed, he agreed that Northern Ireland's government has not been effectively serving the people:

> The political performance of the Stormont government has been *terrible*, I [thought] they would've been more effective, more progressive and forward thinking once more down the line, but most of them…were still elected based on green and orange politics, and just their…lack of ability to deal with social issues, with economic issues, with education issues, and you know, people keep electing them!

Aidan commented that the government's performance was a façade and questioned the purpose of voting:

> It's a big drama. They're all different parties during the day, but at nighttime, they're all the same party, you know? They all drink together, they all wine and dine, and life is great and good. When you see that then you start to think, "Then what's the fucking point? When we vote, what's the point and where's your

> choice?" What does the voting system actually mean and what actually happens? You know, once the majority party comes in, that's great for one side and it's shite for the other side, so when do we get to where everybody is like, "This is good." When is that going to happen?

The view that the government is a façade was the reason most of Aidan's friends, who are of his generation, have never voted. Aidan explained his friends think their vote would not make a difference in the current system, exemplifying apathy felt by some people who grew up during the peace process. Although most participants I interviewed do vote, many expressed frustration towards Northern Irish politics, as Jacob said:

> A lot of the parties seem to say, "we need to do this, we need [to do that]," but there's no *how* they're going to do it, know what I mean? They know what has to be done, but they don't know how to do it…. They know that young Protestant males are underachieving and they're saying they have to improve, but there's actually no effort! There doesn't seem to be any effort to do anything, I think. Why vote when it's not [going to] change anything? Sure, they'll just do the same thing, they'll do nothing for you.

Although Daniel voted, he also felt politically disengaged:

> I would be slightly apathetic towards the whole thing, it's just like, "it's a lost cause, the whole situation." I don't know how it's going to pan out politically, in terms of Northern Ireland, Southern Ireland, Britain. I don't know… again... cynical and *bored* of it at this stage, you know?

Ciaran expressed strong contempt towards post-conflict politics:

> I feel…absolute apathy, just you know? Because for *so* long, for so, so, so long…it comes to the whole fact the idea that, "Okay, here you go, another peace talk. Here you go, another round of treaties, another round of agreements, another round of consent, another round of give and take." When does it stop? When do we eventually say, "Okay, I'm fed up! I don't want to hear these talks anymore. I don't want to hear these talks about shared futures, about a 'shared Northern Ireland' when it's been done *so* many times!" It's led me to feeling very apathetic…feeling apathetic about the whole situation… about the place that I live in now, and I try not to follow too much into the politics, or any kind…I don't even care anymore, truthfully, I really don't care.

Ciaran's political and national identity shifted during his experiences at university, when he began to identity more as Northern Irish than Irish or as a member of the UK. Rob expressed a similar attitude towards his nationality, as he was more concerned about what happened in his immediate community than what happened in "Westminster."

The duality between participants' practice of voting and political attitudes is an interesting reflection of this group's relationship with post-conflict Northern Ireland. It is also interesting that this duality was shared by both Catholic and Protestant participants. Because most participants did vote, they do not appear to be entirely apathetic toward Northern Irish political affairs. The relationship between participants' political participation and political attitudes is inconsistent, but it is possible that participants' frustration with the government's performance has resulted in a feeling of indifference towards election results. Participants might think their vote will not make substantial change to the current system.

Being very politically active since childhood, Peadar was concerned about his generation and younger generations' political disengagement, referring to it as "violent" and "pervasive":

> There's just a *non-interest*…especially people [in] my generation. My generation is the cut-off. Anyone 2-3 years younger than me, there's a completely different experience of life in the war, and national identity especially…it's *fascinating*, but there is a pervasive apathy and disinterest in the political process. I would contend a…*violent* apathy. People are just not interested, engaged. There is a real violent apathy that's real pervasive in every aspect of young people's lives. People don't care about it, and there's no strong, prophetic witness against or any great countercultural movement to offer an alternative, either coming from the political or spiritual spheres…or social spheres… it really highlights a major problem.

Peadar expressed concern that younger generations, including his, have not responded with a countercultural agenda against the present political apparatus in Northern Ireland. Considering Peadar's Irish Republican background, it is not clear whether Peadar was concerned solely for Catholics of his generation and their lack of political engagement, or his generation from both Catholic and Protestant communities. Paul shared a similar concern for younger generations general lack of interest or participation in politics:

> I'm disappointed there hasn't been…this new generation isn't reflective yet within the political sector. If you speak to them though, they're becoming more politically apathetic, and statistics are showing fewer and fewer of them are bothered to vote at all, you know? So, are we going to be stuck with the same voices, same rhetoric for another generation?

Youth are the Future

Paul was referring to the generation that was raised during the peace process, but his central focus was on the "post-conflict kids" born after the peace process. He discussed his work to build local leadership and prevent further apathy among them. He worked with local Protestant bands to encourage young band members to become involved in "alternative forms of leadership." Alongside the support of bandmasters, Paul developed volunteer and travel opportunities for young people intended to teach them how to impact their communities without going "through the mainstream political structures."

Having also worked in the youth and community-sector, Aidan, Liam, and Jacob felt the post-conflict generation should be given more opportunities to become politically active and make a local impact, but none commented on their own generation's involvement, or lack thereof. Liam said that males in their late-teens to early-20s are aware of the social and economic issues that affect them and want to develop opportunities in their communities for employment, financial independence, and access to social and health services and entertainment. Jacob, however, pointed out politicians might express interest, but do not actively engage with the younger generation or provide them opportunities for political engagement. Aidan felt the political ideologies that are entrenched in Northern Ireland's history will extend over generations, but that young people growing up in the region today are less concerned about ideologies than they are about immediate issues. Aidan hoped this generation would help change the current system that continues to represent old ethnonationalist divides:

> Hopefully, the young people that's growing up now…I believe in 6 or 7 years that there will be far more independents that will move from the green and orange politics and look more towards what's best for the people everywhere rather than "what benefits me." [Young people] are sitting and seeing the same thing, and they're going "Right, [the conflict] happened and all, but where are we now, and how does that deal with education? How does that deal with health?" …. It just seems the dinosaurs have been in power for too long and it's time for a change.

These participants' active engagement with youth and support for the post-conflict generation's political participation seems to contradict Peadar's concerns that pervasive apathy is affecting his generation. His concerns, however, are supported by Paul's comment that also expressed concern, as well as some participants' clear apathetic attitude towards current politics, as well as the apathy felt by their friends. It is interesting that some participants were more attentive to building younger generations' political engagement than with their own. It is possible thatsome participants were apathetic towards current politics because the politicians who worked towards peace and continue to serve at Stormont are still absorbed by the legacy of the conflict, rather than with immediate issues. People I spoke with during my fieldwork jested that peace would not really come to Northern Ireland until all generations that had lived through the Troubles were deceased. As Daniel said,

> I think the old adage 'time heals all' applies here. I don't think you're ever going to…remove certain ideologies out of people's heads, they just kind of have to *die*! Hopefully if people are born into families with strong ideologies, then the changes

that already happening in society will steer them away slowly from violence, you know what I mean? That's the only way it can happen.

With Daniel's comment in mind, I examined Peadar's notion that violent apathy was pervasive among younger generations in Northern Ireland today. Peadar did not provide a concrete definition for what he meant by violent apathy, but he described the notion as a repercussion of society's lack of activism against the state's—particularly Great Britain—promotion or use of violence. Peadar believed people's political disengagement has resulted in a social apathy with violent consequences. He stated that through this apathy, not only has sectarian violence continued, but also self-inflicted violence has increased. Peadar said the issues of drug abuse, self-harm, and suicide in Northern Ireland are examples of this violent apathy. I consider his concerns by examining the emotional, mental, and physical impacts the culture of silence and traditional standards of hegemonic masculinity, which encourages boys and men to suppress their emotions, have had on male populations in the post-conflict state.

A Violent Apathy: Males' Mental Health and Well-Being

"Get on with It:" Coping and the Culture of Silence

As previously stated, it was challenging for me to find participants because many men I reached out to were uncomfortable with interview partially focused on mental health. Among the men I did interview, a few shared some personal reflections regarding their own mental health. Aidan and Liam spoke of their mental/emotional issues during adolescence. For Aidan, the bullying he dealt with throughout primary school and some of secondary school had severe emotional effects on him at the time, "Whenever I was going through the bad bullying, the bag stage of bullying, I was bringing knives up to the mirror…I didn't really self-harm, but I was contemplating suicide, like." Fortunately,

Aidan's father recognized his son was struggling to cope with the bullying he faced, and, not only put Aidan into martial arts training to learn how to physically defend himself, but also provided emotional support by giving him a prayer card that encouraged inner strength. Aidan carried this card with him as he began his youth work career and gave it to a boy who was going through similar experiences:

> My dad gave me this thing from St. Jude, like a small prayer card for strength. It basically says that every cloud has a silver lining and say this prayer for strength. I ended up finding myself then, and…I'm not super religious, I don't practice religion, but I ended up finding myself giving that boy that piece of courage because I thought to myself, 'My dad gave this to me whenever I was at a point when I didn't want my life to continue…seeing that I needed strength and was lacking it.' Seeing this young boy still has [the card] and he's still here…it's a good thing.

Liam did not comment specifically on mental health-related experiences he had as an adolescent, but said:

> I just know, and I'm sure that a lot of teenagers would say stuff that [they] had suicidal thoughts at certain times, but never acted on that or tried to anything like that, but there [were] definitely times where life was very, very tough, [which] comes with being a teenager.

As a teenager, Liam witnessed an increase in suicide that began in 1998, and became aware of the effects suicide, as well as drugs, had on both families and communities:

> You see when I was about 16-17, for some reason, there was a spike of suicides in [Derry]. I'd say in a space of about a year, there was maybe about 4-5 guys from

> my school who would've been in the same year, year above, or year below me who took their lives, and there were a lot of young women who did the same thing too. So, at that stage, where it's a very formative stage of my life, I had seen how suicide had an impact on families and communities. At the same time, young people were dying from taking drugs as well. That sort of showed me that dangers associated, number one with drugs, so I was never part of the drug culture, and number two, I could see that negative impact [of suicide].

Liam discussed how his home environment and his experiences abroad built his resilience in coping with his emotional challenges in a positive way, though he never experienced "any major traumas." He said when he was growing up, mental health was never discussed and considered a black-and-white issue:

> Mental health was never talked about. Having a mental health was never discussed…you're either okay or depressed, and there was no in-between…and that's something because it wasn't taught, it wasn't talked about, it wasn't taught in school, it wasn't talked about in the family, anything at all like that.

Paul suggested that keeping quiet about emotional issues is an engrained part of Irish culture:

> Pretty certain there was no counseling in those days, maybe there was, but I think that's against the old Irish thing. It's not kind of the Irish way to be emotional or open-up. People would be horrified at the thought if you were going to counseling, it's as if you're one step away from the nuthouse. So, people kept to themselves and retracted into themselves. Obviously, that has to come out and

> manifest itself in some way… "If you ignore it, it'll go away." That was [adults] policy on [mental health].

Liam and Paul's statements resonate with the culture of silence that was mentioned in the last chapter. As previously stated, some parents exemplified the culture of silence by not discussing the Troubles with their children, as a way of protecting them from external violence. In other cases, silence and the suppression of emotion demonstrated is an accustomed response to difficult situations.

This emotional suppression, however, can only last for so long, as Paul said, "Obviously that has to come out and manifest itself in some way." Researchers and mental health professionals have recognized there are distressing repercussions of this silent norm.[39] I met with several practitioners during my fieldwork, and the majority believed that the legacy of the Troubles and the mental and emotional suppression of traumatic events are having a transgenerational impact on people who were raised at the end of or after the conflict. Practitioners stated that transgenerational trauma occurs socially and genetically, and has, at least in part, led to an increase in self-harm and suicide, prevalent among younger generations in Northern Ireland. I learned from a couple practitioners that the physical stress trauma has on the body can be transmitted genetically to a fetus. The genetic transmission of trauma can affect an infant's fight-or-flight response to stress, and is a possible explanation for mental illness experienced by a child. In relation to the social transmission of trauma, one practitioner I spoke with had

[39] Although the practitioners I interviewed and some of my participants expressed concern about silence as a coping mechanism to overcome past traumas, it should be noted that their concern represents their beliefs of how trauma should be addressed from a Western-centric perspective. There are other models that acknowledge silence as an appropriate way of coping, and discussing traumatic events could hinder, rather than help a person's healing.

previously worked with the Bloody Sunday victims' families and found a "sense of abandonment" among the children and grandchildren of family members whose relatives were killed or injured. This counselor said the trauma of Bloody Sunday not only had direct emotional and mental effects on victims' immediate family members, but also had effects on the children and grandchildren, who did not feel their emotional needs were being met, as their parent or grandparent was "consumed with seeking justice."

Another counselor with the Men's Action Network (MAN), a service center in Derry, described transgenerational trauma in the case of a former client who was being emotionally abused by his wife. The counselor said it was hard for clients who have been abused to discuss their trauma, due to the stigma against men being victims of domestic violence. However, in time, the client recognized that the possible cause of his wife's behavior was a result of her background from a strict Irish Republican family who restricted her accessibility to the greater community. This led the wife to exert similar expressions of control toward her husband and child, mentally affecting both. This recognition allowed the client to empathize with his wife's behavior as he focused on his own personal development.

One practitioner I spoke with is a leading academic on transgenerational trauma and suicidality in Northern Ireland, and she stated that there is a cultural stigma towards mental illness, and that the Troubles in particular "masked" the subject. After the Troubles, then "people reevaluated their experiences and recognized their issues were mental health-related." Additionally, the counselor who worked with Bloody Sunday victims' families said, "Many people during the Troubles experienced [similar] trauma, but how you were beforehand impacts how you'll cope." Both practitioners stated that

traumas occurred before the conflict, that people self-harmed and committed suicide before and during the conflict, but the Troubles brought a new focus on these subjects. According to these practitioners, the silence regarding mental health and trauma began to breakdown with the development of intra-communal social and mental health services after the peace process began.

Self-Inflicted Violence and Masculinity

Although the general topic of mental health is beginning to shift in Northern Ireland, men's mental health remains a difficult area to engage. Ciaran discussed the culture of silence in relation to hegemonic standards of masculinity:

> Every kind of man that I know, it's almost seen as taboo to tell someone about your feelings. [You mentioned] high rates of suicide, and I feel that that is the case. Men don't feel like they can express themselves. Men don't feel like they can say exactly how they feel, exactly what's on their mind, what's on their heart. If you're upset about something, it's easier just to say nothing, and let it build up, build up until they feel the only way to relieve the stress is to harm themselves or take their own lives.

Ciaran said he was lucky to have male friends who were supportive and open to sharing feelings, but that he knew "plenty of men" who did not have that support or were not open to expressing their emotions. One of the counselors said men are more likely to discuss their feelings and emotions in private with a counselor than among their peers. "They want to open up…it just takes them longer socially, not personally. It's in them, but their emotional intelligence hasn't been nurtured." Ciaran considered this emotional silence a "major problem" for men and boys alike in Northern Ireland, but expressed

more concern for a population of young boys who attend the school where he teaches. He said the principal has daily briefings regarding one or more boys whose behavior and actions the staff should be conscious of, because they may be harming or killing themselves. Ciaran said, as an educator, he has dealt with students who committed suicide, and it frightened him to see the boys in his school suppress their emotions and put on a mask of bravado:

> They talk so massive, they talk so tough, and they never let up in front of their friends. They swear all the time. They talk about other things—they they talk about girls, they about *anything* they can than how they feel. You never get to see how they truly feel. I feel like that's a great tragedy and I feel like it's a massive issue. Young men do not know how to deal with their emotions and it's much, much easier for them to hurt themselves than kind of dealing with their problems or dealing with their emotions.

Ciaran further discussed the boys' use of silence as a coping mechanism, which not only resonates with the pervasive culture of silence, but also demonstrates boys striving to attain the tough, hard image of hegemonic masculinity:

> There's just this culture of "keeping your head down and get on with it. A huge culture of "don't burden people with your problems." It'll be ok in the morning" or older boys it's like, "just take a drink and forget about it." "Put on some music and forget about it." "Be tough"…. It's always got to be playing around or fighting, just on the very edge of manliness and aggression, rather than sitting around and talking about it. It's a huge problem that keeps happening because no one ever turns around and says, "You want to sit down and tell me what's wrong

> with you? If you're having a problem, tell me what's wrong, tell me what's on your mind." Even when kids are brought forward with the opportunity of allowing them to speak, very few of them take it. When they come back to class [from counseling], the bravado, the macho-man kind-of-attitude is put on straightaway. They're laughing about what's going on, and they're playing up to their friends, and they just put on a show…. They think, "don't show anyone your emotions because that's '*gay*'" or "*that's feminine*." "You're a fruit, you're a queer, you're a faggot if you show your emotions!" They just don't care at all… I worry that they genuinely don't care.

I noticed in my internship work the bravado and aloof attitude Ciaran described among some of his male students. Among the groups I worked with, there was a handful of young men, whose well-being and home life caused concern for my coworker. During our group outings, these young men's behavior and attitudes would often disrupt the functioning relationship of the overall group. My coworker and I decided to do more individual work with the young men who disrupted the group dynamic. While these young men often acted with an air of bravado and postured their toughness during our group sessions and outings, during individual sessions, they appeared quiet, sensitive, and keen on our time together, which focused exclusively on their needs and interests. These young men had difficult home situations and came from working-class communities where dissident Republican paramilitaries operated. One of the young men had a stronger Republican background than the others, but all were vulnerable to becoming involved in paramilitary activity. Further, one of the young men's mental and emotional well-being was a concern, in regard to self-harm. These young men's contrasting

behavior between public and private spheres exemplifies how the culture of silence and hegemonic masculinity are interrelated, as these young men postured a tough image among groups that did not give away the inner emotional challenges that they struggled with.

Aidan shared the story of a young man he mentored the past several years, who demonstrated similar apathy towards his personal well-being as some of Ciaran's students, and had a history of traumatic experiences. Aidan said this young man was introduced to selling drugs at an early age, and had conflicts with dissident Republican paramilitaries in his community. When he was about 13-14, the tension between the paramilitary groups and this young man escalated to the point that a death threat was issued. Aidan stayed with this young man at his home while local paramilitaries were waiting to carry out the assault. Several times, the young man tried to sneak out of the house. Aidan caught him and said, "You can't go out there! They're watching the house, waiting for you." The young man replied, "I don't give a fuck!" in defiant indifference to his safety. He was charged by the local police and attempted suicide so that he would not have to deal with the legal consequences. At the time of Aidan's interview, the young man was in a juvenile justice center, and regardless of serving time for his actions, and according to Aidan, would likely face a worse sentence when he returned to his community. Aidan anticipated that the young man would be shot by the paramilitaries before he turned 18. Aidan said the community where this young man is from is accustomed to violence that took place before, during and after the conflict, and some residents not only supported this young man's "punishment," ("I'll be watching you get

shot on your 16th birthday"), but also often took their sons to the paramilitaries for punishment.

A Pervasive Apathy

The disregard for this young men's safety and well-being is disturbing, and is not an isolated event. Youth workers engaged with young men report that parents in some communities will coordinate with the paramilitaries or take their children to "appointments," where the young person is beaten or shot as punishment for some offense. One youth worker said that there is a "societal shrug" towards paramilitary punishments, which have steadily occurred since the Good Friday Agreement, as little legal action has been carried out against the perpetrators. The youth workers claimed these situations occur most by those in low socioeconomic neighborhoods that were exposed to most of the violence during the Troubles. As the youth workers said, these communities continue to value the local policing role paramilitaries played during the conflict. The academic I spoke with said the high rates of self-harm and suicide that are prevalent among young men can be reflective of "their involvement during the conflict, other traumas experienced, and their proximity to violence during and after the Troubles." She also said Northern Ireland's post-conflict state is "ambiguous," in which people are "wanting to move on, but there's still so much grief, unanswered questions, unresolved issues, and ongoing sectarian violence."

The ambiguity of Northern Ireland's future beyond the post-conflict era is through many participants' apathy towards current politics. Many participants remain skeptical that, within their lifetime, politicians will make groundbreaking progress, as the legacy of the conflict continues to be a roadblock to policymaking. Additionally, from my

conversations with several participants, mental health professionals, and youth workers, it is feasible that social apathy has emerged, where boys and men susceptible to self-inflicted violence and paramilitary assaults, have been overlooked by the general population. As the culture of silence and traditional standards of hegemonic masculinity continue into the post-conflict era, violence has persisted, and has had a pervasive effect on boys and men's mental health and physical well-being.

CHAPTER V

"THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH BEING A MAN FROM BELFAST:" THE AMBIGUOUS PARADIGM OF MASCULINITIES[40]

> *I do feel there comes a time when a man does have to be a man and…be tough…it's hard for me to say…and I do reflect on this all the time, but….There were times in Northern Ireland in order to be a man, you had to be a member of, you know, paramilitary organizations, you had to be ready to fight, you had to be ready to go to prison, you had to be ready to* die, *you had to be tough. I feel like a lot of that still goes on now, like the kids that I teach and the people that live around me. I feel like they have to put on this kind of bravado of being tough and being intimidating, and that's not always the case, you know? There's a time to be tender and men don't realize this. (Ciaran, 2014)*

Masculinities in Northern Ireland: The Past and the Future

Ciaran was one of the first men I interviewed when I began my research three years ago. I believe his statement provides a compelling reflection of how the standards of hegemonic masculinity have been conceptualized in Northern Ireland, at least since the beginning of the Troubles, and how young men relate to these standards. Ciaran believed there is a time for men to be tough and there is a time for men to be tender, but that representations of masculinity in Northern Ireland are more productive of a tough bravado image. Ciaran spoke about masculinities in black-and-white terms. Understanding masculinities in Northern Ireland, however, particularly in the current post-conflict state, is not that simple. The central aim of this thesis has been to explore

[40] Title Credit: Ciaran.

how masculinity is conceptualized by the men who grew up during the peace process of the 1990s. I wanted to understand how this population's adolescent experiences affected their social and political identities. I also wanted to address the issue of transgenerational trauma and young men's mental health in the post-conflict state. Prior to understanding these men's experiences, I had to examine the theories of masculinity, as well as how masculinity has historically been constructed in Northern Ireland.

Theories of Masculinities

As discussed in Chapter Two, theorizing masculinities is a newer concept that has primarily been examined through Connell's (1987) concept of hegemonic masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity seeks to understand how men not only interact with one another, but also with women. Hegemonic masculinity is a cultural construct that exists in the presence of patriarchal institutions, such as the military, and is susceptible to being reconfigured and redefined as society changes. Further, through Connell's (1995) notion of complicit masculinity, many men benefit from the institutions and practices that are crucial to the development of their sense of masculinity. Connell (1995) purposes that masculinities are manifested through a hierarchy, where hegemonic masculinity is at the top and subordinate and marginalized masculinities are lower on the continuum. Men who primarily fall within subordinate or marginalized masculinity, but fit within the heteronormative, racial, or socioeconomic standards of hegemony, can strive to attain hegemony through their behavior and actions.

Connell's hierarchical model and argument that there is only one form of hegemonic masculinity has been challenged. Beasley (Hamber, 2016) suggests there are variants of hegemonic masculinity. Beasley proposes it is possible that two dominant

masculinities can exist simultaneously through supra- and sub-hegemonic forms. As masculinities constantly compete with another, hegemony is also "constantly negotiated and resisted" (26). Militarized masculinities exemplify Beasley's model of supra- and sub-hegemonic masculinity. Nagel (1998) states nationalism is a masculine institution, and so, nationalist traits are homologous with masculine ideals. In a nationalist state, militarized masculinities are likely to coexist with other constructs of masculinity, and because militarized masculinities come in various forms, one form may be more dominant during war than during peace.

Masculinities in Northern Ireland

In the context of Northern Ireland, there is competition between Catholic and Protestant communities for hegemony. There is further competition within the Protestant community, due to class and political differences, creating a hierarchy between hegemonic and marginalized masculinities. Despite different political motives, both Catholic/Nationalist/Republicans and Protestant/Unionist/Loyalists share nationalist agendas creating militarized masculinities within each society. Additionally, hegemonic masculinity in both communities has traditionally been represented through the hardman image. The ideals of the hardman embody physical and mental toughness, and emotional suppression, these values that have been historically respected within the communities. The hardman image, however, was challenged during the Troubles, due to the establishment of Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries, and the presence of militant state-sponsored security forces.

Throughout the conflict, militarized masculinities became more prevalent, and the paramilitaries gave face to a new image of hegemonic masculinity—the gunman. The

gunman took precedence over the hardman, but both were present throughout the Troubles as representations of violent hegemonic masculinities. The dual presence and acceptance of the hardman and gunman within many communities exemplifies Beasley's sub and supra hegemonic forms. Ashe (2012), however, debates whether paramilitaries exemplify hegemonic masculinity because of their controversial legitimacy within both communities. It is arguable that paramilitaries were a model of hegemonic militarized masculinity, as they were considered local defenders and well-respected in many Catholic and Protestant communities, but there is not substantial literature on paramilitaries' masculinity to assess Ashe's claim.

As the peace process began in the 1990s, the gunman became less of an ideal representation of hegemonic masculinity, and today is generally considered taboo in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, support for peacebuilding and diplomacy reconfigured the roles of many former combatants and political prisoners within their communities. While peacebuilding began to develop new representations of masculinity, sectarian violence continued in some Catholic and Protestant communities. Factions of Republican and Loyalist paramilitaries also continued to operate in the transitioning society. The ongoing presence of sectarian violence and paramilitaries has allowed violent masculinity to prevail in the post-conflict period. Further, while the gunman is not as socially accepted, it has been memorialized in vast murals on display in many communities. In addition to the gunman, the traditional ideals of the hardman have also persevered, influencing some young men's perception of masculinity, and impacting how they engage with one another and others outside their communities.

Post-Conflict Apathy

While the peace process in Northern Ireland transformed the political sphere, and ended three decades of constant violence, the Good Friday Agreement and transition towards relative peace was not met with total support. As participants described, there were conflicting reactions within both their homes and communities towards the Good Friday Agreement. The legacy of the conflict continues to affect people daily. With unresolved injustices, unaddressed traumas, and sectarian violence still present, it has been argued that Northern Ireland's post-conflict era is ambiguous, without clear direction of where the region is headed. This ambiguity, along with the legacy of the conflict, has arguably led to the "pervasive, violent apathy" among younger generations that Peadar described.

Many participants' political engagement contradicted their political attitudes. On one hand, most of the participants I interviewed were politically active, and were breaking the voting mold of older generations by not following a specific party that represented their ethnonationalist background. On the other hand, while many participants were politically active, several felt disengaged from the system and were apathetic towards the results. A possible explanation for the duality between being politically active, but politically apathetic could be the frustration with the performance of post-conflict politics, in which, as my interviewees stated, the government continues to argue the same "orange and green politics," rather than focusing on immediate issues that affect entire communities. Despite the political apathy and frustration, a few of the participants had hope that the post-conflict generation would change the focus and face of Northern Ireland's politics, as older generations begin to die.

In the meantime, the legacy of the conflict and an engrained culture of silence has potentially impacted the mental health and well-being of many young men raised during and after the peace process. This transgenerational phenomenon is exemplified by the increase in male suicide trends since the Good Friday Agreement, as the number of suicides doubled between 1997 and 2006, increasing from 138 suicides recorded to 291 (Tomlinson, 2007). The current rate of male suicide is 25.24 per 100,000 (Tomlinson, 2013)—the highest in the UK (Scowcroft, 2017)—with males aged 25-29 being the highest reported age group in 2015 (Scowcroft 2017). Paramilitary punishments continue to take place in some communities. Since 1990, over 4,300 beatings and shootings have been reported, with 98% of victims being male and 20-29 being the average age (Kennedy, 2014; Torney, May 20, 2016 *RTÉ)*. As these assaults continue in the post-conflict era, they demonstrate the pervasive violence that Peadar mentioned, in which the brutality of paramilitary "punishment" beatings and shootings can have harmful effects on boys and men's physical, emotional, and mental health. Additionally, participants and professionals I interviewed stated that there has not been a proactive social response to assist young men vulnerable to physical and mental harms, exemplifying the possibility of a social apathy in Northern Ireland that is consequential for them.

An Ambiguous Paradigm: Hegemonic Masculinity in Northern Ireland Today

I suggest that the ambiguity of Northern Ireland's post-conflict society extends to an ambiguous construction of masculinities in the transitioned state. Participants I interviewed described multiple influences that have shaped their identities as men today, including: parents, other family members, mentors, music, political and religious ideologies, communities of support (bands, church), experiences during school and

university, and experiences abroad. Analyzing participants interviews, it is clear to me that there are no definitive singular standards of hegemonic masculinity in Northern Ireland today. The interviewees did suggest to me that men raised during the peace process perceive masculinity differently than earlier generations, suggesting a change in the conceptualization of Northern Irish masculinity.

Several participants described their personal definition of masculinity in traditional terms that resonated with the hardman image that has been predominant throughout generations. Participants learned this traditional construct from their fathers or grandfathers, and some discussed experiencing pressure at school to attain this construction of masculinity. Liam provided a specific description of the pressures he dealt with as a young man, which not only supported the hardman image, but as Liam said, are still experienced by many young men today. These pressures included being heterosexual, being sexually active, being strong, consuming alcohol, and active in sports. As adults, however, the hard image and the pressures described by Liam did not always resonate with participants' practice of masculinity. For example, some participants' careers in youth work clashed with the traditional model of men doing manual labor. Furthermore, all participants had experiences of witnessing or being a victim of sectarian violence, and had memories of the militarized landscape from their childhood and adolescence. Participants described either fighting back or avoiding the conflict altogether. For some participants, the Troubles did not have a strong impact on their adolescent identity, as it was not discussed in school or at home. The infamous gunman and militarized masculinities that were predominant during the Troubles were not noted influences for the men I interviewed. Aidan and Rob described there was the

possibility they could have become involved with Republican or Loyalist paramilitaries, but their parents intervened. However, Aidan, Liam, and Paul's experiences of working with young men, as well as other youth workers I met during my fieldwork, showed that paramilitaries continue to be aspirational images of power for some young men.

In addition to challenging traditional standards of hegemonic masculinity, several participants were proponents of breaking the engrained culture of silence that is eminent among boys and men. Experiences at university and abroad not only broadened their perceptions beyond their ethnonationalist background, but also taught some of these men the disadvantages of hegemonic masculinity. These participants believed men should be emotionally conscientious and open to communication. For older generations of men, there was limited opportunity to leave their communities or travel outside of Northern Ireland. Some men I interviewed said they have a different relationship with the global community than did older generations, and these experiences influenced their notions of masculinity. Through education, youth and community work, these men sought to change how young men perceive themselves and engage with others from within and outside their communities. As Northern Ireland's peace process encouraged cross-community relations and peacebuilding, new constructions of masculinity emerged that discouraged violence.

These new constructions, however, are challenged by both traditional masculinity and the pervasive violent and militarized masculinities that continue to be prevalent in the post-conflict state. Therefore, a new representation of hegemonic masculinity has not emerged to take precedence over the hardman or gunman image, leaving the conceptualization of masculinity vague, ambiguous, and contested in the post-conflict

era. Although multiple masculinities are present and coexist in Northern Ireland, in the context of the Troubles, the masculinities that had existed prior to the conflict and the masculinities that emerged out of the conflict are all problematic in their competition for hegemony. Meaning, while multiple masculinities were striving to be *the* dominant masculinity, all were under duress and each have been contested throughout the Troubles, the peace process, and in the post-conflict period. Further, I argue that the relationships between contested, vague, "unreliable" images of masculinity have led to confusion of being male and this, in turn, along with the cultural practice of suppressing emotional issues, has had a negative impact on young men's mental health.

Looking Forward

The Fundamentals of Education

Given the above argument, I asked my interviewees for their recommendations participants regarding sectarianism, reduce young men's vulnerability to physical and mental harm. Almost all of them—participants and professionals—said education is the most crucial arena for development. Participants and professionals discussed education proposals to help address these issues: concentrated initiatives by the government to integrate schools, incorporating mental health into education and counseling schools, and programs to nurture boys' emotional intelligence.

In the post-conflict state, young Protestant boys' academic underachievement has been a serious concern for educators and researchers (Harland & McCready, 2012, McManus, 2015). As a teacher, Ciaran spoke passionately about this issue:

> It is a massive, massive fact that a culture of young Protestant boys [are] underachieving, and I'm talking *grossly,* grossly, *massive* underachievement in

schools. They're being outperformed by Catholic counterparts on both gender, I feel that this is a shame, you know these boys should not be behind.

Ciaran, as well as Liam, Paul, Jacob, Rob, and professionals I spoke with, equated part of the problem to the loss of large industries in Northern Ireland that had historically guaranteed employment for Protestant males. The other part of the problem Ciaran equated with segregated schools, which he felt was abhorrent in the post-conflict era:

> I feel that this is hugely indicative of the problem having separate schools. If schools were integrated, it'd solve two problems. The first problem is purely an academic problem. Once you have these kids mixing together and they move towards a common goal of, "Okay, we'll go through this together. We'll move side-by-side. We'll do our exams together. We'll go to university together." The second [problem integration] solves is…the fear of the unknown, the other. At my school, there are kids who say, "I hate Huns and if I ever saw a Hun, I'd kill him!" or "There better be no Huns coming around here, or we'll get them." And they've never *met* a Protestant! I feel like at the end of the day, they're all kids. They all breathe the same air. They share the same spaces. They live in the same areas. They all share the same interests. So, segregating the schools elevates growing up into our society and having a fear of the other…. I can honestly see no viable, *no* logical reason for keeping schools segregated. It reminds me of the 60s in America, where they had schools segregated because of race. To think it's 2014 and this is still going on…its…I don't even know the word for it…*barbaric* almost. It's grotesque that this has happened, that the kids are separated on the grounds of their religion that their parents!

Although the Good Friday Agreement promised to "facilitate and encourage" integrated education and housing, only 7% of children are enrolled in maintained or controlled integrated schools, allowing stereotypes and fears of the "other" to go unchallenged. [41]

"The fear of the other" is a struggle Liam often has with young Protestant men he works with in Derry. Liam told me a story of two young Protestant men he was helping to find employment. The jobs the young men found were in the Cityside, which worried the young men, who were fearful of leaving the predominately Protestant Waterside. Liam said this is an example of how prevalent "the fear of the other" is for many people. Part of Jacob's job as an education and outreach coordinator was to arrange lectures at Catholic and Protestant schools. He taught young people the history and tradition of Protestant bands, and attempting to undercut the image of those bands as sectarian. Jacob emphasized to students (and other people) that he is not just a bandsman; rather, he is a musician, which he hoped is encouraging for young people. Jacob's organization has struggled to work with schools in developing musical clubs or classes that teach Protestant Unionist songs, due to the schools' concerns with Protestant bands' sectarian history. Despite current opposition from schools, Jacob was determined to continue educating young people from both communities and help change the personification of Protestant bands and bandsmen.

[41] "Integrated Schools." Department of Education, Northern Ireland: https://www.education-ni.gov.uk/articles/integrated-schools. While many children attend traditionally Protestant and Catholic schools, Paul discussed the demographic of some Protestant secondary schools has changed. Paul attended a traditionally Protestant school in Derry as an adolescent, where the student population was about 95% Protestant, but according to Paul, the population is currently about 40% Catholic. This particular school is an example of some of the social progress Northern Ireland has made since 1998, but as stated by Ciaran, there is a substantial need for further improvement that could be beneficial to young Protestant men's educational needs now and in the future.

I asked mental health professionals what could be done to help to reduce the male self-harm and suicide trends that have risen in the post-conflict era. All of them advocated the "nurturing" of young boys' emotional intelligence and developing curriculum in schools and communities to foster an understanding of mental health and coping with trauma. The academic I met with believed individuals should be screened and identified for mental health disorders prior to school in order to provide the "most appropriate academic support throughout their education and social development." She also believed community workshops should be developed for parents who were actively involved in the conflict and/or suffered trauma from it. She proposed that these workshops would provide "basic parenting information and skills to help their babies develop a sense of emotional intelligence, and build their own to become better parents to this child." These proposals would help "reduce the child's risk of self-harm, suicide, or violent and/or anti-social behavior." She suggested that emotional intelligence would help alleviate some of the impact transgenerational trauma has had in Northern Ireland, and help boys and men feel more comfortable expressing and communicating their feelings.

Although many participants and professionals believed changes in education would help Northern Ireland's post-conflict state and the male population, Liam was skeptical if or how the present culture could change with hegemonic masculinity's continuous influence on young men's behaviors and actions. He reiterated the seductive allure of hegemonic masculinity:

> "It's *so* seductive, but, again, there doesn't seem to be any great practical usefulness to being that way. It's a changing world and there's still such a lack of

> understanding of how to behave in a way that doesn't mean you're conforming to the dominant form of masculinity. Something *has* to change…there's *so* much evidence out there that trying to be a man is killing us. I think about this stuff *all* the time, and it's sad, but to try and say anything else to you, I would be lying.

Regardless of hegemonic masculinity, Harland and McCready (2012) advocate that policymakers, educators, youth workers, and social and health professionals engage with young men in an encouraging manner, rather than blaming them for misconduct. Within schools, Harland and McCready state that the, "the culture of the school" should nurture "a sense of connection and encourage and foster responsibility for [the] self and others" (89). Harland and McCready also suggest teachers need to become mindful of their relationship with male students and the outside circumstances that may affect young men's behavior and actions.

Future Research and Perspective

The purpose of this thesis was to contribute to the growing subject of masculinities in Northern Ireland and the scant research on young men's experiences growing up during the 1990s' peace process. At the start of my research, I intended to interview an equal number of Catholic and Protestant participants, but was only able to interview a few Protestant men. Protestant masculinities alone are complex, as there is competition not only between different Protestant social classes, but there is also competition against Catholic masculinities. The complexity of Protestant masculinities and the growing concern of young Protestant boys' academic underperformance provide the opportunity for more concentrated research. This focused analysis would provide

insight into how Protestant masculinities have changed since the end of the Troubles, and what issues young Protestant men have in their communities today.

Additionally, further research needs to be conducted on the age group I examined in my research. Focusing on this age group would provide greater knowledge on the social and mental impacts Northern Ireland's transitional process is having on this population. The understudied subject of masculinities during and after conflict is not exclusive to Northern Ireland, as masculinities continues to be understudied in the wider context of intrastate conflicts. Further research on male populations growing up in transitional periods of conflict in both Northern Ireland and other countries would provide invaluable information on how masculinities are reconfigured during this time and the issues male populations face during and after societal transition. Developing this research allows the opportunity for cross-cultural analysis and better understanding of how masculinities are constructed in conflict and post-conflict areas, providing social and mental health professionals and policymakers insight on how to assist male populations. Additionally, because my research did not take social identities such as class, race, and sexuality, as well as male/female relationships, future research should be more perceptive to these factors, as they provide further complexity and critical insight into understanding how masculinities are conceptualized in Northern Ireland. Overall, there are numerous avenues for researching masculinities in Northern Ireland that have not been explored.

Throughout my fieldwork, I wondered how my gender and nationality were affecting the recruitment and interview process. Ciaran and Liam were especially intrigued that "an American girl" was interested in Northern Ireland, let alone men's experiences and mental health. I thought my outsider image would be advantageous in

finding men to interview. It is possible that some men felt uncomfortable speaking to a woman, but it is also likely that the subject matter was too personal and made them uncomfortable. A few participants said to me they found the experience enlightening, since I was interested in discussing more than Northern Ireland's past and present political affairs than they were used to. One participant took the interview quite personally and enjoyed reflecting on his experiences with me because he said that I "actually cared." I thoroughly enjoyed meeting and speaking with these different men, and believe more concentrated effort should be undertaken to engage with the boys and men most pressured by hegemonic masculinity. In my experience, I found that once men were given the opportunity to tell their stories, many surprisingly shared more than I had anticipated, and seemed to be relieved to get some thoughts "off their mind."

"Being a Man in Northern Ireland"

At the conclusion of their interviews, a few participants provided a personal anecdote summing up their thoughts on the different themes we discussed. It feels appropriate for me to conclude this thesis with some of their voices. Ciaran had a memorable quip for the men of his generation:

> There's nothing wrong with being a man, as long as you don't always feel the need to pigeonhole yourself into one identity from another, as long as you still have to be Nationalist/Catholic man, or a Loyalist/Protestant man, or a hardman, a sporty-man, an athlete, a fighting man, whatever it is, as long as you are just happy enough, as long as you are willing to live your life and be flexible, and be open to other people, and be *open* to *change*…. There's nothing wrong with being

> a man from Belfast, there's nothing wrong with being a man in Northern Ireland, as long as you are willing to just *chill the fuck out*!

Aidan reflected on the future of his child. Indeed, he was the only participant who mentioned both having and raising children.[42] He was concerned that he would not have the same foresight with his child as his parents had raising him:

> That would be one of the big challenges for me, especially where I come from and raising a child of my own, and now knowing my wee boy is going to be growing up with that, what can I do to try to stop it? You know, am I going to be smart enough or as aware enough as my mother and father were, in relation to paramilitaries and stuff, and keeping me into integrated schools? Am I going to be that quick when it comes to [my son]? Am I going to think those things through as well? Is he going to come out the other side better, or is he going to get caught up in the loop? Every parent hopes that their child doesn't go through the same shit, but he probably will, but I can be a wee bit more in touch, and make sure it might be an easier process for him. I don't know if that will prevent it, or make it better, but you just have to hope for the best, and make sure that that no matter what he chooses, or what he wants to do, [he knows] that I'll always love him either way. Society doesn't…well… fuck society, like! You know it'll be up to him to find his own, you know as long he has my love and support behind him, then he should be able to do alright.

Aidan's main priority was to focus on raising his son and giving back to his community through his youth work, rather than dwelling on an uncertain future. Aidan's tough

[42] Daniel did not any children of his own, but he discussed that he has thought about how he would raise a child, in terms of their ethnonationalist identity.

experiences and the dynamics of his masculinity will be fundamentally influential on his child's developing perception of post-conflict Northern Ireland. His son is two generations removed from the end of the Troubles. As he becomes a young man, I expect that the legacy of the conflict will be less pervasive on his physical and mental health, and hope that the paradigm of hegemonic masculinity will be less violent, more communicative, and more emotionally receptive.

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic/General Background

1. How old were you in 1994 and in 1998?
2. Where did you grow up? or Where were you living in 1994 and 1998?
3. Do you identify with a political party? If yes, which one?
4. Do your parents share the same political identity or party affiliation as you?
5. Do you have a religious affiliation? If yes, which one?
6. Do your parents share the same religious identity as you?

Informal Interview

1. What do you recall of the 1994 and 1996 paramilitary ceasefires and the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA) in 1998?
2. How did you feel towards this events?
    a. What were the attitudes your family, peers, or community felt towards the ceasefires and the GFA?
3. What factors or events in your life have been significant in shaping your identity? (family, community, politics, religion, art, sports/hobbies, relationships, school, work, etc.)
4. What was the role of young men in your community, in the 1990s?
    a. What were the expectations of you as a young man (within family or community)?
    b. How have these roles or expectations changed since your adolescence?
        i. What is your role now in comparison to your adolescence and the role of men your age at that time (1990s)?
5. How have these roles and expectations impacted your definition of masculinity?
    a. What other factors have been influential in constructing this definition?
6. What were some of the societal challenges you dealt with as a young man?
    a. Were these challenges shared by your peers?
    b. How did these challenges impact other areas of your life, both then and now?
        i. Dependent upon participant's response:
            1. Did these challenges ever impact you emotionally or mentally?
            2. How did you cope with these challenges?
            3. Did you ever seek help (from friends, family, teachers/mentors, community, etc.) in handling and overcoming these challenges?
            4. How do you cope with societal challenges today?
    c. Are these societal challenges still experienced by young men today?
        i. If yes, how do young men today cope with these challenges?
        ii. If no, what are the challenges experienced by young men today?

7. How have the challenges and issues young men experience in Northern Ireland been dealt with?
    a. During your adolescence, for your generation now, and for younger generations of young men.
    b. What are the steps or approaches that have been taken to benefit young men of different generations in Northern Ireland today?

Dependent upon participant's response: what other steps or approaches can be done to benefit young men of different generations?

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