VERBAL AND VISUAL SYMBOLISM IN NORTHERN IRISH CULTURAL IDENTITY

By

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Chair
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abstract

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The ongoing political conflict in Northern Ireland has led to a social separation between the Catholics and Protestants of the region. Because of this division, cultural traditions have become associated with one side or the other. Most of the residents of Northern Ireland claim to be able to decipher to some extent whether someone is Protestant or Catholic within a few minutes of speaking with the individual. Discussed in this paper will be the relationship between symbolism and identity in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Included in this analysis are characteristics of names, appearance, demeanor, sports, apparel, and other cultural elements that are associated with either Protestants or Catholics. The importance and purpose of these links are also discussed.
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father;
for without their patience (and loans) it would not have been possible.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

The Republic of Ireland received its independence from the United Kingdom in 1921. Because of the relatively high population of British Protestants in the northern portion of the island, the North was partitioned and remained within the British Union. This partition created what is officially known as Northern Ireland and has led to political and civil unrest.

Figure 1: Map of Ireland (Lonely Planet 2004)
Preface to Understanding Irish Identity

There has been much academic discussion about the violence that has occurred in Northern Ireland for the past thirty-some years. The conflict in Northern Ireland is not simply a religious conflict, and is in fact considered more of an ethnic conflict. Essentially, the disagreement lies in who has the right to control the North of Ireland. Opposing political factions, Unionists and Nationalists, typically associate themselves with contrasting ethnic ancestry. Residents of Belfast whose ancestors landed as early settlers from England or Scotland during the past four centuries are most often Protestant, while those of Irish descent are generally Catholic. Protestants are typically Unionists, a political designation for those who wish to remain part of Britain, while Catholics are typically Nationalists, those who wish to unite all of Ireland. This intermixing of self-categorizations leads to a menagerie of possible combinations of ethnic, religious, and political identities. Yet generally, the identifying characteristics that are grouped together above are stereotyped as coinciding. Therefore, religious, cultural, and political terms are used interchangeably to describe the same stereotypical group of opposing residents of Northern Ireland.

For the purpose of this paper and in accordance with Bryan (2000), I will use the terms “Protestant” and “Catholic” to refer to ethnic identification. Bryan (2000) has described these ethnic categories as “not all encompassing and [they] are constantly being worked, understood and developed by different interests” (16). Yet despite this ambiguity, the terms are useful to describe the general population divide. These terms do not necessarily refer to highly religious, church-going people. They are better understood as ‘ethnic’ labels, with members sharing the same cultural tradition and history.
The ‘Real’ Irish Question

“…the true enigma is not why so many have died: rather, it is why so few have been killed.”

(Leyton 1974: 185)

The current phase of violence, beginning in the late 1960s, is the most recent in a series of episodes that have plagued the island for centuries. Violence has decreased since a paramilitary ceasefire was called in 1994 and negotiations for the Peace Agreement continue. Yet between July 14, 1969 and December 31, 2001, 3,523 people have lost their lives due to the conflict, and tens of thousands have been injured (Sutton 2001). While this figure may sound appalling, it is minuscule when compared to the death rate in Somalia, where ethnic conflict led to the death of 350,000 people between 1978 and 1997 (Center for Defense Information 1998). Unlike other areas of ethnic strife, Northern Ireland has not exploded into all out civil war (Bryan 2003: Personal Communication). I present an illustration of how the residents of Belfast, the largest city in Northern Ireland, have dealt with the tension that has persisted throughout years of conflict.

While researching my family history in Ireland in 2001, I found social interaction in Belfast interesting and seemingly contradictory. The bigotry I had expected to see was blatant in the graffiti that embellished the walls of some areas of Belfast. However, the city infamous for sectarian civil war was peaceful and friendly. This warmth was most apparent on September 11, 2001 with the news of the terrorist attacks on America. Protestant and Catholic Belfast residents alike, familiar with terrorist violence, sympathized with America collectively. This
seemingly conflicting social relationship intrigued me. How do people living amongst such social tension appear to get along relatively well?

Most of the residents of Belfast, although they have different ideas regarding the political and social future of the North of Ireland, remain peaceful using culture specific social strategies to maintain civility within their personal and social realm. I am not suggesting that the social strategy employed by the residents of Belfast controls the level of ethnic violence. I do, however, suggest that these social skills may contribute to keeping the peace within individual social spheres.

Many of the Belfast residents I interviewed emphasized that they have many friends of the other religion, and that they all get along. Yet the fact that they are aware of their friends’ religion is interesting (Bryan 2003: Personal Communication). It is considered inappropriate to ask one’s religion, yet actors in Belfast society are generally aware of others’ religious affiliation. From this information, Belfast residents can assume others’ political and ethnic background. Or, political and ethnic identity of others can be theorized, which can then lead to assumptions of their religious affiliation. This thesis explores the social phenomenon of assuming identity in the religiously segregated community of Belfast.

People living in Northern Ireland have learned to cope with constant rioting, violence, and sectarian divisions in residence, schooling, and occupation. I suggest that, as a way of coping with this sectarian division, it is necessary for Belfast residents to know a stranger’s religious and political affiliation. This knowledge may help minimize violence between newly introduced strangers by establishing awareness of whether or not political or prejudicial language may be used.
Specific Aims

It has been demonstrated (Burton 1978, Harris 1972, Parker 1993) that Protestants and Catholics in Northern Ireland believe they can tell a stranger’s religious and political affiliation through verbal and visual cues. Some of these cues include name, appearance, personality, residence, and verbal signifiers. It has also been documented that, if one’s religious affiliation is not indicated by these signs, subtle questions are posed, deliberately phrased to discover affiliation (Parker 1993). I will examine these identifying cues and deliberate inquiries in order to explore the following research questions:

1. What are the acknowledged names, social attributes, characteristics of appearance and demeanor, terminology, and residential markings associated with the different religious and political factions?
2. How accurate do Belfast residents feel they are at categorizing others?
3. How important is the social practice of categorization to Belfast residents, and what are the major reasons for these practices?

My hypothesis is that Belfast residents incorporate interpretations of identifying cues into every aspect of their social lives. The main purpose of this shared practice is to maintain social civility in a conflicted community. This symbolism seems to be an acknowledged phenomenon among researchers and residents of Northern Ireland, yet these symbols have not been fully examined, especially in today’s context. This thesis analyzes the ability of Protestants and Catholics to decipher religious and political affiliation, the characteristics of identity markers, and the importance they play in daily life. This research will contribute to the awareness of the
causes of ethnic strife in Northern Ireland and may lead to a better understanding of religious and political symbolism and the construction of identity.
CHAPTER TWO
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Historical events play key roles in interpreting symbols of identity in Belfast. Protestants and Catholics view Irish history very differently, and historical events are interpreted and established as an important part of their identity. One group’s historical hero is another’s villain, just as one group’s freedom fighter is another’s terrorist.

Early Invasion

Ulster, the most northerly of the four provinces of Ireland, remained relatively uninfluenced by outside forces and retained its Gaelic tradition for longer than the southern portion of Ireland. Despite the assertions of English monarchs of their power over Ulster, the poor soil and marshland wilderness made it difficult to attract settlers.

Ulster was initially impacted greatly by Viking raids beginning in the ninth century, but the Ulster kings were able to succeed in numerous counterattacks that transferred the focus of further raids to the south. These raids encouraged the unification of the provincial rulers of Ireland to create a high-kingship, with one king ruling Ireland. However, this unification led to conflict as provincial kings allied and collided with each other in an attempt to seize the high-kingship during the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

One such king, Dermont MacMurrough, the King of Leinster, allied with King Henry II of England in an attempt to seize the high-kingship of Ireland. King Henry II granted MacMurrough permission to recruit assistance from his Norman barons, who eagerly pledged their support to MacMurrough in exchange for land and status.
With the death of MacMurrough in 1171, Henry II arrived to secure his control of Ireland with such a large force that no resistance was offered. All of the Irish kings, except two rulers in northern Ireland, the Cenél Eóghain and Cenél Conaill rulers, submitted to Henry’s control. Henry made Dublin the capital of his lordship of Ireland and colonized Ireland with men of unwavering loyalty. In his absence, control could not be maintained and the Normans were pushed back to a small area around their capital known as “the Pale”. Beyond “the Pale”, new landowners intermarried with native Irish people, adopting their language and culture. As early as the 14th Century, the Anglo-Normans established laws prohibiting this assimilation.

With the accession of King Henry VIII to the throne, Ulster was dramatically changed. The partition between “the Pale” and “beyond the Pale” was to be erased and all Gaelic lords were to hold land by English feudal law. With Henry VIII’s adoption of Protestantism, Catholic relics were burned and the well-established Catholic monastery system throughout Ireland was dissolved.

Fearing that Ulster’s Gaelic lords were conspiring with England’s continental enemies, Elizabeth I was inclined to assert her power over Ulster. Throughout the Nine Years War in the late sixteenth century, traitorous battles ensued between the Gaelic lords and Queen Elizabeth’s forces. Although the Gaelic forces, under the leadership of Hugh O’Neill and with assistance from the Spanish, were initially successful, a decisive battle in 1601 shifted favor to the English. The Treaty of Mellifont had promised Gaelic rights to the land. However, bitterness and mistrust led to the failure of this treaty. The Gaelic lords of Ulster would not accept English government and law easily after fighting so hard against it.
The Plantation Scheme

With little hope for the future, their lands divided, and rumors of threats on the life of the Gaelic lords of Ulster, many exiled themselves to Spain. In 1607, these Gaelic lords’ lands were confiscated and the plantation scheme began. Land was divided into precincts and subdivided into estates. Conditions for occupancy included that all undertakers were to clear their estates of all native Irish inhabitants (Bardon 2001: 125). Attempts by James I to remove natives from settlers’ estates was in vain. The Gaelic Irish were laborers and tenants, and were too useful to the colonists to evict.

In an era of colonial expansion, James I saw many advantages to establishing a plantation in Ulster beside the potential earnings. He could reward at little cost those who had claims on his patronage, and an Ulster populated by loyal Protestants would limit risk of foreign invasion. Many Protestant settlers of all classes arrived from England and Scotland.

The Gaelic Irish were unhappy due to the lack of security of tenure, high rents, and reduction of status. In 1641, they rebelled against the settlers of Ulster. The massacre was violent as the Gaelic Irish fought for their lands back from the Scottish and English Protestants. Fighting continued with great success on the side of the Irish until Charles I was executed in 1649 and Oliver Cromwell arrived in Ulster. In retribution for the massacre of 1641, Cromwell’s forces brutally overtook Ulster. Thousands of Irish rebels were executed and around 15,000 were exiled (Bardon 2001: 141). Cromwell confiscated the land of many thousands of Irish and forced them to abandon their homes and their land and relocate to west of the River Shannon (Duffy 2000:116). The Gaelic nobility had ended in Ulster, laying the foundations for the Protestant aristocracy.
During the late seventeenth century, greater numbers of colonists began arriving in Ulster, this time mainly from England. For the most part, newcomers and natives intermingled. Many Gaelic families dropped the ‘O’ and ‘Mac’ from their names and became Protestant, while many Protestants married natives and became Catholic. Thus religious affiliations, rather than bloodlines, became the emblem of ethnic division.

**The Battle of the Boyne**

With the accession of the Catholic King James II in England in 1685, and the subsequent threat to English nobility, the Protestant aristocracy in England sought aid from William of Orange, the husband of English princess, Mary. James fled to France when William arrived in England with a formidable Dutch army in 1688. When James arrived in Ireland with his own French army, Protestants in Ulster sought sanctuary in the city of Derry. The siege at Derry, still a controversial event today, lasted 105 days, with James’ forces starving 15,000 Protestants to death (Bardon 2001: 156). The siege of Derry ended when reinforcements arrived from William’s army.

Ulster was soon cleared of Jacobites as William’s forces drove them south where they waited for French reinforcements. Even though James had French support, the Williamites were 10,000 men stronger and had better firepower than James’ forces (Bardon 2001: 163). The Williamites pursued the Jacobites south until they met north of ‘Dublin. The Battle of the Boyne and the Williamites subsequent victory on July 12th, 1690 was the decisive battle in Irish history that determined the future of Irish politics. When news of the victory reached the Protestant supporters in Ulster, they set celebratory bonfires, which they have continued to do every year since then, even to the present day.
To most of the Protestant population of Belfast today, the 12th of July is the largest celebration of the year. The majority of Catholics, however, usually leave Belfast for the Republic of Ireland on this day so they do not have to witness the celebration of their historic defeat.

**The Eighteenth Century**

Penal Laws were passed in the early eighteenth century by the Irish parliament, who represented the plantation owners, in order to strip affluent Catholic men of political and economic power (Bardon 2001: 169). Catholics were forbidden from buying land or owning property valued at more than five pounds. Rent was high for Catholics and restrictions were placed on leases. Catholics were forbidden from voting, holding public office, sitting on grand juries, bearing arms, and educating their children. In addition, restrictions were placed on the practice of their religion and, in many cases, Catholic clergy were persecuted. Many affluent Irish Catholics converted to Protestantism in order to keep their land (Moody and Martin 2001: 178). Most of the Irish Catholic population, however, were poor to begin with and had no property nor any power to be taken away. These Penal Laws brought about the highly privileged elite Protestant class. Catholics did, however, invest their capital during the eighteenth century in commercial ventures, which raised some Catholics to middle class status (Bardon 2001: 169). The Penal Laws continued until the late eighteenth century when the influence of the Enlightenment increased tolerance and led to the repeal of most of the laws.

Many landowning Presbyterian Scots and enlightened Protestants challenged the Protestant ascendancy and fought for equal rights for Catholics. Several of the greatest supporters of relaxation of the Penal Laws were Protestants from Ulster. Populations of
Catholics and Protestants in Ulster were fairly equal, so the fear held throughout other areas of Ireland of a Catholic majority was absent. The Belfast representatives, however, could not convince their fellow delegates to allow Catholics the right to vote.

The Protestant ascendency in Ireland was in danger. The struggle for equal rights and suffrage for Catholics threatened Protestant power. The Enlightenment led to a struggle to reform British control and gain legislative independence for Ireland. Catholics and Protestants were in competition with each other, especially in Ulster, for land. These threats led to the formation of a Protestant armed group called the ‘Peep O’Day Boys’ in the late eighteenth century, and the Catholic counterpart, ‘the Defenders’. Violence between these two gangs was intense (Duffy 2000: 139). Also formed in the late eighteenth century was the Orange Order, an oath-based fraternity that pledged to defend ‘the King and his heirs so long as he or they support the Protestant Ascendancy’ (Bardon 2001: 226). The United Irishmen, an enlightened body of both Protestants and Catholics that initially formed to fight for equal rights and Irish legislative independence, became an oath-based revolutionary body as well, whose goal had evolved to fight for an Irish Republic.

With rumors of a revolution planned by the United Irishmen, the parliament imposed martial law, giving the courts power to execute those found guilty of administering unlawful oaths and to exonerate the many magistrates who had exceeded their powers. The Yeomanry, a volunteer army set up by the British for the defense of their homeland, was established in Ireland in 1796. The Yeomanry consisted almost exclusively of Protestant men, many belonging to the Orange Order.

Military searches began in Belfast and surrounding areas, with officials confiscating weapons and ammunition, and arresting or executing almost all of the leading revolutionaries.
Yeomen were let loose on the countryside, burning houses and beating suspected revolutionaries. By the end of 1797, the campaign nearly obliterated the United Irishman in Ulster. The spirit of insurrection was dead in Ulster, and the Catholics now had Protestant neighbors armed by the government.

Fear of an independent Ireland allying with France against Britain motivated Westminster to create the United Kingdom of England and Ireland. Lord Cornwallis was sent to Ireland in order to force through legislation the uniting of Britain and Ireland. Through bribery and corruption, the Irish Parliament passed the Act of Union Bill in 1800 and voted itself out of existence (Bardon 2001: 237-239). The new Union Jack incorporated Saint Patrick’s cross into its design. For the majority of the population, although highly opposed to the Bill, were not impacted greatly by its implementation. Yet with the increasing occasions of famine and disease, it would be vital to Ulster politics.

The Nineteenth Century

The violence of the 1790s continued into the nineteenth century. The debate for Catholic suffrage continued, yet could not be resolved. Membership in sectarian gangs increased. Around 20,000 Yeomen were stationed in Ulster, nearly all Protestant Orangemen (Bardon 2001: 253). The Order became more respected as upper classes were persuaded to join.

The British Government, while appreciating what the Orange Order was doing on their behalf, began to take action when reports surfaced of intimidation and blatant partiality of Orange magistrates. The government set up a mobile constabulary and magistrates independent of local politics to help achieve justice. In addition, laws were passed in an attempt to ensure peace. The Unlawful Societies Act outlawed most sectarian organizations, and led the upper
class members of the Orange Order to disassociate themselves with the movement. The Party Processions Act of 1832 outlawed Orange demonstrations. The Orange Order was feeling pressure from the government and, now increasing deserted by the upper classes, had lost most of its power and respect, which would not return for another 50 years.

In 1826, hundreds of tenants went against their landlords’ instructions and voted in favor of pro-suffrage members of government. As a result, Catholic suffrage was achieved by 1829. Catholics could now vote and sit in Parliament. Many Irish Protestants did not accept this and violence ensued in Ulster.

After achieving Catholic suffrage, the next objective for the Nationalists was to achieve a more independent Ireland. Violence ensued in Belfast in 1841 with the campaign for the repeal of the Union and the reestablishment of Dublin’s parliament. It was feared by Protestants that repealing the Union would bring economic instability, as Ulster’s prosperity was due to Protestant enterprise and British imperial markets. The issue would be delayed, however, with the tragedy of famine in the mid-1800s.

Many cottiers throughout Ireland were poor before the potato blight arrived in the 1840s. Potatoes were the staple of poor land tenants because they produced the greatest yield for the land used. The potato blight ravaged this important crop and led to the death of around a million people, with an additional million emigrating to the United States and Britain. While Ulster was not hit as hard by the Potato Famine as the rest of Ireland, some 224,000 people died in Ulster and 40% of Ireland’s emigrates came from Ulster (Bardon 2001: 307-308).

Relief efforts by the British Government were delayed and had little success once implemented. Public works programs were set up to provide wages for the poor, yet many were turned away from the workhouses, for they became greatly overcrowded. Death rates were
appalling as disease became rampant. Some 3,020,000 people depended on soup kitchens, yet they were closed prematurely in 1847 by the British government (Bardon 2001: 299). Some landlords relaxed on rents and provided food for their tenants, while others objected to wasting public money on works programs and evicted their tenants. From 1849 to 1850, at least 36,000 families were evicted from their land holdings (Duffy 2000: 164-165).

The British government contributed less than half the cost to the relief of the famine, the rest came from Ireland itself. Westminster’s contribution was 7 million dollars (Bardon 2001: 300). Some people today see this contribution as adequate, as no European state at that time had ever taken such strong action to combat the affects of famine. Yet others view this contribution as negligible when it is pointed out that the United Kingdom’s annual tax revenue in the late 1840s was around 53 million and that 69.3 million was spent on the Crimean War (Bardon 2001: 300).

Some Nationalist explanations of the famine assert that during its height, from 1846 to 1851, Ireland produced enough food to sufficiently feed the starving people, yet this food was exported (Ó Ciosáin 2001: 107). Some also argue that the British Government used the famine to their advantage by deliberately allowing these exports of food in order to reduce the population of Ireland (107). Some argue that the British Government wanted the control of, and therefore responsibility for, Ireland, yet they did nothing to support the inhabitants when the famine arrived (Ó Dwyer 2001).

Several Catholic explanations state that the famine was used by Protestant evangelists to convert the hungry (Ó Ciosáin 2001: 108). Food relief is said to have been conditional, dependent on conversion to Protestantism (Duffy 2000: 161). In addition, because the majority of poor tenants were Catholic, the majority of deaths came from Catholic families. This
historical viewpoint has been adopted by some Nationalists, and many wall murals depict the famine as a Catholic holocaust.

The issue of Home Rule polarized Ulster politics in the 1880s. The Irish Parliamentary Party, led by a Protestant man, Charles Parnell, campaigned for the reestablishment of parliamentary rule in Dublin. This once again placed a wedge between Catholics and Protestants as Protestant conservatives and Orangemen collaborated in order to fight against Home Rule, fearing that it would result in ‘Rome Rule’.

Throughout Ireland, Ulster was the only province with nearly equal numbers of Catholics and Protestants, yet Protestants dominated economic life. Most of the land and businesses were owned by Protestants. The Unionists of Ulster feared that Home Rule would mean no security for life and property, lack of commercial confidence, and unfair treatment of Unionists (Bardon 2001). Belfast would not prosper because a parliament in Dublin would be dominated by farmers who neither knew how to administer industrial Ulster nor cared. Many industrial firms threatened to relocate if the Home Rule Bill passed. They also feared that the Dublin parliament would tax Ulster too heavily and issue tariffs on raw materials. Skilled Protestants feared they would lose their privileged position in the industrial workforce, as the great majority of well-paid, trained workers were Protestant. Catholicism was seen as an oppressive, backward religion. The Home Rule Bill meant that the British crown would not protect Protestant interests to the same extent, and Catholic morality and authority could be imposed on them. Protestants feared a Dublin Parliament would Catholicize all education and reserve public employment for Catholics.

Rioting began in 1886 with the news that the Home Rule Bill was defeated. Protestants lit tar barrels in celebration while Catholics set their chimneys on fire in protest. The conflict left
around 50 dead (Bardon 2001: 382). After another attempt at Home Rule, the bill was shelved until the new century due to the death of Parnell and conflicts within the Irish Parliamentary Party.

The Twentieth Century

In response to growing anxiety among Unionists, the Ulster Unionist Council was formed in 1904. The purpose of the council was to collaborate unionist associations in Ulster, establish a provisional government of Ulster, and form an army to protect against the interests of Home Rulers. The council was preparing for battle, purchasing large amounts of firearms. The threat of full-scale sectarian fighting was high.

When the Home Rule Bill was reintroduced in 1912, it was followed by Unionist attacks on Catholics throughout Ulster. On September 28, 1912, Protestants emerged from churches and meeting halls to sign Ulster’s Solemn League and Covenant, pledging to stand by one another in defending against the ‘conspiracy of Home Rule’ (Bardon 2001: 437). The Ulster Unionist Council recruited men from those who signed the Covenant to join an army in defense of the bill’s realization. This army, known as the Ulster Volunteer Force, was formed in 1912, and by the end of the year there were an estimated hundred thousand members (Hennessey 1998: 4).

As a counterpart to the Ulster Volunteer Force, the Irish Volunteers was formed with membership at 129,000 in 1914 (Bardon 2001: 443). Both the Ulster Volunteer Force and the Irish Volunteers were gunrunning, stockpiling firearms, and training recruits for a civil war that seemed imminent. However, World War I postponed the fighting.

The Irish Republican Brotherhood, seeing the opportunity of a distracted England, prepared a rebellion in Dublin. This uprising, known as the Easter Rising, was ill prepared, as a
plot to smuggle German firearms into Ireland to arm the rebels was foiled. The insurrection continued, however, with perhaps as few as 1,600 taking part (Duffy 2000: 188). The rebellion lacked popular support, but after the execution of its leaders, public sympathy grew.

Figure 2: Distribution of Protestants and Catholics in Ulster, 1981 (Duffy 2000: 195)

Violence all over Ireland escalated as negotiations of the Irish Question continued. A coalition of advanced nationalism formed in 1917 under the name Sinn Féin, replacing the earlier Sinn Féin that had died out with the Easter Rising of 1916. This coalition’s members ranged from Home Rulers to militant Republicans. The Irish Volunteers became the Irish Republican Army (IRA) and by 1920, small-scale guerilla warfare had developed. The civil war had begun and battles ensued in Derry, Belfast, Lisburn, Banbridge, and Dromore throughout 1920. IRA attacks spread throughout Ireland and Protestant resistance mobilized. Westminster sent security forces, known as the “Black and Tans”, into Ireland to supplement the Royal Irish Constabulary,
whose membership was diminishing do to the IRA threat. The Black and Tans ruthlessly assaulted the Irish Republican people, resulting in increased resentment toward Britain.

The civil war intensified as Westminster applied its constitutional solutions in 1921. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 called for peace in Ireland by establishing the southern twenty-six counties of Ireland as the Irish Free State, with a constitutional relationship with Britain much like that of Canada, while establishing Home Rule to the six northeastern counties, to be known as Northern Ireland. This partitioned the historic province of Ulster, leaving three western counties of the province part of the Irish Free State. Sinn Féin was opposed to the partitioning of the northern six counties and was opposed to remaining part of the empire, yet reluctantly agreed because of an article providing for a Boundary Commission. The Boundary Commission was to be set up in order to determine the boundary between Northern Ireland and the south, in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants. The Loyalist slogan, “not an inch”, that appears as graffiti in many areas refers to their resistance to the Irish Free States attempts at stretching the boundary.

By 1922, around 4,000 people had lost their lives in the Anglo-Irish War (Duffy 2000: 205). While the Anglo-Irish Treaty led to a decrease in violence in the south, the outcome of the treaty was uncertainty and disorder in the north, resulting in more intense bloodshed. Nationalists had their expectations raised and Loyalists living along the border were gripped with apprehension. Civil war ensued in earnest in January 1922. Hostages were seized, police and special constables were ambushed, IRA snipers defended Catholic ghettos in Belfast and Derry, businesses and houses were burned, and sectarian murders continued.

Views regarding the formation of the northern state are largely dichotomous. In the Nationalist or Republican view, British imperialism divided Ireland in order to weaken Irish
Nationalism, perhaps for an eventual re-conquest of the whole island. Although Unionists generally favored separation of the northern six counties, emphasis is placed on the role played by the British state. In the Unionist view, the formation of Northern Ireland is a direct result of the Ulster Protestants not accepting a united Ireland. (Bew et. al. 1995, 42-43)

The anti-treaty party, Fianna Fáil, came into power in the Irish Free State in 1932, intent on separating the ties between the Irish Free State and the British Empire. The party’s leader, Eamon de Valera, informed Westminster that he would remove the oath of fidelity from the Irish constitution and withdraw payments of annuities (repayments under the Land Purchase Acts). This was a breach of international agreement, and Westminster retaliated by imposing a 20 per cent duty on livestock, meat, and dairy produce from the Irish Free State. De Valera retaliated with a 20 per cent tariff on many imports from Britain. This was the beginning of an economic war. De Valera believed that Britain had deliberately cultivated religious tensions in Ulster to divide the Irish people, and partition was the culmination of this policy. Therefore, pressure had to be put on Westminster to reunify Ireland.

De Valera drafted a new constitution in 1937 that included an assertion of jurisdiction over the whole island, acknowledged the special position of the Roman Catholic Church, and including only an external association with the Commonwealth. This constitution resulted in the alienation of Northern Ireland. Northern Catholics felt abandoned, as the twenty-six county state seemed to be limiting opportunities for reunification. Protestants in Northern Ireland could not accept De Valera’s plans for rigid censorship, a constitutional prohibition on divorce and family planning, and mandatory Irish language education for children.

The Anglo-Eire agreement was signed in 1938, thereby settling and opening economic and trade relations, appeasing relations between Britain and the Irish Free State. In 1949, the
Irish government passed a bill establishing the Irish Free State as the Irish Republic. Yet Westminster passed the Ireland Act that declared that, ‘in no event will Northern Ireland cease to be part of his Majesty’s dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the parliament of Northern Ireland’ (as quoted in Bardon 2001: 601). Unionists wanted nothing to do with the south. Even though Northern Ireland was one of the most disadvantaged regions of the United Kingdom, its standard of living was superior to the Republic.

In 1951, the IRA launched Operation Harvest. Through accumulation of numerous firearms raided from Gough barracks, the IRA intended to drive British troops out of Northern Ireland. In response, the government cratered or spiked many border roads, called up reserve security forces, strengthened the British army scout cars, and arrested a large number of IRA members. By the end of 1957, 366 incidents of shooting and bombing were attributed to the campaign (Bardon 2001: 607). By autumn of 1958, most of the leading activists were either interned or jailed. Operation Harvest lasted until the campaign was called off in 1962, without much success.

The Current “Troubles”

The 1960s began with the promise of cooperation and reconciliation in Northern Ireland. By the end of the decade, however, Ulster was in a state of near revolutionary crisis. Violence in Northern Ireland, especially in Belfast, was so intense that news coverage competed with the war in Vietnam.

Captain Terence O’Neill, elected in 1962 as the new leader of Ulster Unionism, made his principal aims 'to make Northern Ireland economically stronger and prosperous... and to build bridges between the two traditions within our community' (Bardon 2001: 622). The Northern
Ireland government tended to speak of Northern Ireland in terms of Protestants, viewing the Catholics as not quite citizens. Participation in the government, as well, was suspect, for Catholics were seen as traitors, and governmental leaders endorsed this view. O’Neill’s program was to bring the benefits of modernization to everyone in the region, not just the Protestant majority. O’Neill was the first prime minister of Northern Ireland to accept the friendly gesture of the Republic and made the startling gesture of inviting the Republic of Ireland’s Prime Minister (the Taoiseach), Seán Lemass, to visit Belfast in 1965 (Duffy 2000: 226).

Despite O’Neill’s effort to restore community in Northern Ireland, political frustrations and traditional fears soon violently climaxed. Catholics were frustrated with O’Neill’s inability to deliver extensive reform while Protestants were convinced that he was conceding too much.

An ardent critic of O’Neill and vocal political activist was Reverend Ian Paisley, founder and Moderator of the Free Presbyterian Church. Paisley, learning about a small tri-color flag hanging in the window of the Republican headquarters, demanded it be taken down or his supporters would remove it themselves. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), under the Flags and Emblems Act, removed the flag without much incident. Another flag appeared in the window a few days later, and this time the police smashed the windows with pickaxes and removed it. Short lived yet intense rioting ensued; stones and bottles were thrown at police, petrol bombs were thrown, a corporation bus burned, and water cannons were sprayed at rioters. Paisley gained support, not only from the fundamentalists he represented, but also from Loyalists who feared O’Neill’s alliance with the Nationalist minority.

1966 was the 50th anniversary of the Easter Rising and of the Battle of the Somme (a battle during World War II that resulted in the loss of many Northern Irish lives). Commemorations increased tensions and violent rioting ensued. Loyalist militants formed a new
terrorist group in Belfast with its aim to topple O’Neill and fight the IRA. This militant group was named the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), as was the Unionist group already mentioned from the beginning of the century. On May 21, 1966, Belfast newspapers received this message from the UVF: “from this day we declare war against the IRA and its splinter group. Known IRA men will be executed mercilessly and without hesitation.” (as quoted in Bardon 2001: 635). Catholics were attacked on several occasions in May and June, petrol bombs were thrown into Catholic-owned businesses, Catholics were shot on the street, and the RUC unearthed a plot by the UVF to assassinate O’Neill.

Discrimination against Catholics persisted. Gerrymandering was blatant as ward boundaries were arranged in order to maintain Protestant or Loyalist majority, not reflecting the true proportions of the geographical region. Because only rate-payers (householders) could have a vote, and the housing councils were generally made up of Protestant Unionists, houses were allocated more frequently to Protestant families. Only 34 Catholic families were allocated council houses in Dungannon between 1945 and 1967, compared to 265 Protestant families (Bardon 2001: 637). And although the population of Protestants and Catholics was close to equal in Northern Ireland, Catholics were continuously underrepresented in public positions. While Catholics occupied about 30% of lower positions in local governments, only 11% of the higher governmental positions were held by Catholics (639). In 1969, only 6 out of 68 senior judicial positions, 49 out of 332 members of public boards, and only 15.4 per cent of the 8,122 public works employees were Catholic (641).

Statistics regarding discrimination in private sectors is problematic. Protestants had always dominated the skilled trade. Small, family-owned businesses tended to keep with one
religious affiliation or the other, usually claiming that a person of another religious persuasion would not get along with already established employees (Bardon 2001: 641).

Inspired in part by the American Civil Rights Movement, the Catholic population in Northern Ireland began protesting for their civil rights in the late 1960s. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement began peacefully. Protests, marches, pickets, and sit-ins were countered with marches supported by Ian Paisley. Loyalists were convinced that the civil rights movement was a guise for Republican interests and thus counterdemonstrations augmented most rallies.

During a civil rights march in Derry on October 5, 1968, police with batons confronted unarmed demonstrators. Broadcasted across the world, the RUC beat many unarmed demonstrators without restraint. The British media was convinced that, despite the argument that the demonstration was a front for Republican, IRA, and communism, Northern Ireland’s regime had been caught in an act of suppressing free speech. The sectarian crisis was renewed.

On New Year’s Day in 1969, around forty students gathered to march the seventy-five miles from Belfast to Derry. The march was modeled on the one led by Martin Luther King Jr. in 1965. Its objective was to reawaken the civil rights movement and declare that the concessions allotted by O’Neill amounted to too little. O’Neill had refused to ban the march so the RUC was obliged to protect the demonstrators. Many RUC men did not hide their distaste and contempt for the marchers. The demonstration was followed closely by loyalist counter-demonstrators hurling criticism at the students. Opponents laid an ambush on the route to Derry, trucking in stones and bottles. When the demonstrators were led into the ambush, stones and bottles crashed down. The police offered little help, and in fact held the demonstrators on the road with their batons when they attempted to escape into the fields. Many of the assailants were identified later through photographs as members of the reserve constabulary. Those marchers
still able to walk made their way to Derry only to be assaulted again with stones and bottles. The civil rights demonstrations evolved into what the Loyalist groups accused them of initially, they became increasingly sectarian and political.

In the spring of 1969, numerous bombs exploded at water pipelines and electric substations throughout Ulster. The RUC announced it was the work of the IRA, and O’Neill subsequently called out the Reserve RUC and commanded all police officers to carry firearms. The bombings were actually carried out by Loyalist extremists, intent on implicating Republicans thereby hardening Unionist opinions regarding O’Neill’s concessions. The plot worked perfectly, and O’Neill resigned April 28, 1969.

Tensions steadily increased during the summer in Belfast when Catholic rebels grouped in front of Divis flats and Protestant rebels gathered on Shankill Road. Police armored cars did little to disperse the crowds, and merely became targets for petrol bombs and stones. It is unknown from what side it began. A shot suddenly rang out and gunfire ensued. The police fired machine guns at the rebels. The Protestant rebels mobilized, moving down the roads intersecting Falls Road and Shankill Road, throwing petrol bombs into homes as they went. As they emerged on Divis Street, the mobs clashed. The death toll was six people, 12 factories had been ruined, and 100 houses were destroyed, with 300 damaged by petrol bombs (Bardon 2001: 718). As smoke rose from burning buildings, huge barricades were put up, particularly in the Falls District. Because of this violence, British troops were sent into Belfast. Preferring soldiers to the police, Catholics initially welcomed the soldiers. This would become a point of contention in the future.

In December of 1969, angered by the lack of interest in violent action and disgusted with the IRA’s acceptance of the arrival of British troops, a coup within the IRA resulted in a split
between the Official IRA and Provisional IRA. The Provisional IRA was more conservative, sectarian, and violent. The Official IRA was leaning more towards nonviolent quasi-Marxist socialism. Many Irish-Americans, Irish business-owners, and, in all probability, the Republic of Ireland government, supplied arms to the Provisional IRA.

During the spring of 1970, numerous violent riots ensued between Protestant and Catholic groups. The British troops had become targets of violence, seen by Catholics as sectarian and by Protestants as traitors. In July, after finding a cache of firearms in the lower Fall’s district, the RUC and British troops closed the lower Falls District for thirty-five hours, and searched house by house for further firearms. Rioting ensued, and battle waged between the Official IRA’s volunteers and the troops. British troops killed three people and crushed another with an armored car. This action convinced the Official IRA to join forces against the British Troops.

That summer the Provisional IRA put into action a bombing campaign at such targets as hotels, bus depots, customs stations, personal residents, and public houses. Violence rapidly increased throughout Northern Ireland, but especially in Belfast. Busses were burned, petrol bombs, grenades, and nail bombs were thrown, machine guns blazed, gun battles broke out everywhere, public houses were blown up, and soldiers and activists were executed. Soldiers and police violently searched houses for arms, adding to the mistrust and dislike of these security forces. The intense violence led to the implementation of internment.

In August of 1971, thousands of soldiers set out in arrest squads focused on Catholic activists. Despite the warnings from women blowing whistles and banging dustpans on the streets, 342 men were seized (Bardon 2001: 682). The army had a list of 452 names of wanted rebels, yet little attempt was made to arrest loyalist rebels, despite numerous records of violence.
The public learned that the internees were beaten, forced to walk over broken glass, deprived of food, water, and bathroom facilities, subjected to electric shock therapy and hallucinogenic drugs, were blindfolded and pushed out of helicopters hovering over the ground, and burnt with cigarettes (684). Violence escalated and the IRA continued their bombing campaign. Seven thousand Catholic refuges fled to Dublin and several hundred Protestant refuges fled to Liverpool (685).

January 30, 1972 was a day of atrocity in Derry. Around fifteen thousand demonstrators, many of them youths, marched in Derry protesting against internment. It is unclear which side fired first. However, it is clear that the troops continued shooting, killing thirteen marchers, seven under nineteen years of age (Bardon 2001: 687). After the incident, the consensus was that the troopers had lost control, as many of those killed had been shot in the back as they ran for cover. Angry and violent protests ensued the next day throughout Northern Ireland. This incident, known as ‘Bloody Sunday’, led to the fall of the Northern Irish Parliament in March of 1972 and direct rule from Westminster (Duffy 2000: 234).

The spring of 1972 saw sustained bombing campaigns by the Provisional IRA and the Official IRA. The technique of car bombing was effective and every parked car was suspect. During May of 1972, the army recorded 1,223 engagements and forty deaths (Bardon 2001: 693).

The majority of Catholics and Protestants alike disapproved of the violence, signed petitions and begged for peace. Too many innocent people were being killed or maimed. Republican paramilitaries had established numerous no-go areas, where entrance would mean execution. Loyalist paramilitaries went on assassination raids, intent on killing Catholics, no
matter if they were activists or not. Barricades were erected and patrolled with armed
volunteers.

Violence in Belfast climaxed July 21, 1972, known as ‘Bloody Friday’. Within sixty-five
minutes, twenty bombs had been detonated throughout the city, killing nine innocent people,
between the soldiers and the Provisionals, and four innocent people were hit with stray bullets.
While Belfast was the most severely hit, in total 39 bombs were detonated throughout Northern
Ireland. In response to the onslaught, additional British troops were brought into Northern
Ireland, bringing the number to 22,000, with the goal of immobilizing the terror of the IRA
(Bardon 2001: 698).

The 1970s continued with negotiations regarding the Sunnydale Agreement of 1974,
which provided for a power-sharing coalition government including Irish and British council.
This agreement did not last, however, and the coalition government collapsed after a Protestant
strike.

The Provisional IRA expanded its bombing raid into Britain, killing many and injuring
hundreds. The Provisional IRA gained nothing from these attacks but condemnation from both
sides of the Irish Sea. A ceasefire was called in December of 1974, broken for a time and
another called in February of 1975. Many local Provisional commanders did not agree with the
cease-fire and continued their violent campaign.

Violence became a way of life as vast areas of Belfast were under the control of
paramilitary gangs. Robberies of public houses and hijacking of vehicles was commonplace.
Extortion and protection racketeering was on a vast scale. Well-funded through these incomes,
in addition to oversees donations, the Provisional IRA continued its bombing campaign.
In the late 1970s, in protest of their political status and placement in a criminal prison, known as the Maze, a number of Provisional IRA prisoners began a “dirty protest”. Provisional IRA volunteers saw themselves as freedom fighters rather than common convicts. Toward the end of 1980, 341 of the 1365 prisoners in the Maze were refusing to bathe and smeared their excrement on the walls of their cells (Bardon 2001: 741). When authorities refused to give way, the Provisional IRA began assassinating wardens, killing nineteen by January 1980 (742). In the spring of 1981, Bobby Sands, a Provisional IRA leader arrested and held at the Maze, led a hunger strike for political status change. Public sympathy was immense and Sands was even elected as Member of Parliament on his 40th day without food. On May 5th 1981, Sands died on the 66th day of his hunger strike (Arthur and Jeffery 1995: 132). Protests erupted throughout the world supporting the Catholics in Northern Ireland. Sands would be the first of nine to die in the hunger strikes, each death followed by intense riots. Concessions were eventually granted to the prisoners, yet their status as political prisoners was not.

Further negotiations continued for the seemingly unsolvable problem of governmental power. Support for the Provisional Sinn Féin Party, the political wing of the Provisional IRA, was increasing amongst the Northern Irish Catholic minority. Because of this, the New Ireland Forum was organized in order to analyze the situation and recommend solutions. The report developed during almost a year of discussions led to the development of the Anglo-Irish agreement in November 1985, an elaborate document establishing twelve clauses regarding the political problems of Ulster. Among these included an Intergovernmental Conference to promote cross-border cooperation and a devolved government with shared power.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement was not received well by extremist groups. Loyalists did not accept the agreement because it gave the Republic of Ireland a say in matters dealing with the
north. The treaty signified a concession by Britain acknowledging the Republic’s legitimacy in affairs of Northern Ireland. They felt betrayed by the British and began a campaign of non-cooperation and protest. Republican reaction was also negative, and the Provisional Sinn Féin described the agreement as a ‘disaster’ (Bardon 2001: 756). The treaty was a realization by the Republic that reunification was at best a long-term aspiration.

In October 1987, a shipment of 150 tons of arms and explosives, including ground to air missiles, rocket-propelled grenades, rifles, mortars, and Semtex (an odorless plastic explosive) was intercepted before delivery could be completed from Libya to the Provisional IRA (Bardon 2001: 774). Evidence suggested that this was the fifth shipment to the Provisional IRA by Libya. It was now feared that the Provisional IRA had ground to air missiles. Search operations only uncovered one substantial stash.

It became apparent that security forces had taken on a shoot to kill policy regarding Provisional IRA members. Suspected members were shot at, with no chance to surrender or to stand. The funeral of three Provisionals was interrupted by a man who threw bombs into the crowd, killing three. It was rumored that this man was tipped off by the RUC. It became apparent that security forces were illegally trapping suspects. Cover-ups were employed, files went missing, and conspiracies were rampant.

The Peace Process began in earnest when John Hume, political leader of the Social Democratic Labor Party of Northern Ireland, entered into dialogue with the leader of Sinn Féin, Gerry Adams, in the late 1980s. However, because of the IRA’s continued violent campaigns, Sinn Féin was excluded from further talks until they called a ceasefire. On August 31, 1994, the IRA did call this ceasefire, and Loyalist groups made similar concessions soon thereafter.
Republicans soon lost faith in the Peace Process after Orange marches led to violence in Belfast (Duffy 2000: 238). By February 1996, the IRA had continued their bombing campaign.

In July of 1997, the IRA called another ceasefire and talks continued. The Good Friday Agreement was reached on April 10, 1998. The agreement established an assembly of proportionate representation and a number of other safeguards to protect the vital issues of both sides. This complex agreement could never hope to please the extremists of either sides, but was supported by 71.2 per cent of the population of Northern Ireland (Duffy 2001: 238).

The Peace Process continues, as the populations of Belfast learns to live with each other. Social institutions attempting to achieve neighborly cooperation encourage integrated schooling and public education. The extreme Republicans and Loyalists continue their campaigns of strategic violence. While sectarianism continues, the majority of the population of Belfast, however, does not support the violence and simply want to live their lives in peace and cooperation. Yet the history of deceit and unfulfilled promises between the ones who control society, including the government, security forces, and paramilitary groups, and those who have been disappointed by these agencies, has led to continued mistrust and fear.
CHAPTER THREE
THE CULMINATION OF HISTORY: OPPOSING WORLDVIEWS

The following perspectives are generalized depictions of cultural viewpoints. I believe these ideas exist at some level in many Northern Ireland residents’ minds, perhaps because of the influence of propaganda during the height of the troubles in the 1970s. Yet only extremists on either side would emphasize these ideas today and use them to support their causes. As one young man told me, making these types of generalizations about Belfast residents “is like saying every [Middle Easterner] is Osama Bin Laden.”

Catholic/Nationalist Worldview

While some argue that opposition to Protestantism is an element in Catholic hostility (Leyton 1974: 188), my research suggests that Catholics are not actually fighting for Catholicism. Instead, the foci of their revolts have been nationalistic.

The general viewpoint of the Nationalists is that the Irish people should form one nation and that Britain is to blame for keeping Ireland divided (Whyte 1990: 117). From a Nationalist historical perspective, England’s attempts to subjugate and exterminate the Irish Catholics resulted in centuries of massacres, sectarian bigotry, and confiscation of land (Leyton 1974: 188). Nationalists believe that through courage and strength, Irish Catholics defeated the English in the twentieth century and regained the majority of their land. However, six counties in Ulster had to be allocated to the British Government in order to secure this land. This partition was seen either as a gross misjudgment on the part of negotiators, or as only a temporary solution to a
problem that would be completely solved at a later date. The struggle continues for the Irish Catholics reclamation of these six counties.

In order to maintain a Protestant majority in Northern Ireland, Unionists asserted to the British Government that they could only handle six counties instead of the nine that Ulster originally comprised (Whyte 1990: 164). It is rumored that the British Government realized that sectioning off all nine counties would mean that Catholics and Protestants would be equal in numbers, resulting in the possibility for majority opinion to sway towards reuniting with the southern portion of the island. This is an area of resentment as to why the island has not already been united.

Figure 3: The Province of Ulster and the Boundary Line (Duffy 2000: 198)
Resentment is also present in the allegations by Catholics of discrimination. Catholics have been unequally allocated housing, underrepresented in government employment and in law-enforcement, and persecuted by members of law-enforcement (Whyte 1990: 165). In addition, the gerrymandering of local government boundaries assured the under-representation of Catholics in governmental policy (Whyte 1990: 165).

Protestant/Unionist Worldview

The general Protestant worldview is based on defense; defense of their religion, of their economic welfare, and of their national identity (Whyte 1990: 149). Unionists argue that the Ireland Act of 1949, passed by Westminster, declares that, ‘in no event will Northern Ireland cease to be part of his Majesty’s dominions and of the United Kingdom without the consent of the parliament of Northern Ireland’ (Bardon 2001). Therefore, they defend their claim to the land while also defending their majority vote.

Many Protestants fear that if Catholics were allowed to hold power in Northern Ireland, they would apply Catholic morality to the population as a whole (Whyte 1990: 150). The Catholic Church’s anti-birthcontrol doctrine was interpreted by some to be a way to out-breed Protestants (Leyton 1974: 193). In addition, because of Catholics’ loyalty to the Pope, they could not be trusted to serve the British Royalty (187).

Many Unionists believe that there are two distinct peoples in Northern Ireland, the British and the Irish (or Protestant and Catholic or Unionists and Nationalist) (Whyte 1990: 146). Nationalists fail to recognize this fact nor do they favor the same rights of self-determination to Unionists that they claim for themselves (146).
Economically, Northern Ireland is better off as part of the United Kingdom than it would be as part of the Republic of Ireland (Whyte 1990: 149). Many Unionists emphasize that Belfast was built as a British city due to British ingenuity. It became a major city only during the Industrial Revolution, when Protestants held the means of production. Poor Catholics from the countryside emigrated into Belfast to find work, which led to competition with the Protestants (Bardon 2001).

Northern Ireland benefits from Britain’s social services and strong economy (Whyte 1990: 149). Today, some Unionists see Catholics as profiting from living under the British Crown, through the dole and subsidies, while at the same time cursing this relationship. In addition, because of the increase in the Catholic population relative to Protestant population in Belfast, housing in Catholic neighborhoods has become more valuable. Because of this, working-class Catholics tend to keep up their houses more than working-class Protestants, resulting in a clear difference in neighborhood appearance. Protestants see this difference as support for their idea that Catholics are reaping more benefits from the government, while Protestants are being unfairly left out. (Bryan 2003: Personal Communication)
IDENTITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND: A LITERATURE REVIEW

Northern Irish Social Conflict

Religion has shaped Northern Irish society, not only through a difference of opinion, but by segregating social interaction in residence, employment, education, and marriage (Whyte 1990: 50). This division does not necessarily lead to conflict, yet through nourishing mutual ignorance and stereotyping, it can add to conflict when other opposing issues arise (50). The opposing issues that have risen in Northern Ireland, simplistically stated, deal with who has the right to control the North of Ireland.

A sectarian division of residents has been in existence since the early nineteenth century with the influx of Catholics into Belfast during the Irish Industrial Revolution. During the early 1970s, with the onset of the “troubles”, those people whose religion differed from that of their neighbors were systematically intimidated out (Burton 1978: 56). Neighborhoods such as Shankill, Falls, and Andersonstown are known by all Belfast residents by their religious association (57). Burton (1978) suggests that in addition to the actual residence as a identity marker, the buses one takes and the bus stops one utilizes also “tell” one’s religious affiliation. Parker (1993), an Englishman who relocated to Belfast, also mentions this sectarian division. When attempting to find an apartment in Belfast, Parker was steered by his Irish real-estate agent away from the Catholic areas because of his presumed Protestant affiliation.
An additional reason for conflict between the two communities of Northern Ireland is economic. Economics play a large part in the tensions between Catholics and Protestants (Whyte 1990: 60). Catholics have historically been worse off on average than Protestants (53). This has been, in part, due to discrimination that has been a source of bitterness for Catholics and rebuffed by Protestants (102). Differentiation of income has led to residential segregation of class distinctions. Whyte (1990) suggested that an economic boom would do much to settle tensions.

Political differences in Northern Ireland exist in residents’ choices of national identity, party preference, and reaction to issues of law, order, security, and proposals for a political
settlement in Northern Ireland (Whyte 1990: 67). Catholics and Protestants tend to identify with different nationalities; Catholics typically with the Irish and Protestants with British or Anglo-Irish (67). Political opinion and reaction to political issues also typically segregates Catholics and Protestants into parties such as the Unionists, Nationalists, and others (75).

Morrow (1997) states that Protestants and Catholics in Armagh, while maintaining business relationships and friendships throughout most of the year, terminate their civil relationships when political issues arise (56). During the entire month of July, which is celebrated for the historic anniversary of the defeat of the Catholic King James by the Protestant William of Orange, Morrow (1997) notes that many relationships are temporarily terminated (56). These periods are times of tension and crossing the boundary between the two groups may lead to dangerous situations. Larsen (1982) also mentions this avoidance during the summer months. As one Catholic told him, ‘when it comes to the hot months many of our Protestant friends just stop talking to us’ (287). Many Catholics travel to the Republic of Ireland during the month of July.

Attempts to settle tensions through government support include the establishment of the Community Relations Information Center in Belfast as a resource for information and contacts dealing with sectarianism and discrimination. Organizations, such as the Northern Ireland Mixed Marriage Association, “exists for the mutual help and support of people involved in or about to be involved in mixed marriages” (NIMMA Brochure 2003).

**Enculturation**

The segregation of society has led to children growing up with different cultures, worldviews, and identities. Enculturation of identity goes beyond parental influence. Because of
the segregation of schooling, some children do not meet a child of another religion until they attend university. Protestant children go to state schools, where they learn British history and French or German (Leyton 1974: 191). Catholic children go to Catholic schools, where they learn Irish history and the Irish language (191). Without a diverse community to add to their education, children are raised with different views of the world around them.

The Community Relations Council commissioned a report to examine to what extent three to six year old children in Northern Ireland are aware of the cultural and political issues that surround them (Connolly et. al. 2002). From the age of three, children were found to prefer symbols of identity that relate to their own religious and cultural tradition (5). In addition, especially at the age of six, children demonstrated an awareness of the political or cultural significance of these symbols (5). Sectarian comments were made by a small percentage of the children during these interviews, yet increased to 15% among children of six years of age (5). The following quotes regarding children’s reaction to the Republic of Ireland flag illustrate this sectarianism:

**Catholic boy, age 6:** “Has my two fave colors on it [orange and green] and that one’s just yucky [Union Jack]. I hate English and I love Irish.”

**Protestant girl, age 6:** “It’s the Fenian flag. It’s only bad people that have that color of flag and that’s all I know about that flag.”

(Connolly et. al. 2002)

Connolly et. al. (2002) concluded that the main influences on these children were from their local community, families, and school.
**Ethnic Group Definition**

I define an ethnic group as a collection of individuals who share fundamental cultural values and recognize themselves as connected as a group, as well as are recognized by others as distinguishable from other categories of the same level of identity (Barth 1969).

To an outsider, the Protestants and Catholics of Belfast seem indistinguishable. Yet the majority of Protestants and Catholics see their differences as ethnic ones. They see two different cultures inhabiting Belfast. While their rituals and parades both feature pipe and drum bands, the wearing of kilts and sashes, and the carrying of elaborately painted banners, only if one looks closely can one see that the images on the banners, the regalia worn, the color of the sashes, and the music being played, are distinguishable (Leyton 1974: 192).

Barth (1969) suggests that the sharing of a common culture is a result, a secondary feature, of ethnic group organization (11). Cultural traits within ethnic identity labels may vary dramatically, yet membership within the ethnicity remains (Barth 1969: 13). Blom (1969) supports this argument with observations of Norwegian mountain farmers who utilize different patterns of activity dependent on local ecology, yet self-identify themselves within the larger ethnic group through shared values. Barth (1969) emphasizes that there is not a one-to-one relationship between cultural traits and ethnic units: it is only those traits that the actors feel are important that unite ethnic units (14). These traits may include overt signs such as the use of house type or language and basic value orientations, which members of an ethnic group judge themselves (14).

The residents of the Belfast area wear many identifying labels. Individuals’ ethnic identities are ascribed by themselves and supported by the way others view them. The layers of identity include citizenship in Northern Ireland, Britain, or Ireland, residency in specific
neighborhoods of Belfast, political labels such as Unionist or Nationalist, or religious labels like Protestant or Catholic. Within Unionism or Nationalism, there are extremists who would identify themselves as Loyalist or Republican respectively. Identity is self-ascribed and is not dependent on one’s history or religion. One may fight for Unionism and be a Catholic of Irish ancestry or fight for Nationalism and be a Protestant Briton. While this may be rare, and acceptance into these groups may be questionable, the residents of Belfast I interviewed often mentioned the possibility.

Ethnic Boundaries

Because of the ambiguity of defining a group through cultural traits, it is better to define a group in relation to the ethnic boundaries present in society (Barth 1969:15) and the interpretation of these boundaries. In other words, instead of using the etic perspective of assigning cultural traits to categories of ethnicity, I am using the emic definitions of ethnicity.

Barth (1969) calls for anthropologists to look beyond cultural difference for what creates ethnicity, and focus on the boundaries of ethnic categories utilized within the social knowledge of the community (6). The basis of ethnic difference is not cultural difference, but “the social organization of cultural difference” (6).

Barth (1969) emphasizes that ethnic boundaries may persist despite continuous interaction and changing participation (9). Ethnic groups are sometimes viewed as based on a geographical or societal division and an absence of interaction with other ethnic groups (9). Barth suggests that the structure of self-defined ethnicity is usually based precisely on social interaction (10). Whether interacting societies accept one another or reject the cultural
differences, the interaction between these groups lays the foundation for modern ethnic
definition.

While members of an ethnic group usually define themselves through shared historic
eXperience and common cultural traits, these qualities do not necessarily determine individual
membership and cannot be used by an outsider to accurately assign individuals with ethnic
labels. To someone without the knowledge of the culture, individuals of the various ethnic
groups may appear to have quite similar cultural traits (Eidheim 1969: 40). Anthropologists
have dealt with uncertainty by declaring ‘transitional zones’ (Eidheim 1969: 39). Yet within
society, members with such cultural knowledge seem to have no difficulty in assigning ethnic
labels to others within the society (Eidheim 1969: 39). Those within the society perceive ethnic
membership through identity markers that have been defined by that society. This potentially
vicious circle is the basis for this study. The indicators of identity that are perceived by Belfast
society to denote group membership are researched in this paper, as well as their perception
regarding these identity markers’ importance.

Maintaining distinct ethnic identity within a society with multiple ethnic groups requires
criteria for determining membership in terms of exclusion and by continually expressing and
validating membership for inclusion (Barth 1969: 15). This is described by Eidheim (1969) as
the public vs. closed sphere. Within a closed sphere, such as the Lapp community of Norway,
the Lappish language is a code of interaction among Lapps and is sanctioned negatively by this
group if not used (49). The use of Lappish within the public sphere that includes neighboring
Norwegians, however, is socially stigmatized and seen as highly improper or challenging to the
Norwegians’ ethnic boundary (49). When a Norwegian enters a closed stage, people switch from
Lappish to Norwegian and themes of conversation are changed (49).
"The identification of another person as a fellow member of an ethnic group implies a sharing of criteria for evaluation and judgment. It thus entails the assumption that the two are fundamentally ‘playing the same game’, and this means that there is between them a potential for diversification and expansion of their social relationship to cover eventually all different sectors and domains of activity. On the other hand, a dichotomization of others as strangers, as members of another ethnic group, implies a recognition of limitations on shared understandings, differences in criteria for judgment of value and performance, and a restriction of interaction to sectors of assumed common understanding and mutual interest.” (Barth 1969: 15).

An element of ethnic boundaries suggested by Barth (1969) is socially structured rules regarding interaction between ethnic groups (16). Inter-ethnic interaction can be governed by a social stigma against intermarriage, for instance, in order to maintain the ethnic boundary (16). Social structures could also be in place to physically separate ethnic groups, such as Peace Walls in Belfast, in order to prevent confrontation (16).

Psychological division between ethnic groups lies in the emotional element of “deep, unconscious forces” (Tajfel 1981: 94). Tajfel explains that social group interaction can be understood as a joint function of individuals’ shared affiliation as a group and the shared interpretation of the relationships between ingroups and outgroups (243). The Social Identity Theory (Tajfel 1981, Cairnes 1982) suggests that the maintenance of group conflict lies in the inherent need to maintain one’s group superiority (97). In addition, threat, anxieties, and sensitivities of both sides maintain group identity (102).

Actors struggle through social interaction to define their situation through perception and tact (Barth 30). Haaland (1969) suggests that inter-ethnic interaction among the Fur and Baggara
of Western Sudan runs more smoothly when actors can assess their social situation through ethnic symbolism (61). The reason behind these identifying features, including traits of residence, language, and weapon use, is to enable Furs and Baggaras to categorize people into those with whom one may have unlimited relations and those with whom one may only interact with a limited way (61).

The “Telling” of Identity

Burton (1978) discusses the manifestations of sectarianism through “telling”. “Telling is the pattern of signs and cues by which religious ascription is arrived at in the everyday interactions of Protestants and Catholics” (37). Burton characterizes telling as “the social significance attached to name, face and dress, area of residence, school attended, linguistic and possibly phonetic use, colour and symbolism” (37). He also explains that these ascriptions are not based on fact, but on stereotyped traits. Burton suggests that the traits associated with Protestantism and Catholicism may be disputed; yet the need to “tell” is clear. He suggests that being able to read others’ cues can facilitate appropriate social interaction and can interpret levels of safety in social situations (65).

The existing literature on Northern Irish symbolism has focused mainly on mural paintings and political parades (Jarmen 1997, Fraser 1998, Bryan 2000). These symbols of sectarian, ethnic, and political division are exercised in Northern Irish society as community markers. Cohen (1985) discusses the symbolic construction of communities, where communities are simultaneously a unitary force as well as a dividing force between different groups of people. Community symbolism is an important aspect of individual’s personal identity.
McFarlane (1986) studied the sectarian boundaries present in four Northern Ireland villages. He states that villagers believe that “you get on better with you own” (91). Social interaction with mixed groups takes serious effort if one wishes to act “decently” (96). Therefore, McFarlane (1986) explains, it makes sense that one could get along better within his or her own social group. This idea leaks into social and economic domains, and generates public interest in where people live, whom they marry, and whom they support economically. Catholics and Protestants tell their affiliation “by a complex set of verbal-nonverbal, direct-indirect, and physical-nonphysical cues” (95).

Evidence of the same elements is present in Parker’s (1993) interviews. Parker interviewed many residents of Belfast in order to establish an understanding of what life is like for and how the troubles have affected ordinary, and not so ordinary, residents of Belfast. Parker discussed these sectarian cues as an introduction to the edited interviews presented in his work. He suggested that there are specific questions used for the purpose of discovering others’ religious affiliation (4). He also suggested that Nationalists and Unionists use different terminology for the same things, such as the use of “Ulster” or “Northern Ireland” as opposed to “the North of Ireland” and “the six counties”, because of the historical and political connotations attached to expression (4). My research expands on these suggestions in order to examine what questions are used, what terms are different, and why this phenomenon occurs.

The two Belfast communities are very similar culturally and physically. Yet because of the sectarian and political division that has been occurred for hundreds of years, the social construction of difference has been well developed. Because of this, the social phenomenon of what Burton (1978) calls “telling” ensures that there are stereotypes believed to enable one to judge religious and political ascription in social interaction (49).
Theoretical Base

It seems obvious that ethnic groups and national identities can only exist in contrast to one another. These group formations are a way to defend oneself from external threats. The theoretical base my analysis builds upon is that group identity, group belonging, and group formation are a direct result of threat. It is my hypothesis that conflict not only separates people, but it brings them together amongst their allies. The main purpose of this group adhesion is to bring protection and support to individuals. The threat felt by Protestants in Northern Ireland was the loss of power, privilege, and security, while the threat felt by Catholics was the loss of rights, impartiality, and population. These threats culminated in the late 1960s, uniting the membership of each group and separating them into distinct entities with the distinct purpose of fighting one another.

Jarmen (1997) analyzes the maintenance of group identity in Belfast with the yearly 12th of July Orangeman parade. The purpose, as Jarmen (1997) states is the Protestant “…victory is confirmed for another year, and the Ascendancy assured” (107). He supports the theory of threat as a basis of grouping by explaining the 12th of July parade as a response to threat:

“Virtually all sects within the Protestant faith are able to come together within the framework of loyalist parades. This is possible because that framework, while nominally religious, is principally about a collective national identity, constructed and maintained in the face of a threatening Other” (117)

Barth (1969) emphasizes that the maintenance of ethnic groups lies in social boundaries. The boundaries he mentions are in regard to physical boundaries, such as geographic or Peace Walls, and social boundaries, such as restrictions on intermarriage between ethnic groups and separation of schools. I analyze in this paper another aspect of maintaining ethnic boundaries;
the recognition of ethnic cues, subtle cultural knowledge of recognition that enables individuals to cope with social interaction.

Without asking the question explicitly, alternative modes are used to assert to which religious persuasion strangers adhere (Leyton 1974: 190). “When two… men meet as strangers, no conversation can be initiated, no relationship be established, until the ‘colour of your coat’ is warily ascertained.” (Leyton 1974: 190)

An information booklet, intended to assist businesses in tackling problems of sectarianism, states:

“It is an almost universal practice in Northern Ireland that when we meet or come across a person for the first time, we want to know what “side” he or she comes from. So pervasive is it that, even for those of us who believe that it is genuinely a matter of no practical or even theological interest, fall into the practice to some extent.” (Logue 1993)

Morrow (1997) has reported that business or friend relationships between Protestants and Catholics are most often accompanied by an element of mistrust (55). The result of this wariness is a “taboo about addressing political or religious matters” (55). In this paper, I analyze the establishment of these taboos that maintain a need for and support of identity indicators.
CHAPTER FIVE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research for this paper was conducted from May 29 to August 12, 2003 in Belfast, Northern Ireland. The study consisted of informal and formal interviews, media analysis, and social and material observation.

Informal Interviews

Any conversation with Belfast residents or other interlocutors was summarized as completely as possible in writing. I would estimate the number of informal interviews at forty, including participants of varying religions, ages, socio-economic classes, and both sexes. Brief conversations with taxi drivers, librarians, people I met in pubs and restaurants, and other strangers, most often included their response to my research. Because these encounters mainly consisted of introductions, I was often asked what I was doing in Belfast. When I described my research project, their reaction typically was one of amusement. Analyzing this amusement proved difficult, and I got the feeling that there was apprehension about telling me their real opinions. Some told me that Belfast residents are the focus of many social and political studies and that they are no longer interested in being examined. Others had strong opinions regarding the social division in Belfast and were glad to discuss it. And some young men were not interested in the subject at all and only wanted to “chat me up”.

Early in my research I realized that I needed to be very careful about how I phrase my research questions. With such a sensitive topic, and the potential for insulting or upsetting people, I feared that I had used inappropriate language on occasion and felt that I had insulted the
person I was conversing with. Two days after my arrival in Belfast, I spoke with a taxi driver who had asked about my research. I replied that I was studying stereotypes of Protestants and Catholics in Belfast. “Stereotypes, huh, that should be interesting”, was his reply. Silence followed, and I worried that I had offended him with the use of the term. “What is your view on what stereotypes are?” he asked. I replied that I was not sure, as I had just begun my research project. The rest of the conversation was pleasant, and he wished me good luck on my research as I exited the cab. After this conversation, my conventional response to questions about my research was that “I was studying symbolism in Belfast”.

Because of the literature I reviewed before my arrival in Belfast, I was very aware of the impression I was giving to others. I listened intently to the phrases people used when I spoke informally with them. At the counter of a railway ticket agent, I asked for a ticket to Dublin. “Dublin, eh?” the agent said, “Ah, McGuire, a good Irish name. Where’s your family from?” This pleasantry suggested to me that, because I was traveling to Dublin (the seat of Irish government) and my surname was “McGuire” (a common Irish Catholic name), the ticket agent felt comfortable in expressing his judgment of my name as a “good Irish” one.

When discussing my research with people, they often mentioned stereotypes they had encountered as children, how confident they are in their ability to tell whether someone was Protestant or Catholic, or other relevant information. These brief comments were noted in writing and contributed to my analysis.

Formal Interviews

While the residents of Belfast are very friendly people in general, I found it difficult to recruit formal interviewees. Reasons for this stemmed from my initial impression regarding
Belfast residents’ apprehension about speaking of these matters, both because they are tired of being asked and because many of the matters are “politically incorrect”. These impressions were gathered through informal interviews with strangers and discussions with professionals researching social and political phenomenon in Belfast. Another reason I felt apprehension in recruiting formal interviewees from groups of unfamiliar people is that my intentions were often misinterpreted. In one instance, I engaged in a conversation with two young men at a pub. They agreed to a formal interview, but were non-cooperative after a few questions. It was my impression that they were not really interested in my research once they realized that I was actually interviewing them and not trying to pick them up. After this insight, I was wary of recruiting male strangers, young and old. While I had a little more confidence in recruiting female Belfast residents for interviews, most of my informants were referred to me by acquaintances I had met in Belfast.

In total, I was able to formally interview twenty residents of Belfast. Formal interviews involved nine Protestants, four of them women, and ten Catholics, including seven women. Ages varied evenly from 22 and 52 years of age. In addition, I interviewed a woman who had a Catholic mother and a Protestant father. She did not identify with either religion. Interestingly, out of the twenty informants, she was the only person whose religion I could not identify purely on the verbal and visual clues I discuss in this thesis.

Interviews took between 15 minutes to one hour to complete, depending on the nature of the informant. Most often the interviews took place at pubs, coffee houses, or restaurants. Occasionally they took place at the informant’s home. During these interviews, differential terminology was noted, as well as any obvious physical or ornamental feature of the informant that might have been significant to my research. I incorporated numerous questions regarding
identity indicators in Belfast. My interview schedule asked informants to freely recall surnames and Christian names, characteristics of appearance and personality, residential areas of Belfast, and verbal signifiers that they would associate with Catholicism or Protestantism (see Appendix I). In addition, I asked for their perception about why these associations exist and to what degree these perceived correlations are important. Emphasized in my interview schedule were questions regarding whether or not the informants believed they could accurately distinguish between Protestants and Catholics and how important this is to their lives. It was my intention to tape-record all interviews. However, it became clear that my informants felt uncomfortable with this, so I did not insist upon recorded interviews. Notes were taken during interviews and direct quotes were documented whenever possible. I was able to record two informants: a Catholic woman and a Protestant man.

I initially feared that because of my informant’s impression of my religious affiliation, they might not be fully truthful. It was my perception that none of my informants were concerned about my religious or political views, as I am an American and not involved in their society. Yet I did get the sense that many of my informants were restricting their answers to adhere to the political correctness rules that seem to be established in today’s Belfast.

**Social and Material Observation**

July is the heart of the parading season in Northern Ireland and was an ideal opportunity for me to document through observation and photography the banners, flags, and characteristics of marchers. Permission was asked when photographing specific people. Observations of symbolic cues were made at political parades and other segregated events where I could presume
religious affiliation. In addition, known sectarian symbolism, such as murals and painted sidewalks, were documented.

I attended two parades while in Belfast. The first was the large Orange parade that travels through the heart of Belfast on July 12th. This parade consisted of numerous Orange Lodge bands, playing the same Loyalist tune, and marching some six miles to gather at a field on the outskirts of town with thousands of spectators following. July 12th is the most important day for celebrating Protestant Loyalism. The day celebrates the Protestant King William’s victory over the Catholic King James. The majority of Catholics from Belfast leave town for the weekend of July 12th, while most of the Protestants celebrate from early morning into the wee hours. Nearly every spectator was dressed in red, white, and blue or wearing a Rangers’ jersey, and many teenagers had painted faces and wrapped themselves in British flags. Along the Belfast parade route, carts sold memorabilia from extensive collections of red, white, and blue baseball caps, newsboy caps, flags, batons, and drums, to giant red hands and miniature orange sashes. The marchers carried banners with pictures of King Billy, along with paramilitary dolls and Union Jacks. This festive event was ideal for documenting Protestant symbolism, as they were quite abundant and grandiose.

The second parade I attended was a Sinn Féin parade. It was held in early August and was significantly less festive than the Orangemen parade. While the Orangemen parade mostly consisted of bands marching and merrily playing Loyalist tunes, the Sinn Féin parade consisted mainly of marchers holding banners or signs that read, “Collusion is State Murder” or remembering someone who had died “for the cause”. I was told this parade was to bring attention to the governmental policy of giving information about IRA members to Loyalist paramilitary gangs for the purpose of assassination. The paraders marched from the top of Falls
Road (a Catholic district) into the city center, where Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams spoke at the political rally. This parade differed from the Orangemen parade in that there were very few spectators, as all spectators were encouraged to march along with the parade, and less flamboyance in the marcher’s dress, their banners, and other symbolic materials. The only memorabilia sold were small Republic of Ireland flags and orange, green, and white scarves. Probably because the majority of Protestants did not leave town during this parade as the Catholics did during the 12th of July parade, there was a sense of fear when the parade entered the city center.

Photo 1: Sinn Féin Parade (M. McGuire 2003)
Media Analyses

In order to collect information on sectarian naming, I analyzed the death announcements in two sectarian newspapers: the *Irish News*, a Catholic Nationalist newspaper, and the *Newsletter*, a Protestant Unionist newspaper. Both newspapers were collected together on random days throughout the months of June, July, and August of 2003. A total of nine editions each were analyzed. Surname data was collected, recorded, and alphabetized from both newspapers. These lists were then analyzed for the degree of difference or similarity between the two collections. My analysis of these records is based on the assumption that only Catholics or Protestants would be announced in their associated paper. It has been expressed through informants that this tends to be the case, yet no empirical data confirms this perception. Therefore, the surname data from these death announcements must be assessed with the intent of only gaining an impression of name association.

Included in my interview schedule were questions referring to perceived identity indicators. Because of the numerous responses given regarding sectarian newspapers, I investigated further by collecting the most commonly recalled sectarian newspapers. These included the *Irish News* and the *Andersonstown News* (another Catholic Nationalist newspaper), and the *Newsletter*. A total of ten *Newsletters*, two *Andersonstown News*, and nine *Irish News’* were gathered and analyzed. Front-page headlines were recorded and analyzed and contents were examined in order to compare and contrast perspective.
CHAPTER SIX

IDENTITY INDICATORS

Common Stereotypes

Many stereotypes exist amongst the residents of Belfast. Whether they believe in these stereotypes or not, most are able to recite them without difficulty. Catholics see themselves as tolerant, open, and interested in culture, while they see Protestants as bigoted, narrow-minded, discriminatory, and money-centered. Protestants see Catholics as lazy, scruffy, treacherous, and obedient to priests. They see themselves as industrious, clean, loyal to the state, and supportive of the freedom of religion. (Donnan and McFarlane 1986)

The Community Relations Council produced a training guide for their new employees that included a satirical cartoon strip entitled, ‘Spotting the Difference’ (Kindness 1970). The cartoon demonstrates the common stereotypes of Catholics and Protestants. Stereotypes of Catholics include that their eyes are closer together, they lack cleanliness, and they have an abundance of children. Protestants are depicted as clean, educated, and supporters of the Queen and the Orange Order. These stereotypes are typical throughout Northern Ireland.
Indicators of Identity

Names

The Newsletter, a Protestant newspaper, and the Irish News, a Catholic newspaper, were reviewed for surname relationships through death announcements. The Newsletter and the Irish News both contained a number of shared surnames in their death announcements (see Appendix I). These surnames include: Brown, Campbell, Chesney, Crawford, Duffy, Hurrell, Lovett, McNeice, McAuley, McGrady, Mills, Murphy, O’Kane, Quinn, and Scott. Other surnames shared by both newspapers’ death announcements, yet spelled differently, were ‘Allan’ and...
‘Smyth’ (Newsletter) and ‘Allen’ and ‘Smith’ (Irish News). Interestingly, the surname ‘Neill’ appeared in the Newsletter, while ‘McNeill’ and ‘O’Neill’ both appeared in the Irish News. ‘Mc’, or associated prefixes such as ‘Ma’ or ‘Mac’, and ‘O’’ derive from Irish and Scots Gaelic tradition. While the data do show more numbers of ‘Mc’s and ‘O’’s in the Irish News (15:23), the difference is slight (see Appendix I).

Many of the residents of Belfast whom I interviewed stated that Catholic Christian names are much easier to identify than Protestant Christian names. One Protestant woman agreed that Catholic names are distinctive, while Protestant names are “just normal”. Catholic names are associated with names that have a Gaelic spelling or pronunciation. For example, diminutive suffixes such as “eeg” and “og” are common in the Irish language, and therefore names ending in these suffixes are associated with Catholic tradition. In addition, English names pronounced and spelled in the Irish Gaelic language would be associated with Catholics. For example, Seamus is the Irish version of James, while Liam is the Irish version of William. “Eoin” and “Ruari” have the same pronunciation as the English versions, “Owen” and “Rory”, yet the spelling associates the names with the Gaelic Irish, and therefore Catholic, tradition.

Both the Catholic and Protestant informants whom I interviewed recalled many of the same names that they associate with a particular religious affiliation. Common names given for a Catholic affiliation were: “Sean”, “Seamus”, “Padraig”, “Bridget”, “Siobhan”, and “Bernadette”. Common names given for Protestant affiliation almost always included the name “William”, and/or a version of “William”, such as “Billy” or “Mina”. The reason given for why “William” was considered a Protestant name was that it referred to the Protestant hero, William of Orange (see above history). Additional names given that the informants associated with a Protestant affiliation were: “Samantha” and “Samuel”, “Victor” and “Victoria”, “Rose”, “Eoin” and “Ruari” have the same pronunciation as the English versions, “Owen” and “Rory”, yet the spelling associates the names with the Gaelic Irish, and therefore Catholic, tradition.

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“Elizabeth”, and “Trevor”. “Trevors” is an expression for the police in Northern Ireland, used by the Catholic Nationalist population because of the historical abundance of Protestants on the force.

A young Catholic woman related the following story:

“We used to go to this pub on Sandy Row because it was easy to get into at 15. ‘Norma’ is a middle of the road name, but I would always say my name was Sadie, because you would definitely be a Protestant if your name was Sadie”.
(Note: ‘Norma’ is a pseudonym)

A Protestant man recalled this story:

“The girl who is now my girlfriend, her name is Marie, said that when she joined the shop, the manager of the shop went around to all the members of the staff and said, ‘there’s a Catholic girl coming’. Only because her name was Marie, she assumed that she was Catholic. She had interviewed her obviously for [the job], but she had assumed…It turned out one of the staff said, ‘she not Catholic, I know her!’”

History seems to be the main reason why these names are associated with one religion or another. Common views regarding this association indicate that names affiliated with Protestantism are names pertaining to English royalty, while names affiliated with Catholicism are of the Irish tradition, such as clan names. Many informants stated that they simply have not met someone of one religion whose name was associated with the other religion. Informants associate names with religious affiliation according to what their friends’ and associates’ names are. Other insights included the notion that it is part of Protestant tradition to pass down family names, that many Catholic families name children after saints canonized by the Pope, and that
naming asserts identity. One Catholic woman explained that when the troubles began in the
1960s, there was a revival of Gaelic tradition. She stated, “When someone is trying to take
something away from you, you hold onto it, if you think you are going to loose it: it’s preserving
identity”.

Naming also has a political dimension. Many informants suggested that if one is highly
political and wishes to make a political statement, then he or she may give a child a name that is
associated with a particular political stance. An ex-IRA Catholic man stated that, depending on
one’s nationalistic background, “the name is like a badge”. Yet, he added that if one was not
necessarily nationalistic, then little consciousness goes into the political ramifications of the
name. However, he does remark that, “it is important not to call your children ‘Cromwell’ or
‘Thatcher’”.

The importance of naming seems to depend mainly on where one lives and who one’s
associates are. While it seems that it is less important for Catholics to not give their children
Protestant names, presumably because Protestant names are less “distinctive”, it appears
somewhat important for Protestants not to give their children Catholic names, especially if they
live in a very Protestant neighborhood or come from a very Unionist background. As one
Catholic woman noted, if a Protestant had a Catholic name, “they would get killed in their own
areas”. A Protestant man explained to me that if one lived in an upper to middle class area,
having a Catholic name would not matter as much. However, if one lives in a “ghetto”, such as
the Protestant district of Shankill, having a Catholic name like “Seamus” may not be well
received. It was also mentioned by numerous informants that many parents give their children
neutral names, names that are not strongly associated with either religion, in order to alleviate
these issues for their children.
Newspapers

A Catholic woman mentioned that, “there are parts [of Belfast] that you wouldn’t want to go looking for the Irish News, and other parts of town you wouldn’t want to go looking for the Newsletter”. The newspaper one reads is an indication of religious and political views (see Photo 1).

Photo 2: Irish Catholic man reading an Irish News (M. McGuire 2003)

A comparison of random samples of the Newsletter and the Irish News clearly showed this difference. It is difficult to assess whether news stories, classified ads, or other contents of the Newsletter or the Irish News are sectarian. However, a few obvious examples of cultural differences are clear. These differences lay primarily in their association with distinctly separate cultural affiliations. For example, the Newsletter contains a section called “Ulster Today”, a phrase for Northern Ireland that some Catholics would find offensive (see Terminology).
addition, some sections of the *Irish News* are in Irish Gaelic, which is a language Protestants would not likely associate with.

As would be expected, there is a difference in perspective that is apparent in the articles of the *Newsletter* and the *Irish News*. The reason most often given by my informants for purchasing one paper over the other was because of political viewpoint. Both newspapers tend to focus reports on their own communities. The *Irish News* and the *Newsletter* displayed this different focus on their main front-page headlines. Headlines such as, "Orangemen Flagging up Threats of Violence", about the Protestant lodge members threats towards Catholics (*Irish News*, 6/27/03), and "Protestants Subjected to Canaries Nightmare by Republican Thugs: Holiday Hell", about five young Protestants who had been subjected to intimidation by Republicans while on holiday in the Canary Island (*Newsletter*, 8/02/03), show from what standpoint these newspapers come from in order to relate to their readers.

The most interesting example of differential perception reporting was depicted in the July 14, 2003 editions of the *Newsletter* and the *Anderstonstown News*. This Monday edition covered the previous weekend’s July 12th celebrations. As mentioned above, July 12th is celebrated by Protestants in remembrance of the Battle of the Boyne in 1689, in which the Protestant King William of Orange defeated the Catholic King James. Numerous Orangemen march, followed by their flute and drum bands, around the streets of Belfast, generally in Protestant neighborhoods, but sometimes through interfaces with Catholic neighborhoods, causing problems with Catholics who see the marching as insulting. The *Newsletter*’s main headline declared, “Parade Boy, 5, Fighting for Sight”, about a young boy who was injured in the eye by stones pelted at the family car. The Protestant family was driving home from the parades through a Catholic neighborhood at the time. In addition to this story, the *Newsletter* contained a
“24 page picture special” of the 12th of July celebrations from all over Northern Ireland, filled with photographs of smiling and laughing parade-goers. This image contrasted drastically with the cover story of the Anderstonstown News, which read, “The Dark Side of the Twelfth; What the BBC Didn’t Show”. This edition also contained photographs from the 12th celebrations, yet they showed, “crowds chanting anti-Catholic slogans, entire communities hemmed in like animals so that bigots could march triumphantly past their homes, and a police force doing what it does best: forcing Orange marches through areas where they’re not welcome”.

Williams (2000) examined the use of metaphors in the Belfast Telegraph (a theoretically non-sectarian newspaper) for the month of July 1997, mentioning that widely read newspapers in Northern Ireland must be very conscious of their terminology. For example, the term ‘the troubles’, referring to the recent violence over the past thirty years in Northern Ireland, is a term that would not be used by paramilitaries and their supporters (276). Instead, they would use the terms, ‘the armed struggle’, ‘the conflict’, or ‘the war’ (276). Non-sectarian, non-political newspapers must take such terminology in consideration in order to be accepted by the population with a wide range of political views.

Sports

The most obvious difference between the Irish News and the Newsletter is in the reporting of sports. One reason given for buying a particular newspaper was the informant’s interest in sports. Catholics associate themselves with the Gaelic Irish, and tend to play Gaelic Irish sports, while Protestants culturally associate with the English and tend to play English sports.
A Catholic man mentioned that the grammar school he attended did not allow him to play soccer. Instead he played hurling (a team sport played with a small ball and a curved wooden stick) and Gaelic Football (a game very similar to soccer yet unique to Ireland). If Catholics tend to appreciate Gaelic football and hurling, then they would be more likely to buy the Irish News, as these sports are the focus of this newspaper’s sports section. On the other side, if Protestants tend to appreciate rugby, soccer, and cricket, they would be more interested in the Newsletter’s sports section. Both newspapers report on tennis, racing, boxing, and golf, yet focuses on their associated cultural sports. A prime example of this differentiating focus lies in the June 23, 2003 editions of the Irish News and the Newsletter. On this publication date, the Irish News contained an “8 page full-colour [Gaelic Football] Championship pull-out” in contrast to the Newsletter’s “Super eight-page summer tennis supplement: Wimbledon Special”. On July 21, 2003, the Irish News supplemented its coverage with “Full Coverage Gael Talk, P21-28 and Back Page” covering the Ulster Finals, while the Newsletter did not cover this Gaelic Football Final Competition.

Photo 3: Irish Catholic children playing hurling (M. McGuire 2003)
A Protestant man explained one way of deciphering whether someone was Protestant or Catholic was by the sports they discuss:

“The fella’ who served you coffee is Catholic. He’s never told me, but his name is Sean and I’ve heard him talking about sports…We started talking about sports and I could tell by his answers. He doesn’t necessarily look like a Catholic”

This Protestant man also explained the social rules when acquaintances of different religious and cultural backgrounds discuss sports:

“I am a Glasgow Rangers supporter, but everybody in my district is…I can talk to Sean about English football…I can sit and have a cup of coffee and say to Sean, ‘Ah, did you see the football last night?’ Liverpool and Manchester United, the English teams, but I could never say, ‘did the Rangers play well last night?’ or ‘wasn’t that terrible the Rangers lost?’ It’s getting into dangerous ground, identifying yourself…if the Rangers played a match last night and I said to him, ‘ah, the Rangers got a beatin’ last night’, I would be afraid I would be offending him by identifying myself as a Protestant. I would be afraid that he would say, ‘he’s just telling me he is a Rangers supporter so he could tell me he is a Protestant’. But he’s probably doing the same thing with the Celtics, he would never say to me, ‘didn’t the Celtics do all right against the German team’, or something like that. Because he would be worried that maybe I wouldn’t like to hear that.”
Appearance

Many older informants discussed physical stereotypes they heard about children of the other religion when they were young. Because of the segregated school system and the extent of social segregation, especially during the 1970s, many children did not interact with children from another religious and cultural background unless they attended university. Therefore, rumors about the Other were spread between children. One Protestant man, who grew up with only Protestant friends, had heard that Catholics had eyes too close together and eyebrows that met in the middle. He also recalled reading an academic book that said Catholics had carrot colored hair, which supported his typecasting. Dark or red hair is stereotypically associated with Catholics, while lighter hair is stereotypically associated with Protestants.

The stereotype of the typical Catholic colleen with ginger hair and fair skin was mentioned by nearly all of my informants. A Catholic woman related a story about when she was a child: One afternoon, her grandmother accompanied her mother to pick her up at the primary school, where she was one of the only two Catholic children in attendance. Her grandmother said, “Oh, there she is coming now”, yet it wasn’t she. The grandmother had identified the only other child in the school who had a Catholic parent, and the only other child who had the similar pale face, dark hair, and smaller statue than the other children.

A Protestant man stated:

“There always was a theory…it’s not true, that people looked like Protestants or looked like Catholics. People used to say, ‘I don’t know what it is about them, but their eyes are too close together so they must be Catholic’…I don’t know if the Catholics were saying the same thing, but I presume [they were]. And I remember, as a fun thing, sitting in town with friends…it was a bad thing to do, but it was something we did, as a laugh. We use to try to, as people
walked past, look at them and try to decide whether they were Catholic or Protestant by the way they looked. And sometimes it was little things like how they dressed, or how much jewelry they wore. I don’t know... We used to sit and argue about it. Somebody would say, ‘they’re Protestant’, ‘no they’re not’... ‘Oh they’re Catholic’, ‘I don’t know, they might be Protestant’. We would sit and argue about it. Just for a laugh, you know. And then sometimes somebody would walk by, there was four of us sitting together, and we would say, ‘ya, definitely Catholic’, ‘yep, definitely’, ‘ya, you’re right’.”

This man then attempted to decipher who, among the crowd of strangers in the center of the city, was Catholic or Protestant:

“You see these first two girls coming across there; I would imagine they were Catholic, because of their massive earrings. I don’t think young kids who are Protestant wear them... the track suity sort of thing that doesn’t match, it’s sort of Catholic. I would classify, if I had to, them as Catholic. I could be wrong.

“He’s Catholic as well, that fella’ there; the fella’ with the tracksuit. There’s just something about him. I don’t know. In the bad old days when I used to be much more openly prejudiced I would have said that he just looks much more scruffy. I remember people, some of my friends, used to say, ‘they just look dirty’.

“With her, I would think she was Protestant. Ya, I would say she’d be a Protestant. Um, there’s nothing about her that sticks out as being slightly different... what you’re used to, what you’re associate with... I think there is a bit of snobbiness in it as well. The nice looking ones are Protestant and the ugly ones are Catholic (laughs). I really don’t know.”

Apparel

Apparel is an obvious indicator of religious or cultural identity in Belfast. The most often recognized designating piece of apparel is in the wearing of football jerseys. Nearly all of my
informants recalled that Catholics wear Celtics’ jerseys and Protestants wear Rangers’ jerseys (see Photo 2 and 3). A Protestant man recalled that in 1967, the Celtics had won the European Cup. He was a child of six, and wanted a Celtics’ jersey to support the winning team. His father would not let him have one. His father knew that it was dangerous for a young Protestant boy to walk through their Unionist neighborhood in a Celtics’ jersey. As a child, he did not understand this.

![Celtics’ Jersey](Photo 4: Celtics’ Jersey) ![Rangers’ Jersey](Photo 5: Rangers’ Jersey) (M. McGuire 2003)

Another important designating piece of apparel is school uniforms. Knowing what school a child attends can convey not only religious affiliation due to the segregated education, but it also can convey economic and social status. A Protestant woman emphasized the importance of school uniforms as indicators of religion: “You could be recognized as a target”,

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she said, “the city center wasn’t a problem. Anyone in East Belfast or West Belfast doesn’t know what our uniforms looked like, but in the small area around your school [people would]”.

A Catholic woman related a story regarding school uniforms:

“Our uniforms were maroon. One day we decided to leave school early. We got on a bus, just to see where we would end up. We ended up on Armagh Road and found ourselves in a Loyalist neighborhood with red, white, and blue painted on the curbstones and thought, ‘oh shit, I’m in this uniform and I’m in a Loyalist neighborhood’. But fortunately, Don Mary High had a very similar uniform, so in situations like that you would just cover your crest and pretend to be talking; ‘up with Protestantism’.”

A young Catholic woman mentioned that sometimes young Protestant women dress and wear their hair more conservatively. An older Protestant man also stated that Protestants would be more likely to dress conservatively and have a more conservative demeanor and mannerism, although, he questioned whether this is due to historical class division.

Tattoos, imagery, and jewelry can also be associated with cultural and religious tradition. Tattoos referring to paramilitary gangs or political, cultural, or religious affiliation are an obvious sign of association. In addition, a piece of jewelry incorporating a family crest or a Celtic scroll may associate one with cultural tradition.
Photo 6: Protestant man’s tattoo, signifying membership in a Loyalist group (M. McGuire 2003)

Many of my informants also mentioned an association with the abundance of jewelry worn, especially gold, and religious affiliation. A woman, who was raised in a mixed family, stated that Protestant men would wear an excess of gold jewelry, especially imperial jewelry and heavy-set gold rings. She also stated that Catholic women tend to wear heavy gold Creole loop earrings, which she hypothesized was related to lower socio-economic status. A Protestant man also discussed this association:

“This week…a couple of young teenage girls got on the bus who weren’t dressed in any particular uniform, but the certain jewelry they wore in their ears was definitely something only a Catholic would wear. Just long, dangly, gold, cheap jewelry. You know, and I was saying, ‘Protestants wouldn’t wear that…I probably could have been wrong’.”
This man theorized about why Catholic children and Protestant children dress differently:

“I thought about why it was and I think it’s probably, when you’re younger, you know like kids, if you see kids knockin’ about, everybody the same. Guy wears similar clothes to each other, they wear the same type of trousers, t-shirt, jumper, top, whatever. It’s very similar. If somebody goes out and buys something, all their friends buys something very similar until they’re almost in a sort of uniform within that little group. And because Catholic kids and Protestant kids have grown up, maybe for sixteen years of their life, never interacting with each other, then they only have influence within each other. It’s like two animals in evolution evolving separately…one takes on a set of clothing that is their uniform and another takes on another set of clothing that is their uniform, and so you say, oh, look at the way they are dressed. Catholics would dress like that; Protestants would dress like another way.”

**Personality and Demeanor**

The stereotypes regarding the clean-cut, hardworking Protestant and the lazy, feckless Catholic are only held by few Belfast residents. As a young Protestant man said to me, “We all drink too much, curse too much, eat too many chips; we’re all identical in every way. The only difference is the color of the curbstones and the flags we fly”.

A Catholic man asserted that Catholics were better storytellers, less reserved, and more gregarious than Protestants. He admits this is his stereotype, but supports it by stating that it is what he has noticed through interfacing with his Protestant friends. A young Catholic woman said that Catholics are more outgoing: “they socialize and drink more”. She also stated that young Protestant women are either more conservative or, at the other extreme, more promiscuous.
Terminology

Nationalists, in order to support their political ambition, have associated themselves with Irish culture, tradition, and language. Unionists, highlighting their Britishness for the same purpose, generally reject all things Irish, including the language. McGimpsey (1994) analyzes the social correlation between the Irish language and Nationalism and suggests that it is unfounded, given that it is a relatively recent phenomenon (10). He encourages the promotion of the Irish language among Protestants and suggests that its use could “become another element of Irish life which unites us rather than divide us” (12).

There are a number of differing accents in the city of Belfast alone. Because of the extent of residential segregation, certain areas of the city have developed distinctive accents. The difference is nearly imperceptible to those who are unfamiliar with Belfast society, yet to those who are able to decipher them, accents are an important component in assuming one’s religion. In addition, differing accents from throughout all of Ireland can suggest religious affiliation. Kallen and Kirk (2000) hypothesize that, though many dialects do exist, the pattern of variation is not too great for a ‘Standard Irish English’. In addition, they suggest that the differences between English spoken in Northern Ireland and the English spoken in other areas of the Republic of Ireland are not great.

Because of the historical association attached to place names, Nationalists and Unionists typically use different names for the same places. An example of this is with the term “Northern Ireland” itself. Unionists would use this term for the northern portion of Ireland, as well as the term “Ulster”. Nationalists would tend to not use these labels because it legitimizes the establishment of partition. Instead, they would use terms such as “statelet”, “the six counties”, “the North of Ireland”, or simply “Ireland”. A Protestant man related that his father used to yell
at the television when a Republican politician referred to this area as the “North of Ireland”.

Another example of differential terminology is in the term for “Derry”. Derry is a city on the Western portion of Northern Ireland that the British named “Londonderry”. Most Catholics would not refer to “Derry” as “Londonderry” because, again, it would legitimize British rule.

In addition, terminology referring to one’s identity also runs along sectarian lines. A Protestant may deny the label, “Irish”, but may assert that she or he are an “Ulsterwoman” or “Ulsterman”, “Northern Irish”, or “British”.

Nationalists would tend to avoid terms that legitimize partition and British control. Therefore, Protestants would tend to say ‘police’, ‘army’, and ‘security forces’, while Catholics would tend to use the terms ‘RUC’ (Royal Ulster Constabulary) and ‘Brits’ for these services.

A common perceived difference in Catholic and Protestant speech is in the pronunciation of the letter, “H”. Catholics pronounce the letter, ‘haitch’, while Protestants pronounce it, ‘aitch’. A Catholic man said that, “if you pronounced it ‘aitch’ you were beaten up”.

Terminology may give clues to religious affiliation, but these clues are not necessarily definitive:

“Well, it’s a series of clues; you can never be 100% on any of them. Certainly I had a friend who, when he spelled words, he would spell them with a ‘haitch’. We would say, ‘why do you say ‘haitch’”, and he would say, ‘that’s just the way I learned the [letter].’ You know, he was a Protestant, but we knew from other things that he was a Protestant”. (Protestant man)
Larsen (1982) reported on the visual symbols of the Catholic and Protestant populations on the main street of Kilbroney:

“The right side of the street is ‘Catholic’: the shops are owned by tradesmen with Irish names, and two or three pubs with their fronts painted dark green, their names spelt out in golden Gaelic lettering, indicate the kind of custom they are soliciting. The left-hand side is ‘Protestant’. The shops, among them some of the more prosperous ones, are owned by Protestant tradesmen. The Council office, the premises of the Freemasons and the meeting hall of the Orange Order stand next to each other, and imposing trinity of Protestant power.” (132)

It is quite apparent when one enters a distinctively Protestant or Catholic neighborhood in Belfast for they are decorated with political and cultural colors, flags, and murals. Catholic neighborhoods are decorated with orange, white, and green painted sidewalks and lampposts.
(colors of the Republic of Ireland flag). Protestant neighborhoods, as well, have painted sidewalks, yet they are red, white, and blue, after the colors of the Union Jack. Both neighborhoods would fly their associated flags. In anticipation of the Orange parade on July 12, Protestant children often lay a fresh coat of paint on the curbstones and decorate their streets with new flags. In response, Catholic children do the same with their colors and flags. These markings carry with them a sense of community and pride, but also a proclamation of territory. A Catholic woman suggested that both sides are merely expressing their culture, yet when she travels through an area with red, white, and blue painted on the curbstone, she thinks, “fucking bigot bastards”.

Murals, as well, are a distinct territory marker. There is a wide range of opinion regarding the murals that are displayed on walls throughout working class, sectarian areas of Belfast. Many of my informants expressed feelings of dislike of these murals and some
expressed fear, one saying that she would drive through one of these districts in her car, but "would not stop for a cup of tea". Some also stated that they would feel unsafe in either Republican or Loyalist areas that display paramilitary murals, as they are high crime areas. Some informants stated that they have become accustomed to the murals, so that they do not notice them. Other informants expressed pride towards murals that depict their heroes of history, such as the Hunger Strikers or William of Orange. One Catholic woman quoted a mural depicting Bobby Sands that reads, "Let our revenge be the laughter of our children", and expressed her admiration at how well that statement sums up all that has happened. In addition, some appreciate the artistic skill of the mural artists and the cleverness of the statements.

![Photo 10: Mural from a Catholic neighborhood](image1)
![Photo 11: Mural from a Protestant neighborhood](image2)

(M. McGuire 2003)

A young Catholic woman remembered discussing with her friends how their Catholic murals were so much nicer than the Protestant murals because theirs have images of flowing hair as opposed to guns. It was often commented that Catholic murals attempt to celebrate heroes instead of displaying more violent images. Protestant murals often depict masked men with guns and more violent scenes.
Documented symbols associated with Nationalists and Catholics are the color green and the shamrock (from the legend of St. Patrick, who is said to have explained the Trinity to the Irish with a shamrock), the Harp (because it was historically outlawed within the Pale), the shape of the island of Ireland, Celtic scroll, the Easter Lily (in remembrance of the Easter Rising of 1916), the Vatican flag and Vatican colors, and many other religious symbols. Symbols associated with Unionists and Protestants are the Red Hand of Ulster (sign of the historic province adopted by Loyalist paramilitaries), the Government of Northern Ireland flag (which includes a red hand and a six-pointed star, signifying loyalty to Queen), the Crimson Flag (in remembrance of the Siege of Derry), the Union Jack (based on the crosses of the patron saints of Ireland, England, and Scotland), the Orange flag with a purple star (flown by William of Orange at the Battle of the Boyne), William of Orange’s white horse, and many paramilitary flags.

(Bryson and McCartney 1994)

Photo 12: Irish Catholic girl with a Republic of Ireland flag (M. McGuire 2003)
CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

Through conversations with both Protestant and Catholic residents of Belfast, it is apparent that the markers associated with religious or cultural affiliation are important in the maintenance of social peace. Northern Ireland has historically been the scene of many violent incidences associated with religious and political struggles. Verbal and visual identifying cues are found to be very important in the social interplay of Belfast residents. This importance is both a cause and a result of an extreme form of tact used by Belfast residents and determined by their ability to interpret religious and political symbols.

In concluding this paper, I wish to revisit the questions on which my research was based:

1. **What are the acknowledged names, social attributes, characteristics of appearance and demeanor, terminology, and residential markings associated with the different religious and political factions?**

   While the characteristics that can label one as affiliated with one religion or the other are well known to Belfast residents, nearly all of my informants emphasized that some of these characteristics can cross religious boundaries. Names, for example, seemed the most variable in one sense because the majority of names are ‘middle of the road’ names. On the other hand, Gaelicized names or names referring to British Kings, Queens, or heroes can be very apparent labels.

   The newspaper one reads or the sports one supports can label he or she as Unionist/Protestant or Nationalist/Catholic. Most of my informants claimed not to read the
Newsletter or the Irish News because they felt both were biased. However, if they were inquiring about sports, they would choose the appropriate newspaper. Because Belfast children tend to associate with others of the same religious affiliation, and certain sports are encouraged upon them, they tend to grow up supporting the same types of sports (Irish or British) and the same teams (Rangers or Celtics).

While characteristics of appearance, personality, and demeanor that some use to label one as ‘Protestant’ or ‘Catholic’ seem to be based on social stereotypes, the clothing one wears is a near certain indicator of identity. Sports jerseys, political t-shirts, school uniforms, and cultural symbols such as the Union Jack or the harp can be very obvious announcements of religious or political affiliation.

Characteristics of language use are also indicators of identity. Whether it is the use of the Irish language, the variation in regional accents, or the use of cultural and political terminology, Belfast residents listen carefully to language use to decipher to whom they may be speaking with. This distinctiveness in language may be subconscious to the speaker, yet could tell the listener where the speaker is from or what his or her social surroundings are.

Segregated neighborhoods are an infamous characteristic of Northern Ireland. I have found, however, that these highly separated neighborhoods remain most divided in the poorer areas of Belfast. With the rising middle class in Belfast, families of both religious and political persuasions have become more intermixed in middle class neighborhoods, where political markings of murals and painted sidewalks and lampposts are rare. Yet in the working class districts, where the residents feel economically, socially, and politically threatened by the Other, markings in neighborhoods remain an obvious indicator of residential identity.
2. How accurate do Belfast residents feel they are at categorizing others?

Many of my informants claimed an ability to decipher what religion someone is to a certain extent. Usually, some said, it depends on the person and his or her cultural transparency. As one Protestant woman with a Catholic name said, “I think it is good that no one knows what I am”. Yet on the other hand, some of my informants claimed to be able to identify religious affiliation within 15 minutes and be 100% accurate. “You need to know where you stand”, said a Catholic woman. A young Protestant man said, “Nine and a half times out of ten. It’s just one of those things. It’s small mannerisms. It’s in the back of your mind.”

A Catholic woman explained that assuming someone’s religion is not necessarily a conscious act. “I think some people do [assume religion] to put you in a box, and give you a context”. A Protestant man explained the subconscious aspect of this association: “You can tell by the way he walks past that there is a good chance he is homosexual. It’s that sort of thing. He sort of has that thing about him that makes him look like he probably is. It is probably a similar idea to that”.

If one is unable to decipher someone’s religious or political affiliation, then often he or she inquires as to where the person lives or what school he or she attended. As a young woman said, “if you hear what school someone went to, you will be able to tell everything you would ever want to know about them…if they are middle or upper class, [if] their parents have some money…”

3. How important is the social practice of categorization to Belfast residents, and what are the major reasons for these practices?

Views regarding whether knowing someone’s religion is important were quite mixed. Some asserted that it is not important to know what religion someone is. Yet it was obvious by
their statements regarding their “Catholic co-workers”, or “Protestant friends”, that they do know. In addition, many informants would say that they wear Celtics’ or Rangers’ jerseys because it is the team they support, and why shouldn’t they? However, they know very well what wearing those jerseys says about them and make a conscious decision to wear them in public (Bryan 2003: personal communication).

Many said that it is only important to know someone’s religious affiliation when you are in a situation that may put you in danger. “If you were stranded on a road and getting a lift it may be important,” said a Catholic man. “It can be a matter of life and death, and I mean that literally”, said another Catholic man. “You wouldn’t want to stray off somewhere and get your head bashed in”, said a young Protestant man. “I need to know who I am talking to before I could trust them with information…what is that saying, ‘walls have eyes and ears’”, said a Protestant woman.

Another time when it would be important to know someone’s religion is in the context of dating. While intermarriage is more common today than it was twenty years ago, it is often mentioned that the practice brings about difficulties. A young Catholic woman recalled how her friends would say to her when she was dating a Protestant boy, “why are you dating him? What, Catholic boys aren’t good enough for you?”. A Protestant man communicated his distress at how his parents did not attend his wedding to a Catholic woman. A Protestant man said that it was important for him to know someone’s religion if he was at a disco and interested in a woman:

“In my case, if they were Catholic, I couldn’t take them back to where I lived. I couldn’t carry on a relationship in any significant manner outside of the disco…One [reason], I would assume they would not want to come into my area…because of the district I lived in. They would feel worried about being in that district; that they would be
identified as being Catholic. Also then, I would have to consider...how other people would react to them, like family and friends...It certainly was well known for people to lose friends and be even attacked because they started to go out with somebody...across the divide. So you had to bring this into consideration, you know, was it worth bringing somebody back and saying to your friends, “this is my girlfriend” and they finding out she was Catholic and being annoyed by it...Not necessarily my friends, but people who weren’t my friends, find out about it, might pay me a visit.

“It wasn’t just finding out whether a girl was interested, it was finding out whether she was interested and she was the right religion...and I’m sure she was doing the same thing. It was much handier, much more sensible just to give away enough clues to my religion so that she would know, so she could guess and she just say, ‘well, cheerio’ and make her escape quicker than wasting her time with it. It wasn’t that they actually had an open hostility. Probably everybody has said, ‘well, it’s no problem with me, but my friends might...’ and my friends have probably said, ‘well, it’s no problem with me, but my friends might...’ Maybe even my friends were worried what I would say, and I was worried what my friends would say.”

In addition, knowing someone’s religious or cultural affiliation can prevent offensive social interaction:

“You have to be more careful of what you say, because maybe it’s gonna be something that would offend. So you have to be sure that you don’t say something out of line that people might think that you were saying something deliberately to offend them, in a work place especially...Particularly in the 70s and 80s when incidences happened, there was specific rules of dealing with that incident the next morning.

“[Michael Stone] was a Protestant and he killed some Catholic people during an IRA funeral. But it was the job of the Protestants to speak first about it the next day. And everybody just recognized it...It’s never been set down in any rule, but Protestant people knew, that because it was a Protestant who had done that, that they had to be the first to bring it up and say, ‘wasn’t that an awful event that happened yesterday? Wasn’t that terrible the way that man did that?’ Then the Catholic people would feel safe to say, ‘ya, it was terrible’. But they couldn’t
say it first for fear of offending us because it was a Protestant who had done it. And a few days later, at the funeral of the people that he killed, some British soldiers were murdered by Republicans…and immediately the roles switched.” (Protestant man)

People living in Northern Ireland have learned to cope with constant rioting, violence, and sectarian division of residence, schooling, and occupation. As a way of coping with this sectarian division, it is important for Belfast residents to know a stranger’s religious and political affiliation. This knowledge may help minimize violence between newly introduced strangers by establishing awareness of whether or not political or prejudicial language may be used. The main purpose of this shared practice is to maintain social civility in a conflicted community.
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APPENDIX I: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE

Note: Actual interview questions varied.

STATISTICS
AGE:
SEX:
OCCUPATION:

FREE RECALL ON IDENTIFICATION

WHAT ARE SOME NAMES ASSOCIATED WITH A PROTESTANT AFFILIATION?
  Christian Names?
  Surnames?
  What makes these names “Protestant”?
  How important is it for Protestant parents to name their children with “Protestant” names?
  How important is it for Protestant parents to NOT name their children with “Catholic” names?

WHAT ARE SOME NAMES ASSOCIATED WITH A CATHOLIC AFFILIATION?
  Christian Names?
  Surnames?
  What makes these names “Catholic”?
  How important is it for Catholic parents to name their children with “Catholic” names?
  How important is it for Catholic parents to NOT name their children with “Protestant” names?

IS YOUR NAME PROTESTANT OR CATHOLIC? (DON’T LIST NAME)
  Did your parents name you purposefully with a Protestant or Catholics name?

ARE THERE SOME PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS SPECIFIC TO PROTESTANTS?
  What is distinctive about their facial characteristics?
  What is distinctive about the characteristics of their apparel?

ARE THERE SOME PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS SPECIFIC TO CATHOLICS?
  What is distinctive about their facial characteristics?
  What is distinctive about the characteristics of their apparel?

ARE THERE SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF A “PROTESTANT” PERSONALITY?

ARE THERE SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF A “CATHOLIC” PERSONALITY?

WHAT AREAS OF BELFAST ARE ASSOCIATED WITH PROTESTANTS?
  Are Catholics encouraged or not encouraged to enter these areas?
  Is the division as exact today as it has been in historically?

WHAT AREAS OF BELFAST ARE ASSOCIATED WITH CATHOLICS?
  Are Protestants encouraged or not encouraged to enter these areas?
  Is the division as exact today as it has been in historically?

ARE THERE FEELINGS OF ANGER/OFFENCE/FEAR/INDIFFERENCE TOWARDS POLITICAL MURALS DEPICTING ANTI-BRITISH OR ANTI-IRISH SCENES?
IS THERE A FEELING OF PRIDE TOWARDS SOME POLITICAL MURALS?
HOW DO YOU FEEL WHEN YOU ENTER A VILLAGE OR NEIGHBORHOOD WITH RED/WHITE/BLUE OR GREEN/WHITE/ORANGE PAINTED ON CURBSTONES OR LAMPPPOSTS?
ARE THERE ANY TERMS USED ONLY BY PROTESTANTS?
   Why are these terms used?
   How important is it for Catholics to NOT use these terms?
ARE THERE ANY TERMS USED ONLY BY CATHOLICS?
   Why are these terms used?
   How important is it for Protestants to NOT use these terms?
IS IT IMPORTANT TO KNOW WHAT RELIGION SOMEONE IS?
   When is it most important?
DO YOU FEEL THAT YOU CAN TELL WHETHER SOMEONE IS CATHOLIC OR PROTESTANT WITHIN A FEW MINUTES OF TALKING TO THEM?
   How accurate do you think you are?
HAVE YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW EVER BEEN WRONG AND HAD AN EMBARRASSING OR AWKWARD SITUATION?
WOULD YOU PURCHASE A “CATHOLIC” OR “PROTESTANT” NEWSPAPER?
   Why or why not?
WOULD YOU PURCHASE A “CATHOLIC” OR “PROTESTANT” ALCOHOL PRODUCT?

PERSONAL INFORMATION

WHERE DO YOU LIVE?
IS THE POPULATION MORE PROTESTANT OR CATHOLIC, OR IS IT A MIXED COMMUNITY?
ARE YOU AWARE OF RELIGIOUS OR ETHNIC BOUNDARIES IN YOUR AREA?
ARE THERE AREAS YOU WOULD AVOID?
WHERE WERE YOU RAISED?
WAS THE POPULATION MORE PROTESTANT OR CATHOLIC, OR WAS IT A MIXED COMMUNITY?
   Were Protestant or Catholic families treated differently?
WERE THERE PROTESTANT OR CATHOLIC CHILDREN IN YOUR SCHOOL?
   Were Protestant or Catholic children treated differently?
WHAT SOCIAL CLASS DID YOU COME FROM?
WHAT SOCIAL CLASS WOULD YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF NOW?
## APPENDIX II: SURNames RECORdInE NEWSPAPER DEATH ANNOUNCEMENTS

Note: Surnames in bold refer to names found in both newspapers.

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Smyth Sloan
Snodden Small
Stanhope Smith
Steele Spratt
Stewart Synott
T. Taggart Thomas
Tate Toman
Thompson Toner
**Totten** Tweed
U. Uilliott
V. Vauls
W. Wade Wallace
Walsh Walsh
Watson West
**Williams** Webb
Winter

**Williams** Wilson
Winton Woodburn
Workman
APPENDIX III: NEWSPAPER FRONT PAGE HEADLINES

Newsletter

Saturday, June 14, 2003
"Double Trouble: Parades Commission Chief Knighted, Nationalists Back Out of Drumcree Talks"

Monday, June 23, 2003
"Donaldson will Stand Firm on his Policy: I'll Stay and Fight Vows MP"

Friday, June 27, 2003
"County Lodge Threat to Quit Unionist Council: Trimble Facing Orange Revolt"

Monday, July 14, 2003
"Parade Boy, 5, Fighting for Sight"

Thursday, July 17, 2003
"Lives will be Lost, Government Warned: Attacks Leave 999 Crews on Road to Nowhere"

Monday, July 21, 2003
"Bus-Bomb 'Message' backs jail campaign: Deadly Move in War of Nerves"

Thursday, July 24, 2003
"Real IRA atrocity continues to take toll as emergency workers quit: Omagh Heroes Pay High Price"

Tuesday, July 29, 2003
"Why Did it Take Police so Long to Catch Him?: Jail for Sex Beast - At Last"

Saturday, August 2, 2003
"Protestants Subjected to Canaries Nightmare by Republican Thugs: Holiday Hell"

Monday, August 4, 2003
"Omagh Father Condemns Minister Over Plea to Aid Depressed Daughter: A Cold House for Victims"

Irish News

Saturday, June 14, 2003
"New NIO Man Voted for Army Murderers"

Monday, June 23, 2003
"Detectives Examine Loyalist's UFF Links"

Friday, June 27, 2003
"Orangemen Flagging up Threats of Violence"

Thursday, July 17, 2003
"Rights Bill Plan 'Will Undermine Progress'"

Monday, July 21, 2003
"20-Strong Gang of Loyalists Attack Man"

Thursday, July 24, 2003
"Victims' Families Slam 'Offensive' SF Website"

Tuesday, July 29, 2003
"Sex Abuser is Given Four Life Sentences"

Saturday, August 2, 2003
"Fisherman Drowned after Boat Hits Rocks"

Monday, August 4, 2003
"Journalist Brands Spy Claim 'Rubbish'"

Anderstonstown News

Saturday, June 14, 2003
"Go Away, I'm Alive: Sick Hoaxers send undertakers to Sadie's Home in a New Low"

Monday, July 14, 2003
"What the BBC Didn't Show"