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Anthropology and European Ethnology in Northern Ireland: New Directions

Edited by
Fiona Magowan
and
Máiréad Nic Craith

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As the Anthropological Association of Ireland celebrates its twenty-first anniversary we take this opportunity to reflect upon its history. The Association was founded in 1987 by four academics, Hastings Donnan and Graham McFarlane (both from Queen’s University Belfast); Séamas Ó Síocháin (St. Patrick’s College Maynooth, now the National University of Ireland, Maynooth); and Joe Ruane (University College Cork). The objective was and remains to bring together and to represent the interests of all those anthropologists who work on the island as well as those who have been trained and/or carried out research there, and many of the Association’s activities over the last two decades have reflected the diverse locations in which its members have conducted fieldwork: Sudan, Pakistan, Papua New Guinea, Australia, Kenya, Nigeria, Seychelles, Irish Republic and Northern Ireland. As this issue focuses on Northern Ireland we ask what are the key research questions for anthropologists and ethnologists today that will advance knowledge and develop Northern Ireland’s future; and how do contemporary interests reflect or diverge from concerns of the past?

Some of the current research being conducted on Northern Ireland relates to migrant experiences and transnational identifications; commemorating the past; living with division; community relations between youth and police; risks in walking and driving; and performances of identity and belonging. Association members have a long history of representing local views in policy arenas and continue to do so in order to influence public debate (Wilson and Donnan 2006: 178). Anthropologists at Queen’s University were among the first to recognize that anthropology could contribute to policy and identity debates as early as the 1970s (see Blacking 1973). Since then, the culture-policy interface has been critically reviewed in a series of edited volumes in the 1980s and 1990s (Donnan and McFarlane 1983, 1989, 1997) and other papers examined the nexus between anthropology and social policy (Jenkins, Donnan and McFarlane 1986; Kane, Blacking, Donnan and McFarlane 1988; Bryan and Jarman 1996; Blacking, Byrne and Ingram 1986; Sluka 1999). These reviews highlighted the need for primary research on critical socio-political concerns, and Queen’s University anthropologists have continued to develop and build extensive profiles relating to policy issues, for example around marching and the parades commission (see Bryan 1999, 2000, 2003; Jarman and Bryan 1996); national flags and symbols (Jarman 1999); unemployment and mixed marriage (McFarlane 1979; Donnan 1990); the impact of migration (Donnan and O’Brien 1998); hidden border economies and social exclusion (Donnan 1999); young people, drugs and the police (Roche 2005); and the nature of ritual and parading (Nagle 2005). In the case of the University of Ulster, anthropologists and ethnologists have focused on culture and identity conflicts (Kockel 1999; Harrison 1999, 2003; Nie Craith 2002, 2003); culture and economic development (Kockel 2002a, b; Naylor 2008); as well as ethnomusicology (McCann 2001, 2003). Museum studies have also featured prominently in anthropological/ethnological research at this university (Crooke 2008, 2000).

Anthropological collaborations with the public sector in Northern Ireland have extended well out into the community with anthropologists being employed in other institutions such as the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, pursuing their own interests in local life and bringing their expertise to bear upon its findings (Buckley 1982, 1985–6). Scholars living beyond the island of Ireland have also contributed much to the academic wealth of interpretation of Northern Ireland politics around republicanism and nationalism (Feldman 1991; Sluka 1995); work, memory and identity (Kelleher 2003); and festival and dance (Santino 1998; Wulff 2007).

This volume brings to light key questions for anthropological and ethnological research of Northern Ireland shaped by emergent social and political concerns. While some of the themes explored in this issue are not new, local sentiments about living in post-conflict Northern Ireland are. Contemporary concerns of anthropologists to some extent reflect changing politics. As official policies of inclusion and incorporation have become more embedded at grass-roots levels, researchers have revisited subjects such as religion and ritual as a mode of social affirmation rather than a cause of division. The tone of the new Northern Ireland is one in which innovative commemorative practices will take us beyond the past, with an emphasis upon healing in various forms.
rather than regret (see Finlay 1999; Nagle this volume). However, as we shall see in four of the anthropology papers in this volume (Roche, Hurley-Depret, Nagle), wounds of the past still run deep in the veins of contemporary social relations. Nagle considers the problematics around commemoration in the performance of social memory and community restoration; while Hurley-Depret shows how post-conflict social attitudes and the relations they engendered are changing slowly, albeit not completely, in one Belfast suburb. Similarly, Roche shows that there are still issues for the police to deal with in how young people view police intervention, partly as a result of ideas handed down in generational transmission.

Three of the essays in this special edition might be located in an anthropological field more commonly known as European ethnology. ‘Cultural Encounters’ is a major theme at the University of Ulster’s Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages, and a recent edition of the journal Shared Space (No. 5) featured six postgraduate contributions on migration. In this volume, Delargy and Liubiniene explore cultural encounters between traditional and incoming communities while Ferrario’s explores the impact of modern technology on memory and heritage.

The concept of ethnology (without the prefix European) is several hundred years old and has been defined differently over the centuries (Nic Craith 2008). The French electrician, André-Marie Ampère, adopted the term in the 1830s to describe: ‘the science which studied the places occupied by nations and the races from which they took their origin, the monuments left behind them by their predecessors, the history of their progress and decadence, the religions that they professed’ (Fenton 2004: 18). For Ampère, there was a very clear distinction between ethnology and ethnography. Whereas ethnology was a comparative and theoretical field, ethnography was descriptive. However, his view is not representative of all contemporary perspectives, and sometimes the concepts of ethnology and ethnography are confused. Ampère’s contrast is accepted in many central European countries, but it is rejected in the Soviet Union and many of its Eastern European neighbours who see no difference between them.

Buckley (2008) has identified four approaches to the field of ethnology in Northern Ireland. During much of the nineteenth century, there was a strong emphasis on the basic compilation of empirical information. In a second and subsequent approach, these ethnological materials were used to conceptualize and idealize identities at all levels and blossomed, for example, during the Celtic revival that occurred at the end of the nineteenth century. The third ethnological approach identified by Buckley was essentially a search for origins and focused on issues of ‘survivals’ and ‘diffusions’ from one generation to another. The fourth approach ‘arrived rather suddenly in Ulster in 1972’. At this time, the primary task of Ulster ethnology was to ascertain the meaning of objects and actions in specific social situations.

At this time (1972), the titles of academic chairs at the Universities of Lund, Stockholm and Uppsala were changed from Nordic and Comparative Studies to Ethnology, and the concept of European ethnology is widely used in many universities in Central Europe today – although each defines it in its own, distinct way. Konrad Köstlin, an eminent European ethnologist, has described the disciplinary field in terms of story-telling and suggests that it ‘explains to people what is their practice. It tells stories … and creates identity by means of assumptions of authenticity’ (1996: 174–75). Although European ethnologists are not the only story-tellers in academia, Köstlin suggest that they are more successful than others ‘because their stories fit into everyday life and into contemporary life strategies’. Such narratives can effectively allow a community or nation ‘to perform itself’ (Köstlin 1996: 178). Here Köstlin is describing a discipline in active, rather than in passive, terms; in the context of what it does, rather than what it is.

Telling stories as a mode of identity performance is also a key aspect of anthropology. In recent times there has been a public emphasis on celebrating Northern Ireland in official festive rhetorics of a post-conflict society that seeks to promote the region as free of the suffering held in the memories and memorialization that are presented in some of the articles in this volume. A number of Queen’s anthropologists have sought to document the complexity of artistic forms through the analysis of traditional music (Schiller 2004; Radford 2001); and in more diverse performative expressions that reflect a post-conflict multicultural society (Magowan 2005; Svašek 2007). These issues have gained currency as research topics amongst postgraduate scholars who are keen to experiment with new methodologies of researching peace, belonging and identity. Particularly popular are studies of Northern Ireland musics whether in the Ulster Scots or nationalist parading traditions. Research interests of upcoming scholars are likely to expand with the cross-fertilization between Queen’s anthropology and Irish Studies which offers an MA that also brings in scholars of history, politics, philosophy and sociology. Anthropology at Queen’s is also shaping and reviewing the research agenda as evidenced in the recent Anthropology in Action volume on Northern Ireland edited by Skinner (2006) and the publication of The Anthropology of Ireland (Wilson and Donnan 2006).

The approach to European ethnology at the University of Ulster is characterized by a holistic perspective underpinned by a practically-based theoretical framework, with a strong focus on applied concerns, especially regional development and cultural policy, and on international, inter-cultural comparison and knowledge transfer. A dedicated series on ethnology in Europe is edited by Ulrich Kockel at the Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages and published by a major publisher (Dow and Bockhorn 2004, Kockel 2002, Margry and Roodeenburg 2007 and Rihtman-Augustin 2004). This Academy (established with SPUR funding in 2001) has generated a new interest in ethnological research in Northern Ireland. In 2007, the Academy introduced an MRes for those interested in the fields of heritage and technology and the number of doctoral students in the field is growing steadily.

At Queen’s University the spotlight is firmly upon Northern Ireland in debates about the transformation
of conflict at the Mitchell Symposium in May. With Queen’s University’s investment in a one million pound Irish Studies Research Initiative which is set to fund postgraduate and postdoctoral researchers over the next five years, the future of anthropological and ethnological research in Ireland and the depth of scholarship and critical inquiry is surely set to grow.

Endnotes

1. Lee Komito (University College Dublin) assisted with this process, standing in for Séamas Ó Síocháin when he was on sabbatical.

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Ulster Folk and Transport Museum
http://www.uftm.org.uk/

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http://www2.hu-berlin.de/ethno/english/departm/general.htm

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Lithuanians in Northern Ireland: New Home, New Homeland?

Neringa Liubiniene

Abstract

This essay explores the experience of ‘home-building’ in Northern Ireland by recent Lithuanian migrants. Drawing on anthropological fieldwork conducted in Northern Ireland from 2006–007, the article examines the changing landscape of ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland with particular reference to the meaning of ‘home’ and the significance of a physical building, such as a house. The social and economic infrastructure for Lithuanian migrants in Northern Ireland is examined as well as the memories and cultural emblems that they bring from their home country. Migrant experiences of belonging and nostalgia are examined here as well as the question of return-migration.

Introduction

This article addresses the process of ‘home-building’ in the host country (Northern Ireland) by the first generation of Lithuanian migrants. Making ‘home’ in a new country is a challenge to many people. Migrants who leave behind the familiar environment of homeland and come to a strange country to live and work very often experience cultural shock (different languages, traditions, customs etc.) and insecurity (hostility from local residents, competition with other migrants, lack of information). ‘Home-building’ usually serves as the initial stage of domestication of a new place and a construction of one’s own space within it.

– What is Northern Ireland to you?
– Home.
– And Lithuania?
– Home… Oops…
(a Lithuanian woman in NI)

The notion of home is a part of the discourse of the nation state and has emotive connotations of solidarity with those inside and the exclusion of those outside. Migration means not only leaving home but also taking up residence in someone else’s home (Castells and Davidson 2000). Still, today’s technological achievements, though contributing to an increase in the mobility of people, cannot sponge the memories of homeland and feelings of nostalgia. In the recent anthropological theories of transnationalism and transmigration that gain more and more attention among academics (Schiller, Basch and Szanton 1995), migrants are characterized as having multiple attachments and as variously (socially, economically, politically, and culturally) participating in the life of several countries (e.g. of host country and of country of origin). In the light of globalization, technological and informational development, and of mobility, the constant change, flux, and dissolution of boundaries are seen as trivial and normal. In these conditions locality is no longer essentially rooted in particular places. Therefore, this article explores how under the influence of globalizing forces, first generation migrants in Northern Ireland perceive ‘home’, that is, where and when it is located (if it is located at all) and what kind of experiences, ideas, and objects migrants (Lithuanians) use for ‘home-building’ in the host country (Northern Ireland).

The main data used in the article comes from the fieldwork (semi-structured interviews, informal conversations, participant observation and secondary data sources) that the researcher carried out in Northern Ireland (NI) among Lithuanian migrants from October 2006 to June 2007. Undoubtedly, Lithuanians in NI are not a homogeneous group and consequently the data of the fieldwork cannot be extended to all Lithuanian migrants living in NI. Nevertheless, it may be used to outline main trends and features and, hopefully, to initiate new research. In the article the word ‘Lithuanian’ is used in the following sense: it refers generally to a person who emigrated from Lithuania but does not indicate his/her ethnicity or citizenship.

Migration of Lithuanians to Northern Ireland after 2004

Following the EU enlargement in 2004, several older member-states that fully opened their labour markets magnetized high numbers of migrants from Eastern and Central Europe. Nationals from the so called ‘accession countries’ (A8) did not hesitate in using the freedom of mobility, crossing borders and accessing fully open labour markets of the countries in the British Isles – the UK and Ireland. At the same time those Eastern Europeans who already lived and worked in these countries before 2004,
either under different work permits schemes or illegally, seized the opportunity to change their status and/or to become ‘visible’.

NI attracted many immigrants from Eastern and Central Europe as well. While NI is increasingly becoming a multicultural society, its earlier historical events (mass emigration to USA) and conflicts (British vs. Irish, Protestants vs. Catholics) have left a significant mark and still affect the current lives of local residents and newcomers. As it is said in the Racial Equality Strategy for Northern Ireland (OFMDFM 2005: 9), ‘The conflict in Northern Ireland over the past 35 years has created patterns and attitudes – such as residential segregation and heightened territorial awareness – that now impact upon minority ethnic groups.’

The newcomers markedly changed the landscape of already established ethnic minorities and significantly influenced economic, social and cultural life of the area. Undoubtedly, in social life any process does not proceed in isolation or vacuum; consequently, the arrival of many immigrants was not unnoticed by local residents of NI. Setting up in the new country often leads to what Castells and Davidson (2000: 130) label as a ‘clash between the «house rules» of the new place and the practices that immigrants bring with them’; negotiations with neighbours are needed to avoid deep oppositions and conflicts.

The governmental, social and academic bodies quickly acknowledged the existence of high numbers of migrants from A8 countries in NI and, consequently, research on migrants (especially on the social and economic issues) is growing rapidly. They are usually considered as migrant workers and therefore the main attention focuses on economic and social dimensions. The findings of various researchers are often used to dissolve the negative stereotypes and myths about migrant workers as well as to promote equal rights. Even though the statistical figures of immigration to the UK (and NI) and Ireland seem to be much higher than predicted, state officials and in both countries share the view that immigration boosts their economies and is therefore beneficial. Nevertheless, the official promotion of the advantages of these migrants does not negate the opposite view of immigrants as a burden and a threat.

Despite the existing different opinions in the public context about the positive and negative impact of an open immigration regime for A8 nationals, the communities of Poles, Lithuanians, Slovaks and other ethnic groups are growing. It is still difficult to provide the exact numbers of nationals coming to NI from eight accession countries, but the available data shows that at least until recently Poles and Lithuanians represented the largest groups of immigrants from A8 in NI. The official figures for NI Worker Registration Scheme provided by Home Office (NISRA 2007: 5, Table 1.3) suggest that around 4,700 Lithuanians were registered during the period May 2004 – March 2007 and that, based on UK population share, NI has received markedly more registrations from Lithuania than the UK as a whole. While the Embassy of the Republic of Lithuania in London also suggests about 4,000 Lithuanians in NI, HE Ambassador Vygaudas Usackas thinks that there may be up to 15,000 Lithuanians in the region (Eglinskas 2007).

McAliskey (Holder, McAliskey and Lenaghan 2006) asks how would anybody look at the map of the world and decide to come to NI in particular. Lithuanians and NI do not have any former historical connections, and there were no historical networks of Lithuanians in NI. This is different from the situation in Scotland and England which had an active Lithuanian Diaspora of post-war migrants. McAliskey (Holder, McAliskey and Lenaghan 2006) suggests that people come to NI because they are invited by employers. This is true in the sense that, being predominantly labour migrants, they would not settle in the area if there were not a demand for their labour. They help fill the gaps in the country’s labour market, particularly in administration, business and management, hospitality and catering, agriculture, manufacturing and food, fish and meat processing (McVeigh and Fisher 2006; Home Office 2007).

But Lithuanians themselves suggest that the primary attraction is the social networks that already exist in NI. Friends, relatives, acquaintances are already in the region, have some useful information, and can help on the first days of arrival. Geographically, Lithuanians are dispersed throughout the whole NI – they live both in cities and in small villages. Still, according to Worker Registration Scheme statistics available by area of employer, the most popular areas of employment among migrant workers from A8 countries (including Lithuanians) are Belfast, Dungannon, Newry & Mourne, and Craigavon Local Government Districts (NISRA 2007).

Although many Lithuanians are Catholics, not all of them consider the residential segregation between Catholics and Protestants in NI when finding a home. Very often they choose to live in the Protestant areas (e.g. Portadown or particular areas in Derry). This choice is sometimes deliberate (‘It is cheaper’) but can also result from ignorance (‘I didn’t know anything about conflict’, ‘I don’t care’), or inexperience (‘Is it important’, ‘Nothing yet happened to us’). While such patterns may have ‘a genuinely leavening effect on society that has long been frozen in its «two traditions» divide’ (OFMDFM 2005: 20), they may also expose these people as targets to possible racial and/or hate attacks: research from Animate (2005: 77) suggests that ‘there were clear patterns in relation to religion and nationality with those categorizing themselves as Protestant and/or British showing significantly higher levels of prejudice than those who were not’.

**Migrants’ notions about Lithuania and Northern Ireland: ‘home’, ‘work’, ‘holidays’**

During the conversations with Lithuanians in NI about their lives in the new country one of the main themes was about ‘home’. According to Castells and Davidson (2000: 130), the notion of home plays an important role for most people: home is where one feels a sense of belonging and security, where one can decide on acceptable values and forms of behaviour, where one can shut the door on outsiders; however, home does not just refer to a house, but by analogy it represents a wider social space.
— even a country. Lithuanians presented differing notions regarding which place (country) they defined as home: some chose Lithuania, some NI, some both countries.

In the beginning of this article there was a quote from a Lithuanian woman disclosing that two countries — Lithuania and NI — might be perceived by a migrant as equal in some way, both can represent home. The puzzle is how two completely different places (they are geographically distant, culturally distinct and have different historical pasts) might be perceived by somebody as 'home' and how many such 'homes' one could have. Such attitudes of migrants challenge the idea of home as something rooted, constant and localized. At the same time it clearly shows multi-attachments and implies that a person in the new country already feels secure and comfortable as he/she did 'at home' in Lithuania. But this was not the same for everyone. Other Lithuanians employed completely different ideas about place, constructing them through the opposition; that is, they suggested that the relationship between NI and Lithuania was similar to that between a 'workplace' and a 'place for holidays'. In this example they ascribed host and origin countries to very different qualitative spheres. However, such a division between work and holidays might be the expression of the migrant's everyday life.

Lithuanians are mostly economic/labour migrants, that is, their main reasons for coming to NI were to work, to earn some money and to return/not return to Lithuania. They usually work in the agricultural, food processing, and construction sectors, as well as in various other factories (recycling, exhaust etc.) or in the service-sector (pubs, night clubs, restaurants). It is common, especially in the beginning, to live according to the scheme 'home-work-home' and not to spend much time on leisure activities. Working overtime or on long shifts is also a usual practice among Lithuanians. So it is very reasonable to associate NI with 'work'.

On the other hand, many Lithuanians from NI told me that they go for holidays to Lithuania. And if there is a possibility (generally, money and time) they go there for Christmas or Easter as well. However, it does not mean that the main trigger for such trips is nostalgia for Lithuania (idealized, imagined, loved); maybe nostalgia plays a part, but not to a great extent. More often the main factors are visits to children, parents, relatives and friends combined with very prosaic reasons such as visiting a dentist, doctors or simply to repair a house/flat etc. Associating NI with work and Lithuania with holidays does not necessarily mean that the former country is viewed negatively and the latter positively. Viewing both as home does not mean that they are both seen in a positive light either. Of course, Lithuanians' opinions vary, but it is possible to distinguish a few common trends.

Contrary to one's expectations, Lithuanians rarely spoke about discrimination or exploitation at work (this, of course, does not mean that they have not faced it or that it is not happening). Instead they accentuated the positive things about NI: helpful and polite people, beautiful landscape and good salaries. The positive outweighed the negative as demonstrated in the case of a Lithuanian family that faced really big problems in NI (including racketeering) and, consequently, had to return for a while to Lithuania but now thinks about coming back to NI.

Although NI is generally perceived positively or, at least, neutrally, the attitude towards Lithuania is more complicated and ambiguous. There are two groups of Lithuanians: those that perceive Lithuania positively or at least neutrally and those that see it negatively. (Of course, there are also individuals who have mixed feelings about Lithuania). Overall, it becomes evident that Lithuanians are more critical about their country of origin than about the host country. There might be various explanations for this, but one of them could be that Lithuanians simply have a much better understanding about life in Lithuania, what is going on there compared to their knowledge about NI's life. Consequently, after a number of years in NI their uncritical attitude towards the host country might change significantly. A third group of Lithuanians represents those who from the very beginning clearly decided that their home was either in Lithuania or in NI, but their explanations for the localization of 'home' in one or another country varied depending on their conceptions and ideas about what home was.

What makes ‘home’ for a migrant: intertwined and contradictory characteristics

When trying to explain why their ‘home’ is where it is, Lithuanians use several different ideas that each makes the central axis for ‘home-building’. These are as follows: ‘I’, ‘house’, and ‘family’. Accordingly, all answers could be classified into three types: ego-centred (I), social-relations-centred (family), and object-centred (house).

The words ‘here’ and ‘there’ are usually used as a supplement to the main ideas by placing ‘home’ in Lithuania or NI.

Those that base their definitions on the use of ego-centred explanations usually say something like: ‘I am here, so my home is here’. Such a definition carries some kind of post-modern attitude towards place/areas, because it implies no attachment to a country, state or any other geographically located place. Even the contrary happens: it shows full mobility of ‘home’ that is not rooted in any place and subject to changes, that is, it has to some extent a peripatetic existence. Logically, if a person (‘I’) is in NI, at the moment his/her ‘home’ is in NI.

The social-relations-centred definition of ‘home’ is based on the presence/non-presence of one’s family members in a very concrete place (geographical area). By saying ‘family’ Lithuanians usually have in mind a nuclear family — wife, husband, and children. In this case, ‘home’ might be either in Lithuania or in NI; it depends on where one’s family is, so it is flexible as well. Following this definition, the ‘home’ is mobile in its nature, but only to a certain degree. Its mobility might be subject to certain constraints; for example, a migrant may not be able to bring his/her family due to immigration policy. Since Lithuania joined the EU, its nationals can experience full mobility and the ‘home’ can ‘travel’ to NI as well. At the same time the mobility of ‘home’ depends upon the other people’s (family members) willingness to move to another country.
The third type of explanation is based on a very material object—the house that symbolises a ‘home’. This definition involves not only symbolic house–home relations, but also includes an economic dimension (the house as a property and sometimes as a liability). This third definition (the object-centred definition) places much more emphasis on stability, long-term plans and rootedness. A house localises ‘home’ in a very concrete place— even though it could be sold in certain circumstances. The house is usually either in Lithuania or in NI, and it is not mobile.

In those instances where both Lithuania and NI were both named as ‘home’ it is important to specify that after some confusion these Lithuanians started to explain further and draw distinctions between two so-called ‘homes’, for example, ‘this is my first home’ and this is my ‘second home’ and so on. When speaking about their home many Lithuanians used qualifying adjectives and talked about their ‘new home’, their ‘second home’, their ‘temporary home’, their ‘true home’ or their ‘first home’. The notion about home in Lithuania as ‘true’, ‘first’, ‘the only’ is popular among Lithuanians. Nevertheless, those who plan to stay in NI speak more often about home in NI as the ‘new home’. And those who plan to return back to Lithuania or are not sure about future plans tend to call ‘home’ in NI ‘temporary’ or ‘second’. Sometimes, life in NI is described by them as a ‘temporary stop’.

Labelling home as ‘true’ or ‘second’ might be again merely influenced by the everyday life of migrants. It is common practice among Lithuanians in NI to rent a room, a flat or a house. They very rarely own a house/flat. In Lithuania many of them had (and then sold) or still have their flats and houses. Consequently, ownership of a house or flat might influence how one perceives the place and, logically, the ‘home’. And the reverse also occurs: Lithuanians, especially younger ones, who lived with their parents or in rented flats in Lithuania, may manage to buy a house after few years of work in NI (of course, usually they need a loan as well). Thus, the employment of different adjectives while describing and localizing home may well be influenced by their former experience, because the association of house with ‘home’ is very strong in various cultures.

Overall there are very different ideas among Lithuanians about ‘home’ (what and where it is). They still disclose the tendency to localize ‘home’ in the concrete place, but not to root it, and as a result this type of ‘home’ is subject to transportation to other places or simply to cloning/recreating it in a new place. The tangle of mobility and stability in migrants’ descriptions of what and where their ‘home’ is, indicate that a person’s migration experience, albeit not exclusively, does have an impact on his/her sense of place and ideas about ‘home’.

**Pieces of Lithuania in the migrants’ ‘homes’ in Northern Ireland**

Castells and Davidson (2000) write that the use of homeland languages, the import/production of ethnic food, the desire to own one’s own house, to decorate the home in traditional ways etc. are almost universal among immigrants. In his study of Lebanese immigrants in Australia, Hage (in Castells and Davidson 2000: 131) argues that the introduction of material goods and cultural symbols from the homeland are not a nostalgic attempt to symbolically return home, but rather have the function to create a new sense of home as a base from which to perceive and grasp the Australian opportunities.

Despite stronger or weaker classifications of what belongs to one or another place (in this case, to Lithuania or NI), when constructing ‘home’ in NI Lithuanians often turn back to their country of origin and former life in it. Usually, it is done by transporting some material things: personal things from former homes in Lithuania, Lithuanian cultural and/or state symbols, informational material about the country of origin etc. But non-material things (for example, some memories or even people) are transported to the new place and the new home as well.

Usually, when people remember their everyday lives in Lithuania, they miss some small simple things, like strawberries in mother’s or grandmother’s garden (here they are ‘tasteless’) or sitting with friends in the coffee bar in Laisves avenue (and here are ‘only pubs’ or they ‘don’t go out at all’). But together with these warm memories Lithuanians also remembered the more difficult aspects of their lives in Lithuania such as their small salaries. This shows that first-generation migrants from Lithuania do not simply perceive their country of origin either negatively (hate) or positively (idealization). Instead, it is experienced through a blend of mixed memories and emotions. And these memories and emotions are brought to NI.

Some migrants said that they did not need to go back to Lithuania, because everything they needed (including people) are already here in NI. And they were not simply talking about the nuclear family such as their husbands, wives, or children. The more extended circle: parents, brothers and sisters with families, other relatives and friends are also here. For this reason several Lithuanians suggested that they did not feel a need to communicate with somebody outside their familial/friends network or to make new friendships. As well as these familial/friends networks there are also wider or smaller ethnic networks (depends on the living place) that may be used as a source for help, information and new friendships. Dungannon town is a good example of such a network where there is an incredible concentration of Lithuanians from the same Silute region in Lithuania. Consequently, after arriving in Dungannon, migrants meet people that they already knew in Lithuania – for example, relatives, classmate's, close friends.

Occasionally, Lithuanians tend to bring items that represent Lithuania (various symbols) but more frequently they carry personal, heart-warming belongings from their former ‘home’. Symbolic mementos include cross-statues, flags, amber necklaces, horseshoes and similar items that in one way or another are associated with Lithuania. My conversations with Lithuanians suggested that, if the need for cultural or state symbols from Lithuania emerged at all, this occurred after the migrant has been abroad for some time. Sometimes Lithuanians bring items such as an amber necklace or a flag for more representational purposes (i.e. to show to
locals). At other times mementos (i.e. typical calendar, wooden salt box or a painting of the old town of the capital Vilnius) serve to remind the migrant of home. Friends or relatives coming to visit sometimes also bring certain things that might be associated with Lithuania. Photographs and music CDs/files are most common personal belongings taken to NI. More colourful and revealing personal belongings that ‘came’ to NI are wedding gifts, father’s paintings and a handful of soil. There are cases when people bring plant seeds from Lithuania specifically to grow strawberries, cucumbers, flowers and other things in their backyards and small greenhouses. Lithuanians that brought seeds always accentuate that the seeds are from Lithuania, because here (in NI) one cannot get such good seeds. Among other typical things that come from Lithuania are books (mostly novels), journals (women’s magazines), medicines (various), food (sausages, bread, sweets), alcohol (vodka, beer, mead, etc.), and cigarettes. Recently a number of Eastern European convenience stories have opened and one can easily purchase ethnic food and some journals, so there is no need anymore to bring ethnic food from Lithuania.

Thus, Lithuanian migrants consciously and/or subconsciously tend to use material and non-material ‘things’ from Lithuania for the construction of ‘home’ in a new place and by doing so they domesticate this place, that is, create a familiar environment. There can be different reasons for doing this: nostalgia, facilitation of everyday life, preparation of a good starting place for going out into a wider society and of a secure place to come back to, demonstration of ethnic and/or national belonging and attachments, or all together.

According to Castells and Davidson (2000), the migrants in the new country seek to construct a place that they can again call home, and such ‘home-building’ not only represents individual or family level but also functions as the first step to the more collective activity of ‘place-making’. This article has aimed to find out how nowadays first generation migrants perceive and construct ‘home’. The study of Lithuanian migrants in Northern Ireland disclosed a range of different, but at the same time complementary and intertwined ideas about ‘home’, its essential elements and the required conditions for its localization. The experience of migration and of a former life in Lithuania plays an important role in the way migrants perceive ‘home’ and why they localize it in a particular place (country). Although in some cases migrants’ homes acquire traits of mobility and rootlessness, however, there is a clear tendency to localize the home eventually. To conclude, although Lithuanian migrants feel stronger or weaker attachments to Lithuania, this does not imply closure from the society and culture of Northern Ireland.

References


Local-Born Videos: Gone Digital to Stay Local? The North West Film Archive Story

Maria Angela Ferrario

Abstract

Memory, knowledge, and property play key roles in the understanding of heritage in the western world. This article looks at the process of digitally archiving cinematographic memories as a typically western approach to the preservation of tangible and intangible cultural assets. For this I will introduce some terminology drawn from computer and information sciences (C&IS) and then expand its use in two ways: first, by anchoring it to a selected range of anthropological concepts dealing with memory, cultural flows and material culture; second, by explaining its application in the preservation of cultural heritage using the North West Digital Film Archive as an example.

Introduction

The first time I heard of the North West Film Archive (NWFA) I was driving down the Glendermott Road on the Waterside of Derry/Londonderry. It was October 2005 and I was listening to BBC Radio Foyle, the local radio station. Breda Connell, NWFA Archivist, and Terry Coyle, NWFA Project Manager, went on air to talk about their project and to make an appeal for Atsy McCaul, a local amateur film-maker, whose collection dated back to the ‘50s.

In June 2007, two years after the event and in very different circumstances, I find myself attending the official launch of the NWFA. It was then that the nearly forgotten memory of Atsy and his collection re-emerged from the past. What I find interesting about this memory is that it locates the acquisition of a piece of information in a precise moment in time and that it describes its later retrieval as triggered by a specific event. It is a living memory that grows into knowledge by stretching along the elastic boundaries of space and time.

Information, memory, and knowledge play key roles in the understanding of the subject matter of this article: the process of digitally archiving cinematographic memories as a typically western approach to the preservation of cultural objects. It is a subject area that I wish to approach using concepts and models drawn both from computer and information sciences (C&IS) as well as social science.

For this I will introduce some C&IS terminology and then expand its use in two ways: first, by anchoring it to a selected range of anthropological concepts dealing with memory, cultural flows and material culture; second, by explaining its application in the preservation of cultural heritage using the North West Digital Film Archive as an example. The anthropological concepts I am looking at include Forty and Küchler’s reflections on material culture and memory (Forty and Küchler 1999), Hannerz’s processual understanding of culture as a time-space based flow (Hannerz 1992, 1996), Miller and Slater’s observation on a localized use of globalizing technologies (Miller and Slater, 2000) and Magowan’s reflections on heritage and copyright (Magowan 2001; 2007).

The C&IS concept I wish to introduce is the model of the knowledge life-cycle, which describes the process of storing information into memory and turning knowledge into action. Using my first memory of Atsy and the NWFA as an example I can describe the knowledge life-cycle as a five-step process: an external and transient piece of information (1) was acquired at a precise moment in time (2). It had then been nearly forgotten (3) until it was retrieved (4) and re-used (5) when deemed fit for a purpose (e.g. writing this article). Let’s assume that this five-step model is a reasonable approximation to the knowledge life-cycle process: (1) Information Discovery; (2) Acquisition; (3) Maintenance; (4) Retrieval (or Access); (5) Re-use (see diagram in Figure 1).

I argue that this is a typical western approach to knowledge representation and preservation, drawing from models used in machine learning, computer science and information science (Roth–Berghofer and Iglezakis 2001; Smyth and Keane 1995; Ferrario and B. Smyth 2000; Khosrow-Pour 2005). To better explain and ground these concepts I will apply the five steps of the knowledge life-cycle to the description NWFA and reflect on its achievements and shortcomings. The structure of this article reflects this approach and it is divided into five short sections focusing on each step. In addition, a brief overview of the NWFA and a clarification of some of
A Foreword: the NWFA and an Epistemological Leap

The NWFA is a digital collection of cinematographic material from counties Derry and Donegal. The archive provides free public access to over 90 hours of film in the form of 230 separate items, including documentaries, news-reels, television news and drama from BBC, UTV, RTÉ and Channel 4, short films, animation and Super 8 home movies. The Archive was officially launched at the end of June 2007, after two years of work at the Nerve Centre (a multimedia arts training and production centre based in Derry) from a partnership including Derry City Council Museums Service and Donegal County Museum. The cross-border project received funding support from Co-Operation Ireland and the EU Peace II funds (source: press reports).

By using the NWFA as a case-study for rooting the digital archiving process into the knowledge-life cycle above described, I am willingly taking an epistemological leap. This leap consists, first, in connecting the concept of heritage to knowledge and, second, in anchoring the knowledge life-cycle into the discovery of information. Hence, the following two questions: When does information become knowledge? How fair is it to define cultural heritage as knowledge? First, no information is knowledge per se, for knowledge is an intuitive and yet explicable connection between X & Y, problems and solutions, questions and answers (Ferrario 2001). This idea of knowledge, even if used in the context of Artificial Intelligence, is a very human one as it goes beyond the logic categories of false and true, the moral boundaries of right and wrong, and may find shelter in myths and religious practices (Harrison 2004). To put it simply, information provides the building blocks for knowledge, whereas knowledge is made up of connected and interpreted information that humans may store, remember and use over time. Second, not all knowledge becomes heritage. Heritage, whether in a material or intangible form, is knowledge that has been recognised as the legacy of a group or society: ‘it steers us away from a well-defined idea of control or possession and toward a sense of belonging’ (Turner 2006).

The approach used to carry out this study includes desk-research, in depth interviews, and extensive use of the archive. The desk-research includes topics such as intelligent systems and knowledge management models; digital technologies applications in the cultural heritage domain and memory institutions; anthropological studies on globalization, memory and material culture. A number of in-depth interviews were also carried out with the key partners involved in the NWFA project.

Discovery: Is Shooting Back in the Past, Shooting the Past in the Back?

For a full century now the cinema… has been a novel form of expression for creative thought and feeling… as well as a witness to instants, places and visions situated in time and space, and hence an incomparable aid to memory… It is capable of promoting mutual knowledge, understanding and tolerance among humans (UNESCO definition of cinematographic heritage)
In this paragraph I specifically refer to the discovery of information objects located in a space and time as opposed to the abstract concept of information. I hope that this will bring a sense of physicality into the equation. In the context of the NWFA the information objects (clips and footages mostly in analogue format) are seen also as local heritage assets, in that they contain information about a specific culture and heritage. With this in mind it seems that anything that gets objectified (e.g. recorded on video), far from being immortalized, enters a realm of impending death and decay.

My argument is that, as Forty and Küchler suggest, the two concepts of physicality and transience are key to the way western society views its past, its memories and ultimately its heritages: ‘it is as if the past dissolves unless it is saved in archives, commemorated with monuments or given other durable physical forms’ (Forty and Küchler 1999). My objective is not to prove this approach right or wrong, but it is to describe it and to better understand its strengths and weaknesses. In this section we will see the information discovery step in the context of NWFA, that is, what type of objects were looked for and what was found.

‘Have you found Atsy?’ I ask Breda over a meeting a couple of days after her appeal on the radio ‘Atsy? Do you mean Manus McCaul? Yes! Just a couple of hours after our appeal on BBC Radio Foyle his son rang and gave us the original tapes’ The tapes, which contained six hours of local life dating back to the 50s, were now on Breda’s desk ready to be digitized and stored into the archive. The footages include De Valera close ups at the time of his visit to Derry in 1951, clips from the dog shows at the Brandywell and the sports days in Pennyburn. Manus McCaul was a local amateur film-maker and he had been head-hunted by Breda for both the technical quality and the subject matter of his movies. The McCaul collection was first shown in 1987, during the very first Foyle Film Festival, the Derry-based Film Festival that, has now reached international fame.

Atsy’s collection is only one example of the material that the NWFA has been collecting over the past year. ‘Another gem in the archive is James Canavan’s collection also dating back to the 50s/40s. James is able to capture with great skill the now-lost techniques of thatching a house and cutting the grass by hand. More recent material covers, for example, the very start of the civil right movements at the end of 1968, when snapshots of a young John Hume emerge from marching portraits of women, children and young men demonstrating in Waterloo Place. Other highlights of the collection include the films of local filmmakers Terence McDonald and John Grant.

With more than one hundred hours digitized and stored in the archive it is only natural to wonder where all this material was found and how it was discovered. The NWFA team devised a public awareness campaign that included radio appeals, contacts with Irish communities abroad and posters put up in libraries, old-people homes, places where one would come across older generations. However, according to Terry Coyle, word-of-mouth and personal knowledge were the most successful tools for the task ‘each of us had a notion of good material that could form a sound basis for the archive’. Archiving is about collecting and organizing known and existing material, and this is more a reflective inward oriented exercise than a creative out-ward looking one. Archives contain what has been already used and somehow tested. However, this doesn’t necessary make information discovery an easy task.

Gathering material has been one of the greatest challenges for the NWFA, some have been enthusiastic contributors, others, especially owners of private collections, felt uneasy at sharing private snapshots of their past. However, for many the NWFA represented their very last chance to bring back to life footages that otherwise would have been lost for ever. The fast advances of modern technologies have meant that videos taken forty to fifty years ago cannot be viewed with modern equipment. The NWFA, by having all the equipment necessary for the digitization of a broad range of analogue formats, is able to provide a professional and free digital transfer service. In the next section will look in more detail at the acquisition of the information objects that have been discovered.

Acquisition: The Head-Space of an Archive

More and more of the entire world’s cultural and educational resources are being produced, distributed and accessed in digital form rather than on paper. Born-digital heritage … is now an integral part of the world’s cultural heritage. The need to safeguard this new form of indexed heritage calls for international consensus on its storage, preservation and dissemination. (UNESCO definition of digital heritage)

The acquisition step comprises both the way the knowledge is represented (or categorised, indexed, etc.) and the format in which is stored. We will describe the representation model of NWFA as relying on a two-way process where the nature of the material acquired has influenced the taxonomies used for the archive and vice versa. In this I argue that representations are as fluid and transient as their objects and the meaning that they represent. To paraphrase McLuhan’s expression that the Medium is the Message (McLuhan 1964) I suggest that, in the context of the acquisition process, the Mind is the Message. The categories used to represent the information are equally important in the shaping of the message as the meaning (original and interpreted) and the format in which is an object is stored.

During our interview Terry Coyle speaks of a sort of head space, when describing the process of identifying suitable categories for representing the material in the archive ‘We were developing the classification structure on an on-going basis, as the material was coming in . . . it was shaping up like a sort of head space’ The type of information often determines the interface and how the information is going to be represented, but it also true the other way around’. Table 1 shows the list of the main categories used in the archive. Each clip or footage may be classified under more than one category (the total
number of items contained in the archive at the time of writing is 230). In terms of physical storage, each clip was first digitized and backed-up on a DVD. It was then compressed in MPEG and made available through Macromedia Director Interface. The fluidity of the representation process was also mentioned by the members of the steering committee as they confirmed their advisory role in deciding which categories should have been used in the database. Hannerz’s processual understanding of culture comes to mind (Hannerz 1992). The structure of the NWFA was designed in such a way that it is possible to continue to update and include additional material as well as new categories without a major reprogramming job, unless significant changes to the interface, that is the way the material is going to be accessed, are required. Maintenance (that is updating the archive through necessary changes over time) and access are the next two topics of discussion.

**Table 1 List of Categories Used in The Archive**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>n.</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Number of Clips within Category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Home and Family Life</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Rural Life</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Town and City Life</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Industry</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Coastal Waterways and Transport</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Identity</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Communication, Leisure and Education</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Local Film Collections</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>People</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Maintenance: The Short Life of a Fly on the Web**

In my view (Ferrario and Smyth 2000) the maintenance process stands at the background of each step of the knowledge life cycle. For instance, a category such as Home and Family may need to be reviewed when new relevant material such as clips of Weddings or First Holy Communions are discovered (Discovery step). It could be the case that a new category such as Religious Celebrations may be required (Acquisition/representation). A decision is also to be made as to whether it is worth retaining all the clips for later use (Retrieval and Re-use) or simply discarding some of them as redundant or of poor quality. (Not all the footage of First Holy Communions has seen the light of the Archive).

In a sense, the maintenance within a knowledge system should strike the right balance between remembering and forgetting. Moreover, it should accept that not all that is remembered now will survive the test of time. This is especially true in a context where, the higher the technology, the shorter the life-span seems to be.

As regards the subject of forgetting, machine learning and anthropology have never been this close. On one side, machine learning reminds us that not only is it useful to forget, but also that not forgetting can be detrimental. ‘Any form of learning is essentially a form of investment’ and ‘there are circumstances in which it is better to dispose of an item of knowledge than retain it’ (Markovitch and Scott 1988). On the other, anthropologists such as Rowlands and King remind us that ‘a society’s material technologies of memory are always also its technologies of forgetting’ (Rowlands 1999; King 1999).

The NWFA technology-transfer exercise from older to newer form of storage illustrates the two intertwined concepts of useful forgetfulness and the inevitable obsolescence of knowledge, memory and the technologies that support them. According to research, magnetic tapes start deteriorating after 10 years (Lindner 1998). Media at risk include recorded media such as master audio recordings of symphonies and videotape recordings of the news gathered over the last 40 years. Can digitalization help? Yes, but only if regarded as a temporary solution since media such as zip disks, CDs, or DVDs last only a definite period before the medium begins to degrade. Manufacturers claim minimum lifetimes of 50 years for CD-Rs and 25 years for CD-RWs (Optical Storage Technology Association). For information that must be preserved, periodic transcription from old media to new is necessary, not only because the media are unstable, but also because the recording technology may become obsolete.

Is the born-digital and on-line material any safer? For many, the Web has become the information source of first resort. However, very little attention has been paid to the long-term preservation of Web sites. Indeed, with the life of an average web site estimated by the UK Web Archiving Consortium to be around forty-four days –
about the same lifespan as a housefly – and the sheer amount of material uploaded every day, the digit-land looks more like a jungle than a safe haven for the information. In a sense, being born analogue may have its advantages, as I will briefly explain with the following example. In the context of NWFA we will see how the obsolescence of a medium can also trigger a substantial knowledge gain during the transfer from an old technology to a newer one.

For example, James Canavan’s collection, with material dating back to the late 30s may be one of the oldest NWFA footage. Canavan’s clip is 40 minutes long and it contains a selection of scenes of rural life in the Inishowen Peninsula, Donegal, from thatching the roofs of cottages to cutting the grass by hand. In reality, what truly captured my attention was the background noise of a projector and James Canavan’s voiceover. These two sounds gave an entirely new dimension to the original B&W silent movie.

In 1995 local film-maker Tracey Cullen was to transfer Canavan’s original (and only) film for the Nerve Centre. While doing so he asked James Canavan to sit and describe the scenes while they were projected onto the wall by a 16mm projector. The material was then captured on VHS. Ten years later (2005) it was digitized and made available from the Archive. In this case the obsolescence of a technology has led to the acquisition of an extra layer of knowledge rather than to knowledge loss.

Access: Gone Digital to Stay Local?

There is very little advantage in storing information for the sake of it. In the case of the NWFA the reasons given were many and varied (including the rather elusive one ‘it seemed a good thing to do’), the most significant and recurrent of all being ‘enthusing the locals’ and ‘to make it (the archive) accessible to the general public’.

Accessibility has been a focal point of reference in the development of the archive, yet one that has not being fully resolved. Is it enough to be digital to become global?

‘The idea is to attract local people. There are so many footages of local family history. One can spot relatives, see the way the city was and so forth. We want to link with local people’ says the Archivist at the Tower Museum, Bernadette Walsh, during her interview. The focus on local communities in the NWFA project reminds me of the work of Miller and Slater, which examines the Internet and its on-line digital services as a phenomenon that can reinforce the sense of self in a community (Miller and Slater 2003).

The user interface of the archive is very simple to use (see Figure 2). The archive can be accessed through three broad keys: (1) Themes (2) Geographical Area (3) Free Text Search. The themes include the topics listed in Table 1; the Geographic Area includes a clickable map of the Counties of Derry and Donegal; the free text search consists of a field where one can enter a keyword. Terry Coyle tells me during the interview that the design was made with the general public in mind: ‘if we were to design an archive for film-makers it would probably be completely different from the interface that we have now. There are not too many layers of access and I think it works quite well in that way’. However, one of the limits to the access of the digital archive is not that it is also for the locals, but that it is localized. In a time where digital rhymes with global, the NWFA provides an interesting twist in the story.

At present, the NWFA is only available from a number of machines located in the Nerve Centre. Copies of the archive will also be installed around various cultural centres in Derry and Donegal. However, until the archive is physically brought into these venues, there is no other way to have access to it than to travel to the Nerve Centre. Why not have it, for example, on the web? A web presence of NWFA is not excluded, and in many cases is hoped for. There is a general agreement that the purpose of the website as well as the material that can be accessed from it might have to be different from that of the archive. The on-line presence is seen more as a marketing tool and a research device rather than a gateway for the full download of the footages. It is an approach that puts in good use the versatility of the digital medium. In addition, there are two issues that must be addressed before making (if ever) the NWFA fully available on line.

The first issue has to be sought at the information discovery stage. The NWFA team knew that, if they said to private collectors that the material was to be made available on-line, then it was likely that fewer people would have contributed, fearing intrusion in their privacy
and family life. The second reason is to be sought in the ownership of the archive and the material there contained: who and to what extent can it be used? To answer this question we must look at the last stage of the knowledge cycle: the (Re)-use of knowledge as Intellectual Property covered by Copyright Law.

Reuse: What is Mine is Yours, What is Yours is Mine: A Fast Spin on the Copyright Cycle.

There is deep-seated assumption that knowledge, especially knowledge of the past, is a scarce and valuable political resource. It belongs properly in the hands of senior men, and should not be allowed to remain a free good accessible to anyone. (Harrison 2004: 149)

The re-use of knowledge does usually follow its retrieval (or access), but not all that is retrieved is necessarily re-used. Knowledge is used or re-used once its usefulness has been identified, that is, once it has been recognized as having some value. In the context of the NWFA, this value can be of many kinds: educational, political, aesthetic, etc…

For now, I will look at the value of knowledge as protected by Intellectual Property and Copyright. To put it simply, Intellectual Property allows owning things one creates in a similar way to owning physical property. Copyright is one of the four main types of intellectual property and it protects material, such as literature, art, music, sound recordings, films and broadcasts. We are back to physicality – virtual or real – as a key factor in the way we approach the ‘safeguard’ of our heritage. The link between knowledge/ownership/authority is neither new nor a solely western phenomenon (Harrison 2004). There are at first glance similarities to copyright-like practices among native peoples. Stories, songs, myths, dances and certain ritual practices are often understood as the property of individuals (Kasten 2002). The value of knowledge and the exclusive rights of a few individuals to use and transmit such knowledge has been also highlighted by Magowan when she describes the importance of ‘knowing from songs’ given by Aborigines in the Northern Territory of Australia: ‘only few senior women can assert their right to teach and cry through songs as a mean of transmitting […] personal and collective knowledge’ (Magowan 2001).

Some years later, Magowan refers to ‘knowledge and the power it provides’ as ‘types of currencies’ when reporting on the expanding access to (aboriginal) musical heritage and its commodification through the use of the new technology: ‘the Internet has enabled indigenous communities to participate in a distance education of the West in ways not previously imagined’ (Magowan 2007). Is the commodification of indigenous culture a case of the ‘East’ meeting the ‘West’? On the other hand, isn’t it true that knowledge has always had an economic and political value and what we are witnessing now is just a natural shift toward a stronger currency (the ‘Western’ one)? In any case, whether the idea of intellectual property can be applied to all cultures or not, it is true that the modern western society was the one that formalized it and had it protected by law. The modern concept of copyright, for example, originated in Britain in 1710 with the Statute of Anne (Feather 1980).

Projects like the NWFA and other digitization initiatives within the cultural heritage domain rely on public funds, which are time-limited. This often poses the question of the economic sustainability of such projects over time. This is not a discussion on the pros and cons of public funding, but it is a reminder of the value of knowledge in all its forms and its potentials. To conclude, ‘the cost of acquiring and retaining knowledge must not exceed the value of the resource provided by that knowledge’. Interestingly this is not the comment of an economist, but of two computer scientists (Markovitch and Scott 1988).

Conclusion

By applying the knowledge life-cycle model to heritage and the way that it can be digitally represented, one may ask to what extent Heritage is truly inherited and to what extent it is re-shaped, re-created and ultimately commodified through its many representations, interpretations and re-use. It is a fair question, but it loses its significance once the concept of heritage gets de-objectified. Is it true that heritage is something that one can possess? Wouldn’t it be more appropriate to define heritage as an experience of remembering and belonging? Would this attitude change our approach to the preservation of our heritage and the methods used to do so? There are songs that have survived for centuries without having been formalized, written, or let alone digitized. Is it fair to expect that silicon chips can store human memories through the many generations to come?

I often like to refer to Plato’s view on writing when discussing the use of digital technology in our lives. It calls for a reflection on the impact that writing (which we now regard as one of the most common technology at hand) has had on humankind. ‘[I]f men learn this (the skill of writing), it will implant forgetfulness in their souls’; it then
continues, ‘what you have discovered is a recipe not for memory, but for reminder. And it is no true wisdom that you offer your disciples, but only its semblance’ (Plato, Phaedrus 275a-b).

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Do you speak Bollywood? Perceptions of the Indian Community in Northern Ireland

Mary Delargy

Abstract

This essay explores perceptions of the Indian community in Northern Ireland by members of the wider society, the factors which influence these perceptions and recent innovations which are intended to give the community a higher public profile. The last ten years have seen a growth in awareness among the general population of the presence of minority communities in Northern Ireland. Although members of the Indian community have been in Northern Ireland since the 1940s, the general public appears to know little about the community. Now a number of initiatives, including an innovative arts project hope to change that perception.

Introduction

Since 2004 I have been working as a researcher in minority ethnic communities at the Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages at the University of Ulster. My work focuses on two of the longer-established communities, Indian and Chinese, and on the perceptions of members of these communities as British or Irish and the factors which influence these perceptions. I am also interested in the representation of their culture in the public space both through Chinese and Indian cultural festivals and the participation of Chinese and Indians in local Northern Irish festivals. Much of my research involves interviews with individual members of the community; consequently, my findings are qualitative rather than quantative. This essay draws on some of my research on the Indian community in the region.

Profile of the Indian Community in Northern Ireland

The 2001 census for Northern Ireland shows that 99.15% of the population self-define as ‘White’. The situation has changed rapidly, especially with the arrival of many new workers from the eight European Union Accesion countries (A8) from 2004 onwards. This change in population is reflected not only in the workforce but also in the children attending both primary and secondary school throughout Northern Ireland. Prior to the arrival of children from the A8 countries in 2004, the majority of children from ‘non-traditional’ backgrounds attended a handful of schools and over fifty-per-cent of children were unlikely to have a child from a different ethnic background in their class.

The Indian community in Derry does not have as high a profile as the Chinese community but there are several Indian-owned clothing shops and two excellent Indian restaurants in the city centre as well as a Sikh temple on the east bank. I was surprised, therefore, during a workshop for primary schools on the new communities in the city to be asked ‘Miss, are there really Injuns (sic) living in Derry?’ Conversation with members of the Indian community in Belfast revealed a similar situation – although most people in the city are aware of the restaurants, their knowledge of the community extends little beyond this.

Throughout this essay I have used the term ‘Indian community’ as defined by Greg Irwin (1998: 185) to refer to a community as a ‘generic label to denote those who have classified themselves as being of Indian ethnic status’. Figures from the census of 2001 show the Indian population of Northern Ireland as around 1,600 or 0.09% of the total population with the main centres in Belfast and Derry. This would appear to be due in part to the fact that the two main teaching hospitals in the province are located in these cities and several members of the Indian community who settled here, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s were employed as doctors or nurses in the hospitals. Most of the first settlers in Northern Ireland arrived just as Pakistan was becoming independent from India, many of them fleeing civil strife in their own country.

The majority of the men who came in the early years were well-educated, some of them having held civil servant posts. Consequently they had little difficulty in communicating with their new neighbours. On coming to Northern Ireland, many of them were forced to take lower-paid jobs than those they had in India. For several of them this meant working in the retail industry, in the
earliest years as a door-to-door salesman, often travelling on a bicycle with two suitcases full of clothes to sell. Early accounts, both those described in the *Irish Raj* and in my own interviews with members of the community, describe how particular areas of Northern Ireland were allocated to different members of the community as their working area. It was relatively easy for the men to integrate into the local community, firstly because they spoke English and secondly because they provided a much-needed service. Door-to-door selling was particularly popular in rural areas where it would have been difficult to get to shops; in addition, travelling salesmen allowed goods to be paid off weekly, a service offered by few of the shops at the time.

Our typical working hours would be from 9 o’clock in the morning until 7–8 o’clock in the evening, Monday to Saturday. (We) pioneered the system of selling clothes on interest-free credit, where the customer would make a regular weekly payment of, say, 4 or 5 shillings which would allow him/her to purchase goods up to the value of £5. (Kapur 1997: 82).

For the women, life was much more complicated. This was vividly portrayed in the documentary ‘A Passage from India’ shown on BBC2 Northern Ireland in 2002. Firstly, many of them did not speak English and struggled to communicate in the new country. Even today in Belfast several of the older women do not speak English but see Hindi as their everyday language. Daniel Holder (Holder and Lanao 2003) quotes figures of less than 40% of the Indian population aged over 55 as being fluent in English; the percentage of the community aged over 55 is around 20%. This contrasts with a figure of 60% of the Indian community as a whole being proficient in English and only 20% speaking and writing basic English. (Holder and Lanao 2003, section 2b: 8–9). In addition, most of the women stayed at home to care for their children so had little contact with the host community.

There was also the problem of finding both clothes and food. Traditional saris were not available in Northern Ireland, nearest supplies being in London. This is a situation which has not changed greatly but has become less difficult with the advent of internet shopping where users can view items such as traditional saris, salwar kameez (a traditional dress of tunic and trousers) or other items online before making their purchase; examples include [www.rupalion.com](http://www.rupalion.com) and [www.khushbutfashions.com](http://www.khushbutfashions.com), which sell everything from saris and salwar kameez (the traditional tunic) to bridal dresses. One member of the Indian community described to me how as recently as the 1990s her sisters and herself would plan a shopping trip to Southall in London to buy traditional Indian clothes:

Now in London there’s two places, one is called Southall and the other is called Green Street. If you go there, you’re nearly in India in those places … everything is Indian there, the clothes, jewellery, the household things, groceries, everything. You can go there and you can buy everything that you could buy in India. What I do is I would go there once a year, my brother lives in London and I’ll do a year’s shopping in one day. I shop till I drop and the poor brother has to endure going round the shops with me. I don’t be just shopping for myself, my brothers and sisters say ‘bring me back this and bring me back that’. But that was the only way you could buy things.

A similar situation occurred with the food. Not only were traditional fruits and vegetables unavailable but the range of spices for cooking was severely limited. Twice a year, a travelling salesman would arrive from England to take orders for traditional spices and other foods not readily available in Northern Ireland. One lady described to me the excitement of the box arriving and knowing that she would be able to taste familiar food again.

For many years, members of the Indian socialized together; meetings normally took place once a month. A particular interest was meeting up to watch Indian films. These were hired from the Indian embassy in London and shown on a Sunday evening—at a time when cinemas in Northern Ireland would not normally have been open to patrons. One informant describes the experience:

I know now the films were very much the same and you’d always be crying at the end. They’d all be about three hours long. People don’t realise that India has a bigger film industry than Hollywood so all these films are very long and they take in everything. They’re for family viewing so you have to have some singing in it, some dancing, a tragedy that despite everything leads to happiness at the end, that was the films, you know, it was a full day out.

Originally the films would have been shown in Belfast and Derry but as the community spread out across Northern Ireland more central locations such as Dungannon and Magherafelt were chosen to allow everyone to meet up. Over the years, however, these events became less and less frequent and socializing is now in much smaller groups apart from major events such as weddings.

**Religious and Cultural Infrastructure**

One visible sign of the Indian community in Belfast is the community centre. The Indian Community Centre in Belfast was opened in a former Presbyterian church in north Belfast in 1989. Its aim was to provide a focus for the community, somewhere that they could meet to celebrate their own culture and which could also be a meeting place for anyone wanting to find out more about the community. The Belfast centre also houses the Hindu mandir or main temple for Northern Ireland. There is no set service in the temple, which opens both morning and evening but closes in the afternoon. There are also two Hare Krishna temples in the city. The centre is located in Carlisle Circus in the north of the city, an area well-known as a sectarian interface as it is the starting point for many of the Twelfth of July marches by the Orange Order. From the outside, there is little to indicate that the building is anything other than a disused church; the sign proclaiming ‘Indian Community Centre’ is barely visible
from the main road and even a number of the taxi drivers in the locality are barely aware of its location.

The centre organizes a wide range of events aimed at both the Indian and the wider communities. The last two years have seen a move away from arts-based projects into more advocacy and representation of the Indian community at all levels of society. A recent event was a four-week course on Irish politics for members of minority ethnic communities. The course, which was heavily oversubscribed, aimed to provide a historical overview to the Northern Ireland situation for people who have not grown up here and to introduce the various political parties and their members to the communities. Research has shown that there is a very low turnout of members of the minority ethnic communities at both local and national elections in Northern Ireland. This situation may change, however, with the election of Anna Lo, chairperson of the Chinese Welfare Association to the Northern Ireland Assembly. The Indian community works closely with the PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland) and is the only minority ethnic community to have a representative on the District Policing Partnership. The community centre offers Hindi classes mainly aimed at young people. Their purpose is twofold, firstly to encourage younger people to learn more about their culture and secondly to try to break down barriers between the older people, mainly women, who use Hindi as their everyday language and the young people who speak only English. These classes are held at weekends and involve around 20–30 children.

The Belfast Centre enjoys a higher public profile than the Sikh temple in Derry as much of its work of involves outreach to the local community, through schools projects and events such as traditional dance classes. Services offered by the Indian Community Centre include sari demonstrations, henna painting and visits to the temple. Around fifty visits are held annually and the Centre is used regularly for community events as it is considered a ‘neutral’ venue, having no political associations in the Northern Ireland context.

The Role of the Arts

Over the last five years, some members of the Indian community, particularly in Belfast have seen the arts as a means both of raising their public profile and of engaging with the local community. This is a controversial area and the involvement of minorities in the arts is not well-established. James Purnell, recently appointed as Secretary of State for Culture Arts and Sport in the United Kingdom, provoked outrage when he suggested that inclusion in the arts could now be ‘taken for granted’ and that ‘the battle had been won when it came to meeting quotas relating to priority groups such as ethnic minorities’. Writing in Theatre Survey Angela Pao (2006: 2) takes a rather different view of the situation:

It is well established that the difficulties faced by immigrants and ethnic minorities who want to have professional careers in the theatre can be attributed largely to sociocultural factors and problems of access to the institutional support required for theatrical production. Recent critical studies provide constructive perspectives on the social, political and cultural contexts framing immigrant and ethnic minority writing and, increasingly, performance.

Whatever the situation in the rest of the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland is only beginning to become aware of the possible participation of ethnic minority communities in the arts. The focus had previously been on bringing together the ‘two communities’ and there are many examples of participation of the Irish and Ulster Scots traditions, for example in the dancing displays which form part of the Walled City Cultural Trail held in Derry each summer.

Research by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland (ACNI 2005) addressed the issue of attendance by members of minority ethnic communities at arts events. The survey did not request details of ethnicity but rather drew on information from surveys conducted in England and Scotland (ACNI 2005: 36–38) Barriers included language, which was felt to be a problem for those who spoke little or no English, a lack of understanding (that they would need specialist knowledge to understand and appreciate the arts), and social barriers, of particular relevance for younger people and women. Pakistani women, in particular, could experience, and were concerned about community disapproval.

ACNI consulted with the Northern Ireland Community Relations Council on the subject of ethnic minorities and the arts (ACNI 2005: 51). They suggested that there was a need:

- for greater understanding of ethnic minority cultures by the arts sector (and wider community) in Northern Ireland;
- for more opportunities to participate in and attend the arts for ethnic minority cultures;
- to include ethnic minority culture as part of events that are taking place; and
- to neutralise some of our cultural venues to ensure they are welcoming to all cultures.

There have been some successful ventures in Northern Ireland. These include ArtsEkta, which was founded in April 2006 by Nisha Tandon. Nisha was born in India but has been living in Northern Ireland since the 1970s, and had previously been arts development officer at the Indian Community Centre in Belfast. The name means ‘bonding’ or ‘unity’ in Hindi and is the first arts-based organisation to provide a blend of Indian and other ethnic arts on the island of Ireland. Its purpose is twofold, firstly to raise awareness of the Indian community in Northern Ireland through the promotion of the arts and secondly to profile in a wider context the individual artists, many of whom were not known outside their own community. Artists involved in the project are not all from an Indian background but include members of the Chinese, Sri Lankan, and Pakistani communities. The organization offers an education outreach programme aimed at both schools and community groups;
workshops in dance, music and drama, and instrument and costume hire.

Another successful venture is the Tinderbox Theatre Company; an independent theatre company based in Belfast. Formed in 1988 it describes itself as being ‘dedicated to new writing for the theatre, the playwrights who create it and the artistic environment in which its work takes place.’ Since 2000, the theatre has an outreach and education programme aimed at bringing theatre to schools and community groups. Many of those who have taken part in Tinderbox productions have had little or no previous knowledge of drama production or scriptwriting. Since 2004, John McCann, outreach officer with the company, has been involved in a number of drama initiatives involving groups such as the Chinese community and refugee and asylum seekers groups, not usual participants for this type of work in Northern Ireland, where working ‘outside the box’ normally involves bringing members of the Protestant and Catholic communities together. There is a conscious effort on the part of Tinderbox to engage with the groups before undertaking any drama and each group is encouraged to make the work their own, with participants writing their own script or adapting one to suit their own aims rather than simply using one which has already been written.

Community drama has become a major part of Northern Ireland theatre with writers such as Martin Lynch and Marie Jones coming to the fore. While there has not been the amount of academic writing on the subject that might have been anticipated, some have chosen to address the issue (see for example Maxwell 1990; Maguire 2006, Pilkington 2001). A study undertaken by director and researcher David Grant for the Community Relations Council in 1993 tells us that the main benefits of drama work (whether professional or community-based) seem are as follows:

- It provides a non-competitive opportunity for personal interaction, which in the context of a full production can be of quite a profound kind.
- It is a good vehicle for the exploration of sensitive or difficult ideas.
- Of necessity it engages participants in a process that encourages them (either actively as performers or more passively as members of an audience) to challenge or question these ideas (Grant 1993:13).

The importance of applied drama – that is drama which takes place in different settings such as prisons, schools, hostels for the homeless, care homes etc. – has been explored by Helen Nicholson (2005). Nicholson examines a wide range of community dramas, intergenerational groups who came together in a local school, three refugees who put on a drama in London, and drama with the elderly. In each case, she illustrates how involvement in a drama group has allowed the practitioners to explore issues which they might not have felt comfortable in addressing in other ways, such as open discussion. Drama provided them with an opportunity to explore these issues and to learn from them. Olive, one of the refugee women, provides an example. Her experience was too painful to relate as a narrative, but through drama she found a means of confronting difficult issues:

I am thinking about someone else. My story is so sad it makes me very, very emotional if I tell it so I behave like someone else. When I first started devising I had not been long in London and I kept thinking ‘What are these white girls (the directors) asking me to do? We were telling stories in ways I had never done before using bits of string and maps and pictures. It was not like performances at home. I tell my own story in my own words but I also tell it in new languages because I had not seen a play like this before. It was fun to learn this way. (Nicholson 2005: 58)

A similar arts organisation has recently been established in Scotland to encourage participation by members of minority ethnic communities. ‘In Scotland I was to witness how theatre could contribute to the development of a … cultural self-confidence …not reliant on narrow conceptions of cultural identity’ (in Maguire 2006: 13). A Scottish arts group, Ankur productions, seeks to provide a forum for participation by members of the country’s black and minority ethnic communities in the arts. Its stated aims include the creation of ‘a pioneering artistic work that speaks to contemporary shared experiences and to address the lack of participation in the arts by Scotland’s Black and Minority Ethnic communities’ (www.ankurproductions.org.uk/Home.htm).

In the case of Northern Ireland, a chance meeting between John McCann and Nisha Tandon, then arts development officer at the Indian Community Centre in Belfast, led to a two-year collaborative project. The first year of the project involved mainly working with members of the Indian community in the centre in Belfast. A group of around fifteen people ranging from the oldest members of the community to teenagers came together to discuss ways of developing the project. The group met on a weekly basis to develop their skills in production and stagecraft as well as developing the play. The discussions eventually became a form of community dialogue in which different generations of the Indian community could address issues which were important to them such as being allowed to mix with members of the local community and how much time could be spent socializing instead of doing schoolwork.

At the same time the group decided to work with three schools in Belfast on the play Hayavadana by the Indian writer Girish Karnad based on an old Indian story of two men who fall in love with the same woman; the play, written in 1972, won the award for best Indian play of the year. Prior to this, there were a number of sessions to raise awareness of the Indian community among the pupils involved in the schools project. As is common with schools projects in Northern Ireland, the schools were one from the Catholic sector, one state school, and one integrated. Two of the schools chosen were located in the same area as the Indian Community Centre, the third was the integrated school which had expressed an interest in taking part in the event.
Although two of the three schools chosen had pupils from the Indian community attending, those pupils taking part admitted that they had not thought about the lives of members of this community outside of their lives in school — in fact the title of this article comes from a remark made to a member of the Indian community — in an attempt to be welcoming on his first day at a new school he was asked by a fellow-pupil: ‘Do you speak Bollywood?’ Each of the schools involved was given one-third of the play and asked to reinterpret it for a Belfast audience.

The project was not without problems. On an early visit to one of the schools, the worker involved found that the pupils were using the script exactly as it had been given to them but were reading it in ‘Indian’ accents. What was more, they were initially unable to see anything wrong with what they were doing; they failed to see it as stereotyping the Indian community and the way that they spoke. They did admit, however, that once they understood what was being asked of them it was much easier for them to reinterpret the play. A first version was presented in the Indian Community Centre in March 2006 to an audience of over three-hundred people. The play was felt to be a great success, particularly because most of those who attended were family and friends of the school pupils, many of whom had never before been in the Indian Community Centre and knew little about the Indian community in Northern Ireland.

Because of the success of the first performance, the group decided to develop a second play to be performed to an invited audience in Belfast’s Waterfront Hall studio. This time there was no initial script from which the play developed. Rather the group was given a hypothetical situation and asked to come up with a play around it. The result was Chaat Masala: a Bollywood for Belfast, chaat masala being the term for a hot, spicy dish. The play centered on Vir, a young Indian man whose widowed mother decides to send him to live with an aunt and uncle in Belfast to further his education and improve his English. The play had a cast of almost thirty performers from India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, China and Ghana as well as a few Northern Irish performers. As befits the ‘Bollywood for Belfast’ subtitle the play contained much music and dance.

More serious issues were, in typical Northern Ireland fashion, dealt with through humour; for example, a young member of the Indian community, obviously somewhat disgruntled at the arrival of the stranger, is overheard to say ‘I bet he doesn’t even speak English!’ As is common with most productions from Northern Ireland, the main character is first asked what part of India he is from and this is followed up with the question ‘Are you a Prod or a Taig?’ The ‘Prod or Taig?’ question is one which arises in a variety of contexts in Northern Ireland. That it might be directed towards someone who might reasonably be assumed to be from outside these two communities has been dealt with in earlier research on ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland (Donnan and O’Brien 1998: 89):

‘neither, I’m Muslim.’ ‘But are you a Catholic or Protestant Muslim?’ This variant of the old ‘joke’ about the Catholic Jew/Protestant Jew is unlikely to elicit more than a tired groan but as evidence of a local sensitivity (even if not explicitly articulated) the plight of a minority group in a society pervasively divided between Catholic and Protestant, it is still suggestive. … Moreover, and whatever we think about the value of its wit, the joke does draw attention to the particularity of the circumstances in which ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland must live their lives. It would seem to raise questions about where and how ethnic minorities ‘fit’ into a deeply divided society and even about whether or not they can be fitted in at all.

The use of the ‘joke’ in the play seems to suggest that the Indian community has decided that it can be fitted in after all.

Interviewed in the Belfast Newsletter, Bob Collins, chairperson of the Equality Commission, said:

It is good to see a dramatic and lively exploration of the experiences of new residents in Northern Ireland. The production brings a welcome touch of the glamour, colour and excitement of Bollywood to Belfast while exploring issues which are important and challenging for everyone in our community.

In the same article, Inspector Jeremy Adams of the PSNI Community Safety branch, said that Chaat Masala ‘is an excellent event which delivers a relevant message and it is encouraging to see events like this being held throughout Northern Ireland, during Intercultural and Anti-racism week’ [http://www.newsletter.co.uk/feature?articleid=2134130].

The Impact of Cultural Festivals

For the last ten years, the Chinese community in Northern Ireland has seen festivals, both involving the wider community in its own festivals and participating in local festivals, as a way of engaging with local community. The Indian community in Belfast is now using its festivals as a means of community engagement. The main festival for the Indian community in Northern Ireland is the Belfast Mela held in August. First held in 2004, the Mela — meaning ‘festival’ — is a celebration of dance, music and other arts forms. The event in Belfast provided an opportunity not only for the Indian community throughout Northern Ireland to come together but also to provide an opportunity for people from the wider community to learn more about the Indian community. Organizers described the event as being:

a totally unique event and a new concept in Northern Ireland: an ethnic organisation, in this case the Indian community is taking the lead as the main group and inviting other organisation to participate. Mela is a festival featuring a diverse and intensive content of various Indian art forms and culture. The event seeks to promote and further develop various Indian art forms throughout.
Northern Ireland by building on the existing interest and demand and to incorporate other ethnic arts and cultures. To build good relations and celebrate diversity through Arts (http://www.communityni.org/index.cfm/section/Events/key/7277B042-1143-D8AC-6B06AEF54AE4B8D4).

The event in 2004 was held in Botanic Gardens Belfast close to Queen's University. Performers came from Ireland, Britain and south east Asia to demonstrate Indian music and dance and a series of activities were laid on for the children. Food stalls provide samples of traditional Indian dishes and several clothing manufacturers brought along samples of saris and other traditional dress from which customers could order. In addition to the entertainment there were some more serious events such as a talk by the Chief Constable of the PSNI on the possibility of recruiting members of the Indian community to the police force. Media coverage of the event came from the BBC and local Ulster Television. This was felt to be particularly significant as until recently such events might have merited a photograph in the newspaper but would not have been felt to warrant television coverage.

_Diwlai_, or the Festival of Lights is a celebration shared by Hindus and Sikhs. It celebrates the victory of good over evil and light over darkness. In India the festival is marked with the lighting of lamps both indoors and outside; many of the outdoor lamps will be floated on the river. A fireworks display often marks the end of the celebrations. Members of the Indian community from throughout Northern Ireland gather in the Centre in Belfast for the celebrations. This normally takes the form of prayers followed by a meal and entertainment. In 2005, the community chose to celebrate Diwali with their neighbours from the Ashton Centre in north Belfast. The event was a joint celebration of the old Celtic festival of _Samhain_, _Samhain_, a forerunner of the modern Halloween, or the Festival of the Dead. The joint festival took the form of a lantern-lit procession along the river with some fireworks and a sharing of stories about the two festivals. It was the first time for the communities to look at what was shared within their traditions, to compare the stories handed down in their communities and to look at the elements which they shared in the way they celebrated their festivals. It is intended that the _Diwalai/Samhain_ shared festival will become an annual event.

_Co nclusion_

Much has changed for the Indian community in Northern Ireland in the last ten years. While members of the community were largely accepted into the host community, there was little understanding of the community’s culture. This issue was raised about ethnic minorities in general by Irwin and Dunn (1997: 117) who noted that there are matters which the ethnic representative groups themselves need to consider. More needs to be done to make the general population aware of the existence of ethnic minorities in Northern Ireland, their history in the region, and their cultural outlook. Such an approach can help to overcome existing ignorance and suspicion in relation to ethnic groups.

The involvement of the Indian community in joint festivals such as _Samhain/Diwali_ and the Belfast Mela, along with the innovative drama productions, should go a long way towards encouraging a fuller understanding of Indian cultural life.

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From Mourning to Melancholia? The Ambivalent Role of Commemoration in Facilitating Peace-Building in Northern Ireland.

Dr. John Nagle

Abstract

This paper explores the potential of commemoration to assist successfully with contemporary conflict transition efforts in Northern Ireland. It asks whether commemoration, as a form of addressing Northern Ireland’s relatively recent violent past, can, as Brandon Hamber (2006: 562) asserts, “bolster national attempts to “re-establish” society, and as such have a healing and restorative dimension”. Instead of focusing on solutions to socio-economic disparities, peace-builder John Paul Lederach’s (1997) approach to the psycho-social dimensions of conflict offers a provocative model through which to assess the role of commemoration in creating sustainable reconciliation.

The Janus face of commemoration in conflict transitional societies

Commemoration is Janus faced. As much as commemorative practice often evokes an aura of timeless continuity with the past, commemoration can serve simultaneously as a rite to signify rupture from tradition. In the case of the French and American revolutions, writes Gillis (1994: 8), ‘the need to commemorate arose directly out of an ideologically driven desire to break with the past, to construct as great a distance as possible between the new age and the old’. In societies journeying through the liminal space of ‘conflict transition’ (Lederach 1997), the ruptured face of commemoration is often brought to the fore. This rupture is articulated as an exacting effort to abstain from ancient grievances by advocating redress, healing and reparation, a mechanism to confront the wounds of the past and offer a new and inclusive future (Bloomfield 1998). In classic rites de passage fashion, commemoration, in this sense, marks and then refashions the boundary separating previous identities which perpetuated generations of acrimony and division with a new identity proclaiming reconciliation and a shared future.

In Northern Ireland the present task of commemoration and remembrance could be its possible role in helping to ‘bring closure’ to the past three decades characterized by civil violence, euphemistically titled ‘the Troubles’. Acts of commemoration have thus been identified by a number of agencies, such as the charity-funded NGO, Healing Through Remembering, as a means through which ‘healing can take place for all people affected by the conflict in and about Northern Ireland’. Part of the attraction of commemoration is that it can possess the therapeutic power to cauterize the social and psychological wounds of individuals and communities. By healing wounds opened by conflict, commemoration acts as a final break from a nightmarish sense of history, to paraphrase James Joyce, which Northern Ireland currently is trying to awaken from. This recurring nightmare has often been perpetuated through commemorative practice in Northern Ireland. Talismanic dates (McBride 2001), such as the yearly commemorations for 1688, 1690 and 1916, are seen as ensuring that the nationalist and unionist protagonists are unable to escape from ‘dancing to history’s tune’ (Bell 1993: 829), a choreography that creates a timeless around the problem of conflict rendering it impervious to political solutions (McBride 2001). Social memory is thus identified as key to institutionalizing acrimony because it reenacts and recreates the old conflict of opposing ethnic groups (Jarman 1997: 3–4). It is for this reason that Joep Leerssen (2001), following Freud, has identified, the ‘uncanny’ [unheimlich] aspect of Northern Irish commemorative practice. Commemoration in Northern Ireland has been in the form of ‘nightmarish recurrences characterised by their combination of repetitive familiarity and their disconcerting repulsion’ (Leerssen 2001: 222).

This paper explores the possibility of commemoration to successfully assist with contemporary conflict transition efforts in Northern Ireland. It asks whether commemoration, as a form of addressing Northern Ireland’s relatively recent violent past, can, as Brandon
Hamber (2006: 562) asserts, ‘bolster national attempts
to «re-establish» society, and as such can have a healing
and restorative dimension’. Peace-builder John Paul
Lederach’s (1997) formulation which addresses the
psycho-social dimensions of conflict, rather than wholly
fixating on rectifying socio-economic disparities, provides a provocative model to assess the role of
commemoration in creating sustainable reconciliation.
Lederach’s holistic focus combines two key components:
middle-ranking organisations (NGOs, academics) who
work to engender grassroots, cross-community
collaborative networks, as opposed to the top-down
diplomatic statist courting of insurgent political leaders;
and addressing the past as a means to work towards a
collective future in order to establish functional
relationships between opposed groups, who view each other
through the prism of mutual hatred and fear.

Problematically, however, current peace building
initiatives in Northern Ireland are largely dominated by
pragmatic top-down diplomatic endeavours which have
concentrated largely on eradicating political violence and
maintaining peace at all costs (O’Flynn and Russell 2005).
These initiatives, predicated on enabling power-sharing
arrangements between nationalists and unionists, have
been accompanied by the state funding of agencies which
ostensibly carry out grassroots ‘single identity’ community
rather than ‘cross community’ work. Moreover, because
peace agreements have tended to shore up and valorize
the differences between nationalists and unionists, the
performance of memory, especially tropes of
victimhood, continues to express ethn-o-national
distinctions between the two factions.

Peace building in Northern Ireland: a Lederachian perspective

The major issue which continues to confront Northern
Ireland is that of building sustainable peace. Top-down
diplomatic efforts post-1997 have concentrated on
brokering paramilitary ceasefires, facilitating peace
agreements, achieving acts of military decommissioning,
constituting civil reform and brokering a power-sharing
executive between nationalists and unionists with varying
degrees of success.

Less top-down approaches to conflict resolution in
Northern Ireland, especially those devised by Lederach,
look towards a more holistic methodology which
encompasses profound reconciliation between the
antagonistic parties by sustaining a ‘wide network of
relationships and mechanisms that promote justice and
address the root causes of enmity before they can
regenerate destabilizing tensions’ (Lederach 1997: 26).
This focus on reconciliation includes a frame of reference
which hopes to build functional relationships between
opposed groups.

In Lederach’s (1997) formulation the construction of
functional interpersonal and social relationships is
predicated on addressing the ‘psycho-social’ elements of
conflict as much as tackling pervasive socio-economic
and political inequalities. According to Lederach, since
conflict flows from the close proximity of opposing
groups, long-standing animosities rooted in a perceived
threat to identity and survival are reinforced by high levels
of violence and the direct experience of atrocities. The
conflicting groups’ animosity, perception of enmity, and
deep-rooted fear and hatred of the other, cannot be dealt
with without being germane to the protagonists’
experiential and subjective realities which shape their
existential perspectives and needs (Lederach 1997: 24).

The immediacy of hatred and prejudice, of racism and
xenophobia, as primary factors and motivators of the
conflict, means that its transformation must be rooted
in social-psychological and spiritual dimensions that
traditionally have been rendered irrelevant or outside the
competency of international diplomacy.

Reconciliation, in this analysis, looks towards forging
relationships by engaging the protagonists to view each
other in terms of a common humanity, ‘as humans in
relationship’ (Lederach 1997: 24). A central component
of this project is concerned with methods that address
the past for both groups ‘without getting locked into a
vicious cycle of mutual exclusiveness inherent in the past’
(Lederach 1997: 26). This inclusivity is achieved through
acknowledging the other’s trauma of loss and the anger
that accompanies the pain and the memory of injustices
experienced. As Lederach (1997: 26) explains,
‘acknowledgement through hearing one another’s stories
validates experience and feelings and represents the first
step toward restoration of the person and the
relationship’. Simultaneously, such emphasis on the past
as a means to fashion reconciliation works best when it
provides a space for people to look forward and envision
a shared future. Reconciliation, as Lederach explains, is
thus a place, a social space, an encounter in which
narratives of the past and future can meet and become
singular. Though Lederach recognizes that this
simultaneous orientation of melding together the past
and the future is paradoxical, this is to be carefully
nourished. Instead of prioritizing either the past or the
future, providing a space for grieving the past permits a
reorientation toward the future and, inversely, envisioning
a common future creates new lenses for dealing with the
past.

What role for commemoration in peace building?

Lederach’s model for reconciliation does not specifically
refer to the auxiliary function of commemoration in
sustainable peace-building projects. Nevertheless, a
review of literature on commemorative practice can
illuminate both the progressive and ambivalent role
commemoration can provide in attempts to engender
reconciliation. Firstly, commemoration can assist the
process of ‘acknowledgement’ in so far as the physical
and symbolic acknowledgment of the suffering of
victims embodied in commemorative acts can also act
as ‘repairs’ (Hamber 2006), apologies and attempts
to amend the hurt individuals and groups have caused.
Secondly, commemoration can, in some circumstances,
help bereavement or the trauma experienced by survivors
of human rights abuses. Commemorative practice can
process. Though the individual ‘goes through mourning’, it is a fixed journey that reaches a definite conclusion. When completed, the individual can begin to move on. The mourning concludes when the libido has yielded its attachment to the lost object, leaving the individual free to form new attachments. This progression is narrative as it frames ‘healthy mourning’ as a passage, although often difficult, from point A (attachment to the lost object) to point B (attachment to the new object).

The dire consequences of failing to remember and mourn healthily through commemorative practice have been transposed onto whole societies. The dangers of a society not commemorating, mourning and dealing in a satisfactory fashion with the horrors of the recent past were outlined by the Mitscherlichs (1975), two German psychoanalysts. Like Winter, they also applied Freud’s distinction between ‘mourning’ and ‘melancholia’ to the collective inability of Germany to mourn through confronting the nation’s then recent Nazi past. The ability to recall whole segments of the national past faded away, leaving destructive blank spaces in individual autobiographies and creating patterns of intergenerational complicity and conflict that contributed to a culture of alienation from the indifference not only to the past but ‘to anything that entails responsibility’ (see Hamber 2006: 581). For the bereaved, people who have suffered injuries or been threatened with violence, or those who have been exposed to violence. Problematically, however, such lists run the risk of excluding others. Current, though highly-contested definitions of post-traumatic psychopathology have spread far beyond combat-related stress to include accounts of death or injury (in contrast to direct encounters) (Lerner and Micale 2001). The danger of mapping trauma onto whole populations, like Northern Ireland, is clear. Firstly, the conflict in Northern Ireland was unevenly distributed. Some localities and communities were almost wholly immune from the ravages of violence whilst others were immersed on an
almost daily basis. The broadband application of ‘trauma’ has served to further obscure rather than clarify what one person’s trauma might have in common with the trauma of somebody else. The danger of trauma theory is that it implicates us all in an undifferentiated world of hurt (Gray and Oliver 2004: 10).

If the relationship between commemoration and healing is complex and ambivalent, at best, is it therefore possible to argue against remembering and commemoration? Or even, just as problematically, is it right to query whether healing can ever really occur? Indeed, as Winter and Sivan (1999: 32) note, what healing does occur ‘is at best healing for a while, and when old age sets in, healing may cease together and wounds reopen. Mourning may never end, and when it seems to be completed, it may re-emerge’. Moreover, Hamber (2006: 576–78) argues that acts of reparations for human rights violations, such as the building of memorials to recognize and give a focus for victims to bereave, cannot repair the irreparable. Such acts, of course, cannot bring back the dead. In fact, in some cases, accepting reparations can be guilt-inducing for survivors, a ‘disrespectful act that betrays the loss they have endured, or the memory of those killed’ (Hamber 2006: 568).

Regarding the case against commemoration and healing, Walter Benjamin avowedly refused to mourn or hold any redemptive hope in commemoration. Considering the vast process of memorialization and commemoration inaugurated in Europe after the Great War, Benjamin ‘steadfastly defied all attempts to heal the wounds caused by the war’ (Jay 1999: 225). Benjamin instead defended repetitive, never-worked-through remembrance. For Benjamin the national memory sites constructed to commemorate the Great War, especially opaque and concealed forms like the Cenotaph, Pyramid and the Mound, sought to justify the sacrifices made in its name. Simply put, never could the horror of the war be transformed into something elevating or ultimately progressive by commemorative practices. To parry shocks through healing practices ‘purchases its fragile peace … at the cost of deeper understanding of the sources of the shocks, which might ultimately lead to changing them’ (Jay 1999: 226). It was not consolation or a superficial anaesthesia-induced ‘closure’ that Benjamin demanded, because this would cushion the trauma to the point where only forgetting would result.

Similarly, for Doss, the ‘spontaneous and, often impermanent, and distinctly unofficial nature of many of these … shrines, grassroots memorials, offering and ritualistic behaviours seem less concerned with producing a critique of historical moments and tragic events than in catharsis and redemption’ (ibid: 60). Wholly fixating on the therapeutic, cathartic and redemptive aspects of commemoration can act to ignore and forget the messy and uncomfortable political causes and historical realities that created bereavement. It is not enough, as Erika Doss (2002: 69) argues, to assume ‘that grieving, in and of itself, is a prescriptive political practice’. Assessing the memorials which sprang up in the aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing and the Columbine High School killings, Doss notes that a ‘superficial focus on psychic closure – on healing and closure – skirts the causal, historical dimensions of these visibly public deaths. It further fails to provide a shared set of rituals and commemorative forms that might allow citizens to consider critically how to change the conditions that contribute to the culture of violence in America’ (2002: 71).

Specifically looking at the memorial solutions offered to commemorate the Oklahoma bomb, Doss writes that the ‘Symbolic Memorial’ contains ‘no references to why the bombing occurred and who was responsible, or to the nation’s history of catastrophic violence’ (2002: 74). Rather than ‘opening a window’ on traumatic events and thus facilitating the stages of mourning – from anger to closure, from mourning to acceptance – the memorials are ‘anaesthetic because the historical and political context of why these deaths occurred has been effaced’ (2002: 78).

Commemorative practice should, instead, provide an educational function. Commemorations, for instance, holocaust commemorations, not only urge us to remember the dead, but it must leave such an effect on its victims that their story must be told to prevent future repetition. Similarly, the civic function of war memorial art is to remind us of a sacrifice which must never be allowed to happen again. The pedagogic aspect of commemoration thus signals the practical synthesis of the questions ‘what’ should be taught and ‘why’, with considerations as to how that teaching should take place. As a pedagogical form, commemoration incorporates a set of evaluations that structure what memories should inform our social imagination as well as a detailed, structured set of operations for presenting and engaging historical representations intended to provoke and sediment affect and meaning. In other words, we should look toward shared commemorative forms that might allow citizens to critically consider how to change the conditions that contribute to conflict in Northern Ireland.

The tremendum horrendum of commemoration

The question of how the past should be addressed in order to establish functional relationships between the opposed Irish nationalist and British unionist groups has been addressed by a number of organizations in recent years. The first major survey was the Bloomfield Report of 1998, which was commissioned by the then Northern Irish Secretary of State. The Bloomfield Report was charged with an inclusive agenda ‘to look at possible ways to recognize the pain and suffering felt by victims of violence arising from the troubles of the last 30 years, including those who have died or been injured in the service of the community’ (Bloomfield 1998). The report advocated a three-strand approach ‘to deal with pain and suffering experienced by victims’. Alongside suggesting that ‘practical help’ should be offered to victims, the report promotes projects to create a non-physical memorial scheme and a physical memorial project. By enlisting suggestions from the public, the report sought to explore ‘the possibility of establishing a new memorial reflecting both the sorrows of the past and hope for a stable future’ (Bloomfield 1998: 8). Some of the
suggestions for a non-physical memorial scheme included: a memorial fund which provided financial assistance for victims and a range of cross-community initiatives; a scholarship; a commemorative medal for an assortment of groups and individuals; a day of remembrance/public holiday. Ideas proffered for a permanent memorial incorporated a monument; a memorial park; a memorial building.

Problematically, some of the submissions to the Bloomfield Report were ostensibly single-identity in synopsis: they sought to memorialize only one group at the expense of the other. Examples of submissions included ‘a physical memorial, but to the victims of terrorists and to the security forces only’, or awarding a ‘medal to all members of the Security Forces who have been injured as a result of terrorism’ (Bloomfield 2000). This partisan approach to commemoration is generally reflective of a more recent survey which showed that, though 64% of those polled expressed support for a unified memorial, only 49% agreed that the memorial should be for everyone, regardless of whether they were paramilitaries, security force personnel and civilians (Cap Gemini Ernst & Young 2001).

Although the Bloomfield Report generally received a positive response from victims, especially for the practical measures it advocated for victims – like reviewing compensation laws for victims – the proposals for a non-physical and physical memorial scheme have as yet not been implemented. At present, despite some commemorations in Northern Ireland making reference to ‘all the victims of the Troubles’, there is no single memorial to the victims of the conflict from all sides.

Predictably, one reason why a significant constituent is unwilling to countenance an inclusive commemoration is a preexistent ‘hierarchy of victimhood’. Many simply do not want to consider a commemoration which equalizes say, for instance, dead paramilitaries, security force personnel and civilians. On this issue the Bloomfield Report noted that ‘many people feel strongly that any person engaged in unlawful activity, that is killed or injured in pursuit of it, is only a victim of his own criminality and deserves no recognition for it’ (1998: 14). This reaction, though understandable, can sometimes be manipulated by political organizations which target victims for their own ideological ends (Cap Gemini Ernst and Young 2001; Hamber 2006). Research has found, as Hamber (2006a: 133) notes, ‘a continued high jacking of the so-called victim issue, both in terms of individuals and in terms of defining one <community> or the other as the <real victim>’ (see also Deloitte and Touche 2001; Morrissey and Smyth 2002).

**Conclusion**

Nationalists and unionists thus participate in what Buruma (1999) has called an ‘Olympics of suffering’, in which competitors compete for ‘superior status for their particular psychic suffering’. One pertinent reason for why this state of affairs exists is that, despite diplomatic successes regarding reducing the level of politically motivated deaths in Northern Ireland almost completely, the conflict transition phase could be said to be one where the sphere of culture and identity has more than ever become the pursuit of war through other means. In other words, nationalists and unionists are presently engaged in a cold war and the discourse of victimhood fulfils a number of emotional (Hamber 2006a) and political functions. Politically, many of the more macro diplomatic negotiations between nationalists and unionists have not been fully resolved; perpetuating ‘victimhood’ and ‘minority community’ is therefore a powerful trope that can be utilized to try to gain more economic and political concessions on the basis of deserved need and at the expense of the less deserving enemy oppressors.

The performance of memory in Northern Ireland, specifically enacted in commemorative acts, is one particular modus operandi in which claims to victimhood are articulated. This can be seen in how Ulster Unionist traumatic experience is characterized by being constantly under siege, its survival relentlessly threatened. The Protestant unionist self-image, articulated through commemoration is represented as ‘an endless repetition of repelled assaults, without hope of absolute finally or of fundamental close’ (MacDonagh 1983: 3–14). Nationalist commemorations, with its pantheon of dead wrought through blood sacrifices, are an expression of grieving and how ancient grievances sustain the recollection of conquest and persecution (McBride 2001).

Paramilitary modes of commemoration in Northern Ireland, especially, are the most intense in perpetuating victimhood. Paramilitary murals, parades and marches, songs, rolls of honour for the dead, plaques and commemorative DVDs and webpages articulate what Ricoeur (1988: 187) would call the tremendum horrendum aspect of history. This speaks of the horrors of history, those events which because of their nature must never be forgotten. Horror attaches itself to these events. Horror constitutes the ultimate ethical motivation for the history of victims. These events are what Ricoeur has further termed as ‘epoch-making’. These ‘epoch-making’ events, often born from violence:

draw their specific meaning from their capacity to find or reinforce the community’s consciousness of its identity, its narrative identity, as well as the identity of its members. These events generate feelings of considerable ethical intensity, whether this be fervent commemoration or some manifestation of loathing, or indignation, or of regret or compassion, or the call for forgiveness (1988: 187).

Horror and narrative structure can be clearly seen, read and heard in the contemporary commemorative rites of unionists and nationalist paramilitaries and their political representatives. Relatively ancient and recent events and atrocities which loom large in commemorative practices include, for nationalists, Bloody Sunday in 1972, the death of nationalist hunger strikers in 1981, and the Dublin Easter Rising of 1916; for unionists, the ‘sacrifice’ of protestant soldiers at the battle of the Somme in 1916, the massacre of unionist civilians in Teebane in 1992 and on the Shankill Road 1994.
The obvious horror of these events is continually reproduced through commemorative rituals. Typically these commemorations are not embodied in permanent forms, such as statues and public buildings, which delineate what philosopher Nietzsche termed as ‘monumental time’. That is, commemoration marks a selection from the past of the great achievements and pinnacles of the elites to give us an edifying sense that greatness was once possible and is possible still. Instead, the collective will not to forget in Northern Ireland, notes Leerssen, ‘is not shored up by officially instituted public landmarks but persists by traditional renewal, self-repetition and re-enactment’ (2001: 15). It is the mode of rebel songs, paramilitary murals in Belfast housing estates, and orange lodge parades. The constantly replenishing character of paramilitary-inspired commemoration embodies what Leerssen calls the ‘traumatic paradigm’ (2001:215). This expression of history is spoken ‘from the point of view of the losers, the bereaved, the victims’.

Although these tropes of martyrdom and suffering rendered in performances of social memory are no longer used to perpetuate violence between groups, they nevertheless continue to act as ‘a central facet of the ideological armoury of the group, helping to legitimise and rationalise difference by rooting it in the far-distant past and thus placing weight on the primordial or essential nature of the antagonism or otherness’ (Jarman 1997: 6). Moreover, commemoration, because it clearly articulates identity, can be the target for defacement, desecration and violent attack from the Other. Such actions, as Longley notes (2001: 231), strive to counter-symbolically erase the other’s historical narrative, culture and territorial presence. The psycho-social dimensions of conflict, elaborated earlier by Lederach (1997), which involves animosity, perception of enmity, and deep-rooted fear and hatred of the other, thus continues to be protracted through the lens of commemoration in Northern Ireland.

This paper has briefly investigated the potential of commemorative practice to assist in peace-building efforts in Northern Ireland. Lederach’s (1997) analysis of civil conflict as being ostensibly rooted in ‘psychosocial’ as much as in economic and social disparities is thus seen to require mechanisms to address the past while imagining a new inclusive future. The invocation to remember, in this perspective, is thus seen as vital to the construction of sustainable peace. This process is not easy, however. As commemorative practice in Northern Ireland becomes ever more a means for nationalists and unionists to compete in the ‘Olympics of suffering’, and as the state continues to fund so-called ‘single-identity’ commemorative work, commemoration retains its divisive rather than inclusive character.

References


Mitscherlich, Alexander and Margarete Mitscherlich,
Invisible Interfaces: The Boundaries of Belonging on Belfast’s upper Ormeau Road

Molly Hurley-Depret

Introduction

Since the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement in 1998, Northern Ireland has witnessed paramilitary ceasefires, the decommissioning of some weapons, multiple elections, a functioning government in Stormont and migration to the province from an array of countries. Yet, the fact remains that many people in Northern Ireland continue to contend with division in their daily lives. Violence remains an undeniably important issue for residents, researchers, and policy makers, whether in the direct violence of sectarian, racist or xenophobic attacks, the structural violence of economic inequality, or the more subtle ‘invisible interfaces,’ divisions that can be both geographic and social that form the basis of this article.

This essay provides an overview of the anthropological literature on Northern Ireland relating to violence, before examining how narratives of residents from one area in south Belfast reveal how Belfast’s invisible interfaces have been, and are experienced, managed and challenged.

Violence, Ethnicity and Invisible Interfaces

The study of conflict is not new to Northern Ireland, and it has become the dominant focus in much research on the province (Curtin et al. 1993). Rosemary Harris’s 1972 ethnography of a border town focused on how Protestants and Catholics in rural areas managed to live relatively peacefully. In the 1980s and 1990s there was a shift towards urban-based research that eschewed this emphasis on harmony in favour of projects on perceptions of paramilitaries (Sluka 1989); violence, the body, space and paramilitary members (Feldman 1991); the narratives of nationalist women (Aretxaga 1997); Protestant Orange parades (Jarman 1997; Bryan 2000); and the problematics of memory, history, and division (Kelleher 2003). Anthropologists have also increasingly turned their attention towards policy (Donnan and McFarlane 1989; Jarman 2005; Bryan 2005; Roche 2006).

This recent body of work in Northern Ireland both reflects and contributes to the movement in anthropology to address violence. Anthropologists have analysed armed violence by state and non-state actors (Daniel 1996; Nordstrom 2004), as well as ‘everyday,’ invisible, normalized and mis-recognized forms of violence and social suffering, such as hunger, drugs, and fear (Scheper-Hughes 1992; Bourgois 1995; Farmer 2003; Das et al. 2001). The theorists of ‘everyday,’ normalized violence are essential to this analysis as they emphasize the less obvious, though nonetheless harmful, forms of indirect violence, such as fear in Northern Ireland (Shirlow 2000; Lysaght 2005). I seek to contribute to this literature by examining ‘invisible interfaces,’ the social boundaries, divisions, and fears of harm that derive from the experience of Northern Ireland’s history of conflict.

The violence of division most clearly affects those who live in the segregated interface areas – zones where walls, fences or empty lots have been created, ostensibly to prevent violence between closely neighbouring Protestant and Catholic residents. Social researchers as well as practitioners and activists have focused on interface areas and the overarching issue of segregation (Boal 1970; Darby and Morris 1974; Belfast Interface Project 1998; Murtagh and Shirlow 2006). Yet ‘segregation, polarisation and social division are endemic to Northern Irish society, rather than being confined to one relatively small section of it’ (Jarman 2004). For this reason, it is crucial that researchers must not only turn their attention towards clear instances of suffering and violence in interface areas, but they must also examine life in areas where fear, suffering and socioeconomic deprivation are less apparent, though hardly non-existent.

In my ethnographic research among residents living in Ballynafeigh/the upper Ormeau Road – a largely calm, ‘mixed’ area in terms of class, ethnicity, religion/spirituality, political beliefs and, increasingly, skin colour and nationality – I have sought to achieve precisely this type of analysis, which addresses the lived experience of normalized violence, such as the fear of crossing ethnic, geographical, or social boundaries. At the same time, I avoid over-emphasizing the degree of violence, since residents of other neighbourhoods face far more severe challenges. In doing so, a more complete picture of the ways in which ‘segregation, polarisation, and social division’ (Jarman 2004) have been insinuated into daily life in Northern Ireland can become apparent. At the same time, the ways in which residents challenge or transgress these ‘invisible interfaces’ offers a compelling counterpoint to an otherwise rather pessimistic portrait.
of people’s lives, as several authors have already revealed in their research on senior citizens’ socio-geographic boundary-crossing relationships (Shirlow 2003) and young women’s friendships (McGrellis 2005).

Over the course of this doctoral dissertation research project, which I began in July 2006, I have been compelled by the idea of ‘invisible interfaces.’ I intended initially to focus on geographically-based invisible interfaces, such as those described in Peter Shirlow’s work (2000, 2003), in Ballynafeigh/the Ormeau Road of south Belfast, in order to investigate whether people in a ‘mixed’ area navigated subtle geographic boundaries. I began to realize that the less obvious social and geographic boundaries between people could also be conceptualized as invisible interfaces as well. In extending the definition of ‘interface,’ I do not intend to diminish the significance of this concept for sites where physical violence occurs to residents. Rather, I aim to express the other sorts of violence that occur, or have occurred, in daily life that derive from precisely the types of divisions that built interfaces can so viscerally exemplify. In this conceptualization of the ‘interface,’ therefore, I see three types: firstly, there are built interfaces, which often take the form of walls, fences, or small-business zones that have been built in response to long-term, localized violence. Secondly, invisible geographical interfaces exist, which often require a fine-tuned sense of local knowledge in order to be recognized, such as a shop on the corner, a vacant lot or a particular side of a street (Bryan 2003). Finally, the more subtle invisible social interfaces form part of the equation, interfaces that are based in social relations and interpersonal boundaries, though sometimes also related to space, place, and geography (see Magowan 2005). The final type of ‘invisible interfaces’ derives from a combination of the Northern Irish concept of the ‘interface’ and the broader anthropological concept of ‘ethnicity’ as described in Barth (1969) and later in Eriksen (1994) and Jenkins (1997).

In analysing the words, ideas and experiences of the people I interviewed, I found it necessary to think through the term ‘interface’ in relation to ‘ethnicity.’ This conceptualization of invisible interfaces has its roots in anthropological definitions of ethnicity because those anthropologists have been some of the key theorists of interpersonal boundary-making and maintenance, and the divisions in Northern Ireland have often been conceptualised as ethnic (Jenkins 1997; Donnan 2005). My extension of the ‘invisible interface’ is not, therefore, without historical precedent. Richard Jenkins (1997) has described Barth (1969) as focusing:

upon relationships of cultural differentiation; specifically upon contact between collectivities thus differentiated, ‘us’ and ‘them’ … The emphasis is … upon the social processes which produce and reproduce, which organize, boundaries of identification and differentiation between ethnic collectivities.

Despite critiques of Barth as being ‘materialist, individualist and narrowly instrumentalist’ (Jenkins 1997: 12), Barth’s description of ethnicity (1969) and Jenkins’s (1997: 13–14) similar outline of the ‘basic social anthropological model of ethnicity’ remain two of my guiding definitions. Jenkins (1997: 14) adds, to counter reification of the concept, that ethnicity is a ‘complex repertoire which people experience, use, learn and ‘do’ in their daily lives.’

Like the invisible interfaces of Belfast, ethnicity is negotiated through processes of social interaction, and while the lines between ‘us’ and ‘them’ may harden, they may soften at times as well, allowing for some flexibility and room to manoeuvre. This distinction between ‘us’ and ‘them,’ even if it may be more flexible in practice, is another component shared by ethnicity and invisible interfaces. Without this distinction, without a consciousness of social or cultural difference in comparison to others, as Thomas Hylland Eriksen (1993: 18) has pointed out, ethnicity would not exist. The invisible interfaces described below that delineate ‘us’ and ‘them,’ like ethnicity, are lived, negotiated and ‘done’ by people.

Yet even while the two terms have much in common, and ethnicity is analytically useful up to a point, ‘interface’ has a specific local resonance when referring to divisions and social boundaries that ethnicity may fail to evoke despite its analytical utility. The term ‘interface’ is a widely used term to describe built boundaries between Protestant and Catholic, and several authors have referred to invisible interfaces in relation to urban geography, as noted above. Utilizing ‘invisible interface’ to describe boundaries better describes the sorts of subtle, sometimes shifting social and geographic boundaries that people experience, than ‘ethnic boundary’ which can more easily lead to the reification of ‘ethnic groups.’

Ballynafeigh and the upper Ormeau Road

During my research from July 2006 to September 2007, I interviewed over 40 residents, six police officers, and six community workers and conducted participant-observation with a number of community groups. These narratives offer a better understanding of their experiences of the Troubles, their present-day concerns, and the ways in which they are grappling with the past in their daily lives. Throughout all the interviews, I sought to understand how people perceived the city and their neighbourhood. What sorts of boundaries do they encounter? What sorts of boundaries did they experience in the past? How have they managed these in order to find some pleasure, security, and freedom in their lives?

For those who know Belfast well, the term ‘interface’ generally does not come to mind when speaking of the upper Ormeau Road, known by its older name of ‘Ballynafeigh’ by some residents. The Ormeau Bridge defines the only widely acknowledged interface in the area, dividing the largely nationalist area below the bridge from the upper part, which is still perceived by some as a Protestant/unionist area, even though it is widely acknowledged by researchers, community workers, police and many locals that Catholics now make up the majority of the residents. According to a 2005 sample survey by Carmichael and Murtagh, 43% identified as Catholic, while 19% identified as Protestant; they note
that the 2001 census revealed an increase in Catholics from 42% in 1991 to 50%, and a decrease of Protestants from 30% to 21%. This area was rocked by anti-Orange Order parade protests during the early 1990s following murders of Catholics in a betting shop on the lower Ormeau Road by a loyalist paramilitary and a number of murders have taken place in the area since the beginning of the Troubles, with 11 of its 46 Troubles-related murders occurring in the 1990s (Sutton 1994). Yet speaking of the ‘the Ormeau Road’ most likely evokes images of a ‘mixed,’ desirable, and increasingly expensive area of south Belfast where residents of varied nationalities and professions can shop at local vegetable shops and butchers, sip a pint at a pub, or savour a cappuccino and a scone at a café.

The area has long been known as a mixed area where both Catholic and Protestant people have lived, according to both young and senior citizen residents I interviewed. During the Troubles, unlike many of Belfast’s neighbourhoods, the area did not experience masses of people being driven from their homes as ethnic identities hardened, even though a number of high-profile events occurred, such as the bombing of the police barracks and the Red Lion, a local pub. The Ballynafeigh Community Development Association, founded in 1974 known locally as ‘the community house,’ played a role by attempting to promote interaction between Catholics and Protestants (Hanlon 1994). The Clergy Fellowship, which includes both Protestant and Catholic clergy, developed in the early 1970s as a response to the bitter divisiveness of the Troubles and still exists today. During the course of the Troubles, ethnic segregation in the city was widespread, and Ballynafeigh has been one of the few areas where segregation was not enforced, even if some largely Protestant enclaves existed within the area. According to those I spoke with, for example some ‘mixed’ couples, who would not live in a segregated area due to fears for one or both partners, compromised by moving to Ballynafeigh. According to interviewees, it also became an attractive place for those seeking to escape the tensions of their own neighbourhood or town, as well as for artists or others who felt they did not fit into the categories of ‘Catholic’ or ‘Protestant.’ As mobile workers have moved to Northern Ireland in recent years, many of those in Belfast have been attracted to Ballynafeigh, either through the advice of friends, co-workers, or employers. In what follows, I examine how some residents of this neighbourhood have managed the invisible interfaces in their lives.

Navigating Invisible Interfaces

**1. Bette and Sean**

The morning of 13 July 2007, I visited a quiet terraced house owned by Bette¹ and her partner, Sean. Sitting down to tea and a biscuit at their casual dining nook as the rain drizzled outside, Sean sat in a chair facing me, thoughtful and ready to talk, while Bette, petite and energetic, leaned against the doorway, smiling amiably, and their teenager surfed the internet. Their home radiated warmth, with small dogs visiting periodically and books haphazardly lining the walls. They recounted the night they met with wry humour, debating who first noticed whom at a city centre pub 23 years ago (for the record, Bette noted, it was Sean who noticed her).² Their story, like many others, took place in the context of the Troubles, however. Bette’s decision to go to his flat up the Falls Road, a Catholic/nationalist/republican area, was potentially complicated by the fact that she was Protestant: ‘At that time he was living in a flat up the Falls, and this would’ve been the early 80s? And he invited me up for a coffee, you know, as you do. I remember my friend saying to me, are you right in the head to go up the Falls to his flat? I said I’ll be alright, it’ll be grand, it’ll be grand. And it was.’ Bette’s openness to visiting a ‘mixed,’ city centre pub and her willingness to go to Sean’s apartment in nationalist west Belfast reveal that she was questioning the Catholic/Protestant social and geographical boundaries that were – and often still are – observed. As a teenager in the working-class Annadale Flats in Ballynafeigh, Bette recalled that she ‘would’ve been … one of the millies up at the bonfire, you know one of the millies following the bands … Then, we were loyalists, or you thought you were,’ alluding to working-class teenage girls who hang out at the bonfires and parades that many Protestants participate in each summer to celebrate 12 July and commemorate William of Orange’s 1690 victory at the Battle of the Boyne.

In her late teens and early twenties (she was 49 at the time of our interview), Bette began this process of questioning. Sean had even fewer opportunities to meet Protestants, particularly since he came from the countryside of south Armagh, an area still known for its Irish republicanism. Speaking about her partner’s experience, Bette commented half-jokingly, ‘You would’ve had less opportunities to mix with Protestants, I mean I had more opportunities … I went to drink with Catholics in my twenties. Where Sean more likely probably didn’t even know what a Protestant was when he was eighteen. He thought maybe we had horns.’ Sean responded, ‘the way things were at the time, you just didn’t mix. It wasn’t that, it wasn’t a choice, you know, where we lived at home.’ Curious about his family’s response to Bette and the fact that he would be moving to the Annadale Flats, which was (and sometimes still is) widely seen as a loyalist area, he responded that his family was concerned for his safety even though they accepted Bette: ‘I would say the concerns when I linked up with Bette wouldn’t have been about her being Protestant … The concerns would’ve been me going into a Protestant area and what could possibly happen to me.’ Prior to moving to Belfast, Sean had rarely encountered the invisible interfaces that can be facts of life for many Belfasters, though they are not exclusive to cities and towns. In navigating and crossing these interfaces, first by going to a mixed pub, then by beginning a relationship with a Protestant woman, and finally by moving to a primarily Protestant housing estate, he came to feel the boundaries at a personal level. As he explained, Ballynafeigh:

would’ve been perceived as a mixed area, yes, overall. But at that time, the Annadale Flats, where we lived at that time, would’ve been viewed as a loyalist area, Protestant/loyalist … Although nothing ever happened to me there, nothing
was ever said to me, it was only my own fears and feelings about what was going on at the time, sectarian killings. And people were getting shot for being in the wrong place and living in areas where they were seen as something different, so that was a very real worry for a period. No real difficulties, but there was a lot, living with fear and the stress of that for years was... Even though he specifies that no violence took place against him, ‘living with the fear and stress’ and remaining vigilant against an attack were also forms of violence, albeit violence with no clear perpetrator. He felt that people in mixed relationships could be particularly vulnerable, even in a relatively ‘safe’ area: ‘there was always a bit of threat around. And particularly so for mixed relationships, I think. It wasn’t the done thing... during the Troubles it was more difficult for those people.’

Both Bette and Sean agreed that if he had been living on his own in Annadale Flats, without a link to a local family, he would have encountered more problems. Bette commented, ‘But that’s not to say that maybe if he had been living on his own in one of the flats...’ as her partner chimed in, ‘yes, I would say part of it was because her family was well-known and established in the area, and probably that I was seen, well, if he’s there and he’s with them he’s o.k., maybe he is alright. But others, it wouldn’t have mattered to them.’ Bette also felt that she was at risk for an attack while they lived there, precariously perched between her well-established local Protestant roots and her boundary-crossing relationship. She felt particularly tense and vulnerable during the summer marching season:

There would’ve been times, I would’ve had that fear too. You just didn’t know. One 11 [July] night he was away down home and... there was a lot of tension in the area. I think that must’ve been around the time of... the Orange marches, and they weren’t allowed down over the bridge and all this stuff was starting to happen [early- to mid-1990s]... I didn’t go down to the bonfire and stuff. I could hear someone [outside door]. One said, ‘oh come on, we’ll go break some fenian’s windows’... And I stayed up all night because I was frightened to go to bed... One could say, there’s a fenian in there, or she lives in there with a fenian.

Bette’s story highlights the fact that both partners could be at risk of attack when their relationship crossed the invisible interface that existed between many Protestants and Catholics. Being perceived as ‘one who lives with a fenian’ potentially put her in harm’s way and gave her reason to fear an attack.

Yet, in spite of all these challenges, they raised their children in Ballynafeigh, where they own a home. Sean noted that he could feel less tension on the Ormeau Road these days, and both partners agreed that the mid-1990s peace talks gave them more hope and an increasing sense of ease in their daily lives. Yet they also shared a sense that crime against pensioners has increased, and that newfound economic prosperity would lead to greed, alongside a loss of community spirit. Their boundary-crossing tendencies have led them to re-define their identities as well. Since having children, they have been careful to avoid imposing a ‘Catholic’ or ‘Protestant’ identity on their children, which was facilitated by their respective moves towards Buddhism (Sean) and a patchwork of new age, Buddhist and Christian spirituality (Bette): ‘I was christened Protestant, whatever, but there’s nothing to going to church on Sunday morning, that wouldn’t be enough... I need more than that. But I agree with wee bits of all religions, you know. I should do me own religion, shouldn’t I?’

II. Kathy and Angela

Kathy and Angela were two friends in their 30s whom I came to know through volunteer work. Both came from rural areas originally and were practising Catholics: Angela moved to county Tyrone at an early age, while Kathy came from a rural area just north of Lough Neagh. They had lived in Belfast for a number of years, even while maintaining strong links to ‘home.’ I interviewed them separately, but the three of us spent a lot of time together.

On a warm spring Friday evening, Kathy and I sat at small table in the back bar of the Errigle Inn, a richly-coloured room known for attracting an ‘artsy’ crowd; Angela would be joining us for a drink later. We talked for a long time before beginning the interview because she had been dealing with a difficult personal situation. After commiserating with her about this problem and expecting to re-schedule, she seemed to brighten and offered to talk about growing up in Northern Ireland and her perceptions of her neighbourhood. We began by talking about Ballynafeigh, where she loved living, particularly going to the butcher’s after work every day for fresh meat and walking a short distance to her work. Later, I asked if there was anywhere in the neighbourhood she did not feel comfortable. She thought for a moment and responded, ‘I’ve never been caught in anything, and it’s never stopped me... I can’t think of where I’d feel uncomfortable.’ During a period of quiet, we sat observing the other patrons. I felt the interview had come to an end, when she mused: ‘I would never go to the band hall [where the Apprentice Boys of Ballynafeigh practice and Protestants, and a few local Catholics, drink downstairs]. I probably could. I’d think I couldn’t go there because I’m Catholic. But then again, that shows how many Protestant friends I have.’

She began to talk about where she grew up, almost in a stream of consciousness, while I rapidly took notes. In the rural area she came from, which is near a primarily republican town, her family had few neighbours, except for one Protestant family: ‘at home where we live, it’s farmland... at that time our nearest neighbours were Protestants, and we never went to their house, and they never came to ours...’

We wouldn’t have even known them... If they were Catholic, we would’ve played with them, but we didn’t.’ At this point, she told me about a poem that speaks to these divisions. Beginning to quote from memory, she said, ‘He lived in 22 / I lived in 95... / there was a wall / to these divisions. Beginning to quote from memory, she said, ‘He lived in 22 / I lived in 95... / there was a wall / to these divisions.'
she told a story of her sister waking her up early one morning to run away when they were young girls. They left the house, skimming across the farmland in their nightgowns. But their neighbour, the mother of the nearby Protestant family, must have seen these wee girls and she picked us up and brought us home. But I’ve never been in their house. It’s sad like, too, it’s weird.

Her neighbour ‘from that then, they never set foot in our door ... I think it might’ve been that her brother was murdered.’ Yet when tragedy struck her own family, they came to the funeral, ‘which is a big show of respect.’

These memories of the wee invisible lines were clearly still strong for Kathy, who as an ‘older, more open, better educated, less brainwashed’ person, now views them critically. Having grown up with these invisible interfaces, Kathy is nevertheless open to friendships with Protestants, even as she recognizes that she has few close Protestant friends. Yet, as she delved into her family’s history, it became clear that she is still struggling to make sense of what she has lived through: ‘That’s why you grow up a bit bitter ... and that’s how that gets ingrained in you. [The police or security forces] could just lift who they wanted, they could come in and lift you out of bed and hold you for so many hours.’ She recalled her granny’s parties for friends and family who were released from prison, as well as a visit to a relative in jail when she was a child: ‘all I remember about going to jail ... I remember having a can of Fanta ... Mummy must’ve been bringing [the cans] into him ... I’m sitting in there, and it’s mad.’

Angela and I met for an interview a few months earlier in the living room of her eclectic home, filled with books about spirituality and cards from family and friends. We discussed her early life, which was mainly in the countryside of county Tyrone, though her parents did leave Belfast in the 1970s due to their fears of violence. Though, like Kathy, she appreciates much about the Ormeau Road and hopes to continue living there, she has also encountered invisible interfaces:

The [pub] is good as well ... It’s quite a nice venue. Downstairs I think it’s a bit intimidating, its more, kind of more loyalists, you sort of feel you don’t fit in or something, downstairs, but it’s mixed upstairs if there’s anything on.

I asked Angela why she felt people downstairs were more likely loyalists, and she reflected:

A lot of the time I think you sort of know to look at people, it’s really strange, you know? It’s hard to explain that. As well, it’s a bit of an older crowd ... It’s just a bit of a heavier atmosphere downstairs ... or they tend to all stare at you when you go in the door, [laughing] like in a John Wayne film.

This sense that certain spaces are restricted reveals that people in mixed and shared areas still must navigate invisible interfaces. Her description of entering the pub, likening it to an old Western, evokes her sense of exclusion and intimidation and her fears of confrontation. This boundary that she experiences, like Sean and Bette’s fears of attacks, reflects the way in which fear is also a form of everyday violence.

Angela had also experienced invisible interfaces in her search for housing. She was in the process of changing careers and did not have a lot of money for the expensive rental prices. Yet when she was offered housing in Annadale Flats, she was ill at ease:

They said at that time, that was in 2002, they said, ‘oh yes, there’s quite a big turnover’, but then when I was going around looking at houses I did say to some of the taxi men, because they’re quite good to know the areas, and they said ‘oh no, you’d have to barricade your door with forty locks in there’, you know, and really put me off it, you know. I was speaking to Kevin recently, and he really loves it. But maybe he feels safe because he’s a guy, I don’t know. But there used to be a lot of sectarian tension I think around here. I mean, they say it’s always been a mixed area, but I think it has been more, traditionally more loyalist area, you know. The Annadale Flats probably would be probably more loyalist. It just kind of frightened me ...

Now if I was offered one, would I take it, you know? I would probably go and see it, but I might be still a bit wary, because of the fact that they’re flats as well, you don’t know who’s going to be moving beside you. Taxi men were saying, ‘oh there’s syringes and needles lying on the stairway’. It wasn’t just one [taxi man], it was a few who had put me off it. Kevin has quite a good opinion of Annadale Flats ... But you wouldn’t really, I suppose, want to go down there and wander about.

Angela experienced overlapping layers of fear. She was frightened by the loyalist history of Annadale Flats. Yet the advice of taxi drivers seemed to hint at crime and drug use, more than sectarian crimes, and she took Kevin’s gender into account as well (he is also Catholic). Perceptions of sectarianism, gender, and crime make her fears all the more complex.

III. The 11th Night, 2007

My husband, Etienne, and I strolled from our flat down to the bonfire site, where around 150-250 local Protestants, largely working-class, would celebrate before 12 July parade. The sun was only beginning to set behind the towering bonfire, which had been built on a small field that bordered both the River Lagan and a local housing estate, Annadale Flats. A loyalist paramilitary’s initials painted high upon one block of the housing estate overlooked the area, while clusters of women with strollers and children playing in a nearly traffic-free street seemed to contradict its negative connotations. Amidst these women, however, the news circulated that, as we spoke, it was likely that a loyalist paramilitary was beating a resident (a local Protestant man), who threatened to ruin the night’s festivities with disorderly behaviour. Hearing about this worried me. I knew there were still loyalist paramilitaries with influence in the area, and I had heard other rumours, but I was surprised and concerned nevertheless.

We walked past the bonfire site; teenagers were hanging out, waiting for the party to really begin after
dark. We decided to kill some time by visiting my husband's friends from work who lived nearby. In their 20s to mid-30s, the five of them had been working together at a local call centre for several months, and all were university-educated people who were finding little work in their home countries. They lived in a semi-detached brick house with few possessions, as if they were ready to move quickly if Belfast also proved a dead end. Several commented on their readiness to seek opportunities elsewhere, though one woman said she would miss Belfast’s compactness if she moved to Dublin, since Belfast reminded her of her hometown in France’s Loire Valley. We chatted with his co-workers from France and Germany, two of whom had roots in north Africa as well, who were surprised that Etienne and I were going to the bonfire. The housemates were curious about the reasons for this bonfire and the next day’s parade, although none felt safe enough to go. A good friend of his – Francois, a loquacious man from southern France – commented that he liked parties, even when he didn’t know anyone, but that the people at these parties simply did not look friendly or welcoming, particularly towards ‘foreigners.’ Francois’s sense of their demeanour and his fears for his safety created an invisible interface at the end of their street. After hearing that someone was rumoured to have been beaten up by paramilitaries – which I had not told him – I didn’t blame him for being wary. Returning to the bonfire after a cocktail at their house, throbbing techno and hip-hop music pounded on my eardrums as I moved through the crowd. I gave a quick hug to a couple of women, introduced Etienne, and grabbed a beer that one woman offered me. The thought of paramilitaries was distant from my mind for a moment. Looking out across the hill, the glow of pink, green, and blue neon lights danced across people’s faces and bodies: some moved ecstatically, sweat dripping from their hair, pumping their arms in the air at the DJ. Beneath the trees, friends moved slowly and drunkenly, heads drooping, with arms linked around one another, the heat from the bonfire at their backs. Middle-aged, tough-looking men stood in small groups and scanned the crowd, taking cautious swigs of their beers as fireworks crackled behind them. At the periphery, a small group of people of Chinese descent looked on, fellow Annadale Flats residents who, according to a local community worker, live in around ten per cent of the 250 flats.

The 11th night had indeed begun. The neatly-stacked bonfire blazed, topped off with Gerry Adams’ campaign poster. To use the dark Belfast sense of humour, perhaps this was a move forward from last year’s Irish tricolour flag – at least they’re just burning a picture of one politician and not the flag of an entire nation. Still, this beacon was not the most welcoming sight. Francois’s sense of one politician and not the flag of an entire nation. Still, this beacon was not the most welcoming sight. Francois’s sense of colonisation by many Northern Irish families. These individuals’ past and present experiences underscore that even while people carry on, the experience of living through the Troubles continues to echo through their lives.

Conclusion

These ethnographic examples give insights into the quotidian experience of fear, even for residents who live in a relatively calm area. Underlying many of the above narratives is their recognition of the potential for physical violence if they crossed certain boundaries, such as being in a mixed relationship. In this way, they share the experience of everyday, normalised violence. Even those narratives, such as Kathy’s, in which crossing ‘the wee invisible lines’ of her childhood would likely not have resulted in physical violence, one can hear in her story the violence of long-term ethnic divisions and the pain shared by many Northern Irish families. These individuals’ past and present experiences underscore that even while people carry on, the experience of living through the Troubles continues to echo through their lives.

Endnotes:

1. All names and identifying details have been changed
2. This interview and Angela’s interview were recorded. I took notes with Kathy at her request.

3. Originally, the term ‘fenian’ was used during the 1860s to refer to members of the Irish nationalist secret society who were operating in Britain, the United States and Ireland. In present-day Northern Ireland, however, it is used as a derogatory term for Catholic people.

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Still the ‘Brutes in the Suits’?:
Continuing Perceptions of the Police in Northern Ireland

Rosellen Roche

Abstract
Since the historic Belfast Agreement in 1998, countless measures have been put in place to improve the quality of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, particularly with regard to equality in representation, misconduct and harassment. While the realization of these measures have led to a decrease in many levels or types of complaint among the public, for young people the Police Service remains a suspicious institution tied to its sociohistoric and ‘Troubled’ past. Utilizing field data from three distinct periods from 1999 to 2008, the ethnographic material provided illustrates that while the type of complaint may change, distrust of the police is far from quelled in urban enclaves.

Introduction
On 16 January 2006, the Comptroller and Auditor General of the National Audit Office published its Executive Summary for the Best Value Performance Plan for Northern Ireland Policing Board for 2005–2006 (Her Majesty’s Stationery Office [HMSO] 2006: 2). On the front of the executive summary was a photo of two very modern police persons. Showing one young male and one young female, the police officers seemed poised and calm, but ready for action. The young female officer looks forward and is listening through an earpiece. The young male officer looks forward in unison with his fellow female officer. This scene, set against a picturesque building (and one that appears to be a house of worship), presents a crisp and professional image of today’s Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). This illustration, like many portraying officers pleasantly performing their duties since the negotiation of the historic peace agreement in April of 1998, sets a new standard for comparison when contrasted with the previous and often disturbing reports and images of personnel within the former police institution, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) (Brewer et al. 1996; Ellison and Smyth 2000; Ní Aoláin 2000; Weitzer 1995).

Using this image as a contemporary ideal of the PSNI, this article will examine the current climate of policing in the wake of the Agreement Between the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the Government of Ireland in April of 1998 (commonly referred to as the Belfast Agreement). In this discussion, I draw upon nine years of both qualitative and quantitative field research with young people of urban and working-class background in both Belfast and Derry/Londonderry between the ages of 15 and 35. This ethnographic data aims to emphasize subsequent changes in police conduct among young people who have the highest levels of discontentment with the police (cf. Hamilton et al. 2003; Jarman and O’Halloran 2001; McVeigh 1994; Roche 2005a, 2005b; Smyth 1994). It highlights continuing concerns among young people with specific reference to feelings regarding police misconduct and harassment. While the situation regarding the type or level of police contact and misconduct with young people is improving, their perceptions and suspicions of the police remain largely within the same socio-historic boundaries that were recognized ten years ago. By touching on ideologies regarding ‘chronic’ situations of violence (Tambiah 1996) and drawing comparisons with other forms of non-state authority within the Northern Irish context, such as local paramilitary authority (cf. Kennedy 2003 and 1994; Knox 2002 and 2001; Roche 2007), I seek to provide a space for contemporary ethnomaterial discussion on policing and working-class young people by focusing on misconduct by the police. This will give the reader an understanding of the current terrain of policing through the shift from the RUC to the PSNI between 1999 to the present. By examining both statistical evidence as well as ethnographic field results, I aim to illustrate that, while the type and frequency of incidents of misconduct reported may be changing, feelings regarding what young people see as a ‘useless’ and ‘dishonest’, Troubles-linked institution remains throughout urban Northern Irish enclaves.

Legacies of Authority and Policing
Several forms of authority have had lengthy, consistent and complicated presences in Northern Ireland, including
the British Army, the policing services and the paramilitaries. These institutions of authority have not only influenced and created very specific relationships with those that they ‘protect’, but also have significantly influenced interpretations of each other within an ethnonationally divided context (cf. only for example Burton 1978; Crawford 2003; Mulcahy 2006; Sluka 1989; Weitzer 1995).

Members of the police forces have had some of the most prolific and intimate contact with the average Northern Irish citizen since the start of the ‘Troubles’ in the late 1960s, and particularly so since the Irish Republican Army (IRA) ceasefires in 1994, the large reduction in UK military troops by 2000 and the final withdrawal of troops from Operation Banner at midnight on 31 July 2007. Because of the institution of police primacy in Northern Ireland in 1977 – the handling of terrorism within the normal context of policing – and emergency measures which still apply in Northern Ireland today, the RUC and the subsequent PSNI were and are one of the most important and prominent channels of authority for the average Catholic Nationalist/Republican (Catholic) and Protestant Unionist/Loyalist (Protestant) working-class family.

However, police institutions have been riddled with controversy due to the legacy of majority Protestant representation in the force, as well as noted harassment and misconduct by police forces towards the communities they patrolled, particularly during the height of the Troubles. By the 1970s and 1980s, complaints of misconduct by the police were becoming well documented and reviewed indigenously by bodies such as the Committee for the Administration of Justice (CAJ) (1988 and 1985) and exogenously by Amnesty International (1978). Complaints of misconduct also gained more international awareness in the mid and late 1990s with attention from Human Rights Watch (1997) and the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur to the Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (1998), turning the spotlight on Northern Ireland’s police.

Changes for Northern Irish Policing

Since the advent of the Belfast Agreement, legislation has increasingly emphasized change for Northern Ireland in the areas of policing, human rights and equality. The Agreement indicated that the police service should be representative of the community as a whole, shaking off an historical Protestant mantle, and an independent commission was to be established to make recommendations for the future of policing in the summer of 1999 (Independent Commission for Policing for Northern Ireland 1999 and House of Commons, Bill 125, 2000). The new measures provided for the new recruitment arrangements to enable the policing force to represent equal numbers of Roman Catholic and Non-Roman Catholic trainees, cutting out ‘discrimination in appointments’ (House of Commons, Bill 125, 2000: Note 43). In November 2001, these visions for change were manifested when the Policing Board unanimously voted in a new badge and uniform for the police and the former Royal Ulster Constabulary became the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI).

In November 1998, then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Marjorie Mowlam, announced the search for an independent police Ombudsman to whom individuals could officially complain of police malpractice. The First Annual Report, covering the period from November 2000 through March 2002, states that almost half (49%) of the 6,385 allegations brought against the police to the Ombudsman were related to ‘Oppressive Conduct’ which is outlined as assault, harassment, unlawful arrest, serious assault, sexual assault and unspecified (Police Ombudsman 2002: 25).

Allegations of ‘Failure of Duty’ (23%) and ‘Incivility’ (14%) were the next most frequent complaints (Police Ombudsman 2002: 25).

Over time, however, some changes have become evident regarding a downward trend in the type or level of complaint. The Annual Report covering the period of April 2004 to March 2005 states that ‘(o)ver the last 4 years, and over the longer period of 10 years, there has been a continuing downward trend in the level of complaints, and also the number of incidents which lead to complaints. The highest period for complaints against the RUC was 1997–1998, with over 4000, now the level of complaints is falling below 3000’ (Police Ombudsman 2005: 19).

Localized surveys among young people, some of those who are most affected by police contact and misconduct, also reflect a downward trend in some forms of complaint. For example, survey research published in 2003 by Hamilton et al. conducted with 1163 young people across Northern Ireland stated that most young people’s experiences with police remain predominantly negative, with 26% of respondents between the ages 16 and 24 years reporting that they were very dissatisfied with the PSNI (Hamilton et al. 2003: 5–6). However, rather than oppressive conduct complaints as expressed in initial Ombudsman reports, 58% of young people in the Hamilton et al. (2003: 6) report stated that the main form of unacceptable behaviour was being disrespectful and/or being impolite.

Equally, my most recent quantitative research conducted in Derry/Londonderry among young school-leavers aged 15 to 25 (Roche 2005a, 2005b and 2006) indicates a shift in the type of contact experienced by young people in relation to those some years their senior. In this survey, part of a three-year Toward Reconciliation and Inclusion Project (TRIPROJECT), over 900 young school leavers and young unemployed from working-class areas participated in the creation, the dissemination and completion of a questionnaire that addressed their specific needs. A total of 486 young people aged between 15 and 25 years were included in the final sample with 329 respondents reporting general contact with the police. Overall, some of the most common forms of contact between young people and police were reported as being ‘stopped and questioned’ (32%) or being ‘asked to move on’ (24%).

When considering reports of misconduct as coming from the questionnaire, TRIPROJECT findings were not unlike findings of Hamilton et al. (2003). TRIPROJECT
findings indicated that 37% of those who reported contact overall stated that the police were ‘disrespectful and impolite’. Following this, almost identical percentages emerged with just over a third of respondents having noted that they were ‘wrongly accused of misbehaviour’ (36%) by the PSNI or RUC, and stated they were ‘stopped for no reason’ (36%) (Roche 2005a: 178–196) with one exception – being ‘wrongly accused of misbehaviour’. This was most frequently reported by those aged 18 years and under (44%). Those aged 22 years and over reported the highest frequencies of austere or emergency-led contact, such as house or body searches for ‘no reason’ (Roche 2005a: 194–196). Changes in reporting, including ‘lesser’ degrees of contact as misconduct, could indicate a growing sensitivity towards misconduct between different age groups. Keeping in mind that police contact was reported to have most frequently occurred between ages 10 and 20 years for almost all respondents, these results may indicate a reduction in level of complaint and/or type of incident (Roche 2005a: 187).

**Northern Irish Young People**

The statistics from research outlined above indicate a shift in the level or type of incidents that are identified and reported as police misconduct by segments of the population. These incidents also follow a parallel pattern regarding the decommissioning and relief of emergency powers in Northern Ireland as a whole. Overall, the trends regarding misconduct of the police seem to be in sync with the historical movements towards creating a more just and less austere policing service as envisioned in the Agreement of 1998 and the subsequent change to the PSNI. However, are the relationships between young people and the police improving, and how are young people feeling about the institution of the police and police personnel in this new climate?

Those in their teenage and early adult years, and those coming from the most deprived areas in Northern Ireland have some of the most contact with policing services (Hamilton et al. 2003). Considering the nuances of ongoing policing difficulties and changes in Northern Ireland young people have experienced particularly strained relationships with the police service (Bell 1990; Ellison 2001; Hamilton et al. 2003; Jarman and O’Halloran 2001; Smyth 2004).

Since 1994, some policy-focused investigation regarding young people and state authorities began to be disseminated across Northern Ireland. These investigations highlighted not only issues related to sect, but issues of class, as well as youth and gender that are prevalent in Northern Irish police misconduct (for example, McVeigh 1994: 77). Similarly, more recent quantitative Belfast-based research conducted by Ellison (2001) among young people aged 14 to 18 years, also emphasized that young people from areas of social deprivation were more likely to commit and/or be victims of crime than those from more affluent areas.

Young people in Northern Ireland experience many similar concerns and relationships with police forces as youths in other deprived areas of the United Kingdom (cf. Coffield et al. 1986; O’Donnell and Sharpe 2000; Parker 1992; Willis 1993). Indeed, reports and eye witness accounts of Northern Irish young people’s hostile interchanges with police perhaps often echo Parker’s (1992: 138–147) deduction of ‘toughness and trouble’ among ‘Boys’ from the ‘Roundhouse’ in Liverpool, where he found that among his ‘Boys’:

> (w)hat is constantly in question is the behaviour of the officials who represent Authority … Authority officials break the rules continuously and get away with it. The fact that so many respectable and influential outsiders are so naive as to refuse to believe that the policeman has two distinct sides to him is a prime source of irritation. (Parker 1992: 160)

While experiences of working-class Northern Irish teenagers may seem to reflect those of teenagers living in other urban environs of the United Kingdom, differences in the context of living in an ethnationally divided society regulated by policing continues to make young people’s lives distinct. For example, 95% of children still attend segregated schools and 80% of the public housing remains segregated by religious affiliation (cf. Shirlow 1999; McCole et. al 2003 cited in Kelly and Sinelair 2005). Only recently have significant efforts been made to reduce the military appearance of police personnel, police vehicles and police stations and barracks. Similarly, it is only within the past decade that changes to police conduct have been highlighted in legislation and policy, and the public reporting of such conduct has been made available. A child who was 10 at the time of the 1994 ceasefires, for example, would have experienced many aspects of militarized policing and, while witnessing some changes to police structures, would have become a teenager in what can be considered only the beginning processes of change.

Perhaps more important to examine is the concept of teenhood and the spectrum of friends with whom young people socialize in this period of their lives. Most young people have older (and younger) siblings and friends who are immediate peers, playmates and confidantes. These acquaintances and family members affect not only the young person’s interchanges with policing personnel, but their perceptions of the institution of the police as a whole.

This concept of peer cohorts and age spectrum is an important point for consideration. The TRIPROJECT results show that what respondents considered to be improper police conduct increased in the older age category especially amongst those aged 22 years and over who would have been children during the heavy emergency measures. While young people reported the same types of police contact overall, such as having a ‘house searched for no reason’, this was reported almost three times as frequently by those aged 22 years and over (15%) compared with respondents aged 18 years and under (5%) (Roche 2005a: 194–195).

Although trends in the level or type of reported incident appear to be improving, those in the older age groups have had substantial experience of serious
incidents of emergency-led procedures and are passing these details on through friendship networks, and perhaps most importantly, kinship networks. Although reports relating to more serious assault and emergency-led procedures, such as house searches, are declining in the younger age cohorts, narratives of more austere policing continue to be passed down among family members and friends. These experiences feed into and throughout a young person’s personal ‘circle’ of relationships, and add to the perceptions of policing that young people continue to hold.

**Feeling no confidence**

Feelings about whether the police have ‘changed’ for the better since becoming the PSNI, aspects regarding whether young people from both Catholic and Protestant working-class enclaves would now join the new PSNI, and lingering suspicions about the preferential treatment the opposite community receives from police in the divided Northern Irish context are telling when thinking about the current relationship between the police and working-class young people in Northern Ireland.

For example, amongst all respondents feelings of being harassed are high. In examining TRIPROJECT results of misconduct and harassment, out of 329 young people who had any kind of contact with police 68% reported improper contact, even if that conduct was ‘being disrespectful and impolite’. Of those who felt they had been treated improperly, 74% considered they had been harassed.

Feelings of harassment alone, however, perhaps cannot distinguish Northern Irish young people’s feelings from their counterparts elsewhere in the United Kingdom. More important are impressions regarding the ‘honesty’ of policing services and the improvement of the police since changing to the PSNI. In the TRIPROJECT results overall, a very small percentage of young people believe the police to be ‘honest’, totalling 14% of total respondents with an almost even split between the communities on this response. Equally, only 10% of Catholics and 11% of Protestants ‘agreed’ that the ‘police have improved since becoming the PSNI.’ (Roche 2003: 184). This response rate also echoes the responses of Hamilton et al. who found that a greater number of respondents believed the PSNI remained unchanged from its RUC predecessor (Hamilton et al. 2003: 37).

This vote of no confidence in the new PSNI is significant. Even though young people report a difference in the type of misconduct by police, their perceptions of the new PSNI have changed little from their impressions of the RUC. Indeed, only 10% of young working-class respondents in the TRIPROJECT report stated that they would consider ‘becoming part of the new PSNI’. Out of the total number who stated that they would consider joining, only slightly more Protestant respondents (13%) compared to Catholic respondents (8%) stated that they would consider joining.

**Lingering suspicions**

Moving beyond statistical evidence, lengthy qualitative research and contact with young people throughout a period of over nine years shows very little movement in their perceptions of the police. This feeling, whether supported by the statistical evidence or not, promotes lingering suspicions of the police personnel in the contemporary context.

Examining my field experiences sequentially, in early periods of field work from 1999–2001, well over half of the young people had some sort of threatening or violent encounter with a police person (Roche 2003: 184) and many noted fear of being thought to ‘tout’ or divulge information to police, preferring to turn to paramilitaries in their respective areas. From 2003–2005 a majority of young people surveyed reported police misconduct of some kind, particularly harassment. Most, whether from the Catholic or Protestant ethnonationalist community, noted they would never consider joining the recently changed PSNI. Finally, recent field work 2006–2008, currently underway in both Belfast and Derry/Londonderry, is also indicating high levels of suspicion and mistrust of police. This current eighteen-month research project, *The Facts, Fears and Feelings Project* (NICRC 2007), reveals strong sentiments regarding police distrust and links this distrust to divided living in Northern Ireland. In sum, young people most express their consistent image of an unchanged policing service in their continued discussions regarding brutality by police, the ‘uselessness’ of police in their areas coupled with the continued presence of paramilitary control, and continued suspicions of preferential treatment of police to the alternate community.

Beginning with inappropriate physical contact, while on field work in Derry/Londonderry 1999–2001, countless reports of beatings and brutalities from police officers were recounted by young people from both Catholic and Protestant enclaves. Regarding police misconduct and brutality in urban Northern Ireland among disaffected young people, a seventeen-year-old Protestant named Crowell, whom I knew in the early periods of fieldwork (when police services were the RUC), echoes the feelings of many regarding the ‘cops.’ Beyond aspects of mere ‘toughness and trouble’ (Parker 1992 [1974]), he outlined serious concerns of being subjected to beatings from heavily armed police personnel in ‘thick-skinned’ vehicles (Weitzer 1995:73). In a casual conversation regarding ‘being lifted’ after some minor rioting, Crowell matter-of-factly describes beatings that happened in what many young people called ‘meat wagons’ or armoured Land Rovers, illustrating the physicality of the experiences in the vehicle.

Me: So what happened to you, when you got in there?
Crowell: They handcuff ye, and put your hands behind your back so ye can’t cover yourself. And just start beatin’ your ribs and your stomach.
Me: Are there lots of people in there with you or is it just you?
Crowell: Naw, it would just be the wan … It’d be wan
person to a Land Rover. So nobody else can see it happenin’. And then if you ever do say anything, there’s always fuckin’ three or four cops in a Land Rover, and them three stick together. And a judge isn’t gonny believe wan person over three cops, like.

... But it was never, ye couldn’t see them bruises so ye, so ye couldn’t… because of the clothes. They can’t really just strip off and show my bruises, ‘cause them bruises could’ve came from anywhere, like. Them marks could’ve came from anywhere. And ye could just be sayin’ it.

Tied in with experiences with police, Crowell continues by describing additional consequences that can come from paramilitaries in his area if a young person is suspected of discussing local issues with police. This can encompass using police to sort out problems, being seen with police personnel or even being ‘lifted’ by police in his Loyalist area. Having been subjected to a punishment beating himself, where part of his knee flesh had been removed, Crowell was sensitive to the intertwined and complex nature of authority in his area.

Like punishment beatin’s wouldn’t be broadcasted. If it happened, you just, you don’t tell anybody. You just keep it to yourself sort of thing. You don’t phone, you don’t phone the news or anything like that there. Know, put it on T.V.

You’re blamed (by the paramilitaries) for, I dunno, you could be blamed for talkin’ to the cops and telling things. Tellin’ people what’s happenin’, and it’s just shit like that there. And ye get it worse. Like after a beatin’ it’s normally a shootin’. You normally get shot in the kneecaps then.

Other young people also noted the lack of confidence in using police services. For example, seventeen-year-old Marty, coming from a Protestant and heavily Loyalist area, in a discussion regarding whether he would call upon the police in favour of Catholics, young working-class Protestants often feel abandoned by the PSNI. Garry, a young nineteen-year-old Belfast man states plainly:

There’s one thing I notice, if there’s anything wrong and you need the police to do anything for you and you’re in a Catholic area, they don’t help you as much. But if you’re Protestant and you live in a Protestant area, they’re, like, over there pronto. That’s definitely for certain, like, /…/ ‘cause my sister’s going out with a Protestant and if you’re a Catholic so you’re gonna come with us. We’re gonna question you.’

Sentiments like these, discussing perceived preferential treatment toward Protestant residents of Northern Ireland, continue to be both casually and commonly stated among the Catholic community in enclaved areas in either Derry/Londonderry or Belfast. Conversely, the levelling of appointments in the PSNI has only added to an ideology of perceived preferential treatment towards Catholics among young working-class Protestants. Feeling that the new recruitment and appointments of Catholic police officers will bias the police in favour of Catholics, young working-class Protestants often feel abandoned by the PSNI. Garry, a young nineteen-year-old Belfast man states plainly:

The thing is like this – since their (the PSNI) new hiring and things, us, we can’t get a fair chance. If them Catholics think that the police were ever on our side, then themins should think again. Now that they are taking on so many of them, they won’t be of much use to us, now.
Catholic community makes up around 44% of the population, Catholics only comprise 21% of the PSNI (British Irish Rights Watch 2007). Thus, while representation within the police services still remains heavily within the category of ‘Non-Roman Catholic’, and many perceptions within the Protestant community are unfounded, these perceptions are important. The divided nature of living in Northern Ireland and indeed the forced appointment of more Catholic representation in the PSNI can push and pull notions regarding policing services in a variety of directions in both communities. However, most sentiments reflect negativity for the new force. While most young Catholic community members may maintain there is no difference in police services based on previous experiences and perceptions of the RUC, the new hiring policies for the PSNI have led many working-class Protestant young people to comment on what they regard as a situation that will inevitably lead to reverse discrimination.

Johnny, an eighteen-year-old Protestant from Belfast, sums up his continuing suspicions regarding police contact and the police force in most recent field research throughout 2006–2008.

Ones always used to think that it’s the Catholics that have the most bother with the cops. They come in and ask us as many questions just. I don’t think they’ve changed. They’re like, like, dirty. I don’t know, rotten or somethin’. Cuants, like. Ah, they have the new outfit, y’know, and the hat, suit, and all, and they, like, want them to stop being such like, I don’t know … brutes, but they’re the same.

They say there’s more Catholics in the cops, but they won’t be more fair neither. It’s just the way it is with them. Brutes in the, the new fuckin’ suits … They’ll always be pushing us around in here. …

Although statements like these were common among young Catholics and Protestants in early fieldwork, the persistent notion of unfair and unjust treatment in everyday conversation with young people bespeaks a ‘street’ feeling which may not reflect the more positive movements from government and actual decline of emergency-level misconduct. Whether ‘brutes in suits’, or as one young person in Derry/Londonderry referred to police personnel over seven years ago – ‘gangsters in uniform’ (Roche 2003: 178) – there are continuing suspicions regarding policing behaviour with similarities across a period of just under a decade and throughout these initial periods of change for the police service.

Ethnohistorical Outlooks

Elsewhere (Roche 2003 and 2007) I have argued that young people in Northern Ireland have personalized and individualized relationships with authority figures in their lives due to the pervasive cultural experience of the Troubles and emergency measures. Expanding on Tambiah’s (1996: 221–243) theories of ‘chronic’ situations of violence where cultures have experienced a tit-for-tat exchange for decades enhancing an atmosphere where violence ‘has its own autonomy’, I propose that personal networks between families and neighbours in working-class areas promote a specific understanding of authority figures within communities connected to this violent culture (Roche 2007).

What perhaps is most important to note in the relationships with these forms of authority is that, for example, while paramilitary activity in Northern Ireland is changing throughout the processes of peace and can be seen as bringing the paramilitaries closer to Mafiosi categories due to their increased activity in underground economies, working-class community perceptions of them as unofficial and legitimate guardians of each of their communities continue to be strong and prevalent (Roche 2007: 225). Similarly, while police force administration, conduct and self-examination are changing, working-class community relationships with police still suffer from the history of documented sectarianism in hiring policies, unnecessary force and the divided life in working-class enclaves. It is within this sociohistoric landscape that it is important to chart the progress of community perceptions and possible change in attitude toward the police. While in actuality, the appearance, community composition and the actions of the police force may be changing, the community perceptions regarding those in the uniform are harder to alter.

Crowell, now approximately twenty-five years of age, will not forget the brutality he experienced and would disagree with Marie that Protestants receive special privilege from police personnel. Marie, looking to raise children herself someday, still would feel that Catholics are discriminated against and ‘would never join the police’. Johnny, youngest and most contemporary of the field examples, now represents the suspicion of the younger end of this spectrum, feeling that, even with the introduction of affirmative action towards the recruitment of Catholics into the police force, the force is so ‘dirty’ that institutional change is impossible.

What remains to be witnessed is if the upcoming generations manifest the same suspicions and interactions with policing services, and how these attitudes are tied into the socioeconomic and cultural expectations within the various segments of changing Northern Irish society. While Northern Ireland is regarded as one of the most researched areas on the planet (Whyte 1990), it is this very wealth of inquiry that makes it such a valuable resource and paradigm. Should Northern Ireland be able to continue to encourage research that probes and monitors the progress of such an historic peace settlement, the contribution to other societies grappling with tit-for-tat situations of chronic violence may also be able to benefit. Finally, by maintaining scrutiny of community perception and change, anthropology can continue to impact some of Northern Ireland’s largest challenges for the future.

Endnotes
1. Field work used for this article encompasses three periods of research. Each project had slightly different age parameters, but all projects included young male and female school leavers and the young unemployed in both Catholic and Protestant ethnonationalist enclaves experiencing high levels of deprivation in the urban cities of Belfast and/or Derry/Londonderry, Northern Ireland. Primary research was conducted between 1999–2001 sponsored in the main by monies from Peterhouse, Cambridge and the Guggenheim Foundation (Roche 2003). The second period of field-work covers the period of 2003-2005 and incorporated both quantitative and qualitative work. This project, TRIPROJECT, was funded in the main by the Special EU Programmes Body for Peace and Reconciliation administered by CFNI (Community Foundation for Northern Ireland) (Roche 2005a, 2005b and 2006). The final segment of field research included here is currently underway. Entitled Facts, Fears and Feelings: The Impact and Role of Sectarianism in Everyday Life, the project seeks to uncover mundane and tacit factors in sectarianism researched across 2006-2008. The project is sponsored by Special EU Programmes Body for Peace and Reconciliation administered by the NICRC at Queen’s University Belfast (NICRC 2007: 28).

2. All names have been changed from their original. The ages of young people and their area of residence are accurate from time of original field interview.

3. In February 2000, Britain suspended the Assembly because of serious disagreement between Unionist and Nationalist factions. On 8 May 2007, power-sharing began again and the Assembly government was re-launched.

References


University of Cambridge.
The AAI continues to flourish and has seen advances in terms of membership, profile and visibility. As this is the end of my two-year term of office as Chair I want to reflect on some of the changes, advances and issues that the Association has addressed in that period. My vision for the AAI focused on two key areas: the profile of the association nationally and internationally through a number of initiatives.

One of the aims nationally has been to hone our attention more towards postgraduate students and current research as their contribution is vital to the ongoing dynamism of the organization. The inaugural postgraduate conference was held last year at Queen's University, Belfast, and it is exciting to see the ongoing collaboration between Queen's, Maynooth and Trinity College Dublin grow through this conference forum. The papers that we have heard so far, and those still to come, show the richness and diversity of anthropological research being produced here, as well as the depth of intellectual talent and scholarship in the discipline.

The profile and visibility of the organization has been reassessed through two areas; firstly by a major review of the entire membership over twenty-one years. Jamie Rollins-McColgan has undertaken a mailout to virtually all previous members in an effort to re-establish links and connections with those who are no longer part of the organization. This has resulted in considerable success in growth as the organization now has twice as many members this year as it did at the same time last year. As the organization is dependent upon its membership we appreciate your support and would ask you to join the AAI if you have not already done so.

Internationally we have stepped up our activities through Attracta Brownlee who has been responsible for improving public relations with organizations overseas. Attracta has given a lot of time and effort to bolstering our overseas contingent by contacting potential members in Europe, Australia and the US and by building up a database of these overseas participants and being able to advertise our activities worldwide.

One of the improvements that the Association has made to the facility for becoming a member is the introduction of electronic payment services online. Adam Drazin has been responsible for managing and setting up Paypal and we are delighted now to be able to offer this service to our members to renew membership or to become a member, so please make use of it!

In terms of continuing to improve the visibility of AAI, we had previously discussed the possibility of running an AAI conference panel at the ICAES conference in July this year. Although this did not happen, the idea of profiling AAI at conferences is an important one, and some measures have been taken to improve visibility in terms of AAI with committee members running AAI stalls at conferences. However, there is more that could be done and the idea of a conference panel is one that might still be on the agenda for the future.

This year we have a number of outgoing committee members. These include Michael Roberts who had to resign in January due to starting a new job in the northwest health trust, and we wish him well in his position and thank him for all his work, which has been greatly valued and appreciated during his term of office as secretary. Jonathan Skinner also resigned at the end of February and we are also grateful to him for all of his input and efforts especially in organizing the very successful St. Patrick’s Day conference in 2006.

I would therefore like to propose a vote of thanks to Michael, Jonathan and all of the current outgoing committee for this hard work during their term of office. Thank you to all of you for your support and efforts in helping the AAI to thrive.

Fiona Magowan

**AAI Committee for 2008–2009, elected at the AGM, 12 April 2008**

Chairperson: Dr Andrew Finlay  
Vice-Chairperson: Dr Chandana Mathur  
Secretary: Attracta Brownlee  
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NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

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Authors are encouraged to submit items for the IJA. Articles, which may be in English or Irish, should be original and should not be under consideration elsewhere. IJA is a refereed journal and articles submitted will be assessed by readers for their suitability.

Articles for consideration should be sent to the Editor or Associate Editor as follows:

Séamas Ó Siocháin, Editor, Department of Anthropology, NUI Maynooth, Co. Kildare, Ireland.
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Fiona Magowan, Associate Editor, School of History and Anthropology, The Queen's University Belfast, Belfast BT7 1NN, N. Ireland. f.magowan@qub.ac.uk

Books for review and completed reviews should be sent to the Reviews Editors:

Chandana Mathur, Department of Anthropology, NUI Maynooth. chandana.mathur@nuim.ie; or to Máiréad Nic Craith, Director, Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages, University of Ulster (Magee), Aberfoyle House, Northland Road, Derry/Londonderry, BT48 7JA. m.niccraith@ulster.ac.uk

Other material (conference and research reports, news, advertisements, letters etc.) should be sent to:

Anne Nolan, c/o Department of Anthropology, NUI Maynooth. anne.t.nolan@nuim.ie

Presentation

Articles should be in the region of 4000 words. Included should be the author’s name and academic affiliation, the title and a short abstract of no more than 100 words. All contributions should be clearly typed on one side of A4 paper, double-spaced and with wide margins throughout (including notes and bibliographical references). Two manuscript copies should be submitted and a 3.5” disk or electronic copy in IBM PC format readable in MsWord. Receipt of a submission will be acknowledged, and articles will be processed only after receipt of both hardcopy and electronic copies.

The following points should be observed:

Notes should be endnotes and should be kept to a minimum; they should be presented in a typed list at the end of the article and double-spaced.

Bibliographical references in the body of the text should be given in parentheses in standard author-date form: (Lee and Devore 1968: 236). A complete list of references cited, arranged alphabetically by author’s surname, should be typed at the end of the article and adhere to the following style:


Subheadings should be typed flush left.

Quotations. Single inverted commas should be used except for quotations within quotations, which should have double inverted commas. Quotations of more than about 60 words should be indented and typed without inverted commas.

Spellings. British English (not American English) spelling should be used in English articles except in quoted material, which should follow the original. Use -ise not -ize word endings.
FACTS, FEARS & FEELINGS PROJECT
The impact of sectarianism in everyday life

STAND TOGETHER AGAINST SECTARIANISM