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Tiocfaidh Ár Lá (Our Day Will Come): Negotiating the Cultural Politics of Citizenship, Heritage, and Identity in Northern Ireland

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Abstract

Fifteen years after the Good Friday Agreement ended thirty years of violence in Northern Ireland, people still grapple with peace process implementation. Many within the Catholic minority continue their hopes for a united Ireland, free from British hegemony, refusing to accept they are citizens of the United Kingdom. In the border town of Strabane, County Tyrone, the remembered past plays a dynamic role in how people live in the present, envision their future, and pass it on to younger generations. During the Troubles, members of this republican community were either volunteers in the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or active supporters in what they considered a struggle for civil rights and a fight against British occupation. The ambush and deaths of three local lads by Crown Forces in 1985 was a pivotal event that inspired a greater commitment to opposing British rule, particularly through the expression and performance of their Irish and republican identity, using tangible and intangible symbols. These forms of cultural identity remain important as residents negotiate their place in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Flags, murals, and plaques identify ethno-national territory, serving as boundary markers and sites of memory for local residents. A memorial band established right after the shooting continues to honor the "local lads" as members march and perform republican music embedded with the narratives of republican hero/martyrs who died for Irish freedom. With music, drumming, and parading they embody memories, reimagine community, contest British citizenship, and create their own heritage of the Troubles. In a pub setting, this same music invites audience participation in singing the stories, extending the memorial and commemorative aspect to everyday events. As they perform their Irish identity and memorialize the past, this community has transitioned from being marginalized and at odds with local government, to participating on their own terms, incorporating republican celebrations and heritage into programs within the broader Strabane community, and taking an active part in planning for the future.

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TIOCFAIDH ÁR LÁ (OUR DAY WILL COME):

NEGOTIATING THE CULTURAL POLITICS OF CITIZENSHIP, HERITAGE,

AND IDENTITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Doris Ellen Panzer

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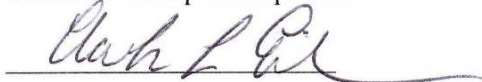2015

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POLITICS OF CITIZENSHIP, HERITAGE, AND IDENTITY IN NORTHERN

IRELAND

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Go raibh míle maith agaibh. (Thank you)

ABSTRACT

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Fifteen years after the Good Friday Agreement ended thirty years of violence in Northern Ireland, people still grapple with peace process implementation. Many within the Catholic minority continue their hopes for a united Ireland, free from British hegemony, refusing to accept they are citizens of the United Kingdom. In the border town of Strabane, County Tyrone, the remembered past plays a dynamic role in how people live in the present, envision their future, and pass it on to younger generations. During the Troubles, members of this republican community were either volunteers in the Irish Republican Army (IRA) or active supporters in what they considered a struggle for civil rights and a fight against British occupation. The ambush and deaths of three local lads by Crown Forces in 1985 was a pivotal event that inspired a greater commitment to opposing British rule, particularly through the expression and performance of their Irish and republican identity, using tangible and intangible symbols. These forms of cultural identity remain important as residents negotiate their place in post-conflict Northern

Ireland. Flags, murals, and plaques identify ethno-national territory, serving as boundary markers and sites of memory for local residents. A memorial band established right after the shooting continues to honor the "local lads" as members march and perform republican music embedded with the narratives of republican hero/martyrs who died for Irish freedom. With music, drumming, and parading they embody memories, reimagine community, contest British citizenship, and create their own heritage of the Troubles. In a pub setting, this same music invites audience participation in singing the stories, extending the memorial and commemorative aspect to everyday events. As they perform their Irish identity and memorialize the past, this community has transitioned from being marginalized and at odds with local government, to participating on their own terms, incorporating republican celebrations and heritage into programs within the broader Strabane community, and taking an active part in planning for the future.

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In the wee hours of the morning three Strabane lads they did die,
Fighting for their homeland, "Freedom!" was their cry.
Two of them were brothers Michael and David Devine
Along with Charles Breslin, Oh Lord, to them be kind.

(*chorus*) What they got was British justice it's plain for all to see
Orders straight from Thatcher, Shoot To Kill – their policy.

"SHOOT TO KILL POLICY (British Justice)" by J. McGinley[1]

Introduction

The Strabane of today is a lot different than the Strabane of twenty-five years ago and we are now solidly on the road to peace. No family should ever have to endure what the Breslin and Devine families have had to. In normal times, had justice and peace prevailed, these three young men would not have gone to their deaths. No element must ever be allowed to drag us back to those dark days. (Father Boland, February 22, 2010)[2]

Father Declan Boland, parish priest of the Church of the Immaculate Conception in Strabane, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, spoke these words during a memorial mass in observation of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the shooting deaths of Charles Breslin, and brothers David and Michael Devine. The three men, who were volunteers in the Irish Republican Army (IRA), were shot to death by British soldiers on February 23rd, 1985 while crossing a field on their way to placing a cache of weapons in an arms dump near the Plumbridge Road in Strabane, County Tyrone, Northern Ireland (McKittrick et al 2007:1010). They are just three of the more than thirty-seven hundred who died over the thirty-plus years of violence in Northern Ireland, but the manner of their deaths was a pivotal event that lead to a variety of responses within Strabane's Catholic community. Jeffrey Sluka has noted that in places like Strabane, where close to ninety-five percent of

the population are nationalists or republicans, young men like Charles (Charlie), Michael, and David (Davy) are considered "everyone's son."

> They are part of the community and what is done to them is, in some respects, done to the whole community. The IRA is not something apart from the community, a sort of "infection" that can be surgically removed without harming the host. Families of prisoners, living and dead republicans are scattered through the ghettos and their experiences are in varying degrees shared by many others within these communities. (Sluka 1995:92)

The memorial mass was among a series of commemorative events that were held over four days in Strabane to mark the highly controversial killings of the three young men in 1985. People were incensed that not only were the three killed with no opportunity to surrender, but their bodies were left lying in the hillside field for seven hours (Magee 2011:323), a sight that was clearly visible from a number of locations throughout the town. The sentiments expressed at the anniversary mass by Father Boland could have come from any Strabane resident, community leader or otherwise, who experienced the civil unrest and the ensuing period of conflict in Northern Ireland generally referred to as "the Troubles."[3] Those few short phrases acknowledge the extensive changes that were, and continue to be negotiated and implemented in the town of Strabane, as residents continue to mourn the violent deaths of the three lads, while also promising that "no element… [will] drag us back to those dark days."

The commemorative events that year included a candlelight vigil near the site of the shooting and the production of a DVD on the shooting and the subsequent community response. The Strabane Memorial Flute Band, which was established after the shooting in memory of the three lads, was invited to play traditional Irish music as part of the anniversary mass as well. This was particularly significant because it was the first time

the memorial band was allowed to perform in a Catholic church. In addition, they were invited because of their close connection to the lads and several people felt it would be fitting for the band to provide the music. Yet, it was an exhibition in the local community center of family photos and personal objects, such as the "boiler suit" worn by Charlie when he was shot that seemed to be the most moving experience. Viewing the photos and objects triggered memories, prompting community members to share personal stories and allowing those too young to remember to gain a greater understanding of what had happened back in 1985. While thinking back on the exhibit, a number of people struggled to describe to me what made it so exceptionally powerful. One woman echoed others when she said. "There was something unusual going on in the community center… There was actually, like, a spiritual feeling about the place – it was weird. People were comin' out just broken down, cryin'."

Through their acts of public commemoration, both the formal ritual performed annually and the informal acts of commemorations when passing the stone memorial near the shooting site or hearing the song about the shooting, the people of Strabane ensure that the story of Charlie Breslin, Michael and Davy Devine will continue to be remembered.

While the deaths of these young men are not the only ones remembered in the town, the particular ways that their deaths are celebrated and embedded in the local landscape – memorialized, not just in concrete and stone, but also in song and stories – demonstrates some of the ways that the Troubles continue to be remembered and contested today. The conflict remains an undercurrent in Northern Ireland – more than fifteen years after the signing of the Good Friday Agreement that officially ended the

violence in 1998. At the same time, these on-going acts of celebration and remembrance in Strabane are empowering the republican community as they negotiate the cultural politics of identity, citizenship, and heritage in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Admittedly, the peace process has been challenging for the Catholic nationalists and republicans of Strabane, requiring reevaluation and transformation of past practices in order to begin to engage with the broader community of Strabane District, including their Protestant neighbors, frequently described as "the other side of the house." Each "side of the house" is struggling to maintain a sense of their particular cultural heritage and social identity during implementation of peace process initiatives, with lingering disagreements emerging over effective ways to move beyond age-old prejudices and mistrust. For republicans in Strabane this has meant maintaining their core principles and memories of the past, but revising how, when, and where they express them. For example, where in the past the Strabane Memorial Flute Band members took a provocative and oppositional stance towards the police and the British presence, they now coordinate with local officials to ensure smooth passage through town as they march along an agreed route. One community leader explained that although some distrust of the police and government remains, most of the republicans in Strabane realize that the best way to achieve desired change is through political and community involvement – which they are engaged in now and "on their own terms." This dissertation seeks to document and examine cultural practices such as these through which memories of the past are being rearticulated and transformed and new forms of Irish identity are being fashioned and proclaimed in a border town in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Reimagining Borders and Belonging in Post-Troubles Northern Ireland

A variety of issues within Northern Ireland as well as the neighboring Republic of Ireland have made peace process implementation challenging.[4] Even though Northern Ireland is a province within the United Kingdom, and the Republic of Ireland is an independent country, together, of course, they make up the island of Ireland with a shared history and interdependent economies.

Studies conducted at intervals over the past few decades show that despite partition being imposed in 1922 and the more recent thirty years of armed conflict in the North, a wide range of civil and social organizations continued to operate on both sides of the border (Anderson and Goodman 1997:29). Furthermore, while it was challenging to maintain cross-border trade and business cooperation in the decades following partition, trade did continue, and since the end of the conflict, cross-border retail business seems to be stimulating market competition (Magennis 2012:133). In addition to ending armed conflict in the North, the Good Friday Agreement established the North/South Ministerial Council (NSMC) to oversee cross-border initiatives such as Waterways Ireland and the Irish language organization Foras na Gaeilge (de Búrca 2011:144). While many of the cross-border initiatives relate to programs and organizations throughout the island, it is in the towns and villages of the nine border counties, four in the North and five in the South, where the greatest amount of cross-border interaction takes place. Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson address a variety of issues specific to these borderlands, such as noting

> how the cross-border cultures of the national and ethnic groups which usually
> straddle borders may offer both an opportunity and a threat in different times and
> circumstances, subverting and resisting the state in some contexts while providing

the bases and networks for cross-border cooperation in others. (Donnan and Wilson 2010b:19)

They also identify ways that these borderlands contain "common and contested cultures and communities… [in which] there are often as many links to territory and place as there are to the social 'landscape' of memory and history, where the politics of emplacement intertwine" (Wilson and Donnan 2006:116).

In West Tyrone, this social landscape of memory and history is intertwined with family, friends, and places on the East Donegal-side of the "international" border that runs next to small towns, as well as through rural farmlands and the rugged terrain of the Killeter Forest. The interaction between these areas has a long history, as people living in this stretch of borderlands both resisted and supported "various state and supranational initiatives to transform the economic, political and social structures of people's everyday lives" (Wilson and Donnan 2005a:2).

Since the River Finn is the only material "barrier" separating these locations, residents of Strabane and their "sister" town Lifford in County Donegal have alternated over the years between deftly using the border to their advantage – trying to circumvent the political restrictions it represented – and simply going about business as if there was no meaningful divide between the two locations. Since partition, people on one side or the other have devised clever ways to smuggle food and other goods through border checkpoints. One of my Strabane neighbors, an eighty-three-year-old woman, remembered that when tea and other foods were rationed in the North, during the first half of the twentieth-century, her mother sewed pockets into her petticoat so she could smuggle food from the "Free State" (which later came to be known as the Republic of

Ireland). During the Troubles, Lifford became a "safe haven" for IRA Volunteers fleeing British pursuit. And because the movie theatre in Strabane was blown up during the Troubles, people have crossed the river to view films in Lifford for several decades now.

When the road-blocks and Army checkpoints were removed in the late 1990s, with the end of the conflict, the significance of this border crossing became negligible. The largest supermarket in the area is situated on the western outskirts of Strabane, so people from Lifford and other Donegal communities frequently cross the border for their groceries. The weekly *Strabane Chronicle* carries ads for Lifford businesses and articles about other Lifford news on a regular basis. On-going debates regarding proposed upgrades to the A-5 road, which connects the town of Strabane with Derry[5] to the north and Omagh (and points in the Republic beyond that) to the south, impacts people and businesses on both sides of the border. Along with their shared history and social memory, the practices of everyday life continue to link people and places throughout this (border-crossing) region. Given this complex history, Strabane was an ideal site to investigate how republican border communities are experiencing dilemmas at the heart of post-conflict reform and change in Northern Ireland.

I conducted ethnographic fieldwork in a working-class, republican neighborhood in Strabane from October 2011 through July 2012. This deliberately local study provides general insight into how the implementation of new policies is impacting the everyday lives of individuals and their immediate small-town communities. Furthermore, by locating the study in a marginalized republican neighborhood with a reputation for defying the police and other civic employees, I identify how this community is being

transformed from within. This offers much needed analysis of ways that legislative efforts toward equality are working at the local level.

In order to understand processes of change in Strabane's republican community, I look at the transformation and utilization of cultural expression that creates and maintains a distinct republican heritage, particularly through performance. The basic values, political perspectives, and collective memory underlying these cultural expressions remain the same as in the past. However, by examining their levels and forms of engagement with the wider Strabane civil society, as well as their cooperation with specific peace process initiatives, I explore how maintaining their core republican ideals and interests contributes to their active involvement in town and district affairs. It is within this revised post-conflict context that I analyze the on-going significance and influence of individual and collective memory regarding actions in the past and how they continue to inform debates over issues of political economy in the present (Lutz and Nonini 1999; Hewitt 1993). This includes disagreements over the success or effectiveness of initiatives within Strabane to establish balanced representation and address the history of discrimination that has impacted both housing and employment opportunities in the area (de Paor 1990; Murtagh 2002; Donnan 2005). Memories of these past discriminatory practices contribute to republican's continued ambivalence, ambiguity, and resistance to the broader, Protestant-dominated Northern Irish society. This ambivalence, in turn, is expressed through creative and transformative opposition (Ortner 1995:191) as they symbolize and exhibit their republican and Irish identity in the form of music, language, and commemorative parading.

In order to analyze the combination of elements that make up republican identities, I draw upon theoretical formulations of nationality (Ericksen 2002), the creation of heritage through commemorative performance (McCarthy 2005a; Connerton 1989; McGrattan 2013), and how both tangible and/or intangible symbols are employed to claim this identity (Morris 2005; Jarman 2007; Rolston 2010a). In particular, I question how residents are "reimagining" their community (Anderson 1991; Gupta and Ferguson 1997; Jenkins 2002) and national affiliation or citizenship within post-conflict Northern Ireland (Nic Craith 2003). I examine the contentious issue of Britain's continued presence and influence in Northern Ireland (Hoglund and Zartman 2006), a presence that continues to be resisted and opposed through the performance and display of heritage and "invented traditions" (Hobsbawm 2000; Nic Craith 2002). This oppositional stance is embedded in performaces, such as playing the tunes for, and/or singing republican ballads. Performance links twentieth-century hero/martyrs with leaders of earlier rebellion agains the British (Zimmermann 1967; Faolain 1983; McLaughlin 2003) and is a key element of parading (Ross 2009a; Jeffery 2000), which serves to create, enforce, and define community boundaries (Stokes 1997; Jarman and Bryan 2000). By describing and analyzing varied republican performances, I demonstrate how the remembered past plays a dynamic role in how people create group identity (Morrisey and Smyth 2002; Crooke 2005), maintain their lives in the present (Bainer 2008), and envision their future. Through these activities, individual and community memories of the Troubles are refashioned in a variety of performances and displays of local heritage, as the people of Strabane negotiate the cultural politics of citizenship and identity in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

In approaching this study of heritage, I draw upon recent work in anthropology that defines heritage not as a "thing," but rather as a complex, ongoing process in which people remember, forget, restructure, and interact in the present with their historic past (Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge 2007: Macdonald 2012). Frequently this process includes ascribing new meanings to the past in order to justify and explain current events or behavior. Memory is an integral part of this selective process as people evaluate their past and choose which aspects will best serve as resources for the present (Ashworth and Graham 2005a; Lowenthal 1985). Through memory, individuals continually revise and reinterpret the past, as they engage with a present reconfigured to accommodate their idealized and malleable past.

In the forging of heritage, elements of a past are often identified within the tangible built environment, such as archaeological sites and historic districts. But heritage is also built upon intangible, inherited cultural forms such as language, beliefs, and traditions. Whether preserved orally or in oft-examined materials, expressive traditions become key vehicles for sharing and transmitting forms of heritage through the specificity of language, and particularly in the context of performances, in combination with "nonlinguistic behaviors, such as body posture, gesture, eye gaze, and facial expression" (Duranti 1992:156) that communicate "information as a symbolic medium that is quite different from language" (Kaeppler 1992:202).

In Ireland, competing heritages, traditions, and interpretations of history have contributed to conflict and discord for centuries (Tunbridge and Ashworth 1996:72) and continue to impact perspectives on "Irishness" and identity throughout the island today. For people in Strabane, these notions of heritage and tradition are embedded in

communal memory that is expressed through a range of types of public performances such as republican commemorations. It is these performances that are the focus of this dissertation.

Emergence and development of interest in Irish heritage and folklore

Social science research on collective memory historically has been shaped by work in a range of disciplines including history, psychology, and anthropology. Dramatic social changes in Western Europe during the nineteenth century related to industrialization, the rise of increasingly consumer-driven economies, and the consolidation of local peoples within increasingly powerful nation-states, among other forces, led to "a sense of disconnection with the past… [and] traditional forms of memory" (Lipsitz 1990:6). Historians have examined how societies have addressed these feelings of disconnection by reinforcing notions of solidarity and bolstering existing lines of power and control through the creation of new interpretations of past events to explain and justify the present (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2000; Zerubavel 1995). For example, colonial powers in Western Europe drew on notions of European superiority to legitimize their rule of "exotic" non-Western others. They glorified civilizations of Western Europe through scientific studies of "antiquities" – the relics, monuments, and culture of ancient times, thus confirming their superiority over colonized peoples. These attitudes coincided with the general interests of upper-class Europeans in uncovering the purported ethnic roots of nationalism and national identities, which in turn led to the founding of scientific societies that provided club-like lectures and related programs focusing imagined

traditions (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2000) that linked a people and a nation to a celebrated past – thereby articulating a nation's origin story and its source of political legitimation.

One such organization, the Royal Irish Academy was formed in 1785. Its mission was to study Ireland's ancient, Celtic past, focusing in particular on "the Irish language and the history and material remains of early Ireland" (de Paor 1986:270). Within this same time-frame, a new Highland "tradition" was created in Scotland, stressing ancient origins distinctly independent from Celtic Ireland (Trevor-Roper 2000:16); while Welshmen were "rediscovering" a distant past of druids and Celts (Morgan 2000). In resistance to English cultural and political hegemony, people in Scotland, Wales, and Ireland looked for links to their Celtic and even pre-Celtic heritage to claim "their own history that was autonomous and separate from England" (Morgan 2000:68). Meanwhile, Victorian English society mirrored their international political alliances by identifying strongly with their Anglo-Saxon, Germanic past (Urry 1993:83). This represented a past that clearly separated them from, and indexed their superiority to, their inferior and therefor legitimately dominated Irish, Welsh, and Scottish neighbors.

In the late 1800s the term "folk-lore came to be used by those studying the customs, local dialects, and oral traditions of specific communities in both Ireland and Great Britain. The concept of "folk-lore" implied that these forms of culture reflected a living connection to the past, rather than existing simply as antiquarian relics (Ó Giolláin 2000:46). Folklore organizations in Ireland and throughout Western Europe recognized the significance of collecting and preserving local knowledge embedded in the oral traditions of communities – communities that were changing quickly and dramatically. These organizations shared the concern that essential ethnological and cultural

information be gathered and preserved before it vanished forever (Hyde 1910:x; Urry 1993:86). In some cases folklore then served as a resource for constructing a national history and a national high culture, particularly in regions trying to claim their own separate ethnic identity to oppose a stronger state power (Ó Giolláin 2000:63). In other situations, people emphasized and valorized their seemingly ancient local folk customs in order to maintain their ethnic distinction as they interacted with larger markets that were controlled by distant metropolitan centers (Noyes and Abrahams 1999:86).

By the end of the 1800s in Ireland, organizations that primarily had focused on purely cultural concerns began to shift their attention to what were increasingly political aims and agendas. For example, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) initially was formed in 1884 to standardize "age old" traditional Irish sports, assigning them a level of organization and regulation similar to what existed for English games such as cricket (de Paor 1986:270). The GAA grew into an island-wide network of teams that regularly came together to play. These sporting events became a vehicle for fostering pride in a shared Celtic past and encouraging the spread of Irish nationalism (Ó Giolláin 2000:116). In a similar way, interest in the Irish[6] language became politicized and implicated in the quest for a national identity (Greene 1993). For the many Irish Protestants and Catholics who were dissatisfied with British colonial rule, the Irish language and the "folk" custom of storytelling became ways of accessing and continuing to connect with Ireland's ancient, and decidedly non-British, past (Glassie 1985:23). Yet, not all who became involved with this Irish cultural revival objected to governmental and administrative links with Great Britain (Boyce 1982; Ó Giolláin 2000). Political views among the aristocratic elite who were most active e in the revival varied significantly. Indeed, some considered the

promotion, study, and identification with Irish antiquity, language, and culture to be merely an intellectual pursuit. Yet others viewed their study of Irish culture as part of a deliberate strategy for eventually overthrowing English tyranny.

Outside elite intellectual circles, various forms of Irish cultural performances became vehicles for circulating political commentary as well as stimulating debate. In particular, seditious and other types of ballads were "at once a form of entertainment and a way of disseminating news and of forming popular opinion" (Ó Dúghaill 1973:38), frequently using allegorical terms to disguise the identity of a targeted political figure or illegal activity (O'Boyle 1957:51). Within these ballads, the island of Ireland has alternately been represented as an old grey-haired woman or a lovely young lass, and often named with variations of Rose or Kathleen (Morris 2005:22). As itinerant musicians traveled around the island giving voice to popular feelings of discontent with the government, they attracted crowds of interested listeners who colluded with balladeers to thwart efforts to arrest them (Murphy 1979:94).

Well before the nineteenth century, commemorative parading had become an established way of promoting political agendas. Protestants annually invoked the memory of King William of Orange and his triumph over King James at the Battle of the Boyne in ceremonies and processions that demonstrated their continued dominance over the Catholic population (Kelly 2000). Although elite members of society, including government officials, were the primary participants in these parades, their political message and ability to control access to public space were obvious to all members of society. As demands for Catholic emancipation in the early nineteenth century grew stronger, they too turned to public expression of their political identity, establishing, for

example, the custom of parading on St. Patrick's Day (Jarman 1997:50). By revising or otherwise invoking memories of the past, Catholic as well as Protestant Irishmen struggled to claim and assert their particular view of Irishness and their place within or outside of British control.

The tendency to claim historical connections with, or manipulate elements from the past was not a new phenomenon in the nineteenth century, however the practice gained greater intensity because of widespread social and political change. Many of the changes were fostered in relation to rising notions of nationhood (Erickson 2002). Theodore Hoppen argues that in Ireland, the influence and attraction of cultural nationalism due to it looking "as much to the future as to the past, and, though undoubtedly involving much romantic emphasis on real or imagined traditions, radiated a dynamic – if complex – modernity far removed from mere nostalgia and antiquarianism" (Hoppen 1999:142).

A significant element of the rise of nationalism, according to Benedict Anderson, was how technological innovation and the spread of print media enabled people to *imagine* (or conceive of) being part of a political community larger than one's immediate associations (Anderson 1991:6). Anderson's concept of imagined communities is not only an effective analytical tool for understanding the development and expansion of nationalist ideologies, but it can be extended to other identity constructions, as well as explanations of collective memory and heritage. In his discussion on aspects of collective memory, Maurice Halbwachs notes that even individual remembrances are formed within spatial and temporal conditions that are shared with others and gain significance because of, and through, those relationships (Halbwachs 1980:54). Furthermore, Geoffrey Cubitt

stresses that the transmission of individual memories from one generation to the next is a crucial component of remembering within a society (Cubitt 2007:121). Within this distinctly cultural and collective context, an individual becomes connected to an historical and remembered past beyond her immediate experience, in which she must be able to perceive of herself – *imagine* herself – as being part of a broader continuum of remembrance. Moreover, as part of that broader social group, the individual participates in reinterpreting the memory of past events to suit present needs and obligations (Halbwachs 1992:49).

In order to refine how I define and utilize the concept of memory in the account that follows, I now turn to consider scholarship that has contributed to explaining how collective memory contributes to the emergence of imagined communities and shapes forms of social identification.

Distinctions of, and between, forms of memory

The writings of Maurice Halbwachs on collective memory were highly influential when first published in the early twentieth century (Coser 1992) and continue to influence scholarly work on memory to this day. Halbwachs stresses that memory is dependent on social engagement and that collective memory is not a preservation of the past, but a reconstruction of the past based on present needs, what he terms the "predominant thoughts of the society" (Halbwachs 1992:40).

The term *collective memory* was the first expression of group memory in common usage among scholars. The term was given different meanings across these studies, however, such as: a form of the collective past gathered within a specific community; the

power of remembering embedded in a society's organizational form; or simply strategies developed within a group in order to recall information (Cubitt 2007:13). Yet across these different formulations, memories are consistently understood as being created through group interaction and the reassessment of past events (Weiglhofer 2014:150).

The terms *social memory* and *public memory* are frequently used interchangeably with collective memory. Indeed, Halbwachs equates the term *historical memory* with social memory when distinguishing between collective and what he describes as *autobiographical memory*, or an individual's personal recollections (Halbwachs 1980:52). While carrying subtle distinctions, any one of these terms incorporates the significance of this selective process of sharing and validating our individual memories with others, whereby we locate, and may even reconstruct, our personal narrative to fit within the collective memory (Lowenthal 1985:196). Expressed in semiotic terms, collective memory can be seen as "a social construction constituted through a multiplicity of sign forms, with interpretations shared by some social actors and institutions and contested by others in… a hierarchical social field in which representations of the past are mediated through concerns of the present" (French 2012:340).

Individuals and groups use "sign forms" representing the past as malleable resources from which to strategically select, highlight, and revise memories to accommodate variable situations. Cubitt offers a variation on this concept. He suggests viewing social memory as a series of interrelated processes that apply to multiple communities. These processes are likely to engender varied selection and utilization of any one particular past, depending on the perspectives of each group (Cubitt 2007:18). In this reading, any given memory event can be polyvalent as it is experienced by different

audiences. It is this volatility and polyvalence that Nora refers to when he describes

memory as

> life, always embodied in living societies and as such in permanent evolution,
> subject to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of the
> distortions to which it is subject, vulnerable in various ways to appropriation and
> manipulation, and capable of lying dormant for long periods only to be suddenly
> reawakened. (Nora 1996:3)

The process of choosing between remembering and forgetting, in order to appropriate and

manipulate the past, is particularly apt in relation to the notion of public memory, which

can incorporate elements of unequal power distributions as well. Dominant official

narratives, particularly national ones, can impose an "accepted" interpretation on the

public that reduces "the memories of the vanquished to a private or fugitive status,

deprived of legitimacy and of public recognition" (Cubitt 2007: 228). Actors then often

internalize the dominant narratives that are taken for granted within their social worlds,

incorporating them into their own sense of social identity.

In contrast to the subtle distinctions attributed to social, collective, and public

memory, the term *cultural memory* integrates elements of those terms as it creates "a

sense of meaning within a culture… [that] is always dependent on media and politics"

(Marschall 2009:154). Furthermore, this production of culturally-mediated memory, from

sources such as newspapers and photojournalism, is always influenced by decisions over

which aspects of the past should be remembered at any given time (Zelizer 1999:138). In

addition, these processes of memory selection and the ways that memories are interpreted

continue to evolve along with other cultural changes, particularly as literal, first-person

memories of specific events are gone. At that point, Nora argues, cultural products,

records, and artifacts are placed within institutions that are tasked with providing and

preserving cultural memory "because such activities no longer occur naturally" (Nora 1989:12). While Daniel Traister also discusses libraries as a locus for cultural memory, he cautions that the texts (or other materials) are collected with no clear consideration that they *are* cultural memory, and never can be complete representations of all the memories that ever were created (Traister 1999:203). We are left with remembrances and archives that are unremittingly subject to selection, interpretation and reevaluation as elements of the social, collective, public, or cultural memory that shapes and directs our relationship with the past and our identity in the present.

For scholars, the significance of, and the uses for, the various labels attached to the term *memory* continue to inspire debate and reinterpretation themselves as they "offer an approach to the past that is distinct from history" (Zelizer 1999:137). Indeed, the terms frequently are employed in order to qualify the subtle differences between history and memory. Any attempt to reference the past is a complicated endeavor, which is limited by available knowledge that, in turn, is fraught with multiple meanings and perspectives. David Lowenthal describes the past as a "foreign country" whose knowledge can be accessed through the processes of both memory and history, as well as the relics, or artifacts that are tangible remains of those processes (Lowenthal 1985:187). He mirrors other scholars in distinguishing between the processes of memory versus history, claiming that "memory is inescapable and prima-facie indubitable; [while] history is contingent and empirically testable" (Lowenthal 1985:187). Similarly, Nora describes memory as "rooted in the concrete: in space, gesture, image, and object… [with history dwelling] exclusively on temporal continuities, on changes in things and in the relations among things. Memory is an absolute, while history is always relative" (Nora 1996:3).

Likewise, at another time Nora labels history as a problematic and incomplete reconstruction of the past in comparison to memory, which firmly connects us to the present and selects facts that are suitable for current situations (Nora 1998:8). In contrast, Halbwachs claims that collective memory "retains from the past only what still lives or is capable of living in the consciousness of the groups keeping the memory alive… [and] it is constantly transformed along with the group itself" (Halbwachs 1980:80, 82), whereas he sees history as a set record of change as viewed from "outside" of a specific group.

Like the subtle distinctions made between collective, social, and cultural memory, scholars continue to wrestle with whatever essence separates history from memory. Taking that into account, Marita Stuken suggests that "cultural memory and history [are] *entangled* rather than oppositional. Indeed there is so much traffic across the borders of cultural memory and history that in many cases it may be futile to maintain a distinction between them" (Sturken 1997:5, emphasis in original). Building on that argument, Tamar Katriel acknowledges certain distinctions between history and memory, but focuses on their interrelatedness, writing that "historical orientation both builds on and transcends individual memory, and a memory orientation both incorporates and refashions historical knowledge" (Katriel 1999:100). From this perspective, history and memory not only complement each other, but their interaction is essential for current engagement with a former time.

For my study, I find this concept of the interrelatedness, or entanglement, of history and memory to be useful in illustrating the performative behaviors I identify within Strabane's republican community. As a marginalized group, their memories reflect opposition and resistance to the dominant narrative of history. The past may well be a

foreign country, as Lowenthal claims; and humans may not want to inhabit that past in any literal sense, but there is continuous interest in delving into the past in order to understand who we are, confirm where we "came from," and justify our actions in the present and on into the future. Acting on this interest leads to a range of responses that may include manipulating or distorting historical "facts;" anchoring memory in specific locales; and developing methods that support society-wide acts of remembrance. These responses frequently are interrelated, yet each has specific attributes and significance for the larger process of social, or collective, memory production.

In the account that follows, I draw upon several of these concepts in examining the different types of memory being expressed across various activities in the town of Strabane. The concept of cultural memory, for example, helps to explain how memories are intentionally and strategically being preserved through the creation and maintenance of a small museum in Strabane. Here, republican ex-prisoners present their perspectives on and share their experiences of the Troubles through personal artifacts and public documents. They are acutely aware that the Protestant, unionist majority, given their political power and overall domination, could determine what is "remembered" from the last few decades. They want to ensure that their memories of the Troubles are included in the broader story of that time period.

Yet, equally important in Strabane are the public memories that are implicitly passed on through ritualized performance, such as republican commemorative parading. Public memories are articulated, and shared too, in the music played during commemorations as well as boldly and regularly sung within the local pubs. These

memories provide a sense of legitimacy to residents' republican perspectives and are unconsciously transmitted as a part of everyday life.

<div align="center">**Dimensions of Memory Production in Strabane**</div>

The sociality of memory production

Clearly, remembering is a social activity, or an activity within a social context of past events. Both literate and oral societies have developed strategies for remembering, whether through embodiment in ritual and commemorative performance (Connerton 1989; Stoller 1995); mnemonic devices for storytelling, music, and singing (Vansina 1985); or imbuing symbolic meaning onto objects (Sturken 1997; Morris 2005) as well as man-made and natural landscapes (Hayden 1995; Ross 2009a). Through the practice of habitual activities such as commemorative parading, integrated with the use of symbolic objects and music, republicans in Strabane are reminded of their connection to the past and reassured of their particular group membership. Paul Connerton suggests that the social memories that support these practices "are located within the mental and material spaces of the group" (Connerton 1989:37). Following his perspective, I have studied the "acts of transfer that make remembering in common possible" (Connerton 1989:39) in Strabane, such as ceremonial commemorations and the bodily practices that produce those ceremonies (Connerton 1989:40). These ritualized acts of transfer may take on a wide range of performance formations, including impromptu gestures that accompany republican songs in the pub, but all are embedded with symbolic meaning and collective knowledge of the past that remains an essential element for the group in the present.

Commemorations – acts of remembrance – frequently represent or are created out

of acts of mourning, both individualized and collective. Initially they may occur

> in private spheres, where personal acts of remembrance are practiced within
> family circles. [They] can also take place in the intimate public spheres of local
> communities. On a larger scale, acts of commemoration can be performed within
> greater sociopolitical frameworks, which sanction official ceremonies and
> commission monuments. These spheres are interdependent so that
> commemorative practices are dialogic cultural processes, which create and
> modify social memory through negotiations that take place both within each
> sphere and between various spheres of remembrance. (Beiner 2007:202)

As cultural processes, commemorations may offer heroic or other narratives that attempt

to legitimize nationalist claims, emphasize revolutionary commitment, or replace grief

and doubt in marginalized communities (Khalili 2007:94). Officially sanctioned

commemorations identify and confirm the dominant culture and often legitimize forms of

government. Commemorative parading in Northern Ireland incorporates all of these

elements in turn, depending on which community is parading and what route the parade

follows (Fraser 2000b). Indeed, Northern Irish commemorative parades are clear

examples of how the past can be "remembered" selectively and interpreted in multiple

and opposing ways that are then expressed through ritualized performances.

Embodied memory

A key aspect of these ritualized acts of transfer is the way in which the body

serves as a site of memory when an individual participates in a commemorative

ceremony. Casey argues that "(c)ommemoration is not separable in the end from body

memory – or from place memory either. Each is an essential component… in

remembering that goes beyond – perhaps we should also say *under* – mind" (Casey

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2000:253, emphasis in original). Whether it is by literally walking a particular route taken

by a hero/martyr, singing a symbolic song, or repeating a list of dead heroes, participants

are receiving their "tradition bodily, by re-enacting it – re-enacting it with lips and larynx

and limbs, and with the whole apparatus of their unconscious nervous system"

(Connerton 2011:104). The physicality and process of embodying a tradition through

ceremonial reenactment and memorialization has long been recognized as a deliberate

strategy for oral societies, but is applicable to literate societies as well. Pierre Bourdieu

extends this concept to the everyday, the *habitus* of life, when he describes a process of

enculturation of physical and verbal manners in which societal structures treat the human

"body as a memory… [entrusting] to it in abbreviated and practical, i.e. mnemonic form

the fundamental principles of the arbitrary content of the culture" (Bourdieu 1977:94).

For Bourdieu this process of enculturation proceeds through both symbolic systems such

as language as well as actual structures within a society, yet with no awareness of those

involved (Bourdieu 1989:14). Performing these culturally-specific bodily practices relies

on "a combination of cognitive and habit-memory" (Connerton 1989:88). Individuals

unconsciously internalize the social meanings and values embedded in posture, gesture,

and language through

> a series of reflexive social processes – processes of value production, maintenance
> and transformation – through which a scheme of cultural values has a social life,
> as it were, a processual and dynamic existence that depends on the activities of
> social persons linked to each other through discursive interactions and
> institutions. (Agha 2007:190)

Along with these processes of value production within specific societies, memories of

trauma, whether from armed conflict or other violence, can become encoded in bodies

(Sturken 1997:73; Casey 2000:155) – literally and figuratively – adding to the layers of

meaning, internalization, and response of embodied memory. Paul Stoller suggests giving greater attention to all bodily senses, including taste, smell, and hearing, for their potential to trigger memories, rather than be limited by the Western European tendency to privilege perception through vision and literate expression (Stoller 1995:22). Sensory experiences such as hearing music, physically moving to that music, or the aroma of specific foods – even as prosaic as a cup of tea following more formalized ritual in Ireland – frequently play an important role in commemorative activity, as they create a particular sensory experience that connects participants with memories of the past.

Memory and symbolic objects

Sensory experiences rely on the symbolic meaning attributed or embedded in objects – both tangible and intangible. Invested with symbolic meaning, an otherwise ordinary, perhaps ornamental object can become a "tool" for remembering. Social scientists documenting oral cultures have recorded a wide range of examples of tangible objects designed as testimonials of past events, such as a Hopi feather shrine considered proof of a boundary agreement between them and neighboring Navajo, or a particular firebrand kept by a West African family that substantiated their ancient royal lineage (Vansina 1985:44). While the encoded meaning and appearance may differ in more recent symbolic creations, people continue to imbue objects with information that they want others to remember. Sturken describes these objects as "technologies of memory, from the photograph to the body, [which] generate narratives of remembrance that intersect and build upon each other across cultures" (Sturken 1997:257). For republicans in Northern Ireland, marching behind the Tricolor flag of the Republic and the related act

of lowering the flag in honor of an IRA volunteer who "died in active service," is layered with meaningful narratives and memories. Just as each narrative varies according to the particular object and its temporal and spatial arrangement, together they carry meaning related to the rights and obligations connected both with them and with group members. Thus they are "enclosed within a distinct world of legal relationships formed in the past but continually present to them" (Halbwachs 1980:139), taking on polyvalent forms and functions, depending on current issues and the people involved.

Musical performance often employs symbolism as it draws on memory to express a range of political stances, from demonstrating support for the status quo, to claims of national belonging, to opposition of marginalization. David McDonald identifies what he calls "creative indexing" in a contemporary Palestinian resistance song in which "familiar rhythms and melodies are layered with contemporary political messages and imagery [that bring] together powerful associations of past and present, the primordial nation and the contemporary nationalist movement" (McDonald 2012:140). In republican music performed in Ireland, as in McDonald's example, elements of "indigenous" musical rhythm and tunes act as intangible symbols representing a culture with deep historic roots. Similar to the memories embedded in Irish republican music, for Palestinians living in occupied territory and struggling to establish a nation of their own, the music creates a powerful message of unity and resolve. By adding new lyrics to older, traditional Palestinian music, they emphasize their enduring connections to the historic past and their claims of past nationhood (McDonald 2012:132). The symbolism and memories embedded in regional music have been embraced not only to justify nationalist claims, such as those of the Palestinians and republicans in Ireland, but also to serve as

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testimonials about dictatorial political power and can direct attention to human rights abuses.

During violent political and social unrest in 1980s Peru, musicians wrote and performed folkloric protest songs that bore witness to the extensive trauma and created "a needed and often singular social space for political protest, social commentary, and collective remembrance of those lost in the violence" (Ritter 2012:198). Throughout the tensions and conflict of the Troubles in Northern Ireland, musicians similarly performed songs written in traditional Irish jig, reel, or waltz-time that expressed and reaffirmed opposition to British hegemony and presence on the island (Faolain 1983; Sawyers 2001; O'Flynn 2009). In particular, songs about the ten men who died on hunger strike in 1981 bore witness to events during the conflict and supported the limited news reports reaching international audiences that cast a negative perspective on British actions.

Besides being written in age-old tune styles or set to already familiar melodies, the narratives within the songs linked contemporary efforts to the acts of heroes from earlier struggles for Irish independence. Newly-written songs would spread quickly through live performances in local pubs and airing over the radio from stations in the Republic of Ireland or by pirate radio stations located in the North.

Today as both countries are negotiating post-conflict processes, these songs continue to be relevant as one source of collective memory that adds very specific contextual detail to other, more "standard" historical records. They operate as *lieux de memoire*, or sites of memory even though they are intangible. As described by Nora in his multi-volume work using memory to construct a history of France, "a lieu de memoire is any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by

human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community" (Nora 1996:xvii). Moreover, Nora claims that sites of memory can range from being very tangible to being totally abstract, representing either material, symbolic, or functional elements (Nora 1989:19). Although his original writings focused on teasing out the ways that history and memory contribute to a sense of "Frenchness," he offers thoughtful perspectives on the interrelationships between historic records and the construction of memory. According to Nora, symbols are either imposed or constructed (Nora 1998:x). Following this perspective, music like the testimonials from Peru and Northern Ireland, can function as a constructed symbol because it attains symbolic significance through "unforeseen mechanisms, combinations of circumstances, the passage of time, human effort, and history itself" (Nora 1998:x). In contrast, imposed symbols are objects or actions that are deliberately created and chosen to be symbolic, including official state symbols such as flags or seals of office.

Tangible objects like national flags symbolize the state at the same time they convey additional significance that can trigger varied memories for different publics, as "they compress a broad range of meanings [that] are rich in aesthetic and emotional connotations" (Eriksen 2007:3). The emotional connotations of national flags are particularly strong because of the very visible ways they can denote issues of national membership; claim ownership of a defined territory; assert or reinforce the domination of one group over another; or even incite protest and resistance. The colors chosen and design elements of any national flag are constant reminders of aspects of that country's history and any processes that contributed to making those choices and designs.

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In early 2014 the Prime Minister of New Zealand proposed holding a referendum on changing their national flag, after a group of citizens voiced concerns that the current flag not only is too similar to Australia's flag, but it also includes a miniature version of Great Britain's Union Jack.[7] Many New Zealanders feel that as a reminder of their former colonial status, the Union Jack should no longer be used to symbolize their country. At this writing New Zealanders are merely discussing how to proceed with a country-wide debate, discussion, and eventual vote about their flag. However their experience highlights ways that the meanings and memories evoked by symbols, particularly by national symbols, can take on new interpretations that stand in opposition to their initial intent. For many people, like the citizens of New Zealand, a national flag symbolizes identity and allegiance. Particularly in Northern Ireland the contested notion of nation; the designation of boundaries – community as well as national boundaries; and perceptions of ethnic differences are expressed continually through a variety of symbolic display and performance that I discuss in greater detail in Chapters 3, 4, and 5.

Memory and Place

The social contexts in which humans create memories exist within temporal and spatial dimensions that ground our memories with some awareness of time and place. Whenever I visit the city of Derry now and walk along the top of the medieval walls encircling the oldest and central area of the city,[8] I cannot help remembering my first visit to the city in 1987. It was in the midst of the Troubles, when heavily armed soldiers seemed to be on every street corner and the wall was closed off and laden with barbed wire. Residents of Strabane have even more personal memories triggered on a daily basis.

Reminders include the hillside field that is highly visible from much of the town, with a Tricolor marking the place where Charlie, Michael, and Davy were killed. Even the act of passing through one of several intersections that served as Army checkpoints and where Catholic nationalists were regularly delayed and intimidated can engender memories. However it is not only sad or traumatic memories that are triggered by place. There is one particular spot along Derry's Wall where I remember stopping to ring my husband back in the states to tell him of my excitement at freely walking along the wall on a gorgeous sunny July in 2009 – my first visit back to Derry since the 1980s. In a similar vein, one of my Strabane neighbors told me about the open field where she and others used to play before it became the Riverside Gardens housing estate where we both lived, recalling how they used to slide down the steep hill at the one corner where several flights of stairs now make the journey safer, but less thrilling. Long before her childhood, someone had called that spot "the Gap." Even with so much change over time, people still do. For Halbwachs, this form of memory includes an element of interaction because "place and group have each received the imprint of the other… every phase of the group can be translated into spatial terms…for each portion of its space corresponds to various and different aspects of the structure and life of their society" (Halbwachs 1980:130). Furthermore, place, either in the form of the built environment or as natural landscape, "comes to index the past for those who inhabit it in the present" (French 2012:342).

Whether through an individual mental imprint of a past event that is automatically paired with its location, or the shared collective memory of a social group, a sense of *place* is an essential aspect of remembering. Even early Greek philosophers wrangled over concepts regarding the human relationship with place. The present-day philosopher

Edward Casey quotes Aristotle when he argues "the primary action of place is that of *containing*… to be in a place is to be sheltered and sustained by its containing boundary" (Casey 2000:186, emphasis in original). Describing this phenomenon as *place memory*, Casey states

> (n)o wonder, then, that access to place is not deeply problematic: in its abiding character, place is there to be re-entered, by memory if not by direct bodily movement…As continually available, place does not naturally lead us to become preoccupied with indirect symbolic representations of it, or to feel that we are somehow forced to choose between these representations. The very persistence of place helps to make it accessible in a way that is rarely true of a comparable unit of time or a given site… It is the stabilizing persistence of place as a container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability. (Casey 2000:186).

Casey distinguishes between *site* and *place*, arguing that "(a) site possesses no points of attachment onto which to hang our memories, much less to retrieve them" (Casey 2000:186) and criticizes the writings of Descartes and others who looked at place merely as the geometric relationship of one dimension to another. From the perspective of common usage today, I see both site and place having the potential to hold and trigger memories. For me, the term site applies best to a very specific location within a larger, less-defined place. For example, a cemetery could be a *place* of memory, while a specific grave could be a *site*. Although I disagree with Casey's definition of and criticism of the term *site* in comparison to *place*, his overall argument regarding the relationship between place, remembering, and bodily movement adds an important perspective to any discourse on place. Dolores Hayden, too, refers to *place memory* in her arguments for developing a new approach to urban history, claiming that it "encapsulates the human ability to connect with both the built and natural environments that are entwined in the

cultural landscape. It is the key to the power of historic places to help citizens define their public pasts" (Hayden 1995:48).

On several occasions while discussing favorite republican songs or aspects of republican history in Ireland, people would ask me if I had been to Kilmainham Gaol (Jail) in Dublin, a place of significant events for over a century before it became forever linked to the 1916 Easter Rising, as the site where the primary leaders were executed. One of the most romantic stories from the Rising, and source of a popular republican song, is the marriage of Grace Gifford to one of the leaders, Joseph Plunkett, in the jail's chapel the night before his execution (O'Neill 2000:103). Time and again, I was pressed to "Go see Kilmainham." People stressed that just knowing the history was not enough – I had to "be" in that place to fully appreciate its role in the Rising and the amazing commitment of those who died there.

When I finally managed to visit Kilmainham, I found it was all that people had told me, and more. Of course, I could not help viewing much of the place through the events of the Rising, but was able to gain additional understanding and insight into the jail's history before, and after. Grace Gifford's presence was certainly there in both the tour narrative and through her artwork preserved on the wall of a cell she herself occupied a few years after the Rising. In addition to all the references to the Rising, our guide also pointed out ways that the structure represented changing attitudes about incarceration from the eighteenth into the twentieth century, and made sure that we saw Éamon de Valera's cell from his incarceration during the Civil War in the early 1920s. Granted, de Valera played a significant role in the 1916 Rising, however our guide was really referencing him as the leader responsible for restructuring the Irish Free State into

the Republic of Ireland, maintaining his political influence into the1970s (McGarry 2010:160). In multiple ways, the guide placed the jail and its history in the broader context of events in Europe, in addition to ones closer to home in Dublin, including the decades following the jail's closure in 1924. De Valera led the Free State in severing its ties with the British Empire in 1937 (de Paor 1986:307), thus actually fulfilling the goal of the hero/martyrs from 1916. Indirectly the guide helps define the significance of both the jail and the heroic sacrifice of the 1916 Rising by reminding the public of the historic acts that came later and completed what the Rising began, defining the moment in a broader context and contributing to collective memory.

Page Putnam Miller could have been describing my experience at Kilmainham Gaol when she notes that

> historic buildings can evoke powerful images, eliciting new insights and jarring old memories. Historic resources physically link us to our past, stimulating our imagination and assisting us in better understanding and appreciating the past. When tangible remains exist, they complement the written documents and offer the possibility of asking different questions and seeing the past from a new vantage point. (Miller 1992a:1)

I find both Hayden's and Miller's perspectives on the power of place and its relationship to memory production to be significant, even though their larger work focuses on issues of historic preservation and arguments for a more holistic approach within that discipline. In particular, they draw attention to issues regarding governmental or other institutional controls over the use of, or access to public places, which in turn can impact what elements of a community's past are remembered for the future. Indeed, Marschall cautions that "any particular symbolic landscape emphasizes and privileges certain narratives (and associated heroes) over others" (Marschall 2009:155). Identifying who

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controls the emphasis and privileging is essential for fully understanding the significance

of that specific landscape and its relation to power dynamics both past and present.

Dominic Bryan and Clifford Stevenson add that

> the symbolic landscape in Northern Ireland is complex and the use of symbols
> and emblems cannot be simply read as a reflection of people's identities. It is also
> part of localized power structures linked to potential and remembered violence
> and ongoing struggles and contests both internal to their own communities and to
> the boundaries between communities. (Bryan and Stevenson 2009:69)

Sites of memory themselves can represent issues being contested between groups who

claim competing interpretations of the past and disagree on forms of remembrance for the

present. As Nora stresses in much of his writing, places that hold memories are complex,

"at once natural and artificial, simple and ambiguous, concrete and abstract, they are…

places, sites, causes – in three senses: material, symbolic, and functional" (Nora

1996:14). Man-made monuments marking places of memory can take many forms from

large officially-constructed national memorials, to intimate, grass-roots efforts by small

communities to identify some significant event from the past. In all of their diverse forms

> monuments provide the *locus* of private and official acts of ritual. By offering a
> ready-made stage, they invite, even call for… commemorative action… [They]
> represent, control, and authorize preselected memories… [By aiming] to create a
> specific historical consciousness and identity… monuments can become contested
> and divisive. (Marschall 2009:155, emphasis in original)

Moreover, whatever symbolism is embedded in place, within memory, the meanings are

likely to change through reevaluation as each new occurrence alters interpretations of that

past.

Memory distortion – manipulating memory

In Scene Three, Act One of Edward Albee's play *Tiny Alice*, two characters are discussing a past experience and questioning the validity of that memory, when one challenges the other saying "Is the memory of something having happened the same as it having happened?" (Albee 1965:65). Even in fiction, individuals express puzzlement and uncertainty over the actual truth of what is remembered and how that remembrance was formed. An explanation for this dilemma, offered by Halbwachs, is that from time to time society "obligates people not just to reproduce in thought previous events of their lives, but also to touch them up, to shorten them, or to complete them so that, however convinced we are that our memories are exact, we give them a prestige that reality did not possess" (Halbwachs 1992:51). Expressing this in more psychological and biological terms, Daniel Schacter notes that "the output of human memory often differs – sometimes rather substantially – from the input. Remembering can fail not only because information is forgotten over time, but also because it is changed and distorted" (Schacter 1995:1). Reasons for changing, forgetting, or distorting memories of the past are identified and interpreted in numerous ways, including what Eric Hobsbawm and Terrance Ranger (2000) label the "invention" of tradition; the remembering versus forgetting dichotomy for those who experienced traumatic events (Casey 2000); and "counter" memory (Lipsitz 1990).

The term *tradition* has a variety of implied meanings, generally all related to some aspect of revered age-old cultural practices that are "an inherited body of customs and beliefs" (Handler and Linnekin 1984:273) that contribute to cultural identity. The primary issue of contention for deciding what actually qualifies as tradition is the question of how

long the practice has been in common use, with some claiming it is only legitimate if the

practice was passed down through at least three generations, carries spiritual or moral

prestige, and communicates "a sense of continuity between past and present" (Ó Giolláin

2000:8). In some discussions tradition is considered to be a phenomena that is limited to

rural populations and seen as an obstacle for adopting change (Dawson 1997:39); while

others stress that it contributes to the construction of identity, rural or otherwise, and can

be used strategically (Barth 1969). Strategic use, or the *invention*, of tradition includes

selectively choosing which elements from the past to continue, and adapting other

elements to suit current or rising situations (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2000). Dynamic

social and political transformations in late-nineteenth century Europe led to the invention,

or development, of "new devices to ensure or express social cohesion and identity and to

structure social relations" (Hobsbawm 2000:263) by both political institutions such as the

state and less official entities. For some areas this process was less an invention of a

totally *new* tradition, but a heightened interest in and revision of some aspect from a

region or nation's past. Rather than get caught up in debates over the authenticity (a

contested term in its own right) or factual truth of a tradition or particular memory,

Sturken argues for considering

> memory as an inventive and social practice… If memory is redefined as a social
> and individual practice that integrates elements of remembrance, fantasy, and
> invention, then it can shift from the problematic role of standing for the truth to a
> new role as an active, engaging practice of creating meaning. (Sturken 1997:259)

In this reading, I find the word *memory* exchangeable with *tradition*, particularly since

they both refer to aspects of *how* the past is remembered. Moreover, perspectives on and

relationships with both memory and tradition are subject to change because they are

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facets of "social life, which is not natural but symbolically constituted" (Handler and Linnekin 1984:276).

Traumatic events – Counter-memory

The act of remembering always includes some aspect of forgetting, in an interdependent, selective process in which certain elements of the past are retained while others are ignored and eventually forgotten. The level of deliberation in this process varies and the incentives for choosing to remember or forget are complex as

> each is essential to the other's existence … [making] what we remember… highly selective, and how we retrieve it says as much about desire and denial as it does about remembrance. Rather, it shifts the discussion of memory, particular, cultural memory, away from questions of truth and toward questions of political intent… [and] the stakes held by individuals and institutions in attributing meaning to the past. (Sturken 1997: 2, 7, 9)

For histories and memories of traumatic events, in particular, the stakes are high as individuals with oppositional narratives try to express or maintain their memories in the face of stronger hegemonic powers. At times this struggle takes on the aspect of attempting to "set the record straight" by revealing the "truth." However there is no one absolute truth about the past. And yet frequently, politically and socially marginalized people are thwarted in getting multiple perspectives heard on any issue, beyond the dominant narrative. In 2012, while I was attending a republican commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising with friends, I was introduced to the guest speaker, Martin McGuinness, who is Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland. When he heard about my research focus within the republican community of Strabane he was encouraging and supportive as he added "For once someone's going to get it right." McGuinness was

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expressing his belief that I would present an objective representation of republicans and their current interests, in opposition to some of the more inflammatory perspectives and suspicions expressed by the Protestant majority.

Over time, marginalized populations, like the republicans in Northern Ireland, have developed strategies for demonstrating resistance to incomplete public memories, and even have been encouraged to correct official records. Connerton describes an "ethics of memory" at the end of the twentieth century in which the stories and testimonies of those surviving totalitarian regimes and atrocities were considered to be both therapeutic and political acts that supported general concerns that the event be remembered and not forgotten (Connerton 2011:33). Meanwhile, less overtly traumatic subjugation, based on race, ethnicity, or gender, relegates portions of the population "to the margins of domestic discourse [where they] learn that the 'truths' of society obscure unconscionable lies, while the lies of myth and folklore offer opportunities for voicing long suppressed truths" (Lipsitz 1990: 212).

Through a range of cultural expression such as literature, music, and visual arts, marginalized groups maintain their continued presence with their own perceptions of the past, as they demonstrate their resistance to the dominant narrative. In West Africa, performers have used Hauka spirit-possession rituals to mimic and mock Europeans from their colonial past (Stoller 1995). Music has become "a discourse of resistance" (Pratt 2003) for Blues singers in the American South; for human rights activists such as Victor Jara in Chile (Nandorfy 2003:172); and for contesting "issues of nationhood, identity, and power" (Nooshin 2005:231) in a variety of settings including Ireland. Songs relate the deaths of IRA Volunteers like Charlie Breslin, and Michael and Davy Devine, turning

them into hero/martyrs at the same time they criticize Margaret Thatcher and the British

"shoot to kill" policy. These varied forms of cultural expression question the prevailing

governments, protest the dominant culture, and focus attention on alternative perspectives

and memories of the past.

George Lipsitz suggests the term *counter-memory* for describing memories that

seem oppositional to main-stream representations, explaining that it is

> a way of remembering and forgetting that starts with the local, the immediate, and
> the personal… and then builds outward toward a total story…(looking) for the
> hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives… (and forcing) revision of
> existing histories by supplying new perspectives about the past… Counter-
> memory focuses on localized experiences with oppression, using them to reframe
> and refocus dominant narratives purporting to represent universal experience.
> (Lipsitz 1990:213)

From this perspective, it is not enough just to present or acknowledge an alternate version

of past events, but that very process of presentation needs to attempt to revise how the

current, dominant history is analyzed. Similar to Lipsitz, Zerubavel considers counter-

memory as oppositional to dominant narratives, yet not replacing or overcoming them

with another expression of domination (Zerubavel 1995:10). Rather, by including

subversive and alternate memories, "the past can thus become a contested territory in

which groups engaging in a political conflict promote competing views of the past in

order to gain control over the political center or to legitimate a separatist orientation"

(Zerubavel 1995: 11). Alternative cultural memories not only "counter" the dominant

discourse when shared with the wider public, but contribute to the construction of identity

and action in those "alternate" communities. Residents of Belfast during the Troubles

continually witnessed and experienced extreme violence, leading some Catholic women

to join the armed struggle. Their decisions were shaped by the discourse around them –

the memories and experience of others that were "encapsulated, and conveyed through collective images and stories, through silences and the ongoing reshaping of ethnic difference [taking] place through the practice of violence" (Aretxaga 1997: 89).

People in Strabane were affected in similar ways during the Troubles, particularly in the Head of the Town section where Charlie, Michael, and Davy lived, where undercurrents from the conflict continue to influence behavior and attitudes. Back in 1985 when the three "lads" were shot, the Strabane community came together in solidarity and support of the families, and that still goes on today. One of Charlie Breslin's sisters told me that

> To this day, once people recognize me being Charlie's sister they'll say, "I remember the time your brother died." And where they were, and where their children were. Or who wasn't at home – who had to come home for the funeral. People traveled from England and down South at the time. They might never come home, maybe three times a year, [but] when it happened, people came from England and all around. Not because we were related – because we weren't. Because this had happened in Strabane, it was done to three Strabane boys, and they wanted to be home.

She also talked about the first anniversary of the shooting and the mixture of emotions people were feeling. The night before the actual anniversary her family held a vigil, trying to help each other through it, and she remembered her house being very somber at that point. However, she explained that when they left the house the day of the anniversary,

> it was weird because it was a completely different experience. Once we left our house there was a feeling of anticipation throughout the Head of the Town. And it was to do with the band… I can still remember the feeling, you know, the sense of anticipation. And it wasn't just the excitement of people going out to march, it was the big additional emotional attachment there. And it was all hidden, it wasn't talked about, you know. Young fellows weren't saying "We're doing this for the boys," or "Doing this to show them," or whatever. There was nothing like that

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said out loud, but we knew that was at the forefront… I realized it didn't have to be a sad day – that something good could come out of it. The band marched that day, and it was an emotional day, surely, [but] we got through it… And I remember thinking "Charlie would've loved this," because he spent his whole life whistling rebel songs and playing rebel songs. Before you'd see him walking down the street, you'd hear him from around the corner.

In the Head of the Town they continue to play the rebel songs and march every February to remember and honor the three lads. The core members of the Strabane Memorial Flute Band, who were contemporaries of Charlie, Michael, and Davy, are now middle-aged and their sons and daughters are making up a new generation of band members. Through the annual commemorative parade, friends and family, along with the town of Strabane, remember the three lads as they perform and display their republican sentiment and identity. That republican identity and the acts of remembrance remain highly meaningful even as people engage with the wider Northern Irish community, to work through the peace process and create a more inclusive future for everyone. By these acts of remembrance and additional activities that contribute to and affirm their Irish identity, the people of Strabane are creating their own heritage of the Troubles, as they negotiate the cultural politics of citizenship and identity in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Methodology

Preliminary fieldwork in Strabane during the summer of 2009 created the foundation for this longer, in-depth ethnographic study. While living in the Head of the Town neighborhood that first summer, I shared in individuals' private conversations and learned of their opinions regarding the changes that came with the end of the Troubles.

My initial interest had been to investigate the impact of ongoing emigration from the area, but what I discovered was that while emigration continues on a regular basis, it was not a significant issue in the lives of the people I interviewed and observed. Yes, they criticized the lack of good job opportunities, or other factors that entice individuals to leave Strabane, but they seemed to find the topic unimportant and regularly countered my questions with stories of those who have returned to the area. More significantly, it was quite evident that their experiences during the Troubles continued to affect them powerfully in the present. Their memories were clearly all around them – embedded in the landscape of the neighborhood and integrated into the fabric of their daily lives in numerous ways. A mural on a corner building in the Head of the Town memorialized members of the West Tyrone Brigade of the IRA who were killed during the Troubles. Locations of specific violence were marked with the tri-color flag of the Republic of Ireland, or plaques. I could not move through the neighborhood without encountering visual reminders of events that occurred during the conflict. Then one night live music at the local pub turned the remaining anger, distrust, and collective memory of the Troubles into a performative experience for audience and band members alike. I came away knowing that there were other, more compelling processes at work, than the latest trends in emigration from Strabane.

My return to Strabane in 2011 was quite different than my first visit. In addition to having made plans for an extended stay, I had a new research focus, a certain familiarity with the area, and a core network of friends who knew I was coming and were ready to help me connect with other people whose involvement in the Head of the Town, or even the town of Strabane, might contribute to my research.

While living there I joined in on a range of town activities as a participant-observer and conducted ethnographic interviews with more than seventy residents of the town, as well as a few people living in other areas of the North. Several of my primary interviewees were willing and able to meet with me on multiple occasions throughout my stay, giving me the opportunity to clarify details we had discussed, or to get their perspectives on material I had gathered elsewhere since we last spoke.

I lived with friends in the Riverside Gardens housing estate that covers a large portion of the Head of the Town area, taking part in the flow of everyday life. I became immersed in the day-to-day life of the community, which allowed residents to become familiar and comfortable around me, as much as it presented opportunities for me to observe the activities taking place. Participation in daily interaction gave me the chance simply to *listen* to people talk about their experiences in the post-conflict period, in order to determine which research questions were most appropriate for addressing the interests and concerns of the community.

To conduct fieldwork primarily within the normally closed republican community in the Head of the Town, I needed to adopt some of the strategies practiced by anthropologists working in truly dangerous field sites, where there is on-going daily violence. Daniel Goldstein describes the pervasive suspicion of people living in semi-chaotic settings characterized by violence who may not trust or understand the "idea of disinterested social science" (Goldstein 2014:7).

On top of the expected initial distrust of me simply because I was an outsider, I had to counter concerns that the data I was collecting could be seized by state authorities and used for prosecuting past criminal activity. Local people had heard the news about

litigation over an oral history archive at Boston College.[9] I spent a considerable amount of time trying to allay people's concerns, sometimes more successfully than others. First of all, I made it clear that I had no desire to ask about or discuss any criminal activity – whether during the Troubles or more recently – and that I would stop recording if a conversation veered towards discussing illegal activity. I was sensitive to the reality that in this neighborhood, many people's past experience included activity considered illegal under British law, such as involvement with or support for the IRA armed conflict. In addition to explaining my research focus, I made it clear that I could provide a safe setting for any interview process and was taking care to secure any data collected. Because of lingering memories from the conflict, in this research project I have never used the label "informant" or "collaborator" to describe or refer to anyone talking with, assisting, or engaging in a formal interview with me. Those terms remain highly volatile in Northern Ireland. Furthermore, as I moved about the town of Strabane, like other anthropologists conducting fieldwork in republican communities have done, I made certain not to interact with police officers on the street (Sluka 1990:19). Many people within the republican community have unpleasant memories of abusive police behavior and hence distrust anyone who associates with the police. I also made a point not to join or try to observe activities specifically organized for and by the Protestant/unionist/loyalist communities in the district. This may seem restrictive, but it was not at all problematic for me to work within these parameters of life in Strabane's republican community. Doing so also helped me better understand some of the uncertainties and expectations for those who have lived there all their lives.

In designing my research, I had decided to examine the cultural politics of citizenship and identity exclusively from the perspective of Catholic, nationalist, and republican people of Strabane. As Marilyn Cohen observes, doing ethnographic work in divided societies is challenging, especially if one is trying to maintain neutrality and relationships with people in both communities (Cohen 2000/2001:224). I felt strongly that it would jeopardize my involvement within the Head of the Town if I had tried for a cross-community study. Cohen also allows that maintaining neutrality and working with both "sides of the house," in cases such as Northern Ireland, may not be necessary for effective scholarship as evidenced by numerous studies within a number of different unionist communities (Cohen 2000/2001:225). Cohen notes fewer studies of republican neighborhoods, something that should change as we move further from the extensive violence of the Troubles.

For most of my ethnography I have followed the normal practice of assigning pseudonyms to the people I worked with and interviewed. In many cases in fact, I have created composite characters, choosing to be less specific in how I describe them. In a few instances, such as in the case of historical figures like the three lads shot in 1985, or when quoting a person from the local newspaper, I have used that person's true name. In Chapter 5, where I describe the significance of symbols, I found it unavoidable to use Karina Carlin's name because her comments were so compelling. She has graciously given me permission to do so. When it came to identifying Strabane, it made no sense to follow common practice and create a fictional town. The same is true for the area I refer to as the Head of the Town, which is the real descriptor for the part of the town most known as a republican area. On the other hand, I have been a bit vague on details

concerning everyday life within the Head of the Town, renaming the housing estate where I lived, as well as the community center and staff.

One of the essential elements for my fieldwork was the friendship and support I received from several families living in the Head of the Town, who as my neighbors, vouched for me and introduced me to additional people in the neighborhood. Over time, I got to know more people on my own and was noticed and welcomed around town and at a variety of events. Never-the-less, it was my association with specific individuals that "granted me a certain legitimacy in the community" (Sluka 1990:118) – a legitimacy I could never have gained on my own. Initially, I met several of these Riverside Garden neighbors through mutual friends now living near my home in Philadelphia, and they accepted me as a "distant cousin," making me feel more than welcome. I developed very close working relationships with two women in particular, partly because of our mutual friends in Philadelphia, but also because we had one of the most universal bonds – we all were grandmothers. We could relate to each other on a number of topics beyond my research interest, including as parents of adult children. Kathleen Daugherty opened her home to me, giving me space to live and work, including clearing out of the way on occasion when I was conducting interviews. She also gave me "street cred" in the republican community. Often, when I met people for the first time and tried to explain my research, as soon as they heard I was living with Kathleen Daugherty, they knew more about me than any of my words could tell them, or at least what was important for them to know, in order to feel comfortable working with me.

Nuala Doyle became my primary resource, offering invaluable guidance as we talked over the information I wanted to gather, coming up with appropriate people to

consult on these different topics. We traveled out and about Strabane together calling in on individuals Nuala felt would provide a particular perspective or experience related to one issue or another. First she would introduce me to a prospective interviewee, then after we had engaged in casual conversation for a while, Nuala would deftly shift to discussing the research I was conducting and my interest in recruiting additional interviewees. This gave me the opportunity to offer additional explanations and ask whether I could schedule an interview at that person's convenience. As we traveled about, or during our strategy sessions at the house, Nuala shared insights about individuals and/or organizations in the town that helped me understand how best to approach them, or in what ways their input could contribute to the data I was collecting. Fortunately most people that I met, whether through Nuala or otherwise, were interested in helping me because *I* was showing interest in them and their republican community. They saw that I valued learning more about them, the town of Strabane, and how their lives were impacted by peace process implementation.

The people of Strabane, and particularly those residing in the Head of the Town, continue to face economic, housing, and other socio-political challenges. My point, however, is that they in fact *are* facing those challenges, and this is the story of some of the ways they do so as they negotiate their place in post-conflict Northern Ireland. What follows are five chapters that address some of the issues involved in this process of negotiating, in particular, the cultural politics of citizenship and identity through the production and expression of memory.

I start with an historical overview of the politics of heritage in Northern Ireland and how those issues relate to the area of West Tyrone and the District, as well as the

town of Strabane. Next I discuss the role of republican music in preserving stories of the past, in addition to the creation and maintenance of republican spirit and perspectives on the past. In relation to the significance of republican music, I then examine republican commemorative parading, in which music is a key element for memorializing and honoring IRA Volunteers who died "while in active service." There are symbolic elements embedded in all of these topics, however in the next chapter I focus on changes in perspectives about, and displays of, a selection of key symbols representing Irish identity. Finally I address peace process implementation on the local level of Strabane, considering a variety of efforts underway.

The first fifteen years of the peace process produced mixed results as people throughout the province continued to negotiate a wide range of issues in working toward an inclusive society. There are, however, clear signs of significant change, as well as the occasional "step back." While a number of scholars have evaluated and analyzed the peace process on a province-wide level and from several different perspectives (Mitchell 2011; McGrattan 2013; Lawther 2014), I present a case study of how one community – a republican border community in which the dilemmas of change are highly visible and pervasive – is experiencing the process of post-accord reform and change in Northern Ireland.

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[1] "Shoot to Kill (British Justice) by J. McGinley. http://oneofthebhoys09.tripod.com/rsb2/id20.html – accessed November 8, 2014.

[2] *Strabane Chronicle* February 25, 2010

[3] Initially, the term "the Troubles" was used in the mid-twentieth-century to describe any of the range of events that disrupted ordinary life in Northern Ireland or the Republic of Ireland, from the Easter Uprising of 1916 onward, that were "related in some way to the political status of Ireland or Northern Ireland vis-á-vis Great Britain" (Shivers and Bowman 1984:6). By the late twentieth-century the term shifted to

specifically define the thirty-some years of sectarian violence between the mid-1960s and the eventual peace process that began in the 1990s.

[4] I use the term "Ireland" to refer to the whole island; "Northern Ireland," or the "North" to refer to the six counties comprising Northern Ireland; and "the Republic of Ireland," "the Republic," or the "South" to refer to the remaining twenty-six counties that are the Republic of Ireland.

[5] The name of the city and county Derry has been a point of contention ever since the settlement/town's name Derry was changed to Londonderry in the early 1600s during the plantation of Ulster, to honor the mercantile companies in London who provided the funding (McBride 1997:9). Like many contentious issues in Ireland, the choice between using the name Derry alone or Londonderry divides along ethnonationalist lines, with nationalists/republicans tending to use the name Derry and unionists/loyalists using the name Londonderry. Currently the official, accepted name for the city uses the two combined: Derry/Londonderry. I have chosen to use the name Derry because it is how I came to know the place and it is the name used by the community where I conducted my fieldwork.

[6] I use the term "Irish" rather than Gaelic or Irish Gaelic to designate the Celtic language of Ireland, following the practice of many contemporary Irish speakers.

[7] Wednesday 12 March 2014 - http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/australasia/new-zealand-to-hold-referendum-on-new-postcolonial-national-flag-9183985.html

[8] Derry's defensive walls were finished in 1618 and withstood several sieges over the next one hundred years (McMahon 2004:43), earning it the nickname the "Maiden City.'

[9] The Boston College oral history project, sometimes referred to as the Belfast Project, was an idealistic effort to compile an oral history archive of the experiences of some of the men and women who actively participated in the Troubles on both the republican/Catholic and loyalist/Protestant sides of the conflict. Forty-six former combatants spoke in confidence with researchers from Boston College, with the understanding that the material would only be released with their consent or after their death. In 2011 the British government initiated legal action to access some of the recordings. After extended attempts to block British access, Boston College lost their legal claims on the confidentiality of the material, which led to the arrest and questioning of Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams in 2014 and the increased concern of project participants over their personal safety for having shared potentially incriminating information. (Kevin Cullen, *Boston Globe*, July 6, 2014)

Chapter 2: Haunted by History?:
the Politics of Heritage in Northern Ireland

"Oh! then tell me, Sean O'Farrell, tell me why you hurry so?"
"Hush, *a bhuachaill*, hush and listen," and his eyes were all aglow.
"I bear orders from the Captain, get you ready quick and soon,
For the pikes must all be ready at the rising of the moon."

First verse, "The Rising of the Moon"[10] (by John Keegan Casey) – still popular today, the song tells a story from the 1798 rebellion

"It is important for republicans to write their own history."

(Republican ex-prisoner and community organizer, Strabane 2012)

Russ O'Brien had set up two folding chairs in the Strabane Republican Prisoners' Museum and was waiting in the front office when I arrived for our morning interview. As a busy community activist, he had chosen to meet me in the shared space of the museum and Cairde offices because of their convenience as well as my interest in talking about both the museum's mission and the range of social services provided to republican ex-prisoners by Cairde[11]. These are individuals who were imprisoned during the Troubles because they were active Volunteers in the IRA and fought against British occupation of Strabane and the rest of Northern Ireland. Now, more than fifteen years later they continue to face discrimination because of their former prisoner status, such as restrictions on travel, limited employment opportunities, and housing problems that make their lives difficult on a daily basis. Adding to their frustration and anger is their original understanding that these issues would be improved, if not eliminated, with implementation of the peace accords and the release of politically motivated offenders (von Tangen Page 2000:101). So, service organizations such as Cairde work to address the needs and concerns of republican ex-prisoners and their families (Shirlow and McEvoy 2008:56).

In the process of addressing those needs, the museum developed as a response to ex-prisoner debates over what kind of legacy they were leaving that would fairly represent their experiences during the Troubles. Although the museum only takes up a very modest one-room space, they have amassed and displayed an extensive variety of materials that document Strabane's experience of the Troubles, including civil rights protests, bombings, and checkpoints around town, as well as artifacts from ex-prisoners that demonstrate their creativity and resourcefulness while incarcerated (Carr and Mytum 2012b). Russ, and others I spoke to about the museum, stress that when talking with museum visitors, particularly students, they do not glorify the fighting or other violent activity that went on during the Troubles, rather they simply try to explain what happened from the prisoners' perspective. Russ added he has "no intention of influencing young people to take up the fight" for Irish independence or anything else. At the same time they want ex-prisoners to be respected like veterans of other armed conflict.

Another ex-prisoner organization in Strabane, Teach na Failte, serves former Volunteers of the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) in similar ways. In addition, Teach na Failte staff work with the province-wide From Prison to Peace partnership that includes former loyalist and republican paramilitary members in a variety of peace and reconciliation efforts, particularly aimed at youth and dispelling any romantic notions they may have regarding armed conflict (From Prison to Peace, Issue 2).

Across Northern Ireland, this specific concern about the attitudes of young people is echoed by youth workers and other organizations hosting cross-community programs who have found that "many young people, unaware of the brutal realities of conflict and imprisonment, had romanticized the conflict and were voicing an increasing acceptance

of violence as an outlet for their sense of alienation" (Hall 2010:3) within both Catholic and Protestant communities. In order to minimize any romantic ideas about the Troubles in Strabane, whether notions held by today's youth, or ideas yet to develop in subsequent generations, the republican ex-prisoners of Cairde share their memories through personal artifacts from that period in Strabane's history. Frequent use of Irish national symbols such as the harp and shamrock (Morris 2005), in addition to the Tricolor (flag) of the Republic on posters, wooden plaques, and other objects, symbolically link republican activity in the second half of the twentieth century with earlier efforts to establish an independent Ireland. With this exhibit, republicans in Strabane add their experiences of the Troubles to the rich and long heritage of Strabane (Dooher and Kennedy 2000) and West Tyrone.[12] In this chapter I discuss the contested nature of heritage in Northern Ireland and describe some of the ways it is expressed to demonstrate and maintain differing identities, political views, and aims. Then I locate Strabane and expressions of heritage within the nationalist/republican community, identifying what makes Strabane a good example of the significance of heritage, as residents there continue negotiating life in this post-conflict period.

Competing heritages in Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, heritage remains a highly contested issue (Nic Craith 2002; Rolston 1997/1998; Brett 1996) as people struggle with implementation of the peace process. Fifteen years after the formal end to the conflict, political and sectarian tensions regarding each side's particular claims on heritage still exist, albeit with some new perspectives. From a political stand-point, unionists and loyalists represent the Protestant

community who continue to celebrate their Ulster-Scots heritage and support Northern Ireland's ongoing status as part of the United Kingdom (Stapleton and Wilson 2004). Republicans and nationalists represent the Catholic community that identifies with an *Irish* history and heritage that reflects their continuing interest in breaking away from the United Kingdom (UK) and joining the Republic of Ireland (Nic Craith 2003). Among the new perspectives is an awareness that certain expressions of ethno-nationalist membership, and their accompanying symbolic sentiments, are inappropriate in public areas and may be offensive to segments of the wider community. This includes restrictions on publicly displaying symbols of citizenship, such as national flags; painting curbstones to mark ethnic/sectarian territory or boundaries; and exhibiting overtly provocative, political ethnic/sectarian murals. Through a range of cross-community initiatives and programs launched or sponsored by local community centers and District Councils throughout Northern Ireland (Doran 2010: 136), many individuals have altered their attitudes and behaviors in this regard. At the same time, the competing sentiments of these communities remain omnipresent in Northern Ireland today, whether through songs that continue to celebrate past revolutionary actions such as the first epigraph to this chapter, or other forms of expression. While there has been admirable progress towards a less-divided society, transforming long-standing practices and prejudices can be a slow and uneven process. Overcoming continued intercommunity intolerance remains very much a work in progress.

Kris Brown and Roger MacGinty argue "that antagonism over and attachment to symbols… often seem out of place in the political landscape of their 'parent' states… where gratuitous displays of nationalism … [can be] out of sync with an increasingly

post-nationalist political culture" (Brown and MacGinty 2003: 87). In the predominantly nationalist town of Strabane there are few unionist/British markers beyond the memorial for those who served with British forces during the First World War. Instead, various graffiti and posters appear around town warning "Drug dealers will be shot," or protesting events such as the continued internment of a high-profile republican activist, as well as Queen Elizabeth's 2012 visit to Northern Ireland in celebration of her Diamond Jubilee (Morrison 2013:183).

Along the main road north from Strabane to Derry (the A-5), there are a series of small villages and hamlets including Magheramason, right at the Tyrone/Derry border, where fresh blue, red, and white-painted curbs every June identify this as a unionist town preparing for the Protestant "marching season." In other places, such as Castlederg, a short distance southwest of Strabane, there are signs that residents have shed some elements of past ethno-nationalist behavior. Faint shadings of green, gold, and white paint, still visible on curbstones in one neighborhood, hint at the sectarian divisions that have long plagued the town (Jarman and Bell 2012:44), but suggest that public opinion is embracing greater tolerance of differences and cross-community interaction. On the other hand, in the days leading up to Easter Sunday and the nationalist/ republican commemoration of the 1916 Rising, large cut-outs of the iconic lily were affixed to light poles and other standards throughout Castlederg. Clearly, certain aspects of heritage and cultural identity remain, with some expression more overt than others, leaving the selection and use subject to revision over time.

There are additional ways – admittedly less confrontational – but divisive none-the-less – in which differences between the two communities are identified and enacted

on a daily basis. These are based on subtle cues learned through socialization (Wilson

and Donnan 2006) and long-established institutional structures. Some were initially

formed by portions of the penal codes imposed on Catholics, early in the eighteenth

century until the mid-nineteenth century that included laws preventing marriage between

Protestants and Catholics, as well as instituting a system of separate schooling (Akenson

1988:109). As described by William Lecky in the late nineteenth century,

> (t)he penal code, as it was actually carried out, was inspired much less by
> fanaticism than by rapacity, and was directed less against the Catholic religion
> than against the property and industry of its professors. It was intended to make
> them poor and to keep them poor, to crush in them every germ of enterprise, to
> degrade them into a servile caste who could never hope to rise to the level of their
> oppressors. The division of classes was made as deep as possible, and every
> precaution was taken to perpetuate and to embitter it. (Lecky 1892:152)

The structure of this social divide has been embedded in both psyche and practice so

successfully that Protestants and Catholics could, did, and still may live in close

proximity and yet manage to "live in completely separate worlds" (Akenson 1988:126).

In the past, individuals participated in their respective group's religious observances,

sporting events, and schools, with virtually no activities in common with "the other side

of the house," a practice that continues to undergo transformation today. Educators

continue to wrestle with strategies for engaging Catholic and Protestant students in

effective peace-building activities, as they encourage more enrollment in integrated

schools. However, an overwhelming majority of the population continues to choose

predominantly Protestant or Catholic schools (Hughes and Donnelly 2012). And while

larger urban centers in Northern Ireland, like the wider European community, struggle

with the challenges brought about by increasing non-EU immigration (Hellström

2008:36; Nic Craith 2004) and the related development of racial consciousness

(Silverstein 2005), historical Irish cultural and religious divisions remain the significant aspect of life in small towns such as Strabane.

In order to negotiate this divided society, people long ago learned how to identify whether someone was Protestant or Catholic, and what topics could or could not be discussed when in "mixed" company, such as politics, religion, and sports (Harris 1972:147). In a process that Frank Burton (1978) labels "telling," people in Northern Ireland distinguish between members of either "side of the house" not only through highly identifiable symbols such as school uniform color, sports logo, or which newspaper you buy, but also through more subtle cues such as personal and/or family names, speech idioms, and where you live (Harris 1972; Burton 1978; Finlay 1999; Kelleher 2003). Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan stress that this is not simply a matter of minor differences, but

> a process of negotiating identity within the politics of place, work, home and leisure… differences in social recognition and action, themselves part of the bedrock of the [recent] violent conflict… wherein telling is a demonstration of the 'intellectual property' of each group. (Wilson and Donnan 2006:125)

Whether there is empirical truth behind any of these perceptions is immaterial according to Burton, as the process of telling "is a social construction of differences which is used to think with and act upon" (Burton 1978:38). Finlay goes so far as to caution that such "deep-seated emotional and moral issues … are immanent even in routine encounters between Catholics and Protestants and I suspect that it is this that makes [t]elling necessary and so difficult to escape, even for the social researcher" (Finlay 1999:1.24). At one point during interviews with former workers in the Derry shirt industry, Finlay realized that his own identity as a Protestant from Belfast in all likelihood was

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influencing what people did, or did not, choose to tell him. Even this far into the peace process, distinct collective memories of the near and distant past continue to support perceptions about the "other side of the house" that in turn engender caution in everyday behavior.

In my own experience conducting research in Strabane and around other parts of Northern Ireland, I was keenly aware of cues that people could and did use to "tell" things about me. For starters, all I needed to do was speak a few words for it to be clear I was an American. Beyond that initial give-away, like permanent residents, I was cautious about what I revealed about myself to strangers, particularly my research focus. Within the immediate neighborhood where I lived, I was acquainted with a number of people through my personal friend network, yet it became clear that still others knew about me and my research because of local gossip. On one of my stops to buy the weekly paper at the nearby mini-market, I was surprised when the cashier said casually "You'll be glad to be going home soon." Prior to this we had spoken occasionally – but almost exclusively about the weather – a topic likely to come up in any informal interaction when out in public. However, at that particular time I was indeed planning to go back to Philadelphia for a short break, and while it was no secret, I had not anticipated being the subject of local conversation to that extent. At the same time I knew full well that people in the neighborhood would easily spot I was an outsider, since pretty much everyone had lived there their whole lives and knew, or were related to, many of the others.

Outside of my local neighborhood, I too, participated in a certain level of *telling*, before revealing much of anything about myself. In other areas of Strabane, such as Gaelphobal, the community center for Irish language and culture, Strabane's Sinn Féin

office, or the Catholic parish church, anyone I met would have nationalist sentiments, at a minimum, and some understanding of my interest in conducting research within Strabane's republican community. Otherwise, I was more reticent, only explaining my research entailed studying the creation and maintenance of heritage. After attending a camera club meeting in the town center one evening, I wound up walking back to my car with a couple who politely asked a few questions about my research and then wondered where I was staying while in Strabane. I realized a true response would tell them much more about "whose heritage" I was researching than anything I had said to that point. Although it was highly likely this couple were Protestants, I also felt that lying made no sense either. When they heard that I was living with friends in the Head of the Town, they knew it meant I was living and working with the republican community. But fair play to them, they merely replied, "Ah, you will find plenty of heritage there." The fact that neither followed up by asking whether I knew "so and so," who also lived in the Head of the Town, probably confirms that they indeed were Protestants, and possibly lived in one of the nearby villages. At the same time, their attendance at an evening event in town demonstrates an increased willingness and interest of people around the district to engage in potentially "mixed" activity.

The continued potency of this habit of watching what one says and looking for cues to identity in any new acquaintance or unfamiliar location, was underscored by the Strabane audience's enthusiastic reaction to singer/songwriter Tommy Sands' performance in the town center when he sang:

> Whatever you say, say nothing
> When you talk about you know what
> For if you know who could hear you

You know what you'd get
For they'd take you off to you know where
For you wouldn't know how long
So for you know who's sake
Don't let anyone hear you singing this song[13]

There were knowing nods and plenty of understanding laughter – this remains a significant issue whether experienced by Protestants or Catholics, and Sands' introduction and presentation of the song is ambiguous enough to apply to either "side of the house." Nobel laureate Seamus Heaney tackles this dilemma in a poem also titled "Whatever You Say Say Nothing," yet from a decidedly Catholic perspective in the following stanzas:

Smoke-signals are loud-mouthed compared to us:
Manoevrings to find out name and school,
Subtle discrimination by addresses
With hardly an exception to the rule

That Norman, Ken and Sidney signalled Prod,
And Seamus (call me Sean) was sure-fire Pape.
O land of password, hand-grip, wink and nod,
Of open minds as open as a trap,

Where tongues lie coiled, as under flames lie wicks,
Where half of us, as in a wooden horse
Were cabin'd and confined like wiley Greeks,
Beseiged within the siege, whispering morse.

(Heaney 1975:53-54)

With lyrical references, Heaney describes the acute awareness of difference that constantly underlies interactions and the cautious behavior that very awareness fosters, while Sands pokes fun at the practice by taking it to a silly extreme by literally "saying nothing" with the phrases such as "you know who," "you know what," and "you know where." In addition to songs and poems like these, William Kelleher describes "talk

about talk" in which people regularly classify, reflect upon, and evaluate talk (Kelleher 2003:11). Cultural identity and notions of heritage are the "undercurrents" of this discursive practice of "telling." The importance for me is that despite efforts – and many successful ones, too – towards improving inter-community relations, memories of the past and collective, often divisive, claims on heritage continue to impact life in Northern Ireland on a daily basis.

In Strabane, plaques and larger memorials – some with an accompanying Tricolor flag – either mark specific sites where local residents were killed during the Troubles, or use public space to memorialize other efforts to gain independence from the UK. Periodically, commemorative parades marking significant anniversaries of those events highlight the history and jog memories. There are other historical markers and memorials around town, such as the plaque noting the birthplace of John Dunlop, who emigrated to America when he was ten years old and went on to print the first copies of the U.S. Declaration of Independence in 1776; and the sign on an existing building that once housed one of the earliest printing shops in Strabane, now known as Gray's Printers, after the family that took over the business in 1820 (Gamble 2000:250). And like most towns throughout Northern Ireland, near the town center, the official marble memorial to those who died in World War I is adorned with poppy-laden wreaths every November. Just about any month in Strabane there is some sort of ceremony marking an event that has local, regional, or island-wide historical connection and significance. On a weekly basis the widely-read *Strabane Chronicle* carries a page featuring an archived photo from some past event, plus "100 years of the Strabane Chronicle" – a sampling of key stories from twenty-five, fifty, seventy-five, and one hundred years ago, respectively. So people

literally bring bits of Strabane history into their homes with the newspaper each week, pass historical markers as they move around the town, engage in or at least notice memorial observances taking place, all offering opportunities for older family members to interpret their meanings and recall their own experiences to the next generation. In this way, peoples' heritages – whether it is their direct memory and experience of the Troubles, other key events in Strabane, or more-distant histories – are expressed through commemorative activities that are enacted by the community, embedded in the landscape, as well as integrated into their daily lives. Through these processes, people construct and confirm their personal as well as collective identity in a region struggling to overcome severe socio-economic challenges and engage with the Northern Irish peace process.

Individual as well as communal interpretation and mobilization of the past such as this is a dynamic process. In this regard, McGrattan argues that people

> seek to increase their political standing, raise their social status, or contain those they perceive as rivals…The reconfiguring of the past and its replacement in relation to the present informs what people think about themselves, their affiliation to larger groups (particularly that of the nation) and, indeed, how happy they feel about those forms of identity. (McGrattan 2013:150)

As republicans in Strabane interact with the various expressions of local and island-wide heritage, they are renegotiating past concepts of republican identity. In addition they are evaluating their perspective of, and where they fit within the current peace process, along with the debates over how to define victimhood and assess blame (Morrisey and Smyth 2002). Whether they share personal memories, sing songs about recent and historical republican heroes (Faolain 1983; McLaughlin 2003), or participate in commemorative events (McGrattan 2013:10), they are countering the state practices (Kelleher 2000:163)

that created and sustained institutionalized discrimination in Northern Ireland for decades.

In addition, the personal memories, stories, and songs are a very portable form of heritage, so they automatically travel with emigrants headed for ethnic enclaves around the globe and are shared on social media. In other, deliberately organized events, Northern Irish musicians go on international tours, performing their republican heritage through songs for both ex-pats and interested audiences; while family members of IRA martyr/heroes participate in commemorations held in diasporic communities such as Boston or Cleveland. Moreover, for many republicans – whether participating within Northern Ireland or in other countries – this re-negotiation and evaluation of past political processes, along with attribution of blame, is not limited to the Northern Irish Assembly and wider UK domination. It includes the recognition that the Republic of Ireland has contributed, and continues to contribute to political and economic decisions made in the North (Coakley and O'Dowd 2007a). While conducting fieldwork in another County Tyrone district, William Kelleher observed close family members of IRA dead sharing their experiences at commemorative events in Ireland and the U.S., both before and during the peace process, in which

> [t]hey told of state mediated practices that contradicted the values of home. When they did this in Boston, they relocated previously subaltern knowledge in a transnational space that recognized that knowledge as valuable and important. Their stories became instruments of evaluation… [as they] produced critical assessments of the British state and called for it to justify its acts, while they criticized the Irish state for its complicity. (Kelleher 2000:163)

Whether in local settings or in diasporic communities abroad, personal memories like these create links with public memory and heritage production as Irish men and women.

Stories shared in formal, as well as informal venues, like the "rebel" music relating the actions of a republican hero "are more than living chronicles of past events, they enliven and illuminate the present" (O'Boyle 1957: 53).

Complicating anyone's concept of "national affiliation" in Northern Ireland is both the complexity of heritage and their connection with Great Britain. Even within Protestant/unionist communities there are differing perspectives over their national affiliation. Results from the 2011 census show that in Strabane 32.99% claim a British national identity, 39.16% have an Irish national identity, and 31.82% have a Northern Irish national identity.[14] Narrowing the focus to the East Ward, Head of the Town area where I lived and did the majority of my fieldwork, only 11.9% indicated a British national identity on the census, while 55.66% had an Irish national identity, and 33.96% had a Northern Irish national identity.[15] These results come from a district that has 64.93% of the residents with a Catholic background and 33.69% with a Protestant background, while in the East Ward 93.70% claim a Catholic background, compared to 5.19% claiming a Protestant background. Clearly religious affiliation or background is not the sole determinant of national identity in Strabane. It is also interesting to note that respondents had the option of indicating more than one national identity, just as residents of Northern Ireland have the right to obtain passports from both the Republic of Ireland and the United Kingdom. Of the people I interviewed only a few had UK passports, and those were obtained for work-related travel. In addition, when asked how they would describe their citizenship, all of my interviewees claimed they were Irish.

Even for those who identify as British, the relationship between residents of Northern Ireland and the separate island of Great Britain is complicated by a colonial past

and the more recent history of armed conflict that engaged British soldiers, in what to many "on the mainland" of Great Britain considered to be a foreign war. As the UK promoted and prepared for the summer Olympics in early in 2012, a major point of pride, and extensive media coverage, was the plan for the Olympic Torch relay to travel throughout the UK, coming within at least ten miles of every person living in the kingdom. Early on the morning of June 5, 2012 I joined hundreds of on-lookers in down-town Strabane as they cheered the Torch being carried through the main street, then take a turn back to the A-5 highway and head on south to Omagh. School children gathered along the sidewalk, excitedly waving their own hand-made interpretations of the flaming torch, as a local woman jogged through town with the official one. Following the relay passing through town, many of us wandered over to the Alley Theatre to watch a series of dances and skits by local schools and organizations in celebration of the Olympics. After all of this community engagement with the upcoming London Olympics, I was taken aback later in the summer when the games actually started and the athletes from the UK were constantly referred to as "Team GB," as if they only came from and represented Great Britain – England, Scotland, and Wales. Athletes from Northern Ireland *were* on the team, yet the name effectively excluded and denied them as participants, at the same time it excluded and denied host-country status to Northern Ireland. It is another reflection of Northern Ireland's complicated relationship and, at times what appears to be unequal status, with the rest of the UK.

Northern Ireland came into being as a province of the United Kingdom – a political entity separate from the rest of the island of Ireland – with the Government of Ireland Act of 1920. This was an effort to appease the Protestant majority in regions of

the country who opposed separating from the United Kingdom and living under Dublin Home Rule (de Paor 1990:100). Since its establishment, society in Northern Ireland has continued to be divided by multiple and varying layers of cultural identity and behavior; nationalist or unionist agendas; politics; religion; and language which all tend to be cross-cut by class as well. These divisions create boundaries that may be tangible or intangible, sometimes even both – but in any form help to establish and maintain the variety of real and/or imagined communities, plus the real and/or imagined inequality that becomes contested and performed through the lens of heritage.

The "facts" underlying any replaying or revision of the past are embedded within the various contested claims on heritage and history that are *not* supported by empirical evidence, in what de Paor describes as the "Green myth" and the "Orange myth" (de Paor 1990:14). As de Paor explains, in the "Green myth" supporters claim allegiance to an ancient and historic Irish nation, stressing that the Irish were independent until the twelfth century, with a rich civilization of their own until they were invaded by the Normans. Ever since then, they have endured a continuing struggle against colonial British rule that included efforts to destroy their Roman Catholic religion in addition to economic discrimination. In the "Orange myth" supporters claim allegiance to the British Constitution and refer to the Plantation of Ulster (with loyalist Protestants) as a time when religion and liberty were established in the midst of barbarism, followed by Ulster Protestants upholding and defending their ideals against popery, and culminating in the Glorious Revolution of 1688 (de Paor 1990:14). Political scientist Brian Walker agrees that interpretations and memories of the past can be affected by the present, but cautions against viewing myths only as widely held but false beliefs. He argues that "often they

can be a part of a sense of history, containing truths and half truths, which a group or

community can create for itself, in response to contemporary challenges or needs"

(Walker 1996:viii). In this light, Ian McBride suggests explanations for alternative

readings of history in both the nationalist and unionist communities. For nationalists, he

feels that

> "posthumous sympathy" for republican martyrs… [serves] as a pressure-valve,
> compensating nationalists for the realities of British rule by fostering a sense of
> self-regard rooted in the noble words and actions of their insurgent ancestors…
> [while it is not] strange that Ulster Protestants, confronted with attempts to make
> them a permanent minority in a hostile state, have invoked the seventeenth-
> century Siege of Derry. (McBride 2001b:36)

Whether it is the Siege of Derry or another historical touchstone, it is clear that these

varied readings of past events continue to impact people's sense of identity and

connection to their claims on heritage in Northern Ireland today.

Heritage and the Troubles

In order to appreciate the complexity of present conditions and attitudes regarding

contested practices of heritage in Northern Ireland, it is essential to understand basic

elements and issues that led to, and continued the armed conflict of the Troubles for over

thirty years. Among the vast body of scholarship that tracks and analyzes events of the

Troubles, *Lost Lives: The stories of the men, women and children who died as a result of

the Northern Ireland troubles*, by David McKittrick, Seamus Kelters, Brian Feeney,

Chris Thornton, and David McVea, offers a stunning and painstakingly detailed, year-by-

year account of every individual they can document as having died because of sectarian

violence. In short introductions for each year's entries, they highlight significant political,

military, and/or sectarian activities, then give a chronological listing of those who died, starting with 1966 and continuing through to 2006, based primarily on "newspaper reports… and follow-up reports of deaths, together with reports of inquests and subsequent prosecutions and other legal proceedings" (McKittrick et al. 2007:16).

Rather than the individual stories compiled by McKittrick and his associates, many other historians and scholars take on broader aspects of the Troubles and Northern Irish history, including detailed context and analysis in their discussions. Liam de Paor's *Divided Ulster* was published in 1970 and is considered a classic by current historians who continue to cite his straightforward analysis and explanation of how and why it has "seemed to be to the advantage of somebody to keep Ulster divided" (de Paor 1970:13) at so many points in time. More recently, but still prior to the peace process of the 1990s, de Paor revisits the issues being contested in the province and argues for taking "due note of the past for the light it may shed on the present, and... [offers] suggestions for the future" (de Paor 1990:3). His boldest suggestion is that Ulster has been and will continue to be different from the rest of Ireland and the best solution to the political turmoil is to rework Northern Ireland as a democratic, independent nation within the emerging European Union. He argues that

> the problem of the internal relations in Northern Ireland arises from the problem of its external relations. It is precisely the question of how to relate to Britain on the one hand, to the Republic on the other, that causes the internal problem. Therefore neither can usefully be given priority over the other in the negotiations that must now, sooner or later, be undertaken. (de Paor 1990:150)

Although the present Northern Irish political system contains elements of de Paor's projection for the future, it was a controversial perspective back in the early 1990s.

Historian Paul Dixon is among those analyzing peace process negotiations through the 1990s and the eventual signing of the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998. Dixon deftly utilizes newspaper commentary along with historical records to support his discussion of the significance and power of the propaganda war, versus what he calls the "real" war. He claims that both efforts aim "at winning advantage through physical means, violence, demonstrations, and repression… to shift the political agenda" (Dixon 2001:1). And the political agendas of the opposing parties are frequently constructed with reference to Northern Ireland's contested past. Moreover, the Good Friday Agreement was deliberately crafted as a "consociational agreement" as a strategy to accommodate continued contestation. Political scientist Brendan O'Leary describes a consociation as "an association of communities" (O'Leary 2004:262). The key elements making the Good Friday Agreement consociational are executive power-sharing; proportionality of representation in government and public sectors; communal autonomy and equality; and minority veto rights (O'Leary 2004). It also created a North-South Ministerial Council in order to constructively oversee all-island, or cross-border shared interests such as inland waterways, transportation, and tourism (McGarry and O'Leary 2004a:11).

The question of police reform, however, was "so divisive that the local parties and two governments could only agree to hand it over to an independent commission on agreed terms of reference" (McGarry 2004b:372). Like other conflict areas, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) long were seen as serving only one part of society (Murray 2006:78) – in this case, the Protestant/unionist "side of the house." In addition the RUC, along with the British Army, were implicated with abusive interrogation practices (Wilson 2010:54) and "a form of 'shoot to kill' policy that was at odds with British law"

(Punch 2012:75). These and other concerns regarding RUC behavior and image in diverse communities were addressed by the independent Patton Commission, who recommended a staggering 175 changes to policing in Northern Ireland. Recommendations included creating a new name for the police along with new representative emblems; a revision of accountability practices; and the establishment of District Policing Partnerships around the province (Murray 2006).

The fifteen years following the initial peace process implementation have provided many opportunities for evaluating the initiatives and mandates within the Good Friday Agreement. There have been a number of miss-steps and debate over implementation and interpretation along the way, but despite remaining factional disagreement (Frampton 2011; Tonge 2011), a majority of the people of Northern Ireland accepted peace. They continue to negotiate and proceed with various elements of the peace process rather than return to direct rule by Britain, demonstrating that both "Protestants and Catholics are more concerned about peaceful coexistence and addressing social issues than about nationalistic claims to the land they share" (Beggan and Indurthy 2002:348). Granted, not everyone is satisfied with the current direction of government: splinter paramilitary groups continue to oppose the peace process (Höglund and Zartman 2006:27; Mac Ginty, Muldoon, and Ferguson 2007:2); while politicians "struggle with a legacy of communal antagonism and sectarianism, with some trends indicating a deterioration in relations between the communities" (Doran 2010:130).

Some scholars argue that government power-sharing fosters polarization because it legitimizes the two primary blocs of Catholic nationalism and Protestant unionism (Mac Ginty, Muldoon, and Ferguson 2007:130). In a similar vein, Nic Craith argues that

emphasizing "the two traditions paradigm is not the way forward as it essentializes these cultures – generating a perception of cultural traditions as homogenous, fixed qualities" (Nic Craith 2002:20). By "legitimizing" the two traditions paradigm it leaves communities more likely to ignore the small but growing minority communities such as Poles, Indians, and Pakistanis. Even in towns like Strabane where newer arrivals are a tiny minority, immigrant groups are uniting in ethnic community associations. They want to make their presence more widely known and increase their integration into the broader society, at the same time they practice their own cultural heritages. In early October 2011, the local Indian community helped primary-school children learn about, and participate in, a celebration of Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights. At the town library, leaflets are available that offer useful phrases in a range of languages, just one part of district efforts to promote good community relations in addition to respect for other language-speakers.

Other socio-political changes are taking place as well, with some progressing more smoothly than others, but proceeding never-the-less. Among mandated reforms, the police are now known as the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). the initial District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) evolved into Policing and Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) in April 2012, in order to combine and increase the effectiveness of local community and police initiatives. In the strongly republican Head of the Town section of Strabane where I lived, attitudes towards, and relations with the police remain suspicious, adversarial, and tense on both sides. A common comment I heard was that the PSNI were merely the RUC under a new name. Nationalists and republicans who participate as members of the joint community-police partnerships such as the current

PCSP continue to face severe criticism from some, simply for "sitting down with the police." For their part, the only police vehicle that I saw enter the Head of the Town, on any occasion, was an armored Land Rover, while they clearly used sedan-styled cars in other areas. It is very hard for people from either side of the divide to reconcile their memories of belligerent, aggressive, and abusive behavior from the past with present implementation of reform.

The ongoing interrelationship between the historical past and the present in Northern Ireland is expressed in many ways on a daily basis, as demonstrated by this comment in a local newspaper during the early 1990s: "We must go back three centuries to explain any fight outside a chip shop" (Dermot Bolger in *Sunday Independent*, 16 August, 1992). In other cases, people dig even deeper to explain or support claims of Irish and/or Celtic heritage and history. Northern Irish singer/songwriter Tommy Sands has played a pivotal role in transforming aspects of traditional Irish music into political commentary on both a local and international level in his efforts to promote peace and understanding in his home country. When he tries to answer questions about "how far back" the Troubles go, he muses

> How far back do you want to go? ... Back with the geologists, 500 million years to the time when Ireland was divided by the Iapetus Ocean?… Or back with the mythologists to the arrival of the first human in Ireland?... Or perhaps the better-known date of 1690 when… Prince William of Orange, escaped the bloody Battle of the Boyne… Or back again to early Ulster problems in the fourth and fifth century when the north's most powerful tribe, the Ulaid… had differences of opinion with the Dal Fiatach? That's when land was fought for cruelly but honestly, hungrily or greedily, without the pretense of religion or patriotism as the excuse. (Sands 2005:252)

There is a seriousness underlying Sand's playful storytelling, however, as it underscores the long complicated history and distinction of Ulster over time that historians, political scientists, and anthropologists are continually trying to sort out and explain. And the challenges faced by scholars trying to sift through the rhetoric and propaganda are nothing new. Back in the late 1800s William Lecky complained that in writing his *History of Ireland in the Eighteenth Century* he "had to deal with a history which has been very imperfectly written, and usually under the influence of the most furious partisanship" (Lecky 1892:v). The partisanship that Lecky found in the 1800s and scholars continue to find today, demonstrates the continuing influence of the past and how it is replayed and revised to serve the present.

Moving beyond the general historical and political contexts, sources for more regional and personal perspectives on the Troubles and peace process implementation include community-based surveys conducted by academics questioning aspects of working-class life. There also are government-sponsored studies that evaluate the effectiveness of programs designed to increase cross-community interaction. The second half of the twentieth century brought extensive economic and social changes to working-class communities in Northern Ireland, in addition to the disruption they experienced with the armed conflict. Building on a series of transcripts first broadcast by Radio Ulster between 1976 and 1980 that presented working-class community members discussing their lives, Peter McNamee and Tom Lovett (1987) capture the experiences and perspectives of both Catholic and Protestant working-class communities through interviews on a range of topics. Despite the fact that this project occurred at the height of the Troubles, it goes beyond examining how people cope in the midst of violence and

delves more broadly into their overall life experience. By examining the socio-economic

challenges and changes taking place in Northern Ireland in this manner, they provide

> the working-class in the province with the opportunity to "speak their word," to
> vividly and imaginatively describe their lives and experiences, to paint a picture
> of working-class life – both past and present – in all its varied aspects such as
> family and marriage, neighbourhood and social life, work and unemployment,
> religion and moral values, the role of women and the attitudes of young people. It
> also offers them an opportunity to speak frankly about the division in the
> working-class between Protestant and Catholic, and about how they see each
> other. (McNamee and Lovett 1987:3-4)

More recent grass-roots interview projects and other forms of data collection have been

conducted, or at least sponsored by educational institutions such as the University of

Ulster; independent organizations like the Community Relations Council (CRC); and the

province-wide District Councils' Community Relations Programme out of the Office of

the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) based in Stormont, Northern

Ireland's legislative center. Many of these projects, studies, or programs are designed for

use by the general public and often are available both in print form and through websites.

Beginning in 1993 and with support from the CRC and the extensive CAIN

(Conflict Archive on the Internet) web-service at the University of Ulster, Michael Hall

has been publishing a series of booklets (under the collective title *Island Pamphlets*) that

represent small-group discussions on a range of issues that initially were meant to

stimulate cross-community debate. Public interest was so great however, that the series

evolved into The Farset Community Think Tanks Project. Their latest publication

(Number 105) presents the fifth entry in on-going discussions under the heading "A

Shared Future," a governmental policy and strategic initiative that began in 2005.[16] In

addition to the intention of stimulating dialog between and within various Northern Irish

communities, these grass-roots "think tanks" and the related pamphlet series present an intriguing longitudinal study of the opinions and experiences of ordinary people, and the variety of approaches they take to negotiate implementation of the peace process. Moreover, the strong public interest and participation attests to how deeply people value having an opportunity for their experiences and perspectives to be recorded in some form of public record. In a complementary way, the CAIN website,[17] contains links to a variety of resources relating to the Troubles, including an on-going digital archive project with interactive maps for locating "deaths and memorials related to the conflict [and] correlated with various socio-economic factors" (Kelleher and Melaugh 2011:2). Accessing the CAIN web-site adds significant spatial, temporal, and visual elements to any reading of the grass-roots community dialogs in the *Island Pamphlet* series, or other resources such as McKittrick et al's *Lost Lives*.

Additional studies and reports presenting local opinions and attitudes, along with quantified data on specific districts, add another dimension for understanding how people continue to negotiate the peace process and ways that the process varies by location. *Beyond Belfast: contested spaces in urban, rural and cross border settings*, a Community Relations Council report, conceptualizes and explores "the dynamics of segregation, division and community tensions in cities, towns and villages beyond Belfast" (Bell, Jarman, and Harvey 2010:1). As they examine various aspects of contested spaces the authors include the historical background and context for the current levels of segregation and avoidance between Catholic and Protestant communities, while paying careful attention to the unique elements impacting border communities in both the North and the South.

Focusing even more on regional data, local governing bodies like the Strabane

District Council produces reports and program reviews on activities under the headings of

"Good Relations" or "Local Strategy Partnership." These publications describe targeted

initiatives and relate findings of periodic program audits, in addition to comparing district

demographics and individual opinions from different time periods, in order to evaluate

levels of success on various initiatives mandated by the peace process. The combination

of generalized, as well as very specific data, and community responses on issues being

addressed within peace process implementation, contextualizes the more general

historical data and underscores the complexity of the process for individuals and

communities alike. The process may seem slow, but some attitudes and behavior are

changing, even in Strabane. Speaking more broadly, only a year after the Good Friday

Agreement was signed, Ullrich Kockel noted that

> (n)owadays even the hard-line unionists acknowledge that the comprehensive
> discriminatory practices during the first fifty years of the autonomous Northern
> Ireland administration were morally untenable. With the escalation of the conflict
> during the 1970s, however, civil rights issues took a "back seat" in a discourse
> that revolved increasingly around questions of nationality, belonging, and cultural
> "birth rights." This tendency has only been reversed, to some extent, in the current
> "peace process." (Kockel 1999:125)

Although changes may come in fits and spurts, the various foci and sponsors for these

studies over time demonstrate increasingly strong community and governmental interest

in gathering data from a wide range of constituencies. Through this data they hope to

identify and analyze the impact – potential or existing – of initiatives currently being

planned or implemented. In order to illustrate the historic, social, and political contexts of

these current attitudes and programs, I next examine several ethnographies that have been

conducted in Ireland. Many of them clarify the complexity of any initiative designed to

overcome the deeply embedded distrust and avoidance of the "other side of the house," as communities and government officials foster the development of a more inclusive future for Northern Ireland.

Ethnographic research in Ireland

With its unique location on the Western edge of Europe, Ireland – both North and South – has been and continues to be a rich fieldsite for ethnographic study by social scientists such as anthropologists and folklorists, with each discipline contributing a slightly different perspective and approach. Government- and institution-sponsored reports, population statistics, historical and political science perspectives are all valuable resources for conducting research anywhere. What sets ethnographic study and anthropological findings apart from other disciplines

> is their complex specificness, their circumstantiality. It is with the kind of material produced by long-term, mainly (though not exclusively) qualitative, highly participative, and almost obsessively fine-comb field study in confined contexts that the mega-concepts with which contemporary social science is afflicted – legitimacy, modernization, integration, conflict, charisma, structure… meaning – can be given the sort of sensible actuality that makes it possible to think not only realistically and concretely *about* them, but what is more important, creatively and imaginatively *with* them. (Geertz 1973:23 italics in original)

The anthropology of Ireland "has been molded by local and global forces. Among them are the intellectual and academic traditions and concerns of both American cultural anthropology and British social anthropology" (Wilson and Donnan 2006:2). A high percentage of ethnographic inquiry in the Republic of Ireland has been and is conducted by U.S.-trained anthropologists, while more British-trained anthropologists have conducted their fieldwork in Northern Ireland. Although the differences may be subtle,

Wilson and Donnan argue that as the profession developed in the first half of the twentieth century, American cultural anthropology was "more interested in historical and culture change, culture contact and acculturation, and culture and personality [while] British social anthropology emphasized cross-cutting ties of kinship and social organization, political networks, and disputes in communities" (Wilson and Donnan 2006:31).

Parallel to anthropological inquiry in Ireland, folklorists generally conduct their fieldwork in rural communities with "the goal of understanding and telling others about [the] community by attending to the expressive forms people there find most meaningful" (Cashman 2008:223). Initially one of their primary interests was to salvage examples of oral traditions they felt were "disappearing" (Ó Duilearga 1963:v), so they would "collect" and categorize examples of stories, songs, and other performative expression (Ó Súilleabháin 1963). The combined involvement and influence of both American- and British-trained socio-cultural anthropologists as well as folklorists is reflected in much of the research conducted in Ireland for decades. Today their shared approaches continue to demonstrate commitment to empirically-based research, ethnographic fieldwork, and the analysis of the construction, maintenance, and meaning of cultural identities.

Under the auspices of Harvard University in the early 1930s, Conrad Arensberg and Solon Kimball participated in an ethnographic study and analysis of communities in County Clare, in the west of Ireland "in what was to be the first comprehensive anthropological study of a small modern nation" (Wilson and Donnan 2006:19). Their joint ethnography *Family and Community in Ireland*, first published in 1940, and Arensberg's *The Irish Countryman*, published in 1937 are still recognized as pioneering

studies (Frankenberg 1966:12; Cohen 2002:324). They were interested in presenting an objective study of contemporary social behavior in several rural communities rather than merely a "description of things Irish" (Arensberg and Kimball 1961:xxiii). Arensberg makes it clear that although they were interested in "old customs and beliefs," their approach was new and different from work of previous scholars. They investigated what the old customs meant to people in their current lives, to discover how those customs directly or indirectly created the "system of values which [ruled] life in the present" (Arensberg 1937:33). Both works describe an agricultural, rural society, yet explicitly identify the significance of their interrelationship and system of reciprocity with the nearby townspeople (Arensberg 1937:154; Arensberg and Kimball 1961:297).

An expanded second edition of *Family and Community in Ireland* (Arensberg and Kimball 1968) labels the original fourteen chapters as "Part One: The Countryside" and continues with "Part Two: The Town" in order to "give a real sense of the distinctions separating urban life from life in the countryside even as the two remain intimately linked" (Arensberg and Kimball 1968:ix), a linkage they demonstrate through the data collected during their pioneering fieldwork in the 1930s. Although Arensberg and Kimball acknowledge that metropolitan sophistication and industrialization "has passed southern Ireland by" (Arensberg 1937:147), they note moderate to slow changes in these communities that are managed through a familiar structure that responds to changes in such a way that creates "a new equilibrium and creates a scaffolding for new behaviours and sentiments" (Arensberg 1937:80). At the same time, Arensberg admits to some of the challenges he faced when trying to interpret what people said or did, particularly in relation to aspects of fairylore, and suggests strategies for continued observation of

behavior and additional questioning to gain understanding (Arensberg 1937:27). With subtle commentary interspersed through his ethnography, Arensberg presents both a respectful and thoughtful account of life in rural County Clare in the 1930s, which later provided an influential framework for conducting participant observation and ethnographic fieldwork in other parts of Europe (Frykman 2012:584). In comparison, a contemporary article in the Irish folklore journal *Béaloideas* discusses similar topics such as the orientation of, and common layout within farmhouses (Campbell 1935), as more of a descriptive inventory of an "average" farm than an analysis of any significance in the layout and tools used, or even an introduction to the individuals who live and work there.

World War II interrupted academic inquiry and publication for most of the 1940s, then scholars returned to topics of study begun in the late 1930s, while some expanded their areas of interest to address societal changes in the post-war years (Frankenburg 1966). To be sure, ethnographic studies of rural, traditional communities continued, however some anthropologists turned their attention to more urban, industrialized communities, or to particular segments of the population such as youth. James C. Messenger's (1969) study of a fictitiously-named island community, *Inis Beag: Isle of Ireland*, is frequently cited along with Arensberg and Kimball's fieldwork for influencing other scholars. Although he describes a marginalized island community, Messenger avoids some of the tropes of "salvage ethnography" common to a few other scholars, such as his contemporaries, Hugh Brody and Robin Fox. Rather than explore the dynamics of transition for an area where the demographics and economics are declining, Brody emphasizes the breakdown of community, devaluation of traditional values, and youth lacking respect for their elders (Brody 1974:2). And while Robin Fox notes that

change is happening on his island of study, he describes the place as "semifossilized history" (Fox 1978:x), claiming that much of life on the island is like pre-Famine Ireland![18] At the same time he does identify a significant level of cultural continuity that, paired with a flexible society, helps them survive (Fox 1978:186).

In comparison, Messenger documents examples of change without reifying the past and labeling change as a "loss of tradition" as Brody and Fox tend to do. Moreover, Messenger seems more aware of the beginnings of great socio-political change in Ireland of the 1960s, such as the political unrest in Northern Ireland that was filtering into the Republic, greater ease of transportation, increased tourism, and return visits from earlier emigrants which brought additional outside influences that fostered interest in change (Nash 1977:37). In his ethnography, Messenger describes a particular situation or response and then places that in its immediate context of an island community that is part of a country continually grappling with post-colonial issues (Messenger 1969:2). He acknowledges the economic benefits as well as psychological challenges posed by increased tourism as islanders struggle for valorization by fulfilling tourists' expectations of traditional Irish folklife (Messenger 1969:52). Although he never directly explains the process, it is clear that Messenger's wife Betty, a professional folklorist,[19] participated in the fieldwork. This collaboration may explain his ability to include sections analyzing sexual knowledge and behavior from both male and female perspectives that are another distinction of his study (Messenger 1969:78). In a culture well-known for sexual repression and segregation (Wilson and Donnan 2006:47), this information could be gathered successfully only through sensitive conversations and interviews between members of the same sex. Messenger's ethnography demonstrates that life in the "Celtic

fringe" was constructed, not only based on economic challenges to traditional folkways, but through complex interactions with, and influence from, national and global events.

As the growing political and social unrest of the 1950s and 1960s evolved into the armed conflict of the Troubles, anthropologists and folklorists conducting fieldwork in Northern Ireland had to face the influence and reality of sectarianism, social class, and notions of citizenship that needed to be addressed in order to

> account for the divisiveness and friction which cross-cut all levels of Northern Irish society. In the anthropology of Northern Ireland it was, and it remains, impossible to understand local rural and urban communities without understanding ethnicity, sectarianism, national identities, class and the overall importance of history in everyday life. (Wilson and Donnan 2006:28)

Anthropologists conducting research in Northern Ireland have done just that, from a range of perspectives, and in a variety of settings. In the early days of the Troubles, Rosemary Harris studied a community near the border between County Tyrone in the North, and the Republic of Ireland in the South. She stresses the complexity of factors of a divided society that impacted patterns of both social and kin relationships, in addition to divisions created by the border which "brought into sharp contrast not only those actually separated by it but those separated because their opinions about it were opposed" (Harris 1972:20). Richard Jenkins conducted fieldwork among working-class youth in Belfast during the 1980s, where he examined the processes by which young men developed their perspectives of social differentiation within their own peer group, finding that "outsiders" such as housing officials, police, and teachers were "heavily implicated in the production of that world" (Jenkins 1983:130). Although most, if not all of his study subjects were Protestant, and he acknowledges effects of the existing conflict, he focuses his observations and analysis on the challenges faced by (primarily male) youth in a

particularly deprived and rough housing estate, identifying their distinctive production and reproduction of social class.

In contrast, while Jeffrey Sluka also conducted fieldwork in a deprived and rough Belfast locale in the midst of the Troubles, he deliberately chose a Catholic community known for their involvement with, and support for, either the IRA or the INLA (Sluka 1989), the primary republican paramilitary groups at the time. Sluka questions a commonly accepted perspective that regards terroristic organizations as "parasites" within civilian populations who "fail to aid the security forces in combating the 'terrorists' or guerrillas only because they fear to act against them, and not because they support or sympathize with them" (Sluka 1989:2). Covering a Belfast fieldsite that includes the same high-rise housing estate that Sluka studied, Allen Feldman examines political agency and violence, concentrating on ways that "political enactment becomes sedimented with its own local histories that are mapped out on the template of the body" (Feldman 1991:4). In particular, he describes how imprisoned IRA volunteers used their bodies as a "weapon" of protest and resistance, arguing that "power is the formation of agency, and… [it is] the agency of the body that is both presupposed and formed by power… The historicized and historicizing body is a pluralized site of torsion and contestation" (Feldman 1991:177). While Feldman's analysis is primarily through the experience of men living in a "Belfast ghetto," Begoña Aretxaga examines the mechanisms of social and political change in the same type of community, but from the women's perspective, as they push back when they get excluded from full participation in the conflict and are treated as "marginal to the arena of dominant political practices" (Aretxaga 1997:10). Whether using a gendered, semiotic, or other focus for analysis,

these various studies identify strategies used to cope with life during a protracted violent conflict; and negotiate the power of domination and subordination. Moreover, because they situate their ethnographies in specific locations that are integral to negotiations of domination and subordination, they also contextualize and humanize the broader historical record of the Troubles.

Other scholarly studies encompass socio-cultural practices across multiple communities. Instead of examining a specific fieldsite, they analyze expressions and performance of heritage and identity throughout Northern Ireland, such as parading (Jarman 1997; Bryan 2000b), mural painting (Rolston 2003b; 2010a), "traditional" Irish music (McLaughlin 2003; Vallely 2008; OFlynn 2009), and use of either the Irish or Ulster-Scots language (Mac Póilin 1999; Nic Craith 2003). These scholars grapple with the current politics and contested perspectives of Irish history that are embedded in any of these presentations of heritage and identity. They tease out the distinctions between competing claims on characters from Ireland's mythic past, such as Cú Chulainn (Rolston 1997/1998; Nic Craith 2002:96), and explain the backstory on how and why a specific parade route became such a volatile issue, so that now just saying the words "Garvaghy Road" carries immense significance (Bryan 2000a).[20] The performance or enactment of any of these expressions of identity and heritage is clearly divided between Protestants/unionists/loyalists and Catholics/nationalists/republicans, with some practices being in use longer than others, but each practice engendering strong commitment.

Recognition of Ulster-Scots as an official language in Northern Ireland, on a par with Irish, is a relatively new phenomenon – one of the conditions negotiated within the Good Friday Agreement (Mac Póilin 1999:114).[21] Since then, the Ulster-Scots language

along with its own distinctive music, literature, and language has been embraced and "rediscovered" – primarily by Protestants of Scottish decent – as *their* heritage and an alternative to what they perceive as the dominant Irish-Gaelic heritage discourse in Northern Ireland (Kockel 2007:22). It is not that there is no historical connection to the claims, however the current interest is a recent development, more directed to constructing "an appreciation of distinct traditions with a strong sense of difference" (Nic Craith 2003:83). It simply is the latest example of how notions of heritage can have such a polarizing effect and be a strong influence for changes in peoples' behavior in Northern Ireland.

In an earlier research project I interviewed a Philadelphia-based Irish-dancing instructor who emigrated from County Derry in the 1960s. Although she admitted that many Protestants in her hometown wanted nothing to do with traditional Irish step-dancing "because it was more of a Catholic thing to do then," she stressed that there *were* groups of Protestants that did Irish dancing. It merely was done separately from the Catholics living in the same community, just as the rest of daily life was segregated. In a similar vein, Kockel observes that presently in the "Ulster-Scots heartland… where a generation ago Irish dancing was practiced by both Catholics and Protestants, the latter have increasingly turned to Scottish Highland styles of dancing and music with the associated 'traditional' Tartanry" (Kockel 2007:25) in an effort to emphasize their difference from what they perceive as both Catholic and Irish heritage and culture.

In contrast to the fairly recent awareness and use of Ulster-Scots, several habitual Irish-speaking communities, known as *gaeltachts*, exist to this day in the South, having survived Britain's nineteenth-century attempt to ban Irish usage and later coping with

additional factors that discouraged continued use of Irish (Mac Póilin 1996:138). Other *gaeltachts* faced continual decline as "their knowledge of Irish was suppressed and silenced" (Nic Craith 2002:75), until there were no native Irish-speakers living, such as those in a few hamlets of central County Tyrone in the early twentieth century (Gaelphobal Strabane, n.d.). Irish language learning and usage expanded beyond the marginal *gaeltachts* in the late 1800s when people related speaking Irish with their efforts to gain independence from Britain (Nic Craith 2003:74).

Speaking one's regional language continues to embody political perspectives, marking boundaries and claiming membership (O'Reilly 1998:51). In a deliberately political act, republican combatants imprisoned in the notorious Maze/Long Kesh prison declared "some of their huts as '*gaeltacht*' areas, where only Irish was spoken and radio and television in English banned. In time these areas became known as 'jailtachts' and the unique Irish dialect that developed was similarly described as Maze 'jailic'" (Ryder 2000:120). For many prisoners, finally learning Irish was a key step in taking "ownership" of their Irish heritage and identity, in addition to providing the incentive to help establish Irish-medium schools in their home neighborhoods after prison release (O'Reilly 1998:53). Today those former prisoners are respected within their republican communities, both for their efforts to unite Ireland during the Troubles, but also as fluent Irish-speakers they demonstrate that portion of Irish identity long-denied residents of Northern Ireland. Like other aspects of identity, language continues be highly contested and embedded with meaning, while serving to mark intangible borders between people and places.

Other study of borders and boundaries of identity consider the materiality of place – the marking of those who belong, those who are perceived as beyond the border, and "the cross-border cultures of the national and ethnic groups [who frequently] straddle borders" (Donnan and Wilson 2010b:19). In addition to taking on one or more of those characteristics, people in Northern Ireland, and those across the border in the Republic, "belong" to a series of increasingly larger and more complex entities: their immediate community, then regional/county, followed by nation/state, and now the multi-country European Union (EU). With EU financing behind many peace and cross-border initiatives in Ireland (Donnan and Wilson 2010c:77; Nash, Reid, and Graham 2013:131), residents on either side of the border are regularly reminded of their relationship with, and dependence on, European financial support for accomplishing many of the goals of the Good Friday peace process.[22]

As anthropologists study these various spheres of belonging and division, they acknowledge that borders are "simultaneously structures and processes… [with] culture as a marker and agent of tradition and change at borders" (Donnan and Wilson 1999:62) whether tangible or not. Power relationships are "a key factor in the development of boundaries and… power relations [are] a central incentive for shifts in identity categories" (Hoewer 2014:2). Often, particular boundaries reflect contested notions over territory or the rights to control their use. Teenagers in Belfast, for example, construct narratives that describe and support existing boundaries that also "reify their collective identity… [and illustrate] generational otherness in the communities in which they reside" (Leonard 2008:475). Whether in Belfast or other Northern Irish communities, day-to-day experience and perspectives are transformed into symbolic system of place

and belonging in which "constantly negotiated and contested social and spatial practices matter [because of the ways] they are interpreted and given significance by their participants" (Shirlow 2008:75).

Many of my Strabane neighbors and friends used discursive practices that regularly expressed their relationship with, and resistance to the imposed border between the North and the South. By always referring to Northern Ireland as "the six counties," they negate the existence of Northern Ireland as a separate entity from the Republic of Ireland; criticize use of "Ulster" as an alternative term for the North, since three of the historical nine counties of Ulster remain in the Republic; and indirectly claim their connection and allegiance to a united Ireland and the remaining twenty-six counties. The "language of borders" – the choice of words related to bordered territory can establish and maintain "the theory and practice of upholding and safeguarding [those] borders" (Rabinowitz 2012:304), or they can express resistance to those attempting to maintain them. Famously in Belfast and the city of Derry, large wall murals denote socio-political relationships and territorial boundaries for both nationalist and unionist communities (Rollston 2010a:vii) with an art form that is now an integral part of tourism.[23]

Whether by utilizing discourse that contests boundaries, physically crossing or maintaining control over borders, marking territorial borders with painted murals, or visiting any or all of these borderlands as a tourist, individuals contribute to the performativity of bordering practices (Kaiser 2012). The varied aspects of border performativity include the formal identification and defense of borders; the practical processes of cross-border cooperation that filter goods, people, and ideas (O'Dowd, McCall, and Damkat 2007); and the popular dissemination and/or contestation of the

meanings of borders (Wilson and Donnan 2012a:19). Since the Good Friday Agreement

was signed in 1998, the 250 mile [400 km] (Nash, Reid, and Graham 2013:17) border

splitting Ireland between North and South no longer emphasizes the state sovereignty of

either entity, and the British army watchtowers and checkpoints are gone (McCall

2012:216). Yet for people living in Strabane, literally on an "international" border, right

next to Lifford in the Republic, borderland negotiations remain, even if the only visible

official marker is the change in speed-limit signs that alert drivers they have crossed from

one side to the other.[24] Daily life in Strabane can include regular border crossings

between the North and South, with their co-occurring performances, as well as the often

less obvious "border crossings." These "crossings" identify divisions between their

nationalist/Catholic/republican lives and other areas of the town or the district that they

perceive as being controlled by "the other side of the house." Negotiating this

combination of tangible and intangible borders includes negotiating personal and

collective memories embedded in those places, "the borderland heritage, everyday

experience as well as the systemic framework" (Kiiskinen 2012:23) that remains an

undercurrent of daily life in present-day Strabane.

Locating Strabane and County Tyrone

Picturesquely situated along the River Mourne in northwest Northern Ireland,

Strabane is the second largest town, after Omagh, along the western edge of County

Tyrone. It is the primary town for the District of Strabane, which operates in a similar

way to townships or counties in some areas of the U.S. The local government of Strabane

District Council oversees public services for the town of Strabane and the numerous

smaller towns, villages, and hamlets in the surrounding countryside, that comprise the district population of 38,248 out of a total of 1,814,300 for all of Northern Ireland.[25] District services include trash and recycling removal, licensing, plus the development and maintenance of roads and leisure programs. County Tyrone is one of the six counties that make up present-day Northern Ireland and one of the nine counties that make up the historic ancient province of Ulster. With 3,263 square kilometers (1,220 square miles)[26] County Tyrone is geographically the largest in Northern Ireland and remains mostly rural and agricultural. Significant natural features include several rivers and the broad Strule Valley, which is encircled by the Sperrin Mountains with its combination of heather-covered slopes, woodlands, and bogs that reveal evidence of human occupation over the last four thousand years. Ed Moloney claims that republicans in County Tyrone have "played a crucial role in the annals of Irish republicanism…for over three hundred years. Ever since the great Tudor campaigns against the remnants of Ireland's Gaelic chieftains, Tyrone… stood out for the strength of its resistance to English rule" (Moloney 2003:308). Related to that, Moloney points out that people living in rural areas have long memories, quoting a Tyrone republican who told him "'People know which land they lost in the plantation and who took it. They can identify their fields, and in all probability the same Protestant families who took it from their ancestors are still living there'" (Moloney 2003:308).

Geographically County Tyrone and the Republic share extensive border territory, with County Donegal to the west and County Monaghan along part of the southern edge, making it a primary route for traffic between Dublin and the northwest of Ireland. Busses coming through the depot in Strabane are almost as likely to be going to or from stops in

the Republic as they are traveling within the North. The River Bann separates County

Tyrone, along with Derry, Fermanagh, and a portion of County Armagh, from the eastern

half of the province and its close proximity to the "prosperous Dublin-Belfast economic

'corridor'" (Kockel 1999:151). This division and the accompanying differentiation

between the east and west is reflected by greater economic development, population

densities, and a higher proportion of Protestants in the east with more rural agricultural

areas, Catholics, and historically less manufacturing in the west (Kelleher 2003:27).

Outside of Derry, there are only a few locations where anthropologists or

folklorists have conducted research in this western half of Northern Ireland (Wilson and

Donnan 2006:28). Several are notable for the variety of lifestyles and locations studied

and what the individual ethnographer revealed about that particular community.

Rosemary Harris studied the impact of prejudice and levels of tolerance between

Catholics and Protestants in a small Tyrone community bordering Monaghan in the late

1960s, early 1970s, analyzing the complexity of factors in social relationships as the area

adjusted to the beginnings of armed conflict (Harris 1972). For over a decade, also near

the beginning of the Troubles, folklorist Henry Glassie conducted fieldwork in County

Fermanagh, in a rural region called Ballymenone. His primary focus was the "verbal art"

of storytelling that was an essential component of life, but in the process of relating the

myriad stories told to "pass the time," he places them and their tellers within the dynamic

of late-twentieth-century cultural change and amidst the uneasy conflict (Glassie 1982).

Through the stories and intimate settings, Glassie teases out the historical culture and

worldview that residents embody, noting how some tellers stylistically "speak of the

Troubles as a climate. The violence was here before they came, will continue after they

have gone. Like the weather, it is beyond their control, something to endure" (Glassie 2006:51). Weather and the rhythm of the seasons have been an undercurrent of life in rural Ireland for centuries and in Glassie's ethnography they are joined by the conflict as it becomes another constant, always present in the background of ordinary life.

In a more urbanized setting in southeast County Tyrone, anthropologist William Kelleher presents the ethnography of a town that he identifies with the pseudonym Ballybogoin. He analyzes the processes of working-class formation through linguistic and cultural practices during the 1980s and into the 1990s and the peace process negotiations (Kelleher 2003:151). He situates these processes within the culturally constructed landscape of divided community and conflict, where the past is always present in personal memories and through interactions with the "physical force and discursive power" (Kelleher 2003:129) of the state. Aspects of the political and armed conflict interrupt and influence daily life in Ballybogoin, rather than remain an undercurrent as in Glassie's Ballymenone. Against this harsher reality, Kelleher demonstrates ways that "talk" and "talking about talk" – how residents in the town identify their discursive practices – "extended a person's spatiotemporal relations, enabled memories, and fostered the creation of networks, relationships of import" (Kelleher 2003:157). Whether through storytelling or seemingly mundane conversations, people create meaning – make sense of their lives – through these cultural and verbal customs.

Presenting yet another perspective on linguistic practices, folklorist Ray Cashman conducted fieldwork in Aghyaran, a mixed community in a rural region of southwest County Tyrone around the end of the conflict, as people were negotiating the challenges

of post-conflict peace-building. Cashman describes the cyclic construction and reconstruction of community as people wrestle with the range of socio-political changes going on around the country, through character anecdotes and other forms of story that allow "for contrast and evaluation of past and present ideological orientations and ways of being an individual within Aghyaran as a community" (Cashman 2008:252). Although the conflict was over, the pre-conflict cross-community inter-dependency and cooperation so common in agricultural areas like Aghyaran was severely damaged both by the violence and new farming technology. Within this background, Cashman relates the experience of a community self-consciously attempting "to revive and re-enter a version of… neighborly social reality… through both formal community development schemes and informal, traditional practices such as storytelling at wakes and ceilies" (Cashman 2008:20).

Each of these ethnographies captures a particular point in time and place impacted by the political and violent upheaval of the Troubles, in distinctive communities "west of the Bann." The River Bann is considered the boundary between the seemingly more affluent eastern half of the province and the western half that tends to lag regularly on job creation (Kelleher 2003:140) and other indicators of stable, growing communities. Distant as well as recent history is expressed through local and individual memories that construct identity, claim belonging, and make meaning. Moreover, they show the significance of, and challenges to, notions of "community" and "neighborliness" that are discussed and performed as people go about living their lives. This ethnography of Strabane builds on these earlier works by examining ways that memories of the Troubles

continue to impact and influence communities, as they continue to negotiate peace process implementation.

Strabane is a struggling former industrial town with a difficult history and self-image of poor job prospects and a local reputation for being the center of some of the worst sectarian violence during the Troubles. Indeed, I frequently was told that Strabane was the most bombed-out town during the conflict. And while I have no intention of minimizing the violence they experienced, it is interesting to note that when visiting Castlederg in the late 1990s, only eleven or so miles from Strabane, Cashman was told that *Castlederg* was "the most frequently bombed town in western Europe since World War II" (Cashman 2008:xv). To me the validity of either claim is inconsequential, except to underscore the reality that rural areas and small towns such as Strabane and Castlederg, far from the urban centers of Belfast and Derry – in mind-set, if not in miles – experienced severe violence and trauma that only added to their existing socio-economic challenges. Furthermore, those challenges continue to be negotiated today, fifteen years into the peace process.

A common sight in "downtown" Strabane is young people hanging out in small groups as there is not much for them to do when they have no jobs. Many leave school as soon as they can legally – frequently as young as fifteen or sixteen. More than half of the residents, district-wide, have little or no educational qualifications[27] and while the overall unemployment rate in Northern Ireland fell in the first quarter of 2012, Strabane District continued to have the third-highest rate of unemployment after Belfast and Derry (*Strabane Chronicle*, May 17, 2012). At the same time there is evidence of a range of resources available to teenagers and older adults interested in gaining or improving

employment skills. Several of my interviewees mentioned being enrolled in various training programs and I noticed other opportunities that were advertised in the local paper and promoted in public places, such as the library and Citizens' Advice Bureau. In the commercial area many of the buildings still carry the faded names of businesses that closed long ago. Some stand forlornly empty with "To Let" signs a common feature, while a few other sites have been repurposed as new, usually smaller, business ventures. One of the remaining industries in Strabane is O'Neill's, a company that produces sportswear for Gaelic football, hurling, and other "Irish" sports. This industry still provides jobs in Strabane because the powerful GAA (Gaelic Athletic Association) mandates that the uniforms must be manufactured in Ireland, meaning anywhere in the island.

Instead of the industries of the past, the current hope for jobs in the region comes from the service sector and newer retail ventures such as ASDA, a combination supermarket and department store that has attracted additional chain stores to a growing retail area on the fringe of the older congested downtown. This newer retail area is adjacent to the main north-south road between Omagh and Derry, in addition to being right near the bridge over the River Finn that represents the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Borderland shopping venues like Strabane's attract significant cross-border commerce to the extent that some "trade organizations claimed that cross-border shopping was costing the Irish state around 220m euros a year in lost taxes… and perhaps as many as 11,000 jobs" (Nash, Reid, and Graham 2013:118). And yet, I would argue that this claim is problematic because of the continual flow of business in *both* directions. Furthermore, correctly quantifying the influx of business that offsets any

outflow has to be difficult in border areas like Strabane where there are extensive cross-border flows that include quick "hops" across the river to top up the car's petrol; people who commute daily for work on either side; long-established church parishes and associations that include communities from both counties (Dooher 2000:326; Fawcett 200:296); and the existence of undocumented informal economies. In addition, there are a variety of crossing points along the long border between Tyrone and Donegal, with many of them in rural, semi-remote locations. The decision over which side has the best price varies with changes in the larger economy and exchange rate, as well as on the unscientific perception of getting a better deal "over at so and so's." A friend of mine swore she got the best petrol deal over in Lifford at a station that took her payment in Pound Sterling, rather than the Republic's currency of euros. On both sides of the border, most businesses were equipped and quite willing to ring sales in either currency. For the cross-border "community" of Lifford and Strabane, their social, economic, and sometimes political interrelationships existed well before, during, and after armed conflict problematized crossing the River Finn. Now with free movement into the Republic and back, the river has become a resource that is being incorporated into plans for joint development of this border and riverine environment (*Strabane Chronicle*, April 19, 2012).

The nationalist town of Strabane is comprised of five wards, including the East Ward, which is the most deprived ward out of the whole district, and the North Ward, which is the least deprived (Strabane District Council 2005:25), with the others ranging in levels of deprivation in between along with the rest of the district. Overall deprivation rates are computed based on seven socio-economic issues: income, employment, health

deprivation and disability, education, proximity to services, crime and disorder, and living environment (Northern Ireland Neighborhood Information Service).[28] There are two Catholic churches serving over 12,000 parishioners in the town, one on either side of the River Mourne that runs through the town and flows into the River Finn, just up-river from the bridge connecting Lifford and Strabane. Presbyterian, Methodist, and Church of Ireland congregations are located around the town as well, most within a short walking distance of the town center, although many of their members probably come from nearby villages. The one hotel is located on the western outskirts of town, close to the A-5 which by-passes the town proper. Their facilities include a "ballroom" where they hold wedding receptions and other private events, as well as occasional concerts and other public entertainment. The bus depot is closer to the town center, yet not so easily accessed by pedestrians in a town where a significant number of people walk from place to place on a regular basis. Among the "wish list" of improvements to the town, many people have voiced their interest in a foot-bridge from the town center leading across the Mourne to the bus depot. While the actual area of the town is relatively compact, all traffic – vehicles and pedestrians – must travel to, and cross the river, on the historic two-lane stone bridge to access the other "half" of the town. Other river crossings are roughly a half mile west at the A-5, or over five miles south of town, making those options much less desirable.

A variety of pubs, mostly scattered throughout the town center, range from intimate snugs to larger venues that mount live entertainment targeting young adults and draw sizable crowds. Several of the mid-sized pubs have an occasional weekend performer or two, but more have tended to host karaoke sessions rather than a live act

over the last few years. A few pubs have kitchens serving food, while many merely offer small bags of crisps, and even that selection may not get restocked regularly. While many of the people I spoke with in Strabane may drink alcohol during a meal, when they go out to drink in the evening they generally are disinterested in any form of snacking, let alone eating more substantial fare. In fact, one woman told me she simply cannot eat any food while drinking beer. Thomas Wilson argues that drinking – the consumption of alcoholic beverages – is distinctively cultural, "an integral social, political and economic practice, a manifestation of the institutions, actions and values of culture" (Wilson 2005a:4) and that it deserves greater attention from ethnographers. He goes on to discuss the significance of drinking places for

> their roles in the framing of actions, networks and other social relations beyond their own bounds… [yet] the cultures of the pub, bar, café, *shibeen*, country club and street corner have their own continuations elsewhere. They too are productive forces in the differentiations of identity, in part because they are sites in the making and maintenance of social memory. (Wilson 2005a:16)

Drinking in Ireland, like many places, is a socially charged activity, whether you are with fellow laborers in a local pub after a day of work, as you share an evening of quiz night (Kelleher 2003:98), or when you are offered a whiskey and welcomed round the table in someone's home. The place, the people involved, and even the choice of drink matters in a variety of ways, making the act of drinking a very political one as well (Wilson 2005a:18). My personal preference for Irish whiskey happens to be a "Protestant" label, so when drinking in Strabane I adjust my selection to one that is acceptable to the people around me.

Although several people denied that any one pub tended to be patronized by a particular segment of the town, a few others admitted that at one time, certain pubs had

reputations as being associated with a specific political perspective. In addition to some being identified as being republican bars that were either "IRA," or "INLA," one even was considered a "dissident" bar. While discussing changes in the atmosphere of some of the pubs, a neighbor confirmed that a particular bar in the town center used to be known as a "traditional IRA pub – where all the dos were held," but at this point he felt it was more likely a neutral place. Frankie O'Connor, owner of one of the centrally-located pubs, suggested that by 1997 when serious peace process negotiations were underway, there was a climate for change and he felt that people became more interested in, and willing to socialize with a broader mix of people. When I had a chance conversation with a resident in the nearby unionist village of Artigarvan, he mentioned that he now felt very comfortable going into any one of several pubs in Strabane on an evening, something he never would have done fifteen or twenty years ago. Although people still may favor a particular pub or two, their choice appears to be based more on the atmosphere and the fact that their friends are there, rather than on any political perspectives. At the same time I have to admit that this was one topic that many people seemed uncomfortable discussing in any straightforward manner.

Clancy's Bar is on the periphery of the town center, close to the heavily republican Head of the Town, where the music is an eclectic mix that includes Country and Western, republican songs, and more recent pop recordings. According to bar manager Ed Harris "the bar's more or less like a family. Everybody knows each other, you know. Most of the [Strabane Memorial Flute] Band members would drink in the bar, too." He explained that primarily customers came from the Head of the Town and Ballycolman, another residential area with a large proportion of republicans. At the same

time he stressed that anyone was welcome and there were no restrictions that people would think of for going there. The reality, however, is that any newcomer to Clancy's is watched very carefully. One evening, a few regulars became concerned over the behavior of a newcomer and Nuala said something to me about "so and so" who had vouched for him, suggesting that the "sponsor" needed to take responsibility and stop the questionable actions and/or see that the offending newcomer leave. Although Clancy's Bar does welcome newcomers, without some previous connection to individuals known by the regular crowd, a stranger is likely to be viewed with suspicion, even if they do so in a polite, cautious manner.

The night of my farewell party an out-of-town couple happened to stop in at Clancy's and I noticed them sitting off to one end of the pub by themselves. As I moved around the room taking photos and video amid the singing and dancing, one of them asked what occasion we were celebrating. I could tell they were intrigued by my answer, but when I made a point to offer a piece of cake as we were passing it out, they seemed surprised, as if they had crashed a private party. Instead of finding a bar that had the typical assortment of people socializing in small groups and having occasional interaction with others in the pub, this couple had entered Clancy's on a night when everyone was in party mode, with conversations, clutches of dancers, and singing partners shifting constantly among the whole group. It may not have represented an ordinary evening at Clancy's, but it was typical of the Head of the Town crowd and Clancy regulars in other ways.

Like other Irish working-class neighborhoods they are well-familiar with people leaving home to find a better life in another area or country. In fact, one of my neighbors

would be heading off to Australia before the summer was out. Traditionally, families and friends gather for one last night with whoever is leaving and have a *céilí*, a form of party that is celebrated with music, stories, plenty of drink, and maybe a dance or two. It is based on a older form of socialization in Ireland in which people gathered together in individual homes on an odd evening, as well as for special occasions. Since similar activities of storytelling and playing music also occurred during wakes at the height of emigration to America in the 1800s, this ritualized leave-taking became known as an "American wake" (Clark 1982:76). While it now is more likely to take place in a pub like Clancy's, the gathering still represents a mixture of sadness amidst the celebration and fun. For me, the party confirmed that I was an "adopted daughter" of the community as it gave me one last evening to enjoy the *craic* – social interaction and good conversation – with my engaging and enormously supportive circle of friends from the Head of the Town.

The East Ward, commonly known as the Head of the Town, was the central focus for much of my research because it includes the shooting site of the three lads and is at the heart of community reaction that followed the shooting. The families and close friends of the young men still live there and the Strabane Memorial Flute Band, established in their honor, practices in the Townsend Community Center. Statistics tracking decades of deprivation in housing, education, employment, and other quality of life issues tell only part of the story of the Head of the Town. These forms of deprivation certainly have shaped the place and the people who live here, but there is more to their lives and their interrelationship with the neighborhood than the statistics. At the same time, the "essence" of this place called the Head of the Town, even the discouraging

socio-economic aspects, is one of the primary elements in their construction of identity (Murtagh 2002:6). The area has had a reputation as one of the rougher parts of town for decades, which they jokingly share back and forth with residents in the Ballycolman – another working-class housing estate across the River Mourne. Much of the Ballycolman housing was under construction in the early 1970s with families moving in as each home was finished, since there had been a housing shortage for quite a while. As she recalled the early years of the Troubles, one long-time Ballycolman resident said "when there was rioting in the Head of the Town, all the neighbors in the street where my sister lived would sit on the workmen's benches with their wee cups of tea and watch the riots across the river. They had a great view!" (Ballycolman/Linkside CDA 2010:41). Granted, other memories of the conflict with its related discrimination and violence are much more subdued, but there is a resilience and commitment to make a better future in the community as well.

As a resident in Riverside Gardens, one of several housing estates that make up the Head of the Town, I came to talk with and spend time with a variety of the people living there. In addition to many of them being unabashedly republican, and as opinionated about government as any working-class community, they willingly and generously participate in benefit dances, races, or other events held to raise funds when a fellow resident is in need. One young cancer victim had the opportunity to receive treatment in another country, if only he could afford the travel and related expenses. The variety of events held to make this happen not only was inventive and fun for participants, but tickets sold out quickly every time, and they made their goal well before the deadline. People in the of the Head of the Town demonstrate their interest in and

commitment to their community as they negotiate the variety of challenges embedded in peace process implementation and reimagine what it means to be republican in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Their particular location on the border and their historic links with Lifford, as well as other towns in the Republic, plus their recognition as a nationalist town with an active republican community, all contribute to making Strabane in general, and the Head of the Town in particular, a significant place to study post-conflict peace implementation and how notions of culture, heritage, and identity are renegotiated and transformed.

Clearly, as I demonstrate in this chapter, history and the contested notions of heritage remain ever present undercurrents of ordinary daily life in post-conflict Northern Ireland. In the following chapters I describe and analyze various ways that individual and collective perspectives of that history, within Strabane's republican community, informs their expression and performance of identity as they create and maintain their own heritage of the Troubles.

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[10] "The Rising of the Moon" by John Keegan Casey (Galvin 1956:35).

[11] The term *cairde* is Irish for "friends," the plural of *cara* or "friend."

[12] I discuss the work of Cairde and cross-community programs in greater detail in Chapter 6.

[13] "Whatever you say, say nothing" by Colum Sands (http://www.brendannolan.com/lyrics/whatever.html - accessed November 29, 2014)

[14] Area profile report for Strabane District accessed October 12, 2013, Northern Ireland Neighborhood Information Service. http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/AreaProfileReportViewer.aspx?FromAPAddressMulipleRecords=Strabane@PostCode@BT828BZ@3?

[15] Area Profile Report for East Ward, Strabane, accessed May 23, 2014. http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/AreaProfileReportViewer.aspx?tabchangeReportName=Electoral Ward?

[16] The policy and strategy for *A Shared Future* states that over time, Northern Ireland needs "to establish… a shared society defined by a culture of tolerance: a normal, civic society, in which all individuals are considered as equals, where violence is an illegitimate means to resolve differences, but where differences are resolved through dialogue in the public sphere and where all people are treated impartially." (Good Relations Unit 2005:3)

[17] http://cain.ulst.ac.uk

[18] Which would date lifestyle on the island to the very early 1840s.

[19] Her most acclaimed work: Messenger, Betty. 1978. *Picking up the Linen Threads: A Study in Industrial Folklore*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas Press.

[20] In the mid-1990s Garvaghy Road, Portadown, in County Armagh became a key flashpoint between Protestants and Catholics over July 12th parading. Orange Order members insisted on their right to follow their traditional parade route in celebration of King William's success at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, while Catholic Garvaghy Road residents objected to the abusive and inflammatory behavior of parade participants marching through their community. Official attempts to negotiate alternate routes and bar parade access through Garvaghy Road seem to polarize the two sides even further, leading to extensive violence from both sides throughout the area. (Bryan 2000a) The stand-off, with police blocking the Drumcree Church parade at Garvaghy Road is a bit less volatile today, however, Orange Order bands continue to march right up to the barricade, where they pause to play music and re-assert their right to parade through before retiring the way they came.

[21] The term "Ullans" is a combination of the place-name "Ulster" and "Lallans," which is another term for the Scots, or Lowland Scots language (Unger 2010:100). At the same time, Ullans also is "an acronym – 'Ulster-Scots Language in Literature and Native Speech' – created in 1993 as the title for the magazine of the Ulster-Scots Language Society. The term gathered enough momentum to be enshrined in legislation before the end of the decade" (Mac Póilin 1999:112).

[22] The North West PEACE III Partnership was financially supported by the European Union Regional Development Fund. Under this partnership the Districts of Omagh and Strabane, along with Derry City were following a Peace and Reconciliation Action Plan slated for 2011 to 2013, while I was conducting fieldwork.

[23] Mural tours are promoted on several websites including: http://www.bogsideartists.com/ in Derry and http://www.belfastmuraltours.com/ in Belfast.

[24] Motor vehicle speed in the Republic is measured in kilometers per hour, while speed in the North is in miles (Nash, Reid, and Graham 2013:113).

[25] 2011 Census, Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA)

[26] *The Encyclopedia of Ireland*, 2003:1086.

[27] As of the 2011 Census, 16.09% had a degree or higher qualification; while 52.09% had no or low (level 1) qualifications (Area Profile Report for Strabane Local Government District, Northern Ireland Neighborhood Information Service).

[28] East Ward Area Profile Report (accessed May 23, 2014):
http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/AreaProfileReportViewer.aspx?tabchangeReportName=Electoral Ward?

Chapter 3: From the days of Wolfe Tone through the Peace Process: Embodying, Remembering, and Celebrating Republicanism through Song

"Oh father, why are you so sad, on this bright Easter morn?
When Irish men are proud and glad of the land where they were born."
"Oh son, I see sad mem'ries view of far-off distant days
When, being just a boy like you, I joined the IRA.

(Chorus:)
Where are the lads who stood with me
When history was made?
Oh, *gra mo chroi*, I long to see
The Boys of the Old Brigade.

"Boys of the Old Brigade" by P. McGuigan [29]

One evening in the summer of 2009 I joined friends at Clancy's Bar, the local pub. The place was rather packed and live music by a group called The Irish Brigade was well underway when I arrived. I had to push my way through the crowd trying to find out if Nuala or anyone else had arrived before me. Finally I spotted Nuala at a table with a few others, almost directly in front of a very large speaker. The sound of the music was deafening – it is not that big of a place to need such a loud sound system, but I figured it was challenging for the band to be heard because of all the people and general buzz at a bar. The band was pretty good, too, with three musicians on acoustic instruments including guitars and two of them alternating on vocal numbers. My ears became sore because of the loud volume and it was just about impossible to hold any form of conversation, however the crowd was totally engaged, making lots of requests, singing along, acting out some of the lyrics (such as aiming up in the air as if they were shooting rifles), and tapping out the tempo on the bar or on low rafters. For the most part the band

played catchy tunes with very strong republican and/or rebellious sentiments. A few other non-Irish songs were fit in at times – songs with a similar driving beat and anti-establishment perspective, such as one about being along with the Mexican hero/bandit Pancho Villa. Just about every song the band announced received an enthusiastic response from the crowd – they were totally into hearing the music, not just spending a night out at the pub, and they knew all the lyrics.

Then one song in particular received even more attention from everyone. The song was about the three young men killed in the field above the housing estate where I was staying: "Shoot To Kill Policy (British Justice)."[30] When the band started the song (at one time singing all five verses, then near the end of the night, a shorter version) everyone stood up with serious respect and attention – many singing along with the chorus, and with most applauding during parts of the song that named the three men. The story is simple enough, yet very emblematic of the sectarian divisions exacerbated by extreme violence during the Troubles. As I explain in Chapter 1, early on the morning of February 23, 1985, IRA Volunteers Charles (Charlie) Breslin and brothers Michael and David (Davy) Devine were shot and killed by British soldiers who were lying in wait to ambush the trio. At the inquest into the shooting, lawyers for both families continually pressed for answers, even when they were unable to access pertinent testimony and information in the usual manner. Dissatisfied over the results of the inquest, the families launched several appeals through UK and European courts. After being turned down on several appeals, in 2002, the High Court gave a ruling "against the Ministry of Defense… [that] the men presented no danger and were shot without warning" (McKittrick et al. 2007:1010).

For the people in the pub listening to the song that night, much more was expressed than details of the shooting deaths of Charlie, Michael and Davy. First of all, the story relates a significant event that happened right in their community. The site is a hallowed place on the landscape of Strabane perpetually marked by a Tricolor flag. The shooting of the "three lads" and its turbulent aftermath became the catalyst for a range of community responses and actions. Not only were residents upset over the shootings, but their sadness and anger increased as they watched the families holding funerals amidst extraordinary media coverage and intimidation from local police officers, known as the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) at that time. People felt impelled to respond in some manner. Most notably, political engagement increased. Many joined Sinn Féin and twelve weeks after the shooting, they elected the first Sinn Féin party member to Strabane District Council (Magee 2011:330). Voters in the district have supported Sinn Féin representation on the Council ever since, with half (eight out of sixteen) being Sinn Féin party members in 2012. Following the shooting in 1985, some people expressed their republican sentiments and Irish identity by joining the West Tyrone Brigade of Óglaich na hÉireann (IRA), while others chose to found and perform in the Strabane Memorial Flute Band; participate in Gaelic sports through the local GAA club; and/or develop and participate in Irish language education programs for adults and establishing an Irish medium school (Magee 2011:330). Several of those too young to volunteer in the IRA at the time of the shooting came of age and joined later. And even though I name these expressions of Irish identity separately, it is important to understand them as substantially interrelated. Over time, most if not all of Strabane's nationalists and republicans have been, or continue to be engaged in various combinations of these activities.

For people in Strabane, the song not only represents a history of the shooting and their communal memory of past experience, but it also reinforces their commitment to express and claim their Irish identity in the present. This form of song performance manages to "integrate personal, group and collective identities... [while] conforming to a traditional repertoire of conventional imagery in public performance…that entails the provision of supplementary knowledge by an audience" (Parkes 1997:182). Like other republican ballads relating the death of an IRA Volunteer, the song is set to a traditional-styled tune and triggers the collective memory of the event and its aftermath for Strabane residents, or similar shootings for people from other communities. Recounting the story about the three lads through song emphasizes and gives voice to lingering resentment and the sense of injustice that still is prevalent for many families whose loved ones died because of questionable killings by soldiers who were never prosecuted (McKittrick et al. 2007:14). The highly emotional lyrics of the song directly criticize Margaret Thatcher and her government's "shoot to kill"[31] policy in the chorus:

> What they got was British justice it's plain for all to see
> Orders straight from Thatcher, Shoot To Kill – their policy.

This leaves the individual verses to keep a personalized focus on the three men, giving them recognition as individuals beyond their identity as IRA Volunteers. At the same time, the last verse links them with three other west Tyrone Brigade members who died[32] and then the ultimate connection, linking their sacrifice and contribution to the historic figure Theobold Wolfe Tone, who is still revered as a leader of the United Irishmen uprising of 1798 (McBride 2001b:2; Walker 2000:30; Jarman 1997:143; Faolain 1983):

> There is a lovely graveyard not far from their homes,
> And that's the final resting place for these lads from West Tyrone

They have gone to join their comrades; Harvey, Devlin, McGlynn and Tone.
May God be with you always the lads from West Tyrone.

Through the performance of the song they celebrate the lives and memorialize the deaths of Charlie Breslin, Michael and Davy Devine, who become symbols for all those who fought and continue to struggle for a united Ireland. By acting out parts of the different republican songs, people express their frustrations or anger over past injuries and inequality, but in a semi-playful atmosphere that celebrates and reinforces the meaning of community and commitment (Mattern 1998:19) for both the performers and audience.

I was intrigued by the performance of the song about Charlie, Michael, and Davy that night – both the story sung by the band, and the response and engagement of everyone else. The performance is a solemn ritual shared by the whole group, yet experienced in a deeply personal way by each individual. For people old enough to have known the young men and who remember the event, the song is a form of memorial and reenactment, demonstrating the link between local heritage and involvement in the wider history of Irish opposition to British rule. For those who are younger, the song's story teaches local history, reinforcing the importance of the past for this community. Many republicans in Strabane continue to have a perspective of being at odds with the police service and are skeptical that elected officials are directing sufficient attention to their well-being. Such concerns and distrust create enduring oppositional relationships that produce closely-guarded identities, both musical and otherwise, and sustain social networks (Dueck 2011). As in the past, many depend on these very localized social networks because of their long history of taking care of their own.

In this chapter I examine the multi-layered significance of "Shoot To Kill Policy (British Justice)" and other republican songs, exploring in particular how these songs retain their relevance for communities like Strabane, in which the negotiation of peace initiatives and the implementation of reforms are proving to require very slow and complex processes of adjustment. Music has been, and continues to be, integral to notions of Irish identity, and particularly important during republican ritual commemorations of dead volunteers. Songs are among the ways they keep their commitment to remember those who "died in active service." In addition, the stories in song extend each act of commemoration beyond the formal ceremonies and into the communities, where they may be performed in local pubs or other settings. Through these various forms of performance, republican music connects people with their heritage while creating and maintaining notions of community and belonging.

Historical background of "rebel" music

Nationalist and rebellious sentiment against English rule in Ireland can be identified as early as the sixteenth-century Tudor period (Boyce 1982:47) as poets and balladeers "began to invoke their heroes to help them jettison the English" (Faolain 1983:9). Republican, or rebel music that developed out of the discontent in that period, is merely one component of the ancient, multi-faceted, and on-going musical tradition of Ireland (O'Flynn 2009:36; Faolain 1983:4; Smyth 2009). Many ballads survive that chronicle various periods in Irish history, elevating Brian Boru to hero status for driving out the Danes in 1014, lamenting the crushing penal codes,[33] and remembering the Battle of the Boyne from both Williamite and Jacobean perspectives (Galvin 1956:14).

Elements of the ancient musical tradition existed in peasant society, too, penetrating "the most banal and prosaic aspects of daily life" (Chapman 1997:40). Particularly in rural areas, it was customary for people to gather or visit in one another's homes during the long winter nights, where the activities included singing, dancing, making music, and telling stories (Ó Súilleabháin 1973:10; Harvey 1992:7), along with sharing the latest news (Shields 1993:145). And while the Flight of the Earls in 1607 brought about the end of traditional Gaelic clan rule (Faolain 1983:108) with its structure of patronage, the bardic customs of music and poetry managed to survive in a range of public and private settings, albeit with a few adjustments.

Without their aristocratic patrons, bards and harpers in the seventeenth century became itinerant poets and musicians, who could travel about the country only after obtaining permits from local officials (Faolain 1983:191). Although they continued to be "chroniclers and interpreters of Irish society" (McLaughlin 2003:40), with their privileged status in a stratified society eliminated, they intermingled with the lower classes in new ways so that "Irish music [became] a recombination of plebeian and aristocratic traditions sharing a common national character" (Greaves 1980:20). By the 1700s, itinerant balladeers were traveling from town to town, making money by selling printed copies of their songs (Leyden 1989;1; Zimmermann 1967:21), effectively supplanting the traditional oral role of poets and musicians (Faolain 1983:206). These songs, commonly called broadsides because of the distinctive shape of the paper used to print them, sold for a penny or half penny each and noted whichever well-known tune could be used to sing it (Sawyers 2001:148).[34] Broadsides were a primary source of news

and political or social commentary (Dowling 2010:147), fulfilling a function later taken up by newspapers.

In addition to broadsides, small inexpensive pamphlets called chapbooks, containing a combination of songs, "historical narratives, romantic and moral tales, and religious sermons" (Leyden 1989:2) were available from street vendors. Printers in Strabane, like other small towns in Ireland, served a regional market with a range of broadsides and chapbooks for both Protestant and Catholic communities through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth centuries. Demand for these chapbooks increased in Strabane following Catholic Emancipation in 1829,[35] then waned by mid-century as the new railway eliminated the advantage of local publishing (Gamble 2000:255). Even as readership grew with the new educational opportunity of the 1800s, a large portion of Irish society remained illiterate into the late nineteenth-century (Boyce 1982:204; Hoppen 1999:27),[36] so that oral transmission of songs and stories continued alongside the expanding interest in the printed word. In some cases non-literate people would gather to hear political, frequently seditious material, read or sung to them in public settings (Faolain 1983:291). This public engagement of balladeers performing and selling their broadsides and chapbooks served to encourage and facilitate interest in political issues, as it fostered resentment towards continued British rule and promoted feelings of Irish nationalism. Moreover, the circulation of broadsides also provided the means for peasant society to come "into contact with some political ideas and literary formulae of the upper classes" (Zimmermann 1967:22) that they would not otherwise have heard.

All of this public dialog and interaction was progressing not only in the broader context of the Celtic language and literary revival (White 1998b:96), but with an

awareness of political changes taking place in America (Zimmermann 1967:41), and more particularly, in Europe where music was increasingly utilized "to enhance feelings of national identity" (Sweers 2005:68). Since most Irish men and women resented the inequality they experienced under British control of Ireland, many of the popular ballads in Ireland contained seditious sentiments which could disrupt a town's orderly peace when sung in places with large numbers of both Catholics and Protestants (Murphy 1979:93). However, the more aggressive republican ballads with revolutionary rhetoric were performed in less public settings, such as a pub, and generated a different form of audience participation. According to nineteenth-century official records,

> The street ballad was sung by one individual to an audience who cheered and encouraged the singer, but did not join in the song. The songs of the public house, on the other hand, were for communal singing. One man might lead the song, but the others joined in the refrain and a spirit of camaraderie was fostered by this participation, even the gestures of the singers pointing to this camaraderie. As early as 1804, a report came to [Dublin officials] concerning the singing of a seditious song in a Newry public house. The refrain was repeated at the end of each stanza… at which [time] the singers all clasped and raised their hands… It is significant that this song was sung in the seclusion of a public house, among sympathizers, and out of earshot of the authorities, whereas the ballads were bawled about the streets with the obvious intention of baiting police and loyal individuals…for the next few decades the two traditions – the street ballad and the revolutionary song – ran side by side. (Murphy 1979:92)

More than one hundred years later, I sat in various venues around Northern Ireland while solo performers or small ensembles played and sang ballads and other songs with primarily republican sentiments. Like the camaraderie Murphy describes in nineteenth-century public houses, the audiences were highly engaged in the music – holding hands and raising their arms in unison with the tempo, as they sang along with the performer(s). Frances Morton argues that the physicality of this interaction between audience and performers contributes to the "materiality of space and time…

[transforming] the proxemics of pub spaces" (Morton 2005:670) and further contributing to the dynamics of the experience. And while in the cases I observed, both performers and audience may have taken precautions over *what* was stated *where*, no one was arrested for singing songs, even if anti-British sentiment was being expressed. Back in the nineteenth century, local authorities were highly concerned about what they called "insolent" ballad singers and their seditious material, regularly writing official reports of specific incidents and their continued frustration at the public's complicity that made successful arrest and prosecution of these singers rather difficult (Murphy 1979:95). Before the end of the nineteenth century, the tradition of itinerant ballad singers and related magisterial attempts to silence them seems to have dwindled away (Zimmermann 1967:23; Murphy 1979:99), but they left a legacy of musical style for celebrating and expressing republican heritage, identity, and political viewpoint that has endured into the twenty-first century.

Music as political commentary and cultural identity

As they have since the eighteenth century, "republican," or "rebel" songs represent a form of protest, expression of resistance, and performance of heritage (Faolain 1983; Zimmermann 1967). Today the songs include commentary on shared experiences during the Troubles as performers invite participation from the audience. In many cases songs retell significant events that happened right in their community, or places they know nearby. Like other forms of "Irish" music, these songs connect identity to a place and heritage, which in turn has links to a collective memory of difference,

social boundaries, and the moral and political reality they inhabit (Stokes 1997b:3). The regular retelling of the story through song guarantees that those who died remain part of public memory as it "impinges strongly upon the present, with… chronicles of rebellion and war impacting … present-day attitudes and material practice" (McCarthy 2005a:16). Moreover, engaging demonstrations of this powerful public memory extend even to instrumental performances of the "songs" when no lyrics are sung; because the story remains embedded in the tune – both musician and audience understand and relate to each story signified by the music. On several occasions my friend Deirdre enthusiastically told me the background stories of different tunes adding "You know, once you hear the music then it's in your head and you hear it all day… [and] you know the story behind it."

By singing, playing, or acting out parts of the different republican songs, people memorialize those who died during the Troubles; celebrate their republican heritage while proclaiming their identity as *Irish* men and women; and reinforce their community bonds. Ethnomusicologist John Baily suggests that as a symbol of identity, music not only acts "as a ready means for the identification of different ethnic or social groups, but it has potent emotional connotations and can be used to assert and negotiate identity in a particularly powerful manner" (Baily 1997:48). Trevor Dolan, an active Sinn Féin member in his mid-twenties stressed the political party's awareness that "music is very much a part of honoring people and commemorating the sacrifices they made. It's also something people can relate to… songs can also be very simple, sending a very poignant and important message." The message and key elements referenced in "Shoot To Kill Policy (British Justice)" are common in other stories or songs relating the deaths of IRA

or INLA volunteers from communities across Northern Ireland. The familiar storyline

and common structure of these songs are the basis of their appeal. Although many people

are partial to whichever song memorializes their local lads, when I asked forty-nine-year-

old memorial band member Tad McCarthy to name his favorite song he answered

> I wouldn't pinpoint one particular tune - they all have their significance… I'd rather a song about a dead member of the movement - whether it be IRA, INLA, [or] a Hunger Striker. They may have died prematurely from their own bomb - a lot of that happened when they were killed accidentally from their own devices… There were songs made for almost every republican who died in the war, plus so many made up about Hunger Strikers. I wouldn't say there was any one [I like best] - they all have their significance… There are old tunes from more than 40 years ago that are being revived… you would've went to some republican functions [as a child] - and you would've heard the same music and you would've heard a lot of the bands over and over again… So you got to know the tunes - actually be singing them yourself. If there was a band playing a new song I couldn't sing it, because you learn them from hearing them so many times… [Now] I would listen to it through YouTube. I have a lot of tapes and so on, but that stuff's on YouTube now… The children can even tap the beat, they don't realize that they're learning the tunes. They're nine years to seventeen. They've grown up with us going on summer holiday to Donegal. There's a lot of republican areas down there, with music in the pubs and maybe playing songs that we've been listening to over the years. [The song] I listen to most is about three friends who were shot dead by the SAS in 1988[37]… It happened between here and Carrickmore, a ways up the road from here in a townland called Drumnakilly, hence the name "The Drumnakilly Ambush."

In the end Tad admits having a "favorite" song as well – one that relates the story of an

event near where he grew up and memorializes his friends. Meanwhile his extended

answer demonstrates the importance of each song being part of a larger story which is

perpetuated by a collection of songs that continues to engage listeners as well as

performers in a variety of contemporary venues.

Songs like the "The Drumnakilly Ambush" and "Shoot to Kill Policy (British

Justice)" link local experiences with similar communities across Northern Ireland. They

encourage and support the social memory regarding the specific sites where these

individuals died because of the importance of *place*. Delores Hayden argues for the

"power of place – the power of ordinary… landscapes to nurture citizen's public

memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory…[and that] even the

bitter experiences and fights communities have lost need to be remembered – so as not to

diminish their importance" (Hayden 1995:10). In fact, "lost fights" are frequently *the*

popular stories in Ireland, as they create martyrs of "those who died for the nationalist

faith" (Ford 2001:43) and inspire others to join the fight for a united Ireland.

These stories in song follow a specific notion of form and content (Vansina

1985:79), so while each song is firmly located in a particular community, they have

broader appeal because the stories share familiar elements that others can recognize and

identify from their own personal experience, further validating everyone's sacrifice and

loss. The songs offer a framework for communities to "construct, embody and renew [a]

shared sense of the past" (Ó Ciosáin 2011:95) that corresponds to experiences in other

communities.

Each event involved a small number of local "lads" who not only "gave their

lives" in the struggle for a united Ireland, but continue to be recalled as valued

individuals who played active roles in their families and communities beyond

volunteering for the IRA or INLA. The individual references may be brief, such as the

comment about Brian Mullin having a friendly smile in "The Drumnakilly Ambush," but

certain phrases further serve to personalize the story by speaking directly to each person

killed rather than merely present a chronicle of his life and death. In Strabane, Michael

Devine is remembered for being a prize-winning snooker player, which is noted in

"Shoot to Kill (British Justice)" along with a related sporting analogy to describe his death:

> Oh you were such a champion down in the snooker hall,
> But you played your last frame when you answered Ireland's call.

Singer/songwriter Donal Bready began writing songs and performing during the folk revival of the 1960s and was drawn particularly to music performed by Americans such as Hank Williams and Johnny Cash. At the same time his earliest memories include his parents singing political, or republican songs such as "Skibbereen," which recounts one man's experience of eviction and emigration during the famine of 1848 and vows revenge for the abolition of tenant's rights (Galvin 1956:47).[38] Donal expanded his folk repertoire to include songs about various incidents of resistance and rebellion against the British as the Troubles progressed, such as writing and performing songs that highlighted individuals in the same way as "Shoot to Kill (British Justice)." He explains, "I tried to put into words and music some of the feelings that could not be expressed otherwise. Family and friends of Volunteers who died would come and talk with me about things that the person did – trying to give me a feeling for that individual – and I would write it up into a song." Still, he admits it was challenging to craft personalized songs when so much in each story was similar. Donal says that "you have to have a hook – you're telling a story, but more than that – it has to express defiance."

Key shared elements in many stories behind songs memorializing the death of IRA or INLA Volunteers include the duplicity of local police and British Forces, who contributed to the initial event and later were granted anonymity. In addition, family members of dead Volunteers frequently were taunted by local police, while their lawyers

faced legal obstructions when they struggled to clarify and make public the true facts of an event during inquests (Rolston 2000; Punch 2012). In Strabane, solicitors for the two families of the IRA Volunteers killed on February 23, 1985 argued that the police and the British army colluded in a covert shoot-to-kill operation, noting that

> (t)he number of British army personnel in the area – at least 50 – was too large to be termed a "routine patrol"…The entire Headquarters Mobile Support Unit (HMSU) of the RUC – about 30 officers – normally stationed in Derry, had been moved to Strabane the night before the incident…There had been a preliminary briefing of army and police personnel in Strabane Barracks the night before the incident…[and during questioning] a forensic scientist … revealed that, although rifles found near the three dead IRA men were loaded, two had their safety catches on and none had been fired. He also stated that the three men were shot mostly in the back from a range of about 20 feet, even though the British army evidence was that they had been shot as they walked towards the patrol. (Rolston 2000:117)

Similar police and army collusion has been proven in a variety of incidents throughout the Troubles. Security forces such as local police (RUC) and British army members, along with civic administrative personnel and court officials, frequently gave preference to the Protestant majority while ignoring and/or limiting civil rights and due process for the Catholic minority (Punch 2012:10). During the Saville Inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday in Derry on January 30, 1972, a member of the Military Police reported that

> when allegations against soldiers were made, investigation would be split between the Military Police, who would examine soldiers and army witnesses, and the RUC, who would deal with civilian evidence. This was in order to protect soldiers to whom both the Military Police and RUC were likely to be sympathetic. He added that Military Police investigations of disputed shootings by the army were, in this period, a matter of seeking information "for managerial, not criminal purposes." (Sanders and Wood 2012:178)[39]

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Facts coming out of recent inquiries such as this serve to confirm suspicions during the Troubles that British soldiers were not being held accountable for their actions through any regular criminal justice system.

As noted previously, songs about IRA martyr/heroes offered an outlet for expressing anger, sorrow, and even resistance to what republicans saw as British-sanctioned injustice and continue to do so today. No one is arguing that IRA Volunteers killed in such actions were not involved in armed combat against the British. However, the presumed culpability of those killed does not justify the many examples of police and/or British Army misconduct and brutality towards nationalists throughout Northern Ireland that occurred even before the Troubles officially started, such as internment without trial between 1956 and 1962 (Alonso 2007:31). Particularly egregious behavior on the part of police or British forces engaged in armed conflict with IRA Volunteers, plus targeted harassment of Catholics on a daily basis only increased nationalist and republican resentment. In addition to encouraging resistance of British rule in Northern Ireland, it fueled people's determination to claim and express their identity as *Irish* citizens in opposition to that rule. The lived experiences of unequal treatment in civic affairs, police interaction, and through the justice system, continued during and after the multiple ceasefires[40] for republicans in Strabane and still colors people's attitudes, perceptions, and behavior to this day.

Elements of republicans' outrage, opposition, and distrust of police and the judicial process are expressed, directly or indirectly, in rebel songs along with the specific historical events of each story. Many of the details are not explicitly stated, but that is not necessary – everyone knows the particular story or one quite like it.

Singer/songwriter Donal Bready claims that listening, singing, and physically acting out portions of the songs becomes a catharsis for regular listeners. Songs like "Shoot to Kill (British Justice)" also are a source of introduction and learning about the Irish past for younger as well as new audiences. Twenty-eight-year-old Strabane Memorial Flute Band member Pauric recalls hearing rebel songs from when he was very young:

> I think I [was] politicized at an early age, because I've experienced police and Brits raiding me house… I suppose you become a product of your own environment and you're hearin' songs 'n' you're hearin' people talk and you're seein' how people are being treated, especially in the Head of the Town community. You know, it was every day [the Brits or police] were up in people's houses.

Pauric's political awareness grew out of his personal experience as a child – what he saw and heard, including the music:

> Ah well, we are a musical family you know… Me sister, she plays the flute [and] she sings - I do a bit of singing, my father, he would play the mouth organ [and] his father, he was a musician and he played the accordion. He was an all-Ireland champion on the accordion, playing at weddings and so forth, so the music's in us. Back in [19]90 3, 4, 5 and 6 it would've been republican music we played at the house for the parties. The whole community was just sort of circled round.

Back then his father would explain some of the history behind what was going on, then as he grew older Pauric took it on himself to collect and read books on Irish history to gain a better understanding of both sides of the conflict.

For musicians like Donal Bready, the story in song is a presentation of history that is often incompletely or inaccurately registered in the more conventional forms of historical record. The musician/performer, along with the audience then uses this history as an argument, or proof of legitimacy (Vansina 1985:94), to support claims about British injustice or present an alternative account of how a specific event took place. John McLaughlin claims that frequently the songs are what keeps the stories alive in social

memory and although they are "fiercely partisan and usually downright biased they are nevertheless the repositories and touchstones of tradition, both reflecting and influencing politics and history" (McLaughlin 2003:1). They also provide a form of memorialization that brings both performer and audience together in the ritualized activity of remembrance (Casey 2000:227) in which the story in song expresses people's emotions about the event. On one hand they are celebrating those who died as "martyrs" for the cause of Irish freedom, but there is anger, too, over actions of the police or military during the incident, such as giving no opportunity for surrender. Pre-planned ambushes initiated by Crown Forces that ended only after all of the targeted republicans were dead, occurred numerous times around the North, with each inspiring a commemorative song, including songs memorializing the shooting of the three Strabane lads in 1985, the death of eight Volunteers and one innocent civilian at Loughgall in 1987, and four young men killed at Clonoe in 1992.[41]

These three songs all share common tropes found in other twentieth century songs about hero/martyrs, as well as many of the earlier republican ballads. First, the songs name the dead, sometimes repeatedly, and connect them to specific places and events. In his discussion of current stories that recount sixteenth-century events in County Fermanagh, Henry Glassie claims that

> Stories set in place bring history into the present. Dates alienate. They are a means to kill the past and bury it in irrelevance. So dates are avoided, and stories are given conceptual or spatial introductions, designed to connect them to the present. At the time of the Ford,[42] the English occupied the country. They still do. At the time of Mackan Hill, Protestants and Catholics fought. They still do. The tale's spatial precision makes it tangible, real… Place is space rich enough to provide travel for the mind while the body sits still, space so full of the past that it forces people to become responsible for its future. (Glassie 1982:664)

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Locating either a story, or story in song, to an exact setting serves a similar purpose. Even when people do not know a specific individual, they know that the town – the *place* – exists. These townlands, villages, and city communities are *real*, so the story is real, too. By extension the heroes named become forever connected to that place through the story in song, with many of them remaining or being revived for popular or political performance centuries after the actual event.

A number of songs from the time of the 1798 rebellion[43] continue to have wide appeal, benefitting from the folk music revival of the late 1950s, early 1960s (Sawyers 2001:176). In addition to being identified as Irish rebel music, they are among the tunes regularly played on the pub's jukebox and sung by the crowd in Clancy's Bar, on a Sunday night in Strabane. "The Rising of the Moon," written by John Keegan Casey in the mid-nineteenth century and relating an episode from the 1798 rebellion, is both a perennial folk favorite and rebel ballad. At the time it was written, the song was set to the well-known and catchy tune for singing "United Irish songs 'Green Upon My Cape' and 'The Wearing of the Green,' which in turn, originated from an eighteenth-century Scottish march" (Beiner 2007:95). In the years since, Keegan's title has become a symbol of Irish rebellion on its own (Faolain 1983:292). The first verse presents a dialog between comrades, identifying one as Shaun O'Farrell and hinting at a clandestine operation:

"Oh then, tell me Shaun O'Farrell, why do you hurry so?"
"Hush, *a bhuachaill*, hush and listen," and his cheeks were all aglow.
"I bear orders from the captain, make you ready quick and soon,
For the pikes must be together by the rising of the moon."[44]

Using tunes that already were widely-known and popular among ordinary people helped introduce and keep songs like "The Rising of the Moon" in regular use. Georges-Denis

Zimmermann adds that in some cases, the chosen "melody had already been associated with some successful political song and had thus acquired a meaning quite independent of its musical qualities" (Zimmermann 1967:113).

Several songs about events in 1798 have multiple variations of one basic story that regale the action of one particular hero and identifies the site where he fought for Irish freedom. In addition to attesting to the popular memory of the rebellion, the variations demonstrate a story's "capacity for self-regeneration over a number of decades – a good example of living, and changing – memory" (Cronin 2001:119). Out of the many songs memorializing the rebellion of 1798, there are several song variants for the story of Father John Murphy, with "Boulavogue"[45] remaining popular even today (Faolain 1983:331; Doyle and Folan 1998:107; McLaughlin 2003:59).[46] The song repeats Father Murphy's name, linking him to specific skirmish locations throughout each stanza, as it regales his leadership in the Wexford rebellion efforts. Then in the last verse, it mourns his ultimate martyrdom after the rebels' defeat:

<div style="text-align:center">

At Vinegar Hill o'er the pleasant Slaney,
Our heroes vainly stood back-to-back;
And the yeos at Tullow took Father Murphy
And burned his body upon the rack
God grant you glory, brave Father Murphy,
And open heaven to all your men;
For the Cause that called you may call tomorrow
In another fight for the Green again.

</div>

Many of the songs about 1798, like this version of Father Murphy's exploits and "The Rising of the Moon" were written mid- to late- nineteenth century, reflecting the continued interest in the republican goals of those who rose up in 1798, a commitment to remembering the individuals who were involved, and hinting that another uprising could

come in the future. Both songs are among the favorites played on the jukebox at Clancy's

Bar, engendering enthusiastic as well as melodramatic patron participation on every

chorus.

Other songs link the heroes to an annual holiday along with a place – adding

another tangible element without specifying the exact year. "The Drumboe Martyrs" tells

the story of four men executed in 1923 near Stranolar, County Donegal, during the Irish

Civil War when they refused to sign a document supporting the Free State (Ó Duibhir

2011:228).[47] The song anchors the shooting to St. Patrick's Day in the first verse, names

the men individually in the third verse, calling them martyrs, and still later identifies them

as republican soldiers:

> 'Twas the feast of St. Patrick by the dawn of the day,
> The hills of Tirconnaill stood somber and gray,
> When the first light of morning illumined the sky,
> Four brave Irish soldiers were led forth to die.
> [...]
> They were Enright, O'Sullivan, and Daly by name,
> From the counties of Kerry and Derry they came,
> And gallant Sean Larkin from the banks of the Roe
> Completes the four martyrs shot dead at Drumboe.
>
> Four republican soldiers were dragged from their cells
> Where for months they suffered wild torments like hell.
> No mercy was asked from their pitiless foe
> No mercy was shown by the thugs at Drumboe.

This song is unusual in that the Drumboe "martyrs" were among the Irish forces fighting

in opposition to the Partition of Ireland and their unspecified foes are, in reality, fellow

Irishmen who supported the government of the newly formed Irish Free State.[48] Like

many rebel songs, however, it captures "the feel of the traditional ballad, simple, direct,

and passionate. It is an angry, somber, terse and bitter lament, using strong

uncompromising language like 'traitor,' 'merciless,' and 'thugs,' for it deals with the death of real people" (McLaughlin 2003:204).

Although I cannot attest to whether or not "The Drumboe Martyrs" is well-known beyond the republican communities of West Tyrone and Donegal, its use there is emblematic of the significant linkage between people on both sides of the nearby border.[49] In this case the song is not memorializing local heroes, but rather celebrating the ultimate sacrifice by these men who made the choice to die rather than give up their commitment to a united, independent Ireland. Maura Cronin suggests that in the nineteenth century "poets of the romantic nationalist school transformed the deluded peasant and 'broth of a boy' rebel into a much more genteel figure – the tragic hero-patriot" (Cronin 2001:114), setting a pattern for remembering the dead in this way. It is the martyrdom – the commitment to a cause through self-sacrifice – of the men in the woods called Drumboe that is important. The notation in the second verse that three of the men came from the Free State (County Kerry) while one from the North (County Derry) simply adds an additional symbolic element to the song – indirectly celebrating the united efforts of republican hero-patriots from both sides of the border:

> Three left their loved homes in Kerry's green vale
> And one came from Derry to fight for the Gael,
> But instead of true friends they met traitors and foe
> And uncoffined were laid in the woods at Drumboe.

By repeating the home counties and noting three of the four came from the South, the song reminds republicans living in the North that not all residents of the "Twenty-six Counties" were satisfied with Partition, because it left six counties under British rule.

Many of these rebel ballads contain a chorus, or other form of repeated phrase that is "confrontational" (Mattern 1998:25); placing blame on police and/or British action and usually vowing reprisal and continued allegiance to a united Ireland. Some phrasing is very direct with a clear warning of retribution, such as in "Loughgall Ambush":

Oh England do you really think it's over?
If you do you're going to have to kill us all.
For until you take your murderers out of Ireland,
We will make them rue the blood spilled at Loughgall

The recurring chorus of "Shoot to Kill Policy (British Justice)" is an indictment that Margaret Thatcher's leadership led to the three young men being shot with no chance of surrender:

What they got was British Justice, it's plain for all to see
Orders straight from Thatcher, Shoot to Kill – their policy.

In contrast, the final verse of the "Drumboe Martyrs" is reflexive as it takes into account the culpability of Irish citizens executing other Irish citizens. The stanza prophetically claims that nothing will erase this blot on Donegal, emphasizing the endlessness and depth of the disgrace by referring to the region by its name as the ancient stronghold of the chiefs of Tír Chonaill,[50] adding that "all the waters" of the three rivers in the region will never wash away the shame:

Let Tirconnaill n'er boast of her honour and fame,
All the waters of Finn could not wash out her shame.
While the Foyle and the Swilly continue to flow
That stain will remain on the woods of Drumboe.

Whether confrontational or reflexive, these stanzas are embedded with emotional "tugs" over deaths that did not have to happen and intimations of a shared responsibility to bear witness and remember.

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Another story of ill-fated cross-border comrades took place in 1957 during the IRA's Border Campaign, code-named Operation Harvest (Moloney 2003:50).[51] In an introduction similar to "Drumboe Martyrs," the song "Sean South of Garryowen" contextualizes the event by stating it happened on the New Year's holiday but without identifying the year, and places it in "a Border town." Then it makes it clear that the Volunteers involved came from all over Ireland by mentioning several of the counties represented,[52] yet naming only one man in that first verse – Sean South of Garryowen – and identifying him as their leader:

> It was on a dreary New Year's eve as the shades of night came down,
> A lorry load of volunteers approached a Border town.
> There were men from Dublin and from Cork, Fermanagh and Tyrone,
> But the leader was a Limerick man, Sean South of Garryowen.

Without knowing the back-story a listener will not grasp the details such as who else was involved and where they were from, but in this case that is not essential to understand the point being made. The use of the term "volunteer" is significant, since it indicates the men were members of the IRA, with the important element here being that this was a collaboration of IRA men from all around the island, working together in opposition to Britain's continued presence in Northern Ireland.[53] No matter whether they lived in the now-independent Republic of Ireland or remained under British rule in the North, those committed to the republican ideals expressed at the Easter Rising of 1916 were not willing to accept the status quo. And while other songs ground the event in a specific town name, for this story the point being made is *united* opposition to the Border – the imaginary and invisible line that partitions the island.

As far as the counties named in the first verse, in reality none of the Volunteers

credited with the raid were from County Tyrone. It would seem that for Sean Costello,

the author of the song, poetic license prevailed and he used the only county name that

would rhyme with Garryowen. Furthermore, in order to keep the song within the

hero/martyr tradition, Costello credits Sean South as being the leader. According to

McLaughlin, the raid was actually led by Sean Garland with second in command being

David O'Connell, but both of them escaped capture and fled into the Republic

(McLaughlin 2003:221). Specific details such as who really was directing the operation

are not as important as telling a good story about two brave Irishmen's sacrifice. In

addition, Costello set the song to one of the tunes regaling the heroism of Roddy

McCorley from the rebellion of 1798 and obviously was influenced by the rebel spirit in

the original song (McLaughlin 2003:215).[54] The practice of rewriting an old ballad to

relate a current event has been a common strategy for creating new rebel balladry for

centuries (Faolain 1983:370). In the case of the story of Sean South, using the tune from

"Roddy McCorley" associates the mid-twentieth-century story with exploits from 1798

and utilizes the hero/martyr framework. Then, by titling the song "Sean South of

Garryowen," Costello follows the "deep-rooted sense of identity and unshakeable pride

of place that permeates traditional song" (Leyden 1989:1) composition in Ireland. Sean

O'Boyle notes that this idea "underlies song after song… that some little place… has

produced the sturdiest men or the fairest women in all Ireland. Local pride rings out in

the very titles [such as] 'The Rose of Moneymore'… [or] The 'Thatchers of Gleanrea'"

(O'Boyle 1957:49). Costello continues to emphasize that pride of place by including the

phrase "Sean South of Garryowen" in every stanza at the same time he celebrates this

event as the act of North/South solidarity that is an essential point of pride as well. Although the raid on the Brookeborough RUC barracks was ultimately unsuccessful, the event garnered wide-spread public support for the republican struggle and inspired this song as well as "The Patriot Game" – now both internationally-known ballads (Magee 2011:101).

The song "Sean South of Garryowen," commonly referred to as "Sean South," is certainly quite popular in Strabane. It is among the tunes regularly played on the jukebox at Clancy's Bar and always has enthusiastic vocal accompaniment by patrons with particular attention paid to the line "there were men from Dublin and from Cork, Fermanagh, and Tyrone" – at which time voices rise in volume as singers proudly raise a clenched fist and pump the air to each syllable in the phrase "and Tyrone." Like many rebel songs, "Sean South" invites participation and a celebration of republican pride, as it emphasizes the solidarity of the men involved and links the death of Sean South, as well as Feargal O'Hanlon, with the long struggle for a united Ireland and heroes of the past:

> No more he'll hear the seagulls cry o'er the murmering Shannon tide
> For he fell beneath a Northern sky, O'Hanlon by his side.
> He had gone to join that gallant band of Plunkett, Pearse and Tone,
> A martyr for old Ireland, Sean South of Garryowen.

An essential element of many rebel ballads is connecting the exploits and willing sacrifice of otherwise "obscure young insurgents whose names were not deemed sufficiently important to make the history books" (Doyle and Folan 1998:113), such as South and O'Hanlon, to a selection of prominent figures in events like the 1798 rebellion and the Easter Rising of 1916. Here, South and O'Hanlon are envisioned joined up with the 1798 hero Theobald Wolfe Tone (1763-1798) as well as Joseph Mary Plunkett (1887-

1916) and Patrick Pearse (1879-1916), both Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) members and signers of the 1916 Proclamation declaring Ireland as a republic. As I discussed previously, "Shoot to Kill (British Justice)" also links the dead to Wolfe Tone at the same time it connects them to several local men important to the republican struggle within Strabane's area of West Tyrone. In contrast, "The Drumnakilly Ambush" avoids connecting the Drumnakilly heroes to any named individuals, but relates what happened to those men to the contemporary and higher-profile British army ambushes of IRA Volunteers at Loughgall and Gibraltar:[55]

> On the road past Drumnakilly sorrow shrouds the roadway still
> There the SAS men lay in ambush to do Maggie Thatcher's will
> Like Loughgall and like Gibralter British justice has no frills
> They came to Tyrone for vengeance and their orders were to kill.

Linking a specific hero/martyr to one or more of the earlier iconic republican heroes reiterates his or her role in the long history of sacrifice and struggle against British rule in Ireland, while comparing commonalities in ambushes conducted by Crown Forces underscores the injustice of each event and argues for the importance of honoring all hero/martyrs.

The common elements and themes in these songs make the event from each location a shared experience of injustice and tragedy for people with republican or nationalist sentiments in Northern Ireland, the Republic, and the Irish diaspora world-wide. Listening to, or performing any of these songs becomes both a discursive and reflexive process, subconsciously encouraging individuals to think carefully and deeply about their role or commitment to republican ideals, in addition to serving as a commemoration of those who died. Through the discursive process of remembering, the

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meaning of each event shifts from one specific tragedy to being symbolic of the broader struggle (Fast and Pegley 2012a:22) towards establishing a united Ireland. Moreover, the songs have the capacity to increase awareness of local history and inspire additional study to understand the long-standing issues and how they developed. During the Troubles, each event received substantial media coverage at the time it occurred. Repeated performances of the songs embeds the story even more solidly into public memory, so much so that for many people, simply hearing the tune played by a memorial flute band or any other instrumental presentation will remind people of the story it represents.

Performing the songs

Close to fifteen years into the peace process, musicians continue to perform republican-themed songs celebrating the past and projecting their hopes for a united Ireland in their future, although there are subtle and not-so-subtle changes in where and when this occurs. In Strabane and elsewhere in Northern Ireland, a combination of the economic down-turn over the past few years following any benefit they may have felt from the Celtic Tiger boom days; the short, but significant passage of time since the conflict officially ended; and the variety of efforts to implement peace process initiatives, have contributed to changes in how often and where people can and do listen to republican music. To be sure, many remain committed to the fundamental ideals of republicanism, but they prefer living with the peace, and are evaluating their perspectives and actions with new awareness. Primarily this awareness is that one's behavior should "not offend" people from "the other side of the house." To that end, many musicians now

alter their performance repertoire to accommodate or anticipate "mixed" audiences, only singing rebel music in specific venues. Others, whose performance identity has always been political and republican, have fewer bookings and those are selected carefully to avoid being associated with any of the current dissident groups. Several of these musicians have been performing for thirty years and more, so cutting back on the amount of travel is welcome in many ways and a new generation of performers is quickly taking their place with a broader mix of music.

The folk and Celtic music revivals of the 1960s developed during a period conducive to expressing resistance along with the renewed appeal of ballads from earlier times. Sawyers credits slightly earlier performances in the 1950s by Americans like Woody Guthrie, Pete Seeger, and Leadbelly, or Scotsman Ewan McColl with inspiring the extensive growth of "folk," or acoustic music performance in the 1960s (Sawyer 2001:176).[56] The formation and success of groups such as the Dubliners, Clancy Brothers, and the Wolfe Tones raised awareness and appreciation for the rich musical heritage in Ireland. This awareness encouraged those already involved with some aspect of folk or "Irish" music to continue, inspired others to get involved in the music, and cultivated appreciative audiences in Ireland and around the world. As dissatisfaction and protests over civil rights abuses in Northern Ireland increased in the late 1960s, it was inevitable that some people would choose music as a "weapon" to express their unwillingness to accept continued inequality and to celebrate action taken against Britain's presence in Northern Ireland, similar to the protest music coming from America. Using folk idioms, these propaganda songs point out "some perceived 'problem-situation' in the social system" (Denisoff 1966:582) as they solicit support, create

solidarity, and inspire hope for a better future. In the years since, additional musicians and expanding audiences have continued singing the old standards, as they embraced new ballads relating recent events that are crafted and presented by both groups and solo performers.

In the opinion of people in Strabane, the most widely known and commercially successful "republican" band is the Wolfe Tones, who celebrated their fiftieth year performing in 2013. The band was started by Dublin-based brothers in 1963 who soon expanded to become a foursome performing around Ireland. Since then they have performed in countries around the world, getting a particularly enthusiastic response from the Irish diaspora in the United States. Today the Wolfe Tones are a trio maintaining a busy concert schedule and performing with the same high energy level and audience participation that made their initial reputation. The main page of the official Wolfe Tones' website describes them as "arguably the World's most popular folk and ballad band,"[57] with no reference to any political aspects in their music. However, in the header of the section that lists available CDs and other merchandise available for sale there is a telling quote:

> To be called a rebel is no shame or mark of disgrace… All the great asserters of Liberty, the saviours of their Country, the benefactors of Mankind, in all ages… HAVE BEEN CALLED REBELS! (emphasis in website quotation)[58]

A review of the Wolfe Tones' discography shows they offer a range of songs – some performed by many other musicians, and a few that have become their "signature" songs, such as "A Nation Once Again," which is based on the nineteenth-century Thomas Davis poem, and "Let the People Sing," written by founding member Brian Warfield.[59] Both are crowd-pleasing tunes, with the first voicing the continued longing for the

imagined nation of Ireland and the latter an energetic tune inviting all to come together to

celebrate their Irish heritage by resisting oppression through song:

For those who are in love
There's a song that's warm and tender
For those who are oppressed
In song you can protest
So liberate your minds
And give your soul expression
Open up your hearts
I'll sing for you this song

(chorus) Let the people sing their stories and their songs
And the music of their native land
Their lullabies and battlecries and songs of hope and joy
So join us hand in hand
All across this ancient land
Throughout the test of time
It was music that kept their spirits free
Those songs of yours and mine

Subsequent verses reference elements from Ireland's long history, from ancient bards

telling stories, through the Cromwellian period when harpers and bards were killed, to the

Famine in the 1840s, always coming back to the chorus which suggests an unbroken

connection with ancient Ireland where the shared music – "yours and mine" – kept, and

still keeps, spirits free. In addition to rabble-rousing songs with clear republican

perspectives, the Wolfe Tones perform sentimental ballads of emigration and exile, and a

smattering of nostalgic songs idealizing hearth and home.

The Wolfe Tones' 2012 concert in Strabane drew several hundred people ranging

in age from children to older seniors with a heavy proportion of young adults who were

on their feet and singing along with every number. Since nothing begins at the stated time

in Ireland, I was surprised when my friends insisted some of us get there early, but they

stressed that it was the only way to get good seats. We managed to be the first in line

outside the venue, but soon many more queued up behind us. Clearly there was high anticipation from the crowd. Once inside, we claimed a table along the side with a great view of the stage and audience, with plenty of room for the extended group of family and friends who eventually joined us. Inside the hall there was a table selling Wolfe Tones merchandise including CDs, T-shirts, and tri-colored head-bands that people alternately tied around their heads, wore around their necks, or just waved about as the music played. Meanwhile, images with related, but minimal text about significant periods and events in Irish history, were projected on a large screen at the back of the stage. Generally these were nineteenth-century political cartoons or archival photographs depicting British hegemony and how the Irish suffered and endured over the years. These images continued cycling behind the performers throughout the concert. Interspersed with their high-energy songs and open encouragement for the audience to join them singing or cheering, the band promoted their various merchandise and upcoming fiftieth anniversary cruise. Even with all of their blatant advertising, they packed a lot of music in each set as well. Then for a few songs, such as "Shoot to Kill (British Justice)" about the three Strabane lads, they asked for quiet and respectful attention, not merely acknowledging the local event, but demonstrating that some songs deserve more serious consideration. During the Troubles the Wolfe Tones never performed in the North, but were accessible over radio from the Republic and they performed at venues near the border. From Strabane, for example, people would catch them in concert in Buncranna, which is roughly 32 miles away, or Letterkenny, only 16 miles away in County Donegal.

Another popular well-known group, The Irish Brigade, is based in East Tyrone and has been performing republican music, within and beyond Northern Ireland, for thirty

years. Before that, several of the band members were playing and singing classic folk music under the family name and writing some of the songs themselves. The music of Hank Williams, Johnny Cash, and Tom T. Hall of the United States were among their favorites early on, along with other general folk music of the 1960s (Smyth 2004:87; Cohen 1990:514). Yet once the Troubles began, they took on more regional and topical republican music. Soon they and the rest of Ireland saw the power and significance of putting their feelings about what was happening into words and music.

The period of internment without trial, initiated in August 1971, was the first pivotal event of the Troubles province-wide, leading to a surge in violence throughout the North; extensive displacement of both Protestants and Catholics, primarily in Belfast; and a significant shift of support *for* the IRA cause from the wider Catholic community (Bew and Gillespie 1999:37). Musical responses to Internment performed by fledgling bands like The Irish Brigade included "Men Behind the Wire,"[60] a song that invites support for those imprisoned with the chorus:

> Armored cars and tanks and guns, came to take away our sons,
> But every man must stand behind the men behind the wire.

Meanwhile the three verses sum up the unsettling nighttime raids by British soldiers who literally pulled men from their beds while their families stood helplessly by, and compares British actions to the ruthless Cromwellian campaign in the 1600s.[61] With those sentiments set to an energetic tune, the song was a big hit for the original band, Barleycorn, whose single reached number-one status in the South for weeks in 1972, while the song remains "one of the fastest selling Irish singles ever" (http://www.irish-showbands.com/Bands/barleycorn.htm, accessed July 22, 2013). Of course the song was

aired only on radio stations in the Republic, with maybe the occasional small pirate radio station daring to broadcast it in the North. However, other musicians soon added it to their repertoires and played it in Northern Ireland too, even if they needed to be cautious over where and when it was sung. Technology of the time meant that people could record music themselves on portable cassette players, in addition to purchasing the music or listening to it over the radio. These all provided opportunities for people to mediate and transform the power (Hogg 2005:219) of governmental controls that attempted to limit access to the music and the ideas that the songs promoted.

The stunning success of "Men Behind the Wire" emphasizes the fact that the song expressed a political sentiment that was popular throughout the length of Ireland. Bands like The Irish Brigade, as well as Sinn Féin politicians took note. Sinn Féin soon recognized the potential for identifying their political party with republican music and using it in representations of their movement in their ongoing efforts towards more sympathetic media coverage world-wide, particularly in America (Wilson 1995).[62] In addition, they observed the impact in other conflict zones, when political activists utilized music to criticize the governments in power. By that time, the strategy was being effectively employed in a variety of settings.

Starting in the 1950s and into the early 1960s, people in the United States, Ireland, and elsewhere developed greater awareness of the power of "protest" or "topical" songs (Cohen 1990:519) to "make social comments about events… [that people] had been unable to make any other way" (Seeger 1972:11). Even though a large proportion of American protest songs prior to the 1950s relate to labor relations, the melodies and performance styles represent a wide range of musical traditions such as spirituals, chain

gang songs, sea shanties, and coal mine ballads (Greenway 1953). Musicians effectively adopted one or another of these styles for their musical protests targeting social issues like environmental abuse and civil rights, thereby spreading awareness and cultivating support for addressing the issues. Whether performing live or through recordings, musicians around the globe frequently needed to negotiate with governmental agents, who "controlled access to the broadcast media" (Larkey 2005:196) as well as the ability to appear in institutionalized public settings. In Chile, poet and performer Victor Jara expressed people's discontent with government policies and inspired them to action through music that had deep roots in Chilean cultural tradition (Jara 1984:121). Musicians in pre-revolutionary Iran (late 1960s into the early 1970s) "subtly challenged the political status quo… [by performing] songs whose ambiguous lyrics intimated, rather than declared, their dissent" (Hemmasi 2013:57). Students in Korea appropriated a particular folk tradition of drumming, during the 1980s to wordlessly express dissent and expand public interest in a growing democratization movement (Lee 2012:200).

In a similar fashion, the political party Sinn Féin not only encouraged the continuation of the Irish musical tradition that includes political protest, but deliberately chose it as one means for promoting their cause. Through the music, republicans utilized discursive tactics to bear witness to the violence and provide a "social space for political protest, social commentary, and collective remembrance" (Ritter 2012:198). Sinn Féin and other republican organizations sponsored benefit concerts and in some cases sold recordings of republican music – whether on the earlier vinyl records, cassette tapes, or more recently on CD – that helped raise funds as they raised support and awareness. Their actions illustrate David McDonald's argument that "performative and expressive

media are not epiphenomenal to larger social, political, and economic forces, but rather they are constitutive of those forces" (McDonald 2012:131). Recordings of a Belfast woman who sang for Sinn Féin and Green Cross benefits in the 1970s were re-released as CDs in 1999 with the note "All proceeds of this CD go towards Irish Republican Charities."[63]

Singer/songwriter Donal Bready, a close associate of The Irish Brigade, explained that during the Hunger Strike of 1981 Sinn Féin found an ideal song for raising awareness and support for the struggle, in the band's song "Bobby Sands of Belfast." Sinn Féin even sent them to America for a concert tour. In contrast to the peppy strains of "Men Behind the Wire" the song about Sands is a lyrical ballad, set to the tune of an earlier song called "Avondale," describing the hunger strikers' demand to be recognized and treated as political prisoners rather than criminals:

Now, Irishmen, remember well,
Our heroes who in battle fell.
And those who died in a prison cell,
Like Bobby Sands of Belfast.
An Irish soldier to the last,
A criminal he would not be classed.
And so began the long, death fast,
Of Bobby Sands of Belfast.

(chorus) So proud Britannia, hide your face!
Throughout the world you are disgraced,
How many more will take the place
Of Bobby Sands of Belfast?

When this was written, only Bobby Sands and three other men had died on hunger strike, while several more had started their own fast or were waiting for their signal to "take the place" as additional men died (O'Malley 1990:73).[64] Eventually public reaction to the hunger strike became sympathetic to the republican cause, with increasing criticism of

Margaret Thatcher and her government, both internationally and "among previously

uncommitted people in the Republic" (Geraghty 2000:100). In Britain, even some

government officials expressed concern over the growth of negative American sentiment

regarding treatment of the hunger strikers (Wilson 1995:187).

Folklorist Svanibor Pettan observes that during the 1990s conflict in Croatia

between Serbs and Croats that music served

> a variety of functions in the political and war contexts… encouragement – of
> those fighting on the front lines and those hiding in shelters alike; provocation and
> sometimes humiliation directed towards those seen as enemies; and call for the
> involvement of those not directly endangered – including fellow citizens, the
> Diaspora and the political and military decision-makers abroad. (Pettan 1998a:13)

At the same time it supports and encourages those closely involved in conflict, music can

become a strategy for changing the hearts and minds of people seemingly distanced from

the conflict. By the time the hunger strike ended in October 1981, ten men had died and

prisoners finally gained a variety of concessions regarding their treatment within the

prison. Although there were previous hunger strikes, even a few deaths of men on hunger

strike that started shortly after the 1916 Uprising (O'Malley 1990:26), the impact of these

ten men dying while on hunger strike was unprecedented.[65] Beyond the international

sympathy and support for the hunger strikers and their families, Sinn Féin gained enough

votes in the 1983 general election to suggest that Catholics in Northern Ireland "either

supported the armed struggle or at least were not actively opposed to it" (O'Malley

1990:221). As Donal put it, "the hunger strikes were a turning point – for the first time

republicans had the high ground." Moreover, Ireland gained ten martyr/heroes, who even

today continue to be set apart with great respect and awe from every other person and event of the Troubles.

In her study of heroes and martyrs in Palestine, Laleh Khalili points out that while "unintentional" martyrs *are* recognized and honored, martyrdom commonly is "portrayed as intentionally sought by believers in faith or nation" (Khalili 2007:114). Moreover, she argues that one common denominator for identifying a martyr is "death at the hand of the enemy… [which] transforms that potentially senseless death into a redemptive self-sacrifice for the nation" (Khalili 2007:140). Although republicans celebrate and honor both intentional and unintentional hero/martyrs, they devote a higher level of esteem to the men who chose to die on hunger strike. In addition, most songs about the ten hunger strikers focus solely on the men and their sacrifice, and make no links between them and earlier heroes such as the leaders of the 1916 Uprising. Since there is great pride in one's home-place, the city or townland of the hunger striker is mentioned and sometimes a close family member, but usually the only people named are other hunger strikers. The clear message is that out of all the valiant efforts of Irish men and women to gain a united Ireland, none can compare to the self-sacrifice of "the ten" who died on hunger strike. When hearing one of the songs, most listeners tend to give it quiet attention, subtly lowering their heads briefly in a "final salute" when the hunger striker is named or softly applauding, all with a serious demeanor that can seem incongruous in what otherwise appears to be a raucous pub setting.

Bands like The Irish Brigade traveled around Northern Ireland and beyond throughout the Troubles, helping to bolster morale in some locations, express national pride in others, and maintain support for the struggle through intentionally republican

music which they continue to perform today. Other musicians decided early on that they did not want to be type-cast solely as performers of republican music. One band based in County Down originally went by the name the Long Kesh Ramblers, but soon decided to change it to a less provocative name since traveling the country and performing during the Troubles could be dangerous enough without a name linking them to the main prison in Northern Ireland. Initially they wanted to support those arrested during the period of internment without trial, but they also enjoyed presenting a variety of musical genres in addition to rebel music. As the Long Kesh Ramblers, they joined other musicians in benefit concerts for the Green Cross to raise money for the families of internees. Even those with more nationalist sentiments who disagreed with the armed conflict, like singer/songwriter Gavin Bailey, actively contributed to organizations providing a variety of support to families of imprisoned Volunteers, with benefit concerts being among the primary ways to raise funds. In addition to providing financial support for food and household expenses, the Green Cross and others arranged transportation so that families could visit their loved ones in prison, something that was difficult for many families to do on their own. Other performers, like The Irish Brigade, were committed to assist the republican cause any way they could, with their concerts booked through the P.O.W. department of the republican movement based in Dublin. Donal Bready told me that the concerts were held not only to raise money, but also to "raise spirits" where morale was low, and when they were sent to perform in other countries, it was to encourage international support, in opposition to Britain's domination of the news media.

The various groups and solo performers I interviewed all agree that rebel music performance has changed since the peace process began. Some of this is by deliberate

choice of the musicians, some is a result of modified audience response and interest. Donal admits that he no longer sings "songs that are divisionist [and he] stopped singing a few songs as early as the 1980s because they had stupid, senseless lyrics." He told me that during the Troubles, the music promoted republican goals and actions, even encouraging new volunteers. But now, he says the music "is in a phase of commemoration," adding "it was always understood that IRA Volunteers would be remembered in song."

Of all the popular republican music written during the Troubles, Donal finds the strongest continuing audience interest to be in songs about the hunger strike, adding that "Roll of Honour" is "massive no matter where we go." The song encapsulates the story of the hunger strike in a few stanzas and with poignant metaphors:

> (chorus) Read the Roll of Honour for Ireland's bravest men.
> We must be united in memory of the ten.
> England you're a monster! Don't think that you have won.
> We will never be defeated while Ireland has such sons.
>
> In those dreary H Block cages, ten brave young Irishmen lay,
> Hungering for justice while their young lives ebbed away.
> For their rights as Irish soldiers, and to free their native land,
> They stood beside their leader, the gallant Bobby Sands.
>
> Now they mourn Hughes in Bellaghy, Ray McCreesh in Armagh's hills.
> In those narrow streets of Derry, they miss O'Hara still.
> They so proudly gave their young lives just to break Britannia's hold.
> Their names will be remembered as history unfolds.
>
> (chorus)
>
> Through the war torn streets of Ulster, the black flags did sadly wave.
> To salute ten Irish martyrs, the bravest of the brave:
> Joe McDonnell, Martin Hurson, Kevin Lynch, Keiran Doherty.
> They gave their lives for Freedom, with Thomas McIllwee.
>
> Michael Devine from Derry, you were the last to die.

With your nine brave companions, with the martyred dead you lie.
Your souls cry out "Remember, our deaths were not in vain!"
Fight on and make our homeland, a nation once again!

(chorus)

Each one of "the ten" is named over the course of the song in the order of his death. They are both individuals, with some of their hometowns named, as well as a unit of ten who resolutely "stood beside their leader" Bobby Sands to "break Britannia's hold." They are set apart from other martyr/heroes as the "bravest of the brave" – a special group of martyrs, who deliberately chose death because their "hunger" for justice was so strong.

There is no hint that three were INLA Volunteers and initially distrusted by the IRA, or that before the strike officially was ended, some family members were in the process of agreeing to medical intervention to save the lives of additional volunteers (O'Malley 1990). In this song, it is the unity of purpose and extreme self-sacrifice of the ten that matter and inspires people even today, not only to remember, but to "fight on" in the struggle to make Ireland "a nation once again." Including that phrase in the last verse links this song with Thomas Davis' poem, "A Nation Once Again" and the age-long desire for a united Ireland. Moreover, this adaptation of Davis' poem corroborates his belief that music can and "should be cultivated… to foster a climate of political opinion" (White 1998b:56). Whether sung in a concert or pub setting, or merely played as a marching tune for a commemoration, the meaning and history behind the song is there, too. It makes the listener part of that long history and responsible for carrying on the struggle.

Today, with ongoing efforts to implement peace process initiatives, pub owners are less likely to book a group or solo act that is solely republican music. Despite some

tension and disagreement over specific stipulations in the peace process, there is fairly

broad acceptance and effort "not to offend" others with blatant expressions of cultural

identity in public settings. This extends to the choice of music performed in a pub where

one might expect to find a "mixed" crowd – meaning both Protestants and Catholics,

which seems to be happening more lately. In towns like Strabane where the population

has been and remains overwhelmingly Catholic, Protestants from nearby villages are

beginning to patronize bars and other entertainment venues previously considered just for

Catholics. Moreover, as more time passes and a new generation comes of age during the

peace process, the immediacy and people's visceral experiences of the Troubles are

becoming muted along with the songs that commemorate it. Musician Gavin Bailey

suggests that

> It's possible as time and the politics of the whole thing evolves, some songs will
> last and other songs won't… I don't think [the music] has the value now that it
> did when the people wrote the songs like "The Men Behind the Wire" and "The
> Old Brigade." They were written in a time when the Troubles were just starting.
> People were isolated and needed something. Maybe the little club they went to
> was their only entertainment that they got. And I suppose it was the spirit of a
> revolution that was happening. People identified with the songs at that particular
> time. Songs maybe get dated. We still do some republican songs in our repertoire,
> but not as much nowadays that maybe we would have done. But it is so vital that
> republican music is part of the scene, just as loyalist folk music is part of their
> scene.

While many people like Gavin see the value of republican music, concern over what

happened and commemorating who was involved in the Troubles is not central to the

majority of people in Northern Ireland, even if they have nationalist sentiments. With that

in mind, performers and the public venues booking them, have adjusted their practices, to

some extent. All of the singers and musicians I spoke with had played a range of music

genres for years, so although they may be more conscious of what they "should not" play

in specific settings, it has not meant a significant change in their performances over all. Gavin says that "if someone asked me in mixed company to sing [a rebel song], I'd say 'maybe that's not the wisest thing to sing,'" but in the right circumstances he would be inclined to sing one on request.

Places offering rebel music may be limited now, but they do exist and continue to attract enthusiastic audiences. Some are public venues that openly advertise themselves as "republican" pubs, such as the Wolfe Tone Bar in Letterkenny, County Donegal that uses a take-off of the 1916 Proclamation on their website, declaring that the bar is a "Provisional Public House."[66] Singer/songwriter Sam McBride performs at a variety of venues, including the Wolfe Tone Bar, choosing his songs to accommodate the management hiring him, as well as the expectations of the audience. He explains that

> at the place I'm playing tonight there'll be no republican ballads – none whatsoever – [the manager] just wouldn't want them… It could be mixed company and if I knew it was mixed company, I wouldn't sing them anyway. I wouldn't want to offend somebody that came in. If somebody wants me to sing "The Dying Rebel"[67] at [Clancy's Bar], no problem, but in this pub I'm singing tonight there might be mixed company – Protestants and Catholics. There's no point, like – offending somebody. I go to Letterkenny and play at the Wolfe Tone Bar there. It's a strong republican bar…the whole ethos of it. There's a picture of Bobby Sands, and Gerry Adams, and Martin McGuinness. I sing all republican songs all night… That's what they want and that's what I sing.

As Sam acknowledged, Clancy's Bar has the unofficial label of being a "republican bar." It is located on the far edge of Strabane's commercial downtown, which makes it less likely for strangers – Protestant or otherwise – to drop in. On the other hand, the bar's location is quite convenient to the overwhelmingly republican area people call the Head of the Town. While a number of my friends and neighbors from Riverside Gardens housing estate patronize other pubs, Clancy's Bar remains the primary choice for many.

On occasion, manager Ed Harris will hire live music that always includes a good portion of republican songs, in combination with folk music, or the ever-popular songs of emigration and exile. Otherwise, a similar combination of tunes and songs are available on the juke box and are selected for play on a regular basis. In contrast, the manager of one of the pubs in the town center commented that he no longer books distinctly rebel music, preferring that his bar be welcoming to anyone in the area.

Pubs in the Republic, like the Wolfe Tone Bar, have been free to offer any musical genre they choose since Partition in the 1920s, whereas public performance of rebel music in the North during the Troubles could invite a raid by police and British soldiers. Sam told me of the irony of having constraints over playing rebel music in Strabane, yet none in Lifford, less than a mile away, because it is "in the South," adding, "You could play down in Strabane and never play republican songs, but you go over to Lifford and they didn't care if you played that kind of song. The Army wasn't going to come and raid them…There was a difference when you crossed the border, you could more or less sing what you want."

Today audiences on both sides of the border have options for hearing rebel music in select pubs like Clancy's Bar, in specific concert settings like the Wolfe Tones band playing at the Fir Trees Hotel in Strabane, or semi-private fund-raising events for local (Gaelic Athletic Association) GAA clubs. In the spring of 2012, I went to a sold-out benefit concert for the Magherafelt sports club in the southeast corner of County Derry that was featuring The Irish Brigade. Like many social events in Ireland, the concert started well after 10 p.m. As the evening progressed the mostly young adult audience gradually was joined by a broader range of ages. From my spot along one side of the

room, I could see that many were singing along with the lyrics in addition to clapping and cheering at various times. During one number, a young man moved towards the front of the room and pantomimed shooting a rifle in the air – a gesture he repeated several times throughout the evening. He seemed to know and be known by the band members and was one of the more energetic and enthusiastic attendees. A few others stood to clap, cheer, and/or pump a raised fist in the air in tempo with various songs, but more people stayed seated while responding. Closer to the end of the evening, the crowd became even more enthusiastic and engaged – particularly during songs with driving tempos, such as a revision of "This Land is Your Land," that inserts places in Ireland instead of the U.S. landmarks named in Woody Guthrie's original. Other well-received songs included "Loughgall Ambush" and "Roll of Honor." Since most of the men killed at Loughgall lived within twenty miles of Magherafelt, the song about the ambush was particularly significant to the audience.

Audiences clearly respond to songs that are connected to local people or places, yet many of them never become as well-known nor widely performed as songs about the hunger strike such as "Roll of Honour." I asked musician Gavin Bailey if he was familiar with the song "Shoot to Kill (British Justice)," that relates the story of the three lads shot in Strabane, which is on the opposite side of Northern Ireland from his hometown in County Down. While he was unfamiliar with "Shoot to Kill," he added that he had heard similar songs and many of them would be known in specific areas:

> other songs, like you say, the one about the three lads in Strabane, would be unique to the Strabane area, and would be sung in the Strabane area the same as "Danger in the City," about Joe McCann would be sung around here. He was well known down in Rostrevor – and the song is unique to this area.[68]

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Still, local connections are not always necessary for people to relate to a song. Sam

McBride has lived all his life in Strabane and is proud to sing "Shoot to Kill" wherever

he performs, as long as he feels a republican song is appropriate in that particular venue:

> Oh I sing it everywhere… Everywhere I go I make a particular point of it. I was
> fairly friendly with Michael Devine. Our family would've been very friendly with
> the Devine family all through the years. Davy Devine and me oldest brother were
> very friendly … They were in jail together one time or another and more or less
> always friendly…. Michael Devine and I were the same age group and were in
> school together… I make a point to sing it wherever I am, Paris, or England. I've
> sung it in America – everywhere I go – down in the Republic… [I say] "Here's a
> song from me own home town."

There is a strong interrelationship between the feelings and expressions of pride in

one's hometown and the commitment to remember and honor those who died because of

their active engagement in the conflict. However, it is not only the contemporaries of

those Volunteers, like Sam, who listen to or perform rebel music. Older teens and young

adults are embracing the music in concerts, in pub settings, and even during

commemorations. Trevor Dolan, from County Armagh, is a Sinn Féin member in his

mid-twenties who has been performing a mixture of republican and folk music for more

than ten years. His initial interest in politics developed after he heard several republican

ballads. He explains

> I just began to listen – I started to listen to Republican music when I was about
> twelve or thirteen. I found a republican tape – a rebel tape at home, and I played it
> and I listened to songs like "James Connolly" and "Aidan McAnespy."[69] They
> immediately had an impact on me… I wouldn't have been very political before I
> started reading up on things, starting with the 1916 Uprising. It made me much
> more interested in Irish history. At that time the peace process was emerging in
> the six counties, so there was a lot of political activity every evening. I would've
> started following the news – you know, the six o'clock news…and I joined Sinn
> Féin youth [which] was made up of many of my peers. Music has been very
> important, and if you look at any other struggle – South Africa, and even the

Basque country, music and culture is important, it's part of your identity. In regards to [any] struggle and commemorating – remembering heroes, people who gave their lives, republican ballads are very much a part of that. A lot of what I learned came from listening to ballads. You know, telling the stories of wrongs that were committed. Republican ballads should not just be seen as sorrowful or sad – there's a positive dimension. There's one particular song "Let the People Sing" – and it talks about how the music has been played across many generations.

In a similar story, thirty-year old musician Emmet Carey who lives in the town of Dromore, southwest of Omagh, remembers "goin' for a spin with a cousin of me father's, and he had a Wolfe Tones tape in the car, and like that was it for me – I was probably only about ten." He said that he really liked the stories that the songs told, adding "I'm not one to sit down and read book after book… so I would say that maybe about ninety percent of anything I know about Irish history would probably come from songs." Emmet has been playing out and about for more than fifteen years, usually "a mix of traditional [Irish music], and folk, and a bit of republican music in there, too." Like other performers he stressed that it depends primarily on what kind of music the audience is interested in, and the wishes of whoever hired his group. He said there is a noticeable reaction when the band does perform republican music. He said,

you can just see the --- [pause, laughs lightly], the tempo of the whole thing risin' once you start playin' the republican songs mostly… they could be sittin' and sleepin' at the bar when you're singin' a folk song and when you go into a republican song everybody's on their feet like… roarin' and cheerin' for more.

Similar to many of the pubs around Strabane, however, patronage tends to be less segregated than in the past, so bar managers hiring live music want a variety that will not be offensive to anyone. As Emmet explained, "maybe – you know, a few Protestants people come in, say, to them bars, you know, where maybe they wouldn't come inta ten

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years ago --- so, you have both sides of the community there, and you don't want to offend anybody by playin' [rebel] music." In addition, he has noticed some changes in the way people respond to republican songs and ballads. Audiences do not react in the same way "as they did three years ago even. We can see a big change… people sort of accepted that there's peace here, and a lot of them don't want to go back, [yet] I think everybody sees the importance in the songs, so we don't forget at the same time, where we came from."

Emmet has noticed a decided difference in the crowd reactions when there are more seventeen- and eighteen-year-olds in the audience. As he told me, "When we were growin' up it was just the tail-end of the Troubles, but the generation that you're talkin' about now wouldn't have seen none of it." Although the younger crowds seem to enjoy republican songs to some degree, Emmet claims they show no interest in the ballads, or the stories about the individuals behind those songs that have attracted him over the years. Instead, he said "there's the 'party songs' as we call them… more lively songs that everybody does. You know, not so much tellin' a story, but just givin' a run-down… [laughing] Like, 'Come Out You Black and Tans,' 'Sean South,' and 'Go On Home, British Soldiers.'"[70] Emmet and his peers were in their mid-teens when the peace process began and they can track changes in what songs interest people, even within the broader label of republican music. Considering how long a few songs about the 1798 uprising have remained popular, it is not surprising that several songs still in "demand" relate to the 1916 Rising or events mid-century, such as "Sean South." What is less clear is which ballads about local hero/martyrs such as "Shoot to Kill (British Justice)" and "Drumnakilly Martyrs" will continue to be well-known, at least within their own regions.

On the other hand, younger musicians like Emmet Carey and Trevor Dolan seem well-established as the "next generation" drawn to performing republican music, even if they do so along with other musical genres. Moreover, like older musicians who lived through much more of the Troubles, they both reflect an awareness of their responsibility to perform the music, because of its contribution to public memory and relating the story of those who contributed to the republican struggle for Ireland's freedom.

There is a loose grouping of songs that are not automatically identifiable as republican or rebel music, but are commonly linked with republican music. They are highly popular among republicans, as well as any audience that enjoys nostalgic songs about Ireland. Some tell a bittersweet story, while all are embedded with significant history and heritage issues through their references to important past events. Although less confrontational than the frequently boisterous rebel songs, these too, use music to create "new structures of hope and momentum, new opportunities for developing a community of concern as well as for radicalizing the commitment to preserving a record – a kind of collective memory, if you will – of human suffering and survival" (Heble 2003:238). Sometimes, however, that collective memory is constructed out of politically motivated and inaccurate observations. One such example is the nationalist doctrine that distorted many facts about the mid-nineteenth-century Famine in Ireland, including accusing Great Britain of genocide (Donnelly 2002:217), an opinion that endures to some extent even today. In reality, there *was* an unprecedented potato crop failure over successive years, but other crops produced sub-normal yields as well, and despite emotional rhetoric to the contrary, exorbitant quantities of grain were *not* shipped out of Ireland to England as peasants starved to death (Donnelly 2002:215). However, following

a nationalist agenda that indirectly blames a wealthy landowner, "The Fields of Athenry"[71] relates the story of a young couple who are separated when the man is arrested and transported to Australia for stealing grain. The romantic imagery of the verses describes how the woman is left to raise their child by herself, while the chorus looks back with longing to a time they were together:

Low lie the Fields of Athenry
Where once we watched the small free birds fly.
Our love was on the wing we had dreams and songs to sing
It's so lonely 'round the Fields of Athenry.

Along with a haunting melody and a moving story of separated lovers, the references to imprisonment and rebellion to "the Crown" in the verses inserts meaning independent of the author's intention that "can become a source of identification and emotional strength" (Rolston 1999:42). While the challenges of obtaining food during the Famine may seem a distant memory, people still contend with rebellion to the crown, aftereffects of imprisonment, and the heartache of loved ones living far from home. While in Strabane, I heard several stories of individuals from the Head of the Town who immigrated to the United States at a time when it was easier to enter without proper documentation, took on jobs, and maybe even started families – all without legal documentation as resident aliens. Now they cannot return to Ireland without incurring substantial penalties. These people were not forced to leave Ireland like the man transported to Australia, but their current legal limbo restricts their movements just the same.

Another bittersweet love story in song relates the true tale of the marriage of Grace Gifford and Joseph Plunkett in Kilmainham Jail, on the night before he was executed for being a leader of the 1916 Rising and among the signers of the Proclamation

(McGarry 2010:275). Singer/songwriter Gavin Bailey talked about the poignancy of the song "Grace," adding that it is

> a beautiful ballad, yeah. I think "Grace" is a beautiful song, irrespective of the republican attachment. You think of Grace Gifford who was getting married and she knew that tomorrow he was dead – [that] she would be a widow straightaway. I mean, to go in and marry him the night before his execution, it's a wonderful love song.[72]

Musician Sam McBride admitted that "Grace" was one of his favorite songs and one he performs for any type of audience even though it is about one of the heroes of the 1916 Rising. He pointed out that although some of the details of the republican uprising are there in the song, for the most part it comes off as a sad story of lovers parted by death. In my experience, every time I heard "Grace" performed live, or played on the jukebox, the audience enthusiastically joined in on the sorrowful refrain, with some acting out the story in campy fashion as well:

> Oh Grace just hold me in your arms and let this moment linger
> They'll take me out at dawn and I will die
> With all my love I place this wedding ring upon your finger
> There won't be time to share our love for we must say goodbye

In addition to being a maudlin story, for those who know more of the details, it is yet another reminder of the integrity and commitment of the men of 1916 that was demonstrated through "their willingness to die for their beliefs" (McGarry 2010:272). [73] Furthermore, Grace Gifford continues to be admired not merely for being a woman who supported the man she loved, but as a talented artist and cartoonist who was active in the republican cause after Plunkett's death and among those arrested during the Civil War in 1923 (O'Neill 2000:71).

Other songs within this loose grouping contain barely-disguised metaphors of nationalist longing, such as "Four Green Fields," which was written by Tommy Makem. As a member of the internationally-renowned Clancy Brothers, Makem greatly influenced the Irish folk music boom in the 1960s (Sawyers 2001:262) and introduced untold American audiences to Irish music.[74] In the song, Makem adopts the eighteenth-century personification of Ireland as a woman (Morris 2005:22), to relate the first-person tale of an elderly woman who bemoans the fact that her "four green fields" are in danger. She claims that someone is trying to take them from her and that her strong brave sons all died trying to protect the fields. Just as the woman is symbolic of Ireland, and the "someone" trying to take her fields is Great Britain, the "four green fields" represent the four ancient provinces of Ulster, Munster, Connaught, and Leinster. The woman's sons who died protecting the fields are the many who died over the centuries in the on-going fight against British rule. In the last verse she claims one field is in "bondage" and then vows that her sons' sons will avenge her loss:

> "What have I now?" said the fine old woman
> "What have I now?" this proud old woman did say
> "I have four green fields, one of them's in bondage
> In strangers hands that tried to take it from me
> But my sons have sons, as brave as were their fathers
> My fourth green field will bloom once again," said she

The green field in bondage is Ulster, or at least the six counties of Ulster known as Northern Ireland, and the "blooming" of this fourth green field that the woman foretells is that unidentified day in the future when Ireland is united as one nation. While "Grace" confirms past acts of heroism and patriotism, "Four Green Fields" confirms the belief of many, that at some point in the future, Ireland finally will be united. These songs are

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highly romanticized, yet also powerful in conveying "extra-musical meaning" (White 1998a:28). Using a sentiment similarly expressed in the song "Go On Home British Soldiers," a number of people have said to me, "we have waited eight hundred years to be free of the British, we can wait another eight hundred." Highly emotional or downright "cheeky," the music affirms nationalist belonging (Sommers 1985:477) and sentiment.

One of the more memorable events during my fieldwork was on an early summer evening when I attended the annual commemoration for all of the County Tyrone Volunteers who died while "on active service." At this point I was well-familiar with the general pattern that the ceremony would follow once the bands, color parties, and related groups paraded up to the gathering site. And on numerous other occasions I had stood in respectful attention in the appropriate stance, with my hands clasped behind my back and listened to renditions of the national anthem – of the Republic of Ireland – sung in Irish at the close of each program. However, on this particular evening, as the soloist on the stage began to sing "The Soldier's Song," many of the people around me joined in after the first line, enveloping me in the song.

The song was written around 1907, initially to "convince Irishmen that they did not have to join the British Army to be soldiers" (Morris 2005:29). Soon it was taken up by militant nationalists, including the Irish Republican Brotherhood, who were the forerunners of the IRA, and by late 1916 the song was adopted as Sinn Féin's official anthem (Morris 2005:33). With stirring rhetoric, the song easily appealed to young men dissatisfied under British rule through references of gathering around a "blazing" fire under starry skies awaiting the opportunity to fight the way "our fathers fought before us and conquered 'neath the same old flag."[75] After partition and creation of the Free State

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in 1922, opinions were divided over what symbols should be adopted to represent their

new status of being a separate entity from Great Britain. As symbols that many associated

with Sinn Féin, some people were reluctant to accept either the Tricolor or "The Soldier's

Song" for official emblems of the new state, while others in the fledgling government

argued that they "were symbols of nation, not party" (Morris 2005:38). Although not

officially designated the national flag of the Free State until 1937, when the colors were

clarified as being green, white, and orange, the Tricolor had been in use as a symbol of

the new state even before its official existence; while in 1926, the chorus alone, of "The

Soldier's Song," was approved as the national anthem (Morris 2005:38-40):

> Soldiers are we,
> whose lives are pledged to Ireland;
> Some have come
> from a land beyond the wave.
> Sworn to be free
> No more our ancient sire land,
> Shall shelter the despot or the slave.
> Tonight we man the gap of danger
> In Erin's cause, come woe or weal,
> 'Mid cannons' roar and rifles' peal,
> We'll chant a soldier's song.

Meanwhile, during this same period in Northern Ireland, the various nationalist

political parties were in disagreement over whether or not they should cooperate with the

Northern Ireland parliament and, at times, republicans would express their opposition by

singing "The Soldier's Song" (Morris 2005:138). After the Northern Irish government

took steps in the 1930s towards banning use of both the Tricolor and "The Soldier's

Song" in the North, most nationalists seemed united in adopting both symbols as "acts of

defiance" (Morris 2005:139), similar to their use in the period after the 1916 Rising.

While examining subversive elements in Iranian pop music, ethnomusicologist Laudan

Nooshin identifies some of the ways that "music and the discourses around music have served as an arena for playing out some of the most contested issues of nationhood, identity, and power" (Nooshin 2005:231). Nooshin's observations are applicable for evaluating the transitions of acceptance and use of "The Soldier's Song" in Northern Ireland. Banning, or attempting to ban, public performance of the song gave it a subversive power beyond its original meaning (Nooshin 2005:243) that republicans utilized to their advantage.

Continued use of "The Soldier's Song" in Northern Ireland, whether at Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) events, as part of commemorations for dead IRA volunteers such as the annual Tyrone Volunteers Day, or at closing time in a "republican" pub – and always sung in Irish – contribute to creating and maintaining identity as citizens of Ireland. In addition, it is a form of resistance and opposition to living in a province affiliated with Great Britain. Admittedly many of the republicans I came to know in Strabane may not "have" much Irish – referring to a person's level of fluency in the Irish language – but people tend to learn enough to get through a singing of the anthem and their efforts are supported by the growing number of fluent Irish speakers in the community. National anthems are imbued with power that can be used to stir patriotic sentiment, unite the populace around an ideal, and inspire individuals to defend their homeland (Boti et al. 2003). In the context of Northern Ireland, singing the national anthem of the Republic of Ireland is a form of contestation by republicans and nationalists "who do not identify with the state ideology" (Mach 1997:62) of the UK and feel no connection to it. Folklorist Henry Glassie describes a scene in a rural County

Fermanagh pub during the Troubles, in which neighbors and friends had shared a few

drinks and tunes, and where

> (m)usic holds them together and caps the night. Then, closing time, the proprietor sweeps empty glasses and black bottles onto a tray, and young men, men from the North, willing to put their bodies on the line, stand straight and solemn while Peter Flanagan plays the national anthem, "The Soldier's Song." With people moving past, laughing, jamming in the doorway, a quiet handsome young man who has known the terror of midnight roads, the engine's hum, the feel of a makeshift bomb in his palms, stands, looking to no one, and says softly, "When I hear the old men sing, I love Ireland more." (Glassie 1982:85)

Now that the conflict is officially over, the act of singing "The Soldier's Song" becomes

a powerful symbol of the continuing commitment to achieving the goal of a united

Ireland. At the Tyrone Volunteers Day commemoration, the main speaker spoke about

the legacy left to republicans by the Volunteers who died, vowing

> (w)e as a movement will not be side-tracked or stopped. We will keep marching, marching on, until we achieve what [they] sacrificed [their] lives for. [They] left us [a] legacy and we will deliver on that legacy. We of the republican movement will not rest until we have established a thirty-two-county socialist republic. For the ownership of Ireland belongs to the people of Ireland, where the religious and civil liberties are guaranteed, where there will be equal rights and opportunities for all our citizens. And where all our children will be cherished equally. Of that, comrades, you can be certain. Tiocfaidh ár lá.

Whether in commemorations or other settings, music such as "The Soldier's Song" is a

performance of public ritual (de Rosa 1998:107) and celebration of heritage. It is a

statement of allegiance, a reminder of the past, and a hope for the future.

Conclusion

Music clearly is a potent symbol of identity (Baily 1997:48) that can unite as well

as divide, denote cultural boundaries, and help people understand their connections to the

past. Particularly for republicans living in Northern Ireland, musical performance,

whether as a musician or through audience participation, has and continues to be an

important means for expressing solidarity, acting out opposition to continued British

domination in Ireland, remembering hero/martyrs who died in the various episodes of

armed struggle for a united Ireland, and celebrating heritage. Many republican songs are

deliberately provocative, as O'Boyle has noted, arguing that "(t)hese songs are alive.

Sing one of them in the wrong place and you go home with a broken nose" (O'Boyle

1957:53). By expressing highly charged sentiments, the songs provide an outlet for some

of the anger, frustration, and sorrow within a community. These emotions still mediate

their involvement with the wider Northern Ireland society and civil processes in this post-

conflict period. Republican or rebel music has been a very powerful form of resistance to

historic forms of subordination and institutionalized inequality prevalent in Northern

Ireland in the past. Continued performance of the music references and celebrates this

non-tangible heritage of opposition that is embedded in the music, at the same time it

contributes to the negotiation and construction of republican identity in post-conflict

Northern Ireland.

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[29] Lyrics for "Boys of the Old Brigade" by P. McGuigan
(http://worldbioplus.wordpress.com/2011/03/03/irish-rebel-songs/ - accessed May 7, 2013) *Gra mo choi*
means my darling, or my beloved.

[30] Lyrics for "Shoot to Kill (British Justice)" (http://oneofthebhoys09.tripod.com/rsb2/id20.html – accessed
November 8, 2014)

[31] The phrase *shoot to kill* describes a common opinion during the Troubles "that police or military set out
with the deliberate intention to kill… assailants" (Punch 2012:89) rather than make an arrest. Subsequent
attempts to investigate and/or prosecute the perpetrators were blocked by the government and British
security forces, which has contributed greatly to nationalist and republican distrust and contempt for the
justice system in Northern Ireland (Rolston 2000). For more on the shoot-to-kill policy, see Mulcahy
2006:71; Punch 2011.

[32] Eugene Devlin died December 27, 1972 when shot by British soldiers; Seamus Harvey and Gerard
McGlynn died August 11, 1973 when a bomb they were transporting exploded prematurely (McKittrick et
al 2007:310 and 384).

[33] Penal laws enacted in the early eighteenth century deprived Catholics and some Protestants, primarily Presbyterians, of civil and religious rights as well as excluding their access to landed property and political power (de Paor 1990:24; Shivers and Bowman 1984:103).

[34] Broadsides were "printed on one side of paper about the size of a handbill, and usually decorated with a woodcut" (Sawyers 2001:148).

[35] The Emancipation Act of 1829 eliminated the penal law system and made it possible for Catholics to run for most public offices (Shivers and Bowman 1984:104).

[36] "A national primary education system was set up under state auspices in 1831… [and] by 1881 three-quarters of all those between six and fifteen were… able to read" (Hoppen 1999:27).

[37] Gerard Harte, his brother Martin Harte, and Brian Mullin were killed in an SAS ambush in Drumnakilly, County Tyrone, on August 30, 1988 (McKittrick et al 2007:1143). Lyrics to the "The Drumnakilly Ambush" in Appendix.

[38] Lyrics to "Skibbereen" (Galvin 1956:46)

[39] Family and friends who had pressed for an inquiry into the events of Bloody Sunday for close to forty years were finally vindicated when the Saville Inquiry released their findings on June 15, 2011, and British Prime Minister David Cameron announced "What happened on Bloody Sunday was both unjustified and unjustifiable. It was wrong… what happened should never have happened." (Campbell 2012:2003)

[40] The IRA announced ceasefires to allow for talks with the government at various stages throughout the conflict (such as 1972, 1974, and 1993), however the ceasefire of August 31, 1994 is credited as the major turning point towards a peace process for Northern Ireland (McKittrick and McVea 2012:233). For several perspectives on the 1994 ceasefire and the years leading up to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, see Hume 1997; R. Wilson 2010; Geraghty 2000; Moloney 2003.

[41] Lyrics to "The Loughgall Ambush" by G. O'Glacain (http://oneofthebhoys09.tripod.com/rslm/id36.html – accessed November 8, 2014). "Ambush at Clonoe," also by G. O'Glacain (http://www.oocities.org/tiocfaidh32arla/ambushatclonoe.html - accessed November 29, 2014)

[42] The Ford is an old crossing site along the Arney River in County Fermanagh where a battle was fought in 1595 (Glassie 1982:198).

[43] In 1798, inspired to some degree by the French Revolution, various factions around Ireland, from peasants to elites, rebelled against British rule. In some areas rebel groups included both Catholics and Protestants opposing Britain, in other places they fought against each other with atrocities committed by both factions (Boyce 1982:131). Despite its failure as an uprising and the extensive brutality in some regions, the 1798 rebellion firmly established a commitment to republicanism and goals of an Irish nation in many across the island.

[44] "The Rising of the Moon" (Galvin 1956:35). The Irish phrase *a bhuachaill* indicates someone speaking directly to a boy. The Irish for boy is *buachaill*.

[45] Lyrics to "Boulavogue" (Faolain 1983:332). Written by P.J. McCall in 1898 and initially sung to a different tune, "Boulavogue" gained even more popularity after being set to the melody of "Youghal Harbour" in 1922 (McLaughlin 2003:59). Some sources, including McLaughlin (2003), spell the place name as Boolavogue.

[46] Father Murphy led 10,000 men, armed only with pikes, in a successful attack of trained and well-armed British troops on June 4 1798 (Doyle and Folan 1998:107), then in the subsequent days they were unable to maintain an advantage and were defeated and Murphy hanged by the end of June (Faolain 1983:344).

[47] Lyrics to "The Drumboe Martyrs" (also known as "Drumboe Castle") (McLaughlin 2003:203).

[48] In 1920 the island was partitioned into two parts by the Government of Ireland Act. "Northern Ireland" consisted of six of the nine counties making up the province of Ulster: Antrim, Armagh, Down, Fermanagh, Londonderry, and Tyrone. The remaining twenty-six counties were to make up "Southern Ireland," which became known as the "Irish Free State" a short time later. Partition left most nationalist communities in the North in a political minority and gave unionists a two-to-one plurality over-all. In the South, political

disagreements over Partition eventually led to the Irish Civil War when factions within Sinn Féin and the fledgling IRA rejected Partition, demanding self-rule for the whole island. (de Paor 1986:291)

[49] Strabane is right on the western border of County Tyrone, directly across the River Finn from the Donegal town of Lifford and less than fifteen miles from Stranolar.

[50] Tír Chonaill, or "Conall's country" was a medieval lordship covering much of County Donegal. Conall's brother claimed territory to the east of Conall, including what is present-day Country Tyrone, as "Eógan's country," or Tír Eóghain. The two lordships came to be known as Tyrconnell and Tyrone. (de Paor 1986:64)

[51] Operation Harvest (1956-1962), an effort to end British occupation of Northern Ireland by an offensive launched from logistical bases in the South into the North, functioned primarily in the border counties Armagh, Fermanagh, and Tyrone (Moloney 2003:49).

[52] Lyrics to "Sean South of Garryowen" (McLaughlin 2003:213). The names of IRA Volunteers credited as participating in the raid in addition to Sean South, alternately written as Seán Sabhat, seem to vary. The discrepancies may have to do with spelling variations such as the Irish version versus English version of the same name, or whether an individual was part of some support group rather than in the actual truck that attempted to attack the police station in Brookeborough, County Fermanagh. I found fourteen names listed in connection with the attack, in addition to South: Vincent Conlon (Armagh), Pat Connolly (Fermanagh), Phil Danagher, or O'Donoghue (Dublin), Seán Garland (Dublin), Harry Gonagh, or Goff (Wexford), Feargal O'Hanlon, or O' hAnnluain (Monaghan), Michael, or Mick Kelly (Galway), Liam Nolan (Dublin), Pat McManus (no home county listed), David, or Daithí O'Connell (Cork), Mick O'Brien (Dublin), Paddy O'Regan (Dublin), Seán Scott (Galway), and Pat, or Packy Tierney (Fermanagh). (McLaughlin 2003:221; Magee 2011:101).

[53] Between the late 1930s and 1948, the Irish Free State replaced their constitution and redefined their relationship with Great Britain, culminating in their withdrawal from the British Commonwealth and declaring the country a republic (de Paor 1986).

[54] For more on Roddy McCorley and song variations about him see Zimmermann (1967) and Faolain (1983).

[55] The eight men killed in the ambush in Loughgall on May 8, 1987 represents "the largest single loss of IRA personnel since the 1920s" (Rolston 2000:130). On March 6, 1988, three suspected IRA insurgents were shot and killed by SAS soldiers on the island of Gibraltar, becoming a highly controversial incident that culminated with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) finding that those in command of the operation were responsible for violations of the right to life (Punch 2011:17).

[56] The term "folk" music and "traditional" music frequently get confused, particularly in regards to music of Ireland. I even hesitate to use the term "Irish music" since this has a specific connotation today as well. According to Fintan Vallely, "folk" music means indigenous music from a specific place and "traditional" music in Ireland refers to a wide variety of song and instrumental music that was originally composed and passed through performance – basically an oral custom (Vallely 2008:7).

[57] http://www.wolfetonesofficialsite.com/menu.htm, accessed July 16, 2013.

[58] http://www.wolfetonesofficialsite.com/tours.htm , accessed July 16, 2013

[59] Lyrics to "Let the People Sing" by Brian Warfield. ((http://lyricsvip.com/Wolfe-Tones/Let-the-People-Sing-Lyrics.html - accessed June 2, 2013)

[60] Lyrics to "Men Behind the Wire" by Paddy McGuigan. (http://www.irish-showbands.com/Bands/barleycorn.htm – accessed July 22, 2013).

[61] Of all the periods of extreme war, famine, and disease decimating native Irish populations, Oliver Cromwell's campaign from 1649-52 remains the most unprecedented as it killed off roughly one-fifth of the peasantry and transformed land ownership to a system that continued well into the nineteenth century (McGarry 2010:11). In addition to being imprisoned without trial during the official British

campaign of August 1971, internees experienced brutal treatment including repeated beatings, sleep deprivation, and a starvation diet (Coogan 1996:126).

[62] Leading up to and at the beginning of the Hunger Strikes of 1981, U.S. media and government officials were unsupportive of republican actions because they feared being accused of endorsing terrorism. Efforts by Irish Americans pro-republican groups plus increased news reporting that was independent of British control contributed to a change in public and official opinion as Hunger Strikers began to die. The U.S. public began to question Britain's policies and actions in Northern Ireland. (Wilson 1995)

[63] Kathleen McCready, known as Kathleen Largey after her marriage, was an active supporter of the Green Cross and other organizations helping republican prisoners and their families in the 1960s and 1970s, before her death from cancer in 1979. Her two most successful recordings were reissued as CDs: *Legion of the Rearguard* and *The Price of Justice* (http://www.anphoblacht.com/contents/19646, accessed August 8, 2014).

[64] Lyrics to "Bobby Sands of Belfast" by Gerry O'Glacain. (http://oneofthebhoys09.tripod.com/rsab1/id22.html - accessed Nov 8, 2014).

[65] "The British government "lost the propaganda war, resuscitated an ailing IRA, and politicized militant Republicanism." (O'Malley 1990:208).

[66] http://chimedia.ie/portfolio/wolfetonebar/ , accessed July 31, 2013.

[67] "The Dying Rebel," considered a traditional tune, relates the sorrowful story of an only son being "shot in Dublin, fighting for his country bold" – presumably one of the republicans killed during the 1916 Easter Rising.

[68] Joe McCann, a well-known Volunteer in the Official IRA, was from South Belfast and would have been well-known around County Down. He was shot and killed by British soldiers on April 15, 1972. (McKittrick et al. 2007:175).

[69] James Connolly was among the key leaders of the 1916 Rising who became hero/martyrs following their deaths by firing squad in Kilmainham Jail (McGarry 2010:276). Civilian Aidan McAnespy was killed in a controversial shooting in 1988, as he passed through a border checkpoint near Aughnacloy, County Tyrone, with soldiers claiming it was an accidental ricochet that killed Aidan (McKittrick et al. 2007:1110). Songs about each of these men remain popular and well-known in republican communities.

[70] "Come Out You Black and Tans" by Dominic Behan (http://celtic-lyrics.com/lyrics/146.html - accessed August 10, 2014). "Sean South" by Sean Costello (McLaughlin 2003:213). "Go On Home, British Soldiers," author unknown, (http://www.lyricsfreak.com/w/wolfe+tones/go+on+british+soldiers_20602031.html – accessed April 10, 2013).

[71] "The Fields of Athenry" by Pete St. John. (http://celtic-lyrics.com/lyrics/195.html - accessed August 10, 2014).

[72] "Grace" by brothers Frank and Seán O'Meara. (http://www.irishpage.com/songs/grace.htm - accessed August 10, 2014).

[73] Women were involved in the Rising in a variety of ways, including as combatants, however more were assigned to typical female roles preparing or serving food to the rebel army or tending the injured (McGarry 2010:165). My comment refers to the primary leaders – those who executed shortly after the Rising was put down.

[74] "Four Green Fields" by Tommy Makem (http://celtic-lyrics.com/lyrics/205.html - accessed August 10, 2014).

[75] Lyrics to "The Soldier's Song," both in English and Irish (http://www.taoiseach.gov.ie/eng/Historical_Information/The_National_Anthem/ - accessed April 24, 2013).

Chapter 4: Reading the Roll of Honor:
Acts of Commemoration and Remembrance

Read the Roll of Honour for Ireland's bravest men.
We must be united in memory of the ten.
England you're a monster! Don't think that you have won.
We will never be defeated while Ireland has such sons.

"Roll of Honour" by G. O'Glacain[76]

I set up my tripod and camera in one of the V-shaped nooks that line the sides of

the one-lane stone bridge at Clady and zipped up my rain jacket against the cold

December wind with its threat of rain. Slowly, a few dozen people gathered from either

direction and clustered near me along the bridge, waiting. I had a good view up the

stretch of the road that ends at a T-junction in the Republic, which is a little ways off

around a tree-lined bend from the bridge. We could hear the drumming as the group

started towards us, well before we could see them marching.

The parade came down the road from the Republic side, marched onto the bridge

and straight across to the Clady side where they turned around and marched back to the

mid-point, to stop by the plaque in the stone wall marking Jim McGinn's death in 1973.

Bracketed by a Celtic-style cross to one side and Jim's likeness on the other, the

inscription reads:

In memory of
Staff Captain
Jim McGinn
Óglaigh na hÉireann
who died on active service
15th December, 1973
Fuair sé bás ar son na saoirse[77]

A portable public address system was set up close to the plaque where a Tricolor was flying from a permanent flag pole plastered into the bridge's rock wall. The predominantly male marchers included three in the color party with one carrying the Tricolor out in front followed by the Starry Plough and Rising Sun flags side by side; two men holding a banner almost as wide as the roadway with the title "1916 Societies;" one snare drummer keeping the cadence; with another ten or so men bringing up the rear. Jim McGinn's elderly mother and additional family members had followed behind the procession onto the bridge, then stepped aside across from the plaque while the 1916 Societies marchers continued over the bridge.

The society members all wore black jackets with embroidered emblems on either side of the chest identifying them as members of the "Joseph Plunkett Society" from the two small communities of Clady and Glebe, along with accompanying symbols of Irish nationalism like the Tricolor and emblems for each of the four ancient provinces of Ireland. Centered on the back of each jacket, just below the collar, was the iconic lily – symbolic of the 1916 Easter Rising – plus the words

Clady – Glebe
West Tyrone

Throughout the commemoration the presenters and audience all maintained a solemn demeanor. At one point during the proceedings, I moved closer to the center of events but no one seemed to mind since I was taking photos and I managed to get a nice close-up shot of Jim McGinn's mother receiving a bouquet of flowers. The short program included laying several flower arrangements under the plaque, one by a boy no older than twelve; a few short presentations, mostly thanking people for attending, and

acknowledging Jim's family who attended; a prayer in addition to reciting of the Rosary in Irish; plus two solo songs by a young woman, with the final one being "The Soldier's Song," the Republic of Ireland's national anthem sung in Irish. At the end of the program, the audience was asked to make way for the marchers to pass through, but following that to please join the extended McGinn family for some refreshments over at the pub in Clady.

By the time the program ended I had at least another twenty minutes until the second commemoration began at 3:30, so I walked back up to the T-junction to wait in my car. Traffic was being held up there as the police were checking most or all of the cars coming from Clady bridge (and presumably) were part of the commemoration that just finished. I couldn't tell what papers or ID they were checking, but found it prudent not to look too interested. Since I had parked a bit further along the road past the junction, I simply walked by, put my tripod in the trunk for something to do, and returned to wait for the next march with others who had begun to gather along the bridge.

The River Finn is the "national border" between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland at this point, yet there is nothing to indicate that division beyond speed limit signs posted in kilometers in the South and in miles in the North. By 3:15 p.m. it started to rain, making the afternoon even chillier with the wind and the damp. Like before, we could hear the parade coming before we could see them. The sound of the flutes mingling with the drums filtered through the trees and stirred our anticipation. As the procession got closer to the bridge, I was surprised to see Jim McGinn's family get out of cars parked along the roadside and fall in at the front of the parade. Clearly they were attending this program as well as the earlier one. This time the color party

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consisted of seven flags and they were followed by the Strabane Memorial Flute Band, playing a tune as they crossed the bridge. Following the band came two men holding a banner high for the "Jim McGinn Sinn Féin Cumann" with several dozen people marching behind them. The basic program closely mirrored what happened only an hour before.

The previous flower tributes had been removed and new bouquets and wreathes were laid by several individuals expressing support for the family and/or admiration of Jim's sacrifice in the name of local organizations. Another priest led a recitation of one decade of the Rosary – in Irish again – with the Strabane Memorial Flute Band providing the music this time. One pronounced difference was that the primary speaker for this Sinn Féin-sponsored march was a local politician, MLA (Member of the Legislative Assembly) Sheila McManus. In addition to comments on Jim McGinn's sacrifice and admiration of his family's participation in the memorial, McManus made reference to the continued hope, desire, and plan for a united Ireland. Since this was my first experience attending a commemoration I was not sure what to expect, but I was admittedly surprised at such openness in expressing interest in a united Ireland coming from a government official of Northern Ireland – albeit a Sinn Féin representative. Of course it piqued my curiosity and I added her to my wish list of interviewees. Over the following months I discovered that candid references to republicans' continued desire to achieve a united Ireland were quite common, whether expressed by elected officials such as McManus or private citizens.

I left Clady that day with a greater understanding of commemorations, but many new questions as well. As I continued my fieldwork I discovered that the Jim McGinn

commemoration is like no other commemoration, yet at the same time it is exemplary of commemorations in general. In this chapter I explore and analyze the dynamics of social memory that are embedded in republican commemorations, the significance of performance in ritual activities, plus the creation and maintenance of heritage that contribute to the annual round of republican parading in Northern Ireland. Although I touch on republican parades in the Republic of Ireland, my perspective is through the experience of republicans residing in the North. I address less "political" parading, such as St. Patrick's Day in Chapter 6 on civic engagement where I describe and evaluate efforts to implement peace process initiatives including cross-community programs.

General background on political parading in Ireland

There is a long history of parading within both unionist/loyalist and nationalist/republican communities as public parades became "an established feature of political life in the north of Ireland" (Jarman 1997:43) by 1793. Among other historic events that are marked, unionist/loyalist communities have been celebrating the Siege of Derry with its heroic actions of a small group of apprentice boys for over three hundred years, with Apprentice Boys clubs active today in Scotland, England, the United States, and Canada in addition to Ireland (McBride 1997:49). In the early 1800s, "Ribbonmen"[78] established parading to celebrate St. Patrick's Day in Catholic communities, where funeral processions also provided the opportunity to display solidarity in public spaces (Jarman 1997:50).

As in the past, parades today offer a chance to express collective identities and celebrate different heritages. Utilizing a variety of presentation formats, these public

performances "are not only patterned by social forces – they have been part of the very building and challenging of social relations" (Davis 1988:5). They are political acts that appropriate public landscapes to "harness the symbolic power of space" (Whelan 2005:59) in order to reproduce the cultural norms and established values of the dominant society (Cosgrove 1989: 125). As symbolic landscapes, parade routes "communicate inclusion and exclusion as well as hierarchy, and they portray dominant and subordinate groups in particular ways" (Ross 2009a: 6). Moreover, through the performance of ritualized practices in these spaces, participants express the tensions and conflicts "related to competing cultural codes and different symbolic representations… [as they] lay claims to group heritage or tradition" (De Rosa 1998:99). Within the symbolism of each performance, parade, or commemorative event is the group or social memories that give each act meaning.

Marginalized groups, such as republican communities, use parading to express resistance and opposition to the status quo (Whelan 2005:70) and in memory of past acts of social exclusion. From the perspective of Catholics, or people with republican or nationalist sentiments in Northern Ireland, the "Orange" parades and "marching season"[79] of the unionist/loyalist community are something to be endured and/or avoided as much as possible because they "are disempowering reminders of inequality and discrimination under British and unionist rule" (Smithey 2011:119) and have led to violence and protest over unionist/loyalist parade routes that transgress nationalist community boundaries (Bryan 2000a; Wilson and Donnan 2006:106). Controversy lingers over the Orange parade route from Drumcree Church that historically passed along the primarily nationalist Garvaghy Road into Portadown, County Armagh, even

though a police barricade now blocks marchers from traveling the original route (Smithey 2011:123).

According to T.G. Fraser, the problems and tensions over contested routes for parades, like the symbolism embedded in displays of the Ulster flag, the Union Jack, or the Tricolor "come to rest on five key issues: territory, tradition, cultural identity, civil rights and politics" (Fraser 2000a:6). In the late 1960s, nationalist communities became increasingly vocal over discrimination in housing, employment, and political representation, with parades over civil rights being staged in a variety of locations including one in Strabane on June 29, 1969 (Bryan 2000b:84). Several photos from that parade are on display in the Cairde Republican Prisoners' Museum in the town along with one of the banners carried that day. Whether a form of civil rights protest or not, the variety of parade practices in Northern Ireland are expressions of each community's particular heritage and tradition (Jarman 1997:25; Bryan 2000b:161).

Much of the violence and heightened sectarian tension during the Troubles developed out of, or was exacerbated by the parading of one side or the other, whether it was over the contested use of public space or disagreement with the particular cultural heritage being expressed. This ritualized parading by both loyalist and republican communities has had the potential for "destabilising" (Tonge 2008a:69) consensus building and cross-community efforts because "they serve to reinforce and reproduce the 'two communities' paradigm" (Graff-McRae 2010:148). In contrast, rather than seeing ritualized parading and continued use of familiar symbols of identity as problematic for peace-building efforts, Bill Rolston argues they can help people negotiate the transitions (Rolston 2010b) expected during peace process implementation. Furthermore, some of

the destabilizing potential embedded in parading was mitigated when the British government established the Independent Commission on Parades in 1997 with the authorization "to review the parading situation and to ban, allow, and mediate parades" (Smithey 2011:124).

When I spoke with several coordinators of the Strabane Memorial Flute Band, they explained that now any group wanting to stage a parade must submit an application twenty-eight days in advance, clearly stating who is involved and what route the parade will take, as well as supply their own parade stewards to help supervise along the route. Police officers staff major street crossings and intersections, but parade stewards are present throughout the route, even along smaller roads to watch for motorists and guard against "anti-social behavior" from marchers or on-lookers. Since implementation of the parades commission neither side has been totally satisfied, but the application and approval process created a more transparent, fair system for scheduling public events of this sort and has contributed to efforts for improving cross-community communication and accommodation. Whether people live near highly contested parade routes that annually tend to be flashpoints for sectarian violence, or if they reside in communities more ambivalent to the politics of parading, everyone in Northern Ireland is aware of and impacted by commemorative parade dynamics, one way or another. These performances "structure lived time in such a way as to incorporate significant political events into" (Khalili 2007:81) otherwise ordinary life.

I was in Strabane during the Twelfth of July parades in 2009 and 2012, when members of the Orange Institution (commonly called Orange Order) – a Protestant organization – celebrate the victory of Protestant King William of Orange over the

Catholic King James II in the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 (Bryan 2000b:3). Posted flyers and articles in the newspapers promoting the event made it clear that parade organizers in County Tyrone were stressing the family-oriented atmosphere of the event and attempting to expand the audience attracted to share the celebration. In fact, Smithey argues that "conservative unionist and loyalist organizations… are seeking to cultivate political and social capital by abandoning practices that are seen as sectarian or offensive and engaging more proactively in public relations" (Smithey 2011:8). However, people in the Head of the Town, where I was living, had no interest in participating in any of the programs offered.

My first summer in Strabane, they also let me know that they felt it best that I not try to go view any of the Orange parades either. My neighbor Kathleen Daugherty explained that some republicans still disagree with the peace process and even are suspicious of anyone participating in cross-community programs such as the Policing and Community Safety Partnership. In some cases these people have acted out against other Catholics who they feel are betraying the republican cause. She warned that if I were seen returning from an area where unionist celebrations were happening, it could cause some sort of trouble – whether for me personally was not certain, but potentially for Kathleen at some later date, since she had vouched for me with the wider community. In addition, she cautioned that in past years, cars driving along roads near parade routes have been stoned. Because of this potential for violence in addition to the unpleasant enactment of unionist hegemony embedded in the Twelfth celebrations, many Catholics in Northern Ireland automatically schedule their vacations to be out of the area during this time period. Bill Rolston argues that the rituals around observation of the Twelfth of July are

quasi-state activities with "most major employers [closing] for 'the Twelfth fortnight'…

[and] everyone, unionist or otherwise [having] no choice but to be on annual holiday"

(Rolston 2010a:ii). I was disappointed not to view or participate in any of the Twelfth of

July celebrations. Instead, I experienced some aspects of what it means to be limited to

Catholic areas during unionist/loyalist parading and the unease that endures within

Catholic communities in relation to those parades even fourteen years into the peace

process. Since I decided not to observe any Protestant parading in person, I had to content

myself with viewing television coverage on the Twelfth and reading news articles in the

days that followed.

　　　A few days before the Twelfth in 2009, however, Mitch O'Leary gave me a

Catholic's interpretation of the ceremony as enacted in Strabane. We had driven around

various sites in Strabane as Mitch talked about his experience living in the area his whole

life. Just off the town center, near the Strabane District court house, was an Orange Order

memorial still decorated with faded poppy wreaths from the past November's recognition

of soldiers who died in World War I. From what Mitch told me, on the Twelfth of July

the local Orange Order marches up to this memorial and lays commemorative wreaths,

then after some additional ceremony, they march back out of town the way they came. He

said they never go any further than the memorial since that area is considered Catholic

territory. From my limited observations, Mitch's explanation, and local newspaper

coverage, it seems that Orange Order activity in Strabane is very low-key, with unionist

people from West Tyrone tending to gather in greater numbers and for longer programs

in several other towns nearby, such as Castlederg and Dromore.

Even with the brevity of the Orange Order ceremony in Strabane on the Twelfth, the five primary issues of territory, tradition, cultural identity, civil rights, and politics identified by Fraser (2000a) would still be present as they are with every republican or nationalist parade, except the significance of each term is embedded with different meaning depending on which group is being discussed and who is doing the interpretation. A primary distinction between the two groups is that while "Orange parades effectively became rituals of the state, nationalist parades and displays of flags were regarded as a threat to the state were consequently restricted and sometimes banned under the 1922 Special Powers Act" (Bryan and Jarman 1997:215).

Now after fifteen years of peace process implementation efforts to reform decades-old institutional biases and behavior, plus mandated power-sharing of local and province-wide elected officials, many nationalist/republican communities are directly involved in civic affairs, rather than marginalized as in the past. And while no one I spoke with wants a return to the past violence, there is ambivalence and suspicion over seeing local and national republican leaders cooperating with unionists. Carmel Thompson, a lifelong Strabane resident in her early sixties expressed her mixed feelings over these changes while talking about republican and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, who regularly appears in the media working side by side with unionist First Minister Peter Robinson:

> And Martin McGuinness, I would've known him forty-two years ago. I remember him… When I would've gone out to Lifford to see [IRA men at a "safe house" in County Donegal] …and I remember him runnin' about out there. You know you look at him now in his suit, and it's an *IRA* man… He *was*. But you know, now it's "Peter [Robinson] and I," and I don't know how I think about it, because while you don't want it to go back again – in my opinion they've gained a lot, you

know Catholics, but they're still second-class, but not cut down as much as we used to be.

Carmel's memories complicate her reaction to and opinion about current peace process initiatives and watching Sinn Féin politicians willingly engage with "the other side of the house."

Clearly, certain aspects of inequality, distrust, and misunderstanding continue to underlie social memories in Northern Ireland and how the past is adapted "so as to enrich and manipulate the present" (Lowenthal 1985:210). Paul Connerton further argues that

> if there is such a thing as social memory, we are likely to find it in commemorative ceremonies. Commemorative ceremonies prove to be commemorative (only) in so far as they are performative. But performative memory is in fact much more widespread than commemorative ceremonies which are – though performance is necessary to them – highly representational. Performative memory is… bodily social memory. (Connerton 1989:71)

Among the significant elements in commemorations for dead Volunteers such as Jim McGinn, is the performativity, the physicality of these ritualized engagements with the past. Moreover, the process of physically *being* in a specific place engenders emotions and memories – lived or learned – that make heritage and tradition an active experience, not a tangible object (Smith 2007:8).

In post-conflict Northern Ireland, each commemoration of the republican dead reflects back on the original event, direct family members, the specific time within the Troubles or other historic period, and stirs memories regarding who attended and how local authorities such as the police behaved during that commemoration over subsequent years. This reproductive act of commemoration engenders a form of "counter-memory" that

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starts with the local, the immediate, and the personal… [instead of] historical narratives that begin with the totality of human existence and then locate specific actions and events within that totality, counter-memory starts with the particular and the specific and then builds outward toward a total story. Counter-memory looks to the past for the hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives. (Lipsitz 1990: 213)

At the same time this very act of exclusion links any hidden history and counter-memory with the dominant narrative through and because of the "place where it occurs… [and] establishes marks of its power and engraves memories on things and even within bodies" (Foucault 1977:150). Furthermore, the memories themselves can be quite powerful, inducing strong visceral physical reactions in addition to deliberate performance practices.

Extending Connerton's emphasis on the significant connection between bodily practices and memory, Paul Stoller argues that it is particularly essential to focus on "incorporating," or embodied, practices such as posture, movement, and facial expression when analyzing non-Western rituals, claiming that

> If we are to comprehend ritual in non-Western settings, we need to juxtapose text and body. This point is especially important in the analysis of non-Western commemorative rituals in which scholars all too often transform body and bodily practices into texts… That the body is inscribed in these rituals is uncontestable, but to stop there is to make a serious epistemological error. For in its textualization the body is robbed of its movements, odors, tastes, sounds – its sensibilities, all of which are potent conveyors of meaning and memory. (Stoller 1995:30)

Although Stoller does *not* claim his perspective is appropriate solely for scholarly analysis on non-Western cultures, he does state that since Western culture is comprised of "texts and textual analysis," it is more suited to hermeneutical analysis (Stoller 1995:30). Rather than designate cultural groups as Western or non-Western in order to choose an epistemological approach, Stoller really is highlighting the significance of embodied

performance and the co-occurring sensory experiences for expressing meaning within and between cultural groups, such as relationships of power, dominance, and resistance. Stoller's discussion and analysis of Hauka spirit embodiment and mimicry of earlier European behavior in post-colonial Africa addresses the interplay and expression of these dynamics of power in ways that are applicable in specific situations whether part of a Western or non-Western cultural society. In a complementary manner, Pnina Werbner describes the significance of performance within immigrant Pakistanis in Great Britain and the ways in which "social movements embody identity through performance…[that] takes place within the life worlds of the participants" (Werbner 1996:90).

Similarly, through the act of commemorative parading in Northern Ireland, republicans are physically and sensually expressing cultural identity at the same time they are experiencing and embodying symbolic routes, music, and postures that "have recourse to the past" (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1995:369) and are all potent conveyors of meaning and memory within their "life world." Casey argues that commemoration, body memory, and place memory are inseparable, essential elements of remembering, with participation being "of critical importance" (Casey 2000:253). By bodily remembering a soldier's "ultimate sacrifice" – his death – people recall the surrounding conflict and its relation to their continued goal of establishing a united Ireland. As a small town with a majority nationalist/republican community located along the border in the northwest part of the province, Strabane provides one example of how a community is negotiating the politics of their republican culture, identity, and claim of Irish citizenship as they struggle with participation in peace process implementation in Northern Ireland.

Republican parading and commemoration in Strabane

Republican parading and commemoration in Strabane, like that throughout

Northern Ireland, is comprised of events that memorialize local IRA volunteers who died

"in active service" such as the death of Jim McGinn, plus other commemorations that are

more generalized and are celebrated in both the North and the South, such as the

commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising. Many of the local commemorations are

organized and hosted by the Sinn Féin *cumann* from the neighborhood where that

particular volunteer lived or grew up. Others, like the annual memorial parade for the

three Strabane lads killed in February of 1985, were started and continue to be run by

memorial bands.

Matt Collins, one of the Strabane Memorial Flute Band founders, talked about

community reaction at the time of the 1985 shooting and how it inspired local youth to

start the band:

> My wife's sister was actually going out with one of the lads. In this kind of area
> everybody knows everybody, and in a situation like that, the whole town was in
> an uproar you know – it was a big thing in Strabane at that time, no doubt about it.
> [Starting the band] was a way for young people to show their affiliation and their
> republican beliefs. We knew about other bands… At the time you would've had
> the Patsy O'Hara and Francis Hughes band, from Derry. You would've had the
> Kevin Lynch band from Dungiven. They would've all come out of the hunger
> strike, with the names being the person who was honored... Patsy O'Hara, Francis
> Hughes, and Kevin Lynch would all of been people who died on hunger strike –
> those bands would've been around after '81. But this was just another way for
> people to show their beliefs and their republicanism… Some people would've lent
> towards the republican movement [by] joining the IRA. Young people who felt
> they were too young to do that, but still wanted an outlet for their beliefs,
> would've joined the band… Just a few of us got together after the three lads were
> shot in the field. We wanted to have some form of commemoration for them -
> some way of rememberin' what happened and somebody just came up – "What
> about starting a band?" – and it just went from there.

Realizing they had no idea how to go about organizing and getting money to start a band, the teens approached several adults in the neighborhood who shepherded them through the challenges of raising money, acquiring instruments, choosing uniforms, and sticking with regular practice sessions. Matt explained that their first event was one year later at

> the commemoration of the boys the following year, [the] first anniversary. It was our first parade, the first parade in Strabane. It was *brilliant* – the feeling in the area, you know, of excitement to see the band out there for the first time. I think we knew maybe eight songs and we just kept playing them over again. We might've played them three or four times each, but it got us out and got us into the public eye.

Community support for the Strabane Memorial Flute band was strong from the very beginning, with people participating in fund-raising raffles as well as cheering them on when parading. Today, a core of dedicated members from that first year continue to coordinate the parade in Strabane, when the band joins other commemorations around Ireland, and as they teach a new generation of band members how to march, play a drum or flute, and in the process honor the memory of Charlie, Davy, and Michael. In addition to remembering the three lads every February, the band has a fairly busy schedule of commemorative parades they attend throughout the year, primarily in Northern Ireland with a few others located in the Republic. In early January, Matt Collins gave me an overview of their commemorative parade schedule for the year ahead:

> The week before our parade [in February], we'll go to a parade in Dunloy. It's another commemoration for a couple of volunteers down there, in County Derry. [80] So we'll be there the Sunday before our parade. We would've gone down [to Derry] every year for Bloody Sunday [at the end of January], but that's not happening anymore, [although] I think half the families want to do something. That was normally always the first one of the year. Different people have different ideas – let the families do whatever they want to do – it's up to them, yeah. But that normally would've been the first one of the year. Then, as I say, we would've had Dunloy and then our own, and then a few months after that we'll have Rasharkin. [81] We have the Sean MacDermott parade, in a wee place called

Kiltyclogher, where Sean MacDermott was actually born.[82] I don't know if you're familiar with Sean MacDermott. [He] was one of the signatories of the Proclamation – the Proclamation would've been the men of 1916, the Easter Rising… They had a Proclamation about this, that, and the other, and he would've been one of the signatories... So we go down there every year to commemorate Sean MacDermott. That would be around May… We normally have two in Derry, between that and August, then in September we'll have our own West Tyrone Brigade [commemoration] – that happens in Strabane normally about the first or second week of September. It used always be in the last week of August, and then it sort of tied in with the all-Ireland football weekend, so the date always had to be sort of moved. You would've lost part of your crowd because they would've been watching football, depending on who was involved in it. Then around October we have Belfast… and there's one there in Dromore as well that happens at the end of April, start of May.[83] The one in Belfast in October is about the last one before we do the one in Clady in December [for Jim McGinn]. Those are the parades we would normally do every year, but other ones can almost come in any time. Last year we had three different parades that we never had done before. People just seen us somewhere [and asked us to come to their parade]. We were in Dromore last year [when] we were asked to come to Carrickmore, [then] people seen us at Carrickmore and asked us to go somewhere else – so it just depends where you go.

Decisions over whether or not to accept an invitation to a parade also depends on when the commemoration is being held. Although there may be an exception or two, at this stage they generally only agree to participate in commemorations on weekends. With some band members working away from home during the week, a few working on farms, and others taking evening courses at the local college, there usually are not enough members available to march on weeknights. In addition, the core members who were contemporaries of Charlie, Michael, and Davy are at a different point in their lives than ten or fifteen years ago – they have families of their own, with other activities taking their time and attention. So now their normal round of commemorations is within the ancient province of Ulster, except for the one in Kiltyclogher, County Leitrim, just south of County Fermanagh.

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In the past the band traveled more extensively throughout Ireland and made

several trips to Scotland and England during the Troubles for commemorations honoring

the Hunger Strikers and earlier republican heroes such as James Connolly. Among the

highlights of distant travel for parading were two trips to the United States in the early

2000s, when they visited and performed for enthusiastic crowds in Philadelphia, Boston,

and Cleveland. Although many of the members told me about how much they enjoyed

the extended trips, their primary focus has always and continues to be on keeping the

memories of Charlie, Michael, and Davy alive.

Post-conflict republican commemoration

Due to various elements of peace process implementation and the passage of time,

republican commemorations now draw fewer participants and audiences than they did

during the Troubles, yet remain essential to local Sinn Féin *cumainn* and other dedicated

republicans. From what I observed in a variety of commemorations hosted by different

organizations, all groups presenting commemorations make a strong effort to involve

older teens and young adults in key roles of the program. There seems to be an unspoken

understanding that involving the "next generation" is essential for these ceremonies to

continue. Additional changes over time include a shift from holding yearly observances

of individual deaths to marking only major anniversaries; access to public areas for

republican parading and interaction with police has become less problematic; and instead

of shouting support for the IRA and the continuation of armed conflict, messages

expressed through acts of commemoration combine an appreciation for the individual

valor and sacrifices of past heroes with renewed commitment to a united Ireland in a changing future.

Polyvalent Parading

During her discussion of commemorations held for Palestinians who were killed during violent conflict in their struggle for nationhood, Laleh Khalili describes each event as a public performance that

> demands reactions from [its] audience… That commemoration is dialogic and shaped by constant interaction with its audience allows for ambiguity and polyvalence. Hence, particular commemorative practices can be interpreted as engaging a nationalist audience in one setting, and as appealing to international human rights in another. The same story can mean different things to a member of the Palestinian political elite and to a refugee living in a camp. (Khalili 2007:91)

Republican commemorations in Northern Ireland generally involve four distinct groups who interpret, contribute to, and experience the event from different perspectives: the organization or political party who hosts or coordinates the commemoration and their core workers; immediate family members of the deceased person being remembered; interested supporters of the host organization, along with bands or organizations invited from other towns; and the general public, who may merely watch the parade passing by or join the procession for the formal proceedings.

Commemoration Hosts

Organizations hosting a republican commemoration plan the overall event; such as arranging for speakers, musical performers, visiting bands, and providing refreshments afterwards. They all follow the same general plan that includes wreaths laid at

memorials, recitation of the Rosary, a moment of remembrance in which the color party lowers their flags in honor of the deceased, some acknowledgement of the personal sacrifice being recognized, and encouragement to those attending to continue the struggle for a united Ireland, depending on what group is hosting the commemoration. In addition to acknowledging the person(s) or event being remembered, a commemoration hosted by a local Sinn Féin *cumann* for example, normally will have one or more elected official(s) present and giving a speech, which provides an opportunity to recruit new members as well as promote the current party interests and initiatives. This is not to suggest that any of the commemorations I attended seemed more like a political rally than a time of remembrance, but to highlight what differed between politically-affiliated commemorations and those hosted by other groups. When an elected official did give a speech it was in the context of that particular commemoration and individual observance.

The Strabane Memorial Flute Band's annual commemoration for the three lads has no one delivering speeches. Instead their focus is on the music played by each band that attends. Matt Collins, one of the coordinators explained that the parade route ends up near the town center where all the bands gather and "each band will then play a couple of songs, because there's competition there as well, and the judges then will have the last chance to mark the bands," followed by one band playing "The Soldier's Song" before they break and head indoors for refreshments. The very low-key Jim McGinn commemoration hosted by Clady's 1916 Societies branch also had no elected official speak, in accordance with their declaration that they are not a political party, but an organization dedicated to honoring Ireland's patriot dead. In contrast, the second commemoration hosted by the Jim McGinn *cumann* had the local representative on the

Legislative Assembly give a short speech in which she pointed out that she grew up in the very Ballycolman community included in the Jim McGinn *cumann*, in addition to connecting Jim's sacrifice to Sinn Féin's continued commitment to unite all of Ireland.

Clearly there are variations in how dedication to republicanism is enacted and how commemorations are sponsored and organized. Despite the fact that people involved with Sinn Féin and the 1916 Societies express fundamental differences over several issues regarding interacting with the police service and how to proceed with promoting a united Ireland, they agree on the value and importance of commemorating their "patriot dead" and in the case of commemorating Jim McGinn, they manage to cooperate with each other on timing and sharing the same location for their respective memorial observations.

For major annual commemorations such as the Easter Sunday commemoration in Drumboe, County Donegal, the choice of speaker tends to be one of the high-profile republican leaders island-wide. When I attended in 2012, Martin McGuinness, the Deputy First Minister for Northern Ireland, was the main speaker. After a few introductory comments like hoping he would finish before the rain started, he spoke of the importance of all efforts towards Irish unity as he acknowledged of the four men executed at Drumboe during the Civil War whose deaths were being remembered in this commemoration, saying:

> It really is a privilege to join with you as we recall the Proclamation of the Irish Republic and pay tribute to all those who have given their lives in the cause of Irish freedom. We make no distinction between the men and women of 1916, or the men and women of 1981. We honor equally the republicans who fell in the years of struggle in 1916 to 1923 and those who gave their lives in our own era 1969… To the families, friends, and comrades of all those who died we extend our continuin' sympathy and solidarity.

He stressed the valor of men like Daly, Larkin, Enright, and O'Sullivan who were executed in 1923 for opposing the partition of Ireland (Ó Duibhir 2011:228) and remaining "firm in their allegiance to the all-Ireland republic proclaimed in 1916."[84] McGuinness declared the 1916 Rising to be the defining event and the Proclamation signed by the key leaders to be the defining document "in the history of Irish republicanism," challenging the assembled crowd, "Our task is to apply the principle to the Ireland of 2012 and [create] a new republic on this island." As he used the phrase "a new republic" McGuinness segued into the second half of his speech, which had much more of a Sinn Féin party focus. He noted that the goal of a united Ireland is for "all Irish people in all their diversity. All republicans have a responsibility to reject sectarianism [and] engage in active dialog with unionists, not just with our words, but with our deeds, to share our island with us." Although much of McGuinniss' comments in the second half reflected party rhetoric and sentiments similar to those expressed in the "Uniting Ireland – Towards a New Republic" conferences Sinn Féin was holding in sites all around Ireland (www.unitingireland.ie)[85], his presentation still fit within the common pattern of commemoration speeches given by elected officials. McGuinness linked the particular hero/martyrs being memorialized that day to the on-going struggle for Irish independence, including a fitting comparison to the actions of the original 1916 rebels since the event was marking the Easter Rising as well. Like other speakers, he challenged those assembled, not just to remember and honor the memory of those who died "in the cause of Irish freedom," but to accept the responsibility of working towards that same goal. However, McGuinness went even further, urging republicans to engage with and

involve the unionist community in this effort. Granted, he did put in a strong plug for joining the Sinn Féin party and he artfully balanced his comments to address issues of republicans on either side of the border, but I would have been surprised if he had given anything less than a well-crafted political and commemorative speech, considering his extensive experience as a politician. McGuinness's comments are indicative of the transformations being negotiated across Ireland as Sinn Féin maintains their original intention, yet describes their goal of a united Ireland in a different, inclusive way, similar to current initiatives in Northern Ireland towards a more inclusive future.

Family members and commemorations

Family members of the deceased may be directly or only indirectly involved in commemorations, with some even being consulted on aspects of the ceremony. Two consecutive commemorations hosted by different groups, honoring one person on the same day, like those I attended for Jim McGinn seem to be unusual. While no one had a clear answer when I questioned why two commemorations were held, it seems to have developed out of one of the most recent splits from Sinn Féin over their willingness to sit down and cooperate with the police service. For many who witnessed or experienced police brutality and collusion with British forces during the Troubles, and were already dissatisfied over the peace process, the concept of Sinn Féin members willingly working alongside police officers was simply too much to accept. Although many were reluctant to discuss much about the organization, Jean Barry, one of the founders of the relatively new Charlie D'Arcy 1916 Society in Strabane tried to help me understand how people's anger and disillusionment had built up over the last fifteen years, telling me that many

republicans "were not happy with the peace process… [feeling] they had lost too much to accept a cease-fire." Even after additional negotiations and police reforms were implemented, some people continued to feel betrayed by their political leaders and began threatening local republicans who actively engaged with unionists and/or the police service in their communities. Once Sinn Féin members officially began working with local District Policing Partnerships (DPPs) a few years ago, a number of former Sinn Féin supporters left the party (Patterson 2011:83) and established the 1916 Societies as a "separatist movement" focused on honoring the patriot dead, supporting Irish culture, and promoting a "32-County" referendum for Irish unity.[86] For those dissatisfied with Sinn Féin's current, very active leadership in Northern Irish government, the 1916 Societies offers an alternative to participating in a Sinn Féin hosted commemoration for IRA Volunteers.

It is important to stress that commemorating dead hero/martyrs is an essential aspect of republicanism, whether it is IRA, INLA, or other republican combatants from past acts of rebellion being remembered. Rebecca Graff-McCrae argues that

> The concept of "republican mourning" can be read not only as "mourning republicans" but, crucially, as "mourning the Republic." In this sense mourning pervades republican politics: a process of remembrance is often explicitly included in speeches, press statements, political agreements… party conferences… and so on. The annual Easter statements released by the Provisional IRA (PIRA) leadership form a key element of this discourse, taking hold of historical republican martyrology and sending it back, with new names and changed context. (Graff-McCrae 2010:57)

Commemorating "the patriot dead" is integral to republican communities, demonstrating that the individual is not forgotten, that the death had "meaning," and others accept the responsibility to continue the struggle in some manner. I spoke with relatives of many of

the Strabane IRA Volunteeers who died while "on active service." Several are active members of their local Sinn Féin *cumainn* and involved in the planning and presentation of commemorations. Another family member stays out of direct political involvement, but still argued against the mistrust directed at Sinn Féin's increased role in local and province-wide government:

> I think that is part of the Troubles as well – the trust, you know… You find it difficult to trust people. But if we're not in there and negotiatin' and talkin', you know, and bein' part of it, then we're going to be on the outside. They're going to carry on anyway without us, you know, so we need a voice. And you need to be in there puttin' yourself out there, you know, and speaking for the people… I don't always agree with it, you know, but I think it's the only way forward.

This woman, along with several others, remains appreciative that her family member continues to be recognized for his or her service, but their only involvement in commemorations is coming out and observing the event. According to Jean Barry, of Strabane's Charlie D'Arcy (1916) Society, the family of the deceased has to approach the Society and ask for their involvement in a commemoration, at which time the Society members will get involved. However, from what I was able to learn from several sources in Strabane, the decision that the Clady-Glebe 1916 Society would host a commemoration of Jim McGinn's death did not start with a family request. As a Captain in the IRA who frequently moved between operations in West Tyrone and County Donegal, Jim McGinn would have been well-known among Volunteers from Clady and Glebe, in addition to his own neighborhood in Strabane, and the factions living "on the run" across the border in Lifford. From that perspective it is understandable that many former combatants who knew him well, and live in the Clady and Glebe communities, still want to honor Jim McGinn even though they felt it necessary to split from Sinn Féin.

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With the current practice of holding most commemorations only on significant anniversaries, direct support and participation of family members is an important aspect of the ceremony. Although the individual is being honored for military activity it is important to those involved to acknowledge aspects of the person's life including commitment to family, or maybe particular talents such as in sports or music. Having a family member or very close friend share a specific remembrance or two about the deceased is one of the primary ways to construct or reinforce the social memory of that person as more than an individual who "died for Irish freedom." Personal remembrances that I heard at various commemorations included a sister recalling how appalled her brother used to be over the way she drove a car; how another brother was a "terrific banjo player who didn't drink, but loved the *craic*;" and a close friend relating yet another man's sense of humor. As testimonies, these comments emphasize the personal, the individual, at the same time they "attempt to create a community of shared loss" (Sturken 1997:184) and understanding as part of the cultural memory of the Troubles. Moreover, stressing personal aspects and the individuality of each volunteer serves to mitigate generalized accusations about "the criminality and moral degeneracy" (Lawther 2014:62) of former combatants, living or dead.

Not everyone is comfortable with the process of commemoration or interested in continued involvement, either. At the twenty-fifth anniversary commemoration for the eight IRA Volunteers shot and killed at Loughgall, County Armagh, on May 8, 1987, the sister of Volunteer Tony Gormley expressed her family's appreciation for everyone gathering to honor and remember her brother, mused about what his life might have been like had he survived, shared some personal remembrances, then added:

We all have many different views on things in life – whether it be sport, education, health, religion, politics, but we can still respect each other's view and agree to differ and still remain friends. The organizers of today's commemoration know that my views politically differ from theirs, but we still respect each other and remain friends, and I hope that will still continue. Personally I find the events of… [of commemoration] although very, very much appreciated, they take an awful lot out of me emotionally, and it's got no easier over the years. So I'm goin' to take a less active role for the time bein' – from the 25th anniversary, now, from this year, and I hope that everyone will understand that.

She closed by restating her family's thanks for the communities support:

As a family we wish to thank you all here for bein' here today and remembering Tony and his comrades. We also wish to thank everyone who supported Tony and… his time on active service and all who stood with us through thick and thin over the years, and we had many, many difficult times. We appreciate this very, very much. Thank you.

I could almost feel the inner conflict this woman wrestled with as she spoke, even though she maintained her composure throughout her commentary. Clearly she valued community support and continued recognition of her brother's contribution to the struggle for a united Ireland. At the same time she voiced concerns over current differences in political opinions between herself and the commemoration organizers. What those differences were I never knew. Yet while I was surprised at her comment, I also had respect for how she chose to express those concerns and the fact that she would not participate in commemorations going forward. Presumably she decided that after twenty-five years, she had enough of publicly coping with the heavy emotional toll of being one of the close family members of such a high-profile episode of the Troubles.[87]

Immediate family members of IRA Volunteers who "died on active service" have a range of perspectives about the initial event and subsequent commemorative activities that draw attention to both the hero/martyr(s) and their families on key anniversaries. Whether they were high-profile deaths or not, many of the families continue to face

lingering questions about the shooting(s) or the inquest(s) that followed and have tried to get their concerns addressed through the courts of the United Kingdom as well as the European Court of Human Rights. In some cases, such inquiry may wind up presenting evidence and conclusions that contradict prevailing republican sentiment that an event was initiated by Crown Forces. A report into the Loughgall ambush that was released in December 2011 "overturned the republicans' long-held argument that the SAS opened fire first as part of a shoot-to-kill policy… [concluding] that it was the IRA who opened fire, and that the SAS were within their rights to shoot dead those who were attacking them" (Lawther 2014:90). Each anniversary observance means family and close friends of the deceased have to revisit and remember not only the original violent death, but the continuing debate over the truth of what occurred and who may be to blame.

Invited groups and interested supporters

The third distinct group involved in commemorations includes the host organization's interested supporters and bands or organizations invited from other towns. Following the formal ritual aspects of the commemoration, participants and on-lookers are welcome to join the host organization for tea and refreshments in some form of community hall or other group space. With some groups traveling quite a distance, it is a courtesy to provide some food before they head back home. Moreover, feeding larger groups while out of town can be a logistical challenge and add to the groups' cost to attend, making it difficult for some to participate. In the case of the Strabane Memorial Flute Band's annual observance of the shooting of the three lads, a core group of friends

and close family of band members prepare and serve the refreshments. A few weeks

before the date, band member Matt Collins told me that they use

> a nightclub down in the town center. We all end up there after we fall out. We'll
> be fed and watered in there. And then we have a quiz, and the band normally that
> wins the competition, they play for 20 minutes or so. And then we have music and
> it ends about 9 o'clock. And that's us finished.

The team I saw serving up soup, tiny sausages, sandwiches, tea, and cake clearly were

accustomed to working with each other and the club staff to keep things running

smoothly.

The number of bands participating varies from year to year, as Matt explained to

me:

> We've had bands from all over the place. This year we're hoping for Dungiven to
> be here, Derry, Rasharkin, Moy… Portadown, Donegal … They come almost
> every year. I just get on the phone two or three weeks before and say "Our
> parade's on the 26th - will ye's be here?"... And they say "Yes" or "No," and that
> gives us an idea for what kind of food we have to get put on, to feed them when
> they come.

In addition to visiting bands like those who attend the Strabane Memorial Flute Band's

parade marking the deaths of Charlie Breslin and Michael and Davy Devine,

commemorations hosted by organizations such as a 1916 Societies branch, will include

marching units, usually dressed in some clothing that identifies them as part of a group,

similar to the jackets worn by the Joseph Plunkett Society from Clady-Glebe, and

displaying their local association banner. Generally each memorial band or association

also is followed by friend and family supporters in regular attire, including children or

even babies in prams, indicating strong familial and community support and interest.

Out of the various commemorations I attended, one particular band – the Pride of

Erin Flute Band from Portadown – caught my attention on several occasions, first

because of their distinctive green uniforms with large pom-poms on top of their green berets, but secondly because most of the musicians and flag-bearers were either children or teenagers and it looked as if the only adults involved were women. I was impressed with how well-trained and intent they appeared, and noticed that they seemed to be enjoying what they were doing as well. At one commemoration, when their progress was stopped mid-way along the parade route right in front of me, I had the opportunity to observe them close-up as they marched in place and started into another tune during the minute and a half before the parade continued. During this same lull in the parading, several 1916 Societies branches behind them simply stood around in a casual manner. When the Portadown band came to the commemoration in Strabane I had the opportunity to speak with a few of the adults, including the director who talked about how the band has been a social outlet for children and youth in her area, as well as a way for them to experience and be involved in their culture and heritage. She combines recruiting and directing the band with her job as a community worker in Portadown, County Armagh, where she is involved in a number of activities to keep children and youth away from drugs and other harmful activities.

I also joined the Strabane Memorial Flute Band on several bus trips to commemorations in other communities. One of their favorite commemorations is held in Kiltyclogher, County Leitrim – a small village in the Republic – where residents observe the execution of their home-town hero, Sean MacDermott, on May 13, 1916 for his part in the 1916 Rising. Along with Thomas Clarke, MacDermott is credited with providing the initial inspiration for the Easter Rising (McGarry 2010:103). The Strabane Memorial Flute Band has been traveling to Kiltyclogher to participate in the MacDermott

commemoration since the mid-1990s and over that time have developed a strong relationship and attachment with the town and the commemoration, which was established in either 1935 or 1936, according to some of the locals. The parade started a little less than a mile out of town at a "Y" junction of two small country roads where a color party led the Strabane Memorial Flute Band, followed by a small gathering of people in street attire, who I assumed were from the vicinity. I noticed that a number of these people wore the paper "lily" that is sold and worn on Easter Sunday in honor of the 1916 Rising. It was a rather small parade and a cold but light rain was falling as the procession started back towards the village. As we moved towards Kiltyclogher, we passed small clutches of people, usually waiting at the end of a driveway, who stood at attention as the band marched passed them, then fell in with the rest, so we gathered additional marchers as we made our way to the village cross-roads where a statue of MacDermott is mounted on a tall pedestal right in the center. Most of us "civilians" took shelter against buildings or under awnings, but the color party and band stayed at attention in the street throughout the presentations, reciting of the Rosary, and wreath laying, although they actually cut the program a bit short from what was originally intended when the rain got heavier.

After the ceremony most of the crowd, band, and presenters were all invited to gather at a near-by community center, in the common fashion. As we were warming up with tea there was some joking back and forth between band members and people from Kiltyclogher about the band playing later in the pub, and along with some good-natured laughter, a mention that they had to play more music before they got paid for the day. I was puzzled over what they meant, but figured it would be clear enough at some point.

When we finished eating at the community center, I followed some of the band members over to the bar at the cross-roads and into a back room. Several of the band members had changed into T-shirts or other dry, casual clothing and were socializing with villagers including the MacDermott commemoration organizers, and I began to understand what makes Kiltyclogher so memorable and significant to the people from Strabane. There was the friendly dynamic of long-time acquaintances meeting up after time apart as villagers and band members talked, shared a pint or two, and then settled down for more music from the band. This was the inner circle, so to speak, who look forward to this time of sharing after the commemoration every year. The drummers stood in an open area near the middle of the large space, sometimes moving around to the music, while the flute players remained in various seats around the perimeter with the rest of us scattered among them, or gathered by the bar. Along with the adults were a few younger children, including one small boy who was miming playing the drum, so one of the band's drummers moved over and let him play on his snare drum. At one point band member Tad McCarthy excitedly introduced me to a well-dressed gentleman who had joined the crowd, explaining to me that he was Michael Colreavy, the local TD (Teachta Dála, a member of Dáil Éireann),[88] and in turn telling Michael about my research in Strabane and insisting we pose for a photo together. From the way Tad and others talked with Michael it was obvious they have been friends for some time and have great respect for each other. Tad wanted to be certain that I had a photographic record of meeting Michael, and I have to admit, it *was* interesting to talk, even for a short while, with Sinn Féin members living in the Republic. In addition, Michael graciously urged me to contact him if there was any way he could help with my research.

Before the band finished playing for the evening, a few drummers started up a cadence, the flutes came in with a tune, and at specific intervals in the tempo and tune, the drummers threw their heads back yelling, "I – R – A!" It caught me by surprise since I had been assured they no longer did anything that, but I managed to get some video of their performance to capture the energy of the moment. A few weeks later, I spoke with Jeremy Burke, one of the band's founders who explained that in the past before the peace process began, they would regularly play IRA songs and shout "I – R – A!" – particularly when near the police barracks. This was meant to be provocative, showing that they were standing their ground and let the police know that they were not afraid. Now they only shout out like that in settings like the pub in Kiltyclogher, where the gathering represents more of a private party. Jeremy also explained that the band's strong friendship with Michael Conleavy began when he was chairman of the MacDermott commemoration, before becoming an elected official. Although the bond between people in Kiltyclogher and the Strabane Memorial Flute Band is exceptional, their relationship still demonstrates some of the interaction and resulting friendships that are part of the host-guest dynamic of many republican commemorations. Band members certainly enjoy the social aspects, but they also are committed to the more serious business of remembering the patriot dead as well, taking pride in parading and playing well. As they attend commemorations in various communities, the Strabane Memorial Flute Band engages in a reciprocal process in which their participation in other commemorations and the relationships they develop through that, leads to support and attendance for their personal act of commemoration in Strabane.

Commemoration attendance by the general public

In any town where a commemorative parade is held, some of the residents will see or be aware of it whether they have any interest in participating or not. Usually there is advance publicity in the immediate and surrounding areas encouraging people to come out and support the host organization or the families of those being remembered. In some cases, interested residents along the parade route will simply step outside their front door to view the procession passing. For higher-profile anniversary commemorations, people will gather at various locations to view the parade and then go to the assembly point to hear the presentation. Band member Matt Collins talked about the vagaries of the public audience saying

> I'll be honest with you, it depends on the weather. If it's a nice day people will come out and line the road. They mightn't follow you. They mightn't march behind. But they'll line the road and watch it, and enjoy the bands. They'll come down maybe [to the assembly] site and see the end of the competition. It's never going to be the same numbers, for the reason that the whole landscape has changed. At the start that was a republican way of showing their backing to the family. So they came out. They had to do it to show the family that they supported them and that they had their backin'… but the way the landscape is now – it's changed.

When the Strabane Memorial Flute Band started, their community was in the midst of an armed conflict and in turmoil over the deaths of the three lads that was exacerbated by questionable legal processes blocking the families' questions and concerns during the inquest. Fiona Boylan went to school with two of the lads and remembers the time after the shooting as "a turning event in history for Strabane… People put their energy in the stuff for their culture. You know, it just changed. It changed Strabane. It changed the people." Another friend, Cass Sullivan, recalled the pent-up anger, adding that "the young fellas, after that shooting anyway, you know they

were queuing up to get into the band. They were queuing up to get in the IRA, because of what had happened, and the way they lay in the field that particular time. There was a lot of anger."[89] At that point people responded in various ways, including getting involved in the band or at least supporting the band in any way possible.

Matt explained how the pressures of what was going on all around the Head of the Town spurred people to get involved:

> It was easier to keep the band together and easier to get numbers into the band, because people were comin' in all the time… things were happening in different areas, or in this area. That made them want to do it, on a personal level, whereas now that's not happening anymore. We haven't got the turmoil of people dyin' and the soldiers shootin' somebody. The police shootin' somebody or people bein' arrested, people's doors getting kicked in. People gettin' dragged out and gettin' taken away and jailed. So everything's changed, so you're not goin' to have the same feeling on the street as what you had then, the people are apt to be more lazy on it, if you understand what I'm sayin'… It's just not as important anymore… But all we can do is we try to bring our youngsters into it, like my son and daughter are both in the band.

These four different groups that represent various levels of perspectives on, connections to, and coordination of commemorations overlap at times, particularly in a few situations when family members of the deceased are also members of another "category," such as being involved with one of the memorial bands. For example, the Strabane Memorial Flute Band includes relatives of the three lads and a twenty-five-year-old musician who frequently is invited to sing at commemorations is also on the staff of Sinn Féin. However, no matter what particular dimension, or connection, engages a person in a commemoration, the ultimate interest is the same. To remember and honor individuals who died while fighting for a united Ireland, and to do so with dignity and pride.

Embodying public space

Prior to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 public expression of both republican

and nationalist political and cultural perspectives was severely confined or forbidden

outright in Northern Ireland (Bryan 2000b:61). Nationalists traveling through the town

center of Strabane, or similar towns in the North, would be aware of tangible and

intangible symbols confirming their second-class status. Ashworth, Graham, and

Tunbridge note that "powerful groups will attempt to determine the limits of meaning for

everyone else by universalizing their own cultural truths through traditions, texts,

monuments, pictures and landscapes" (Ashworth, Graham, and Tunbridge 2007:61).

With the majority of businesses owned by Protestants and Strabane District Council

controlled by unionists during the Troubles, there was no question about which "side of

the house" controlled day-to-day activities and cultural expression in Strabane, leaving

nationalists and republicans feeling like second-class citizens in their own town.

During an interview with a few of the core members of the Strabane Memorial

Flute Band, they described earlier challenges of parading in honor of the three lads shot

by British forces in 1985:

> *Matt Collins*: Police gave us a lot of harassment. They would've judged the band
> as IRA sympathizers. They would say to parents "Do you know what your son or
> daughter's in?"… That was the perception of the RUC[90] -- if you were in the
> band, they classed you as IRA. So we were classed as an IRA band. I remember
> when one of the first cease-fires came in, there were a couple of few young ones
> joined, and I think her parents were stopped in the street, and they says "I think
> you're so and so's in the band. They're going to end up in the IRA -- they're
> going to end up in jail." That was RUC. They had it blocked off with police Land
> Rovers, and a load of soldiers and stuff like that to make sure that we did not get
> into the town center with the Tricolor. We were banned from enterin' our own
> town center in Strabane with the Tricolor, because if we took the Tricolor down
> they'd let us march through. I mind a time when we were stopped for a half hour
> or more at Shade's Corner.[91] So we were stopped there from enterin' our own

town. I can't remember what year it was, but we came through the town [another] year on St. Patrick's Day…

Tad McCarthy: I think it was 1987…

Matt: … And we were coming out through the town and [as] we played through the town, the RUC attacked us, and attacked people who came out of their houses to see us…

Tad: They attacked members of the band with batons there, so they did…

Matt: And a fight broke out as people came out of bars. So the band from day one was harassed by the security forces.

When I asked them whether *they* saw themselves as an IRA band as labeled by

the RUC, founding member Jeremy Burke answered "Not really, no. We're not an IRA

band." However, a bit later Matt described the silhouetted figures on the band's emblem

as depicting "two members of the IRA, and like what we call the final salute, [with] their

heads down." I questioned further, wondering whether the band itself takes on an IRA

identity, or if the symbolism in the emblem was there because the band represents the

three lads who *were* IRA Volunteers. After some hesitation, Matt hedged saying "We are

what we are. That's all I can really say… You know, there is members of the band have

served time for IRA membership." Tad McCarthy agreed and added that other behavior

by local youth also contributed to polarizing and problematic relations between the band

and police:

> A few years back, you would've got maybe young lads hanging back, at the end of the parade and then the police would've been there. And the young lads would be throwing stones… But [MP] Pat Doherty[92] [and other political leaders] would fight for the parades. We said we'd sort this out for ourselves, and the last few years there's been no trouble. So we're happy enough and I think they're happy enough. The parades commission would've come down on us now and again – about our uniforms [and] we used to shout on the street, shout IRA slogans, so we did. It's a way of life. We done it here. We've done it in England.

Officially, the Strabane Memorial Flute Band has never been part of the IRA, but over time many band members joined individually, and all were and are in agreement with the republican goals and actions of the IRA. And active IRA or not, membership in the band meant they were targeted for extra police surveillance and harassment.

During the Troubles there were numerous checkpoints along many roads, both in commercial and residential areas throughout Northern Ireland. In west County Tyrone, anyone traveling the major north-south road from Omagh to Derry literally had to go through the center of Strabane, since there was no by-pass as yet, and that meant going through numerous checkpoints. A woman who grew up in Sion Mills, just south of Strabane said that if her father "was questioned at the checkpoint [he] would say he was going to Donnamana, and we'd just go right through and we'd only be going to Strabane. You'd get stopped if you were going to Strabane." In a case like that the police would assume the car's occupants were Protestant since they claimed to be traveling to a unionist community north of Strabane. Of course that only worked for people outside of the town proper who the RUC did not already know. The RUC made it a point to know town residents, including where they worked and what activities they did.

Tad McCarthy lived on one side of Strabane but worked on the other side, and as a band member experienced delays and pointed commentary from police in his daily progress through the checkpoints. He explained

> When I joined the band I was workin', and I'd be stopped like four or five times
> in the morning going to work, so I would. *Every* morning. It probably took me
> maybe thirty-five extra minutes, when my work was only five or ten minutes
> away down the road. I mind being stopped by a guy – he was a UDR member[93] –
> I would know them by their faces, and he says "Tad, like how's it going today?"
> or "this morning," you know, and I says "What are you goin' to do – search me or

what?" And they stop you and search your bag, pockets, and all that stuff, so they did.

The continual police harassment actually served as an incentive to join and/or remain in the band for many of the members who were contemporaries of Charlie, Michael, and Davy who were shot in 1985. As Tad put it

> It was our way of sort of legally getting back at them. I knew a few of the boys that got killed. They lived not too far away from where I did at the time in the Head of the Town. When the call went out to start the band, it was an attitude that every young lad, young girl had, like, you know it was a way of sort of getting' back, so it was... [and] to actually remember the lads.

Tad and the other band members expressed their opposition and resistance to British power and domination through their cultural performance of music and marching. Even the choice of music played in specific locations can carry meaning. As the band was marching out of a primarily republican housing estate onto the main road in Strabane during the 2012 commemoration for the three lads, they were playing "My Little Armalite," a playful tune that pokes fun at the RUC and British soldiers with stanzas such as:

> Sure a brave RUC man came up into our street
> Six hundred British soldiers were gathered round his feet
> "Come out, ye cowardly Fenians," said he, come on out and fight.
> But he cried, "I'm only joking," when he heard the Armalite.[94]

I had gone ahead of the band so I could position my camera to video them turning onto the main road. Unknown to me there were at least two unmarked cars with plain-clothed police officers conducting surveillance along that stretch of road before I arrived. When a few local photographers joined me they immediately noted the police presence and mentioned it to me, so it seems highly likely that the band also knew to expect their presence and had chosen the tune as a cheeky "greeting."

Throughout the 1980s, members of the band and other politically active republicans continually challenged police control over public space, claiming their right to march in Strabane's town center. Since the town was so overwhelmingly nationalist/republican, numerous people questioned biased public policy decisions privileging activities from "the other side of the house," such as when "thousands of loyalists were able to flood the town for Black Saturday[95] while nationalists were not afforded the same opportunities" (Magee 2011: 330). Although unequal treatment regarding access to public space as well as restriction on their movement through the community was merely one aspect of life in Northern Ireland that contributed to republicans and nationalists feeling like second-class citizens, it was highly meaningful because of the way it permeated so much of daily life. Marc Howard Ross describes public space such as the town center of Strabane as "society's symbolic landscape" and argues that "exclusion of groups from the symbolic landscape is an explicit form of denial and assertion of power" (Ross 2009a:7).

Republicans and nationalists in Strabane were continually restricted and excluded from full engagement and an active presence in the main part of town. Resentment of these restrictions contributed significantly to the deep-seated mistrust and anger directed towards police, British authority, and the power of local politicians who were allied with them. People in nationalist and republican communities learned how best to cope with the restrictions while maintaining their pride and a notion of resistance – passive or otherwise. When the Strabane Memorial Flute Band was blocked from parading past the limits of their Head of the Town neighborhood, they would march defiantly right up to the actual blockade and continue playing. Through the bodily action of parading; the

quasi-military appearance of their uniforms, including black berets which were iconic

symbols of IRA Volunteer regalia displayed during funerals (Durney 2004:84); and the

republican "message" implicit in the music being played, the band demonstrated that they

did not accept any ruling stating they could not parade through their town, continued to

press for their right to do so, and showed they were not going to be intimidated by verbal

and/or physical abuse from the police. Matt told me

> us marching on the street was our way of sayin' "We're here – and we're not
> goin' nowhere." You know, to the British establishment. They had tried to put us
> off the roads so many times and tried to break us up, and tried to intimidate us.
> And for us then, it was a ***reason*** to get out on the street.

Since implementation of the peace process, direct confrontations with police and broad

restrictions on daily movements are a thing of the past, yet they remain embedded in

public memory.

When I asked people about what had changed in Strabane following the Good

Friday Agreement, several mentioned that there were fewer "stop and searches." Kevin

Heaney noted "Before that you're getting stopped all the time," while his wife Deirdre

added "You can walkabout and nobody's stopping you now." This is not to suggest that

relations between republicans and the police are smooth and friendly – a great deal of

distrust remains on both sides. I frequently heard the claim that the only thing different

about the police now, in comparison to during the Troubles, is their name. As part of the

reform process outlined in the Patten Report published on September 9, 1999, the Royal

Ulster Constabulary (RUC) became the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI). In

addition, "the report recommended several 'normalization' measures, including – in so

far as the security situation allowed this – the replacement of armoured Land-Rovers with

police cars" (Mulcahy 2006:157). Unfortunately, in neighborhoods such as the Head of the Town, the security situation evidently does not allow the shift to using regular police cars even now, a clear indication that the PSNI continue to be wary of entering some republican communities without the protection of intimidating armored vehicles. The mistrust and memories of past harassment and violent acts impact all who were involved, influencing their current behavior and perceptions of the present.

Now members of the Strabane Memorial Flute Band proudly march around several residential areas and through the center of town as they honor and remember Charlie, Michael, and Davy every February. (See map of route in Appendix.) As they move through the town they are claiming ownership and celebrating their right to be in Strabane with no restrictions on where they can parade. However, passing key landmarks triggers memories of police harassment and former blockades, leaving the ability to march freely a bittersweet experience for long-term members of the band. At the same time, *remembering* is an essential aspect of commemoration which is enhanced by a variety of sensory actions in addition to the physicality of being in a specific location "via an interpolated ritual and text in the co-presence of others" (Casey 2000:218). This includes the uniform worn by memorial bands; their posture and militaristic manner of marching; as well as the symbolic music and stylized battering on the drums that has been an essential part of every performance.

Most memorial bands, like the Strabane Memorial Flute Band, wear clothing that reflects their military connections – in some cases the uniforms resemble army fatigues – in others it is a simpler combination of white shirts and black slacks. The Strabane band uniform is comprised of black slacks tucked into combat-style black boots, a black

woolen jumper (pull-over sweater) with a white lanyard linked to the epaulet on the left

shoulder, a white webbed belt, and black beret. Much of the time they also wear dark

sunglasses. Matt Collins explained that they came up with the idea of wearing dark

glasses because

> as a group of youngsters, we would've looked up at the IRA and anything you would've seen the IRA with. At that time they would've had dark glasses on them. The rest of the outfit was just because we were a memorial band and we felt ninety-nine times out of the hundred, right, that we were going to be remembering someone who had died. So the black-and-white was just because we were a memorial band. We just felt it was the color to commemorate dead people. We weren't going out for christenin's or for weddin's – we were goin' out for people who have died. So we just went with the black uniform and we've kept that to this very day. Twenty-seven years later and we're still wearin' black and white.

In recent years they added the option of wearing white polo shirts if the weather is

particularly warm for Ireland and they omit the black berets for more generalized

parading such as on St. Patrick's Day. Either way, this simple uniform along with their

erect posture and solemn demeanor reflects the band's support and admiration for IRA

direct actions and efforts towards creating a united Ireland, free of British rule.

During practice drills there is repeated emphasis on maintaining formation in

rows as they move forward, pivot to reverse the columns, or turn like at a crossroad – all

in order to both march and play their instruments without any hesitation. During certain

parts of commemorations, band musicians remain standing at attention while the color

party lowers their flags to a slow drum roll and then raise them up again, in a display of

deference to those being honored. This usually happens at key landmarks along the

parade route or at a ceremony at the final gathering place. At times I observed members

of a color party taking the posture of the "final salute" – tilting the head forward while

standing at attention – when the band played a song directly connected to someone being

memorialized, such as "Shoot To Kill (British Justice)" that honors the three lads shot in Strabane in February 1985. This form of body language honoring, almost saluting, someone who died while "in active service" for the IRA even gets replicated in informal settings such as the local pub – an element of ritual that continues to carry meaning as it permeates daily life (Connerton 1989:44). For example, the ten men who died on hunger strike in 1981 are among the most revered of the IRA dead. In the midst of the ordinary hub-bub in Clancy's Bar, when "Roll of Honour" or any song about the hunger strikers would be played over the juke box, invariably a few patrons would lower their heads and maybe raise their glass in a moment of remembrance and honor, when the individual was named. Casey claims that the participatory aspect of symbolic re-enactment is a key aspect of commemoration (Casey 2000:254). Moreover, these small acts of remembering become yet another expression of their social memory of the past and an acknowledgment of their connection and continuity with that past (Connerton 1989:48). Through the multivalent acts of commemoration – both formalized ritual and informal expression – band members, Sinn Féin cumainn, and others are creating and maintaining their heritage of the Troubles.

The Strabane Memorial Flute Band proudly marches through the town center and claims ownership of and their right to be in that public space as they commemorate the deaths of Charlie, Michael, and Davy; physically expressing their cultural opposition and resistance (Stoller 1995:75) to British power in Northern Ireland. Ciro De Rosa argues that

> the politics of territory have become more and more a central concern for a
> section of the population to whom it provides a sense of belonging to a
> community, and allows them to symbolize their political arguments. Through the

politics of territory, people can act out their ethnic self, their class and status through rituals. For many young people, bands have a crucial role in this enterprise of social drama. (De Rosa 1998:107)

Even though De Rosa was writing over fifteen years ago, politics of territory and issues of community belonging continue to impact youth and others in post-conflict Northern Ireland. Some commemorative parade routes pass through rural communities that are the home territory of the volunteer(s) being remembered, like the commemoration held in Cappagh, East Tyrone for the eight IRA Volunteers and one civilian killed at Loughgall, County Armagh, in May 1987. In still other cases the parade path replicates the last route taken by the dead volunteer(s), such as the commemorations for Jim McGinn at Clady every December and one in Coalisland for four volunteers who were ambushed and killed by British forces in February 1992. In these examples, the act of commemoration bodily performs the last "steps" of the hero/martyr(s). No matter what aspect connects a specific place with the individual being memorialized, there is always some form of symbolism in the location of the parade route and/or ceremony. While describing his fieldwork experience in County Fermanagh, Henry Glassie notes some of the ways people remembered local history, as they connected the past with specific geographical sites in their community, writing "in place you are in history, and the past presses heavily upon you, involving you in its preservation and continuation" (Glassie, 1982, 664). Memorial bands and others who perform commemorations feel a responsibility to ensure that these individual histories of republican actions are remembered, and in the process they usually choose a route or location that has some connection with those being memorialized.

The route followed for Jim McGinn's commemoration starts in County Donegal, in the Republic, crosses over the now invisible border between the North and South along

the River Finn, proceeds across the bridge towards the tiny hamlet of Clady just up to where a British army checkpoint was located during the Troubles, then doubles back to the mid-point of the bridge for the ceremony. Strabane Memorial Flute Band member Ed Harris explained how the parade route starts in Donegal and follows the direction Jim McGinn was going just before he died saying, "That's where they came from – the boys, the operation – they came from way down [there]. They were coming across with a bomb when it exploded. They were heading across the bridge, see, for where the Brits were, when the bomb exploded prematurely." Communities in East Donegal and West Tyrone, like Clady and Strabane in the "North" and Lifford in the "South" have been inter-connected for centuries. In some places the River Finn separates the two counties. Then as it travels south from Clady, the border meanders onto land, looping westward and down around the Derg Valley before shifting back east, forming a "peninsula of Northern Ireland jutting into the Republic" (Cashman 2008:xviii). This close proximity would promote cross-border interaction anywhere in Ireland for business as well as recreational activity, but the political history of this western part of Ulster, including the economic isolation of the region following partition in 1920 (Magee 2011: 295), created particularly strong cross-border bonds that continue today. Much of West Tyrone and East Donegal were joined as one Brigade area of the IRA command structure following the 1916 Easter Rising. Then the partition of Ireland

> created an unnatural frontier running north to south that split this region of Western Ulster. Donegal was left as the most isolated and under serviced county under the jurisdiction of the Dublin government. Likewise, West Tyrone became the most marginalized area in the occupied six counties that remained under British rule. Between 1971 and 2000 the economic isolation of the region was further compounded with border roads being regularly closed by the British army. (Magee 2011: 295)

Republicans on both sides of the border worked together to remove British road

blockades that disrupted daily life and commerce, at the same time they cooperated in

armed resistance against continued British rule in Northern Ireland on various occasions

throughout the Twentieth Century. For much of that time, neither army personnel for the

Republic of Ireland nor the Gardaí (police in the Republic) intervened in any IRA

activities that went on in the South (Magee 2011: 298). This meant that many IRA

Volunteers, who had been identified and were being sought by British forces and/or RUC

officers, could cross over to the Republic with relative ease and stay at a safe house –

what they referred to as being "on the run," or OTR. People in Strabane were accustomed

to frequenting Lifford for business dealings and social occasions, making this additional

partnership inevitable. IRA Volunteers like Jim McGinn had friend networks on either

side of the border, some who were not legally free to cross to the other side, so after his

death both communities were interested in holding a commemoration in his honor. As she

talked about commemorations in the years shortly after Jim's death, Carmel Thompson

explained

> See, there used to be two – one in Strabane and one in Lifford. 'Cause the people
> that he lived with in Lifford when he was on the run done one. They didn't come
> into the North much… Jim's [commemoration] is done at Clady Bridge because
> of the people that he lived with while he was on the run. You know, they
> commemorate him as well.

At the time we spoke I did not realize that Carmel actually was referring to a few

people who still live in the Lifford vicinity but never cross into Northern Ireland because

of uncertainty over their legal status as former combatants labeled OTR who were sought

by police and the British Army during the conflict. The reality is that the British

government still seeks to prosecute certain individuals for crimes committed before the peace process. Considering this added perspective, the choice of location for Jim McGinn's commemoration may well reflect the desire to accommodate anyone unable to travel freely from the Republic in to the North. Unfortunately I was unable to speak with anyone about this definitively. When Carmel tried to arrange a meeting for me to talk with an individual who still lives in the South because of his republican activities during the conflict, he only went as far as talking to me over the phone to say he was unwilling to meet with me.

Even though I cannot confirm this possible explanation for holding the commemoration on Clady Bridge, this does not change my conviction that multiple reasons are involved with the choice. According to several Clady residents, including one woman whose front door is less than twenty-five yards from the British checkpoint located on the village-side of the bridge, this continued British presence impacted and watched over everyday life, as much as it disrupted and cut off the normal flow of traffic through the rural area. Holding the commemoration in such close proximity to the former checkpoint reflects villagers' social memory of Jim McGinn's effort to attack the checkpoint and serves as a demonstration of continued defiance and resistance to the British imposition on their village during the conflict. Furthermore, parading from one side to the other physically enacts the continuous connections between County Donegal and West Tyrone and republicanism that people trace back to the 1790s (Magee 2011:294).

Reading the Roll of Honor in the Twenty-first Century

A key element in most republican commemorations is the act of reading the Roll of Honor, the names of those who died while in active service in the struggle to achieve a united Ireland, free of British rule. The actual list of names that is read varies, depending on the location of the particular observation and may include only the names of the individuals whose deaths are being remembered at that specific time. However, like other activities that celebrate individuals who have been negatively stigmatized or criminalized by the dominant culture and government, reading the names of the dead aloud in public represents highly political acts of defiance and resistance as well as declarations of identity (Sturken 1997:160). It is acknowledging that this person, (or these people), engaged in armed combat against the government in power – the British – and that those gathered to commemorate that action approve of that person's engagement, disagree with continued British rule, and are committed to pursuing their goal of a united Ireland. In some cases those defiant and oppositional intentions are merely understood, at other times they are related in great detail.

The master of ceremony at the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Loughgall ambush made a short introductory speech after reading each name, then made the accusation that "these men were all victims of the British 'Shoot to Kill' policy in Ireland. The attack was part of a British murder campaign in East Tyrone and in North Armagh in the late 1980s and 1990s." After additional descriptions of the British campaign and extensive forces directed against republicans and noting the personal loss to the families, he stressed that each one knew the risks and faced those dangers with courage:

these brave men knew the consequences of war, as they all had buried comrades after their deaths in active service. This is a fact that all soldiers must face. These men faced it with courage and determination to use their skills to free their country of British occupation and create a united and free Irish republic… They engaged the enemy on numerous occasions until their deaths. They are a sad loss to their loved ones in East Tyrone and to the people of Ireland. These people could not ignore what was going on… [because] they saw at first hand the brutality with which Britain was maintaining her presence in Ireland.

Before calling for the soloist to sing "The Soldier's Song," he thanked everyone who came out in support of the families and to honor the men who died, then he added this reminder to the present assembly of people, using a quote from a leader in the 1916 Rising:

The crowd here today shows that the Irish people are proud of these brave volunteers and know that the British presence in Ireland is rejected by all right-thinking citizens. I will leave you with the words of James Connolly: "The British government has no right in Ireland. It never had any right in Ireland and never can have a right in Ireland."

Indirectly, he reminded the group that the struggle is unfinished, that it continues to be justified now and into the future, just as it was justified in the past.

At the short Easter Rising ceremony in Strabane Cemetery, in addition to reading the 1916 Proclamation along with the names of the signatories of the Easter Rising, the West Tyrone Roll of Honor was read, starting with Fian Jim McNally who died on the 4th of October, 1921. This places McNally within the conflict that followed the 1916 Rising, when republicans throughout Ireland were fighting to obstruct plans for partitioning the island. Furthermore, it symbolizes the West Tyrone Brigade's long history of participation in the struggle for a united Ireland. At this reading of the Roll of Honor, like all others I witnessed, each name was read out slowly along with that individual's designation of "Volunteer," or in the case of McNally and Tobias Molloy, who died in

1972, the title of "Fian" used to designate a recruit. A poster version, with photographs, of the West Tyrone Roll of Honor is also available at the local Sinn Féin office and includes a Roll of Remembrance, recognizing the contribution of two men who contributed to the struggle for Irish freedom, but whose deaths did not occur while they were in active service.

In a more elaborate ceremony held every July, Sinn Féin politicians host the Tyrone Volunteers Day commemoration to remember, name, and honor all fifty-six men from County Tyrone who died during active service. This event, however, is held on the date when East Tyrone Volunteer Martin Hurson died on hunger strike – 13th of July, 1981 – placing a special emphasis on Hurson's sacrifice as a hunger striker. It also demonstrates one of the ways the 1981 hunger strike, along with the ten men who died, are reified similar to the distinctions given the hero/martyrs of the 1916 Rising (Graff-McRae 2010). Just as writings left by a few of the hunger strikers outline their "line of legitimacy and continuity – to the republican tradition culminating in the Easter Rising and the War of Independence" (Graff-McCrae 2010:163); by acknowledging Hurson's particular contribution, then naming him along with the other men of Tyrone, the commemoration imposes legitimacy and continuity on the actions of the other fifty-five men as well.

Conclusion

Commemorations conducted in the post-conflict setting of the twenty-first century continue to follow a familiar framework; however they contain revised messages and serve republican communities differently than they did during the conflict, as they

memorialize specific individuals in the present and engender memories of past commemorations. They include the physicality of parading, sometimes following a symbolic route, with flags representing historic aspects of republicanism and claim identity as Irish citizens, no matter that most of those participating officially live in a portion of the United Kingdom. There is battering on drums to announce republican ownership and presence in public spaces once denied them, usually as accompaniment to flute bands playing tunes that symbolically tell stories of republican hero/martyrs, or express resistance and opposition to British rule. The commemorative ritual itself includes laying wreaths or other floral tokens in significant locations, in combination with personalized remembrances of the volunteer that recognize him or her as an individual with interests and community involvement beyond his or her proven dedication to the IRA. And, of course, the Irish language as the medium for reciting the Rosary and for singing "The Soldier's Song." Each of these elements is significant for expressing the continuity of current commemorations with memorial actions in the past; linking the hero/martyrs who died during the Troubles with earlier heroes of Irish rebellion; and for identifying those past and present as Irish citizens.

Where once there may have been an interest in recruiting additional volunteers for the IRA in order to continue the armed conflict, the current message expressed by leading republican politicians is on continuing the struggle for a united Ireland through peaceful and democratic processes (Walker 2012:153). Despite the reality that not all republicans accept Sinn Féin's viewpoint that it is essential now to work within the system and that conflict is no longer a way to achieve their goal, the fact that voters have made Sinn Féin

the second most-powerful party in Northern Ireland attests to the numbers of people who

do agree with their approach to the future.

The act of commemoration and related commentary now presents a form of

introductory history lesson for younger generations who were not even born or were too

little to understand what was happening at the time, as they learn of their responsibility to

engage in future rituals that will remember and honor hero/martyrs of the past. Moreover,

by including teenagers and young adults as flag bearers in color parties, soloists for

musical interludes, representatives laying a wreath for a family member being honored,

or in other portions of commemorative presentations, they not only observe the process,

but embody and internalize the act of commemoration themselves. In essence, the people

presently engaged in commemorating hero/martyrs from the most recent conflict are

contributing to public memory as they create their own heritage of the Troubles.

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[76] "Roll of Honour" by Gerry O'Glacain (http://oneofthebhoys09.tripod.com/rspqr/id17.html - accessed November 8, 2014).

[77] *Óglaigh na hÉireann*, or "Irish Volunteers," refers to a member or volunteer of the IRA. *Fuair sé bás ar son na saoirse* means "He died for the cause of freedom."

[78] As part of the efforts directed towards Catholic emancipation in the 1820s, Ribbonmen organized disparate Catholic groups in Ulster to work together "to counter the Orange threat" (Jarman 1997:50).

[79] Marching season encompasses "a series of commemorative events [that] take place throughout the summer months" (Bryan 2007:103).

[80] IRA Volunteers Henry Hogan and Declan Martin were shot and killed by undercover soldiers near the village of Dunloy on February 21, 1984.

[81] IRA Volunteer Gerard Casey was killed in his home in Rasharkin, County Antrim, by loyalists on April 4, 1989.

[82] Seán MacDermott (also known as Seán Mac Diarmada, 1884-1916) was born in Kiltyclogher, County Leitrim, (Republic of Ireland) and executed on May 12, 1916 for his participation in the Easter Uprising.

[83] Republicans in the town of Dromore, County Tyrone, commemorate the death of Bobby Sands on, or close to May 5, every year. He died on Hunger Striker in 1981 a month after being elected MP (Member of Parliament) for Fermanagh-South Tyrone, the first of the ten men to die. He continues to be revered for his leadership role in the IRA in and out of prison.

[84] For more on the "Drumboe Martyrs," including a ballad memorializing their sacrifice, see Chapter 3.

[85] I attended a "Towards a New Republic" conference in Derry on January 28, 2012, along with several hundred people in which presenters included elected officials from both unionist and republican parties and from both sides of the border as well as civic leaders from "both sides of the house" – but all from the

region of northwest Ireland, discussing the challenges and benefits of greater cross-border initiatives and the ultimate goal of Sinn Féin, a united, independent Ireland. Sinn Féin had hosted several conferences in other part of the island.

[86] www.1916societies.com (accessed 8 February, 2012)

[87] With eight IRA Volunteers shot and killed along with one civilian caught in the ambush by accident, the Laughgall Ambush was the "biggest single loss to the IRA in any one operation since 1921, when twelve Volunteers were killed by the Black and Tans in Clonmult, County Cork" (Magee 2011:346).

[88] Michael Colreavy is the TD for Sligo Leitrim North, an elected member of Dáil Éireann, the Irish equivalent of a House of Representatives (http://www.oireachtas.ie/parliament/tdssenators/tds/, accessed August 19, 2014)

[89] Following the shooting in the hillside field, the bodies of Charlie Breslin, Michael and Davy Devine were laid out in the configuration of a cross and left in the field for seven hours, where they were highly visible from many locations throughout Strabane, only adding to the anger of local residents (Magee 2011:323).

[90] Royal Ulster Constabulary: name of police before reform and renaming as PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland).

[91] Shades Corner is an intersection recognized as the division between the Head of the Town area and the center of Strabane.

[92] Pat Doherty is the Sinn Féin MP or Member of Parliament for West Tyrone (http://www.westtyronesinnfein.com/representatives, accessed August 19, 2014)

[93] UDR, or Ulster Defence Regiment, was created in October 1969, as "a new RUC reserve and… locally recruited part-time military force under the control of the British Army" (Bew and Gillespie 1999).

[94] "My Little Armalite," author unknown, (http://oneofthebhoys09.tripod.com/rslm/id19.html - accessed November 8, 2014).

[95] "Black Saturday" refers to the last Saturday in August, the traditional marching date for the Royal Black Perceptory (Fraser and Morgan 2000:150), which is a Protestant parading organization "best described as more religious and less overtly political than the Orange" (Bryan 2000b:114).

Chapter 5: "The Three-leafed Shamrock of Ireland":
Symbols of Identity, Protest, and Boundary Marker

I care not for the Thistle,
And I care not for the Rose;
When bleak winds round us whistle,
Neither down nor crimson shows.
But like hope to him that's friendless,
When no joy around is seen,
O'er our graves with love that's endless
Blooms our own immortal green.

O wearing of the green,
O wearing of the green,
My native land, I cannot stand,
For wearing of the green.

First verse and chorus, "The Wearing of the Green" (old version, 1798)[96]

The morning started out clear with just a bit of a chill. Later there would be rain showers off and on, some stronger than others, increasing the chilly feel of the day, but it was Easter Sunday and across the small valley to the south I could see activity along the upper ridge of the cemetery as people raised Tricolors on flagpoles marking the graves of IRA volunteers. After making sure my pack included gear for various weather contingencies, as well as extra batteries and memory cards for both cameras and audio recorder, I headed over to the Strabane Cemetery entrance for the local wreath-laying ceremony marking the 1916 Rising. Along my way, I noticed several houses with Tricolors displayed out front in honor of the celebration, which was to be expected. However, close to the cemetery entrance, one flag in particular caught my eye – hanging from a pole mounted between two second-story windows of one house. On the central white band of the Tricolor was a large Easter lily emblem, just like the smaller paper

versions sold around the neighborhood the previous week by local Sinn Féin *cumann*

members, to be pinned to lapels or jacket collars in commemoration of the 1916 Rising

(Moloney 2003:99). Once I arrived at the bottom of the hill leading to the cemetery and

joined others waiting for the procession to begin, I realized I had neglected to pin on *my*

lily before heading out for the day. Fortunately a woman offered me one of her extras and

saved me a rushed walk back home. Yes, most of those attending the commemoration

knew I was an outside observer and had no clear expectation that I would actually

participate in their ceremony, however it was important to me to show my respect for,

and understanding of, the 1916 Rising observances.

Like the Tricolor and other emblems of Irish republicanism and nationalism

created in the nineteenth century, symbols and heroes from the 1916 Rising remain

relevant in post-conflict Northern Ireland, where

> display of national symbols can still spark conflict between nationalists and
> unionists. Such conflicts over symbols occur because, far from being incidental to
> politics, symbols are intrinsic to it. Symbols make it possible to imagine abstract
> entities such as nations and states, and they play an important role in creating
> emotionally charged bonds of social solidarity. However, symbols can also be a
> source of dissension. Groups are distinguished from each other by their
> attachment to different symbols, and even within groups disputes can break out
> about the meanings of symbols. (Morris 2005:1).

Whether they are the emblems or colors of a flag; historical characters memorialized in

murals and in song; or a minority language labeling public as well as private boundaries;

symbols make claims on heritage, celebrate ethnic identity, express resistance to a

dominant culture, and always "are intimately bound up in political activity" (Rolston

2003a:3). Further complicating any consideration of symbols is their multiple layers of

meaning, the potential for a lack of uniformity even within a single community, and the

tendency towards increased polarization between factions when a group feels challenged by sociopolitical change (Brown and MacGinty 2003:87). In this chapter I discuss symbols commonly used by republicans today; considering how, when, and where they are used; the significance of internal disputes represented in their use; and what current usage reflects about the impact of peace process implementation on previously-held attitudes regarding these symbols, both within republican communities and in cross-community contexts. I discuss the significance and symbolism of embodiment and performance within republicanism in Chapter 4.

Boundary Markers: flags, murals, and memorials

Among the most visible signs expressing heritage and ethnic or national identity in Northern Ireland throughout much of the second half of the twentieth century, were wall murals commemorating, protesting, or appropriating almost any element from ancient to modern Ulster history, along with the presence of either the British Union Jack or the Tricolor of the Republic of Ireland. Examples of these could be seen throughout the variety of modest-to-small communities like those in County Tyrone, in addition to the more well-known urban centers of Derry and Belfast, where adventurous visitors were touring mural sites even while the conflict was in progress (Jarman 1998:90; Rolston 1995b:31). With implementation of the peace process however, common use and display of these and other potentially divisive symbols marking territory or claiming national affiliation have undergone reevaluation and official efforts towards eliminating the display of sectarian or otherwise exclusive symbols in order to create a more

"inclusive society where everyone can celebrate their different cultures and identities" (Strabane District Council 2011:9).

The results of these initiatives have been uneven with mural tours in Belfast and Derry now playing a large part in their booming tourism industry,[97] while most murals were painted over or sand-blasted away in Strabane several years ago. Yet, just four miles north of Strabane, in the primarily unionist village of Artigarvan, I discovered a neglected set of six loyalist murals along a retaining wall of a housing estate in the winter of 2012. The style of the images, repeating iconic loyalist designs and phrases recalling 1690, including the requisite King Billy on his white horse, suggest the murals were painted in or before the early 1990s (Rolston 1995a:ii; Sluka 1996:385) and clearly identify the community as being unionist/loyalist. In a similar way, a scattering of small villages and hamlets along the main road between Strabane and Derry demonstrate their unionist identity by continuing to apply fresh paint to curbs and hanging new Union Jack bunting from light poles in the days leading up to the Twelfth of July celebrations. One republican councilman from Strabane interpreted their continued display as a sign of their concern over being small unionist communities situated between two ardently republican areas. He added "some of the time I feel that these areas have to show that they're still here… 'We're loyalists,' – 'We're unionists,' – 'And we're proud.' And I think there's a bit of … you know, 'We're here and we're not goin' away.'" While not all republicans have reached this level of empathy for Protestants or unionists by any means, it is an indication of some of the transformed perspectives that are being negotiated in Strabane.

Changes in, and varying interpretation of, official policy on the proper display of flags and other emblems have encouraged some people to display their chosen banner

boldly while others find the policies to be either restrictive or too much of a concession to "the other side of the house" (Morris 2005:206). Whether they are remnants of a "glorious past" such as Artigarvan's fading murals, or flags that mark ethno-national territory, these symbols continue to serve as "sites of memory" and boundary markers, joining behavioral practices and accepted norms to maintain and reinforce the perceived differences between the opposing ethnic and political communities. In addition to marking boundaries, flags, murals and memorials are symbols of identity, and at times, forms of protest. They are not the only tangible signs, but they are the most prominent and common way for the divided communities of Northern Ireland to identify and maintain their selective traditions and heritage on a daily basis.

Flags and banners

In today's globalized world, specific flags are understood as symbols of individual nation-states that abstractly signify "some of the same things that totems and heraldic symbols have done in the past… [such as] the metaphoric kin group of the nation rather than other groups… [and] compress a broad range of meanings [that] are rich in aesthetic and emotional connotations" (Eriksen 2007:3). The emotional connotations of national flags are particularly strong because of the very visible ways they can assert or reinforce domination by one group within the nation over another, incite protest or resistance, and are embedded in collective memory. These varied responses reflect the contested nature of the concept of nationality and nation which Benedict Anderson describes as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 1991:6). In this respect, the notion of nation can be seen as the

awareness of a shared community beyond an individual's day-to-day experience that is based on mutual markers of identity. These markers of identity, or cultural differences, have specific elements that set them apart from others, such as language, religion, and ethnicity, which are social constructs frequently "defined in relation to that which they are not – in other words, in relation to non-members of the group" (Eriksen 2002:10). It is the *perception* or imagination of the group as having some distinctive "difference" that ultimately matters in regards to ethnicity (Eriksen 2002:32). In Northern Ireland the contested notion of nation, community boundaries, heritage, and ethnicity all contribute to a perception of difference that is expressed continually through the multivocality of flags (Eriksen 2007:5).

During fieldwork in County Tyrone in the summer of 2009 I saw a variety of uses of both the Union Jack and the Tricolor flag of the Republic of Ireland. In the small village of Drumquin, about nine miles northwest of the town of Omagh, I noticed the Tricolor on several light posts at one end of the village. Later I mentioned this to my host at the Bed and Breakfast (B & B) where I was staying that week and went on to say that I was surprised at such a public display, rather than seeing the flags being flown on private property. He explained that the area where the Tricolor was adorning light posts was the "republican" end of the village, but if I walked the other direction and crossed over the bridge, I would be in the loyalist part of town. The small river meandering through the valley is a dividing line for this rural community. At the same time he pointed out that at least two of the men who joined us in the pub one evening were Protestants, while he and his family are Catholic. He continued by claiming that although distinctions between the two communities exist, for many people in Drumquin those distinctions are unimportant

to their everyday lives. However unimportant these differences may seem to some of the residents of Drumquin such as my B & B host, a great significance remains in choosing to fly the Tricolor versus another flag, especially the Union Jack, for most communities in Northern Ireland. By displaying either one of these flags

> the two competing collective identities are asserted, defined and renewed… territorial claims are enforced, and social and spatial boundaries are marked out. Flags are also an important element of the ongoing tensions and conflict and have increasingly been a means by which the opposing political aspirations have been sustained throughout the duration of the peace process. (Jarman 2007:90)

That same summer, national newspapers were covering the debates and unrest in several communities across Northern Ireland where people were protesting the location of Union Jack-style banners and decorations being hung in preparation for the upcoming parades marking the Twelfth of July. Even this far into the peace process, some communities continue to have "bunting battles" (Sluka 1996:385) as they negotiate multiple publics and their related allegiances. As noted previously, during the "marching season" Protestant parades frequently go directly through Catholic areas and continue to be "a source of bitter contention between the rival communities" (Beggan and Indurthy 2002:332). In the particular incident making the news that July, the place of contention for a parade route and related ceremony was literally the spot where a Catholic man was beaten to death earlier in the spring.

By the time I returned to County Tyrone and Strabane in the fall of 2011, between conversations with friends and my experience traveling about, it was obvious that some things had changed regarding flag displays. In Strabane and other areas with nationalist/republican majorities, people had adopted the policy of only putting the

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Tricolor out in public places for specific events or holidays and even then in cooperation with local authorities. While this has meant limiting the past practice of marking republican areas with Tricolors whenever one chooses, it opened up opportunities for a decidedly nationalist/republican cultural presence in shared public space. When I attended the twentieth anniversary commemoration of the shooting of four men at Clonoe in East Tyrone, I was struck at first by the irony of two Tricolors and a large banner memorializing the lads displayed on the high fence that surrounds the former police barracks in Coalisland, where the young men had launched an attack in their fateful mission in 1992. Although the friends and families of the men killed continue to feel frustrated, claiming that the killings have never been properly investigated, the fact that they were able to celebrate the lives of these young men in such a central, public area of the town indicates a totally different relationship between the current police force and the republican community around Coalisland.

One of the complicating issues for Northern Ireland is the fact that they have no official flag of their own. Instead, the British Union Flag, or "Union Jack", is the official flag of Northern Ireland[98] and, in turn, is an integral part of the Protestant, unionist, and loyalist tradition, allowing unionism to dominate public space (Bryan 2007:103; Morris 2005:107) and remind nationalists of the differences in the power and authority between the them and the unionist community (Jarman 2007:97). Through this domination of public space the Union Jack then serves to alienate the Catholic, nationalist, and republican communities who resent and oppose continued ties with the United Kingdom (Bryan 2007:103). Official guidelines for the display of flags, or other emblems, such as photographs of Queen Elizabeth, on private property in Northern Ireland have been

revised at various points in time, with much left to the interpretation of the authorities

(Morris 2005:203). In general, they authorized "removal of any emblem whose display

might lead to a breach of the peace" (Morris 2005:202), which frequently has privileged

the unionist majority (Bryan 2007:104).

Legislation crafted following mandates within the Good Friday Agreement are

directed at transforming divisive and intimidating use of flags in the broader goal of

achieving a peaceful civil society that respects diversity and includes a list that specifies

dates when the Union Jack can be flown over government buildings (Bryan 2007:108).

This is not to say there is no lingering tension or contestation over current display

practices, but the official policy is clearly designed to eliminate some of the inequities of

former legislation. Since action taken by individual district councils was not included in

the laws governing flags displayed on government property, their choices vary by which

parties are in the majority (Bryan 2007:111). Hard-line Protestant dissidents rioted

through parts of Belfast in December of 2012 when the city council voted to reduce

display of the Union Jack atop their city hall from three hundred and sixty-five days a

year to the same eighteen official dates that it is flown at Stormont.[99] Within Strabane

District, the town of Castlederg made headlines for weeks in 2013 as unionists and

nationalists disagreed over the timing of banners and Union Jacks going on display for

the marching season that were summed up by a member of Strabane District Council in a

letter to the editor of the *Strabane Chronicle*:

> In last week's newspaper I read with some disbelief the hypocrisy of Ulster
> Unionist councilor Derek Hussey in an article where he praised and congratulated
> loyalists in Castlederg for honouring a commitment to take down the union flags
> which had blighted the town for the previous four months. Much to the annoyance
> and anger of businesses and residents alike (from both sides of the community)

those same flags were hoisted outside homes and businesses without any consultation or consent with owners, much akin to a dog lifting its leg to the nearest lamppost in an attempt to mark its territory. It is also worth remembering that those flags were erected in the days prior to the opening of the Tyrone County Fleadh[100] in a blatant attempt to provoke and to undermine well-laid plans for that weekends celebrations. They were erected despite, I am led to believe, a prior agreement between organisers of the Fleadh and those organisers of the Battle of the Somme Commemoration to have Fleadh bunting removed as soon as the Fleadh ended to allow the Somme commemoration organisers erect their own… Leaders of unionism and loyalism need to realize that community relations work both ways… [I invite] Cllr. Hussey to join me in calling for the removal of loyalist paramilitary flags and union flags which still fly, ripped and frayed along the Killeter Road… which Cllr. Hussey seems to have missed. (Cllr. Ruairi McHugh, Castlederg, October 3, 2013)[101]

The overly dramatic rhetoric aside, the councilor's letter demonstrates joint efforts to change former practices as well as the reality that some aspects of civic transformation remain uneven as undercurrents of long-held prejudices threaten broader community cooperation. Furthermore, the letter emphasizes ways that "temporal and spatial use" (Jarman 2007:94) of flags and other banners in public areas is significant for symbolizing both efforts *towards* cross-community solidarity and opposition to newer transformative civic guidelines.

In sharp contrast to Castlederg, the town of Strabane is considered to be at least 95% nationalist/Catholic, so there is no open competition over "sectarian displays" in public space. As I spoke with people living in various sections of town, everyone seemed aware and supportive of the newer guidelines stipulating that flags like the Tricolor could be put up in public areas for specific events with the understanding that they would be removed in a timely fashion when the event was over. For these people – all either nationalists or republicans – the guidelines were reasonable and they were proud that community groups within Strabane were complying with the guidelines. No one brought

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up the fact that several of the surrounding villages and hamlets continued to leave red, white, and blue bunting, loyalist flags, and other symbols displayed throughout the year. When I questioned people about that, it seemed to be a non-issue to most of them. One local politician agreed that there still was "work to be done" in changing attitudes about sectarian displays in certain communities throughout the district. In the past, the use of symbols from either the unionist/loyalist or the nationalist/republican community represented a recognizable "struggle for power, …imbalance of power, and the political dynamics of domination and resistance" (Sluka 1996:381). Now between legislation specifying equality and respect for diversity (Bryan 2007:108) and Sinn Féin becoming the second most-powerful political party in Northern Ireland (Tonge 2008b:68), the old dynamics of domination and resistance are in flux. While loyalists may continue to hold on to past practices because they view the transformation of the political process and administration as an erosion of their values and role in Northern Ireland's history, nationalists and republicans in places like Strabane are eagerly and openly engaging in local civic and political affairs, whether that process flows smoothly or not.

There *is* an "Ulster" flag – one designed to represent the six counties within Northern Ireland – but it is not universally accepted and used, since elements within the design are interpreted as loyalist symbols by the Catholic/nationalist community.[102] Furthermore, since the historic province of Ulster was comprised of nine counties, using the term "Ulster" for a grouping of only six out of the nine counties is offensive to most nationalists as well. So instead of accepting the Union Jack or adopting any of the quasi-official flags symbolizing the entity that is Northern Ireland, nationalists and republicans use the Tricolor on private property or along public streets during special occasions in

order to claim and identify "their" territory (Bryan 2007:105); underscore their continued allegiance to the hope of a united Ireland; or to memorialize IRA-related sites and events. Even now, fifteen years into the peace process, being able to link IRA actions during the Troubles to the "valorous" volunteers who gained independence for the Republic of Ireland early in the twentieth century is a symbolically powerful link to, and reworking of, the past for the present.

With a longer history than the IRA, the Tricolor flag of the Republic of Ireland was originally designed in 1848 – well before any portion of Ireland had independence from British control (Morris 2005:27). Taking their symbolism from the French flag marking revolution, republican-minded Irishmen created the Tricolor "with unification in mind: 'white' to express peace and unity between the traditional 'green' of Ireland and the 'orange' of the supporters of the late King William of Orange" (Elgenius 2007:25). A solid green flag with a golden harp emblem had been in use even longer, with the occasional addition of other symbols such as a golden crown over the harp to make the flag more acceptable in pro-British communities (Morris 2005:27). When I first heard songs referring to the Tricolor as the "green, white, and gold" I made an initial assumption that republicans were simply being stubborn in substituting the word "gold" for "orange," not wanting to acknowledge the color orange as part of the flag because of its association with the Orange Order and unionism. However correct that may have been for some people, Morris claims that even well into the 1930s there was some confusion over what colors *were* correct for the Tricolor, with a number of flags displayed with what looked more like pale yellow than orange (Morris 2005:63). For committed republicans from the nineteenth century on, using the word "gold" even when the color is

understood as orange may be more of an historic link to the earlier green "harp" flag which was casually referred to as the "the green and the gold" and, as Morris argues, because the word "gold" is easier to include in a rhyme than the word orange (Morris 2005:63). Today, in addition to being the national flag of the Republic of Ireland, for many nationalists and republicans living in Northern Ireland, the Tricolor continues to represent their personal identity as citizens of Ireland. Indeed, they can legitimately claim Irish citizenship and even obtain a passport from the Republic of Ireland, further underscoring their claims of Irish identity. Within that identity, it also stands as a strong link with Irish republican struggles of the past and a symbol of their continuing hope for a united Ireland in the future.

Other historic flags used in republic commemorations and parading by groups like the Strabane Memorial Flute Band, include a flag representing each of the four historic provinces of Ireland, also reflecting the cardinal divisions – Ulster to the north, Munster in the south, Connaght in the west, and Leinster to the east (de Paor 1986:40). In other contexts, such as the Rugby Football Union, a single flag displaying all four symbols of the ancient provinces is chosen because it is considered to be more neutral than the Tricolor (Border Arts 2000:4). Depending on how many band members are available for a specific commemoration or parade, the Strabane Memorial Flute Band usually has a color guard with seven flags: the Tricolor, one each for the four provinces, the Rising Sun (or Sunburst), and the Starry Plough, which depicts the constellation Ursa Major and is "one of the most noticeable features of the night sky over Ireland throughout the year" (Border Arts 2000:4).

Like other symbols, the flags have represented different meanings to those using them to suit the current situation. Symbolism of the sun has been appropriated by many cultures for millennia. In earlier republican struggles

> (r)ising suns and "sunbursts" (the sun appearing from behind a cloud) were employed in … eighteenth century Volunteer and United Irishmen symbolism, on a membership card of the Repeal Association in the 1840s, and in the poetry of Young Ireland writers, and [later] the sunburst was adopted by the Fenians as one of their principal symbols. (Morris 2005:16)

Near the end of the nineteenth century, variations of the Rising Sun were used as the emblem of the Irish language group Conradh Na Gaeilge, but by 1909 it was identified as the symbol of the republican youth movement Fianna Éireann (Border Arts 2000:3). Residents in Strabane – both members of the band and others – look on the Rising Sun flag as memorializing the early nineteenth-century republican efforts of the Fenian Brotherhood (Boyce 1982:176) as well as a link to the future by representing the current republican youth movement, Ógra Shinn Féin. The Starry Plough began as the banner of the Irish Citizen Army (ICA), a Marxist, military force created in 1913 to protect workers from police attack when they tried to unionize (de Paor 1986:282). A few years later, leaders of the 1916 Rising listed the ICA as one of several republican organizations supporting the revolt against British rule and the newly proclaimed "Provisional Government of the Irish Republic" (Magee 2011:37). Today the Starry Plough continues to be linked with socialist republicans, however, for many in Strabane it represents yet another reminder of, and link to, republican struggles of the past.

Similar to flags, banners represent membership and republican identity, but in a more localized context. And, like banners carried by the unionist and loyalist groups participating in Orange parades and observances, they depict "places, people, and events

of significance" (Bryan 2000b:3) to the particular group using the banner, such as a Sinn Féin *cumann* or one of the 1916 Societies member groups. The Sinn Féin *cumann* for the Head of the Town electoral ward is named the "Molloy, Devlin, McCauley Cumann" in honor and memory of three neighborhood men. In August of 1972 eighteen-year-old Fian (IRA recruit)[103] Tobias Molloy was killed by a rubber bullet near the bridge linking Strabane and Lifford (Magee 2011:590). Volunteer Eugene Devlin was killed by a British army patrol while on active service in the Head of the Town in late December 1972 (Magee 2011:150). Volunteer Danny McCauley died in June 1991 of natural causes "brought on as a direct result of active service" (Magee 2011:312). All three continue to be remembered and admired not only for their commitment to the struggle for Irish independence, but as engaged members of the Head of the Town community. The banner is a green panel, roughly three feet wide and five feet high, attached to a pole on either side so that it can be carried high by two marchers and viewed above the heads of the parading people. At the top the names of the three men plus the word "*Cumann*" make a curved arc heading. In the middle are their portraits, with "Sinn Féin" and the town name in a complementary arc below that. Members of the local *cumann* carried the banner in the July 2012 commemorative parade marking the fortieth anniversary of Tobias Molloy's death. Following the graveside ceremony, wreath-laying, and recognition, the group processed a short distance to the church social hall, where the banner was placed prominently against a wall near the refreshment table. Sinn Féin *cumann* banners like this and the *cumann* named in honor of Volunteer Jim McGinn in the Ballycolman area of Strabane, are objects of pride for both the immediate family and home community, acknowledgement of the individual's dedication to republican ideals and Irish

independence, and an expression of the on-going commitment by the community to remember and share their stories with future *cumann* members.

In other settings and occasions, republican groups will display an international flag to demonstrate solidarity with political struggles and issues such as unjust treatment of POWs in other countries (Hill and White 2008:33). For example, one afternoon in the spring of 2012, a group of ex-prisoners held a "white line protest" along the main street running through Strabane, in which they stood along the center line dividing traffic and held up hand-made signs along with a Palestinian flag in support of a hunger strike going on in the Middle East. They were demonstrating their understanding of, and solidarity with, people experiencing domination by a larger, ostensibly foreign power. While republicans had adroitly turned to an international audience and globally engaged with similar political struggles throughout most of the Troubles, loyalist factions had been aligned with the majority government and dominant society, leaving them feeling no need to justify their efforts. Following the peace process however, loyalists along with unionists have had to adjust to a changing political and social dynamic. Expressing their own version of opposition to republicans in Northern Ireland, and solidarity with another nation, some loyalist areas began flying the Israeli flag in 2002, comparing the legitimacy of, and threats to, the Northern Ireland state with challenges being faced by Israel. In their view, Israel's legitimate status is being threatened by Palestinians, whose actions are those of a terrorist organization (Hill and White 2008:36).

The 1916 Societies are another republican group who display banners during commemorations and other events they sponsor in order "to remember the patriot dead of Ireland…[and] encourage education among the people about the republican history of

Ireland with a particular focus on young people".[104] Founded on principles expressed in the Proclamation signed by key leaders of the 1916 Rising, local branches of the 1916 Societies name their group after one of the heroes of 1916. The 1916 Society in Strabane was just getting organized while I was there, so were marching with the group from the villages of Clady and Glebe, not far from Strabane, during commemorations throughout the spring and early summer of 2012. Clady's branch is named for Joseph Mary Plunkett, one of the signatories of the 1916 Proclamation. Their banner is approximately eight feet wide and three feet high, attached to a framework at the sides and top to keep it open and visible as it is held up high by two marchers, similar to the parade display of the Sinn Féin *cumann* banner. The design of Clady's 1916 Societies banner is fairly simple with a portrait of Plunkett encircled by Celtic interlace and icons for the four provinces on the left half of the white background, while the words "Joseph Plunkett Society – Clady-Glebe" are on the right half.

A selection of other 1916 Societies banners I saw included larger sections of Celtic knotwork and images of the original Proclamation in addition to portraits of the particular 1916 hero chosen as the identity of that particular branch. Some had all all text written in the Irish language. All of the various design elements included in the banners contain significant meaning for the society members. In some cases there is a local link with the hero chosen, such as the Dungannon branch who chose the Proclamation signatory Thomas J. Clarke, because he lived in their town in the late 1800s (Magee 2011:207). Whether local hero or not, the men and women (and there were several women prominently involved) who participated in the 1916 Rising symbolize a powerful connection to their republican heritage, commitment to republican values as detailed in

the Proclamation, not to mention undaunted bravery in the face of overwhelming odds and their willingness to die for the cause of Irish independence. Some of the stories are better-known than others, with the sadly romantic tale of Plunkett's marriage in prison, on the night before his execution, one of the more popular stories immortalized in both song and story (as I discuss in Chapter 3). In a banner displayed by either a Sinn Féin *cumann* or 1916 Society, use of Celtic artwork, alone or along with the Irish language, symbolizes and underscores a long history of literature, language, and artistic expression among the people of Ireland, pre-dating any British influence or colonization. Like the Tricolor, these banners are objects of pride, expressing local as well as island-wide identity and interrelationship, at the same time they create and contribute to contested notions of heritage in Northern Ireland.

Murals and other stationary memorials

Murals, and other immobile memorials, solidly mark boundaries, claim allegiance to specific political causes, and produce social memory – all contributing to the creation and maintenance of heritage. In Northern Ireland, both unionist/loyalist and nationalist/republican communities have a mural tradition, with each tradition representing their "distinct sets of political identity over the past ninety years… [and where] one image can have diametrically opposed meaning" (Rolston 1997/1998:11). For loyalist communities, mural paintings in the early twentieth century helped bring both working class and ruling class Protestants together in celebration of their shared heritage with images of King Billy's victory at the Battle of the Boyne in 1690 thrusting this centuries-old battle into the early twentieth-century conflict over Home Rule (Gallagher

and Hanratty 1989:100). In the last decade of the Troubles and as the peace process was negotiated, the symbolism and imagery of loyalist murals expanded to include aggressive images of armed loyalists and pledges that Ulster could stand alone, neither joining the rest of Ireland nor remaining within the UK (Sluka 1996:385).

Throughout much of the twentieth century, cultural activities and expression of any kind by the nationalist and republican communities in Northern Ireland were

> ghettoized…[taking] place in the private space of church halls and sports grounds owned by the Gaelic Athletic Association… There was safety in this confinement, but it was also systematically enforced by the state. No nationalist group could have succeeded in marching through the centre of towns as the Orange Order did. Gaelic sports results, unlike the more unionist sports… were not read out on radio and television broadcasts… Painting murals was not a civic duty for nationalists; more, it would have led to severe harassment by the armed police of the unionist state. (Rolston 2010a:iii)

Despite limited access to public spaces, the "150th anniversary of the Robert Emmet rebellion spawned a brief flowering of murals on the republican side" (Gallagher and Hanratty 1989:100) in the 1950s with sporadic republican symbols and images appearing on walls over the next few decades. Then twelve years into the Troubles, the hunger strikes in 1981

> created an awful tension between traditional beliefs, submerged in the national psyche and serving as a reference point for national identity and present realities… to distinguish between the legitimate Republicanism of yesteryear (which was condemned in its time for being elitist and violent and to which homage was now paid) and the illegitimate Republicanism of the present (which was condemned for the same reasons) and to synchronize the sociopolitical realities of the Irish state with the precepts of Irish nationhood created an almost unbearable anguish. (O'Malley 1990:141).

The values, perspectives, and political agendas of the wider nationalist community and their elected representatives were challenged by the actions of the ten hunger strikers. As people reacted to the controversy over whether republican prisoners would or should be

recognized as political prisoners rather than criminals, and then one by one the ten men died, large numbers of nationalists and republicans became more engaged in local and province-wide political processes (Rolston 2004:42) and made their claim over public space with slogans and murals supporting the hunger strikers, along with additional forms of protest (Rolston 1997/1998:15). Instead of boycotting elections or electing representatives who "refused to take their seats; now the message was that the ballot box was as powerful a weapon as the armalite" (Rolston 2003a:11).

Along with the initial steps toward peace process implementation, republican murals entered into political debate and dialog within Northern Ireland and internationally, expressing solidarity with causes ranging from aboriginal claims on land in Australia, to arguing the legal plight of Native American Leonard Peltier, to the struggle for Basque autonomy in Spain (Rolston 2003b). After the Good Friday Agreement was signed, republican muralists decided to eliminate depictions of hooded, anonymous gunmen, and that images of guns would only be included in "historical murals… or memorial murals, and in the latter, the dead comrades pictured [were] real people" (Rolston 2010b:295). By the mid-2000s both loyalist and republican muralists were attempting to comply with mandated changes of mural images deemed "offensive," such as the loyalist murals that continued to depict menacing images of hooded, armed men, yet Rolston argues that some of the alternative images present a simplistic view of the past that ignores the central experience of the working class communities they supposedly represent (Rolston 2010b:298). Moreover, he suggests that it could be counterproductive to expect complete and dramatic transformation in mural imagery since the inclusion of traditional symbols does not necessarily mean they represent the

same old perspectives. Instead, Rolston argues that those symbols actually may serve as a "bridge between the past and the future which makes the present tolerable" (Rolston 2010b:300).

Although many current mural topics have toned down divisive rhetoric and turned to celebrating historic connections and events, one of the remaining iconic and, to me, troubling Belfast murals in early 2012 depicted a hooded gunman holding an assault rifle next to bold letters proclaiming "You are now entering loyalist Sandy Row, heartland of South Belfast, Ulster Freedom Fighters. *Quis separabit*." (Rolston 2003b). It took up the whole wall of a three-story residence along an arterial road linking the major route M-1 with the city center. On a visit to Belfast in mid-June I was quite surprised to see scaffolding against the wall as white paint was being applied to cover over the image. A few weeks later, shortly before the annual Twelfth of July celebrations, local loyalist leaders "unveiled" the new mural – which represented yet another "return" to the more distant past with a head and shoulders likeness of King Billy, a phrase welcoming people to Sandy Row, and an historic quote attributed to the King addressing his troops back in the 1690s: "Let ambition fire thy mind."[105] Taking Rolston's perspective, the continued use of William of Orange and the mythologizing images of him astride his white horse represent one of the essential elements for constructing collective loyalist memory and identity as they negotiate the new socio-political realities in Northern Ireland. However, I was personally surprised that they chose such over-used historic imagery for this very prominent location. The fact that the designers did not present a more forward-looking "portrait" of this loyalist neighborhood probably says more about their ambivalence and uncertainty with peace process implementation than their affection for King Billy. In

contrast, one of my republican friends in Strabane had an entirely different perspective regarding removal of the earlier mural. She actually was disappointed that they removed the ominous image of a hooded gunman. From her experience, the Sandy Row mural demonstrated that paramilitary groups operated on *both* sides of the conflict, a significant point that seems unknown to many visitors. Murals clearly attract local as well as international attention and debate while they express ethnic pride, make claims on heritage, and contribute to current negotiations of politics and social memory.

Only a few murals remain in Strabane now, in stark contrast to the larger urban centers of Derry and Belfast where some murals are re-imagining the historical legacy and current role of nationalism/republicanism, unionism/loyalism, and Northern Ireland in the global context of the twenty-first century, while others continue to wrestle with older, divisive topics, marking territorial space and protesting police practices. Similar issues, concerns, and global awareness occupy conversations and debates in Strabane, but there is no strong interest in expressing opinions or protest through mural art at this time. During the Troubles murals were readily visible in housing estates around Strabane, and particularly prominent on many of the walls of Riverside Gardens, where housing blocks stack one above the other against the substantial hill taking up a large portion of the Head of the Town. Seamus Greer, one of the Strabane Memorial Flute Band members who has lived in Riverside Gardens his whole life, pointed out that the murals around Riverside were "not as secluded as some other neighborhoods." People, including Protestants from other communities in the district had to pass through the area to get to school or to get into the town center. The murals, painted on retaining walls flanking parking areas and on the gable ends of housing blocks, were highly visible from a number of directions, even

from the Ballycolman estate situated across the broad valley of the Mourne River to the west.

Several people shared personal photos that included views of murals in various places around the town and more were on display in Cairde's museum. They reflect imagery common to republican murals created during the Troubles throughout Northern Ireland that have been extensively documented and analyzed by Bill Rolston (Rolston 1995a; 2003b; 2010a). The mural designs utilize the Tricolor and other republican emblems such as ones representing the four provinces and the Easter lily; heroes and the Proclamation of 1916; slogans in either English or Irish; the ten hero/martyrs of the hunger strike in 1981; and variations on the phoenix, lark, and barbed wire. One colorful mural shows a phoenix in the stereotypical view, rising up above flames, representing "Irish nationalism rising out of the ashes of the defeat suffered by the martyr-heroes of the 1916 Easter Rising" (Kenney 1998:153). The lark in flight is frequently combined with strands of barbed wire – either being encircled by the wire or ascending above it, symbolizing "the IRA rebel-poet Bobby Sands, flying eternally to freedom over the barbed wire of the Maze prison" (Kenney 1998:153) after his death on hunger strike. Bobby Sands, along with the other nine men who died on hunger strike, engendered an unprecedented level of admiration and inspiration among republicans that continues to this day, even eclipsing the reverence shown to the 1916 Rising heroes.

Following Anthony D. Buckley's definition, Bobby Sands' image is a symbol with an historical narrative which,

> on its own,… does not signify a great deal. Its importance lies in the way the picture draws attention to a narrative. It is not the symbol so much as the historical narrative which is relevant to present realities. The symbol evokes the

narrative, and it is the narrative which has significance for the present. (Buckley 1998a:9)

In this case, the whole story of Sands' imprisonment, leadership, and sacrifice is encapsulated in his likeness for those who know the story, in the same way that the lyrics and their related story come to mind for many who hear republican tunes being played. From the photos I viewed, Strabane muralists used the lark and barbed wire in separate panels at times, demonstrating that a single element was sufficient to represent Sands and his heroism. One mural shows the lark in flight, clutching an assault rifle in its clawed feet, framed by emblems of the four provinces in each corner, linking the leadership and heroism of Bobby Sands with all of Ireland, not just the North, in addition to the long history of the island. Another mural incorporates barbed wire, symbolizing imprisonment, along the lower border, a combination of two crossed Tricolors with an Irish harp in the center, a sketch of Bobby Sands' face, and text including the frequently used phrase "Ireland unfree shall never be at peace." In this case the implication is that all of Ireland is imprisoned – with the unspecified jailer being the British.

A few of the mural designs painted in Strabane clearly were copies of artwork, or at least certain elements, from murals or posters seen elsewhere. One in particular replicates the very stark and arresting black and white image from a 1984 poster distributed by Sinn Féin, opposing and drawing attention to the common practice of male jailers strip searching naked women prisoners (Gray 2001:78). Still others have slogans in Irish, from "*Tiocfaidh ár lá*" (Our day will come), to "*Sasain Amach*" (England Out), to "*Óglaigh na hÉireann*" (Irish Volunteers), positioned as a title above a kneeling masked soldier holding a rocket-propelled grenade launcher on his shoulder. Several of

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the designs look like they were professionally painted, others a bit less carefully created,

and a few are proudly captioned as being made by "Ballycolman Republican Youth." My

impression that muralists had varying levels of artistic skill may have more to do with the

security challenges involved with the painting process. Vince Noonan, who painted some

of Strabane's more recent murals, said that

> Before the peace process if you were doing a mural, you'd of had to stop if there were patrols going. You know, you had to clear off, then come back later, that type of thing. You wouldn't have got peace to do something really intricate or anything, you know. But a lot of the young lads --- a lot of the boys probably in the band now, would've been doing the murals, you know, just out and doing them.

In contrast to other mural images taken on the same day around Strabane, one

photo shows what appears to be a brick wall near the entrance to a housing estate, on the

western edge of Strabane, with random slogans more like a graffiti wall with no artwork

or symbols, only text. Along with the centralized phrase "Welcome to Republican

Carlton Drive" are a variety of threats against drug users, such as "Dopeheads Out!" and

"Druggies Out!" A few of the fully-painted murals included graffiti that was applied after

the initial painting and by someone with opposing opinions. One carried the word

"Unworthy" on a mural portraying the Argentine Marxist revolutionary Che Guevera;

another had "Manipulators" and "Taigs" (a disparaging label for Catholics)[106] painted

across the images and wording of a mural encouraging people to wear a lily in honor of

"Ireland's Patriot Dead." One day, while looking over a selection of these mural photos

with Jake Mitchell, a Riverside Gardens neighbor and Strabane Memorial Flute Band

member, he suggested that the graffiti "may have been painted by the Brits." His opinion

seems reasonable, since none of the messages point to competition between the differing

versions of republicanism active in Strabane. As a collection, the photos represent the broad range of topics in mural imagery that was distributed through a number of community neighborhoods in Strabane. They offer some insight into local attitudes, interests, and concerns; confirm local republican engagement with others around Northern Ireland and beyond; as well as hint at the unsettling reality of British soldiers entering their neighborhoods and painting counter-messages on republican murals.

As I noted previously, the murals recorded in those photographs are gone from Strabane now. During the Troubles they were an integral feature in the landscape of Strabane, claiming neighborhood territory as republican space, displaying resistance to British domination, and linking local republican efforts with the province-wide struggle evolving at that time, in addition to the heroes and events of past struggles (Jarman 1998). Murals served the needs of the community during the conflict, whether they were bolstering morale with cheeky rhetoric aimed at "Brit" soldiers or reminding residents of the organization, be it IRA or INLA, who entered the conflict not just to replace British rule with a unified Ireland, but to bring about socio-political reforms to improve life for nationalists and republicans. The messages embedded in those murals no longer represent current attitudes and activities of the majority of residents who find political and civic engagement more appropriate for working towards whatever goals they have for life in the town of Strabane or changes in the sovereignty of Northern Ireland.

Although the extensive mural displays from the years of the Troubles are gone, a small selection of wall murals continues to mark areas of Strabane, along with what appears to be random graffiti and other very specific scrawled messages threatening any drug dealers who choose to operate in Strabane. During the conflict, neighborhoods

known as republican strongholds like the Head of the Town had to resort to self-policing

to control criminal or "antisocial" behavior and maintained their own form of civic

services with support from the IRA or INLA, since the police (RUC) would not respond

to law and order problems in these areas (Sluka 1989:88-9). Even now, individual and

collective memory of police abuse and discrimination remains extremely high in the

Head of the Town, with many residents still unable to trust any activity connected with

the current police service, so some continue the earlier practice of taking care of and

policing their own community.[107]

Of the present graffiti in the Head of the Town, some is generally found on walls

and fences in side or back alleys and appears to be by individuals or a very local group

"tagging" a wall, with minimal or no repetition such as:

Paddy 05 [and] DEE
F

Other graffiti messages are statements from RAAD – Republican Action Against Drugs –

a group dedicated to eliminate drugs from their home communities operating in and

around Derry and Strabane. Their messages are distributed more broadly throughout the

neighborhood both in back lanes and close to, or along, regular streets with variations of

just their acronym, RAAD, as well as whole phrases that clearly state their zero tolerance

for drugs:

UP THE
RAAD
DRUG DEALERS
WILL BE SHOT!!

In this close-knit community, people know this is not an empty threat, but a commitment

to keep the area free of drug use. Along with relatively fresh-painted graffiti, faded

remnants of other acronyms are visible in various locations as well, attesting to the presence or potential incursion of other republican factions, like RIRA (Real IRA, as opposed to PIRA, for Provisional IRA who are aligned with the political party Sinn Féin) in the recent past. Like other symbols, these mark a republican neighborhood at the same time they remind residents that "anti-social" behavior will not be tolerated now any more than it was during the Troubles. When combined with the few remaining murals, seasonal Tricolor displays, and other memorials such as plaques marking specific sites, the figures and letters contribute to a symbolic landscape that represents both past and present social and cultural reproduction (Low 1994:67) and maintenance in the Head of the Town as they negotiate various stages of peace process implementation.

Of the remaining murals, a fairly large one includes the names and portraits of twenty men "who gave their lives for Irish freedom in the west Tyrone area," or were key leaders in local republican politics, along with a waving Tricolor and an iconic view of Strabane from the hillside cemetery. It is an interesting juxtaposition of individual portraits of the men, most of whom died violently, above a romanticized view of the town that incorporates the peaceful curving lines of the River Mourne as it passes through the age-old stone bridge near the center of Strabane, with a poem in the bottom right corner that reads:

> You've come to know the winds that blow,
> The glory that surrounds you;
> Your hills that flow from Knockavoe
> To wrap their warmth around you;
> On Irish streets in August heat,
> Thro' dusky dark December,
> You lost your lives but will never die
> As long as we remember

The mural is on the gable end of a building in the primarily residential Head of the Town, where it is a daily reminder of the struggles of the past and contributes to the "material strategies for the production… [of] social memory" (Feldman 1997/1998:203). The memorial sentiments in the poem emphasize the responsibility of all to remember and honor these men. As one republican ex-prisoner said to me:

> It's a memorial to all those who died, all the volunteers who died, you know. And the memory's being kept, because people see them every day when they go past. You know, it's probably become a wee bit subconscious after a while, but they're still there. It's just getting it up and having it there forever.

Like others in the neighborhood, he either was unaware or chose to ignore the fact that not everyone who passes the mural shares his sentiments about honoring IRA Volunteers. Residents of nearby villages or students attending the "mixed" secondary school, Strabane Academy, have to travel past the mural on a regular basis. Since many of them are Protestant, their social memories are likely to be quite different from those in the Head of the Town. Before the recent reforms Strabane Academy was a Protestant school and during the Troubles students were bused through the Head of the Town daily, where their buses frequently were pelted with stones as they passed through.

Now, however, *some* attitudes in the Head of the Town are undergoing transformations, despite the lack of empathy shown by the republican ex-prisoner. In contrast to his lack of awareness, a few neighbors admitted feeling a bit ashamed that they shouted insults and threw stones at the school buses going to Strabane Academy and in hindsight, recognize that the students had no more control over the socio-political elements of the Troubles than they did as residents of the Head of the Town. Now that the school is deliberately serving a diverse population and both Catholic and Protestant

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students are attending, the perspective of residents is different when they see buses or other school vehicles passing through their neighborhood. It is not that the past has been forgotten. Instead there is a strong appreciation that regular bombings, roadblocks, and other aspects of conflict have ended, which in turn has fostered a reappraisal and renegotiation of many relationships in the town. As people renegotiate their relationship and engagement with the broader community of Strabane District, certain symbols and iconic images of the past may continue to be relevant, but frequently that relevance is from a revised perspective.

Not far from the mural memorializing the martyr/heroes of West Tyrone is a panel painted on the side wall of an out-building, that pairs portraits of Bobby Sands and Che Guevara as if they were posed together. With no accompanying text, their images alone symbolize unwavering commitment to revolutionary causes. Many of the people I spoke with referred to the writings of one or both men, holding them in high regard. Some would recite a quote they attribute to Guevara, "they can kill the revolutionary, but they cannot kill the revolution,"[108] while others referred to several well-known phrases from Sands' writing, including "Everyone, republican or otherwise, has his/her own part to play" (Rolston 1995a:53), words that inspire their actions even now. Currently, opposition to the legislature in Stormont or distrust of the local police is more likely to be expressed or addressed through electoral engagement and participation "within" the political system than the previous forms of violent conflict. However, images of heroes such as Sands and Guevara confirm that republicanism in post-conflict Northern Ireland still can reflect and be guided by the values, goals, and heroes of the past. Other public artwork links identity and heritage to sports. Utilizing the basic concept of mural painting

directly on buildings, three walls of a side extension at Clancy's Bar are painted with wide green and white horizontal stripes along with an image of an Irish footballer in action, a huge shamrock, and the Tricolor, suggesting that involvement with the GAA and traditionally Irish sports contributes to Irish identity and patriotism.

In lieu of murals painted directly on buildings, some billboard-like or over-sized "posters" are propped up against or affixed to walls, serving a similar role as memorial or didactic mural image, as well as for short-term uses like publicizing an upcoming commemoration. In fact, Vince Noonan, a mural artist in Strabane has used the technique of painting first on wooden boards, then mounting the finished work for more permanent projects. He told me,

> I don't know how they do it in Belfast, but if you try to do a mural here, you'll never get it done with the weather. That's what I find, you know. It's always cold, or wet, so I do them in a community center. And then they mount them --- I don't do that [part], the boys with the drills and the screws put them up.

During my travels around County Tyrone I saw versions of this more ephemeral mural/signage style colorfully promoting the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Loughgall shootings, and another for the commemoration of the four men killed at Clonoe, stressing its sponsorship by independent republicans. In the first few months after my October 2011 arrival in Strabane, a large mural/billboard (roughly ten by fourteen feet), was left leaning against a residential garden wall next to the permanent stone memorial honoring the three lads shot in the field above Riverside Gardens – a remnant of the twenty-fifth anniversary observance. Unlike the colorful mural/signs promoting the anniversaries of Loughgall and Clonoe, this mural retained a white background with simple black lettering in the upper and lower "thirds," with the equivalent of a pen and ink portrait of

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each of the three lads across the middle. Combining English and Irish text the heading was "West Tyrone Command" and "*Óglaigh Na hÉireann*," while each individual was identified with the title "*Óglaigh*" (for "Volunteer") in addition to his name, then underneath the portraits, the first line read "*Fuair Siad Bás Ar Son*" with "*Saoirse na hÉireann*" directly below, meaning "They died for the cause of Ireland's freedom." Even though few "have" much Irish, it is as important to utilize the language for this type of public art as it is to include their names and faces – all contribute to the creation and maintenance of Irish identity, collective memory, and a sense of heritage in the Head of the Town.

On the side of the building housing the offices of Cairde, a large mural/sign in observation of the thirtieth anniversary of the hunger strikes is mounted high up, attached to plumbing that runs up and down the wall, making it easily visible to the foot and vehicle traffic nearby, crossing the main bridge into Strabane town center on a constant basis. In this example there is no text, only the numerals indicating 1981 and 2011. The imagery includes a burning candle with a length of barbed wire curling around it, implying that the "flame" of republicanism "burned brightly," or remained steadfast, even when imprisoned. Taking up the bulk of the panel, in solid brown paint against the white background, the head and upper torso of a bearded, long-haired man gazes straight out as if challenging the viewer to make eye contact. The man's image is suggestive of the unkempt appearance of republican prisoners of who were "on the blanket" – refusing to wear prison clothing that identified them as criminals (Ryder 2000:171) in the late 1970s – or were involved in the "dirty protest" as republican prisoners escalated their resistance by refusing to wash or leave their cells and smearing the cell walls with their

own excrement (Ryder 2000:181). Through these protests, republican prisoners literally

"used their bodies as the practical and symbolic subjects of their resistance to

criminalization" (McEvoy 2001:82) that eventually led to the hunger strikes in 1981.

Additional imagery on the mural/sign uses semi-abstract silhouettes within what seems to

be folds in the blanket wrapped around the man's body, suggestive of armed sentries

posted along a prison wall with a prison watch-tower looming beside it. Like other

artwork relating to the hunger strike, the image is evocative of renderings of Jesus Christ,

comparing the suffering and self-sacrifice of republican prisoners with that of Christ

(Ruane and Todd 1996:96; Gallagher and Hanratty 1989:103). The mural/sign with no

text "silently" references a particularly disturbing period of time within the longer history

of the Troubles and acknowledges the significant anniversary observance of the

culminating hunger strikes.

As a pivotal event, the hunger strikes received unprecedented international media

attention, particularly in the United States (Wilson 1995:188). Moreover, reporters

actually visited different communities around Northern Ireland and talked directly with

involved individuals and groups. Prior to this stage in the conflict, reporters commonly

stayed in the vicinity of Belfast and composed their reports based on press briefings by

the British Foreign Office (Wilson 1995:183). The hunger strikes came to symbolize

Catholic resistance to British and unionist domination as world-wide attention was

directed to the

> struggle between prisoners and warders, republicans and British state…
> symbolically fought out on the prisoners' emaciated bodies… The form of the
> hunger strikes increased their impact. The steady silent deterioration of the hunger
> strikers within the prisons contrasted with the flurry of activity on the outside –

the frantic attempts at mediation, the political protests and riots that followed each death (Ruane and Todd 1996:111).

Thirty-plus years later, the hunger strikes still resonate as an important symbol of republican resolve, sacrifice, and heroism that ultimately prevailed over Maggie Thatcher, "bringing her to her knees." Within that large-scale perspective, it also represents the very personal, individual actions, not only of the ten men who died on hunger strike, but those who volunteered for the "standby list" in case the strike coordinators asked for additional volunteers (O'Malley 1990:73), as well as the scores of republican prisoners who "went on the blanket" and participated in the "dirty protest." For these many unnamed prisoners who voluntarily subjected themselves to additional deprivation and abuse beyond the regular prison experience of republicans, it was and remains a very personal, solitary, and demeaning experience. While ex-prisoner support organizations such as Cairde and Teach na Failte in Strabane offer medical, job, and housing counseling and aid, few if any ex-prisoners talk with each other about their shared experience in the "dirty protest" or other aspects of their incarceration. As one ex-prisoner told me, although he knows other ex-prisoners went through similar experiences, being "on the blanket," they do not discuss it. Moreover, he said he has never spoken of it with any family members, adding "it is hard to tell your family about wiping your own shite all over the walls." Yet that very intimate memory is embedded in the symbolism of the mural/sign of the solitary figure, too. For this ex-prisoner, the "dirty protest" and other unpleasant prison memories remain part of his past, even though he chooses to focus on other forms of solidarity and resolve that were initiated in prison. They directed

his actions in the early years following his release from prison, and continue to be significant for him today.

Stationary memorials

Around the countryside, in small towns and villages, as well as the larger urban centers, the Northern Irish "landscape is dotted with plaques and crosses marking the sites of violent deaths" (Leonard 1997:13) since the start of the Troubles. Larger, more elaborate memorials at or near the actual death sites, or home community of the individuals, are frequently constructed much later – usually at a significant anniversary observance of the death, such as the stone "grotto" constructed for the twentieth anniversary commemoration of the three Strabane lads killed in 1985. These memorials

> serve as sites for republican commemorations and other important political and community rituals… [representing their] well-organized and confident resistance movement… which is completely embedded in these communities and an integral part of their everyday life and culture. (Sluka 1995:89)

Several of these larger memorials are located in republican neighborhoods around Strabane, ranging from fairly simple construction to more extensive in style and size. The most recently-built memorial in the Head of the Town commemorates Volunteer John Brady "who was murdered by crown forces while in enemy custody, 3rd October 2009" with a bronze plaque affixed to a large, rough-cut block of stone approximately four feet high and surrounded by a simple slate walkway, enclosed in a wrought iron fence with gate. Adjacent to Brady's memorial in the same housing estate, is a slightly larger memorial to Volunteer Eugene Devlin who was shot and killed by British soldiers in 1972, comprised of a podium-like stone pillar with the details of his death etched in a

marble slab set on an angle into the upper portion. Similar to the memorial for Brady, Devlin's memorial includes a short entry walkway and space within the wrought iron fence that surrounds it.

Another memorial – for the three young men who were killed in 1985 – is located near the shooting site and only a short distance down the road from the housing estate where the Brady and Devlin memorials are located. Although each of these memorials take slightly different forms, they serve the community in a similar manner to the nearby mural honoring IRA Volunteers from West Tyrone, engineering the social memory of a community. In this case the memorial to the three lads is a small grotto-like structure of random ashlar stonework that was built as part of the twentieth anniversary observances of their shooting. Within a gated enclosure, the main façade includes two panels, one with an iconic symbol of ancient Ireland and the other depicting more recent paramilitary activity. They flank a central panel stating the names and ages of the three young men along with the fact that they were "killed by crown forces near this spot 23 February, 1985." The veiled narrative reflected by combining the symbolism of the three panels is significant for directing and influencing how the public remembers and celebrates these men.

Facing the memorial, on the left is the image of a muffled IRA soldier at parade rest. As a former IRA Volunteer explained, during the Troubles both the IRA and INLA were illegal organizations and if someone was identified as being involved with either group, he or she was subject to arrest. Therefore, in actuality and on murals and other representations such as the memorial, volunteers covered up their faces to protect their identity. Depicting republican soldiers in this manner symbolizes the clandestine

elements of IRA activity and the need for maintaining the anonymity of those supporting

their efforts.

On the panel to the right is an image of Cú Chulainn, one of the great heroes

whose exploits are immortalized in the ancient sagas from pre-Christian Ireland, and the

central figure in the Ulster Cycle, a collection of Irish literature transcribed from written

texts dating as early as the eighth century (Cross and Slover 1936:127). Adding to the

symbolism embedded in these images is the fact that this particular image of Cú Chulainn

is taken from a sculpture of him that was placed in the General Post Office in Dublin as a

memorial to the Easter Rising of 1916 (Rolston 1997/1998:6). In this image Cú Chulainn

is shown "mortally wounded, but dying upright, tied to a post" (Rolston 1997/1998:6). A

Gaelic revival was already thriving in colonial Ireland from the mid-1800s onward when

Cú Chulainn was adopted as one who embodied the nationalist ideals of those seeking

Irish independence in the early twentieth century (Rolston 1997/1998:9). Although Cú

Chulainn is commonly presented as a republican/nationalist symbol, Protestants from the

Ulster-Scots heritage claim him as well through a contested interpretation of an ancient

saga describing his exploits (Nic Craith 2002:96). For either republican/nationalists or

unionist/loyalists, Cú Chulainn clearly is emblematic for demonstrating the link between

an ancient Celtic heritage and the present, and he continues to be refashioned and utilized

to influence public memory today.

For public memory in the Head of the Town, the combined presentation of the

three panels links the deaths of Breslin and the Devine brothers with a revered ancient

past of noble sacrifice, the more recent history of martyrs who answered the "call of Irish

freedom" during the Easter Rising of 1916, and the most recent and not entirely finished

struggle from the late twentieth century. Acknowledging certain elements of the Troubles as unfinished business, "functions as a reminder of the injustices of the existing order and an inspiration for future generations" (McBride 2001b:36). It is a subtle but powerful message expressed in this memorial and just one of the several ways the three men remain a conscious presence in the community.

Grave markers, high up in Strabane Cemetery overlooking the Head of the Town, also memorialize and identify the three lads as IRA Volunteers. Erected by the Strabane National Graves Association at the request of each family, the headstones are tall Celtic-style crosses mounted on a slightly larger pedestal, making them roughly six feet high overall and with interlace decorating the "arms" and crossed rifles on the longer lower section, denoting their service in the IRA. The Devine brothers are buried along with their brother Hugh who died the previous May. His death was most likely caused by the physical abuse he received from British soldiers during a "stop and search." All three are named on the one stone monument, along with their death dates, ages, and for Michael and Davy, noting they were Volunteers who died "in active service" with the West Tyrone Command of Óglaigh na hÉireann, or the IRA. Charlie's grave marker is inscribed in a similar manner and both stones include a variation of the phrase "They/he died for the cause of Ireland's freedom" in Irish. The style of standing crosses like these emulate the carved high crosses common to Irish monasteries between the ninth and eleventh centuries (Henry 1967:133), albeit not nearly as tall and with less elaborate interlace designs. The design and its incorporation of the crossed rifles symbolize the men's involvement as armed combatants, whose heritage is linked with a centuries-old "country" and culture. These memorials built into the landscape or painted on houses

influence the creation and maintenance of public memory, which also is expressed

through performances such as storytelling, singing political songs, and parading.

Murals, banners, and stone memorials such as these link republican communities

with political struggles beyond Ireland, like the revolutionary Che Guevara, along with

island-wide efforts to eliminate British rule in Ireland, but primarily they celebrate events

and memorialize local "lads." For residents of the Head of the Town, that means

honoring the memory of members of the West Tyrone Brigade. Listing and reading off

the names of these martyr/heroes is an essential part of memorialization as it

"immediately locates the memorial as being redolent of emotion that is close to home;

these are sons, daughters, parents, neighbors. The struggle against oblivion is intimate in

these tightly packed working-class streets" (Rolston 2010b:293). The symbolism

embedded in these acts of commemoration confirms the communal memory in the Head

of the Town as they negotiate social and political tranformations initiated by peace

process implementation

Personal Expression: The wearing of the green and other symbols

Shamrocks, harps, and Celtic crosses are among the stereotypical symbols to be

found on tourist merchandise throughout Ireland. Beneath any superficial appearance and

meaning as souvenirs that are packed into luggage to be taken home by visitors from

other places as a remembrance of Ireland, these and other symbols remain significant to

people within Ireland as well. Anthony Buckley claims that "symbolism is mainly used to

give definition to a slice of reality… [with] each social group and each individual…

likely to shape reality in a different way, bending the symbolism to their particular

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desires" (Buckley 1998a:14). Previously I focused on symbols primarily found in public settings. In this section I discuss the context for several symbols frequently used in more private or personal ways, and the reality that they define, whether they are meant as an act of protest, celebration, or identification.

The notion of identifying Ireland with the color green has been traced back to the literary tradition of Early Christian Ireland when writers were referring to the greenness of the land (Bryson and McCartney 1994:36). In the manner of many symbols, the meanings and referents of "the green" have varied over the centuries since, while the essence and importance of its connection with Ireland has endured. By 1798, wearing the color green was a capital offense after being adopted by the United Irishmen trying to overthrow British rule, who were inspired by the French and their Tree of Liberty (Faolain 1983:312). In defiance to the crown and in support of the United Irishmen, women might wear a bit of green ribbon and farmers would tuck a sprig of some green bush into their caps. Numerous songs relating the prohibition circulated the island as well, with at least one version prevailing within public memory and repertoires to this day (Faolain 1983:312).

Eighteenth-century revolutionaries adopted the Liberty Tree as their own symbol because it meant that their liberty was "dead" under British rule. However, just as a tree that appears lifeless, that liberty could "bloom again," a concept that corresponded to ancient Irish veneration of trees as well as a medieval interpretation that a "dead tree – the Cross – became green again only when the Crucified Christ revived it with His blood" (Zimmermann 1967:42). Similarly, those eighteenth-century revolutionaries were willing to sacrifice *their* blood for Irish liberty. In contrast to the significance of certain

trees in Ireland, any religious connotation for the use of shamrocks was a relatively late invention, with records mentioning people wearing shamrocks on St. Patrick's Day in 1681 (Morris 2005:14). Although it continues as a popular story, there is no evidence supporting the mythical tale that the historical person known as St. Patrick used the trefoil-shaped shamrock to illustrate the Trinity (Nelson 1990:41) as he ministered to fifth-century Christians in Ireland (de Paor 1986:55).[109] During the late eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth century, the shamrock as an emblem was embraced by both nationalist United Irishmen and loyalist Volunteers, who generally showed it intertwined with the English rose and Scottish thistle (Morris 2005:14). Official or not, shown with three leaves or four, the shamrock continues to be a popular symbol representing Ireland and "the wearing of the green."

In the lead-up to St. Patrick's Day 2012, my friend Helene McCormick filled me in on the tradition of wearing shamrocks in Strabane, as well as the rest of Ireland, and how I could prepare for the day. Throughout the week or two before the day, grocery stores and other shops have "wee small pots" of living shamrocks for sale. She explained that you buy a pot of shamrocks ahead of time and then use several sprigs of it to make a corsage that you wear on your lapel. Then much later in the day, when imbibing at a pub, some people follow a tradition of "drowning the shamrocks," in which they dump their corsage of shamrocks into a glass of whiskey and drink it all down. E. Charles Nelson recorded variations of this when surveying folk concepts about shamrocks in the 1980s (Nelson 1989:41). Helene also cautioned me that the first time she tried it, she neglected to rinse off her shamrocks, leaving neither her whiskey nor shamrocks very appetizing, to be sure! So thus prepared, before heading out to the parade on the morning of St.

Patrick's Day, I made a small foil holder, with moist paper toweling inside to keep my sprigs of shamrock from wilting, and attached it to my jacket. As soon as I was near the center of town I saw people of all ages gathering along the parade route and sporting their shamrock corsages – even a dog or two was decked out with his own shamrocks. I have to admit that at the end of the day, I decided to pass on drowning my shamrocks and simply enjoyed my whiskey neat, as usual.

For all its light-heartedness, wearing shamrocks on St. Patrick's Day is also an act of remembrance on the feast day of Ireland's patron saint; an act that can be a symbolic reflection of both politics and religion. The Easter lily is another semi-religious symbol that was adopted as a form of political expression by Cumann na mBan, the republican women's organization, in the mid-1920s in honor of "Ireland's patriot dead" (Magee 2011:656), referring to republicans who died fighting for Ireland's independence, particularly during the Easter Rising in 1916. There was extensive distrust and disunity among republicans following partition, the creation of the Irish Free State, and the ensuing civil war in the early 1920s, with many accusing the Free State government of "dishonoring the tricolour" (Morris 2005:46).

In response to these disparate opinions, and to replace the tri-colored rosettes and ribbons previously worn by members of Sinn Féin, women created a paper emblem of an Easter lily. It was a direct reference to the heroics of the 1916 Rising and very likely as an alternative to the red poppies worn in memory of those who died in World War I (Morris 2005:46). Initially, the lily "was hand made by republicans, who sold it at great risk throughout the country" (Magee 2011:657). Over the decades since, local republican groups, including members of the youth wing Ógra Shinn Féin, have gone around their

neighborhoods selling the paper lilies a few weeks before Easter. A week or so before

Easter 2012, one of my Riverside Gardens neighbors gave me a paper lily, already fixed

with a pin to attach it to my clothing, and I asked her about how the lilies were usually

distributed. She told me that in some areas a small shop might sell the lilies, but usually

"people go door-to-door – oh aye, it's a very personal thing!" This die-cut paper lily –

just over two inches long – continues to stand for the Easter Rising, but like other

symbols, aspects of its meaning have changed over time.

In the late 1960s yet another split over political and operational tactics within the

IRA led to the creation of the Provisional IRA,[110] frequently called the Provos, and

occasionally identified by the acronym PIRA (Frampton 2011:36). A short time later, the

remaining "original branch," known as the Official IRA, decided to use adhesive on their

Easter lilies, which led to the derisive nickname "stickies," "Stickybacks," or "Sticks"

used to refer to the leadership and members of the Officials (Molohey 2003:99).[111] While

no one sells peel-off adhesive lilies today, the term is still invoked as a critique, such as

when dissident republicans alluded to "the Sticky experience" as they criticized Gerry

Adams and the Provisional IRA for agreeing to the decommissioning of arms in 2005

(Frampton 2011:202). The symbolic lily, like the Tricolor or shamrock, is so ubiquitous

that I almost missed the detail of the lilies used on the cover of the book *Tyrone's*

Struggle, published by County Tyrone's Sinn Féin Commemoration Committee. There,

on the front cover, along with the iconic lark flying free of the barbed wire and the phrase

"*Ar son saoirse na hÉireann*" (For the freedom of Ireland), are images of two paper lilies,

complete with straight pins "attached" as if being worn or ready to be pinned on, making

a subtle but clear statement that this book represents the *Provisional's* story of the republican struggle for Irish freedom.

As combatants during the Troubles, IRA Volunteers generally wore uniforms for parading, attending funerals, and as propaganda. However in rural areas and particularly along the border like County Tyrone, they "wore all manner of uniforms and military equipment" (Durney 2004:84). Nevertheless, IRA Volunteers wearing a black beret and gloves while on active service became emblematic of their participation in the IRA and would be placed on the deceased's coffin along with a Tricolor, when family members requested an IRA funeral. The act of displaying a Volunteer's gloves and beret in this manner became the primary point of contention when police in Strabane tried to prevent Charlie Breslin from receiving an IRA funeral in 1985, as his sister Karina explained to me.

It was clear to the families and close friends that the police and British forces in the area wanted to minimize the community response right after the shooting. To that end the hospital did not release the bodies until midnight Sunday, February 24th, assuming the procession of hearses would attract little attention as they traveled to Strabane at that hour. However, when the procession of cars and hearses got to Strabane around 1 a.m., there were more than 1,500 people waiting in the town square to escort Charlie, Michael, and Davy to their homes (Magee 2011:323). As Karina pointed out, their actions were a clear indication to the authorities that people in Strabane – and beyond – *were* paying attention, and they intended to support the families and fully honor the three lads as IRA Volunteers. Once the bodies of the three men were brought back from the hospital, each family home had become a "wake house," with people calling in to express their

condolences to the families. Close friends and family members kept busy making endless cups of tea and sandwiches for the callers, and the bodies were "laid out" in one of the bedrooms.

The Devine family had requested simply to have a family funeral for Michael and Davy, but the Breslin's chose to honor their son's wishes with an IRA funeral. Karina explained that during the wake in the Breslin home, two IRA Volunteers maintained a guard of honor next to Charlie's coffin, with his black beret and gloves, along with the Tricolor, laid out with him. At one point during the evening before the funeral, several young men carried the closed coffin into the Breslin's backyard where four IRA volunteers wearing balaclava masks fired a volley of shots into the air in honor of all three lads. As soon as the volley was over, Karina said the gunmen slipped away into the night as silently as they had appeared. As they were preparing to go to the church for the funeral the next day, the flag was draped over the closed coffin once again, with the beret and gloves placed on top.

> On the Tuesday of the funerals for Charlie, Michael, and Davy,
>
> there was a huge build-up of British military forces in the Strabane area. The RUC evidently intended… both to intimidate nationalists from attending and, if possible, to engineer an armed attack on mourners. Seventy RUC landrovers… were positioned in the immediate vicinity of the half-mile funeral route [from the Breslin home]. At least forty more vehicles saturated [the housing estate] and three British Army helicopters hovered overhead throughout. (Magee 2011:324)

Karina was fifteen when her brother Charlie was shot. As much as she was in a shock over Charlie's death, her memories of the days following the shooting are quite clear. She told me

> that morning of the funeral, as the sky was getting light, outside our house as far as you could see there were Land Rovers and Saracens[112] [along with hundreds of

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mourners]. It was a massive, massive security operation. [The combined security forces] were determined to stop Charlie having an IRA funeral. They weren't going to have anybody parading a tricolor, beret, and gloves through Strabane.

One of the throng of international news media, a Canadian reporter, questioned whether her father really wanted to insist on an IRA funeral and continue defying the authorities. "My father said, 'You don't understand, do you? This isn't my choice – this is my son's choice. He can't speak for himself anymore, do you not understand that?'" Karina remembered the reporter saying, "'You are a brave man, Joe,'" at which point her father replied, "'We'll all have to be brave come 10 o'clock,'" referring to the time when the funeral mass was set to begin. Just getting Charlie's casket out of the house was proving to be an immense challenge. Martin McGuinness and other leaders from Sinn Féin, along with their parish priest, were there trying to help negotiate between the family and the security forces. After a series of discussions her mother went out to face the media and read a statement written by her father explaining they simply were asking for the opportunity to bury their child with dignity.

When they finally were able to move Charlie's casket out of the house, the procession was flanked by rows of young men with linked arms, four or five deep, trying to keep the police away from reaching the casket and removing the gloves, beret, and Tricolor. Karina dropped something as they started to move and when she bent down to pick it up she could see through the legs of the mourners to where soldiers were pushing their rifle butts into the backs of the legs of the men holding the line. As the procession moved slowly down the street towards the chapel there was another standoff, with the police insisting that the flag, beret, and gloves come off the coffin. The procession was cut off on all sides with Land Rovers, Saracens, and police at the front and pressing in

behind them. The police warned them "'you're not allowed to carry them through the streets,'" referring to the beret and gloves, to which her father answered "'We're not carrying them – Charlie's carrying them.'" After more tense discussion and negotiation, her mother wound up carrying the beret and gloves, while the flag stayed on the coffin until they reached the chapel. Since no flags were allowed in the church, it was removed before the casket was carried inside for the funeral mass.

Seven years later at the funeral services for two of the IRA Volunteers killed at Clonoe, the Mass was delayed when family members refused to remove what they consider their national flag – the Tricolor – from their sons' coffins. Similar to the Breslin's appeal in 1985, one of the parents said they wanted to bury the men with peace and dignity, adding that "both Volunteers had requested that in the event of their death, their coffins be draped with the flag throughout the Mass. Following prolonged discussions the two coffins, still bearing the national flags, were allowed inside the chapel as the mourners cheered and applauded" (Magee 2011:498). Rituals such as funeral Masses are highly emotional events full of much symbolism and, in the cases of violent deaths during an armed conflict, can include a wide range of anger and controversy. Not all families of Volunteers who died on active service wanted a funeral that acknowledged their military involvement. In the case of another Strabane resident, INLA Volunteer James McPhilemy, who was killed in 1988, the family requested that "there be no paramilitary trappings at his funeral" (McKittrick et al 2007:1139).

Even now, former IRA Volunteers are eligible for an IRA funeral, if they request it. Admittedly, not all former Volunteers even discuss their experience with immediate family members and prefer to leave it in the past. However, for many of the Volunteers

who served during the conflict, and their families and close friends, it remains important to acknowledge their contribution to the struggle towards a united Ireland, along with a display of the related symbols of active service. Individually or in a variety of combinations, these tangible symbols carry multiple meanings as they connect those wearing, displaying, and observing them in the present with personal and collective memories of the past. These objects embodying personal and collective memories frequently make reference to additional, less tangible symbols that contribute to the construction and maintenance of Irish identity as well, such as the Irish language which is embedded with a very long history and collective memory.

"Mind Yer Tongue": language as symbol of identity, heritage, culture

In February 2012 Gaelphobal Strabane won the prestigious Glor na nGael national award in recognition of their successful programs and efforts promoting Irish language and culture. In addition to the prestige of being recognized out of all the Irish language centers around the island, the award included €40,000 to support expansion of Irish language programs in the district. In addition, Strabane's branch of the Irish language youth club, Ógras received a separate award of €700. When I spoke with several of the people who represented Strabane at the awards dinner it was easy to hear the surprise and excitement in their voices even in the retelling of the evening. They knew before that evening that Gaelphobal Strabane was among the five finalist organizations being considered, but never thought they would get the top honors.

To find out more about how and why Strabane received the award, I talked with Dublin-based Gareth Trimble, a program manager for Foras na Gaeilge, the organization

tasked with overseeing Irish language programs throughout Ireland.[113] He explained that of the nineteen groups receiving monetary awards, nine were in "the six counties," referring to Northern Ireland. Trimble said the selection process is highly competitive and the fact that Gaelphobal Strabane won the top prize "was a testament to the strong commitment of the volunteer committee and the great working partnership they have with staff who are the ones putting the local strategies into effect and integrating Irish language into the community." He stressed that developing a good workable model for the proposed programs puts a "huge burden" on the volunteer committees but that the group in Strabane has shown themselves to be very effective. Programs connected to promoting the Irish language in Strabane include an Irish-medium school serving children with a nursery, pre-school, and primary classes all taught through the medium of the Irish language; evening adult classes and Irish "coffee hours" in the Gaelphobal office; and providing an Irish language officer for Strabane District Council. Irish language community centers like Gaelphobal Strabane draw support from Northern Ireland as well as cross-border governmental departments and are recognized for offering "a platform for the development of cultural life, such as the arts, through the medium of Irish" (McDermott 2011:64). Neither Gaelphobal nor the Gaelscoil were in place twenty-five years ago, however public programs and interest in Irish such as this is not new to Strabane, or the rest of County Tyrone.

A hundred years ago the Tyrone Gaelic School announced their summer program of courses and lectures in the *Strabane Chronicle*, noting that the object of the school was "as a preparatory school for the Ulster College at Cloughaneely to arrest the decay and promote the study and speaking of Gaelic in the Tyrone Glens and to encourage the Irish

speaking boys and girls of the district to qualify and become Gaelic League teachers"

(May 31, 2012). At that time a fair number of Irish speakers remained in the county, in

the more remote communities of the Sperrin mountains (Gaelphobal Strabane, n.d.). By

mid-twentieth century, those pockets of Irish-speaking communities, known as

gaeltachts, had diminished, with only a few individuals here and there around the county

trying to maintain the language and teach others. Among the challenges faced by Irish

speakers was the reality that without any official standing in Northern Ireland (Nic Craith

2003:77), the Irish language received neither support nor respect from governmental

agencies such as those overseeing educational programming. For example, in 1942 the

regional education board fired a teacher in Strabane's technical school for trying to

implement an Irish language class (Kennedy 2000:363).

In Strabane, one man in particular – Gerald O'Dochartaigh – is credited with

keeping the language alive in the town, well before interest expanded in the late 1980s.

Tomás O'Donnell, Strabane's Irish language officer, told me

> What really happened there in terms of a revival of the Irish language, goes a lot
> deeper and a lot further back, with an old man called Gerald O'Dochartaigh. The
> Gaelscoil was called after him. And you have to give credit where credit is due.
> Gerald kept the Irish language classes going in this town for years, and years, and
> years – long before there would've been a resurgence, or revival, of the Irish
> language. This would've been in the '70s and '80s. I remember attending a class
> when I was about eleven years of age, so that's going back into the very early
> '70s. They were held in different places – just where you could find places to do
> it. There was a house in the Head of the Town, where they held classes. There
> were also club rooms down on Lower Main Street. Gerald kept the classes going
> when there were very few other people who were interested in the Irish language.
> As a result of that then, it left the town ready for a resurgence of Irish language,
> whenever the time became right.

Despite programs such as the Tyrone Gaelic School and local classes held in towns like

Strabane, as an unofficial language, Irish was "peripheral to nationalist discourse…

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[until] the 1970s civil rights movement brought greater awareness of the rights of individuals to speak the language of their choice" (Nic Craith 2003:77). Coinciding with this awareness were dedicated Irish speakers such as Gerald O'Dochartaigh taking on the role of "language activists" in their individual communities around the North as increased interest in learning Irish was "stimulated by the Troubles" (Zenker 2014:69).

Nationalists and republicans throughout Northern Ireland began to recognize that the act of speaking one's regional, minority language were effective symbols of political opposition to the dominant culture (McDermott 2011:55) and served as boundary markers (O'Reilly 1998:51). In addition, languages have played and continue to play a significant role in the formation and maintenance of ethnic identity (Nic Craith 1996a) even though there is decidedly less access to power and privilege for speakers of minority languages (Nic Craith 2012:376). Literally marking territory with Irish-language signage – both for street names and on memorials; or more subtly claiming Irish heritage through the choice of first (or given) names of children; all contain political connotations and elements of resistance to British domination (McDermott 2011:56).

Irish expanded as a nationalist discourse within republicanism when Sinn Féin began to promote the language. Republican prisoners interned in the late 1970s, early 1980s, turned Irish into a living language for themselves and their keepers (Feldman 1991:214) at the same time they employed it as cultural resistance (Nic Craith 2003:78). Moreover, well beyond the prison environment, republicans both publicized and politicized the language by incorporating this normally intangible heritage into the very tangible cultural expression of murals, banners, and other signage (O'Reilly 1998:54). These activities increased awareness of, and familiarity with, the Irish language within

the context of other symbols of "Irish" heritage and culture. Maria Tymoczko and Colin Ireland argue that there is an interplay between tradition and culture throughout the island,

> as each serves to define and construct the other. The role of language in this interplay is paramount, and the multilingualism of Ireland sets in relief the continuities and displacements of Irish traditions, their fractures and linkages. In turn, Ireland's history highlights the relation of language and tradition to politics and power. (Tymoczko and Ireland 2003b:25)

This interaction between tradition, culture, politics, and power regarding use the Irish language, reached a significant measure when the Good Friday Agreement gave official recognition to, and support for, the Irish language in Northern Ireland (McCoy and O'Reilly 2003:157). Even though communities from Belfast to Strabane were already establishing Irish-medium schools and offering programs for people interested in the language, official government recognition put speaking and teaching Irish in Northern Ireland into a whole new relationship with the state, the more-distant British government, and the bi-lingual Republic of Ireland just across the border.

Current interest and involvement with the Irish language in Strabane varies from memorial band members learning just enough Irish to follow the commands while playing music and parading; several Gaelscoil staff whose entire academic experience has been through the medium of Irish; adults who never learned Irish during their regular school experience, but have learned a bit since then and immerse themselves into as many Irish speaking activities as their work schedule and other responsibilities allow; and a few families who speak Irish among themselves as their primary language. Between the public programs and classes initiated by Gaelphobal, and the curriculum as well as student and family activities offered by the Gaelscoil, there are a wide range of Irish

language options for people in Strabane. The people who developed these programs over the last two decades and keep them running today came to their present involvement from a wide range of experience as well.

Sixty-year-old Orla Duffy currently works as a teaching assistant at the Gaelscoil and was among the group who started Strabane's *naíscoil* (infant, or nursery school) in 1994. Orla has lived in or around Strabane her whole life, and although she was able to take Irish as a foreign language while in secondary school, like most of the people I questioned about how they learned Irish, she has mixed feelings about what she actually learned from those classes. As she put it

> I first learned Irish when I was in secondary school here. It was taught as a subject. I say I learned Irish but I did not learn Irish. I learned rules and grammar but I didn't learn to *speak* Irish. I could've read Irish – I could've written a bit of Irish, but I could not converse in Irish, because that's how it was taught. It was an English-speaking school, and that's how *all* the languages are taught. I did have a love for it but I found it very, very difficult.

Then in the earlier years of the Troubles, after she was married and had children in primary school, Orla would visit her brothers who were imprisoned because of their involvement as IRA Volunteers. She told me

> one of them, in particular, became very, very interested in the Irish language and that's where he learned his Irish language – in prison. And in writing home [or during visits], he – for want of a nicer word, he pressurized us to think about attending classes and learning how to speak Irish. --- Pressurized is the wrong word. It's very, very difficult for me to think in English, because I'm used to thinking in Irish. [Orla paused, trying to get the right word.] Promoted I suppose, in his letters home... So I started to attend Irish classes. These were just run on a voluntary basis by an old man named Gerald O'Dochartaigh. He was born and reared here in Strabane and he [was] self-educated [in] Irish, I think, [but also] attended classes in Donegal to learn Irish. And he was promoting the Irish by having classes. My children decided they wanted to come with me, and I didn't think it was geared for children at that stage, because it was mostly adults that were attending. But eventually I gave in and took them with me – so they all have varying amounts of Irish, from being very, very fluent, to just being able to have a

wee conversation. But I took them to the classes and that's where I started to properly learn Irish because we *conversed*. But because I had that grounding from school, that probably helped.

Over time, her brother began to urge Orla to look into starting an Irish language nursery – a *naíscoil*, just as some communities were doing in Belfast and Derry, telling them that "it's meant to introduce them to the Irish language… it's a first step to education through Irish, and he thought we should look into organizing and starting up a *naíscoil*. There wasn't much done about it for a couple of years to be honest."

Eventually, a few local students who had just finished their degrees – in Irish – at the University of Ulster, questioned why there was, as yet, no *naíscoil* in Strabane. This time, the suggestion ultimately led to the founding of the *naíscoil*, with the "next step" of opening an Irish-medium primary school three years later. When I asked Orla what motivated parents to send their children to an Irish-medium school, she answered it was

> probably because we felt maybe that we were bein' beaten into the ground and it was one way we could stand up and say – "We're Irish --- you're not going to do this to us!" That would be where I would be comin' from. It would've been our way to show that we were proud to be Irish and that we didn't deserve bein' treated the way we were bein' treated. And it was a peaceful way, and it was a good way because we were gettin' in touch, you know, with our own culture. In retrospect, if the Troubles hadn't happened, the Irish language might well have died. I don't think it would be as strong in the North anyway. I really don't.

Several other people I spoke with were influenced or encouraged to begin learning or expanding their knowledge and use of Irish by close friends or family, like Orla. And, like her brother, many republican ex-prisoners learned their Irish while imprisoned and brought their interest back to their home communities after their release (O'Reilly 1998:53). Cathal and Vivian O'Toole are fluent Irish speakers who live in the Head of the Town and have raised their children with Irish from birth. Vivian credits her

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husband Cathal, a republican ex-prisoner, with getting her so interested in Irish, telling

me:

> I had Irish in [secondary] school and I never had any interest in it. I had learned very little Irish there. I picked up the bits of Irish that I have, probably through Cathal's love of the language. When Cathal was in prison he was involved with the Irish language in the prison, and I wanted something to have common ground. I took classes for a while – maybe not saying anything to Cathal that I was taking classes. And then I was putting wee bits that I learned into letters and that. So it just progressed from that. Cathal came home from jail and I had attended numerous classes. I probably had reached a stalemate in me learning process, but a number of years ago I went to University of Ulster, McGee and got a diploma in Irish. It was hard got, [laughing] but I do have it. But that's where my interest came, from Cathal's passion.

For his part, Cathal also had some Irish courses while in secondary school, but felt it was

an unsuccessful experience. Then as a young adult, the events of the hunger strike caught

his attention and as he read about the different men and their promotion and use of the

Irish language, he became politicized. Before that, Cathal had no experience with

republicanism. He said, "The events of the hunger strike began to change me… I suppose

as my resentment of Maggie Thatcher was increasing, my interest in what the hunger

strikers were saying and the example that they were giving, to a certain extent, sent me

back to the language." He started attending Irish classes for a short while at Strabane's

Teacher Center, however never completely committed to learning the language until he

was imprisoned in the mid-1980s. At that point he quickly decided that he needed to be

able to speak "the language of my country" and realized that "it was a missing link in me

that I needed to fill."

As the conflict progressed, nationalists across the North felt that same desire –

that "the Irish language [was] a crucial element of their own 'Irish culture' in need of

repossession" (Zenker 2014:73). Not long after he started taking classes in prison, Cathal began teaching others. He explained,

> I was just one step ahead of the people I was trying to help behind me. But I do think that that process actually meant that I learned Irish a lot faster because I really needed to come into the class and explain it to them. So for me, learning and teaching was part of the exact same process. I think for me it probably was a missing link. Because I played Gaelic football, I did have a sense of Irishness. We had marched in a local band here in Strabane – it wasn't a Republican band – it was an accordion band, and all of the tunes that we were playing were, you know, sort of, broadly nationalist and folk tunes and songs, so I was very familiar with those. But that would've been a very cultural, non-militant perspective.

Cathal added that one of his on-going concerns while expanding his knowledge of Irish in prison was "trying to keep our Irish linked with the Irish outside. There was sort of a feeling that there was a 'jail-tacht' Irish" that was distinctive and inferior to a second language that was studied more formally. Similar to the important connections maintained through regular letters between Orla and her brother, Cathal looked forward to, and avidly prepared for sessions with an outside teacher provided by the prison.

Dominic, another republican ex-prisoner in Strabane was among those who took occasional classes with Gerald O'Dochartaigh, and like Cathal, his commitment to learning and using Irish intensified once he was incarcerated in the 1970s. He told me

> I learned Irish on the blanket protest, prior to the hunger strikes in 1981… Previous to that, as I say, I went to classes in the Head of the Town, but that only lasted a matter of weeks, because of raids and things like that. It wasn't sort of the safe thing to do, to have three, or four, or more people in a house that wasn't a home. So we learned a few phrases, [but] I didn't really learn Irish until I was on the blanket protest in Long Kesh. We were all locked up, but what you done was you went to the door, the cell door, and the person who was teaching ye, he may have been six, seven doors down from you, but he shouted out just a phrase, and you repeated the phrase, and everybody else in the class repeated the phrase. And he'd ask you, like "How do you say such and so?" and you tried to translate that. We had, uh ---- I won't go into the gruesome details of it ---. The only things we were allowed to have was a Bible in your cell and a crucifix – you know, Rosary beads. Well, we used the Rosary beads, the lead of the Rosary beads to write on

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the walls. So we actually wrote down [our] lessons on the wall. Or another thing –
there was toothpaste, in a tube, on the outside [of the cells]. If you could steal that
away when you were going back into your cell, you could use that as well to write
on the wall. That's how we wrote things down… Well, you couldn't remember
everything, so you had to write some things down [laughing]. That's what we did
then. We moved to [a] new cell every ten to fourteen days, so you started the
process all over again.

Prison conditions changed by the later 1980s, which allowed the prisoners to organize

their own lives within the confines of the prison wing. Some prisoners took Open

University courses or worked on completing secondary-school credentials, in addition to

focusing on learning and using Irish. By the mid-1990s, they gained additional leeway

and continued working together to educate each other. Feldman suggests that one

explanation for republican prisoners acquiring Irish proficiency is that it

> inserted the stigmatized and isolate prisoner into a historical lineage that endowed
> him with a crucial identity, an identity that rectified his loss of self in the total
> institution. But to make such a claim would be to identify as motive or rationale
> what was in effect one of the results of the acquisition of Gaelic. Gaelic speaking
> was born from the prison experience, and though it had a transcendental power,
> this power was first and foremost directed at the prison itself. The prison was the
> initial discursive object formed by the speaking of Gaelic. (Feldman 1991:215)

> For Dominic, it was even more than that. Whether in Irish language classes or

other educational efforts, he said "You were trying to educate yourself to be more

effective in fightin' the war. That was the purpose of education. It wasn't to get a job."

The "war" was being fought on a number of issues, but the particular relationship that

developed between the Irish language and republican combatants reflects the

> respective historical landscapes of power asymmetries between the oppressive
> British state and Irish Catholics as second-class citizens, ethno-nationalist politics
> and violent conflict about the constitutional status of the Irish North, in which
> these attitudes emerged and which, in turn, they helped to reshape… such
> attitudes are also ideological, both with regard to language and the world beyond.
> (Zenker 2014:72).

Moreover, as these ex-combatants engage with their home communities to expand the number of Irish speakers and establish Irish-medium schools throughout the North, they are taking on a revised strategy for addressing remaining asymmetries of power on their own terms, through their own culture.

As I noted previously, the government of Northern Ireland often was unsupportive of Irish-language programs, although they allowed Catholic secondary schools to include it within their "foreign language" curriculum. With the advent of the civil rights movement in the late 1960s, a community group in Belfast pressed ahead and established an Irish-medium school which operated independently from the Ministry of Education for thirteen years before being granted "maintained status" within the education system in 1984 (Nic Craith 2003:105). This school and additional ones that followed in Belfast, and eventually in Derry, provided inspiration and structural "blueprints" for other communities interested in establishing Irish medium schools (Zenker 2014:69). At the Gaelscoil in Strabane I spoke with Patricia Taylor, who has been a teacher and administrator there since 1999, when the school was in its third year and she was only a few years out of university herself. She told me that parents have a variety of reasons for sending their children to an Irish-medium school, then continued saying:

> Oh, because some of them want immersion education for their children. They want their children to be bilingual. They want their children to have Irish. I mean, years ago in Strabane, [at] St. Colman's for example,… the boys' secondary school, not everybody was offered the Irish language. Not everybody was offered the chance to learn it. So a lot of our parents, maybe a few years older than me, would never have had that opportunity, and they want that opportunity for their children. As well, the parents see the value of having something extra. And the Irish language would be that extra thing, so they'd send their children here. Parents like the fact that we have smaller classes and we're a smaller school in comparison to the rest of the town. The school also has a very good reputation for good results [and] for good relationships with the children. You know, the staff

have good relationships with the children [and their families]… We're very close-knit. Everybody's made welcome, and people know that about our school [and] we're quite involved in the community.

Patricia grew up in Strabane and chose classes in Irish for herself when she had the option in secondary school, but her mother had instilled a love of the language in her well before she started primary school. She explained that

I had always been into the Irish language. Me mummy had taught us prayers when we were wee. We didn't get Irish in primary school, so when we were small, me mother taught us how to bless ourselves, and the Hail Mary and the Our Father – in Irish, so I became aware of Irish at a very young age… When I went to secondary school I had to do French in the first year, and then in the second year I either had to do Irish or Spanish. And I was [assigned to] the class to do Spanish, so I got changed to do the Irish. Our teacher was very inspirational, and encouraged us a lot, so I decided I wanted to do something with Irish… I've always sort of known that I was going to do something with Irish.

Even though her parents were not fluent Irish speakers, Patricia remembers listening to them and some of their friends inserting a phrase or two into conversations, adding that "I don't know if they were showing off, or why they were doing it, but it had an impact on me and it stuck in me mind."

When I asked Patricia why she decided to continue her studies through the medium of Irish when she went to the university she replied,

Well, I suppose I wanted to prove that I'm Irish. It's my way of showin' that I'm an Irish person… Language is part of your culture and your culture is your identity, isn't it? So, I don't think I wanted to go join the IRA or anything like that. I couldn't have been able to do that. So I chose the other route, [going down the cultural]. I did Irish history and politics for A-levels [in secondary school] …and similar courses in college... and I studied folklore as well. So I got a good grounding in all things Irish.

We also spoke about the changing dynamics within education in general throughout Northern Ireland, with the expansion of integrated schools catering to a mixture of Catholic and Protestant students, rather than the established tradition of school choice

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dictated by religious affiliation. Patricia acknowledged that "the integrated schools were supposed to ease the tension between the two communities [and] I suppose it has to a certain extent been a success, but I think in an area like Strabane, in republican areas, integrated schools will be less successful." At the same time she stressed that the Gaelscoil is not a "republican" school, adding:

> we try to stay away from political things for fear that it would send out a message to the community that we are a republican school. Or, [that] we are a politically-dominated school, because, I mean, that's gonna put parents off the school, and that's again maybe sayin' that the Irish language and politics are the one. [But] you can't really say that republicanism and the Irish language are one… You can't do that, for by doing that you're saying to the nationalists and unionists, that this is got nothing to do with you. I mean, that's not the way to sell a language. I mean the language belongs to everybody who lives in Ireland and I don't think one section or population can take over it, should use it for their own benefit.

Other interviewees made similar arguments. While they may feel very strongly that the Irish language is an essential aspect of their Irish identity that includes republicanism, they also recognize and respect the fact that other people interested in enrolling their children in Irish-medium education may not share any of those convictions. As Cathal expressed it:

> The school is not in any way a republican enterprise. Absolutely not. Obviously, there are people there who are republican. *I'm* a republican, and I have certain things that drive me with the language, but what drives me doesn't drive everybody else, you know what I mean? There are people there who aren't republican, who are purely interested in the educational aspect in all this. So I would never want this to be seen in any way as a republican enterprise, and there are many people in the town who are republican [who] don't see any connection with republican beliefs and the Irish language.

Others who talked about their commitment to an Irish-medium education for their children also did so without connecting their decision to any political perspective.

One of the Strabane Memorial Flute Band members who decided to send his children to the Gaelscoil, Tad McCarthy and his wife Brenda said that they "knew as soon as the children were born, because the school was there and it was a chance that we never got. I wouldn't have thought of sending them anywhere else. They were goin' to Irish school and that was it." Brenda said that the primary difference between the Gaelscoil and other choices in Strabane is that

> The Irish culture's in that school, where I can't see it in the others. You learn so much about your Irish culture – you're gonna read so much about it, you're talkin' your national -- like your native language. You're talkin' Irish from the mornin' 'til you come home at night. Unless you're doin' an English lesson, there's no English speakin' in the school. And if that's your native language and your culture, you're not getting' much better than that.

Brenda and Tad feel it is important to raise their children with a strong understanding of their Irish identity, not just by learning the language, but *through* the language, involving their children in other symbolic expressions of Irish heritage as well.

Conclusion

Everyday life in Strabane, like towns all around Northern Ireland is informed, influenced, and bounded by symbols that evoke awareness in individuals that they are part of, or excluded from, certain elements of the social and political events in the town. For most residents within the town, particularly republicans, these symbols reflect claims of Irish identity, history, and resolve in the face of discrimination over housing, employment, and equal access to public domains. Many of the claims on Irish identity provoke memories of British domination, armed conflict, and an educational system that denied access to their "native language." As time progresses new layers of experience

combine with previous collective memories to revise interpretations and understanding of

the heritage and history involved. Current changes in the power dynamics of the past

have not erased the interest and need for cultural symbols like those exhibited in the

murals, banners, and by wearing shamrocks. Instead, by retaining these symbols –

sometimes in revised form or circumstances, they become a primary tool for the

negotiation of identity and engagement in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

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[96] Included, with no author attribution, under "supplemental songs" in *Irish Songs of Resistance* by Patrick Galvin (1956:84). The Thistle symbolizes Scotland, the Rose, England, and Green is for Ireland.

[97] Bogside Artists: http://www.visitderry.com/Arts-and-Culture.T294.aspx?ProductID=11666 and Belfast city tours http://visit-belfast.com/things-to-do/member/belfast-attractions-1 (both accessed June 3, 2014).

[98] http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/images/symbols/flags.htm

[99] *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, Friday December 7, 2012.

[100] County Tyrone Fleadh – An annual county-wide traditional Irish music competition for musicians and singers under the auspices of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, an international non-profit involved with the preservation and promotion of Irish culture including music, song, and dance (Smyth 2004:90). The Tyrone Fleadh is part of a broader network of competition that includes a regional (Ulster) Fleadh and an all-Ireland Fleadh. The fleadhs are significant events for tourism in addition to providing a setting for musicians to meet and exchange ideas.

[101] *Strabane Chronicle*, October 3, 2013.

[102] For more on the history and use of various flags in Ireland see Morris 2005.

[103] Fian, from the Irish *fiann*, referring to roving bands of warrior-hunters in ancient legends.

[104] (www.1916socieities.com accessed 8 Feb, 2012)

[105] Roy Garland, *The Irish News*, July 9, 2012.

[106] In late seventeenth-century Ireland some Gaelic poets "began to refer to the Irish people by the common male name 'Tadhg.' At the same time, the character of the stage Irishman in English drama was being given the names 'Teague' or Teg,' a usage which survives in present-day Northern Ireland, where 'Taig' is a derogatory term for a Catholic." (Morris 2005:21).

[107] For more on the topic of self-policing see Chapter 6 on civic engagement.

[108] Several websites attribute the quote to African American activist and Black Panther Party member Fred Hampton who was murdered in a raid by Illinois state and Federal officers in 1969. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fred_Hampton#Legal_and_political_impacts; http://www.democracynow.org/2009/12/4/the_assassination_of_fred_hampton_how, accessed November 2, 2014)

[109] Like other legendary yet historic characters, St. Patrick has been credited with more accomplishments than may actually be the case, however, he was among the earliest Christians organizing and ministering to people in Ireland.

[110] They chose the term "Provisional" to distinguish their newly-founded organization from the Officials and in recognition of their symbolic ties to the 1916 "Proclamation of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic" (Durney 2004:53).

[111] Moloney (2003:99) adds a note that "a locally recruited regiment of the British army, the Royal Ulster Rifles, were also known by this nickname; in the world of republicanism the term thus acquired a subtle double meaning."

[112] Saracens are six-wheeled armored personnel carriers used by the British Army in their efforts to police Northern Ireland during the Troubles.

[113] In the Good Friday Agreement, it was stated that a North/South Implementation body be set up to promote both the Irish language and the Ulster Scots language. Under the auspices of this body, Foras na Gaeilge will carry out all the designated responsibilities regarding the Irish language. This entails facilitating and encouraging the speaking and writing of Irish in the public and private arena in the Republic of Ireland, and in Northern Ireland where there is appropriate demand, in the context of part three of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages. http://www.forasnagaeilge.ie/Foras_na_Gaeilge/About_Foras_na_Gaeilge.asp (accessed June 21, 2014)

Chapter 6: Measuring Progress in Tiny Steps:
Civic Engagement and Local Peace Process Implementation

Compromise is treachery that's what you hear them say
You're with us or against us there is no other way
But how can we have freedom if our neighbor is not free
It makes us only half of what we all can be
Gather round the table we all must have a say
Friday is a good time to begin another way
Darkness is a fading time to face the day
Who will rise and walk away, have we found another way

Last verse, "Song of Erin"[114] (by Tommy Sands)

Dori: So is the St. Patrick's Day parade something that engages more than the nationalist community?

Russ O'Brien (community organizer/activist): Oh aye, it does. I actually think, and I'm a nationalist/republican, and I make no apologies, but the event that we run …is about engaging everyone, it's not about, you know, "This is ours and we hold it [for the nationalist community]." It's about Strabane, whether you be nationalist, unionist, Catholic, Protestant, whatever you want to be – this event is for you, if you want to participate in it. And, we actually *do* engage with other people. I think when you're talkin' about engagin' with … unionists, uh, Protestants… and I don't like usin' that terminology, because I think, uhm,   you can't pigeon-hole people based just on their religion. But, see --- unionism itself has to stand on its own feet within Strabane. I think that's about workin' on relationships --- about buildin' relationships. I think the biggest thing for unionism, is their own sense of confidence. I think that they need to find their own, you know, sense of confidence… We're about to develop a new society -- a new Ireland -- and it's up to them [to develop] a way to find their own confidence. And I know the nationalists and republican people have a new sense of confidence. You know, they *do* take ownership of things, they *do* take ownership of the community. But also with that comes, sometimes people can get burned out. I know a lot of republican activists who are tired – they long to see a peaceful settlin' --- of things settlin' down in the wider sense. Sometimes it's bumpy, and up and down… It's all about where they see themselves fittin' within that wider community development… [But] when you talk about unionism, it's about bringing them [in], you know, [and understanding each other]. To work on relationships, that's what you

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have to do. And that's what we're tryin' to do. The St. Patrick's Day parade or any event that I'm involved with at the community level is about the whole, it's not just about, you know, *one* section of the community, or *a* section of society, it's about anyone who wants to be involved, like, you know.

Dori: But do you see that involvement changing from what it might have been fifteen years ago?

Russ: Oh aye, society has changed --- the peace process, by its very nature has changed people's views. For me, the peace process is a *process*. You know, the absence of war doesn't make peace. The absence of war just means the absence of war. The process of peace is about engagin' the community - it's about individuals. It is about the individual person understandin' the opposite – you know, someone from the other culture – someone from the other persuasion. And, I think the process of peace will take literally, *years*, because you're dealin' with people. And people, by their very nature, take years to change because their views have been formulated over years. I mean, [in] every society, your views are formulated by your surroundin's. You know, I grew up… in the Head of the Town. My views of the world were dictated by what happened to me when I was [in my teens] because that's when you start formulatin' your views on society.

I had been asking Russ about the volunteer committee that organizes Strabane's St. Patrick's Day parade, as part of his broader role as a community activist in the town. Now in his late forties, he says that he always was drawn to community involvement. As a youth growing up in a republican neighborhood amidst the Troubles, he explained that his viewpoint was that "my society, my community was under attack" and he was inspired to get involved in working to improve things around his neighborhood. He stressed the importance of developing community spirit and concern not just "on the big things, [it] can be on the wee small things [too]." The more we talked, the more animated Russ became – revealing his deep passion about working to make Strabane a "better place." This segment of the interview also captures some of the challenges and

frustrations for all groups involved in negotiating and developing new working

relationships, following such a protracted armed conflict as the Troubles.

Fifteen years into the peace process and it still is very much a work in progress. In

this chapter I focus on some of the town- and district-wide programs, initiatives, and

organizations that try to serve and bring together people from "both sides of the house,"

that developed out of mandates in the Good Friday Agreement or other strategies for

peace process implementation. I describe and evaluate the ways in which these programs

engage the wider community and the how the efforts are accepted by my particular,

republican neighborhood in the Head of the Town. The programs and activities include:

special town events such as the St. Patrick's Day parade; power-sharing on the District

Council; the challenges of Community Policing Partnerships versus vigilantism;

neighborhood-based community programs and leadership; and cross-community as well

as cross-border peace and reconciliation initiatives. Russ told me that "it's all about bein'

involved – askin' for respect and showin' respect back." After living in the Head of the

Town for most of a year, joining friends and neighbors at a wide range of town events,

holding a long series of formal interviews with more discussion over numerous cups of

tea, I would say "it's" a lot more complicated than that. And yet, Russ's point about

asking for and showing respect to others is really a significant starting point for the

process.

Town- and district-wide events

In the weeks leading up to the actual day, I noticed that Strabane's St. Patrick's

Day parade and related events were being well-promoted in the local papers. Then on the

day before, several musicians I'd come to know were playing traditional Irish music in the check-out area of the supermarket, to help create excitement and encourage participation in the range of activities planned around the town. In addition to the parade there would be face painting, a puppet show, and other entertainment for families and children, as well as live (and recorded) music that would be available at all the pubs in town throughout the day and into the night. The parade itself started mid-afternoon in a housing estate on the other side of the River Mourne and then wound down and over the bridge into the center of town. Where I looked for a good spot to watch the parade close to the town center, sturdy metal barriers were in place between the street and sidewalks, marking the route through town and keeping errant children and others out of the path of the parade. It was interesting to see, not just how various groups within the town and district participated, but the fact that people from both the town and district participated. Several schools had decorated floats or simply had groups walking, but all were dressed up and acting out different themes. Other entries included a variety of bands – two accordion bands (one that gets together once a year, just for St. Patrick's day); Strabane Memorial Flute Band, of course; and a local brass band. There were an impressive number of vintage cars, too – many of them from one company that specializes in renting the cars for weddings or other special events – what a great way to advertise. Strabane's Ethnic Community Association had a float that seemed to highlight some of the ethnic groups within the town, although I have seem minimal evidence of an ethnic presence in my normal activities.

A few weeks after the parade and related festivities I had the opportunity to talk with Hugh Murray, another member of the St. Patrick's Day committee, about how the

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parade and other activities developed and what this event reflects about cross-community

cooperation in the district. Hugh explained that "Prior to say, 2005, people wanted to

celebrate St. Patrick's Day [but] there was nothing happenin' in Strabane, so people went

outside the town [and] Strabane was like a ghost town on St. Patrick's Day." In light of

that, several town residents like Hugh and Russ got together and decided to

> get somethin' goin' in Strabane [to] keep people in the town – sort of enhance or
> raise community spirit, you know, *pride* in your home town. So we decided in
> 2005 to have a parade – it was a small parade, you know. But what we said at the
> time [was], "From lowly acorns grow mighty oaks," so we had to start
> somewhere. It was a nice wee parade – all the community groups were involved,
> no bands or nothin'… but the town was full.

The following year several residents of the town formed a band – the Strabane St.

Patrick's Day Accordion Band – just for that one parade a year. Since then the parade just

keeps getting bigger and better each year, drawing visitors from the district and other

areas. Hugh noted the importance of the parade being a cross-community effort:

> It's not just for [the town of] Strabane, it's for Strabane District. This year we had
> the Independent Pipe Band [from Sion Mills] leadin' the parade, which would've
> been [mostly] Protestants, I mean we don't have the monopoly on St. Patrick's
> Day --- it's for *all* Irish people. Even though it's a nationalist town, it's good to
> see them gettin' involved, takin' pride, and enjoyin' the parade, too.

Sion Mills is a predominantly Protestant village about four miles south of

Strabane along the main road to Omagh, with its own intriguing history. Established as a

planned nineteenth-century flax-spinning mill complex, Sion included "workers'

cottages, churches, schools and other public buildings" (Roulston 2000:205) in an

intentionally non-sectarian community. Although Sion Mills has retained some elements

of its deliberate integrated beginnings and the population is roughly 40% Protestant to

60% Catholic, it still is perceived as a Protestant/unionist village by many in Strabane

today. Moreover, Hugh's comment that "it's good to see *them* getting' involved" (emphasis added), hints at lingering divisions, distrust, and the continued practice of differentiating people from "the other side of the house," even by those who are working hard to eliminate age-old prejudices. When I asked Hugh to explain the significance of the Sion Mills band participating in the parade, he explained that it was the result of repeated invitations since they started having the parade, plus the committee's commitment to presenting a cross-community, inclusive celebration.

The concern about, and efforts to avoid potentially offensive symbols or behavior are evident in a good deal of public behavior and display. At the same time parade organizers also recognize it is unrealistic to expect nationalists to tone down their symbolic displays of shamrocks and other tricolored ornaments commonly associated with St. Patrick's Day. Finally getting the Sion Mills band to participate was another important step for cross-community relations in the district and the parade organizers acknowledged this by giving them "pride of place" as the band leading the parade. Hugh added,

> Well, it was the first time it happened – we always asked them before. [At the same time] you can't be sayin' don't be havin' green, white, and gold at St. Patrick's Day. You know, we can't stop it. [Getting the pipe band involved is] a step in the right direction. You know, the Protestant community can say "Well the nationalists are there with their green white and gold on St. Patrick's Day, and on the Twelfth of July, you know, we'll have our Union Jack." That's all right, you know – it's all about understandin' and acceptin' each other's culture, so it is. [It's one of the ways] towards peace and reconciliation. Yeah, we were delighted that the pipe band [came]. --- Now I'm only surmising there was Protestants among them, but I hope there was. You know, you don't ask people's religion.

Hugh may not ask people about their religion, but as he and other community activists go about developing inclusive, cross-community activities in Strabane, they do so amidst a

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certain level of self-consciousness, both of their own ethno-political identities and the deeply-rooted prejudice they believe is held by the opposite community regarding what their republican identity signifies.

Despite the underlying self-consciousness, events such as the St. Patrick's Day parade are indicators that while the older ingrained divisions have not disappeared completely, they at least are fading. Broadly speaking, people may have reservations about elements within the Good Friday Agreement and valid claims that a few specific mandates do not accomplish their stated goals, but there is collective interest in cross-community cooperation in building a better future for Strabane. Like other communities around Northern Ireland, they cogently avail themselves of European Union funding for peace and reconciliation projects aimed at improving cross-community relations and promoting positive attitudes in the region. Events such as the St. Patrick's Day parade, the Strabane Fair in July, and the town's Halloween celebration become part of district-wide strategies for promoting "shared use of spaces as a means of developing understanding, acceptance and trust through the celebration of culture, arts, sports, and identity" (North West PEACE III Partnership 2010a: 60). These three events, in particular, have been expanded or transformed from their more traditional observations in the past, as part of the wider initiative to use cultural celebrations to promote use of public space and improve cross-community interaction. In the process, some activities take on a secondary strategy of re-directing "anti-social" or destructive behavior as well.

I was both surprised and delighted with my introduction to Halloween as celebrated in Strabane. Although I understood the connection between Halloween, the ancient Celtic festival of *Samhain*, and All Saints Day on November 1st (Danaher

1972:200), I did not realize that students actually have a Halloween break, with several days off school (Santino 1998b:4). Because of that, there were a series of events throughout the town center over the days leading up to Halloween itself, such as storytelling at the library, outdoor cage soccer, a fancy dress disco for youth under eighteen years old, and a haunted house in the Catholic church hall. Then early on the evening of Halloween, people gathered in one of the town parking lots where there was a live band (actually very good), fire juggling, and costumed stilt walkers moving through the crowd. Many people came in costume – a few families were dressed up in a theme – while young- to mid-teen girls and boys clustered with their own sex, costumed or not. It simply was a fun and festive atmosphere, just milling about and watching people – especially some of the wee ones who were enthralled with the "scary" characters and not put off one bit. Around 8 pm the crowd wandered over to another parking lot, one adjacent to the River Mourne to watch a fireworks display that was launched out over the water, to musical accompaniment.

Before the Troubles, individual families had fireworks displays in their backyards at Halloween, however explosives were officially banned once the conflict intensified, leading to the development of a new "tradition" of organized, civic fireworks (Santino1998b:63) such as the display in Strabane. The fireworks, along with the various events held over the previous few days were meant to entertain a wide audience from children through adults, of course, but also with a mind to providing alternative activities that would discourage problematic behavior. Remnants of the traditional practice of young people building bonfires around Halloween still linger in Strabane, like other areas throughout Northern Ireland (Santino 1998a:77). Complicating what otherwise might be

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considered merely a safety hazard when youth celebrate by building a large fire, used

tires have become a common source of fuel for the bonfires, making them a serious

environmental and health concern as well. In October 2011, a group of youth from the

Head of the Town made news when they gave the District Council five hundred tires

slated to be burned in a bonfire, rather than burn them. In a news article praising their

actions, a local community worker noted that their "focus was on moving away from

traditional bonfires altogether and on to more organized events… like fancy dress parades

[and] music… These are safer and more environmentally friendly, and they are the way

forward" (*Strabane Chronicle*, October 20, 2011).

Strabane Fair Day also has undergone transformations from its original role as the

day farmers came into town to choose seasonal workers from among the gathered

hopefuls. Sally Meehan, a community worker explained that

> Strabane Fair Day is on the last Saturday in July… It used to be called the "Hiring Fair," many years ago. D'you remember when people used to go to a fair and get hired out for work and that? It's just called the Fair Day now. I don't know if it was politically correct or somethin' --- I don't know why it changed its name. But it's like a big fair day in Strabane. They try and put out as many stalls and have a parade goin' through the town. I think over the last few year it's sort of gone down a wee bit. It started off actually as very big and [with] all-community involvement, and then – through lack of fundin' and stuff like that – it's just gone down a wee bit.

Sally indirectly referred to what could bring potential challenges for communities like

Strabane, if EU Peace funding begins to diminish. Richmond and Tellidis argue that EU

financial support has been key to many of the beneficial programs driving the peace

process in combination with allowing "grassroots movements and the civil society to own

and direct the peace process themselves, rather than have it imposed by (and tailored to)

the interests of the state and/or the international society" (Richmond and Tellidis

2012:136). Strabane Fair Day is among the regional programs that received support from

the first phase of funding by the North West PEACE III Partnership, in an effort to

strengthen relations between the town of Lifford in the Republic, right across the river,

and Strabane. As described in their program report, the project's aim was

> to develop a cross border festival from the current Strabane Fair Day. Strabane
> has a unique historical basis from the original hiring fairs, common throughout
> the 19th and early 20th century, where young farm labourers and servant girls were
> selected for work. The project will develop it as a unique cultural event with
> modern interpretation of these historic times. (North West PEACE III Partnership
> 2010b:9)

Many of the programs being funded through sources like these deliberately

include cross-border elements, acknowledging former as well as existing traditions of

regular economic and social interaction between border communities that may have been

weakened by blocked roads and army checkpoint border crossings during the Troubles. It

also reflects the regional and international governing bodies acceptance of "the special

characteristics of border regions" (Coakley and O'Dowd 2007a:17) and their willingness

to engage local stakeholders in program planning processes. It is this grassroots

coordination and implementation of activities in Strabane that make them successful in

addressing initiatives laid out in regional as well as district plans.

Several of my neighbors had talked about the Strabane Fair well ahead of the

actual date. It was an event that they clearly looked forward to annually. If attendance is

waning as Sally suggests, she also agreed with me that it could mean that more people

have some disposable income and can go away at that point in the summer – but, it is

hard to know for sure. On the other hand, the fact that residents of the Head of the Town

anticipate the Fair Day with such relish, and make a point to go check out the activities,

joining a substantial mix of people from the whole district, indicates that certain efforts to improve cross-community relations and attitudes about shared spaces are succeeding to transform people's opinions and behavior.

Strabane District Council

The council for Strabane District has to balance the interests, needs, and perceptions of close to 40,000 residents living in towns, villages, and hamlets throughout the district, with most of the area beyond Strabane and a handful of smaller towns considered rural. The primary religious make-up of residents was roughly 65% Catholics and 34% Protestants in the district in the 2011 census,[115] while Strabane town is roughly 93% Catholic and 6% Protestant (Strabane District Council 2010:9). There are sixteen councilors – one for each of the electoral wards in the district – five of them representing wards for the town of Strabane, with the spread of party affiliations across the district demonstrating that the majority of the electorate supports nationalist candidates. Voting for elected officials in Strabane District were and are similar to elections held elsewhere in the North in that voting continues to follow religious/ethnic lines (Tonge 2008a:50). Of the eleven nationalist councilors, eight are Sinn Féin, one is SDLP (Socialist Democratic Labour Party), and two are independents. Then out of the five unionist councilors, four are DUP (Democratic Unionist Party) and one is UUP (Ulster Unionist Party).

A community activist from the Ballycolman area told me that "in the 70s, 80s it was a unionist council – even though the town was ninety-plus percent nationalists… Over the years that was reversed. I think our council is considered one of the better

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councils – all seem to work in harmony – that's good for everybody." This activist's comments of harmonious working not-withstanding, memories of a different power structure in the district and violence throughout the Troubles continue to impact people on both side of the ethno-political divide, even if only occasionally. During the Troubles, few nationalists/republicans participated in elections contributing to the overall success of one or more of the unionist parties. When more nationalists/republicans decided to exercise their right to vote in the 1980s, rather than abstaining from a system that privileged the Protestant/unionist community (McGarry 2004a:328), nationalist and republican councilors and their constituents became a more active part of district affairs in Strabane and elsewhere.

Prior to the Good Friday Agreement, the nationalist SDLP garnered substantially more votes over Sinn Féin, but after Sinn Féin supported the peace process, the republican party attracted more voters so that in the early 2000s Sinn Féin "became the majority party in votes within the nationalist bloc for the first time" (McGarry and O'Leary 2004a:19). Then in 2006, when the IRA decommissioned their arsenal of weapons and revived political negotiations introduced a plan for government power-sharing between nationalist and unionist representatives (Morrison 2013:179), Sinn Féin was clearly part of main-stream governmental affairs in Northern Ireland. Power-sharing among the elected officials in Stormont, where the Northern Ireland Assembly meets, is mirrored on the local level with district council members expected to cooperate with each other in working towards more inclusive communities.

I spoke with local Sinn Féin councilor Phil Cassidy about council membership and their role in Strabane District affairs. Similar to the personal story of many

republican men in their early fifties, Phil is an ex-prisoner who is committed to his home

community, Strabane, and in encouraging people, especially the youth of the district, to

explore and maintain their Irish heritage and culture, including the Irish language. In

addition to serving his own electoral constituency within the town for more than twelve

years, Phil also held the position of council chairman for a four–year period, so he

brought multiple perspectives to our discussion. As the chairman he was aware of

representing council decisions and actions to the whole district, plus trying to address

needs in the variety of communities, no matter what their political affiliation. He said

"even though I live in the town, the majority is a very rural area. My role… [was to]

represent, communicate what Strabane District Council does right across the district so

the way I [conducted] myself… reflects on the council." He clearly has experience

working with and respecting people around the district who may not share his view-point,

adding that the council is "workin' towards that sort of situation where you can still have

your culture, your heritage and beliefs, but also understandin' too... how it affects another

community, or our communities. It will take a wee bit of time to work out, but I think

we're movin' in that right direction." Phil also talked about the fact that much of the

work they accomplish is not done only in council chambers, but also

> it's done in the street. It's representin' people on issues – on bread and butter
> issues, housing, unemployment… mediation, and stuff like that. It's what you do
> at it --- bein' in the chamber and the policy stuff is only part of it. I've been
> fortunate enough to be returned… three times, so I must be doin' something right.
> If there's one thing I've learned from bein' involved with bein' a councilor, is that
> sometimes people don't have a lot of things, but what they *do* have is… their right
> to vote. And it's as precious a thing that you can have. And if people have
> exercised that towards you, or towards your party, consistently, then you have to
> be doin' somethin' right. You don't get it right all the time, but they must have the
> belief that you are someone that they can rely on, that's goin' to stand up for
> them, you know, raise issues for them, and be like a civic leader for them.

Along with district staff the council administers the ordinary functions found in any community such as trash pick-up, environmental health issues, and building safety; plus oversee the operations of arts and leisure programs, community centers, and sports complexes. In the early 2000s they established a Community Hubs program which placed satellite offices in targeted locations around the district in order

> to equip a number of key strategically placed community/volunteer organizations to provide essential services to surrounding community/volunteer organizations and strengthen existing services and provide new opportunities for inter-agency and inter-sectoral alliances in the most marginalized areas throughout the district. (Strabane District Council 2005:14)

Setting up regional hubs such as this is just one of a range of strategies and programs developed out of public input and discussion since peace process implementation began in the early 2000s. Phil seemed particularly proud of the council's efforts to cultivate and maintain open dialogs with the public regarding many issues such as removing offensive murals or curb painting, while acknowledging some of the challenges inherent in that as well:

> it has worked favorably, but it's something, Dori, that you cannot take your eye off. You cannot take your eye off the ball for one second and it's about bringin' people with you. What the council's done is they have a Good Relations program. And they brought people in, and they appointed people from inside council, and they got the views of the community *and* councilors --- and they listened first. They listened to what people had to say, rather than the council tellin' them that you should remove that. And see, the stakeholders, which included agencies that could've been alienated – like the PSNI – the stakeholders, too, were consulted on it, you know, the road service and Housing Executive. Everybody had to listen to everybody and find out then, you know, what's the most doable way of dealin' with this… And sometimes, you know, it's three steps forward, but maybe two back – that's the way it'll be.

Advocating "Good Relations within and between people regardless of their religious, political or racial background" (Strabane District Council 2011:4) relates to specific

issues that contribute to an integrated and inclusive society. In addition, "Good Relations" refers to a form of "best practices" that councilors, district staff are expected, and the general public is encouraged to adopt in day-to-day activities and when creating or presenting programs in their individual neighborhoods.

Although there are a variety of initiatives and partnerships available to address challenges and make improvements in communities throughout the district, Phil pointed out that a disproportionate number of Catholic/nationalist communities applied for and received funding than predominantly Protestant/unionist communities. One report on the distribution of funds states that "Although we would have expected 50% of applications to come from the Predominantly Protestant/Mixed Wards, to reflect the community structure, only 30% were received from these wards" (Strabane District Council 2005:24). Phil's opinion is that

> some of these areas, do you know, don't have the capacity… to build leadership… They would struggle… If there were odd occasions for fundin' for developin' programs… [Protestant villages] were the areas least able to [apply, and yet] the Catholic areas… [snapping fingers] very quickly picked it up. [Protestant communities] don't have any really stand-out leadership figures that can bring people along. That can be trusted to go and talk to [people] and say "Look, you know, why do we need these flags up? Why do our curbs need to be painted? Why do you feel you need to wear this badge?"

Funding outputs by ward within that same report, cross-listed by level of deprivation, show that the most deprived East ward received the greatest amount of funding. However, the next four highest monetary awards went to wards that were the eleventh, fifteenth, third, and eighth highest level of deprivation in the district, leaving the group overseeing these partnerships to recommend steps to increase participation in several "Protestant and mixed" wards (Strabane District Council 2005:27).

By providing information on regional and international funding through EU or other sources to grass-roots community groups, in addition to more standard Northern Ireland funding sources, the council partners with neighborhood groups that are trying to improve their areas. From the comments of one community worker in the Head of the Town there is room for improvement in this partnership between community groups and district council, as she said

> There's been a big change cause it would've been a unionist-dominated council for all those years. Whereas… it's now a nationalist council, so there's been big changes there, particularly for this area. Well, there's greater workin' relations – it's not a *great* workin' relationship, but it's not as bad. It's not perfect by any means, but it's a lot better than what it would have been… you know, twenty years ago.

The end of conflict brought many changes to Strabane, including opportunities to build new and different relationships throughout the district that continue to evolve as they reach new stages in the process of building a peaceful civil society.

Challenges of police reform

The successful implementation of mandated police reform in Northern Ireland is a challenging and essential aspect of creating an inclusive, productive civil society. Police reform outlined by the Patten commission

> included a new name and symbols for the police service, a new Policing Board… comprehensive action to focus policing on human rights, new District Policing Partnership Boards to carry out local consultation on policing, and unique arrangements for recruitment designed to redress religious imbalances in the composition of the police service. (Murray 2006:84)

Furthermore, the report continued to address the contested relationship between the police force and much of the public by devolving responsibility to "police district

commanders as much as possible…[with police training] overhauled to inculcate this new emphasis on policing with the community" (Mulcahy 2006:155). The name of the police service was changed from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) with the Police (Northern Ireland) Act 2000 (Mulcahy 2006:170). Moreover, the badge emblem was redesigned and the Union Jack could no longer be displayed at police stations – all in recognition that "symbols tend to carry a significance far beyond their objective selves" (Murray 2006:85). In overwhelmingly nationalist/republican towns such as Strabane, symbols of the RUC represent the focal point of a distressing past in which they were officially marginalized and abused because of their religion and political affiliation.

Today people continue to wrestle with their memories of the brutal and heavy-handed acts of repression they received from both the RUC and British Army (Hewitt 1993:111) and their alienation to the Northern Irish state because of "structural discrimination and inequality" (Sluka 2009:295). For many nationalists there is injustice in how the opposing entities of the Troubles were labeled and treated that extends to attitudes and perceptions today. During and since the Troubles, the IRA has been labeled a terrorist organization by the British and others because "[t]heir predominant strategy has been one of sustained political violence, and threatened violence, aiming to bring fear to a wider audience with the goal of achieving a political effect" (Morrison 2013:193). In response to that many republicans argue that British forces have never been properly censured for their involvement in "pro-state terror [enacted through] Security Forces counterinsurgency operations" (Sluka 1995:73).

Although there now is greater acknowledgement that during the Troubles "illegitimate state repression provoked a significant escalation in terrorism" (Parker 2007:172); even within the period of peace process negotiations, state-sponsored violence continued under an aura of legitimacy that allowed their use of force (Höglund and Zartman 2006:12). And while *police* reform was among the primary concerns of the peace process, for many republicans there is no difference between policing done by the RUC and actions taken by British forces – both were allied with each other and in collusion with loyalist paramilitaries and unionist politicians (Sluka 2009:291). For republicans, each of these groups represented agents of the state violating the law (Das 2003:294). Indeed, each time that British forces or the police violently countered IRA offensives or resistance, it reinforced their perspective that the republican/nationalist community was under attack (Burgess, Ferguson, and Hollywood 2007:72). It is important to understand that during ethno-nationalist conflicts such as the Troubles, groups like the IRA come to be understood as "defenders of the ethnic collectivity" (Tambiah 1996:193), in this case the Catholic, nationalist community, *because* of their armed opposition to what the group considers foreign occupation and domination. Particularly in republican neighborhoods such as Strabane's Head of the Town, continued British repressive action throughout the Troubles only served to reinforce the legitimacy of the republican cause (Parker 2007:162) and the construction of "a culture of resistance" (Sluka 1995:83). After decades of opposition to the "power, social inequality, and cultural hegemony" (Seymour 2006:315) of a unionist-dominated government under British control, many republicans found it difficult, if not impossible, to accept any aspect of the Good Friday Agreement (Höglund and Zartman 2006:27). Even more people –

both nationalists and republicans have reservations that true police reform is a possibility. And while these are two different issues, like so many aspects of life in Northern Ireland, they are closely intertwined with their memories of living through an extended violent conflict (Darby 2006a:8) and their hopes for a peaceful future, as I demonstrate in my description and analysis of several ways people in Strabane are responding to and implementing aspects of police reform.

On the surface, the majority of residents in Strabane are cooperating with implementation of police reform – several with more enthusiasm and optimism than others, but there is a general consensus that some form of police presence is necessary for any society. As one man put it

> we need a policin' service, [however] we haven't had a policin' service. What we had was a partisan militia – for too long. So what we need now is a service. A service, you know, that reflects the community, that acts on the needs of the community, and is accountable to the community.

In a similar critique, a number of the people I interviewed expressed the opinion that while the name may have changed, nothing else about the police service has been reformed. A few of them even mentioned they still engage in forms of resistance that were more common during the Troubles, such as "refusing to fill out census forms, graffiti writing, throwing stones at Brits and 'Peelers' (police), [and] refusing to give date of birth to soldiers" (Sluka 1995:83). One twenty-something young man laughingly spoke of being "lifted," or arrested by the police a week or so before our conversation, and their frustration and anger when he insisted his name was "James Connolly," one of the heroes of the 1916 Rising. Rather than give his real name, he willingly accepted their physical abuse in exchange for the opportunity to annoy and defy the officers.

In another informal conversation, a young mother admitted she stopped her six-year-old daughter from throwing stones at a police vehicle because she didn't want the child getting caught, not because she felt it was wrong to stone police who enter the neighborhood. Clearly relations between the Head of the Town and police remain unsettled and tense, based on their tough reputation during the Troubles. A current Sinn Féin activist in her early forties who has lived in the area her whole life proudly explained that

> We would've been seen as the Ardoyne of Strabane, being from the Head of the Town – where the *real* republicans were, you know. [Stops to laugh] Everyone else was just – they were doing their bit, but this is where the heart of republicanism was – here in the Head of the Town.

Equating the Head of the Town with the notorious "Provisional IRA stronghold in North Belfast" (Kenney 1998:160) not only associates the neighborhood with staunch republicanism, but refines that connection by identifying it as "Provo" territory.

In light of recent episodes like these on top of the long history of distrust and animosity between police and the republican community in Strabane, elected officials and community organizers have worked hard to create open communications to help improve relations between the two factions. To be effective mediators, they have to balance the interests and concerns of both sides, however their primary focus is the particular community they serve on a daily basis. As long-time members of that same community they understand the distrust republicans have for the police over diverse manners of abuse (Wilson 2010:54), past and present, plus the continuing attempts to recruit informers from within the neighborhood. In addition, they have to cope with the reality that some members of the republican community remain opposed to any interaction with

the police. For instance, the 32 County Sovereignty Movement (32CSM) was founded in

1998 by a minority of Provisional republicans who opposed any form of peace process

that maintained the existence of the six counties of Northern Ireland as separate from the

rest of Ireland (Frampton 2011:98). Even now, the perspective of the 32CSM is that any

cooperation with representatives of the Northern Irish government, including

collaborating on community policing issues, undermines their stated goal of a sovereign

Ireland. To attain that goal, the 32CSM and other dissident splinter groups remain

dedicated to undermining implementation of the peace process through violent means

(Nalton, Ramsey, and Taylor 2011). While discussing these challenges as they are

playing out in Strabane, a female community organizer told me that

> The one problem for us is the fact that there is still seen to be a threat on police
> from dissident groups… As far as we're concerned there's two strands of
> policin'… one would be the community policin' – that would be [ordinary and]
> every day. Then there would be anti-terrorism, you know, formal policin'
> whereby you have outside police officers comin' into the area… maybe they
> might have intelligence about a--- a dissident or somebody bein' a part of a
> dissident group, so they're comin' in here heavy-handed and you know, takin' us
> back to the '80s and early '90s with their massive trucks and their forty armed
> officers… But we've dealt with [names local police chief] – with the local police
> on that issue. --- We spoke to the commander and we told him the problems that
> we have with it, because we can't [be] seen to be workin' with community police
> whilst residents in the area still feel intimidated and harassed by you know, *not*
> local police.

I asked her how well the police respond to her concerns and she answered

> They *are* listenin' --- they're doin' their very best, because they know that without
> us cooperatin' with them then progress is gonna take a hell of a lot longer, you
> know. And it's gonna take an awful long time for them to become a success
> within this community… So, as far as they can, we've designed --- like a protocol
> when they're comin' in to the area to do a house search, that they will use local
> police as much as they can, and that they will use cars rather than the Land-
> Rovers – which often the Land Rovers are just a focal point for the children to
> throw [stones] at. So they're aware that we will go out on the ground and try and
> deter young children, or teenagers from engagin' in that behavior. We expect

them, you know, to meet us half-way and send in cars --- do it in an appropriate time – not at 9 o'clock in the evenin' when, you know, teenagers are on the street and have nothin' else to do. And to try and ensure that the police officers comin' in there are as gracious and polite as they can be in that situation, so people don't feel harassed or intimidated. So, now it has worked quite well, so it has.

From this woman's perspective her mediation over how and when the police can enter her neighborhood has been successful, but from my experience not every housing estate has received this level of polite interaction.

The only police vehicles I saw within the Riverside Gardens estate where I lived were heavily fortified Land Rovers, but even that is a step towards more normal community policing in the area than during the Troubles when no police entered the area at all. Because of that, people in the Head of the Town, like other marginalized, working-class republican communities throughout Northern Ireland, developed their own form of self-policing during the Troubles (Darby 2006b:148). Community activist Hugh Murray explained the need to take care of their own community and the lingering effects of that self-dependence saying,

> Well the reason community groups were set up in the 70s, was sort of to police their own areas. What's happening now is the police wanting to get involved with community groups, but there are certain areas where people still are suspicious. People do understand that you need policing in the area, but it's not a marriage, if you know what I mean. [It's] early days yet. Years ago you wouldn't have the police walking around an area and now you have them walkin' about and nobody bothers 'em. It's an on-going process.

Other people I spoke with echoed the need to police the Head of the Town themselves, adding that there was little or no "ordinary" crime during the Troubles, because of the IRA presence in the area. People knew who to go to if they *had* a problem and someone would take care of it.

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This process of self-policing also has been described as vigilantism (Jarman 2008:141; Morrison 2013:193) in which

> The IRA tried to extend its network of control into the communities by taking on an extreme vigilante role. By assuming the role of the Northern Ireland police, republicans tried to reinforce their legitimacy as an anti-system force, imposing an arbitrary and cruel system of "justice" ranging from beatings, kneecappings, shootings in ankles, hands, and elbows to other types of punishments such as expulsion from the community, whereby those individuals accused by the IRA of carrying out activities defined by the group as "antisocial" were sent into exile and forbidden to return. (Alonso 2007:136)

The republican community did not necessarily see self-policing in such stark terms because it "provided the local population with an identifiable avenue for complaints" (Silke 1999:74). Residents knew that their concerns would receive attention and any anti-social or illegal behavior generally would be stopped promptly following a first warning. At the same time, any individual accused of criminal activity was well aware that the stipulated punishment would be meted out if the warning went unheeded. Usually, there was no second warning beyond a message to appear at a known location for punishment, or to leave the community. It was a system that was understood by everyone in the community, with the punishment location known by all as well. As the conflict was drawing to a close and peace negotiations begun, Sinn Féin, as the political wing of the IRA drew increasing pressure to put an end to this punishment system. They found themselves faced with the dilemma that if they moved away from what they termed "community policing" they risked losing broad electoral support in the republican communities that depended on this form of social control, but if they did not work to eliminate vigilantism they would be hindering any process for peace with a police service safely operating in republican neighborhoods (Silke 1999:89).

Ultimately the transition from paramilitary vigilantism in areas like the Head of the Town to more direct official policing, although fraught with lingering reservations, was accomplished by the cooperation and commitment of community networks already in place, community leaders, and the reorganized police service (Jarman 2008:146). When a local parent alerted staff at Townsend Community Center of a text on her daughter's mobile about plans to burn down Strabane Academy, with police approval they made their own counter-plan to patrol the area overnight and made sure their actions were well-publicized as a warning to the youth of the community that this type of behavior was unacceptable (*Strabane Chronicle* July 12, 2012). The previous July the school sustained extensive damage when vandalized, so community workers and the police service were determined to thwart a similar attack. In this case their efforts were successful, however not all community/police interaction is so positive. Regularly people told me of being harassed by police and the local Sinn Féin office reported that police conducted over 750 stop and searches in the town over a three-month period with no arrests resulting from the action, drawing strong criticism that police were abusing their powers" (*Strabane Chronicle* October 20, 2011). Like other aspects of the peace process, relations between the police and residents of the Head of the Town remain a bit tentative with complaints about inappropriate police behavior still part of daily life, however the majority of residents are committed to making it work and negotiating the relationship on their own terms.

At the same time there are republicans in the very same neighborhoods who were never satisfied with the peace process, are dissatisfied with Sinn Féin for "sitting down with the police," and in some cases are exploring membership in, or actually joining one

of the more recently constituted republican splinter groups such as the 1916 Societies, Republicans for National Unity (RNU), or a "Continuity IRA splinter group going by the name of Óglaigh na hÉireann" (Morrison 2013:187).[116] Disagreements within republicanism over various issues that culminate with "dissenters" leaving the primary organization to start an alternative group are not a new phenomenon, but part of the long history of republican efforts in Ireland (Tonge 2011:99; Whiting 2012:484). And while the province-wide political leaders may wrangle over organizational control or criticize those who hold dissenting views (McIntyre 2008), the mix of republicans I observed in Strabane appeared to be respectful, if not accepting, of differing interpretations of what it means to be a republican. Granted, many of the people who consented to talk with me remained guarded in what they said, but overall none appeared concerned whether other community members knew their opinions about Sinn Féin or their affiliation with emerging republican groups; whereas they expressed an on-going fear that similar information could be passed on to the police. Quite a few people continue to worry about police informers – whether through continuing recruitment efforts or otherwise – a strong hold-over from the conflict when either the police or British army made devastating strikes against IRA missions based on information obtained from collaborators (Geraghty 2000:158). Considering police activity from their own perspective, they are tasked with blocking the current increase in dissident violence (Tonge 2011) that is interfering with continued progress towards a peaceful Northern Ireland (Darby 2006b:149).

The most prominent dissident activity around Strabane is the vigilante justice meted out by the group calling themselves Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD). During my period of fieldwork the group seemed to be active only in and around Derry

city and Strabane with the primary focus of identifying, punishing, and ultimately stopping drug dealers (*Strabane Chronicle* October 27, 2011; *The Derry Journal*, January 27, 2012). Through the print media they portrayed themselves as "protectors of the communities… [arguing that] theirs is a job that the PSNI… are unwilling, unable or are unentitled to carry out. This violence allows them the chance to put themselves forward as the indispensable guardians of the peace" (Morrison 2013:195). Their methods for removing assumed drug dealers or stopping drug-related activity include conducting abusive interrogation, knee-capping (shooting the targeted subject in the knee), and expulsion from the town. In some cases, parents would receive a message to "present their sons at a specific location to be shot by RAAD, and if they refused their children would be blasted with shotguns" (*The Derry Journal*, May 1, 2012).

Public response to RAAD activity like this was mixed, but seemed to be growing less supportive by the time I wound up my fieldwork in July 2012. However, even people who chose to speak out against RAAD's actions remained critical of police efforts to curtail increased drug use in the area. One woman told me that "RAAD are getting the 'Big Fish' – the ones bringing in and selling to young teens," adding that she thought they were doing the right thing. Another person suggested that some parents were more than willing to deliver a son for a punishment shooting, because then he would get medical treatment for any drug dependency, in addition to being treated for his trauma. As a side note, all of the stories I read, or heard about informally, involved males, with no females accused of drug dealing.

For me, one of the more disturbing aspects of RAAD's vigilantism was that an accused individual had no recourse for clearing his name. In one incident while I was

living in Strabane, a man who followed RAAD orders and moved out of his home in

Derry was tracked down to his new location in County Donegal and murdered anyway,

prompting a large rally protesting RAAD's practices (*The Derry Journal*, February 21,

2012). There also were indications RAAD was expanding their attention beyond

eliminating drugs by targeting a pedophile (*Strabane Chronicle*, March 22, 2012) and

later claimed responsibility for a bomb attack on a police vehicle in Derry city (*The

Derry Journal*, June 5, 2012). According to Morrison, RAAD officially merged with the

Real IRA (RIRA) in mid-2012 with the aim of appealing "to a wider population and to

put forward a united Republican Movement in opposition not only to British occupation

but also to Sinn Féin and the peace process" (Morrison 2013:196). Clearly RAAD and

RIRA are among "the spoilers" (Höglund and Zartman 2006) opposed to any form of

peace settlement who resent Sinn Féin's increasingly central role in the government of

Northern Ireland and the continued actions of these dissident groups may well have

severe consequences at various times and places around the province. However, on a

more day-to-day basis, RAAD's presence in Strabane as well as Derry strains relations

between the police service and the republican communities who are negotiating an

already delicate process as they attempt to work together and trust each other.

One of the primary resources supporting this process should be the Policing and

Community Safety Partnerships (PCSPs) that were established in every district in April

2012, to combine the functions of former District Policing Partnerships (DPPs). These

groups initially developed out of the recommendations in the Patten report on police

reform. Community Safety Partnerships (CSPs) developed out of a parallel Criminal

Justice Review (O'Rawe 2008:124). The intent in establishing locally-based DPPs was to

engage public participation and contribute to the transformation of the problematic policing culture that alienated large portions of the population (Mulcahy 2006:174). Meanwhile the CSPs were intended as community-based organizations that coordinated community safety initiatives (Mulcahy 2006:171). Following political wrangling over operational details, once established, the functions of these two groups either duplicated or compromised the potential of the other. At the same time, the ability to fund local projects remained at the state level for both groups, leaving the process and fiscal decisions for improving community/police relationships under the existing system (O'Rawe 2008:124). Some people felt that "the creation of separate structures for policing on the one hand and community safety on the other…[was] evidence of political interference… to hamstring the DPPs" (Mulcahy 2006:175).

In addition to the organizational and political challenges, dissident "spoilers" tried to deter republicans from participating in the partnerships, including in Strabane with "protests at meetings and attacks on them and their homes" (*Strabane Chronicle*, February 23, 2012). Tensions between republicans who were trying to contribute to building new relationships between all member of the district, including the police service, and those remaining opposed eased up in 2006 after Sinn Féin announced "they were ready to get behind the North's policing institutions" (*Strabane Chronicle*, February 9, 2012). Brian McMahon, one of the Sinn Féin District Councillors in Strabane told the local paper that although the public turn-out for DPP meetings were minimal, they still served an important function for the district in that the DPPs allowed "people to engage with me on policing issues without having to go to meetings. They felt the mechanism was there to raise issues on policing but didn't want to go to the meetings themselves"

(*Strabane Chronicle*, February 9, 2012). Like other community organizers and elected officials in Strabane, McMahon makes himself available to talk with people in a variety of settings, not just within the specific framework and time of a particular meeting. As Strabane District addresses policing and community safety initiatives through the newer organization of the PCSP, it is the dedicated public engagement and accessibility of community leaders like McMahon that will be an important aspect of the next phase of improving relations between the police and the public.

Neighborhood-based organizations:

In addition to programs initiated and run through Strabane District Council that provide services directed toward improving people's lives, there are neighborhood-based community centers around the town and district responding to concerns of the whole community, as well as organizations serving the needs of specific populations. Those groups include Cairde and Teach na Failte, that work to address challenges faced by republican ex-prisoners. Although each group primarily is following its own agenda, there also is an intriguing level of interaction and mutual support among the various groups in order to share resources and ideas with a wider community. For example, since 2010 Cairde has been sponsoring a community garden and allotment site in the flood plain amidst GAA sport fields and next to the River Mourne, where Strabane residents are encouraged to grow their own vegetables for both health and economic benefits. I took my first stroll along the river to see the allotment in mid-winter, after one of the Cairde volunteers proudly described the program and encouraged me to go see it for myself. Although the expanse of the garden was not a complete surprise, I was quite

impressed with the combination of low and waist-high planting beds, some enclosed in rabbit-deterring fencing, and several Quonset-hut-like structures with opaque plastic stretched over their framing structure, looking like they stand in for more permanent greenhouses. Interspersed throughout the garden were occasional picnic tables and what appeared to be small garden tool sheds. While many of the planting beds were bare since it was the middle of January, a few plots had some hardy plants growing such as cabbages, onions, and leeks.

Later in the spring and early summer when I stopped by to look at the gardens there was a good deal of activity and a wide range of plants growing in the various beds. In April of 2012, staff and volunteers from Cairde, along with the Ballycolman area community center, shared their experience running the garden allotment scheme with community groups from as far away as Enniskillen in County Fermanagh. The event called "Share the Knowledge" was funded by the Public Health Agency in order to encourage other communities to learn from Cairde and be inspired to create similar garden allotment schemes in their own areas (*Strabane Chronicle* April 5, 2012). At the Strabane Fair Day in July, Cairde displayed some of the more unusual produce grown in the gardens and held several demonstrations on appetizing, yet easy ways people could prepare their harvest. Efforts like the garden allotments target improving peoples' lives at the same time they offer opportunities to learn new skills and gain pride in the application of that skill. For towns like Strabane with such high rates of deprivation, successful self-help strategies are essential for replacing past patterns of widespread mental and physical health issues and poor educational opportunities, with individuals gaining confidence in their own abilities and engaging with their neighbors to work on a different, better future

for all residents. Community development centers are the primary organizations where people interact with broader town and district functions.

Localized community centers operate under the Department for Social Development (DSD) and are an important locus of information and resources for and about their particular neighborhoods. The Townsend Community Center serves the Head of the Town with a variety of programs, including implementing peace process initiatives at the grass-roots level and being an intermediary between the Head of the Town residents and the police service. Their current facilities are roughly ten years old and offer a community kitchen, a variety of meeting spaces, an indoor gym, and outdoor sports area that provide programs to people of all ages. I spoke with Townsend Community Center staff as well as some other community volunteers about the center's engagement with and service to the community. Sally Meehan, one of the center's paid staff told me that their programs

> are designed to cater to everybody from birth to senior citizens. We try and provide somethin' for everybody that lives in the community. Programs would take the form of occupational development, education and trainin', and just simple, social recreational activities, for people to come along and meet other people; health and fitness, um, and that's where we would bring in the cookery and try and demonstrate how it's best… to cook nutritious healthy meals on a budget. A lot of our programs are designed with the intention of tryin' to alleviate the poverty… because we would [have] a high dependency on state benefits in this area, uh, and people don't have a load of disposable income. So, a lot of our activities and programs are designed to try and provide them with the same opportunities that people in other different areas are able to afford to pay for.

In another part of her responsibilities, Sally regularly communicates with the police service around their initiative to engage more closely with residents in their home neighborhoods, balancing their interests against continuing suspicion and distrust of the police within the Head of the Town. To maintain that balance Sally keeps her

involvement within the neighborhood rather than join any district-wide community/police partnership, as she explained:

> I don't sit on the policing board, but I work with the police… regardin' any community issues, uhm, police are taking [a new] strategy policing with the community… They have a neighborhood policin' team in the district here and there're officers that go out and try to get, you know, people within the community, so that --- it's a known face to the public, if they have any issues. [So] that they're not dealin' with different officers on different occasions. That there's a bit of familiarity, so they become a recognizable face. And then we try and tackle any issues that arise in our area – *with* the police rather than against them – as used to be the tradition. That's only been goin' on about two – two and a half years here. It's been very successful, but it's because *we're* dictatin' the pace the progression's made. I mean that… the local chief inspector of the police service in the town would be just delighted to be fully integrated into, you know, the area, but unfortunately they're not totally accepted yet, so progress has to be very slow, and the steps have to be very small…. for everybody. --- There's still [dissent] out there. There's people who don't like the police. However, we here at Townsend Community Center know progress has to be made. And for a stable future, we have to be seen to be leading the way. So, that's… what my work is.

At the time of our interview, the district was planning to amalgamate the District Policing Partnership Board (DPP) and the Community Safety Partnership (CSP) and were holding a town meeting-styled session so they could gather community input as well as recruit volunteers for the new organization. Although I understood she was uninterested in actually joining any district-wide community/police board, I thought Sally might attend just to hear the proceedings, but she said,

> No, we prefer to keep all our work with police, uh, low key and low-profile, because of the fact that there are a number of people livin' in the area, that don't tolerate police. And it could possibly put ourselves in some kind of --- at risk. If we're seen to be too prominently, uhm, engagin' with police and the [process] is goin' too fast for everyone else… there's still a concern for … [how our efforts] could be misconstrued.

Throughout my talk with Sally and additional conversations with residents and other community workers, I was impressed by their very deep commitment to, and affection for, the Head of the Town, even as they acknowledge the long history of deprivation and lingering socio-economic challenges, including distrust of the police service. Each improvement to the neighborhood over the last fifteen years, such as housing upgrades to modernize kitchens or install heating systems so residents are not dependent solely on their living-room fireplace, have been accomplished under the advocacy of community workers such as Sally. In turn, some residents have become a bit more willing to engage with police and get involved with additional opportunities for improving their lives because of EU and other funding to support the peace process. As Sally pointed out:

> There's a lot more investment done to the area now, since the ceasefire. The investment bodies are more willin' to invest the money because people are takin' more pride in their community. This is an area where you had kerbstones – everything ripped up. --- Anything that could be ripped up was ripped up, to throw at police when they came into the area. So that has decreased a great deal which means that... everybody's more willing to invest financially into this area, so it's lookin' a lot better.

Community-based organizations like Townsend Community Center work hard to maintain their relations within the neighborhood through regular feedback from residents and by including them in the decision-making process for how best to utilize potential funding from these outside investments. When I spoke with Sally the center was in the early stages of implementing a number of initiatives that came out of a social audit on ideas for expanding resources and programs in the area that included

> doin' a questionnaire with every household in the area. The reimaging of the community was a main point, because we've moved on a great deal from ten years ago where we had green, white, and orange kerbs, and murals on the

walls… We've cleaned the place up dramatically, because now people understand they don't need to mark out this as a republican territory… We've spoken to the community, we've told them, we are proud to be a republican community, but we don't feel the need to intimidate other people or to create the perception that other people aren't welcome in our area, if they happen to have different beliefs or cultures. And that was a very positive response – in the social audit. People were very impressed with the work that was already done to date, which would, you know, be like, tryin' to enhance the area with flower plantin's and, uh, we've removed graffiti… [and] a lot of the other murals have been taken down or painted over.

Removing most of the murals in the Head of the Town was one of the early steps at improving the area initiated with Peace I in the late 1990s. Sally added that not all residents of the area appreciate the remaining murals memorializing the West Tyrone Brigade of the IRA and portraits of Bobby Sands with Che Guevara. She has some ideas of how to mediate this difference of opinion with a "permanent memorial, but in line with the other ones that exist for the Hunger Strikers and other local people who died as a result of this conflict [which] wouldn't be on the side of a wall, so if anyone wants to go look at it, it's their choice." However, like her approach to police interaction in the neighborhood, Sally is going slowly and inviting residents to consider alternatives to the present mural as they work together on the future of the Head of the Town.

Peace and reconciliation efforts

Even before the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 various governmental and community groups initiated discussions on the human impact of the Troubles and how best to facilitate issues of victimhood and reconciliation (Morrissey and Smyth 2002:3). Once signed, the Agreement itself provided a framework and context for the complex process of people seeking reconciliation as well as justice (Donnan

2005:70). Ethnographic studies in other post-conflict areas highlight the challenges of such programs in which the concept of obtaining justice means vengeance and punishment to some who were victimized, rather than any form of reconciliation between people (Wilson 2003:382). In Northern Ireland there was recognition that former prisoners and combatants had to be included in pending peace and reconciliation programs and specific measures needed to be developed to facilitate and support ex-prisoners' reintegration into society (Shirlow and McEvoy 2008:52).

Many of these locally-based ex-prisoner support groups were established in the mid-1990s by former prisoners helping each other (Shirlow and McEvoy 2008:68). Two such groups remain active in Strabane – Cairde, which addresses continuing needs of IRA ex-prisoners and Teach na Failte, which focuses on former INLA Volunteers. Their agendas include elements of peace and reconciliation efforts, but also consider issues of housing, education, and general reintegration to society following incarceration. With the beginning efforts towards implementing the peace process in the early 2000s, the impact and damage of the Troubles began to be re-conceptualized as something from the past, with conferences "to discuss 'managing the past' or 'burying the past'…[occurring], thus constructing the difficulties and suffering by political upheaval as now belonging primarily to the past" (Morrissey and Smyth 2002:16).

Government-sponsored programs, such as *A Shared Future* in 2005, were developed to assist in reconciliation and inclusion that needed the involvement of all interested parties, as expressed in the forward of their Strategic Framework for Good Relations:

> Through *A Shared Future* many of you took the opportunity to tell us that retaining the "status quo" was not an option. This has been a long process, but slow progress should not be mistaken for standing still. Many steps have been taken along the way and the publication of this document is most definitely not the end point. The fundamental principles and aims of this document will begin to underpin how we all, Government, political representatives, local authorities, civic society, can work together to bring about a shared future for all of us in Northern Ireland. (Good Relations Unit 2005:3)

Although the official policy of *A Shared Future* is now defunct, it contributed to a range of initiatives aimed at dissolving sectarianism and fostering reconciliation between Catholics/nationalists and Protestants/unionists (Mitchell 2011:215). Moreover, with continuation of various Good Relations initiatives within Districts, *A Shared Future* may be considered one of the building blocks of a very dynamic peace process that served its purpose at a specific point in time. As communities continue to wrestle with the memories of, and unresolved issues from the past, they utilize a range of programs for addressing the significance of those issues in the present and for the future. I had the opportunity to participate in one peace and reconciliation program myself and took note of other initiatives going on around Strabane District.

In late November 2011 I saw an announcement in the *Strabane Chronicle* about an all-day event aimed at supporting people who are dealing with the impact of the Troubles, to be held at the local library. Influenced by programs addressing human rights and victims issues in other countries, including South Africa, several organizations across Northern Ireland offer initiatives "specifically designed to open up a public space to develop an inclusive strategy for post-conflict truth and justice issues with cross-community support" (Lundy and McGovern 2008:36). In this case, the Derry-based organization, called Towards Understanding and Healing (TUH), was taking reservations

for a program described as a "combination of storytelling and dialogue event." It sounded like a great opportunity for me to learn more about peace and reconciliation programs in action, so I sent off an email asking if I could come as an observer. To follow up on my email, I rang their office the next day and was surprised by the answer. They would not allow me to come and observe, take notes, and so on, but, I was welcome to join them as a participant! The woman I spoke with explained she had no problem including people with no local or long-time experience in Northern Ireland, like me; while she assured me they have done this program in numerous places with a mix of participants.

I was both puzzled and pleased to attend on this basis. In the end they had minimal enrollment – there were eight of us attendees and three staff facilitators who led us through several different activities, the first designed to get us familiar with one another, but all with the intent of fostering a safe environment and welcoming circle of engagement. We were an interesting mix of ages, from two who appeared to be in their twenties, through three of us over sixty. I never could be certain about anyone's sectarian affiliation, but it turned out to be an engaging group who seemed personally invested in the premise of the program. Prior to the event, each person had been asked to bring an object that would be shown in order to share some personal story of oneself. Many brought photos of family and one woman brought a necklace that had belonged to her friend who died from anorexia. The primary activity of the day was a bead-threading exercise. We were directed to choose from the available beads and create a combination that had some meaning to each of us in relation to our life – past, present, and future to make up a bracelet. Although nothing in the process directed participants to share their

personal experience from the Troubles specifically, the point is to offer the opportunity, as explained in one of their brochures:

> Storytelling and dialogue are relatively new methodologies in Northern Ireland. Developed from international models of practice by people from Northern Ireland, they have been designed to provide those who have experienced the trauma of conflict the opportunity to receive acknowledgement of their experiences and to begin to understand the experiences of "the other." (TUH 2008:4)

After the lunch break we were asked to share something of the meaning in our bracelet. It was interesting to hear how others had chosen to represent their lives. When it was my turn I knew almost immediately that I was going to have difficulty saying much. As much as I wanted to be in Strabane to conduct research, part of me felt guilty that I had left others to cover my family responsibilities back in Philadelphia. I started by trying just to say that the three middle beads represented my grandchildren, but could barely get even that out. The good part is that although I was upset, because of the way we had been led through the program, I knew I was in a setting where it was okay at the same time. And, of course, people were as sympathetic and supportive of me as they were listening to others' stories. Overall, it was emotionally challenging, but good, too, for me to experience some of the methods this group utilizes as they help people process the trauma of the Troubles and to grasp even a small understanding of what it is like to acknowledge and share what can be closely held memories and experiences. Before I left for the day, I had confirmed a follow-up meeting with Declan O'Dwyer, one of the facilitators, to discuss more about the TUH programs on peace and reconciliation.

Among other program offerings, TUH has presented weekend-long events they call "residentials" in which the group engages in a combination of storytelling and

"positive encounter dialogs [that provide] participants with the opportunity to have more challenging exchanges relating to critical issues pertaining to the conflict" (TUH 2008:10). When I met with Declan a month or so after the Strabane workshop, he shared some of his experience both as a participant and facilitator in TUH residentials and how that experience led him to reassess and challenge his own culpability and actions, or lack of them, during the Troubles. In his fifties now, Declan grew up and continues to live in the area of the Bogside in Derry. It is primarily a Catholic, republican, working-class neighborhood that experienced significant levels of violence throughout the conflict, including the still-harrowing event called Bloody Sunday in January of 1972 that received international attention at the time and again at the subsequent inquiries that ultimately found the British soldiers guilty of shooting unjustifiably (Campbell 2012).

Declan explained the general concept of TUH events then continued with some of his own experience and observations:

> The core work that we do would be to gather people together, ideally from the various backgrounds that are willing to sit in the same room. Sometime people would use the phrase, [putting their] feet to the fire. And be willin' to agree – to actually agree – that instead of sayin' "No, no – that didn't happen – this is what happened," --- that these people from diverse backgrounds will listen to each other. And maybe they could learn from each other, as to what went on in *their* experience of the Troubles, so as an outcome of that people may be better connected, and maybe more understanding. --- There may be more healing. Some of these groups could be characterized by people weepin' – I haven't really seen people express rage, but I can imagine that could be expressed.

Before sharing some of his more poignant memories, Declan stressed that the trust and openness only comes after a period in which participants get familiar with each other and certain "ground rules" are established.

> I was an invitee to a TUH gathering and I was in a room with an ex-British soldier – in a small group. And the storytelling… that's what we're doing – doing stories.

And I spoke of growing up in [the Bogside]. What it was like growing up in a nationalist, Catholic, republican background. And this soldier, ex-soldier said, "And I served in [the Bogside]." I listened to him speak about what it was like bein' a soldier in [the Bogside]… I never heard anyone speak [like that] – I never met an ex-soldier before. I never met a soldier who had served in [the Bogside]. And what he said, which was deeply memorable, was his mate – his friend was shot dead – by the Provos… That was on a Saturday, this weekend residential. On the Saturday night I was sayin' to myself, "I wonder, would I invite him back to [the Bogside]? Wonder what he would say if I did?" And I was turning this over, and turning it over in the morning, when I came out of my room in this residential and wasn't that guy walking up the corridor at that very moment. So, I blurted out, "You know, you're flyin' back to England, you have to come through Derry, would you be interested in goin' back to [the Bogside]?" And he said, "Yes."

Once the residential was finished on Sunday afternoon Declan and a friend drove back to the Bogside with the ex-British soldier, who pointed out where the soldiers had been based nearby and then took them to the site where his friend was shot and died.

Now Dori, it turned out to be the street where I grew up. This young man was shot dead – he was eighteen, literally about five or six hundred meters from my home. So me and this ex-soldier, and [my friend] stood on a Sunday afternoon, in the year 2000, and in some kind of ritualized way – standing there thinking this young soldier would've walked up, and a gunman would've been behind that gable wall, and he'd of stepped out and shot. And the soldier literally would've walked into a bullet, 'cause he would've been in the way, in the route that the foot patrol would've been on. He would've been exposed. And what this ex-soldier said in the TUH residential, in the year 2000 was, he wasn't on the foot patrol, but they got the call at [their base], and they came stormin' down in their jeeps and they were involved in a follow up search. So what they did was – they wrecked houses. They were searching, they were looking for the killers. So they're searchin' and they're stormin' into houses and you know, if you're the woman of the house, "Whatta you know, whatta you seen?" They're agitated. They're --- it's their friend, he's dyin'. He didn't die immediately, but he was dyin'. And what this ex-soldier was grapplin' with, in a way, was his own violence. So he was sayin', you know, in those instances, "I became a perpetrator." And, uh, just to hear that, like I'm tellin' you that very vividly. In effect, I'm memorializin' that. But what it did for me was, it shook up my little world. Of, you know, British soldiers are *this*. And, it helped me deepen some empathy – you know, or increase some form of compassion. And one of the things that happened later,… I actually invited that British soldier, ex-British soldier – and not at that residential, but maybe five or six years later, because I stayed in touch with him – to my *home*.

Clearly, participation in sharing personal stories through TUH events has been a transformative and positive experience for Declan and others, even though it means confronting and questioning one's own behavior and attitudes.

It was important to Declan that I understand the significant potential for changing deep-seated prejudices through this process of sharing stories, plus the experience he described as a form of healing. He said, "There's something healing in that story for me. It's creatin' a new story, Dori. It's like this --- through that I have a new story, since I've a different way of lookin' because I've been able to somewhat walk in the shoes of the British soldier. What it'd be like to lose your friend." In this and other examples he shared, Declan stressed the meaningfulness of TUH's work for him personally and for many of the participants. By supporting individuals as they relate their experiences during the conflict, TUH is attempting to help people overcome the socially constructed silence (Nugent 2014:51) that contributed to divided communities and misunderstanding for decades. At the same time he acknowledged that not everyone is comfortable with the idea of a process that can lead to reevaluating past viewpoints and actions, particularly regarding their experience of the Troubles. Furthermore, he is aware that his current perspective "leaves me somewhat at odds with my tribe… but --- I look askance now at --- at maybe the republican movement, in ways I wouldn't have done … forty years ago." In Declan's case, he has reconciled that his viewpoint and involvement with TUH puts him "at odds" with the broader republican community in Derry. However, there seem to be many in Strabane who remain concerned about staying within acceptable boundaries of "the tribe" and may be reluctant to participate in peace and reconciliation activities such as ones offered by TUH.

After I registered for the TUH event at the library, I tried to interest some of my immediate friends and neighbors, but no one was willing to attend with me. Then a month or so later, in the context of interviewing a young man whose uncle was shot by British forces, I mentioned having attended the program. He told me that both he and his mother had seen the notice in the paper and briefly considered attending, but eventually decided there were too many unknowns for them to sign up. I discussed this reluctance with local community volunteer Martha Butler, who confirmed that "a lot of people are suspicious… [and] they could've been afraid of who would be there and… just suspicious, of what it would entail. What questions would be asked… would it bring back the hurt that they had had?" I asked if there was some aspect of peer pressure going on as well, that was influencing people's decisions about whether to participate in programs such as TUH and Martha responded,

> Sure. There probably is, yeah. There actually are people in the town who wouldn't want to see other people's children or other people mixin' with – as they would see it – the other side. 'Cause then they would see that as a betrayal --- or, "We want to keep these people down where they are. We don't want to let them move on." My perception of it is that you are only allowed to move on as far as they want you to move on. People still want to be in control, so they do.

Martha seemed uncomfortable discussing this aspect any further, but even that limited insight supported several indirect comments I picked up in various conversations around the town, along with the fact that Declan admitted that TUH had found it challenging to get programs going in Strabane.

In an informal conversation another woman tried to help me understand the form of "social control" that Martha alluded to, confiding that over fifteen years ago she had been pressured against sending her son to a well-respected secondary school in Derry

because it was a mixed, Protestant and Catholic school. The woman felt unable to go against the warning, even though it was a great opportunity for her son. Another person may have been able to stand her ground and resist the local pressure, but being pragmatic, the woman knew that beyond any other considerations, she had to coexist with her neighbors – even if it meant giving up her son's chance of a better education. Even now, in a neighborhood such as the Head of the Town, residents need to balance their willingness and interest in participating in the wider range of civic opportunities against some of their neighbors' perspectives that retain long-held distrust of activities designed to bring Protestants and Catholics together in a positive way. Taking part in a peace and reconciliation program still may seem too threatening for some people to consider, even for their neighbors.

Conclusion

As community organizer Russ O'Brien said, "the peace process is a *process*," and with each event that openly engages a diverse audience; every neighborhood initiative that contributes to individuals gaining a new skill; or even just one housing estate cultivating a better understanding between residents and local police officers helps to move that process along. Strabane town and district clearly have challenges such as lingering memories of the extreme violence during the Troubles that made civic life nearly impossible as well as institutionalized discrimination that disenfranchised and marginalized a large portion of the population (Coulter and Murray 2008a), further embedding distrust and suspicion between Protestants and Catholics. However, through a

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variety of reforms, including mandated power-sharing, elements of inequality are being addressed at both the provincial and local level.

Attitudes towards and interaction between Catholics and the police service remain close to volatile, but serious attention on all sides is committed to developing strategies that will tackle on-going concerns. Consolidating the activities and responsibilities of the DPPs and and CSPs into the one PCSP will improve interaction between police and the public and the related initiatives in communities like Strabane where a sizable portion of the town are committed to building "Good Relations" among all stake-holders in the district, including the police service.

The extensive employment, economic, and health deprivation throughout the district, but particularly in the Third Ward – the Head of the Town, is nothing new either, but there is a pragmatic attitude to the way individuals and organizations are addressing those problems, too. Having community centers such as Townsend Street located in the heart of vulnerable neighborhoods like the Head of the Town makes it possible for residents to engage with potential resources and programs within a safe setting as they transition from being a marginalized community to partners in the broader society. What I found compelling in examining civic engagement in Strabane, whether well-established or just getting developed, was the importance of the regular, clear communication and inter-action between Strabane District Councilors, individual community activists, community center staff, and even the police. They may approach a particular event or program with different concerns or preconceptions, but ultimately they share an interest in creating an inclusive, engaging town and district. The reality is that mere good intentions will not make any of this happen, but community leaders such as Phil Cassidy,

Sally Meehan, and Russ O'Brien demonstrate their willingness to keep working and

recognize progress even in very small steps.

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[114] Sands, Tommy. n.d. "Song for Erin" in *Arising from the Troubles*. SCD 1062. Compact Disc.
[115] NINIS, 2011 Population Statistics for Strabane Local Government District.
http://www.ninis2.nisra.gov.uk/public/AreaProfileReportViewer.aspx?FromAPAddressMulipleRecords=Strabane@PostCode@BT828BZ@3? (accessed October 12, 2013)
[116] Complicating any attempt to identify or track republican splinter groups like these is the fact that at various times, different entities have claimed the same name (Taylor 2011:5).

Chapter 7: Conclusion: Tiocfaidh ár Lá – Our Day Will Come

Tiocfaidh ár lá – Our day will come.
That glorious day for Ireland's fighting sons.
The day will come. We will be free.
Tiocfaidh ár lá – the dawn of liberty!

It's been a long 800 years
Of British scorn and Irish tears
And only freedom will suffice
We've made too long a sacrifice.

Chorus, first verse "Our Day Will Come" by G. O'Glacain[117]

In the previous six chapters I argue that individual and collective memory play a significant role as republicans negotiate the cultural politics of citizenship and identity through the production and performance of heritage in post-conflict Northern Ireland. This process involves continual enactment, reevaluation, and revision of past practices tin events held across the social and physical landscape of Strabane. The significance of specific events varies over time as interpretations of the past fluctuate, depending on which ways they are deemed useful or applicable to later time periods. Events of the twentieth century, particularly the 1916 Rising, the partition of Ireland in 1920, and primarily notable for Northern Ireland, the Troubles which disrupted so much of the last thirty-plus years of the century, are among the latest additions to Ireland's long history that color and inform opinions, memories, and actions in the twenty-first century.

As I describe in the previous chapters, this extensive history of Ireland and related forms of heritage inspire and inform as they communicate in a variety of ways through both tangible and intangible symbols, as well as behavior. On the one hand, there are deliberate, specific acts of remembering, that include the formal commemorative parades

and gatherings held to mark the death of IRA Volunteers who died in active service, or the erection of a stone memorial in honor of an individual. And while these deliberate acts usually include certain aspects of performance, there are other more continuous, sometimes even everyday forms of performance that express cultural identity in the present at the same time they make reference to the past, including republican as well as more traditional "Irish" music. The memories and meanings behind deliberate acts of remembrance and the performance of a distinctly Irish heritage and identity retain their significance, even as republicans engage with the broader Northern Ireland society. Among the unfinished, but significant aspects of peace process implementation have been efforts to foster acceptance, or at least awareness of a shared history, and even some elements of shared heritage between the normally oppositional "two sides of the house." Even though this comes with its own set of challenges, many republicans in Strabane have negotiated ways to perform and celebrate their cultural heritage in cross-community activities. This represents a revision of some aspects of their republican perspectives, as they evaluate their role in this newer phase of public engagement in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

Deliberate acts of remembrance

The formal commemorations held annually to honor and remember Charlie Breslin and Michael and David Devine in Strabane, as well as those marking major anniversaries since the death(s) of particular hero/martyr(s), such as the large gathering in 2012 memorializing the twentieth anniversary of four lads killed at Clonoe, are deliberate, scheduled, and performative events of remembrance. Subtle changes over the

last fifteen years reflect the post-conflict context in which republicans are reevaluating and renegotiating their role in the broader society. The number of annual commemorations is greatly reduced, with many now held only on major anniversaries. Furthermore, memorial groups have adopted less provocative parading styles and organizers are cooperating directly with local authorities when planning commemorative events. Even with these modifications, however, acts of remembrance continue to be highly significant for recreating and maintaining republican heritage. It is just this form of collective memory that Halbwachs describes as "living in the consciousness" of a particular group, arguing that those memories become transformed over time "along with the group itself" (Halbwachs 1980: 82). There is no longer any need or interest in recruiting armed combatants in Northern Ireland, yet people feel a collective responsibility in telling the personal stories of those who volunteered and died in past struggles for Irish freedom. Instead of generating support for continued armed struggle and encouraging provocative resistance and opposition to British rule, commemorations of IRA dead now focus on memorializing them as individuals who are, in turn, linked to the archetypal hero/martyrs of Irish history. Such shifts reflect a complex, selective process, as group memories are transformed, whether consciously or not, whereby the group retains certain elements of past memory, while they ignore or forget others. Sturken emphasizes the complexity of this process, arguing that the choices over what is remembered versus what is ignored or forgotten are strongly related to the political intentions of the individuals and/or communities who assign meaning to that memory (Sturken 1997:7, 9). For highly marginalized people like the republican community in Strabane, creating and maintaining a meaningful collective memory – their heritage of

the Troubles – is essential in order for their perspectives and experiences to be included along with the more "official" record and history created by the dominant society.

By utilizing a basic format that is replicated in communities all over Ireland, commemorations contribute to a "unified national narrative" (Khalili 2007:124) and confirm that the individual Volunteer is a valued participant in the long and revered historic struggle for Irish freedom. A key element in this ritual of remembrance is saying the name of the person being honored, sometimes reading out his or her name along with names of key hero/martyrs of the past. Connerton argues that it is through such repetitive utterances and gestures of ritual that group memory is encoded, calling them "acts of transfer" (Connerton 1989:40). And in the process, he claims, these ceremonies "give value and meaning to the life of those who perform them" (Connerton 1989:45). In line with Connerton's assertion, even though the primary, or at least stated focus of any commemoration is on honoring and remembering the personal sacrifice of an individual, or group of comrades who died together, the ritual also reminds participants of the unfinished goal of creating a united Ireland, free of British rule. This includes an implicit and on occasion, explicit directive, for both audience and participants alike to honor their "patriot dead" by accepting the responsibility to continue the struggle for a united Ireland. It is important to restate that no one is suggesting or encouraging an armed struggle at this point in time. Instead any rhetoric expressing collective responsibility is directed towards inspiring involvement in local as well as province-wide political processes.

The implicit reminder that Ireland is not yet united is supported by a variety of symbolic acts and objects that index claims to citizenship in the Republic of Ireland by republicans in the North, including the Tricolor flag that leads every commemorative

parade and singing the Republic's national anthem, "The Soldier's Song," at the close of every commemoration. Of course, the presence and use of these as well as other symbols that are so instrumental to commemorative practice in Northern Ireland extend into more ordinary forms of daily life. Both of these symbols function as *lieux de memoire*, the sites of memory which Nora describes as either tangible or intangible, that over time become symbolic elements representing the "memorial heritage of any community" (Nora 1996:xvii). The Tricolor not only stands for the state, in this case the Republic of Ireland, but as is common for many tangible symbols, the flag also carries additional meaning and can launch various memories, depending on the viewer's perspective. Eriksen argues that flags, in particular, are "rich in aesthetic and emotional connotations" (Eriksen 2007:3), compressing a broad range of meaning and collective memory. For republicans in Strabane, carrying the Tricolor throughout the town during the commemoration for Charlie, Michael, and Davy expresses their continued allegiance to their goal of a united Ireland and reaffirms their right to express their cultural identity and heritage in their own town. In the process, they are challenging the dominant narrative of British rule and history of unionist privilege in Strabane, with what Lipsitz calls counter-memory (Lipsitz 1990). Moreover, they are assuring that the republican experience of the Troubles in Strabane, an admittedly alternate collective memory, is not merely countering the dominant discourse in the broader public, but also contributing to the creation and maintenance of republican identity for the future. Displays of the Tricolor in private homes or in settings similar to Clancy's Bar serve as daily reminders of more formal events such as republican commemorations and link the memories and motivation underlying any deliberate act of remembrance to the everyday here and now.

Symbolic behavior encodes multiple meanings and memories in performative acts in much the same way, most notably employed within deliberate acts of remembrance like the ritual of commemorative parading. These "invented rituals," as Connerton calls them, "claim continuity with an appropriate historic past" (Connerton 1989:51). Color parties, the flag-bearers who lead commemorative parades, carry tangible symbols of nation, identity, and heritage while they physically express additional significance through their body language as they march, stand at attention, and as they lower the flag to an honorary drumroll while subtly tipping their heads forward in the "final salute." In this form of ritual the human body not only serves as a "receptacle of memory" (Sturken 1997:12) through each individual's sensory experiences, but encodes and disseminates cultural and collective memory as well. Casey calls this "body memory" and argues that it is essential to any type of commemoration, because of the ways that our bodies literally absorb and remember experiences subconsciously (Casey 2000:253). With other gestures and movements, commemoration participants are physically "embodying" or expressing distinct memories of the deceased volunteer. For example, at Clonoe, participants literally walk the last route taken by the four young men who died in 1992. These four hero/martyrs of Clonoe, in turn, embody the history of their community (Khalili 2007:134) and the greater republican struggle, by extension. Connerton claims that performance of collective memory and culturally-specific bodily practices like the commemoration at Clonoe draw on both conscious and habitual memory (Connerton 1989:88). For republicans in Clonoe or Strabane, or any other community, the social meanings and values of their community are embedded in individual bodies through dynamic social processes that are dependent on the discursive interaction of people linked

by common interests and organizations (Agha 2007:190). Furthermore, these dynamic social processes gain additional significance as they are enacted within social and political landscapes.

As I clearly demonstrate in the previous chapters, any discussion of embodied memory is incomplete without acknowledging the importance of the spatial and temporal dimensions in which these rituals are enacted and memories grounded. Whether it is Strabane Memorial Flute Band members recalling former roadblocks and provocative police behavior when they tried to march beyond the boundaries of the Head of the Town in the 1980s, or the satisfaction now when they parade through central areas of Strabane once forbidden to them, *places* engender individual and collective memories. Through their performance, and in a reciprocal process, the band imposes meaning on place. It is this very interaction between group and place that Halbwachs describes when he argues that each leaves an "imprint" on the other as actions of the group coordinate with spatial dimensions, and space accommodates the "structure and life of their society" (Halbwachs 1980: 130). This pairing of place and group memory can be particularly apt for organizations such as the Strabane Memorial Flute Band, since through their commemorative parading the band is embodying – taking ownership – of the social and symbolic landscape within Strabane. As they take ownership of public space, they invert the long-established local power structures that are linked to memories of past violence and marginalization (Bryan and Stevenson 2009:69). Moreover, in doing so, they engage and embed their particular, very republican cultural memories, into the historical narrative of Strabane's public sphere (Sturken 1997:29).

Essential aspects for both commemorative marching and symbolically "taking over" public space is the band's drumming and flute music. As some of the members told me, at one time they would have "battered" their drums loudly in protest when police barricades blocked their procession into the town center. Now, although the drums still can be heard from a distance, they simply are marking the cadence as the band marches along and accompanying the flutes when they play tunes. However, as I discuss in Chapter 3 on music, the actual tunes played are highly significant, because the stories embedded in the music are well-known to republican communities who participate in or view commemorative parades. Many of the stories in song relate the deaths of various hero/martyrs from the Troubles, including Charlie, Michael, and Davy. In essence, their deaths are memorialized every time the tune is played. In addition, the songs link the heroism and sacrifice of recent hero/martyrs with earlier, iconic republican heroes of major events in Irish history. Many songs connect the heroism from the Troubles to the 1916 Rising or the revolutionary attempt in 1798, following a style of song performance begun in the eighteenth century (Faolain 1983; Zimmermann 1967). Through references to both recent and earlier Irish history, the tunes express opposition to British hegemony and criticize their continued presence in Ireland (Sawyers 2000). Following Nora's perspective, republican music is a constructed symbol because of the way it has developed its symbolic meaning over time, as well as through a series of interactions and historical events (Nora 1998: x). Operating as intangible sites of memory, the tunes played for commemorative parading express nationalist sentiments, memorialize hero martyrs, celebrate republican heritage, and reinforce community bonds. Like other symbolic objects that are intrinsic to commemorative rituals, republican music is equally

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effective for performing cultural identity and for creating and maintaining collective memory in informal, less deliberative settings.

Performing identity, referencing the past, and looking to the future

People "perform" their cultural identity on a regular basis – usually with little thought given to the process – through their use of distinctive, intangible symbols that have significant meaning to them. In Strabane, republican and other forms of "Irish" music along with the Irish language are two of the most prominent symbols that denote cultural identity for nationalists and republicans in the town and around the district. Both function as sites of memory because they are embedded with collective memories that references various aspects of local and island-wide history in addition to familial and/or individual experiences. Children and youth are easily enculturated by these processes of performative identity because language and music are experienced along with other symbolic systems within any society (Bourdieu 1977:94). They learn the music without being aware and get introduced to aspects of Irish history – local and island-wide – through the stories in the music. Similarly, children become familiar with and learn the languages spoken around them at an early age as part of their home and neighborhood. For the nationalist community in Strabane, "Irish" music and the Irish language become powerful interrelated symbols for negotiating cultural politics, citizenship, and identity in post-conflict Northern Ireland.

In the previous chapters I discuss and analyze a variety of ways that music is an integral part of deliberate events, whether they are republican commemorations, cross-community or other civic activities, and/or more personal enjoyment. Music is a very

performance-based, interactive mode of expression. As a symbolic site of memory it pervades people's consciousness, engaging a range of sensory experiences as they bodily react to the music. Republican music in particular are a combination of political commentary, cultural identity, expression of resistance and opposition to domination by a foreign power, and a performance of heritage. Like music created and performed by other marginalized communities, republican music presents a version of, or perspectives of the past not normally part of the conventional historical record. Songs memorializing IRA Volunteers who died while in active service have an emotional appeal within republican communities. Some of the songs are about local lads, but if not, they can relate to the stories in song because they are about ordinary people and experiences similar to their own. Just as the tunes played in commemorative parades evoke emotional responses, the songs engender sadness over the loss of a young life, but also inspire continued commitment and allegiance to the goal of a united Ireland. Casey describes the power of this music as creating its own process of memorialization (Casey 2000: 227). Whether performed during a live concert, heard over the jukebox in the pub, or even played on an iPod, the music connects performer and listener in a joint act, an informal ritual, remembering the hero/martyr.

The chorus and first verse of O'Glacain's song "Our Day Will Come," that I use at the start of this chapter, demonstrate the multiple layers of symbolism that can be expressed in even a short song. First of all, it starts with the Irish *Tiocfaidh ár lá*, repeating the equivalent of the phrase in English. He gives "pride of place" to the Irish language by using it first. Moreover, it is an iconic phrase often repeated at republican gatherings even today and in the past was frequently incorporated into wall murals and

other political artwork protesting Britain's presence in Ireland. The term "Erin" refers to common imagery of the nineteenth century when Ireland was frequently depicted as a female on commercial signage, on gravestones, and even jewelry, along with other symbols of romantic nationalism (Morris 2005:19). The first verse emphasizes that Ireland's struggle against British hegemony is nothing new – in fact it has "been a long 800 years." Yet, while various stanzas criticize Britain's inequitable treatment toward of the Irish, the overall feeling is celebratory, expressing the confidence that, indeed, our day *will* come, although there is no indication when that might be. So in a few short lines, the song manages to encompass acknowledgement of past offenses to the Irish people, utilization of key words that symbolize the long struggle for independence from Britain, and assurance that these injustices will be overcome and "liberty" – a united Ireland – will actually happen. In addition, the tune is written in "reel-time," a familiar and peppy musical meter that is a mainstay of traditional Irish music and dance. Barth would argue that this song strategically uses tradition (Barth 1969) to construct and maintain republican identity, while it chooses specific symbols of and from the past, connecting them with the listener in ways that make them relevant to the present (Hobsbawm and Ranger 2000).

The Irish language is another example of intangible symbol that, similarly to music, is also a site of memory. It is a Celtic language that links people in the present to an ancient and proud past, before there was any British presence on the island, as well as indirectly making reference to its history of British efforts to criminalize and marginalize its use over the last few hundred years. For some of the people I interviewed, the Irish language is a reminder of their dissatisfaction with their personal school experience

because of the fact that there was no option to take courses in Irish, the language they consider to be their "native tongue." In Chapter 5 I discuss several of the ways Irish continues to serve as a symbol of identity, noting how it also is, and has been, a form of political opposition and sign of cultural resistance.

In Strabane, both nationalists and republicans have shown increasing interest and involvement with Irish language programs for several decades. That interest is clearly evident in the very active *gaelscoil*, whose administration is scouting out new sites in order to expand the number of children they can accommodate, from pre-school programs through the elementary grades. In addition to Strabane's *gaelscoil* thriving, the fact that Gaelphobal Strabane was awarded the top prize by Glor na nGael in 2012 for their successful programs and efforts promoting Irish language and culture throughout the district, testifies not only to the strength of their programs but also to the dedication of the board members and staff. It also demonstrates substantial public interest in learning Irish and participating in Irish cultural activities. Of the people I interviewed, the reasons for learning Irish and the routes they have taken to get to their present level of proficiency vary widely in many ways, but it ultimately comes down to a desire to be involved with, and be able to express their Irish identity through the language. Whether someone calls in to Gaelphobal Strabane and converses in Irish at a coffee hour, or *gaelscoil* students receive a math lesson through the medium of Irish, or during dinner a family discusses the day's events – in Irish – they are all performing an aspect of their personal or collective identity.

Engaging in the wider community

In public, district-wide events and on closer, neighborhood levels, people in Strabane are responding positively to some of the initiatives aimed at minimizing long-established sectarian divisions and engender greater respect cross-culturally. The responses have ranged from the removal of sectarian and political murals, to repainting curbs that had served as boundary markers with their green, white, and orange striping noting nationalist or republican "territory," or cooperating with newer guidelines clarifying acceptable times for flag displays such as the Tricolor. Granted, efforts towards improving relations between the police service and residents of certain areas like the Head of the Town have proven more problematic and have tended to be unsuccessful, while some communities around the province have not participated in any of these initiatives. However, community and neighborhood leaders around Strabane have worked hard to accomplish the visible changes and continue to foster mutual respect and [what] between the district's Protestant and Catholic communities.

It is highly significant that even in the overwhelmingly nationalist town of Strabane, many people are willingly participating in cross-community activities designed to bridge the long-established cultural divide that was exacerbated by thirty-plus years of the Troubles. This relatively new perspective of showing respect to people from different cultural backgrounds and development of cross-community programs may not all proceed smoothly, but a few examples are noteworthy for demonstrating ways that some republicans in Strabane have revised their prejudices and oppositional perspectives regarding "the other side of the house" and are open to or are actively engaging with Protestants in the district. First of all, on a personal level, I regularly heard explanations

from individuals on why the murals were painted over or why they no longer display the Tricolor outside their home except for special occasions. Invariably the individual would add something to the effect "It might be offensive to someone." They respect the fact that not everyone in Northern Ireland has the same cultural identity and interest. On the other hand, there *are* common interests found in several programs that have brought people together from normally opposite sides of the wider community and throughout Strabane District. One is the annual St. Patrick's Day parade in Strabane's town center and another is a cross-community alliance of musicians.

Although Strabane's St. Patrick's Day parade was established only in 2005, it has served the district well as a cross-community event with diverse participation and enthusiastic crowds cheering them on. Initially the Strabane Memorial Flute Band was considered unsuitable to participate because of their military-styled outfits and demeanor, however they have been among the wide variety of bands in the parade for several years now. In some circles St. Patrick's Day may be viewed primarily as the feast day of a Catholic saint, and while it is that, many Protestants celebrate historical and cultural connections to him as well. This makes St. Patrick's Day observances in districts like Strabane a fitting choice for initiating cross-community interaction.

While civic leaders developed and still coordinate the St. Patrick's Day parade, it was a group of individual musicians who established a deliberately cross-community musical gathering over twenty years ago. They named the group CRAIC, creating an acronym out of the Irish word for conversation, or a chat, that also is used to refer to having a good time with others. Local musician and republican Sam McBride explained that the acronym means <u>C</u>ultural <u>R</u>evival <u>A</u>cross <u>I</u>nterested <u>C</u>ommunities. He was among

the founding group of musicians in the area who just happened to enjoy and play traditional Irish music and wanted an outlet where musicians from both the Catholic and Protestant communities could come together and share their common interest. They gather twice a month, alternating between two different pubs in town where they provide entertainment for customers in exchange for a place to meet. Sam told me that it was not always a very mixed group, but currently is fairly balanced between the two communities. Like the other musicians I interviewed, Sam performs a varied repertoire of songs, in part to make his services more desirable to venues seeking live music, but also because he enjoys playing a range of folk, traditional Irish, and even republican music. Depending on the type of venue, he is careful in the selection of songs he plays. There are a few that have such subtle republican sentiments that he will sing them even at a gathering of CRAIC. "Grace," the song relating the sad tale of Grace Gifford's wedding to the 1916 Rising hero/martyr Joseph Plunkett on the night before his execution, is a good example. Any listener unfamiliar with the story would not understand or identify the song as anything but a tale of devoted love of a woman for a condemned man. In addition to Sam, at various times I spoke with several members of the Strabane Memorial Flute Band who also play with CRAIC on occasion. For some of them, the gathering primarily seems to provide an opportunity to play and sing their favorite folk and Irish music with a group of talented and interested musicians. For a few others, the additional dynamic of sharing music with individuals from "the other side of the house" is an important aspect of their participation.

Significance of the study

The importance of, and interrelationship between memory, modes of Irish music, the performance of culture, and symbols of Irish identity are key elements in the previous six chapters, in which I examine how one republican community is negotiating the cultural politics of identity, citizenship, and heritage in post-conflict Northern Ireland. My study provides insight into ways that a small border town, with extensive socio-economic deprivation, is adjusting and engaging with peace process implementation. As residents of an overwhelmingly nationalist and republican town, people in Strabane still have concerns over past injustices that are reflected in the high rates of deprivation remaining in the area. However many of the republicans I interviewed are choosing to get involved and work within community and town systems to improve their neighborhoods, rather than accept marginalization as in the past. As they engage with the broader society, republicans are reevaluating and revising some of their past practices of cultural expression, while enthusiastically continuing other forms of Irish or republican identity. In particular, it remains essential to many republicans in Strabane, and across the province, to memorialize IRA Volunteers who died in active service with a commemorative parade and ceremony, albeit only on major anniversaries in most cases.

Secondly, the performance of, or at least listening to republican music continues to be an essential "act of transfer," encoding group memory in repetitive utterances and gestures of ritual that, in turn, contribute to the creation and maintenance of their republican and Irish identity. Since post-conflict community-based research seems to focus primarily on the urban areas of Derry and Belfast, my study adds an important dimension to broader understandings of peace process implementation. Additional

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fieldwork in Strabane's republican community, especially during key anniversaries of local events, could track subsequent socio-political changes, district-wide, in the town of Strabane, and most importantly, the neighborhood in the Head of the Town.

As republicans in Strabane perform their Irish identity and memorialize the past, this community has transitioned from being marginalized and at odds with local government, to participating on their own terms, incorporating republican celebrations and heritage into current programs within the broader Strabane community, and taking an active part in plans for the future.

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[117] "Our Day Will Come" by Gerry O'Glacain (http://oneofthebhoys09.tripod.com/rstuv/id23.html – accessed November 8, 2014)

APPENDIX

N ←

STRABANE

Parade
Start

B

D

Mourne River

A

Parade
Finish

← Derry

River
Foyle

River Finn

LIFFORD

Omagh →

C
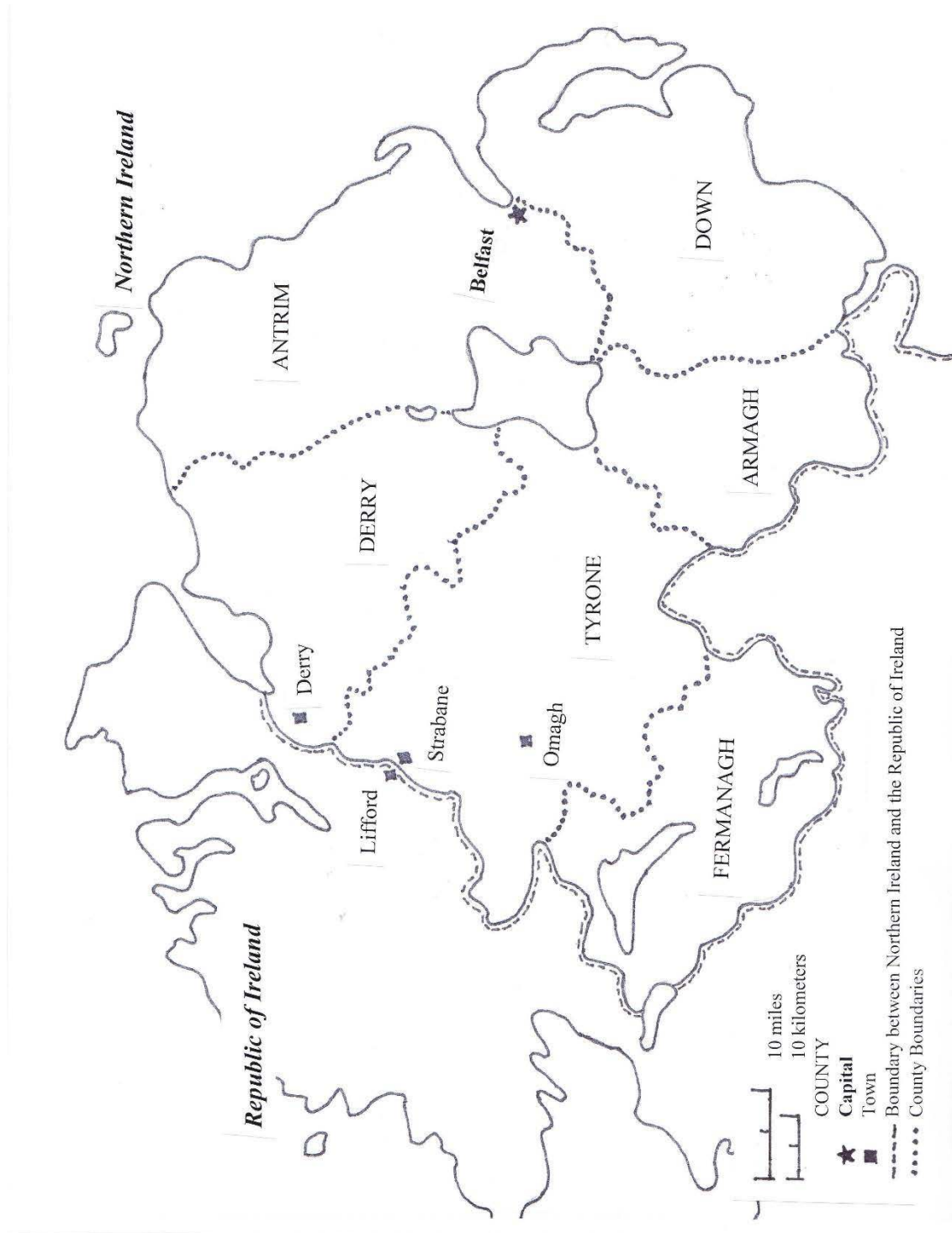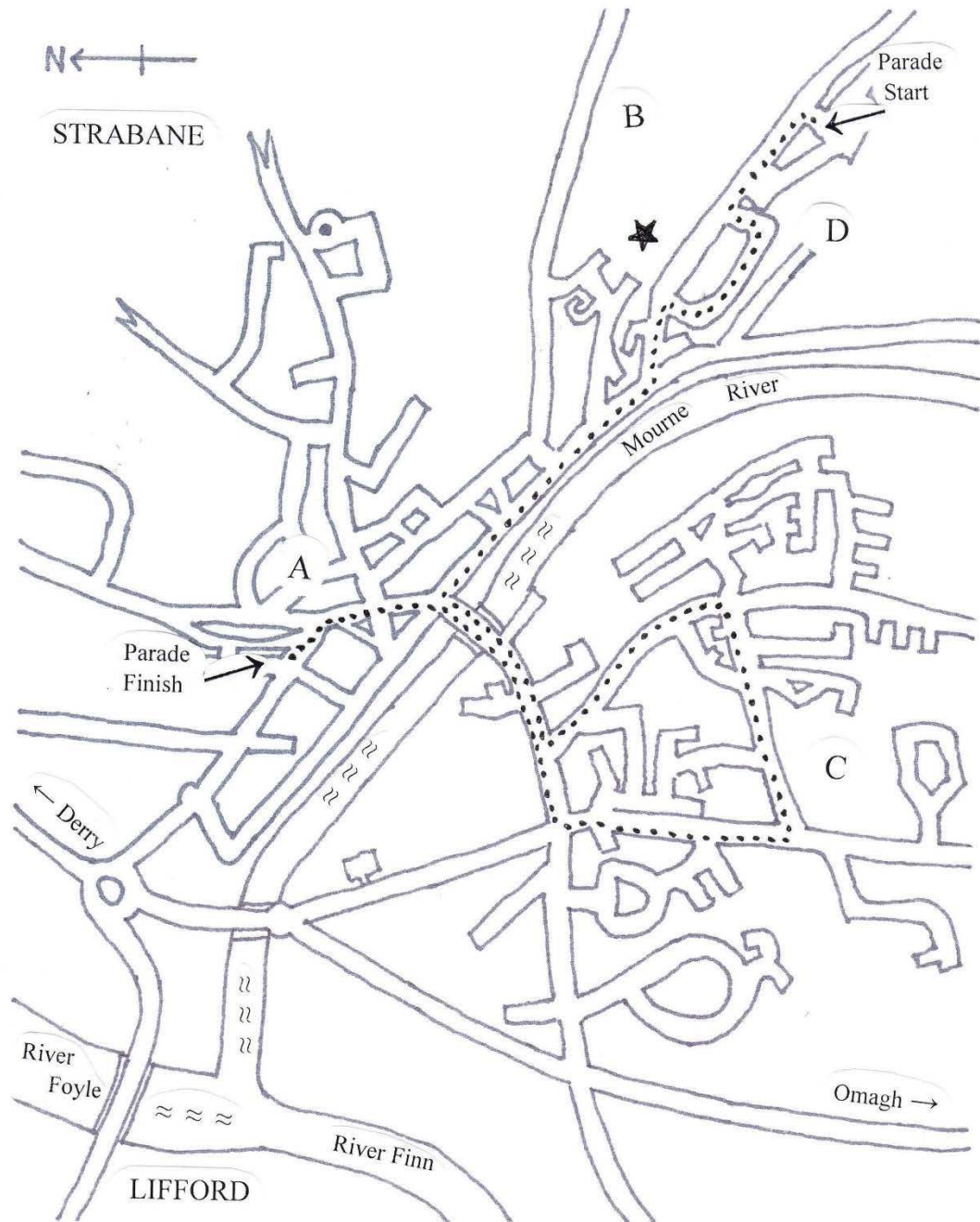
TOWN NAME
Section of town
    A: Strabane town center
    B: Head of the Town
    C: Ballycolman
    D: Strabane Cemetery

≈ ≈ ≈ River
★ Shooting Site (February 23, 1985)
• • • • Commemorative Parade Route

Photo 1. Strabane Memorial Flute Band crossing Clady Bridge.
Commemoration for Jim McGinn, December 11, 2011. (All photos by author)

Photo 2. The Head of the Town hillside with Tricolor marking where Charlie
Breslin, Michael and Davy Devine were shot.

Photo 3. Parents and students of the Gaelscoil make St. Brigid's Day crosses out of rushes.

Photo 4. Memorial to the "three lads."

Photo 5. St. Patrick's Day parade in Strabane, March 17, 2012.

Photo 6. Easter morning, 2012, climbing the hill to Strabane Cemetery.

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