Belfast's 21st Century Apartheid:

How Does Segregation Influence How Catholic Youth Experience and Navigate Life in Belfast?

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Abstract

This thesis explores how the entrenched segregation of Belfast's Catholic and Protestant communities influences the daily experiences and navigation of life for Catholic youth growing up in the post-conflict city. To address this inquiry, a qualitative ethnographic approach was conducted to understand how segregation, and the mechanisms that maintain it such as Belfast's interface barriers, combative discursive landscapes, and schools and sports give rise to the making of place. The range of meanings attached to Belfast's segregated spaces influences social norms, patterns of living and ultimately assists with the formation and (re)production of social identities. I argue that the array of meanings derived from segregated (and non-segregated) spaces in Belfast determines how Catholic youth experience and navigate their life throughout the city. To interpret their varied behaviour and strategies to navigate life in different parts of the city, I utilised Mac Ginty's (2014) framework of everyday peace to facilitate a dialogue between the empirical evidence and theory. The thesis concludes by arguing that segregation plays a fundamental role in shaping patterns of life for youth and it ultimately dictates the strategies used to cope with and navigate life in a deeply-divided post-conflict society.

List of Abbreviations

CNR- Catholic/Nationalist/Republican

GAA- Gaelic Athletic Association

GFA- Good Friday Agreement (sometimes referred to as Belfast Agreement)

IRA- Irish Republican Army

NICRA- Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association

PIRA- Provisional Irish Republican Army

PUL- Protestant/Loyalist/Unionist

RUC- Royal Ulster Constabulary

UDA- Ulster Defence Association

USC -Ulster Special Constabulary (or 'B' Specials)

UUP- Ulster Unionist Party

UVF- Ulster Volunteer Force

Table of Contents

"We must learn to live together as brothers or we will perish together as fools"

-Martin Luther King Jr.

Chapter I: Introduction

Since the 1998 passage of the Good Friday Agreement (GFA)[1] which effectively ended the 30-year protracted sectarian conflict collectively known as the Troubles, the once violent centre of Belfast, Northern Ireland has transformed into a vibrant district with internationally-acclaimed art, music and nightlife scenes. Despite the significant progress that has been made in Belfast's city centre, the post-conflict development of Belfast has remained uneven and many working-class neighbourhoods just outside of the city centre are still epitomised by segregation, sectarianism and an unwavering paramilitary influence (Harland, 2011; Byrne, et al., 2016). Due to the de facto segregation present throughout Belfast, many communities surrounding the city centre are labelled according to the primary identity group that occupies a particular area. The two main identity groups in Belfast are the Protestant/unionist/loyalist (PUL) community, who generally wish to remain part of the United Kingdom, and the Catholic/nationalist/republican (CNR) community, who generally support a united Ireland that is independent from the UK.[2] Due to the ongoing legacy of the conflict, as well as the interconnectedness and salience of ethnicity, nationality and political affiliation, the divide between Catholics and Protestants remains stark today within many of Belfast's most marginalized and segregated communities.

Post-conflict Belfast has been afflicted by sporadic intercommunal violence which serves to reinforce the existing divisions. Brexit has recently inflamed tensions as many of its stipulations have clashed with the border and customs legislation as set forth by the GFA and other legal precedents. For example, this tension manifested itself in a week of violent rioting along the interface barriers of West Belfast in April of 2021 where objects such as bricks and petrol bombs were thrown across the physical barriers that keep the two communities separated. The deep rift between the two antagonistic communities continues to dictate the social and structural norms in post-conflict Belfast as many on both sides live parallel, but separate lives (Dixon et al., 2020). Importantly, these entrenched societal divisions are an inherent and normal aspect of life for not only those who grew up during the Troubles, but also for the many young people who have grown up in the years after the conflict.[3] Nowhere are today's divisions between Catholics and Protestants more visible than in West Belfast which experienced some of the worst atrocities that were seen throughout the Troubles. As a result of West Belfast's enduring legacy of conflict and its famed reputation for high levels of segregation and division, I made West Belfast the geographic base for this research with the objective of generating an in-depth understanding of the everyday

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[1] Also known as the Belfast Agreement

[2] Important to note that heterogeneity exists within both communities and PUL and CNR labels are generalizations. While many use the terms Protestant/unionist/loyalist (PUL) or Catholic/nationalist/republican (CNR) interchangeably, not all who identify as Catholic also identify as nationalist/republican and not all who identify as Protestant also identify as loyalist/unionist and vice versa. The terms Catholic and Protestant are used frequently to describe one's overarching group identity whereas the terms republican/nationalist and loyalist/unionist are usually more specific to one's political ideology. For clarity in this thesis, the term 'Protestant' will be synonymous with PUL and the term 'Catholic' will be synonymous with CNR.

[3] For the purposes of this research, I define young people as individuals between the ages of 12-25. The terms 'youth' and 'young people' will be used interchangeably within this thesis.

experiences of Catholic youth and how they experience and navigate life in this segregated post-conflict environment. In doing so, I utilised an ethnographic approach where I collected empirical data by engaging in countless informal conversations, conducting a focus group interview and taking and analysing numerous photographs during a one-month fieldwork period in Belfast.

Overview of West Belfast

West Belfast is served by two separate bus routes that extend westwards from the city centre out towards the overshadowing Belfast Hills that dominate Belfast's western horizon; bus route 10 extends down the Catholic/nationalist Falls Road while route 11 stretches down the Protestant/loyalist Shankhill Road. These two major West Belfast thoroughfares, and the red-brick housing estates adjacent to them, have become synonymous with the Troubles and its enduring legacy of violence, division, and sectarianism (Hamill, 2010, p. 18). The Shankhill and Falls Roads are marked in locals' minds as territory that belongs exclusively to either the PUL or CNR community and while the two communities are rigidly divided, they are both mutually plagued by socio-economic deprivation, poor health, substance abuse, and crime (Hamill, 2010; Browne and Dwyer, 2014). For those living within these communities, the legacy of the conflict remains etched into people's minds as murals, flags, graffiti, and political messages are commonplace and serve to mark territory and promote a sense of collective identity. For example, if you take bus route 11 down the 'loyalist' Shankhill Road, you will see Union Jacks flying on lampposts, shrines for 'Her Majesty The Queen' and sensationalist murals depicting loyalist paramilitary heroes and innocent victims of the IRA 'genocide'. In a sharp contrast, if you took route 10 down the Catholic Falls Road which runs parallel to the Shankhill Road, you will observe countless murals and symbolic displays promoting Irish nationalism, commemoration for past Irish republican martyrs and solidarity with other famous liberation movements such as the Palestinian struggle against Israel. Furthermore, local businesses along the Shankhill and Falls Roads such as corner shops and pubs are often considered to be distinctly Catholic or Protestant. These labels are usually implicitly applied based on the physical location of the business within a certain community but flags, murals, and particularly within Catholic areas, the Irish language or Irish names on the exterior of businesses all play a role in reinforcing social segregation as people go about their daily lives. The CNR and PUL labels that are applied within West Belfast are "powerful symbols of political and cultural identity forged during thirty-five years of severe social and economic problems and civil and political turmoil"…In other words, living in West Belfast is "a way of life" and undeniably, this way of life is heavily influenced by which side of the peace wall an individual resides on (Hamill, 2010, pp. 21-22).[4]

Catholics and Protestants in West Belfast generally live separately, attend segregated schools, frequent different local businesses and socialise in separate areas of the city (Hughes et al., 2007). Today's divide between the two communities is most visible through the physical segregation of working-class residential communities as 94 percent of public housing estates

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[4] Where CNR and PUL communities border, they are referred to as interfaces, or interface areas. Oftentimes, an interface barrier or peace wall is present within these areas which physically separate the two communities.

within Belfast are single-identity (Northern Ireland Housing Executive, 2016). While the Shankhill and Falls Roads run within a kilometre of each other, they feel worlds apart with a domineering 10-meter high peace wall that runs halfway between them. This extended peace wall, which was originally erected as a temporary structure during the onset of the Troubles, still looms ominously over the homes where the two communities interface. Areas on the other side of the wall belonging to the outgroup are often regarded as no-go areas as the "fear caused by several decades of violence has undermined the capacity of most within highly segregated places to undertake normal mobility practices" (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006, p. 4). This segregation is perpetually reproduced "by the numerous decisions that people make on a daily basis" such as "where to live, which school to send the children to, where to shop, which side of the road to walk on" (Hamilton et al., 2008, p. 11). In addition to the sharply divided living patterns, the various republican and loyalist paramilitary groups that exert control over several segregated working-class communities are another enduring facet of post-conflict West Belfast.

Paramilitary Influence

Despite the many successes of the Good Friday Agreement, it was decidedly weak in addressing paramilitaries as it only contained one brief section in regards to the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons and stated that the decommissioning process would ultimately be achieved through "good faith" (Belfast Agreement, 1998, p. 20). While the Provisional IRA (PIRA) acted in good faith and gave up their arms in 2005, various republican breakaway groups unsatisfied with the concessions made in the peace process have vowed to continue the armed struggle until a united Ireland is attained. These groups have been described as more akin to 'political cults' rather than the revolutionary political movement that the PIRA spearheaded and ultimately represented (McGlinchey, 2021). In addition, the difficulty in disbanding Northern Ireland's paramilitaries has proven difficult due in part to the lack of consensus as to how to define a paramilitary or 'dissident group'.[5] Within the CNR community, these organizations range from "political and community associations to active local groups claiming association with past political goals and who may engage in drug dealing and other economic crimes as well as violent punishment for targeted youth" (Byrne, 2016, p. 1) This ambiguity can be highlighted within the past decade as a dissident group called the Real IRA, along with their political wing called the 32-County Sovereignty Movement, merged with a community vigilante group called Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD) to form what is now called the New IRA (McGlinchey, 2021, p. 718). On the loyalist side, the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and Ulster Defence Force (UDA), which were both active during the Troubles, still hold power and influence over several PUL communities in Belfast and have access to weapons, bases of support and engage in acts of organised crime and terrorism. According to reports, these loyalist groups have a combined 12,500 members in Northern Ireland (Morris, 2020; Dempster, 2020)

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[5] A dissident group in the Northern Ireland context refers to a group of Republicans who oppose the concessions that were made in the Good Friday Agreement. Dissident republicans generally support the use of violence to attain the ultimate goal of a united Ireland.

Within both Protestant and Catholic areas of West Belfast, many residents still hold a romanticised view of paramilitaries which legitimizes their continued existence and any acts of violence that they perpetrate. The glorification of paramilitaries is expressed through the symbolic representations that are prevalent throughout West Belfast such as murals, flags, community memorial gardens, and communal traditions that range from ceremonial parades to rebel music nights in local pubs.[6] Whether walking to school, shopping, or taking the bus into town, people of all ages in West Belfast are surrounded by images, symbols, and narratives that promote and legitimize their side's past struggle and the paramilitary 'heroes, defenders, or martyrs' who vigorously served their community. While Northern Ireland's paramilitaries have become less militant today, paramilitary activity continues to influence, coerce and victimise many young people within numerous segregated and marginalised communities throughout Belfast (Byrne et al., 2016; Lucas et al., 2019).

As a result, growing up in West Belfast comes with a universally understood label in Northern Ireland. It's a creed in itself with a pre-determined yet socially constructed set of values, expectations, and beliefs that individuals must embody to fit-in. Sometimes, this means embracing West Belfast's legacy of violence, paramilitarism, and animosity towards the outgroup which all have detrimental implications on Northern Ireland's peace and reconciliation processes. As a result, young people, and particularly young males, are confronted with interrelated, and sometimes contradictory associations with social identity, family and peer influence, masculinity, rebellion, and West Belfast's long history of sectarian conflict. This research further investigates the entrenched role of the legacy of the conflict and the resultant segregation, division and paramilitarism within West Belfast and brings us to this thesis' central research question:

How does Belfast's structural segregation shape the way that Catholic youth experience and navigate life in the Post-conflict city?

The Gap in Literature and Objectives of this Research

The primary objective of this research is to fill the gap in the existing academic literature that overlooks segregation, and the mechanisms that maintain it, in understanding how it affects the navigation of life for youth in West Belfast. Before approaching this research puzzle and the corresponding gap in academic literature, a definition of segregation was acquired to construct a foundation for further analysis. This thesis employs Reardon and O'Sullivan's (2004, p. 122) definition of segregation which they define as "the extent to which individuals of different groups occupy or experience different social environments". Within the Northern Ireland context, a substantial amount of research has been dedicated to studying segregation, its everyday impacts and the physical and psychological mechanisms that maintain it. Existing literature indicates that Belfast's segregation continues to exist due to its various physical manifestations and the related psychological impacts of segregation that mutually reinforce one another. To illustrate, Shirlow

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[6] Irish rebel music refers to Irish folk music with lyrics that are nationalistic/republican in nature and it often glorifies the Irish struggle against Britain.

and Murtagh (2006) argue that 'space matters' and segregation and its physical and symbolic manifestations provide meaning to space that facilitates notions of inclusion and difference. The meanings derived from segregated space such as the demarcation of territory through flags, murals, and interface barriers fortify social identities for those living there while simultaneously promoting intergroup avoidance and other adverse psychological responses (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006, pp. 1-10). Correspondingly, Hughes et al. (2007, p. 40) identified intergroup "fear, anxiety, and suspicion" as the chief psychological barriers to intergroup contact which are continually reinforced by the physical manifestations of segregation that mark territory belonging to the outgroup. While segregation and its various socio-psychological impacts have been well-researched in the context of Northern Ireland, a significant gap exists in understanding how segregation influences the navigation of life for youth in West Belfast. While Hamill (2010) and Harland (2011) explored the lives of youth in Northern Ireland, they each rely heavily on their own empirical insights while failing to integrate any relevant social theory to interpret their findings. This thesis expands on the existing literature by connecting segregation, the meanings it (re)produces and its socio-psychological ramifications to the understudied and undertheorized theme of understanding how youth experience and navigate life in post-conflict West Belfast.

The qualitative methods utilised during the research process provide an in-depth and nuanced understanding highlighting how the segregated structure of Belfast attaches meaning to place which reinforces ethnic boundaries and social identities while institutionalising outgroup fear and division. These outcomes of segregation synthesise to heavily influence the seemingly subliminal decisions, attitudes and daily routines of youth. While none of the youth that I engaged with had any personal memory of the Troubles, the long legacy of sectarian strife and the resultant social and residential segregation still cast a dark shadow over West Belfast. Crucially, this research focuses on young people in post-conflict West Belfast for two primary reasons. Firstly, youth are most susceptible to falling victim to the negative influences within society and are especially vulnerable to coercion, exploitation, and victimisation on behalf of West Belfast's paramilitary groups (Harland, 2011; Hamill 2010). Secondly, the decisions, attitudes and everyday routines of today's youth provide some insight as to what the future holds in Northern Ireland in regards to inter-communal relations, the ongoing peace process, and paramilitarism. Ultimately, the insights gained from this research not only provide the reader with an enhanced understanding of the various mechanisms through which segregation shapes the lives of youth in West Belfast, but these findings are also relevant for policymakers, academics and practitioners who are engaged with Northern Ireland's ongoing peace process and those involved with promoting reconciliation and the development of young people in deeply-divided societies.

To fully break down and analyse the above research question, this thesis will be broken down into six chapters including this introduction. The next chapter highlights the relevant history of the origins of division, segregation, conflict and paramilitarism in Northern Ireland. The historical context is crucial to understand why segregation, division and paramilitarism still exist and how Northern Ireland's history of violence continues to shape attitudes and influence the way of life in Belfast today. The third chapter explains the research methodology and the various

qualitative approaches that were taken to generate data for this thesis. The fourth chapter focuses specifically on the spatial analysis of identity and how the various mechanisms that maintain segregation in Belfast also reinforce social identity for those living in segregated communities. This chapter will draw upon the empirical data collected from the field to initiate a dialogue between segregation and the theoretical concepts of place and the (re)production of identity. Social identity theory and its key underlying principles will be the theoretical grounds through which the empirical data is interpreted. The fifth chapter builds upon the dialogue generated in the previous chapter and draws upon the empirical insights of how West Belfast youth experience and navigate life. This chapter will build on Mac Ginty's (2014) theoretical framework of everyday peace to provide an enhanced understanding of how youth navigate the complexities of growing up in Belfast. As this chapter will highlight, everyday peace is applied differently depending on the physical location of youth when situated in a segregated versus non-segregated environment. And finally, this thesis will end with a discussion and conclusion that re-states the paper's main findings while also noting a few of the limitations of this research and providing recommendations for further research.

Chapter II: Historical Context

While analysing the origins of the Troubles and the various sources of contention are not a primary aim of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge the salient role of history within the two antagonistic communities. Collective history and the past struggles and sacrifices that both sides endured are continually constructed through discourses which play a fundamental role in shaping an individual's sense of identity. The collective history of each respective community is something that is firmly latched among residents and is perpetually reified as it provides the people there with a sense of pride through the commemoration of the community's shared history. But like everything else within Belfast's segregated and working-class communities, the historical narratives that flourish are strictly divided along ethnic lines and are seen as a continued source of contention between the two communities. Therefore, it's important to acknowledge my positionality within the very contested history of Northern Ireland. The structure of this chapter is founded upon highlighting the salient historical events for those living in Catholic West Belfast where the bulk of the fieldwork was conducted. As a result, the historical insights I gained during the research process were presented from the Catholic/nationalist perspective. This is not to say that I am deliberately providing a partial or one-sided narrative to express my personal viewpoint on Northern Irish history. This section is instead a reflection of the history that I viewed as significant in regards to the shaping of ethnic boundaries, social identities and everyday experiences for youth within Catholic West Belfast. In doing so, this chapter concisely highlights how the past 400 years of history in the region have resulted in segregation, division, and antagonism within West Belfast's working-class communities and have shaped the identities, attitudes and traditions for those living there today.

The Origins of Ireland's Partition and Social Division

Today's political strife, and the resulting segregation, division, and paramilitarism within working-class areas of Belfast stems from hundreds of years of contentious history between the PUL and CNR communities. This antagonism is largely rooted in the ethno-political dynamics between the two communities which have continuously been shaped by the relationship between the island of Ireland (making up both the Republic and Northern Ireland today) and the hegemonic power of Great Britain. For centuries, Great Britain ruled the whole island of Ireland and beginning in the 16th and 17th centuries, Scottish migrants who were overwhelmingly Protestant immigrated across the North Sea to the province of Ulster which makes up Ireland's nine northernmost counties. The new Scottish arrivals set up plantations that were based on "segregationist principles" as the native Irish farmers were driven away to the less fertile hills and lowlands while the Scots took the fertile lands in the valleys (O'Leary and McGarry, 1996, p. 57). In 1690, the British domination of Ulster was bolstered for generations after the Protestant King William of Orange defeated the Catholic King James II at the Battle of Boyne, an event that is still widely celebrated within the PUL community today. This British domination of Ireland was evident through the establishment of penal laws that endured until the 19th century which prevented Catholics from owning property, holding political power, obtaining professions, and outlawed

Catholics from speaking Gaelic or playing Irish music (Howell, 2016, p. 21; O'Leary and McGarry, p. 69). This repression of the native Irish Catholic population and their exclusion from political representation led to the emboldening of their social identity and resulted in collective mobilisation to address their grievances. The mobilisation manifested itself in nationalist movements and "broad-based Irish republicanism which sought to create an independent Irish nation-state" (O'Leary and McGarry, p. 75).

In 1916, the will for an Irish nation-state came to fruition as nationalist/republican insurrectionists rebelled against the British government in Dublin and issued the Proclamation of the Irish Republic which sought to form an independent Irish Republic for the entire island. While the British soon thereafter suppressed the insurrection which would later be known as the Easter Rising, the uprising bolstered popular support for an Irish Republic and the nationalist Sinn Féin political party (O'Leary and McGarry, 1996, p. 97). This nationalist movement lead to the Irish War of Independence which was fought between the newly formed IRA and the British Forces. This war ended through the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 which eventually led to the partitioning of the island of Ireland. This established the majority Catholic/nationalist Irish Free State to the south (now the Republic of Ireland) and the majority Protestant/unionist Northern Ireland which has since remained part of the UK. While most in the Irish Free state were Catholic and supported the nationalist movement, there were internal disagreements over the status of Northern Ireland. Some within the Irish Free State supported the compromise laid out by Anglo-Irish Treaty and thus the continued partition of Ireland while others were vehemently opposed to the Treaty as they supported nothing less than a united Ireland. This led to the onset of the Irish Civil War in 1922 between the anti-Treaty IRA who fought for a united Ireland and the pro-Treaty Irish Free State who were content with the compromise dividing Ireland into two states. During this civil war, unionists in the North established a loyalist paramilitary police force to help ensure that Northern Ireland would remain part of the Union (Munck, 1985, p. 247). With additional support from the British Government, the pro-Treaty forces won in 1923 and the island of Ireland remains partitioned nearly 100 years after the end of the civil war. Since the establishment of Northern Ireland, there have been intermittent periods of violence that have been rooted in the fundamental disagreements over the political status of Northern Ireland belonging to the UK and the systematic inequalities between Catholics and Protestants.

The Turbulent 1920s and the Emergence of Segregation in Belfast

The industrial revolution transformed Belfast into a thriving industrial city known for its linen and shipbuilding industries. The largely Protestant Belfast had seen an influx of Irish Catholics in the second half of the 19th century as many Irish came north to Belfast to escape economic hardship and to find work during the city's industrial boom. Harland & Wolff, the pioneering shipbuilding company most famous for building the ill-fated RMS Titanic, based their shipbuilding operations in Belfast and employed thousands of Catholic and Protestant workers. With that said, Catholics were usually seen as inferior and a source of cheap labour while Protestants received preferential treatment in the workplace (O'Leary and McGarry, 1996, p. 129).

In 1920, the Harland & Wolff shipyards became the epicentre of sectarian violence as thousands of Catholics, and other 'non-loyal' workers were forcibly expelled from their jobs (Moore, 2020). These workplace expulsions were not isolated to just the shipyards as various other industries also expelled Catholics in response to the escalating Irish War of Independence and increasing IRA violence in the north of Ireland which led to a heightened mistrust of Catholics, nationalists and socialists in Belfast. These workplace expulsions marked the beginning of two years of sectarian violence and rioting between Catholics and Protestants as both sides retaliated against perceived injustices perpetrated by the other side. The violence and rioting primarily took place on the streets of Belfast where armed unionists/loyalists attacked Catholic homes and businesses and an estimated 23,000 Catholics were forced out of their homes (Ó Corráin, 2020; Moore, 2020). As a result, residential segregation increased during this period as people who are "confronted with violence, or even its perceived threat" usually "seek protection" (Doherty and Poole, 1997, p. 522; Doherty, 1989, p. 152). Choosing to live amongst in-group members is a primary means to achieve this sense of protection as evidenced by sharp increases in Belfast's levels of residential segregation after periods of widespread social unrest (Doherty, 1989, p. 151). While the violence was quelled in 1922 and a period of relative peace ensued, the bitterness, discrimination and division persisted in the following decades and political tensions reignited in the 1960s which marked the beginning of a tumultuous future in Northern Ireland.

Unionist Domination and the Emergence of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Movement

While Belfast was a relatively peaceful city after the sectarian violence that erupted in the early 1920s, Protestant-unionists had "hegemonic control" for the next five decades as they dominated the political, legal, administrative, and socio-economic spheres of Northern Irish society (O'Leary and McGarry, 1996, pp. 110-147). This domination was achieved through plurality rule elections and the manipulation of electoral boundaries to maintain the Ulster Unionist Party's (UUP) electoral supremacy as they won every Northern Irish election between the years of 1920 and 1969 (O'Leary and McGarry, p. 111; Cameron Report, 1969). As a result, Catholics were largely excluded from political and administrative positions within the unionist government and received an inadequate allocation of housing by government authorities which perpetuated unionist control (Cameron Report, para. 229). Furthermore, the state police forces, which were then delegated to the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and an auxiliary militia force called the Ulster Special Constabulary (USC, or 'B Specials'), were militarised forces that essentially served as "instruments of [the unionist] party government" (Cameron Report, para. 230; Mulcahy, 2005). Within working-class Catholic areas, the RUC was viewed with mistrust as only 11 percent of the force was made up of Catholics in 1969 and widespread allegations of police misconduct toward Catholics were made in the years preceding the Troubles (Mulcahy, 2005, 7; Cameron Report, para. 230).

In response to the systematic discrimination against Catholics, the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was formed in 1967. The NICRA was established as a non-sectarian organisation which pledged to:

1. Defend the basic freedoms of all citizens.
2. To protect the rights of the individual.
3. To highlight all possible abuses of power.
4. To guarantee freedom of speech, assembly and association.
5. To inform the public of their lawful rights.[7]

The establishment of the NICRA was inspired by the U.S. Civil Rights Movement and the doctrine of non-violent resistance as championed by the likes of Dr Martin Luther King Jr. This inspiration likely stemmed from the various parallels between African-Americans in the Deep South and Catholics in Northern Ireland. For example, Catholic activists in Northern Ireland embraced the phrase 'White Negro' as they similarly viewed themselves as a marginalised and subordinate community who were separate and unequal to Protestant-Unionists (De Fazio, 2009, pp. 164-165). With that said, the two movements sharply diverged in practice. In a stark contrast to the US Civil Rights movement, "the commitment to nonviolence was only a rhetorical claim" in Northern Ireland and Catholics had no distinguishable civil rights leader who was committed to non-violent resistance like Dr King (De Fazio, 2009, p. 164; Purdie, 1990, p. 3). While the NICRA was not inherently sectarian and was open to both Catholics and Protestants, the organisation's primary aims were all closely intertwined with those of Irish republicanism. Furthermore, the NICRA had obvious militant underpinnings as "there was a direct, causal, practical, and ideological connection between the 1960s IRA and the civil rights initiative" (English, 2008, p. 219). Despite the IRA's collusion with the NICRA, the widespread desire among Catholics for the expansion of civil rights and reform gave the NICRA a broad swath of support, even among people who did not share the IRA's philosophy (English, pp. 235-236). With this broad range of support, hundreds of civil rights activists, which included many moderate Catholics, prominent politicians, IRA members and left-wing extremists descended on Derry/Londonderry for a civil rights march across the city on the 5th of October, 1968 (Cameron report, 1969). This march ultimately ended in bloodshed as the largely Protestant RUC broke up the protest by charging the crowd with batons which injured many and sparked two days of violent rioting in the city (Melaugh, 2022). This event served to unite Catholics across Northern Ireland in anger and the mobilisation within the CNR community provoked a matched response from the PUL community which was rooted in hostility towards Catholics (Purdie, p. 3). This rupture in Northern Ireland's sectarian fault lines marked the beginning of 30 years of ethnic conflict.

The Troubles

The summer of 1969 was especially contentious in Northern Ireland as riots broke out across Belfast and other cities across the country. Violent mobs from both communities took to the streets of Belfast in August of 1969 and hurled stones and petrol bombs at members and property belonging to the outgroup. Families were forced out and sometimes 'burnt' out of their homes if they were living in a community that was considered to be mixed or belonging to the

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[7] From Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association, 1978, "We Shall Overcome"

outgroup (English, 2008, p. 241; McCann, 2019). Bombay Street is one of West Belfast's most famous examples where Catholic families were forced out of their homes as a loyalist mob burnt every house on the street to the ground. As a result, a new branch of the IRA called Provisional IRA (PIRA) "arose out of the ashes of Bombay Street" and vowed to defend Catholic neighbourhoods as both the RUC and the British army failed to do so (English, p. 254). This sudden onset of sectarian violence led to increased levels of segregation and between the years of 1969 and 1976, an estimated 45,000-60,000 individuals were forced from their homes which at the time represented the largest forced displacement of civilians after World War II in Europe (Connolly and McIntosh 2012, p. 58). It soon became clear to political leaders in both Belfast and London that the RUC was unable to stop the violence so the British Army was called in on the 14th of August, 1969. In an attempt to assuage the violence, the British Army erected the first peace walls to physically separate the mostly Catholic-nationalist Falls Road and the Protestant-loyalist Shankhill Road. Many of the peace lines and other forms of security infrastructure that were originally constructed by the British Army over 50 years-ago still exist in Belfast today.

The British military presence in Belfast was originally welcomed among Catholics in Belfast as many felt that the RUC had not done an adequate job of protecting Catholics from loyalist violence (Rudolph and Lahneman, 2013, p. 37). This sentiment quickly turned sour as the "British army implemented curfews, raided homes, and imprisoned many Nationalists without trials" (Rudolph and Lahneman, p. 37). The Falls curfew in 1970 was one such example where British troops raided homes in the Catholic Falls Road area in search of weapons or any other information that could be of help to British intelligence. As a result, Catholic youth responded with violence which escalated into rioting and later gun fights between the military and the IRA and PIRA. The whole area was put under a 36-hour curfew which further enraged the Catholic community and was a decisive turning point in relations between Catholics and the British forces (Cochrane, 2013, p. 128). This anger only increased throughout the early 1970s as British troops killed 11 unarmed civilians in Ballymurphy, West Belfast in 1971 and again in Derry/Londonderry in 1972 when troops opened fire at a civil rights march that killed 14 Catholic civilians which would later be known as Bloody Sunday. After these violent incidents, the PIRA responded with a systematic armed campaign with modern weaponry imported from the Gaddafi regime in Libya which included surface-to-air missiles, explosives, and heavy-calibre machine guns (O'Brien, 1995, p. 129). The PIRA carried out attacks throughout Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland as well as in England and mainland Europe. Some IRA attacks included bombings in high profile locations such as 10 Downing Street and Hyde Park in London and also included high profile targets such as Lord Mountbatten of the Royal Family and Margaret Thatcher in a failed assassination attempt that resulted in the bombing of a hotel in Brighton. While loyalist paramilitaries such as the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) carried out numerous attacks on mostly local Catholic targets, these attacks were no match to the IRA/PIRA's armed campaign that resulted in over 1,700 deaths throughout the Troubles (Sutton, n.d.).

As the armed campaign stretched on, it soon became clear to both republican paramilitaries and the British government that neither side would be victorious and negotiations towards a ceasefire began in the 1990s. This resulted in the 1994 paramilitary ceasefires and four years later, with the support of the Bill Clinton Administration, the Good Friday Agreement was passed which established a power-sharing agreement between nationalist and unionist political parties and provided frameworks for the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons and future policing and security (Belfast Agreement, 1998). The passage of the GFA finally brought an end to the 30-year conflict where one in two people in Northern Ireland had a friend, relative or acquaintance killed during the conflict which ultimately resulted in over 3,500 deaths, 47,000 injuries and more than 15,000 charged with terrorist offences (Gallagher, 1995 p. 27; Melaugh et al., n.d.) Above all, the conflict sharpened divisions between Protestants and Catholics and while the GFA ended the worst of the violence, it has since been unable to bridge the divide between the two communities and promote meaningful reconciliation within Belfast's urban working-class areas.

Post-Conflict Belfast (1998-Present)

The Troubles are largely seen as a lamentable relic of the past in Belfast's central business district and in the Cathedral and Titanic Quarters of the city where economic investment and tourism have steadily increased since the passage of the Good Friday Agreement. But as Shirlow (2006, p. 101) points out, most tourists walking around Belfast are "physically and cognitively" distant from any trace of the conflict as tourists are "corralled" into the new and 'chic' parts of the city that "are made to look acceptable". Marginalised working-class areas to the north, east and west of the city centre are mostly void of tourists and the revenue they bring to the city.[8] Within many of Belfast's working-class areas, the legacy of the conflict is entrenched and suspicion of the ethnic other, or any outsider for that matter, is commonplace. As a result, segregation persists and "is perpetuated through the need to redeliver the meaning of separated living through…narratives of inclusion, practice, and belief" (Shirlow, p. 103). This reproduction of segregation through narratives is achieved through the markings of territory that are both physical and symbolic and are closely interrelated with the formation of social identity, ethnic boundaries, and intergroup fear. Furthermore, the various paramilitaries of post-conflict Belfast, which vowed to defend their communities during the Troubles, still play a role in maintaining segregation by marking territory through violent narratives and the intimidation of outsiders.

While the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA)[9] has ended its armed campaign, several smaller dissident republican splinter groups that are opposed to the ongoing peace process have emerged in the post-conflict years. These small republican factions, as well as their larger

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[8] There has been a thriving dark-tourism industry that consists of 'black cab tours' and walking tours that bring tourists to the prominent locations of the Troubles in West Belfast. With that said, most of the tourist revenue is spent in and around the city centre which has the city's highest concentration of hotels, restaurants, pubs, shops, and museums (Belfast City Council, n.d.)

[9] The Provisional IRA, which was the most active republican paramilitary during the Troubles, officially announced an end to their armed campaign in 2005. A number of dissident splinter groups who are opposed to the ongoing peace process such as the Continuity IRA (CIRA), Óglaigh na hÉireann (ONH) and the New IRA have since formed and have been labeled as the "greatest national security threats to Northern Ireland" by MI5.

loyalist paramilitary counterparts such as the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) and Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) still exist and exert influence and control over certain segregated working-class communities (Lucas et al., 2019). This is due in part to the segregated structure and the legacy of the conflict within urban working-class areas around Belfast which provide paramilitary groups with legitimacy and a base of support (Rickard and Bakke, 2021). While the various paramilitary organisations in post-conflict Belfast vary greatly in their motives and everyday activities, all of these groups use "their terrorist credentials to increase the fear factor for their victims" (White, 2008). This authority enables paramilitaries to effectively carry out their criminal and/or political objectives through the use of intimidation, extortion, and violence (White, 2008). Within Catholic West Belfast, the community policing and punishment role that paramilitaries take on remains their greatest source of power and influence within the community.[10]

Most of the post-conflict paramilitary violence in Catholic West Belfast has been non-sectarian and has been directed towards members of the CNR community through punishment attacks that are often in response to anti-social behaviour and petty crimes such as drug dealing or joyriding (Rickard and Bakke, 2021; Hamill, 2010). The armed groups perpetrating these attacks rely on the legacy of the conflict and its wartime institutions to exert social control over communities through their role as agents of informal "rough" justice (Rickard and Bakke, 2021). For "paramilitaries to maintain credibility they must meet communal demands to control…crime" which provides a public good to the community and simultaneously plays an instrumental role for these armed groups as they seek to undermine the legitimacy of the state and establish a monopoly of power within the community they operate in (Cavanaugh, 1997, p. 49; Rickard and Bakke, p. 623). This informal policing and punishment role that paramilitaries undertake comes as a result of years of mistrust of state policing within the CNR community and the shared belief among community members that paramilitaries are an effective source of justice compared to the state criminal justice system (Hamill, 2010). Paramilitary punishments come in various forms depending on the severity of the alleged infraction and the individual's personal background (Hamill, p. 67). Warnings, curfews, expulsion from the community, as well as physical punishments such as beatings, and shootings are common forms of paramilitary punishment within West Belfast (Hamill, p. 64). Punishment attacks are often used to "punish young petty offenders, known locally as hoods", who are a loosely defined group of mostly males who are attached to street life, delinquency and rebelling against the authority of the police and the paramilitaries (Hamill, p. 4 and 51-55). For young males growing up in West Belfast, the paramilitaries and the hoods are idolized by some youth as these groups embody the ideals of toughness, rebellion, and masculinity which are all highly valued traits in a community that is still epitomised by years of violent rebellion against the oppressive British authority. As the upcoming chapters will highlight, young people are continually confronted with their community's shared legacy of oppression, rebellion and violent conflict which undoubtedly defines life and the collective attitudes and values for those growing up in Catholic West Belfast.

Chapter Conclusion

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[10] Many locals refer to West Belfast as 'Catholic West Belfast' as Catholics are the majority group in West Belfast.

The purposes of this chapter are twofold; first to provide essential background knowledge of the context of Northern Ireland which enhances the reader's understanding of the upcoming chapters and secondly to highlight the importance of collective history in shaping social identities. Most critically, the chapter displays how the systematic repression of Catholics that spanned hundreds of years led to the emboldening of their identity and collective mobilisation through the nationalist, republican and civil rights movements to address their collective grievances. Within Northern Ireland, this history "is understood primarily in existential terms – as a predicament that gives meaning to people's lives, legitimising their politics and charging their actions with emotive power" (Aretxaga, 1993, p. 224). Today, Catholics latch on to their shared history which is often referenced as their "shared struggle" as it provides a sense of meaning, comradeship, and identity among group members. The upcoming chapters will use empirical data from the field highlighting how the shared history of Catholics contributes to the maintenance of segregation and the construction or reproduction of social identity within Belfast. History unquestionably shapes the everyday experiences and the navigation of life within West Belfast as they are reflections of a contested history between the PUL and CNR communities.

Figure 1: Timeline of Major Events
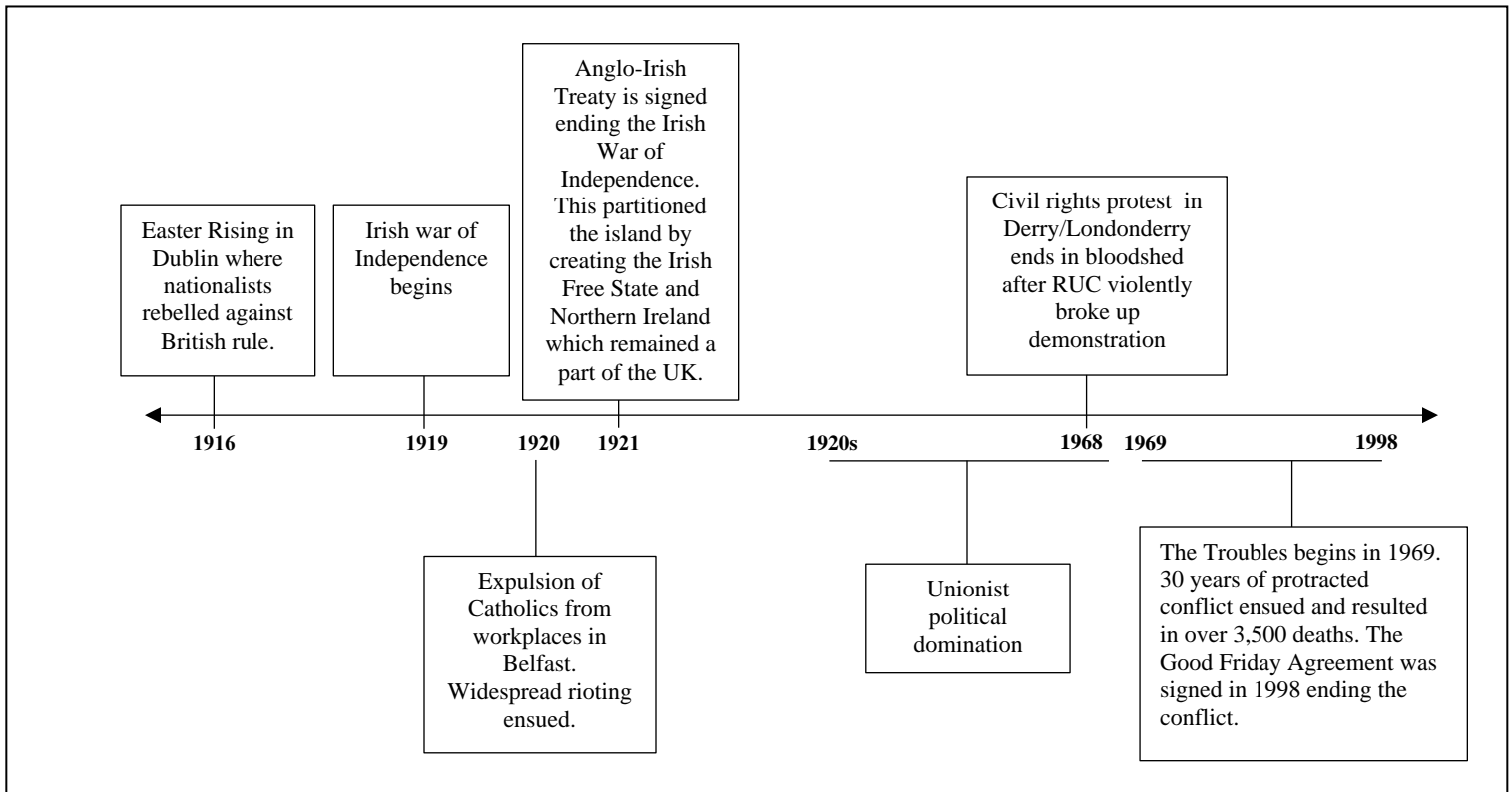
Chapter III: Methodology

To acquire a systematic understanding of how the segregated structure of Belfast shapes how youth experience and navigate life, this research utilised a range of qualitative methods during a one-month fieldwork period in Belfast. An ethnographic approach was utilised which consisted of (1) observations, photographs and countless informal conversations within Belfast's urban segregated areas, (2) an active participant observation approach within a West Belfast youth centre and (3) an informal focus group interview with five members of the youth centre. Furthermore, throughout my time in Belfast, I informally spoke to numerous locals who grew up during the Troubles to gain historical insights as well as an enhanced understanding of the current social and political context in Northern Ireland. While these conversations were often not directly related to my central research question, the accounts of these locals helped guide my research and provided me with critical background knowledge on various subjects relating to Northern Ireland. Each of the qualitative methods that I utilised complements and serves to comprehensively address the research inquiry. To illustrate, this multi-faceted methodological approach generated insights through my first-hand experiences and thus provides an extensive understanding of the interplay between space and the everyday experiences and strategies that individuals use to navigate life in Belfast. Furthermore, my first-hand experiences and observations provide insight into the processes through which identities and attitudes are understood, constructed, and negotiated through one's socialisation in a segregated environment. This methodology section will summarise and justify the research strategies that I utilised throughout the fieldwork and data collection processes.

Data Generation and Analysis

Upon my arrival in Belfast, I began my ethnographic approach where I spent time within some of Belfast's most segregated communities. Aimlessly walking around these segregated communities on both sides of the sectarian divide revealed just how divided and marginalised Belfast's urban working-class areas are. In line with ethnographic tradition, I took detailed fieldnotes on the dynamics of each respective community and any characteristics of the community that I saw as relevant to this research project. These fieldnotes include a diary of my daily activities which provides valuable insights into how the segregated environment of Belfast influenced the way that I experienced and navigated life throughout the fieldwork process. In doing so, I developed a mental map of each community and its boundaries which was facilitated by the prominent physical and symbolic features of segregation that are present throughout Belfast. After taking fieldnotes and photographs each day, I would later analyse my empirical findings from the field by categorising them and attempting to attach them to social theory. Initially, I utilised a pre-made list of sensitising concepts that guided my collection of empirical data and its categorisation but the list of concepts constantly evolved and grew as I observed new patterns and trends in the data. I started this ethnographic note-taking process as soon as I hit the ground in Belfast where I began in the PUL stronghold of East Belfast.

Even though my focus is on youth in Catholic West Belfast, I started the ethnographic approach in the PUL stronghold of East Belfast. This was done with the intention of understanding the narratives and dynamics within a community belonging to the 'ethnic other' in relation to where I would later be conducting the bulk of my fieldwork in Catholic West Belfast. The fieldwork process commenced when I arrived at my East Belfast accommodation on a damp March evening. I immediately began by taking detailed notes of my surroundings.[11] The neighbourhood streets were lined with Belfast's infamous red-brick row-houses that are a defining feature of most working-class areas throughout Belfast. Along the main road adjacent to the neighbourhood, the aroma of fried fish and chips spilt out of the local chippy[12] while local men chatted outside the pub next door while sipping on pints of lager and smoking cigarettes. I spotted a corner shop just across the street to buy a few essential groceries. As I approached the shop, a handwritten sign on the shop's door read "No Manners, No Service". While shopping in the dimly-lit store with scarcely stocked shelves, the woman behind the cash register glared at me with a look of slight confusion as I was clearly not from the block. As I exited the shop and walked back past the pub, the same men smoking cigarettes stood in silence as their heads slowly shifted from left to right as they watched me walk past. As I continued down the residential streets back towards my accommodation, a young man in defiance of the street signs on every block that read, "Alcohol-Free Area", drunkenly stumbled past me and smashed a beer bottle against the pavement. I regularly looked over my shoulder to make sure that he, or no one else was following me.

In the light of the following morning, the loyalist murals, flags, and provocative political messages became more visible. Massive murals depicting masked men with rifles and or UVF paramilitary logos were painted on countless buildings throughout East Belfast. I decided to stop in a small café for a traditional 'Ulster fry' breakfast. The walls of the dining area were decorated with loyalist relics and memorabilia such as black and white photos of past UVF volunteers and framed newspaper articles from decades ago that glorified the loyalist cause. As I walked through the working-class housing estates that sat in the shadows of the bright yellow Harland & Wolff shipbuilding cranes, I observed the tight-knit nature of East Belfast's neighbourhoods and their territorial markings that made it clear that you were about to enter a "Loyalist" community. Neighbours were regularly seen socialising with one another in their front gardens and squinted their eyes in my direction as they tried to piece together who I was as I walked past. After two days in East Belfast and spending time in its segregated and tight-knit housing estates, I had the intuitive feeling that I had raised the suspicion of some locals and decided to leave the area. It felt as if I was intruding on their private property. With that said, I gained valuable first-hand experience by understanding what it feels like to be an outsider within a highly segregated Belfast community. The general feelings of insecurity and fear that I felt while in this community provided me with a foundation for comparison and an experiential understanding of why members of the outgroup would feel on edge in this area. As a result, the responses given by the youth participants embodied a greater meaning to me as I had encountered life in a Belfast community where I didn't

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[11] From fieldnotes dated March 5th
[12] What people in Northern Ireland refer to as their local food takeaway restaurant.

belong. This allowed for comparisons to be made between my own experiences during the fieldwork period and those of the Catholic youth. These comparisons ultimately equip this research with an additional layer of analytical depth that will be unveiled throughout this thesis.

I spent a number of days throughout the next month conducting an ethnography in both the PUL and CNR communities of West Belfast where the insights that I obtained will be highlighted extensively in the upcoming chapters. To acquire these insights, I walked extensively on both sides of Belfast's most prominent peace wall in West Belfast dividing communities along the Catholic Falls Road and the Protestant Shankhill Road. I experienced first-hand how close in proximity these two communities are spatially and yet how distant they are in terms of narratives, beliefs, and traditions. The peace wall that runs between the PUL Shankhill Road and the CNR Falls Road stretches on as far as the eye can see and completely obscures any line of sight into the community on the other side. These walls that fracture West Belfast are covered in artwork; some offering hope for future peace and inclusion, while others depict one-sided sectarian narratives. I later extended my ethnography into the largely Catholic western suburbs of Belfast where there are no interfaces but rather several physically isolated communities with strong ties to Irish nationalism and republican traditions.

These ideologies were evident as I strolled through one of Belfast's largest graveyards called the Milltown Cemetery which lies in Belfast's hilly western suburbs that overlook the city. The cemetery is famous for being the final resting place of many prominent IRA volunteers. Countless gravestones had the Irish tricolour engraved into them along with inscriptions venerating the departed's role as a patriot or Irish freedom fighter. Across from the cemetery sat a rustic pub called the 'Rock Bar' in which numerous Irish flags flew above the front door. To escape the harsh Irish weather, I entered the pub around midday for some warmth and a Guinness. A few grey-haired men sat at the bar quietly nursing their pints while the pub's sole bartender naturally began chatting to me which is customary when an outsider enters a distinctly local pub in Northern Ireland. It was clear that very few people from outside the community would stroll into this West Belfast institution that according to the bartender, was bombed by a rocket during the Troubles. She then discretely pointed to a local man sitting at the end of the bar and zealously described his role as an upstanding IRA volunteer who played a central role in a 1983 IRA prison escape that made international headlines.[13] Upon leaving the pub, the bartender reminded me to come back later for 'rebel music' night which usually hosts a large crowd of people singing along to ballads glorifying the Irish republican cause. These interactions and observations illustrate how the legacy of the conflict is certainly still significant and embraced by many who live in West Belfast. As a result, my observational focus shifted to the people living in West Belfast and their navigation of life in a deeply-divided society.

To further investigate how people experience and navigate the intricacies of growing up in a deeply-divided society, I gained access to a West Belfast youth centre that was located just up the road from the Milltown cemetery in the city's western suburbs. While the youth centre does not discriminate against any race or ethno-religious background, the centre is located in a highly

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[13] From fieldnotes dated April 4th

segregated and deprived West Belfast community called Andersonstown where 95 percent of the population comes from a Catholic background (Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, 2011). For that reason, the overwhelming majority of the centre's members came from a Catholic background and self-identified as Irish. The bulk of the empirical findings for this thesis were generated through the accounts of young people and some of the staff who regularly attended or worked at the youth centre. On my first visit to the youth centre, a focus group was arranged with five youth members of the centre who were all between the ages of 16 and 19 where several themes were discussed in regards to growing up in West Belfast and their day-to-day navigation of life. This focus group highlighted the importance of identity and ethnic boundaries in West Belfast and the semi-structured nature of this group interview allowed me to test the waters and provided me with a solid foundation to build from. Each of the five participants shared similar beliefs and attitudes regarding the realities of life in Belfast and I was able to shape future inquiries based on the insights that I had gained from the focus group. From this point on, I regularly attended the youth centre as if I was one of the members and initiated an active participant observation approach.

Before first arriving at the youth centre, I was unsure of its exact role. Through my observational fieldwork, I first noted that the youth centre plays a central role in the lives of young people in Belfast.[14] Most communities contain at least one youth centre where local youth voluntarily come in and socialise, play games, listen to music and participate in a variety of activities that are facilitated by the organisation. In the youth centre where I conducted my fieldwork, most youth came in to simply 'hang out' as the centre provides a safe place for young people to socialise while simultaneously keeping them off the street and out of trouble. In addition, the youth centre contained pool tables, a snack bar, video games, an outdoor football pitch and sitting areas for young people to socialise. Pop music and oftentimes Irish folk music were regularly played loudly as many of the members danced or sang along. Importantly, the youth centre was a close-knit community where members of all ages knew each other from a young age and were often neighbours, relatives, or classmates. Due to the tight-knit nature of the centre, I was a distinct 'American' outsider conducting research and was initially viewed with wariness and hesitancy among most members. It perplexed most members as to why I came to their relatively isolated and tight-knit community of 'Andystown' to do my research.[15] To diminish my label as an outsider, my first few visits to the centre were dedicated to building rapport and trust among the members. I participated in a number of their regular activities such as playing games of pool and football. I also struck up casual conversations with the members such as discussing hobbies, pop music artists, TikTok influencers, and countless other topics that stemmed far beyond the nature of my research. In doing so, I gained the trust of members and went from being a complete outsider at the beginning of my fieldwork to being a respected individual within the organisation by the time I departed Belfast.

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[14] From fieldnotes dated March 16th
[15] Many youth referred to their own community of Andersonstown as 'Andystown'.
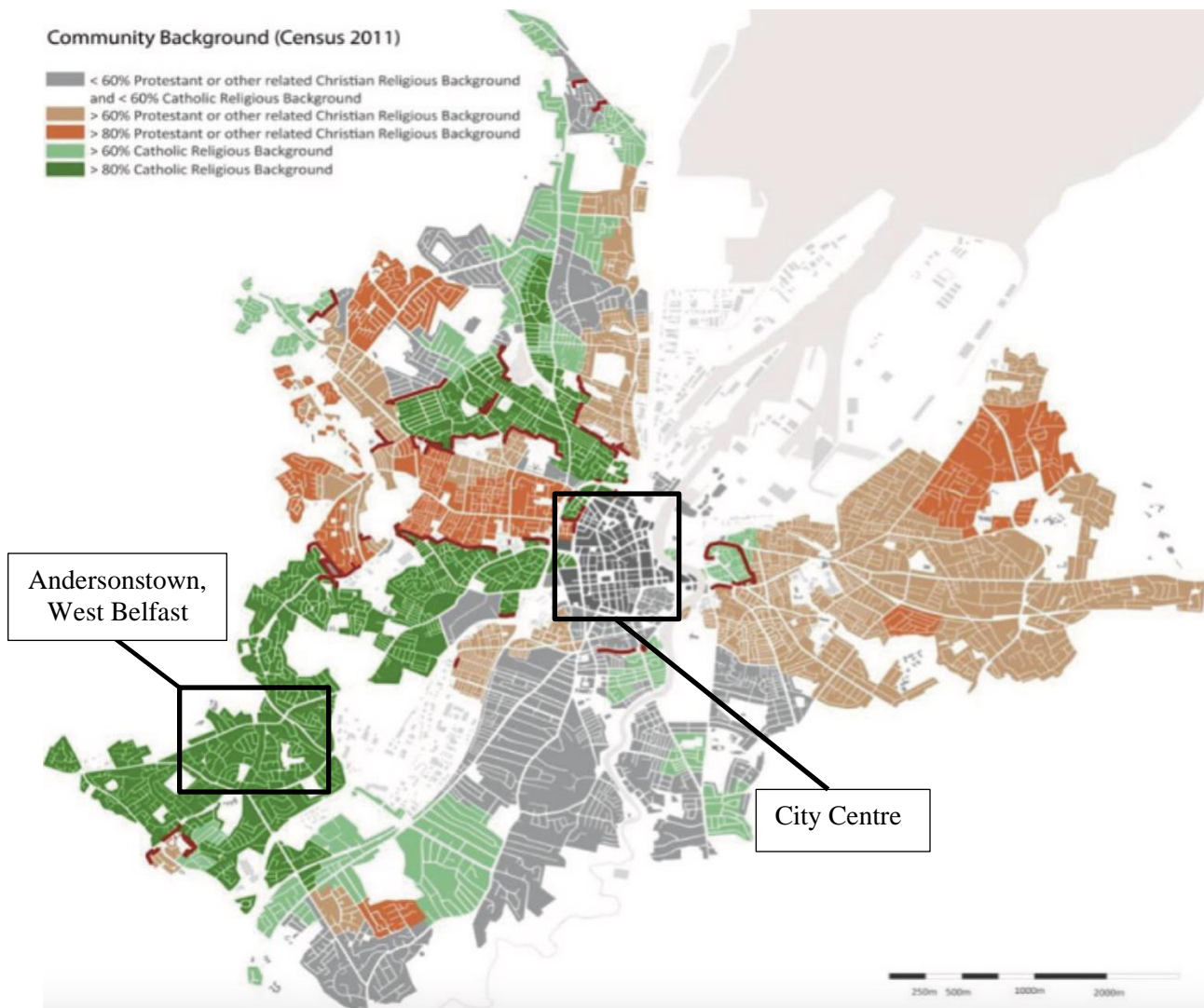
The heightened levels of trust that I gained among the members of the centre did not always correlate to meaningful data collection. The participant observation approach was a constant learning process and I often had to adapt to the circumstances. The most common difficulty I faced was discussing the topics relevant to my research. Many simply did not care about the theme of my research and I often had the inherent feeling that I was a burden by attempting to strike up a conversation relevant to my research at the expense of their social time with friends. Bringing up the themes of segregation, division, and paramilitaries proved to be especially difficult with groups of teenagers who primarily came to the centre to talk gossip or flirt with crushes. I had to adapt to the circumstances so I often actively listened to their conversations and as a result, I was able to gain a real sense of how young people live life in West Belfast. Based on these conversations, I was able to phrase questions accordingly that were relevant to both their conversation as well as my research. This was facilitated more easily due to my age and as a young adult myself, I was not too much older than most of the participants. As a result, I was able to relate and 'fit-in' to their conversations more easily as opposed to an older researcher where hanging out with teenagers has a degree of social awkwardness that would inhibit the rapport and trust-building processes. As a result, I was able to fully immerse myself into the youth centre and participate in their conversations and activities as if I was a teenager which provides a unique and unparalleled perspective into the lives of Catholic youth in West Belfast. Needless to say, this participatory approach required me to continually reflect on ethical guidelines which evolved throughout the fieldwork process.

Ethics

As mandated by Utrecht University, all research involving human subjects is bound by the principle of informed consent. Informed consent proved to be a continual process during the one-month fieldwork period as the informal nature of my conversations and observations within the youth centre raised ethical concerns that need to be addressed. To address these concerns, I first gained written consent from the manager of the youth centre to carry out this research. In doing so, I explicitly stated the scope of my research and the length of time I would need to carry out my fieldwork. After I arrived at the youth centre, I introduced myself to the youth members and stated why I was there and the aims of my research. While I interacted with youth of all ages, the personal accounts of those 16 years old and older will only be admitted. For members of the youth centre under the age of 16, only general observations were admitted as data and no personal information was collected for members of this age bracket. This abides by ethical requirements as set out by Utrecht University which states that individuals younger than 16 are required to have parental consent in order to share personal accounts in university-related research. After my initial visits to the youth centre, informed consent became implied as participants knew why I was there and shared information that they felt comfortable with providing as trust was built over time. Informed consent in participant observation research inherently has a degree of ambiguity but all participants acknowledged that I was there to do research and provided oral consent.

In addition to informed consent, I had the ethical obligation to ensure the privacy of all participants and any information they provided me with. In doing so, all names have been pseudonymized and any information that can easily be traced to an individual has been excluded from this thesis. In addition, I did not record the participants as I believed that it would hinder the trust-building process and the candidness of the conversation so detailed fieldnotes were taken instead. I recorded these notes intermittently during my time spent in the youth centre and all observations and conversations were noted within an hour of their occurrence to ensure the accuracy of the notes. While relying on memory does not provide the same level of word-for-word accuracy as a voice recording, I believe that the conversations I had with the participants were far more open and free-flowing due to the absence of a recording device and thus provided higher quality and candid information. To ensure that all the information provided was secure, the fieldnotes were stored on my password-protected laptop and cell phone in a file that was saved in my secure university email. Most importantly, the doctrine of "do no harm" guided me throughout the entire fieldwork process and I adhered to this doctrine to the best of my ability.

Figure 2: Mapping Belfast's Segregation

Community Background (Census 2011)

- < 60% Protestant or other related Christian Religious Background and < 60% Catholic Religious Background
- > 60% Protestant or other related Christian Religious Background
- > 80% Protestant or other related Christian Religious Background
- > 60% Catholic Religious Background
- > 80% Catholic Religious Background

Andersonstown, West Belfast

City Centre

250m 500m 1000m 2000m

[16] [17]

Source: Sturgeon, et al., 2020, p. 11

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[16] Red lines indicate the locations of interface barriers
[17] Labels were added by me for additional clarity

Chapter IV- Segregation and the Spatial Analysis of Identity

"The question, 'Which side are you on?' has been replaced by the much more fundamental one; "Who are you?"

-Samuel P. Huntington, 1996

Segregation, and the various mechanisms that maintain it within many of Belfast's working-class communities will serve as the lens through which this thesis analyses and interprets the experiences and navigation of life for youth in West Belfast. After providing an operational definition for the concept of segregation and providing a theoretical framework for the spatial construction of identity, this chapter will thereafter be divided into four sections that focus on the various physical and symbolic manifestations that maintain segregation in Belfast. In doing so, this chapter will reveal how the various elements that maintain segregation such as Belfast's peace walls, its discursive landscape, and how schools and sport all add meaning to space and thus serve to embolden social identities on both sides of the divide. As this chapter will display, the meaning derived from the various elements that maintain segregation amalgamates to reinforce and perpetuate the cycle of segregation. To generate an understanding of this process, the first section will explore the various roles that Belfast's interface barriers play in constructing and maintaining social identities through their protective and boundary-defining functions. The second section will explore the discursive landscape within many of Belfast's segregated communities such as murals, community memorial gardens, and other symbolic elements that anchor social identity to a geographic place and ultimately entrench segregation through their one-sided narratives that often vilify the outgroup and bolster solidarity with the in-group. The third section investigates how segregated schools and sports enhance social identity and symbolic representations of the community itself. And finally, the fourth section will explore the lack of boundary policing by the state and the resultant non-state policing by various actors which include members of the in-group, the outgroup, and paramilitaries. These four sections will highlight how the elements and mechanisms that maintain and reproduce segregation in Belfast give rise to the making of place and the (re)production of social identity.

Overview of Segregation

To provide a theoretically informed analysis of segregation in Belfast, an operational definition must first be established. As mentioned earlier, this thesis defines segregation as "the extent to which individuals of different groups occupy or experience different social environments" (Reardon and O'Sullivan, 2004, p. 122) While segregation is often measured quantitatively by using an index of dissimilarity within a geographically defined unit of analysis, this qualitative approach dives deeper than any quantitative approach by investigating and understanding the primary drivers of segregation. In doing so, this chapter explores the various characteristics within segregated communities that either promote, maintain, or reinforce the separation of social environments between Protestants and Catholics in Belfast. Instead of merely explaining the segregation on a macro-level as most quantitative approaches do, the qualitative

methods utilised in this chapter bring about an understanding of the numerous underlying mechanisms that are responsible for the perpetuation of segregation in Belfast. These underlying mechanisms that maintain segregation can only be properly understood when immersed in a segregated environment. The intricate elements of segregation and how they are experienced and interpreted by locals will serve as the indicators that are used to conceptualise segregation. These indicators include the physical interface infrastructure, (inter)communal dynamics, symbolic narratives, and their roles in place-making and reinforcing social identity and are most effectively explored through a qualitative approach. The following sections will make sense of these underlying mechanisms to provide an in-depth understanding of why individuals of different groups occupy different social environments in Belfast.

The Spatial Construction of Identity

In Belfast, place is synonymous with identity as "Belfast remains not as a city but as an assemblage of 'villages' within which detachment from other places is crucial in terms of identity formation" (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006, 17). Within Belfast, people often refer to themselves as from these smaller administrative regions or 'villages' of the city such as 'Clonard, Ballymurphy, or Andersonstown' to name a few. Being from these segregated sub-regions of the city is directly associated with membership of the CNR community and the stereotyped cultural values that are associated with being Irish, Catholic or nationalist. The process of being socially categorised based on spatial principles highlights the relationship between place and the social meaning that a place constructs and reproduces. In other words, social identity is "about the relationship between the individual and the social environment" (Demmers, 2017, p. 22). This section is concerned with the question of how meaning is derived from these categorised social environments and how these meanings perpetuate segregation and re(produce) social identities for those living there.

To highlight the interconnectedness between social identity and place, an understanding of the underlying components that construct and reproduce social identities must first be established. Tajfel and Turner (1979) argue that social identity is constructed and reproduced through three sequential processes of (1) social categorisation, (2) social identification and (3) social comparison. Social categorisation is the process through which groups of people are labelled and categorised to help individuals make sense of the social world. According to Fearon and Laitin (2000), this process consists of two interrelated features; first, there are "rules of membership that decide who is and is not a member of the category" and secondly there are sets of characteristics or behaviours that are considered to be typical of group members (Fearon and Laitin, 848). Based on the constructed social categories, individuals then categorise themselves as belonging to a certain group to achieve a positive sense of self (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, p. 59). Once an individual identifies with a certain group, they strive to maintain a positive social identity by making favourable comparisons in relation to a relevant outgroup (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, p. 60). In Belfast, identification with one of the two antagonistic identity groups is inherently associated with being from one of their respective territorial strongholds around the city. The identity categorisations that are applied to space throughout Belfast provide these areas with meaning that

is (re)produced internally through physical and symbolic manifestations which simultaneously maintain segregation and reinforce identities. Ultimately, categorising space according to ethnic identity gives rise to the making of place.

Most view the concept of 'place' solely in physical terms; the landmarks, the roads, the architecture and the countless other tangible physical elements within a geographically defined space.[18] While the physical features of a place are crucial components in the making of a place, the 'soft' or mental features associated with a place cannot be ignored and they should be studied in congruence with the 'hard' material components associated with a place (Slooter, 2019, p. 118; Cresswell, 1996). This is reflected by Gieryn's (2000, pp. 464-466) definition of place as they consist of three core elements; (1) a physical geographic location, (2) a material form, and (3) have meaning and value. Succinctly, "place is space filled up with people, practices, objects, and representations (Gieryn, 2000, 465). Slooter (2019 p. 120) expands on this by arguing that places have boundaries that demarcate what is and what is not a particular place; have an arranged set of objects such as roads, buildings, and ordering of people; have meaning through history and emotional attachment; and finally, places have norms and social organisation. This theoretical framework can be extrapolated to Belfast's segregated communities as the making of place assists the formation and reproduction of identity through; (1) the boundary-defining peace walls; (2) the discursive landscapes that promote solidarity and emotional attachment with places; (3) and the segregated schools and sports that promote the established norms of a particular place and through symbolic representations, shared traditions and communal values. These manifestations that demarcate and attach meaning to place are closely intertwined with the principles of social identity theory. Lastly, the 'rules of membership' that Fearon and Laitin (2000) discuss are a critical component of social categorisation and assist the policing of boundaries that reinforce segregation in Belfast. The following sections will provide an in-depth understanding of the various mechanisms that maintain segregation and their interplay between place-making and the (re)production of social identity.

Section A: Interface Barriers and Peace Walls

Belfast's interface infrastructure is unquestionably the most visible physical element that sustains the segregated structure of the city.[19] Hence the name, interface barriers generally appear at "the intersection of segregated and polarised working-class residential zones, in areas with a strong link between territory and ethno-political identity" (Jarman 2005, p. 9). Interface barriers "maintain and even strengthen segregation" as they institutionalise intercommunal division through the enclosure of ideas, the monitoring of the entry of strangers and the […] exclusion of the politically undesirable" (McAtackney, p. 48; Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006, 21). In addition, these barriers "visually block the experiences of similarly disadvantaged and conflict-torn

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[18] Space in this thesis refers to a geographically defined and measurable area that occupies a physical location but in and of itself, space has no social meaning.

[19] The term interface barrier encompasses a broad range of security related infrastructure around Belfast. These barriers are often referred to as peace walls or peace lines and come in a variety of forms.

communities from each other and they ensure that a disconnect is perpetuated between those who have been most adversely affected by the Troubles" (McAtackney, 2018, p. 48) As figure 1 highlights above, several interface barriers exist throughout Belfast and are most prevalent between the highly segregated working-class CNR and PUL communities of North and West Belfast. The Belfast Interface Project (2017, p. 7) most recently identified 97 interface barriers that are spread throughout Belfast that are often constructed with a combination of solid concrete, steel, or brick and often include fencing and gates. Belfast's wide-range of interface infrastructure is the last remaining form of security infrastructure resulting from the Troubles and instead of being scaled down, many barriers have been expanded, heightened, and reinforced in the years after the GFA (McAtackney, 2018, p. 43). Many local streets that once provided access between the two communities have been blocked off by interface structures and oftentimes people residing in interface communities have to take permanent detours around the interface barriers to reach work, school or essential services (Boal, 2002, p. 693). The interface gates that allow vehicular and pedestrian access between the two communities during the day are locked by the police every evening around sunset which further inhibits mobility and institutionalises intercommunal division. In addition to their physical role, interface barriers have a highly symbolic role that represents antagonism, territoriality, and most of all, division. The physical and symbolic roles of these barriers unequivocally maintain Belfast's segregation by constructing and maintaining both physical and psychological boundaries, and as a result, assist the processes of place-making, fortify social identities and thus perpetuate the cycle of segregation.

Interface Barriers as a Source of Protection

At their most foundational level, Belfast's interface barriers attempt to keep the peace by physically separating Protestants and Catholics and act as a line of defense to protect territory and property. Throughout the Troubles and even in recent years, the interface areas of Belfast have been hotspots for sectarian clashes and civil unrest. This was evident during last year's rioting along Belfast's most prominent peace wall as residents living next to the wall told the BBC that they were "necessary"…or else "there would be murder" and they "needed to be doubled in size" (BBC News Northern Ireland, 2021). This sentiment is reflected in survey data as 69 percent of people residing near an interface barrier said that they are still necessary while 61 percent said that these barriers make them feel safer (Byrne et al., 2012, p. 13; Byrne et al., 2015, p. 15). The continued existence of these barriers is framed and justified through a security context as they are seen as a key mechanism in reducing inter-communal violence which presumably reinforces the perceived need for the barriers among those living closest to them (Byrne et al., 2012, p. 10). With that said, only a small percentage of Belfast's population resides next to a peace wall and those who live beyond the shadows of the peace walls view their role as a distinct symbol of division (Byrne et al, 2012; Byrne et al., 2015).

Image 1

Children playing in their backyard next to a peace wall as seen from the Catholic side in West Belfast

Interface Barriers and their Symbolism

Beyond their defensive and protective roles, walls in themselves are symbols; The Great Wall of China represented the power and unity of the Chinese Empire, The Berlin Wall represented the sharp split between the East and West during the Cold War and Belfast's peace walls are long-standing symbols of an era epitomised by violent sectarian clashes and widespread civil unrest. Their continued existence today implies that Belfast is a city with an unresolved conflict where the only solution has been to physically separate the two sides essentially freezing the conflict in time. Furthermore, these barriers clearly mark territorial and communal allegiances that are outcomes of past and present animosity, mistrust, and fear between the two communities. In doing so, they serve to heighten the perceived differences of each side and indicate that the people on the other side pose a threat which therefore hinders opportunities for positive intergroup contact (Dixon et al., 2020). Crucially, the symbolic importance of interface walls and barriers stretches

far beyond their shadows. Most of the youth who attended the youth centre did not live in interface areas but still expressed that these walls ultimately prevent the 'reunification of Belfast' by showing the world that Belfast is a divided city as one interviewee compared Belfast's walls to the symbolic role of the Berlin wall.[20] The walls ultimately symbolise the robust division of two distinct communities with competing values, traditions, and political ideologies that are mutually incompatible with one another. The interplay between the physical and symbolic roles of interface barriers assists the process of place-making and the (re)production of social identity.

Interface Barriers, Place-Making and Social Identity

The aforementioned protective and symbolic elements of interface barriers represent the 'hard' and 'soft' components of place-making. The interplay between the interface barriers' material and the mental components serve to place-make by physically defining and demarcating place, attaching meaning to it, and influencing social patterns of movement and interaction. Firstly, interface barriers maintain physical and psychological boundaries which assist the underlying processes of social identity construction. Conversely, the underlying processes of social identity construction, most notably the innate need to categorise and achieve a positive sense of self, assist the construction of boundaries. In other words, "boundaries both create identities and are created through identity" (Newman and Paasi, 1998, p. 194). This two-way street between boundaries and the construction of social identity ultimately reinforces and perpetuates the need for Belfast's physical boundaries such as peace walls. To highlight the interplay between boundaries and social identity, theoretical literature discussing the construction and maintenance of boundaries will be integrated with social identity theory. Empirical insights from the field will also be utilised to exemplify this process and to establish a dialogue between theory and evidence.

As I circumnavigated the residential communities between the Falls and Shankhill roads of West Belfast, I constantly felt entrapped by the monstrous steel walls that were topped with metal fencing. Within the communities, you would often see groups of children playing outside with their neighbourhood friends. You could also hear the voices and laughter of children on the other side of the peace wall, but while only metres away, they allegorically lived a world away. Those kids on the other side, or anyone else for that matter, are labelled as either a Protestant (if on CNR side) or as a Catholic (if on PUL side).[21] These labels arise because of socially constructed boundaries that are physically demarcated in Belfast through its interface infrastructure. Boundaries "create (or reflect) difference and constitute the separation line not only between states and geographical spaces, but also between the us and them" and act as a "sharp cut-off point between two polarities" (Newman 2006, p. 6). The interface barriers attach meaning to communities by creating "social, political, and cultural distance between [them]" (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006, p. 57). As I walked through the interface gates that provided pedestrian and vehicular access between the busy Falls and the Shankhill roads, they were distinctly void of

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[20] From focus group on March 7th

[21] Protestants and Catholics commonly label each other in slang terminology. Terms such as 'hun' or 'prod' are labels indicating Protestants and the terms 'fenian' or 'taig' are used to indicate Catholics.

people. The occasional black cab tour would stop at the gates where a Christian cross stood alongside a mural expressing hope for peace but the sheer absence of locals crossing the boundary was telling.[22] As Newman (2006) points out, crossing borders that provide a point of contact between 'us' and the 'others' is seen as socially deviant as boundaries are intended to deter cross-communal movement (p. 8). As a result, "people who live alongside [the gates] do not often cross them" which has led to a generation of people growing up in an environment of spatial confinement (McAtackney, 2018, p. 47). These empirical insights highlight the role that interface barriers have on the social patterns and ordering of people who live near them. This facilitates the place-making process while simultaneously maintaining segregation and reinforcing social identities.

As Slooter (2019, p. 120) argues, places are characterised by social norms and the ordering of people. By physically entrapping communities, Belfast's interface barriers heavily influence social norms and patterns by "limiting where and how individuals and/or communities [can] engage with different parts of the city" (Mell, 2019, p. 200). As a result, the interface barriers facilitate the physical "merging of people with shared visions and beliefs, whether imagined or real, into segregated places [which] provides the capacity to fortify togetherness and identity" (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006, 1) In addition to strengthening the cohesiveness of the in-group, the barriers limit intergroup contact and as a result, "intergroup differences gain emphasis" (Sanders, 2002, p. 328). As illustrated, the interface barriers not only contribute to the tight-knit nature of interface communities but they also construct and maintain social identity on both sides by shaping patterns of interaction that "give rise to…and reinforce in-group members' self-identification" while confirming outsiders' "confirmation of group distinctions" (Sanders, 2002, p. 327). This aligns with Tajfel and Turner's (1979, p. 59) idea of social categorisation as they argue that this process is fundamental in defining an individual's place in society and the group they identify with. The inherent need to have a positive view of the in-group then leads to favourable intergroup comparisons in relation to a relevant outgroup (Tajfel and Turner, 1979, p. 60). These intergroup comparisons are conducive to an environment where one-sided narratives, prejudice, and intergroup hostility flourish which all serve to reinforce social identities and the physical boundaries that separate Protestants and Catholics. These one-sided and hostile narratives are evident throughout Belfast's most segregated communities.

Section B: Discursive Landscapes that Maintain Segregation

A *Discursive landscape* is the "socially constructed [relationship] between the natural and cultural environment" that is "produced and reproduced in various social and cultural practices" (Häkli, 1999, p. 124; Newman and Paasi, 1998, p. 196). The relationship between the natural and cultural landscape in West Belfast serves to mark territory through narratives and images that align with the shared histories, values, and cultural traits of each community. These narratives and images are reproduced through the social and cultural practices that align with collective notions

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[22] Black cabs tours take paying tourists to the prominent locations of the Troubles. The tour guides/drivers were often involved in the Troubles which is often the primary appeal of the tour.

of 'Irishness' or 'Britishness'. For example, members of the CNR community proudly display Irish tri-colour flags from their homes, parade on St. Patrick's Day, and flaunt their knowledge of the Irish language. Conversely, members of the PUL community fly Union Jacks, paint kerbstones red, white and blue and hold annual parades on the 12th of July commemorating King William of Orange. During these celebrations, massive bonfires are lit and Irish flags and images of the Pope are doused in petrol and set alight. The competing discursive cultural practices in both communities are performed not only to satisfy notions of identity but also play an essential role in attaching meaning and emotional attachment to space which facilitates the making of place as outlined by Slooter (2019). As a result, I argue that the sharply divided discursive landscape of West Belfast plays a fundamental role in maintaining segregation and reinforcing social identities. In West Belfast, the Irish language, murals, flags and the competing narratives that are ubiquitous within the area serve to reflect and reinforce the ideologies and identities of those living there by creating an 'us' versus 'them' divide. In addition, the discursive landscape within both communities marks territory by spatially defining an area as either 'Irish/nationalist' or British/loyalist. Furthermore, violent action of the past is often legitimised and justified through the content of murals and symbolic narratives that often legitimise their own violence while vilifying the other side. This section will first highlight the discursive landscape of West Belfast through its symbolic narratives, murals and community memorial gardens. The chapter then examines how the discursive landscape facilitates the making of place while also fortifying social identities and maintaining segregation.

Overview of Belfast's Discursive Landscape

When I first entered Catholic West Belfast on the Lower Falls Road, I was greeted by a colourful mural reading 'Failte Feirste Thiar', or Welcome to West Belfast in the Irish language. While initially, this appeared to be a subtle symbol celebrating an ancient Celtic language that has largely vanished from common usage, I soon discovered that the Irish language plays a salient and divisive role within West Belfast. Within the CNR community of West Belfast, there has been a resurgence of the Irish language as storefronts and street names along the Falls Road are often displayed in Irish. This comes as a recently proposed bill called the Irish Language Act, which would give Irish equal status to English in the region, has gained momentum in British Parliament. With that said, the bill has been a polarising issue within the Northern Irish Assembly as unionist parties are firmly opposed to the act and have accused nationalist parties of 'weaponizing' the Irish language to achieve a united Ireland (Carroll, 2022). While the use of Irish is largely symbolic and represents a shared culture and identity within the CNR community, it is perceived as an existential threat to the PUL community and their shared culture and identity. Although 'Failte Feirste Thiar' is a seemingly benign phrase to outsiders, the phrase is subtly provocative by implying that only Irish, Catholics, or nationalists are welcome in West Belfast and thus reinforces intercommunal segregation.

As I continued walking westward into West Belfast, I passed the headquarters of the nationalist party called Sinn Fein which is now Northern Ireland's largest political party and the past political wing of the IRA. A massive mural depicting the revered IRA volunteer Bobby Sands who starved himself to death in a 1981 hunger strike is painted on the side of the headquarters with the quote, "our revenge will be the laughter of our children". As I continued west, I passed numerous souvenir shops selling Irish and Palestinian flags, jerseys promoting the Easter Rising, CDs and Vinyl records by rebel music bands as well as novels and autobiographies written by prominent IRA volunteers. In addition, murals appeared on every street corner along the Falls Road depicting Irish revolutionaries and messages that read, "damn your concessions England, we want our country" and "we will rise again".[23] Other murals showed solidarity with Palestine, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Anti-Apartheid Movement of South Africa. The murals promoting solidarity with other international movements serve to legitimise the nationalist cause and their past violence in "the same way a musician might define himself by saying who his influencers are" (Cashman, 2008, p. 369). The murals suggest to outsiders that if you support

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[23] From Fieldnotes dated March 7th

Palestine, Nelson Mandela, or the LTTE, then you should also support Irish republicanism (Cashman, p. 370)

The murals and symbolism promoting nationalism and solidarity with other liberation movements disappeared when crossing interface gates into the Shankhill side of West Belfast. As I crossed the steel interface gates into the PUL Shankhill community, murals depicted contradicting narratives. Instead, these murals displayed British solidarity with Israel and others marked territory by displaying loyalist propaganda. Like the CNR community, the Shankhill Road had numerous murals depicting their paramilitary heroes and others that vilified the "republican murder gangs" and their "30 years of indiscriminate slaughter". A few of Belfast's loyalist murals and symbolic displays are seen in the photographs below:
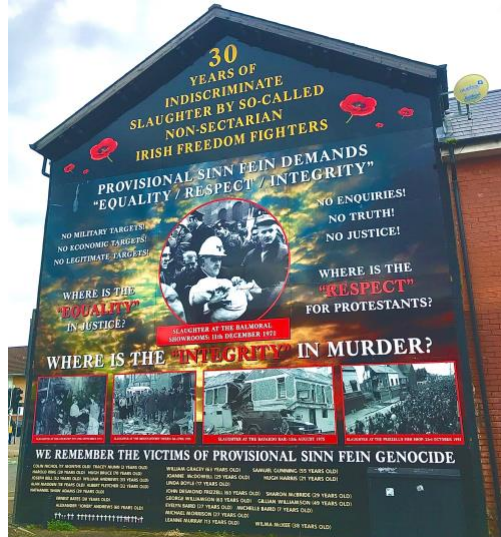
Like the murals within the CNR community, the murals primarily serve to legitimise past violence. Within the PUL community, the narratives often framed the violence as self-defence in response to violence or the "genocide" perpetrated by the other side. The paramilitary men depicted in the murals are portrayed as brave defenders of the community against "unwarranted and cold-blooded attacks". The use of sensationalist language and images of men wielding rifles enhance the eye-catching effect of the murals as they "arrange appropriate symbols into a coherent message that can be easily and quickly decoded by a target audience" (Lisle, 2006, p. 37). For the target audience within the community, the purposeful use of symbols, images and messaging within murals often evokes an emotional response such as agreement and or engagement with the mural and even if ignored, "the mere sight of a provocative image is enough for it to have a subliminal impact" (Lisle, p. 37). These impacts serve to reinforce boundaries and reaffirm identities which will be explored after a brief overview of Belfast's community memorial gardens.

In addition to the contrasting murals of both communities, community memorial gardens are commonplace throughout West Belfast. These memorials usually commemorate those on their side who have died as a result of violence perpetrated by the other side. Oftentimes, these narratives are presented in a sensationalist manner and unlike museums or official memorials, these memorials "aim to present very localised, very-skewed, and often one-sided readings of the past" (McAtackney, 2018, p. 49). Oftentimes, these memorials are strategically placed alongside peace walls to reinforce their meaning by blaming the unseen on the other side of the wall for the deaths of those on this side of it (McAtackney, p. 50). This is displayed in the images below where a memorial garden on Bombay Street sits next to a peace wall and memorialises the brave men of their community (seen on the peace wall in the background) who faithfully resisted the British occupation of their country.

Above: The 'Clonard Martyrs' memorial garden on Bombay street with the peace wall in the background honours the 'martyrs' who were killed during the Troubles. The garden also has a list of 'Civilians Murdered by Loyalist and British Forces'. The large "Bombay Street" sign says 'never forget,' which refers to a large loyalist mob that burnt down many houses along the street in 1969.

Memorial gardens also exist on the other side of the peace wall along the Shankhill Road where Sinn Fein and the IRA are categorised together as one body and are compared to ISIS as seen below.

Discursive landscapes Maintaining Segregation Through the Making of Place

Flags, narratives, political murals and community memorials of Belfast play key roles in maintaining the segregated structure of the city. This is achieved through the everyday discursive landscape that adds political meaning and emotional attachment to an otherwise mundane space by marking territory, promoting one-sided narratives, and strengthening the social identities of those living within the discursive landscape. The murals and memorial gardens "generate messages of inclusion, belonging, and membership that bolster existing cultural boundaries. For those who live with the murals and see them every day in their communities, these symbols reaffirm their identities and confirm their status as members of a particular community" (Lisle, 2006, p. 38). For outsiders, a community's discursive landscape promotes messages of exclusion and intimidation as the discursive landscape serves as a warning indicating that you have entered contested territory (Lisle, 2006; Jarman, 1998). When walking through Belfast, it becomes immediately clear which community you're situated in based on the content of the murals or memorial gardens. The clear markings of territory "signify to residents 'who belongs where' as they move through the city" while simultaneously being ideological expressions of the community itself (Dixon et al., 2020, p. 7). To some, these murals and community gardens are seen as symbols of remembrance when displayed within their own community but as symbols of sectarianism and prejudice when

displayed in a community belonging to the outgroup. When I asked Jacob, a 17-year-old member of the youth centre about his opinions of the murals within his West Belfast community. He expressed that the murals in Catholic West Belfast were "symbols of remembrance". He continued by saying that the murals in protestant areas were "different" as "all that Protestants have left to hang on to is their…paramilitary murals".[24] [25] Jacob's account highlights a degree of positivity toward the murals within his community by seeing them as a way to collectively remember the past. Conversely, Jacob viewed the murals associated with the PUL community with disdain and ridicule as they promoted paramilitaries and the threat they posed to his community. He later stated that he would not visit or feel safe in areas with murals promoting the loyalist cause as people there may give him a "hard time" due to his Catholic identity. This highlights the interconnectedness between the discursive landscape of one's own community and their internal feelings of in-group positivity in comparison to the outgroup's perceived provocative, threatening, or otherwise unwelcoming discursive landscape. Several other youth shared Jacob's viewpoint regarding the murals as one group of teenage males told me how they 'identified' with the republican murals along the Falls Road.[26] Based on these accounts, I argue that social identities and segregation are at least partially constructed and maintained through the various symbolic elements such as murals, political narratives, and other symbols that amalgamate to represent the discursive landscape of a community. People are deterred from living or spending time in places where the discursive landscape challenges or threatens their social identity and instead will favour areas where they view the discursive landscape as positive, inclusive or otherwise aligned with their social identity.

Lastly, it's important to note that the discursive landscapes of West Belfast arise because of segregation and simultaneously reinforce segregation. To illustrate, segregated areas provide a safe place to express one-sided narratives as they are ideological representations of the community and their collective identity. They provide a sense of 'we-ness' and meaning to space as many symbolic representations appear at prominent sites during the Troubles like the community memorial garden on Bombay Street. Many admire, respect, and identify with the artwork, community gardens and narratives that appear within their community and any dissent would be largely looked down upon within these communities. On the other hand, discursive landscapes also reinforce segregation as the one-sided narratives and symbols deter outsiders from living or spending time in an area belonging to the outgroup. This was evident as I spoke to one local (who identified as neither Catholic nor Protestant) who was temporarily staying in a hostel to avoid living in an area marked by 'flags and UVF murals'.[27] Like the peace walls, the discursive landscape of a community marks space as either belonging to 'us' or 'them' which is a key component in the construction of boundaries and therefore keeping Catholics and Protestants divided.

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[24] All names of participants are pseudonyms
[25] From fieldnotes dated March 23rd
[26] From fieldnotes dated March 16th
[27] From fieldnotes dated March 8th

Section C: Schools and Sport

Belfast's segregation stretches beyond its residential segregation and the barriers and discursive landscapes that maintain it. Belfast is also stringently divided along social lines. This social segregation begins at a young age as Protestant students generally attend schools controlled by the Government (controlled schools) while Catholic students generally attend schools maintained by the Catholic church (maintained schools). As a result, 93 percent of schools in Northern Ireland remain segregated (Meredith, 2022). This social segregation continues as young people grow older as Catholics and Protestants generally play different recreational sports. This is largely a result of divergent physical education curriculums as Catholic schools often promote sports sanctioned by the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) such as Gaelic football and hurling while Protestant schools generally coach association football, rugby, field hockey or cricket. Furthermore, sports jerseys are a continued source of contention between communities as they are often seen as symbolic representations of either the PUL or CNR community. The following section will discuss how the social arenas of schools, sports and leisure reinforce social identities and maintain segregation in Belfast.

Segregated Schools and the Construction of Social Identity

In Northern Ireland, there are two prevailing hypotheses when examining the role of segregated education and its role in reinforcing social identity, division, and the perpetuation of segregation (Brocklehurst, 2006; Hughes, 2011). The first model relates to the varying 'hidden' curriculums that have a politicised ethos within both Catholic and Protestant schools that are powerful mechanisms in the political socialisation of children (Brocklehurst, 2006). Within maintained (Catholic) schools, the curriculum often has nationalistic underpinnings with a heightened focus on Irish history while controlled (Protestant) schools have a heightened focus on British history with loyalist underpinnings (Brocklehurst, 2006). These separate curriculums are potential sources of one-sided narratives and historical accounts that reflect the prevailing ideologies of the respective communities and therefore promote a positive view of the in-group and their collective history while holding the other side responsible for the conflict. These one-sided historical accounts were seen among some of the Catholic youth that I engaged with during my fieldwork. It was evident that many had a particular interest in Irish history and the Troubles but their knowledge was decidedly one-sided as evidenced below:

"The Falls Road curfew was the beginning of the Troubles here in West Belfast when the British troops wouldn't let us out of our own homes"[28]

-William (16)

"The IRA was a reactionary force to British aggression"[29]

-John (16)

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[28] From fieldnotes dated March 16th
[29] From fieldnotes dated March 23rd

These one-sided historical accounts are presumably a product of their Catholic education and provoke an affinity with Irish nationalism and their side's armed struggle. This in turn solidifies their in-group identity and perpetuates division by viewing the outgroup as the aggressor. In addition to differences in the content of school curriculum, the second model argues that segregated schools themselves revitalise sectarian sentiments by heightening intergroup differences and promoting intergroup suspicion and hostility (Brocklehurst, 2006; Hughes, 2011).

Brocklehurst (2006) argues that the closed environment of segregated schools facilitates social categorisation through the construction of us versus them while peer pressure reinforces the in-group identity of students (p. 96). This comes as a result of the institutionalisation of division that arises through separate schooling which provides a ripe environment for stereotypes and thus heightens the perceived differences between Catholics and Protestants (Murray, 1985, p. 104). "Once people begin to identify themselves primarily according to own group membership, their responses to others are overlaid with an in-group/outgroup orientation that ….[minimises] actual differences between members of the same group and [exaggerates] the distinctions between social groups" (Hughes, 2011, p. 831; Tajfel, 1978). Peer pressure and the need to fit in amongst peers prevent students from dissenting from the prevailing in-group identity as it would alienate them from other students (Hughes, 2011). This in-group/outgroup view of society that is reinforced by social interaction with peers was evident among the youth who attended the youth centre. Even though the youth centre is not a school, the social dynamics among youth are similar as it is also a highly segregated environment with social pressures to fit in, act cool, and gain the social approval of friends. Segregated schools, and in this case the youth centre, are closed environments that provide a safe place for in-group members to verbally attack and stereotype the outgroup as these vulgar one-sided narratives arise out of peer pressure and go unchallenged as no members of the outgroup are present to counter these narratives.

When I asked a group of 16 and 17-year-olds about their attitudes towards Protestants, one jokingly exclaimed "those fuckin' Huns are rat bastards" as the rest of the group chuckled at his comment.[30] In other instances, younger members with less of an understanding of the weight of their comments would shout vulgarities in group settings such as 'kill all Huns!' which is often marked in graffiti around West Belfast as 'KAH' to mark sectarian allegiance. In numerous other group settings, youth would exclaim phrases glorifying the IRA. One such phrase that was commonly said by a number of members in my presence was 'oooh ahhh up the 'RA' which is a line from an Irish rebel song that glorifies the IRA.[31] [32] This empirical evidence illustrates a clear in-group/outgroup dynamic where the outgroup is labelled in vulgar terms while the in-group is seen positively which aligns with the key social identity principles of in-group positivity and social categorisation as set forth by Tajfel (1978) and Tajfel and Turner (1979). Making disparaging comments towards the outgroup was perceived as one-way to gain social approval amongst in-group members while also reinforcing the 'us' versus 'them' divide. As the next section will

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[30] From fieldnotes March 9th
[31] The 'RA is slang for the IRA or PIRA
[32] From fieldnotes March 14th

highlight, social categorisation and stereotyping also arise outside of school through the segregation of recreational sports in Northern Ireland.

Sports and the Maintenance of Boundaries, Intergroup Anxiety, and Segregation

While sports have often been cited as a mechanism to bridge ethnic difference by enabling people from diverse backgrounds to work together to achieve a common goal, sports in Northern Ireland remain highly segregated and are closely intertwined with the contentious issues of identity and politics. This comes as a result of sports being widely classified as either Irish or British and being symbolic representations of communal identity (Sugden and Bairner, 1993). For example, the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) was established with the express aim of reviving traditional Irish sports and resisting English sports such as football, cricket, and rugby and is therefore a symbol of Irish nationalism (Houlihan, 1997, 128). As a result, sports in Northern Ireland remain divisive as GAA sports such as hurling, Gaelic football, and camogie are primarily played and coached by Catholics and are still viewed with suspicion among many loyalists (Sugden and Bairner, 1993). Within the PUL community, "cricket, rugby and hockey clubs are part of the social fabric of Northern Irish Protestantism" and are a central aspect of their British identity (Sugden and Bairner, p. 67). As illustrated, the segregation of sports in Northern Ireland reflects the divided nature of society but it also maintains and reinforces the segregation by reinforcing ethnic boundaries and emboldening the incompatible social identities on both sides.

While communal background usually dictates the sports that people play, I met a 16-year-old named John from the youth centre who loves rugby. Although he comes from a Catholic background, he joined a rugby club and spoke to me regarding his experience of being a Catholic playing a sport that is considered to be exclusively British/Protestant in Northern Ireland.

"I'm one of only three Catholics in my entire rugby league; everyone else is Protestant. Me and the other Catholic players are sometimes called 'fenians' at matches by other players and people watching."[33]

John's love for the game of rugby supersedes the verbal abuse that he receives due to his Catholic background. Nonetheless, these vulgar sectarian labels that are applied to John and his Catholic counterparts highlight the established ethnic boundaries within sports and the repercussions for crossing these established boundaries. It was clear that most youth had no interest in crossing these boundaries in sports due to the perceived risk of being shamed or called obscenities by members of the outgroup. This social barrier to playing 'British sports' is best explained by intergroup anxiety theory which is grounded in the principles of social identity theory.

Intergroup anxiety theory states that when an individual perceives that their in-group identity is viewed unfavourably by an outgroup, people will seek to avoid anxiety-inducing encounters with that outgroup in favour of staying within the "comfort zone" of their own group (Stephan and Stephan, 1985; Finchilescu, 2010; Schrieff et al., 2010). As a result, most players in

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[33] From fieldnotes dated March 9th

Catholic West Belfast seek to reduce their intergroup anxiety and elect to stay within their comfort zone by sticking to the sports that represent their own community. In doing so, their social identities are reinforced as playing GAA sports such as hurling or Gaelic football goes far beyond the team or club that an individual plays for. Playing GAA sports is also representative of the CNR community itself and its shared cultural norms and values that are dear to the people living there. GAA sports are a fundamental component of what it means to be Irish/Catholic and youth are encouraged to partake in GAA sports by parents and peers as well as through their inherent need for a positive and secure sense of self. Sports are a critical component in the making of Catholic West Belfast through their roles in defining boundaries and being part of the normalised social fabric that's representative of a community. Ultimately, these boundaries and social meaning that sports bestow upon a particular area contribute to the making of a place, the reinforcement of social identity and the continued maintenance of segregation. The next section will discuss these boundaries further by focusing on how they are regulated and policed within and between communities.

Section D: The Policing of Boundaries in Belfast

The various physical and psychological boundaries that have been discussed above are all pivotal mechanisms in maintaining Belfast's segregation. With that said, each of these components that maintain segregation hold value because they are regulated and actively policed. The boundaries that maintain segregation in Belfast are like a currency; banknotes and coins are merely worthless pieces of paper or metal unless they are regulated, policed and backed by a government. In Belfast, the boundaries that maintain segregation are regulated and policed not by the government, but rather by members of the in-group, members of the outgroup, and the paramilitaries that exert social control over Belfast's segregated working-class areas. It's also worth noting that the lack of intervention from the state has allowed for what some have called a 'self-imposed apartheid' where non-state actors have been largely responsible for policing Belfast's ethnic boundaries. All of these mechanisms serve to reify the boundaries so that they are well-defined and rarely crossed. Above all, the tight-knit nature of these communities allows for individual behaviour to be monitored and thus regulated through a number of mechanisms ranging from social norms within a community to explicit threats of violence from paramilitary groups. This section will connect the empirical insights from the field to Fearon and Laitin's (2000) "rules of membership" in categorising who is and is not a member to exemplify how Belfast's boundaries are policed from within and between communities.

Policing From Within: In-group Pressures That Maintain Boundaries

Pressure from one's own in-group is a substantial but often overlooked regulatory mechanism that serves to regulate and maintain Belfast's boundaries. This was made evident by the youth who attended the youth centre. When I asked one member why he had never visited the predominately loyalist East Belfast, he responded:

"If I was ever caught in a loyalist part of town, my dad would kill me."[34]

-William (16)

For William, repercussions from his own father served to reinforce his own perceptions of boundaries and the literal lines that were not to be crossed. A number of the youth shared similar sentiments as many had parents or grandparents who were actively 'involved' with armed groups during the Troubles and still held entrenched sectarian values. While most of the youth I spoke to did not hold the same level of animosity as their elders towards the outgroup, parental influence still dictates the areas of town where their children are permitted to visit. As a result, this ingrains the construction and maintenance of ethnic boundaries from a young age through the socialisation of norms that are indicative of the CNR community and the rules of membership associated with it as outlined by Fearon and Laitin (2000). In addition to parents, peers also have a significant influence over the policing of boundaries. The established boundaries heavily influence the socialisation of children and the friend groups they identify with. By spending time in the youth centre, it became clear that most people's friends came from within the community itself which served to insulate them within their own community. Cross-communal friendships were rare and while they were not explicitly looked down upon among the youth I engaged with, there were unspoken social rules to remain loyal to your friend group within the community. Going outside of the community to make friends would go against the unspoken rules of communal membership and would ultimately make the individual an outcast. The social pressure to fit in with the community and abide by its "rules of membership" internally polices the continued maintenance of boundaries in Belfast.

Policing From the Outside: Outgroup Pressures that Maintain Boundaries

A Muslim man walks up to a pub. Before entering, the doorman asks, "are you a Protestant or a Catholic". "I'm Muslim" he responds. The doorman then asks, "well are you a Protestant Muslim or a Catholic Muslim?"

The above is a running joke that I heard a number of times during my fieldwork in Belfast. To locals, the joke holds a degree of truth which elevates its facetiousness. To illustrate, within many of Belfast's segregated communities, individuals are often categorised in ethnic terms as distinctly Protestant or Catholic. The boundaries between the two communities are often policed as members of both communities utilise a variety of mechanisms to maintain the boundaries. The mechanisms that are employed to police boundaries come in a wide range of forms. Boundary policing often comes in subtle forms such as being viewed with suspicion or at least a degree of curiosity when outside of one's own community. Almost all of the youth that I engaged with said they may be given a 'hard time' or get 'beaten up' if they went into a Protestant community. While

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[34] From fieldnotes dated April 2nd

most avoided Protestant areas altogether, some said they had endured explicit forms of boundary policing within Protestant communities that come in the form of 'tests' to identify someone's communal background. These tests come in seemingly trivial forms such as the way to pronounce the letter 'H' (Catholics pronounce it 'haitch' while Protestants pronounce it 'aitch'). One member of the youth centre stated that someone asked her how she pronounced 'H' before being allowed to enter a shop in another part of town.[35] This would be an example of a shibboleth, or the pronunciation of a word or phrase that distinguishes one group from another (McNamara, 2005, p. 355). This was famously used in the Netherlands during World War II to distinguish German Nazis from the Dutch through the pronunciation of the seaside village 'Scheveningen' (McNamara, p. 355). In addition to shibboleths, another individual stated that he was once asked to recite the lyrics to a loyalist ballad called "The Sash My Father Wore" to assess whether or not he was a Protestant before entering a business. These tests heighten the difference between the two communities by creating "rules of membership" that differentiate the two communities while also serving as a method to embarrass or admonish outsiders. As a result, the tests that are used by members of the outgroup to police boundaries reinforce the existing segregated living patterns of Belfast. In addition, paramilitaries also invoke fear to police and regulate Belfast's ethnic boundaries.

Paramilitary Policing of Boundaries Through Intimidation

Paramilitaries on both sides of the sectarian divide have historically sought to maintain the segregated structure of Belfast's working-class areas by policing ethnic boundaries. These boundaries are policed by utilising a range of intimidating tactics towards any outgroup members living within the communities these groups operate in. As a result, the policing of boundaries has allowed the power and influence of paramilitary groups to go unchallenged within certain working-class areas and has therefore maintained the segregated structure of these communities (Gusic, 2020, p. 206; Moffett et al., 2020). The manifestations of paramilitary intimidation primarily arise through various symbolic elements which include murals, graffiti, and flags that mark territory and dissuade outsiders from entering or living within that community. The symbolic elements of paramilitary intimidation are usually backed by the threat of violence as it's widely acknowledged that these groups are armed and still utilise violence to carry out their various objectives. The violent forms of paramilitary intimidation include personal warnings, threats of physical violence, the vandalisation of property, and has even resulted in the physical beating and removal of outsiders who refuse to leave the area (Gusic, p. 206; Moffett et al., p. 12). Below are visible examples of paramilitary intimidation directed towards Catholics or other outsiders as seen through symbolic representations of paramilitary influence below:

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[35] From fieldnotes dated March 7th

UVF paramilitary markings throughout Belfast

The above images depict the UVF's markings that serve to police boundaries through the use of fear and intimidation. These images warn outsiders that they are in a loyalist-controlled area and imply that they are unwelcome within the community. The displays also give the impression that outsiders are being monitored by the UVF. Catholics would undoubtedly feel threatened and vulnerable within the UVF-proclaimed 'Loyalist Village' where every street is marked with an armed man wearing a balaclava as seen on 'Benburb Street'. The paramilitary displays define the community's rules of membership by implying that you must be a loyalist in order to be welcomed there. These displays ultimately police boundaries by intimidating outsiders away from distinctly 'loyalist' areas and as a result, segregation is perpetuated.

Chapter Conclusion

The primary aim of this chapter was to establish a dialogue between the empirical findings and theory to interpret how segregation is produced and reproduced in Belfast through several physical and socially constructed boundaries. Specifically, the principles of social identity theory were utilised to generate an understanding of the relationship between the physical mechanisms that maintain segregation and their role in facilitating the making of place and the spatial construction of identity. Firstly, Belfast's interface barriers shape patterns of social interaction by physically dividing and entrapping communities which reinforces an individual's in-group identity while simultaneously assisting with social categorisation by physically demarcating group boundaries. Secondly, Belfast's discursive landscape provides meaning to segregated space by remembering the area's fallen heroes and commemorating its collective history. As a result, this landscape provides a collective sense of 'we-ness' among community members while also providing one-sided narratives that promote a positive view of the in-group in comparison to the outgroup who is often demonised for their role in past violence (Snow, 2001 para. 6). Thirdly, segregated schools and sports play fundamental roles in the socialisation of children and their

construction of identity through separate curriculums and sports that are symbolically representative of the larger community. Furthermore, segregated schools institutionalise an environment that is conducive to one-sided sectarian sentiments as children gain the social approval of their peers by making degrading comments regarding the outgroup which assists with the processes of social categorisation and obtaining a positive sense of self. Lastly, the chapter discusses the various mechanisms through which these established ethnic boundaries are policed and regulated through members of the in-group, members of the outgroup and the paramilitaries that exert control over segregated communities. The social pressures that people face in regards to being loyal to friends and family members regulate individual behaviour from the in-group perspective so that boundaries are rarely crossed. Outgroup members police boundaries by making outsiders feel unwelcome by creating tests and other categorisation tactics that are used to distinguish Catholics from Protestants based on socially constructed "rules of membership" as outlined by Fearon and Laitin (2000). This is evident through the use of language or knowledge tests that are used to distinguish the communal background of an individual. Paramilitary intimidation also polices boundaries by making outsiders feel threatened or otherwise unsafe within the community that the paramilitary exerts influence over. Oftentimes, paramilitary displays or symbols depict threatening images which serve to deter outsiders from entering a particular community. All of these mechanisms that maintain segregation in Belfast are not mutually exclusive and amalgamate to become the everyday reality of life in Belfast. The next chapter will build on the insights provided by this chapter and will specifically focus on how the segregated structure of society influences how youth experience and navigate life in West Belfast.

Chapter V: How do Catholic Youth in West Belfast Experience and Navigate Life?

While highly segregated, the 'Wild West' of Belfast is not as homogenous as most people make it out to be. To the outside, West Belfast is portrayed as an area filled with sectarian thugs who are associated with either dissident paramilitary groups or the hoods. While these groups receive a disproportionate amount of attention, they make up an extreme minority of West Belfast's population. Like all communities, there was considerable heterogeneity within the area and among the youth who attended the youth centre. While most were united under a common identity, the youth held different values, hobbies, and political opinions. Furthermore, a number of youth had no interest in the themes of my research, either due to a lack of knowledge or interest regarding the nature of my research or due to a sense of uneasiness regarding the themes of conflict, division, or paramilitaries. Other youth, especially those with a particular interest in Irish history and politics, were delighted to share their stories, experiences and opinions with me. Above all, the vast majority of the youth that I engaged with expressed that they wanted to be normal teenagers who could acquire a job or attend university in the future. Unfortunately, they just happened to be from a community that is still tarnished by its reputation and disgraced by the enduring legacy of the Troubles. To cope with this, the youth employed a variety of strategies when navigating life in Belfast. These strategies are primarily used to avoid negative attention and to ensure personal safety and are explained by Mac Ginty's (2014) theory of everyday peace.

Section A: Overview of 'Everyday Peace'

While both generally live separately, members of the PUL and CNR communities are forced to share the Belfast city centre on a daily basis. Both groups shop at the same department stores and dine next to each other at Five Guys or any of the other popular restaurant chains located in Belfast's Victoria Square shopping mall. The question is, how do individuals within these groups who once killed each other now peacefully eat cheeseburgers side-by-side at Five Guys? Mac Ginty (2014, p. 548) argues that it's up to the everyday strategies used by individuals and groups in deeply-divided societies that serve as the essential building blocks for peace formation and conflict transformation. Strategies promoting

Table I. Types of social practice that constitute everyday peace.

Types of everyday peace activity

Avoidance
- *contentious topics of conversation*
- *offensive displays*
- *high-risk people and places*
- *escapism into subcultures*
- *not drawing attention to oneself*
- *live in the present*

Ambiguity
- *concealing signifiers of identity*
- *non-observance or 'not seeing'*
- *dissembling in speech and actions*

Ritualized politeness
- *system of manners*

Telling
- *ethnically informed identification and social ordering*

Blame deferring
- *shifting blame to outsiders to appear more socially acceptable*

From Mac Ginty (2014, p. 556)

everyday peace consist of "practices and norms deployed by individuals and groups in deeply divided societies to avoid and minimize conflict and awkward situations at both inter- and intra-group levels" (Mac Ginty, p. 553). Everyday peace is achieved through five mutually inclusive social practices which include avoidance, ambiguity, ritualized politeness and blame deferring (Mac Ginty, pp. 555-557). Avoidance is a principle practice used in deeply-divided societies and exhibits itself through a number of strategies. These strategies include the avoidance of contentious conversations and displays as well as certain people or places. Oftentimes, avoidance strategies come in the form of escaping into subcultures or avoiding the traumas of past by living in the present (Mac Ginty, p. 555). In addition to, and often complementing avoidance, ambiguity plays a significant role in the promotion of everyday peace (Mac Ginty, p. 556). This involves concealing any signifiers of identity or group affiliation, ignoring or tolerating intergroup differences by 'not seeing them' or by doing or saying things that are regarded as socially acceptable even though they may contradict a person's underlying values (Mac Ginty, p. 556). This often works in tandem with ritualized politeness where intergroup interactions are somewhat scripted ("how about this weather we're having") to ensure the civility of the conversation (Mac Ginty, pp. 556-557). The 'telling' process is another strategy utilised to ensure everyday peace where individuals look for subtle cues to distinguish whether someone is a member of the in-group or outgroup (Mac Ginty, p. 557). The outcome of this telling process often determines the nature of the interaction or the topics that are acceptable to discuss. And lastly, blame deferring makes up the fifth element of everyday peace where individuals shift the blame to outsiders or the 'deviants' within their own group for any issues that arise (Mac Ginty p. 557). The blaming of these deviants shows that they are unrepresentative of the group as a whole so the constructed notion of positive intergroup relations can be upheld (Mac Ginty, p. 557). Throughout my fieldwork in Belfast, I observed each of the elements of everyday peace in practice as people went about their daily lives. Importantly, the practices and strategies used to navigate life were heavily influenced by segregation and the physical location of an individual.

Segregation Dictates How Everyday Peace is Employed

Mac Ginty's framework on everyday peace is limited in the sense that it fails to incorporate any analysis of how everyday peace is applied spatially within a deeply-divided society. This chapter bridges this gap by examining how everyday peace is employed spatially throughout Belfast. As established in chapter IV, 'space matters' within Belfast's segregated communities and the youth that I engaged with spoke candidly about how they behaved and carried themselves differently based on their physical location in Belfast (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006). Within their own segregated community, they were free to be themselves and to do or say as they pleased. For the Catholic youth, the CNR community of West Belfast was the only place in the city where they did not have to actively avoid contentious topics or conceal their Irish/Catholic identity. As a result, many youth proudly displayed signifiers of identity by wearing GAA jerseys or other clothing that displayed nationalistic undertones. Some youth in the youth centre even wore sweaters that had the 1916 Proclamation to the Irish Republic inscribed on them which served as a blatant expression

of identity. Furthermore, there was no need to engage in purposely scripted conversations as intragroup interactions were generally free-flowing and frank. Within Andersonstown, the youth could say whatever they wanted about their identity or about Protestants without having to worry about causing offence. However, some of the youth I engaged with expressed a desire to escape their community's conflict-ridden legacy through deviant subcultures or by living a 'normal life'.

The employment of everyday peace strategies was far more overt when the youth were outside of their community or in non-segregated areas of Belfast. Avoiding areas belonging to the outgroup was a primary strategy utilised by every young person that I engaged with. The highly segregated structure of Belfast and the meanings derived from the visible mechanisms that maintain it as discussed in the previous chapter make it blatantly clear which areas are to be avoided. As a result, segregation (or the lack thereof) assists with the internal decision-making processes of when to employ everyday peace strategies. A variety of everyday peace practices were also utilised in non-segregated areas such as the city centre where the risk of offending or creating a tense situation was higher as both communities share the public spaces in the bustling Belfast City Centre. To mitigate these risks, individuals commonly used a variety of the everyday peace strategies shown in Table I. This chapter will now highlight and discuss how the Catholic youth of West Belfast employ everyday peace spatially across Belfast.

Section B: Employment of Everyday Peace Within Own Community: Avoidance and Escapism

For the youth in Andersonstown, the intergroup strategies and norms that make up everyday peace are largely irrelevant when inside the community as there is little intergroup interaction due to segregation. With that said, the practices of living in the present and escaping into subcultures are employed by some within the community as internal coping mechanisms for their community's legacy of armed conflict and the bad reputation the community receives as a result. Many outsiders link West Belfast to terrorism and label residents who were involved in the conflict as terrorists. While the words terrorism and terrorist are consciously avoided in the area, the West Belfast youth that I engaged with faced a number of pressures stemming from their community's legacy of conflict and the external stigmas that it receives. Several youth implicitly expressed that they wanted to escape from their own community's tarnished reputation by disassociating themselves from its history and any other sources of contention. To illustrate, avoidance behaviour was exhibited by some youth when I asked them explicit questions in regards to the conflict or its remaining legacy. I was routinely met with the responses of 'I don't know' or 'I'm not sure' and a general lack of enthusiasm for the conversation. Mac Ginty (2014, p. 556) argues that displaying "little or no interest in the ongoing conflict" is an avoidance technique which allows the youth to live in the present and escape from their association with the post-conflict community. The drug and alcohol use among some of the youth I engaged with also provides a mechanism for youth to escape from, and cope with the negative labels that are commonly associated with their community. With that said, avoiding and escaping are complicated processes,

especially when youth are constantly surrounded by narratives, images, and social pressures that reinforce social identities and provide a sense of belonging and meaning to people's lives.

Males in particular are confronted with a set of social pressures that make it especially difficult to escape West Belfast's enduring legacy of conflict. In West Belfast, people are constantly reminded of the violent past as armed men are commonly pictured in monumental murals who are commemorated for their roles or heroic sacrifices made during the Troubles. Some of the youth looked up to their fathers or grandfathers who were actively involved with the (P)IRA or other dissident groups. Furthermore, the various elements embedded within West Belfast's discursive landscape "produce stereotypical images of masculinity and femininity, reinforce patriarchy, and reaffirm the troubles as primarily a masculine experience" (Lisle, 2006, p. 41). In the minds of many youth, these men are martyrs and are looked up to. As a result, some male youth sympathise with their community's collective history and strive to imitate the toughness and rebelliousness of the glorified Irish freedom fighters of the past. It's the sense of 'badness' that we want as a 16-year-old member of the youth centre phrased it. Now that the Troubles and its associated dissident activity have been quelled, the working-class 'bad boy' culture of West Belfast largely revolves around drinking, doing drugs and taking part in anti-social behaviour such as vandalism or stealing cars and taking them for joyrides. These socially deviant and rebellious youth of the area are collectively known by locals as 'hoods'. I argue that the hoods have emerged as a result of the competing male desires of escaping their community's legacy of conflict but also wanting to embody the tough, rebellious and violent behaviour of the paramilitary men who are glorified within their community.

The hoods are a loosely-defined group of mostly males who often stroll the streets of West Belfast hooded in Adidas tracksuits and are known for causing trouble by committing petty crimes, street-fighting, and dangerously driving stolen cars down West Belfast's major roadways (Hamill, 2010, p. 53). "The hoods' inability to access both legitimate law-abiding and illegitimate law-violating groups prevents them from gaining any form of recognized prestige and the accompanying resources" (Hamill, p. 91). Their inability to join 'illegitimate' groups such as republican paramilitaries comes as a result of these groups being largely closed off to recruiting new members after the GFA (Hamill, p. 88). As a result, young people have been unable to "participate in the community […] so they went outside of it by creating a [criminal] subculture" (Hamill, p. 88). The hoods despise all forms of authority; both formal (the police) and informal (the paramilitaries). Due to the lingering mistrust of the police in West Belfast, informal strategies have been utilised by paramilitaries and vigilante groups to police and punish the hoods (Hamill pp. 3-4). The hoods show off their punishment scars and are able to distinguish "the really tough from the not so tough […] through the process of being punished" (Hamill, p. 15). Within the youth centre, attitudes towards the hoods were decidedly mixed as some displayed an affinity for what they represented while others denounced the hoods as evidenced below.

One evening in the youth centre, one of the youth members alerted a staff member and dejectedly stated that someone defaced a page of his homework while he wasn't looking. Someone

secretly scribbled the letters 'UTH", which is short for' Up the Hoods', in bold font.[36] This incident reflects an underlying degree of affinity for the hoods subculture that was evident among some male members of the youth centre. While no one I spoke to openly admitted to being a 'hood', many of the male youth exhibited the traits of hoods. Most males wanted to be perceived as tough, bad, and rebellious amongst their peers which is synonymous with the hoods subculture where prestige is based solely on toughness or 'badness'. This was evident as many youth openly admitted to and boasted their acts of deviant behaviour such as drinking or using drugs from the age of 12 or 13. Males often carried themselves with a tough or 'macho' demeanour and often play fought or slap-boxed one another to give off the impression that they were tough and masculine like the hoods. One individual boasted about quitting school because he 'didn't like it' which is not only a form of rebellion against authority but also bolstered his social approval amongst some of his peers as dropping out signals 'badness'.[37] The societal construct of what it means to be a man, especially in a post-conflict society, and the teenage male impulse to be perceived as tough, masculine and rebellious drives the hoods subculture in a community that glorifies these traits. This is further driven by the desire of some youth to disassociate with their community and instead gain prestige amongst peers by proving one's toughness through status as a hood. Essentially, the hoods provide an outlet for teenage males to escape their community's legacy of conflict while allowing them to fulfil their constructed notions of masculinity, rebellion, and 'badness'.

With that said, most of the youth I engaged with were not fond of the hoods as one labelled them as 'scumbags' who take advantage of the community's history of civil unrest to satisfy their thirst to cause trouble.[38] Instead of escaping into a delinquent sub-culture, others escaped by expressing their desire to have a normal life where they could attain a career, attend university, or just live in the present to live like a normal teenager. The desire for normalcy was undoubtedly the most common mechanism that youth used to escape or cope with their community's history of violence and its negative associations with paramilitarism and sectarianism. This is not to say that the youth wanted to leave behind all aspects of their identity or communal traditions but rather the negative facets associated with the CNR community's legacy of conflict. Several of those who wanted to escape by living peaceful and normal lives still expressed sympathy for the political goals of the (P)IRA, proudly played GAA sports and unequivocally identified as Irish.

Section C: Employment of Everyday Peace Outside of Community: A Multi-Faceted Approach

The youth used a variety of strategies when outside of their community to avoid confrontation, offence, or other awkward situations that could arise in spaces that are shared by both communities. Avoidance and ambiguous everyday peace practices are closely intertwined when youth navigate their lives when outside of their community. The everyday peace practices

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[36] From fieldnotes dated March 30th
[37] From fieldnotes dated March 24th
[38] From fieldnotes dated March 31st

of avoidance and ambiguity took many forms for the Catholic youth that I spoke to. As made clear above, areas that are considered to be territory of the outgroup were overwhelmingly avoided out of fear, anxiety and due to the various mechanisms that maintain and police the ethnic boundaries of Belfast. The youth made clear that when they were outside of their community in mixed or neutral areas, contentious topics and displays were avoided so that their identity would remain ambiguous and therefore minimise the risk of causing offense or tension. This was evidenced by an interaction I had with a younger staff member of the youth centre at the neutral Titanic Quarter area of Belfast. I was discussing the UVF paramilitary murals while a number of other strangers were in our presence. The staff member, clearly on edge, gave me the hand gesture to shut up as others could listen in to the sensitive conversation. Although the staff member and I had numerous conversations that were arguably more politically sensitive within the youth centre, the fact that we were outside of the segregated community of Andersonstown changed everything. Furthermore, some youth expressed that while they felt safe wearing GAA jerseys or other attire representing their Irish identity within their community, they wouldn't wear these jerseys outside of their community as it would be seen as a bold statement and reveal their identity. To illustrate, wearing clothing that is representative of your own community when outside of your community in Belfast would be comparable to flying a Confederate flag in a segregated African-American community in the U.S. Deep South. A group of teenage boys from the youth centre told me that they had heard of people 'getting beaten up' for wearing the wrong jersey in the wrong part of town so most opted to keep their identity ambiguous and avoided wearing jerseys outside of their community. This sentiment is encapsulated by everyday peace as the boys expressed that they would rather wear something less contentious to conceal their identities instead of making a bold statement that would risk their personal safety.

In addition to keeping identities concealed, avoiding contentious conversations and consciously deciding not to wear jerseys representative of their identity when outside of the community, the youth engaged in a ritualized telling process where they continually categorised others as either Catholic or Protestant when outside of their community. The various methods that people use to tell one another apart are subtle and would be chalked up to casual small-talk to the outside observer. The telling process constantly occurs because Protestants and Catholics look the same, speak the same, and share many cultural traits and seemed impossible for me to differentiate a Catholic from a Protestant. This telling process offhandedly occurred while I was sitting in the backseat of a Belfast taxi along with one of my local friends who happened to be Catholic. The driver and my friend went through a telling process where they first asked each other's names. This seemingly subtle question plays a key role in the categorisation of people as Irish-derived names typically indicate that the person is Catholic while Anglo-Saxon-derived names often indicate that the individual is Protestant. Step one of the telling process checked out accordingly as both the driver and my friend had Irish surnames. They then went on to discuss where they were from and both happened to be areas with large Catholic majorities. Their conversation then shifted towards contentious Northern Irish politics as both now felt comfortable doing so as a result of their shared communal background. If the telling process led them to believe that they were from

different communal backgrounds, they likely would have started talking about the weather as "people in Northern Ireland [have] perfected the skill of talking about the weather or [other] inconsequential issues" (Mac Ginty, 2014, p. 555). This interaction between two unfamiliar locals in an otherwise awkward and socially vulnerable position inside the confines of a taxi excellently demonstrated how two complete strangers navigate intricate social situations in Belfast. As illustrated, it was achieved through ritualized friendliness by making casual small-talk which played a dual role in telling them that they shared a common Catholic background.

Lastly, blame deferring was a common tactic that the youth used in my presence. Blame deferring was primarily used to appear more socially acceptable in response to questions that I asked. For example, I asked a number of people if they felt that people in their community still held animosity towards Protestants. Most youth expressed that it was only a few old people within their community who still held sectarian attitudes and that young people had no issues with the members of the other community. With that said, blame deferring also extended to the outgroup. When I asked a number of people why Protestants and Catholics live separate lives, almost everyone blamed it on Protestants and their unwillingness to reach across the divide. To illustrate this, the manager of the youth centre told me that she had reached out to a number of youth centres within the PUL community and stated that they 'do not respond' and are hesitant to engage in intercommunal youth initiatives.[39] A similar sentiment was shared by a number of the youth themselves as many expressed that they 'didn't mind Protestants' but that 'Protestants didn't like them'.

"I wouldn't feel nervous talking to a Protestant but they fear us because we're starting to outnumber them […] so they avoid us."[40]

-Connor (16)

According to the youth, Protestants and the old sectarian extremists within the CNR community are responsible for the societal issues afflicting Belfast. Blaming others for problems is a convenient way to maintain a positive sense of self and justify one's social identity with the ingroup. While blame deferring and all of the other practices that promote everyday peace reduces personal risk or causing offence to others, everyday peace tactics ultimately maintain the segregated and divided structure of Belfast as people are inclined to live in places where they feel safe to express themselves freely without having constantly to mask their internal self by appearing socially acceptable.

Everyday Peace and the Perpetuation of Segregation and Division

While the practice of everyday peace helps ensures the peaceful coexistence of Catholics of Protestants on a micro-level, the employment of everyday peace does not address the principal

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[39] From fieldnotes dated March 7th
[40] From fieldnotes dated March 16th

roots of the conflict in Northern Ireland. Instead, everyday peace ensures a "tolerance of prejudice" where actors have to pretend to tolerate the other side by being polite, socially acceptable, and not expressing or displaying contentious opinions when outside of one's own community (Harris, 1972, p. 200, as cited in Mac Ginty, 2014, p. 557). Everyday peace behaviours have become so internalised and normalised among residents of Belfast that the methods are just another part of the underlying sectarian culture of the city. The widely cited avoidance of segregated strongholds belonging to the outgroup hinders opportunities for positive intergroup contact as set forth by Allport (1954) and thus perpetuates the animosity, fear and intergroup anxiety held for outgroup members. This in turn reproduces the cycle of segregation. Additionally, individuals feel pressured to 'tone down' their rhetoric, displays of cultural pride, or anything else that may be seen as provocative in the eyes of the ethnic other to avoid awkward, tense, or otherwise uncomfortable interactions when outside of their community. Everyday peace is employed knowing that people have a community to go back to where they are freely able to express themselves amongst like-minded thinkers in a segregated community. Everyday peace practices act as the tourniquet preventing Belfast from further bloodshed but they do nothing to heal the city's existing wounds.

Chapter Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to provide a theoretically informed analysis to understand how West Belfast youth experience and navigate life in Belfast. To interpret the empirical insights, the chapter built on Mac Ginty's (2014) framework of everyday peace by generating an understanding of how it is employed spatially within Belfast. In doing so, the empirical insights from my ethnographic approach illustrate how youth applied everyday peace differently depending on their physical location. Crucially, segregation dictates how and when the various practices of everyday peace are carried out. Within their own community, some youth avoided dwelling on the enduring legacy of conflict and just wanted to live in the present. Others escaped to deviant sub-cultures due to social pressures in regards to masculinity, toughness and rebellion. With that said, most youth expressed a desire for normalcy as a means to break away from their community's reputation that has been cemented in violence. When the youth were outside of their community, the use of everyday peace was used explicitly to avoid conflict, tension, awkwardness, or negative attention. Avoidance of high-risk communities belonging to the outgroup was universal among the Catholic youth. When in neutral areas such as the city centre, everyday peace tactics such as the avoidance of contentious topics, wearing jerseys and drawing attention to oneself were commonplace. These avoidance tactics also served to keep their identities ambiguous as a way to uphold everyday peace. Furthermore, a telling process consisting of subtle questions to determine a stranger's identity was routinely carried out by locals in Belfast. The outcome of the telling process often determines the nature of the interaction or the conversational strategies utilised to keep interactions cordial. However, while everyday peace practices assist individuals in deeply-divided societies to navigate life peacefully, it provides no pathway towards meaningful reconciliation and normalises the divide which reinforces the need for segregation.

Chapter VI: Discussion and Conclusion

This research addressed the understudied and undertheorized question of how Belfast's structural segregation influences how Catholic youth in West Belfast experience and navigate life today. This research inquiry is significant both in academia and in a practical sense as policymakers, community organisations and everyday people in Belfast are confronted with the pivotal question of how to promote meaningful reconciliation in the deeply-divided city. The existing academic literature fails to generate an in-depth understanding of how segregation specifically influences the navigation of life and everyday decisions of young people who have grown up in the years after the conflict. The ethnographic approach taken for this research fills the gap in the academic literature by generating an in-depth understanding of how Belfast's segregation manifests itself, gives rise to, and reinforces identities through the making of place, and dictates the way that youth behave and carry themselves in different areas of the city. Succinctly, segregation has an all-encompassing impact on the everyday lives of West Belfast youth; it fundamentally defines who you are, the school curriculum you are taught, the sports you play, and governs where you go and how you interact with others in different parts of the city.

Segregation perpetuates Belfast's division through the city's overbearing interface barriers, the countless murals and memorial gardens and through schools and sports. Belfast's segregation, and the mechanisms that maintain it, construct boundaries, influence social organisation and norms while adding meaning and emotional attachment to space. In other words, space matters in Belfast and Slooter (2019) and Gieryn (2000) argue that these are the essential components that convert an otherwise meaningless physical space into a place that holds meaning and value (Shirlow and Murtagh, 2006). The spatial meaning attached to segregated communities is interpreted internally through the (re)production of social identities and interpreted externally as a threatening or dangerous no-go area. Ultimately, the meanings derived from segregated spaces in Belfast construct and perpetuate the categorised notions of 'us' versus 'them' and reinforce the cycle of segregation. The boundaries that maintain Belfast's segregation go largely un-policed by the state and are instead policed on a local level through peer and family pressure that discourages cross-communal interaction. Perceived threats or intimidation from the outgroup also serve to police boundaries as many would not risk their personal safety by venturing into a stronghold belonging to the outgroup. Paramilitary markings, which often depict masked men wielding rifles, serve as overt warnings to outsiders that they do not belong. In extreme circumstances, the threatening paramilitary displays are backed by the use of physical violence where some have been physically removed from their homes in certain communities as a result of being an outsider. Through my fieldwork, it became clear that segregation, and the mechanisms that maintain it, dictate the behaviour and navigation of life for the Catholic youth of West Belfast.

The West Belfast youth, who are all too young to remember the Troubles but are surrounded by the conflict's enduring legacy, provided key insights into how the city's segregation influences their day-to-day behaviour. Segregation has become such an inherent aspect of life for those living within West Belfast. As a result, patterns of interaction and social norms in segregated

versus non-segregated spaces have become so ritualised that they are almost instinctive. To interpret these ritualised day-to-day decisions, behaviours, and patterns of life, I utilised Mac Ginty's (2014) framework of everyday peace. With that said, I argue that this framework is oversimplified in the context of Belfast where the use of everyday peace strategies was determined by one's physical location and its accompanying degree of segregation. The meanings and perceptions that are derived from various spaces in Belfast determine the everyday peace practices that are utilised. When youth were inside of their own segregated community, the everyday peace strategies were primarily applied to cope with their community's bad reputation and associations with past violence. In doing so, many youth avoided my direct questioning about conflict-related themes by showing little interest in the conversation or by giving short generic responses. These avoidance techniques illustrate how youth cope with their community's violent past by disassociating themselves from it and living in the present. Some male youth, who were constantly confronted with their community's portrayal of masculinity and toughness through its discursive landscape, coped with their community's legacy of violence by escaping into deviant sub-cultures. In West Belfast, the hoods are the most deviant group of youth who are known for repeatedly engaging in petty crimes such as vandalism, stealing cars, and using or selling drugs on the street. The hoods have prestige and a broad range of sympathy among male youth in West Belfast. While most do not engage in the hoods' criminal activity, several males I engaged with proudly displayed their toughness or badness which are the fundamental principles that the hoods use to signal prestige. However, the vast majority of the West Belfast youth expressed that they just wanted to be normal teenagers and have normal lives. They all had dreams and aspirations beyond their community's enduring legacy of violence. This in itself is a way of coping and escaping the negative stigmas associated with their segregated CNR community. Even though most desired a normal life void of conflict, the meanings associated with being from Catholic West Belfast meant that a wide range of strategies had to be utilised to conceal their identities, avoid contentious topics and keep interactions outside of their segregated community cordial.

Avoidance of segregated areas belonging to the outgroup was widely cited among the youth I engaged with. The avoidance of PUL communities helped ensure everyday peace as the perceived threats posed by these areas were negated when the youth physically bypassed them in favour of staying within Catholic or neutral areas. Within Belfast's non-segregated neutral areas such as the city centre, a wide array of everyday peace practices were utilised as these areas are shared by both communities and interactions with the outgroup are to be expected. When navigating life outside of the community, wearing signifiers of identity such as GAA jerseys or any other displays of 'Irishness' was consciously avoided by the youth to reduce the risk of stirring up trouble by keeping their identities ambiguous. Even when identities were ambiguous, the youth illustrated how they engaged in a telling process in an attempt to determine the communal identity of strangers they interact with outside of their community. This was usually achieved through friendly small talk where names and communal backgrounds often signalled the other person's identity. Interactions were often shaped by the outcome of the telling process where people of the same

communal background were freer to discuss contentious topics while intergroup interactions were usually more scripted and non-contentious.

To conclude succinctly, the relationship between segregation and the array of everyday peace strategies is undeniably interconnected. The empirical insights displayed how youth employ distinct everyday peace practices based on their spatial location within their own community or outside of it. Space by itself is meaningless so segregation and the mechanisms that maintain it add the necessary meaning to Belfast's contested spaces that signal to individuals which strategies to utilise based on their physical location in the city. The everyday peace strategies that are employed based on the perceived meanings attached to space ultimately dictate how Catholic youth from West Belfast experience and navigate life throughout the city.

Limitations and Avenues for Future Research

In critically assessing my research, there are some limitations worth noting. Firstly, due to time and resource constraints, I had only one month in Belfast to generate the empirical findings for this thesis. As a result, the data collection process was rushed and I believe that more time would have allowed me to gain a greater level of trust among the youth participants. Consequently, the trust-building process felt forced at times which likely limited what the youth felt comfortable sharing with me. More time in the field would have provided me with the necessary time to naturally build trust and therefore would have generated valuable and more candid insights. Furthermore, due to time constraints, I never had the chance to observe how the youth interact and navigate life outside of the youth centre. My data only reflects their descriptive accounts of how they experience and navigate life. Observational data from outside the youth centre would have added another layer of analytical depth to the thesis. Lastly, gaining access to the field was incredibly challenging. Countless research inquiries were sent to youth centres throughout Belfast to no avail. As a result, my findings only reflect those of Catholic youth in an isolated West Belfast community. Having access to Protestant youth would have established a basis for comparison and insights from the two opposing communities would have greatly enhanced the utility of the research. With the limitations stated, the avenues for future research can now be identified.

One avenue of future academic research should be focused on schools in Northern Ireland. While a majority of people support integrated education in the region, the vast majority of students still attend segregated schools (Wallace, 2021). As this thesis illustrated, separating students from a young age institutionalises division and provides an environment that gives rise to the construction of us versus them and the resulting negative stereotypes of the outgroup. Ethnographic research should be carried out in maintained (Catholic), controlled (Protestant), and integrated secondary schools to generate an understanding of the (inter)group dynamics of each type of school and the disparities and similarities in how students employ everyday peace practices in each environment. Another avenue for research should be centred on the appeal of paramilitaries to male youth within the PUL community as their identity has become increasingly threatened as Northern Irish Catholics are expected to outnumber Protestants in the coming years. The recent electoral success of the nationalist party Sinn Fein is undoubtedly seen as an existential threat to

loyalists and will likely be a renewed source of tension that could be a mobilising force into the well-established loyalist paramilitary groups. This comes as recent civil unrest in Belfast has been centred in loyalist areas so an academically informed understanding of the appeal and potential mobilisation into loyalist paramilitaries could provide invaluable insights into the future of Northern Ireland's fragile peace process.

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