

SPEA UNDERGRADUATE HONORS THESIS

# Northern Ireland Conflict

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## Remaining Issues with the Peace Process

**Joanna Madias**

Policy Analysis

Junior

**Gary L. Branham**

Adjunct Professor

School of Public and Environmental Affairs

Faculty Mentor

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## **Abstract**

The conflict in Northern Ireland dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century when the Scottish and English Protestants colonized largely in the Northern Ireland region. The rest of Ireland was predominately Catholic and gained independence from the United Kingdom in 1922. However, six counties that make up Northern Ireland, a majority Protestant area with a Catholic minority, opted to remain with the United Kingdom. Unionists in Northern Ireland, mostly Protestants, wish to belong to the United Kingdom while nationalists, mostly Catholics, hope for a united Ireland. Furthermore, paramilitary unionists are referred to as loyalists and paramilitary nationalists are known as republicans. From the late 1960's to the late 1990's, there was a period of political violence between the loyalists and republicans referred to as "The Troubles" that resulted in almost 3,500 deaths. The violence ended with the paramilitary ceasefires in 1994 followed by the creation of the Good Friday Agreement in 1998.

The Good Friday Agreement is a major development of the peace process between unionists and nationalists. The Good Friday Agreement consisted of devolved government authority from the United Kingdom to Northern Ireland, new government consisting of democratic and non-violent ideals, and power sharing between the unionists' and nationalists' political parties. This paper will examine three important issues in Northern Ireland that have not completely fulfilled the standards outlined in the Good Friday Agreement: the peace walls that physically separate Protestant and Catholic housing, the segregated education system, and the annual contentious marches and parades. It will provide both the unionists' and nationalists' perspectives on these issues and show why it has been difficult to transform these areas to represent the Good Friday Agreement's goal of a peaceful and shared society. Then the paper will discuss a program that successfully implemented the vision of the Good Friday Agreement;

the reformation of the Northern Ireland police force. The predominately Protestant police force transformed to equally represent both the unionists' and nationalists' beliefs and identities. The new police service became more representative and supportive by the entire Northern Ireland community and portrays the equality and integrating ideals of the Good Friday Agreement.

## **Background**

The conflict in Northern Ireland dates back to the 17th century when the Scottish and English Protestants colonized largely in the Northern Ireland region (Imbornoni, Brunner, & Rowen, 2007). Ireland was a predominately Catholic country and the King of England sent many Protestant colonists to live in Ireland to convert Ireland to Protestantism (Northern Ireland - History of a Conflict and the Peace Process, n.d.). From the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to 1922, Ireland was part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, but Irish citizens supported the notion of Home Rule desiring self-government for Ireland (Imbornoni et al., 2007). In 1922, Ireland won self-governance becoming the Irish Free State, and succeeded in independence from the United Kingdom becoming the Republic of Ireland in 1949 (Imbornoni et al., 2007; Northern Ireland - History of a Conflict and the Peace Process, n.d.).

When Ireland became the Irish Free State, six counties that make up Northern Ireland, a majority Protestant area with a Catholic minority, opted to remain with the United Kingdom (Imbornoni et al., 2007). Unionists in Northern Ireland, mostly Protestants, opposed Home Rule and supported keeping the "Union" with the United Kingdom while nationalists, mostly Catholics, hoped for a united Ireland. (Imbornoni et al. 2007; Doyle, 2010). This notion depicts differing identity is the heart of the Northern Ireland conflict.

The conflict in Northern Ireland arises in the divided religious, national, and political identities. Religious identity is between Protestants and Catholics. Differing national identity refers to the association of “territorial alliances” where Protestants view themselves as British and Catholics perceive themselves as Irish (Hayes & McAllister, 2013). Political identity represents unionists who are mostly Protestants wishing to remain part of the United Kingdom while nationalists are predominately Catholic and hoping to become a united Ireland. Hayes & McAllister (2013) state that “the stereotypical Protestant is someone who sees oneself as British and unionist, and the corresponding Catholic is someone who sees one-self as Irish and nationalist” (p.67). The differing identity to the territory of the state represents the conflict and instability of the region. However, not all Protestants see themselves as unionists and not all Catholics view themselves as nationalists (Hayes & McAllister, 2013). Furthermore, there are some who do not affiliate themselves with a religion and some who claim a Northern Irish identity (Hayes & McAllister, 2013). The Northern Irish identity may be perceived as the “middle ground” between the two polarized identities (Hayes & McAllister, 2013). One may choose to adopt a Northern Irish identity, but rarely does one switch entirely to the opposing identity (Hayes & McAllister, 2013). In this paper, the focus is on the two polarized religious, national, and political identities.

Northern Ireland governed itself from 1922 to 1972 (Northern Ireland - History of a Conflict and the Peace Process, n.d.). Because unionists and Protestants made up the majority of Northern Ireland, their beliefs dominated the way of life in Northern Ireland controlling policing and government affairs (Doyle, 2010; Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). Catholics were discriminated against and had few rights in public housing, employment, and elections (Archick, 2014; Northern Ireland Timeline, 2014). The police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), was

associated with a unionist identity and was not supported by the nationalist community (Doyle, 2010). The power of the Protestants and unionists over the Catholics and nationalists further encouraged the separation of identity between the two communities.

The Catholics in Northern Ireland began fighting for their civil rights starting in the late 1960's (Archick, 2014; Northern Ireland Timeline, 2014). The Civil Rights protests were met with excessive force from the RUC, leaving Catholics feeling unprotected and losing trust of the police (Archick, 2014; Doyle, 2010). Catholics continued to fight for their rights. From the late 1960's to 1998, "The Troubles" was a period of political violence between the paramilitary unionists, referred to as loyalists, and paramilitary nationalists, known as republicans (Archick, 2014) "The Troubles" resulted in almost 3,500 deaths (Archick, 2014). Riots and violence occurred between the two communities in the summer of 1969 which resulted in the first peace wall built by the British troops separating the Catholic and Protestant areas (Sommers, 2014).

In 1972, Northern Ireland was placed under Direct Rule from Westminster where the control over the government affairs of Northern Ireland moved from the hands of the unionists to the United Kingdom (Northern Ireland Timeline, 2014). "The Troubles" ended with paramilitary ceasefires in 1994 followed by the creation of the Good Friday Agreement (Good Friday Agreement) in 1998 (Northern Ireland - History of a Conflict and the Peace Process, n.d.; Northern Ireland Timeline, 2014).

The Good Friday Agreement is a major development of the peace process between unionists and nationalists. The Good Friday Agreement consisted of devolved government authority from the United Kingdom to Northern Ireland, new government consisting of democratic and non-violent ideals, and power sharing between the unionists' and nationalists'

political parties. According to the Northern Ireland Timeline (2014), some important concepts outlined in the Good Friday Agreement include:

- There could be a united Ireland only if the majority of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland voted for it.
- Citizens can be recognized as either Irish or British.
- People are guaranteed rights of equal opportunity, freedom of religion, freedom to see political change by peaceful measures, and freedom from sectarian harassment.
- New police service that is representative and accepted by the entire community.

While the peace process has stopped the major violence that occurred during “The Troubles,” there remain underlying issues that have not been resolved. In particular, the separation of Catholic and Protestant housing by peace walls, segregation in education, and annual contentious marches and parades highlight the existing identity conflict in Northern Ireland.

The Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and Sinn Féin represent the two most popular political parties for the unionists and nationalists, respectively (Archick, 2014). The DUP wishes to remain with the United Kingdom while Sinn Féin hopes for a united Ireland (Doyle, 2010). Even with two strikingly opposing views, the Good Friday Agreement allows the political parties to create public policies that maintain reconciliation and represent the identity of all the people in Northern Ireland. The government has the ability to manage or improve the conflict found in peace walls, education, and marches and parades in order to promote a more peaceful society in Northern Ireland.

## Peace Walls

Peace walls are border barriers separating Protestant and Catholic neighborhoods. The first peace wall was constructed to stop the 1969 riots in order to separate and reduce violence between Catholics and Protestants. They were intended for only temporary purposes, but there are more peace walls today than since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement (Archick, 2014). One report claimed there were 48 peace walls in 2012 compared to 22 in 1998 (Archick, 2014). Another source stated that there are over 80 barriers and peace walls in the loyalist and republican working class areas (Byrne, Heenan, & Robinson, 2012). The exact number of peace walls varies due to ambiguity of how to measure them, but overall, they have grown in number since the beginning of the peace process. Furthermore, more Catholics than Protestants live near peace walls and these areas tend to be economically deprived (Byrne et al., 2012).

A research report conducted at University of Ulster in June 2012 by Johnny Byrne, Cathy Gormley Heenan, and Gillian Robinson titled “Attitudes to Peace Walls” revealed findings between Protestants and Catholics living next to peace walls compared to those in the general population. The survey showed how perspectives of the peace walls for those living near them were different based on religion.



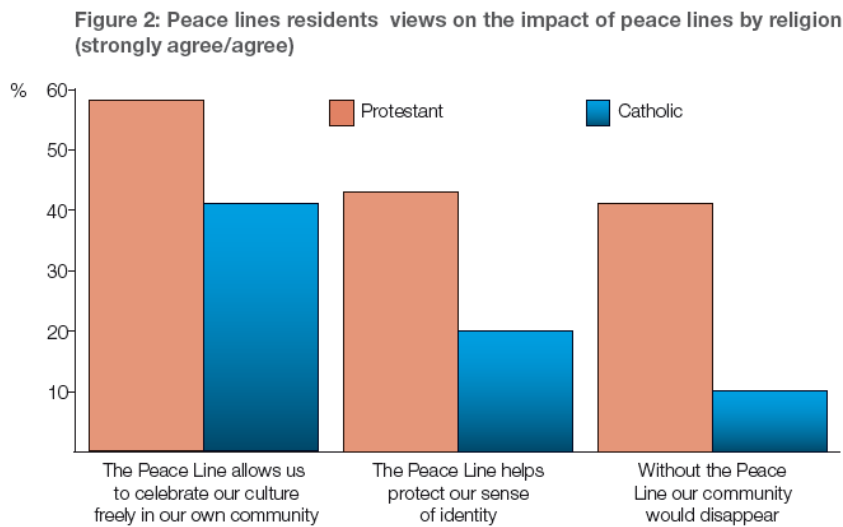


Figure 2 displayed that Protestants are more concerned about protecting their culture and identity (Byrne et al., 2012). The report identified:

59% of Protestants compared to 42% of Catholics felt that the peace walls allowed them to celebrate their culture freely within their own community. Similarly, 43% of Protestants, compared to 20% Catholics felt that the peace walls protected their sense of identity and 41% of Protestants compared to 10% Catholics felt that without the peace walls their communities would disappear (p.13-14)

It is indicated in the results that Protestants fear that their identity and community would disappear if the peace walls were removed (Byrne et al., 2012).

As mentioned in the background, Protestants ruled Northern Ireland during most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the 1998 Good Friday Agreement called for power-sharing between the Protestants and Catholics. In addition, the demographics of Northern Ireland is changing. The percentage of Protestants is declining while the percentage of Catholics is growing. According to the 2011 Census by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency, the Protestant

population has decreased 5% since 2001 to 48% of the resident population while Catholics have increased 1% since 2001 to 45% of the resident population (cited by Devenport, 2012). The decline in Protestants may be because they are older and have a higher mortality rate than most of the Catholic community (Devenport, 2012). Also, more people are claiming to be non-religious (Devenport, 2012). This transformation of power and demographics may cause Protestants to feel like they are losing their sense of identity and culture. Peter Shirlow (2006) claimed in the article, “Belfast: The ‘post-conflict’ city,” that “many predominately Unionist/Loyalist places are troubled by demographic decline” which creates firmer sectarian separation (p. 103).

Table 13: Which one of these statements comes closest to your own view about the Peace Lines in Northern Ireland (Peace Line in this area) being removed?

	General population (Q12)			Peace lines residents (Q15)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
<b>I would like things left the way they are now</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>21</b>
I would like the Peace Line(s) to come down now	27	21	33	14	11	16
<b>I would like the Peace Line(s) to come down some time in the future</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>45</b>
I would like to keep the Peace Line(s) but have them (it) opened up for accessibility	10	9	9	9	11	8
I would like to keep the Peace Line(s) but change how they (it) looks to make it more appealing	2	3	2	8	9	7
Don't know	10	11	10	3	3	2

The results of Table 13 determined 22% of peace line residents would like the peace walls to remain up compared to 3% of the general population (Byrne et al., 2012). Peter Shirlow

(2006) mentioned that those living near peace walls “live under a constant fear of attack” while those in the general population may not feel the present danger of violence (p.103). Additionally, 26% of Protestants compared to 21% of Catholics “like things left the way they are now” showing Protestants are slightly more supportive of keeping the peace walls. Table 13 also showed that 76% of the general population and 58% of the peace line residents would like the peace walls to come down now or in the future indicating that the majority of the respondents would eventually prefer to not have barriers segregating the community (Byrne et al., 2012).

Table 15: If the Peace Line(s) was (ere) removed, which one of these would be most likely to happen?

	General population (Q13)			Peace lines residents (Q16)		
	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %	Total %	Protestant %	Catholic %
Nothing, everything would stay the same as at present	5	4	8	5	4	6
Minor incidents	26	23	30	18	15	21
Some significant incidents	8	9	7	12	9	13
<b>Some significant incidents but only during particular dates/anniversaries or marches</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>37</b>
Constant problems	8	11	5	23	31	20
Don't know	10	9	9	5	7	4

Table 15 revealed that when asked what would happen if the peace walls were removed, the most popular answer among the general population and peace line residents was that there would be some significant incidents, but only during particular dates/anniversaries or marches (Byrne et al., 2012). This paper will later discuss the Northern Ireland marching season and the issue of whether unionists and nationalists have the right to commemorate their historical anniversaries by marching and parading in the opposing community's area.

The International Journal of Conflict Management published an article in 2012 about the physical separation between Protestant and Catholic communities in the peace process (Fissuh,

Skarlato, Byrne, Karari, & Kawser, 2012). The paper revealed that people's perceptions of whether physical separation supports the peace process varies depending on many factors including one's religion, economic class, and the region of residence. (Fissuh et al., 2012).

First, in terms of religion, Catholics are more supportive of physical separation compared to Protestants (Fissuh et al., 2012). While this contradicts Byrne et al. (2012) Table 13 indicating Protestants are more concerned with retaining the peace walls, Fissuh et al. (2012) result may be due to the larger population of Catholics living near peace walls.

Second, professional and skilled classes are more likely to see physical separation as inhibiting the peace process compared to unskilled and semi-skilled workers (Fissuh et al., 2012). Collin Coulter acknowledged that people living in West Belfast greatly suffered during "the Troubles" and in turn, suffered economically "as the second most impoverished community in the entire United Kingdom" (p.768). Areas with high unemployment tend to support the use of violence compared to other developed locations in Northern Ireland (Archick, 2014). Improving the unemployment and quality of life in these disadvantages areas will help these residents support the goals of the peace process rather than resort to violence (Archick, 2014).

Third, residents in the Northern region of Northern Ireland are more likely to perceive physical separation as a means to support the peace process, while people in the Western region are less likely to see that physical separation helps the peace process (Fissuh et al., 2012). According to Fissuh et al. (2012), "People West of the Bann, are more relaxed in their relationships with each other, while those living East of the Bann, especially in North-East Antrim, tend to support Loyalism, and may be more hostile to the peace process" (p.259). This finding reiterates Byrne et al. conclusions that residents living in loyalist areas, who wish to

remain under the United Kingdom, are supportive of a physical separation in order to maintain the peace and keep their sense of identity and community.

Peace walls do not represent the ideals of the Northern Ireland peace process because they are segregating unionists' and nationalists' neighborhoods. The Good Friday Agreement involves eliminating sectarian strife and creating a cohesive environment for the entire community. The research and surveys of the peace walls express how residents closest to the peace walls feel threatened by the chance of violence occurring. Furthermore, unionists living near peace walls fear losing their sense of identity if peace walls are removed. It is important for the government of Northern Ireland to address the possibility of violence and make the citizens feel safe. Additionally, the results implied that those living near peace walls consist of the working class and are more supportive of keeping the peace walls. On the other hand, the general population, not living adjacent to the peace walls, are more economically developed and have skilled and professional jobs and are in favor of taking down the peace walls. Therefore, the Northern Ireland government should strongly consider the perspectives of those living near peace walls because the research suggests that any solution to the issue more greatly affects them compared to the general population.

## **Education**

Northern Ireland's education system is highly segregated between Protestants and Catholics. The article "Integrated Education, Intergroup Relations, and Political Identities in Northern Ireland" by Bernadette Hayes, Ian McAllister, and Lizanne Dowds (2007) stated that "since its foundation in 1921, Northern Ireland has had two separate, religiously based educational systems at both the primary and secondary level" (p. 456). Additionally, the research

article “Segregation, Inequality, and Educational Performance in Northern Ireland: Problems and Solutions” by Vani Borooah and Colin Knox (2015) found that post-primary schools are separated based on academic selection: the selective grammar schools or the non-selective secondary schools. Grammar schools admit students based on an academic “selection test at the age of 11” while secondary schools accept any student (Borooah & Knox, 2014, p. 3).

Primary schools, non-selective secondary schools, and selective grammar schools that are attended by mostly Protestants are under the controlled system (Borooah & Knox, 2014). The controlled system is run by the state (Hayes, McAllister, & Dowds, *Integrated Education, Intergroup Relations, and Political Identities in Northern Ireland*, 2007). Primary schools, non-selective secondary schools, and selective grammar schools that are attended predominately by Catholics are considered under the maintained sector (Borooah & Knox, 2014). All of the Catholic schools are voluntary rather than state controlled and are managed by the Catholic Church (Hayes et al., 2007). There are also some integrated schools, with the first established in 1981, that combine Protestant and Catholic students (Hayes, et al., 2007). However, Catholics and Protestants usually never experience school together until they attend university (Borooah & Knox, 2014). This segregated education system for Northern Ireland youth reinforces the concept of separate religious and national identity.

There are also other people who do not classify themselves as Protestant or Catholic. According to the Department of Education School Statistics 2012/2013, 81% of this other or non-religious group attended Protestants’ post-primary schools while 5% enrolled in Catholic post-primary institutions, and 14% of them went to integrated schools (as cited in Borooah & Knox, 2014). Additionally, the Department of Education School Statistics 2012/2013 showed

that 6.9% of students attended integrated primary and post-primary schools (as cited in Borooah & Knox, 2014).

Borooah and Knox (2014) depicted the segregation in post-primary education in Northern Ireland in Table 1 (p.3).

**Table 1**  
Segregation in Northern Ireland's post primary schooling: 1997/1998 and 2012/2013.

	Protestant Pupils		Catholic Pupils		Other Pupils		Total Pupils	
	1997–1998	2012–2013	1977–1998	2012–2013	1997–1998	2012–2013	1997–1998	2012–2013
Protestant Grammar Schools	25,877	25,262	2495	3423	6164	6772	34,536	35,457
Protestant Secondary Schools	34,795	25,026	1145	615	4214	4717	40,154	30,358
All Protestant schools	60,672	50,288	3640	4048	10,378	11,489	74,690	65,815
Catholic Grammar Schools	101	246	27,564	26,548	35	303	27,700	27,097
Catholic Secondary Schools	132	280	46,171	40,994	93	430	46,396	41,704
All Catholic Schools	233	526	73,735	67,542	128	733	74,096	68,801
Integrated Schools	1608	5807	2291	4397	409	1927	4308	12,131
Total	62,513	56,621	79,666	75,977	10,915	14,149	153,094	146,747

First, it is evident that most Protestants attend Protestant controlled schools and Catholics predominately attend Catholic maintained schools rather than go to the other community's school. The total number of students in post-primary education fell by 6,347 people and as a result, both Protestant and Catholic schools experienced a decrease in the number of pupils (Borooah & Knox, 2014). However, the number of people in Protestants schools exhibited a larger decline from 74,690 in 1997-1998 to 65,815 in 2012-2013 (Borooah & Knox, 2014). The number of students in Catholics schools decreased more moderately from 74,096 in 1997-1998 to 68,801 in 2012-2013 and the number of people in integrated schools increased by 7,823 (Borooah & Knox, 2014). There are 5,807 Protestants, 4,397 Catholics, and 1,927 other or non-religious folks that attended integrated schools in 2012-2013 (Borooah & Knox, 2014). These findings convey that more young people are affiliating themselves as neither Protestant nor Catholic and more Protestants attend integrated schools compared to Catholics.

Separating education between Protestant and Catholic leads to two distinct curriculum (Hayes et al., 2007). Hayes et al. (2007) argues that “for the most part, children take different subjects, learn different religions, read different books, and most importantly, learn different

histories” (p. 457). Before 1990, Catholics learned Irish history while Protestants were taught British history (Hayes et al., 2007). In 1990, a voluntary common curriculum was established to address the differences in Protestant and Catholic educational studies (Hayes et al., 2007). However, Catholics still study Irish history more than British history and Protestants learn British history more than Irish history (Hayes et al., 2007). The minimum comparative history highlights the division between Catholics and Protestants. Furthermore, both Protestants and Catholics celebrate their own historical anniversaries and traditions in their schools contributing to why most students attend schools that identify their religion.

Unlike the segregated curriculum found in Protestant and Catholic education, integrated schools present students both Irish and British histories and religion (Hayes et al., 2007). The goal for integration education is for students to learn and understand the other community’s culture and traditions, which may lead to improving the perception of the other population and introduces the potential for establishing cross-community relationships (Hayes et al., 2007).

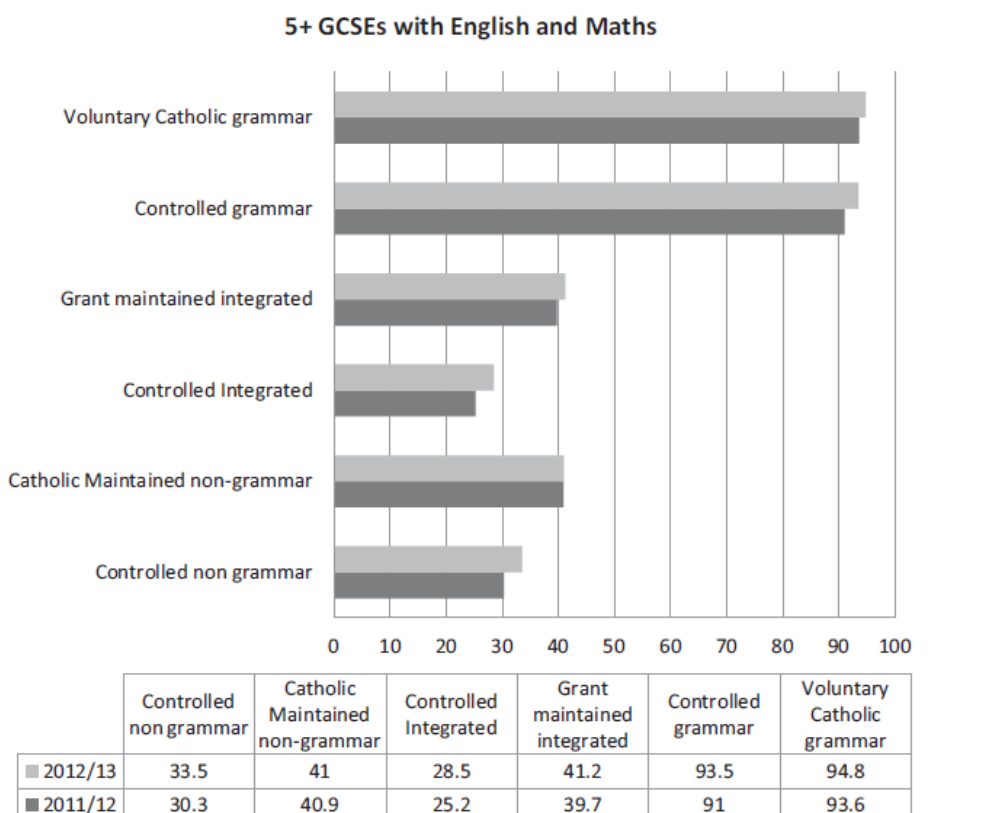
The first integrated school was founded by parents in 1981 and was accompanied by serious objections from both Protestants and Catholics (Hayes et al., 2007). The number of integrated schools have continued to grow with two or three established each year by either grassroots organizations or converting existing schools to integrated status. (Hayes et al., 2007, p.458). In 2005, there were 58 integrated schools in Northern Ireland: 39 primary schools, 19 secondary schools, and no grammar schools (Hayes et al., 2007). Unfortunately, there are disputes among parents, teachers, and principles of integrated schools on how to promote and maintain integration (Hayes et al., 2007). In addition, Hayes et al. (2007) claimed that integrated schools hold a more “pro-British” identity (p.478). This assertion may be due to the fact that a dozen pre-existing Protestant controlled schools have converted to integrated status, while no



Catholic maintained school has made the transition (Hayes et al., 2007). This finding may explain why Borooah and Knox (2014) results show that Catholics are less likely to attend integrated education compared to Protestants. Even for those Catholics and nationalists who favor the idea of integrating education, they may be discouraged from attending a “pro-British” mixed school because their religious and national identity would not be adequately represented.

There is a question on whether integrating education in Northern Ireland will be successful (Hayes et al., 2007). Hayes et al. (2007) stated that contact theory is a common mechanism for resolving conflict. Contact theory “proposes that intergroup conflict can be reduced by bringing together individuals from opposing groups” (Hayes et al., 2007, p.461) Using the contact theory approach, integrating Protestants and Catholics can reduce conflict between the groups (Hayes et al., 2007). It is assumed that “conflict arises from lack of information about the other group and from lack of opportunities to obtain such information” (Hayes et al., 2007, p.461). Therefore, promoting contact between Protestants and Catholics may increase tolerance and reduce the negative view of the other community (Hayes et al., 2007). However, there is evidence that the contact theory more positively affects perceptions of high-status majority groups compared to low-status minority groups (Hayes et al., 2007). This research relates to the peace walls discussion. The residents living near peace walls could be considered low-status minority groups because they live in economically disadvantaged areas and many are members of the working class. They were supportive of keeping the peace walls up to limit contact with the other community. The general population could be thought of as being a high-status majority group because they live in more economically developed areas with many people having skilled or professional jobs. They were more willing to remove the barriers emphasizing their more optimistic attitude of contact with the other community.

Not only is religious identity a factor for where parents send their kids to schools, but quality of education is important to consider. Borooah and Knox's (2015) Table 8 illustrated post-primary school performance by sector (p. 8). Table 8 showed that Catholic and Protestant grammar schools overwhelmingly achieve the highest educational performance (Borooah & Knox, 2014). After the grammar schools, the Catholic secondary non-grammar schools perform at a similar level to the grant maintained secondary integrated schools (Borooah & Knox, 2014). Controlled non-grammar schools, predominately Protestant, are the second to lowest performing schools and the controlled secondary integrated schools perform at the poorest educational rate (Borooah & Knox, 2014). While integrated schools are a fairly recent establishment, their poor performance of the post-primary sector, provides no incentive for parents to send their children to these schools (Borooah & Knox, 2014). The rational perspective of parents is to hope their children are selected for the high-achieving grammar schools.



Borooah and Knox (2014) recommended supporting shared education over integrated education. The Shared Education Programme began in 2007 and is externally funded by the International Fund for Ireland and Atlantic Philanthropies which allows the program to take more risks while the Department of Education for Northern Ireland is more cautious on spending funds (Borooah & Knox, 2014). Shared education is defined as at least two schools from different sectors working together to achieve greater educational performance (Borooah and Knox, 2014). Figure 1 portrayed the four steps of a shared educational model (Borooah and Knox, 2014, p.8)

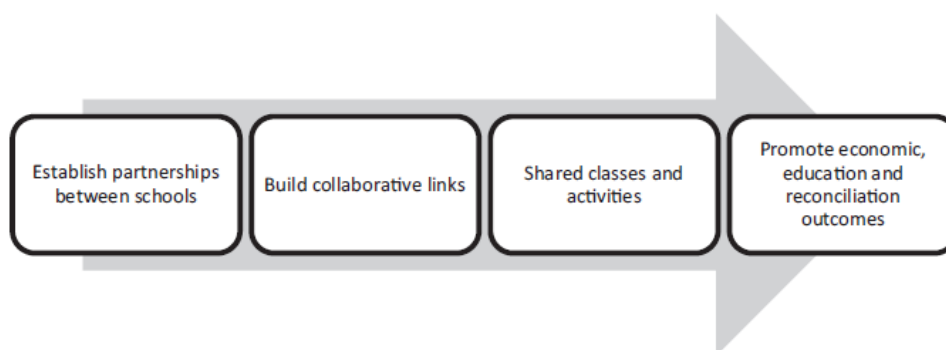


Fig. 1. Shared education model.

With shared education, students are still allowed to attend their preferred identity school rather than being forced to integrate. Borooah and Knox (2014) claimed that “the essential point is that shared education involves educational collaboration while preserving community identity” (p.7). Partnering a Catholic maintained school with a Protestant controlled school improves cross-community contact while conserving separate identity (Borooah & Knox, 2014). This program may lead to a more shared educational society in Northern Ireland.

The highly segregated education system in Northern Ireland is a remaining issue that the peace process has not fully resolved. The United States Supreme Court case *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) decided that “separate is unequal.” However, Northern Ireland’s

separation in education may not be unequal. Inequality in Northern Ireland's education system is apparent through the large gap in academic performance between the selective grammar schools vs. secondary non-grammar schools. Both Catholic maintained grammar schools and Protestant controlled grammar schools perform exceptionally better than the rest of the sectors, as shown in Table 8 (Borooah & Knox, 2014). This result indicates that religion is not a significant factor affecting educational performance.

While having separate schools systems for Protestants and Catholics does not lead to performance inequality, the problem of segregated education may be the lack of access for Protestants and Catholics to communicate and understand each other. Hayes et al. (2007) explained that a lack of knowledge about the other group leads to conflict. Creating avenues to encourage more frequent contact between Protestant and Catholic students may increase their knowledge about one another and allow for compromise and collaboration between the two communities. The Good Friday Agreement requires unionists and nationalists to work together at the government level and extends the goal of cooperation to the local level. Increasing interaction in the youth reinforces the intent of the Good Friday Agreement to create a more peaceful society.

## **Marches and Parades**

The differing identity between Protestants and unionists against Catholics and nationalists leads to conflict. The Good Friday Agreement does not force the two communities to agree on one identity; rather, both are recognized and allowed to express their beliefs. One way the groups demonstrate their identity is through parades and marches.

The rituals of marching and parading have been a long tradition in Northern Ireland (Bryan, 2000; Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). In particular, Orange parades have been occurring for over 200 years (Bryan, 2000). Orangeism refers to groups that adhere to the Protestant faith and British identity (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). The largest Orange organization in Northern Ireland is the Orange Order (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). When unionists dominated the way of life in Northern Ireland from 1922 to 1972, “orangeism found itself in an unprecedented position of power.” (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005, p. 636). During this time, the Orange Order played a significant role in influencing government and political affairs (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). The Orange Order parades “became rituals of state” regularly expressed to the entire region. (Bryan, 2000, p. 9; Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). Catholics were confined to only display their identity and beliefs in Catholic areas (Bryan, 2000).

Today, nationalists also hold marches and parades to commemorate historical anniversaries (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). Nationalists celebrate St. Patrick’s Day, Easter Rising, Bloody Sunday, and other significant events associated with nationalists fighting for their independence from the United Kingdom (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). For unionists, the most important historical anniversary the Orange Order celebrates is July 12, “the Twelfth” which represents the victory of Protestant King William of Orange against Catholic King James II at the Battle of the Boyne (William & Stapleton, 2005). “Together with the anniversary of the Siege of Derry (around 12 August), the Twelfth marches are central to a series of parades during what has become known as the “marching season’ in NI.” (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005, p. 634).

A beginning development for the peace process was the 1994 ceasefires to end the violence of “the Troubles.” Catholics began gaining a political voice fighting for equal rights while Protestants had to fight to keep their rights (Smithey & Young, 2010). In 1995, shortly

after the ceasefires, Catholics wanted to stop the Orangemen from parading down Drumcree/Garvaghy road, a Catholic area (Smithey & Young, 2010). The Orangemen wanted to walk their annual route through the Catholic area like they had always been allowed. The Royal Ulster Constabulary, the former police system for Northern Ireland, were trying to stop the Orange Order from marching in the Catholic area. When the government imposes restrictions on the Protestant marches, the Protestants feel they are losing their rights (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). The dispute of Drumcree became a symbol for the Orange Order to keep their right to freely march and express their identity and culture (Smithey & Young, 2010).

The controversy the peace process cultivated was the Protestant's "right to march" against the Catholic's "right to oppose" the other community from marching (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). Protestants want "the right to march" to keep their tradition of celebrating their historical anniversaries. This notion is accepted when their right is associated with freedom of expression. The Orange Order claims it is their right to march where they wish even if that includes a predominately Catholic housing area. On the other hand, Catholics associate the Orange Order marches with the past of how Catholics did not have freedom in a dominated Protestant life (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). Catholics feel the route of the Orange marches should remain in Protestant areas (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005).

John Wilson and Karyn Stapleton conducted a study of three females from West Belfast (Catholics area) and two females from East Belfast (Protestant area). Wilson and Stapleton assert that their results are not representative of the entire community, but their findings create an interesting discussion on how Catholics and Protestants perceive the marching season. In the discussion in West Belfast, the respondents said "Protestant marches through Catholic areas cause 'trouble', they are 'aggravating' and 'senseless'" (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005, p. 644). They

also recognize that the Catholics have Easter Rising and Protestants have “the Twelfth”, but they add that the Catholics only celebrate a couple of marches while the Protestants have many marches and they do not need to have so many (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). The East Belfast conversation included the respondents saying that marches and parades is the Protestant culture and pointed out that the Catholics have marches too (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005).

In the East Belfast discussion, the respondents feared that the Catholics will be able to stop all Protestant parades in the future and that “the Protestants will let them” (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005, p. 650). This statement indicated that the Protestants feel victimized by authorities, even members of their own religious and national identity, when they favor Catholics by preventing some of the Protestant marches (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). In the East Belfast discussion, one of the participants explained how when she was a child, “the Twelfth” march exhibited no violence and “their kids stood and watched the parades” (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005, p. 653). This response most likely refers to when Protestants controlled Northern Ireland’s activities. At the time, the Catholics did not speak out, but simply accepted the Orange parades.

While the Protestants held government authority for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Good Friday Agreement provides sharing of government power between Protestants and Catholics. The West Belfast group commented how the Protestants “need to change with the time...we’re fighting to have equal rights...and we have more rights now than we ever did.” (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005, p.648). While Catholics had to once accept the Orange Order marches, they are now gaining a political voice and fighting for equal rights.

Furthermore the West and East Belfast discussion showed that the groups differentiate themselves between “us” and “them.” (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005). The Protestants acknowledged that they would not march in the St. Patrick’s Day Parade because it is a Catholic

event. This shows how the Catholic and Protestant culture are separate. Both communities celebrate their own events to express their distinct identity. There is no cohesive community engagement.

The way Protestants feel their right to march is being confiscated is similar to the peace walls discussion. The Protestants living near interface areas feared they would lose their sense of identity and community if the peace walls are torn down. It is demonstrated in peace walls and in marches and parades that the transformation of Protestant power to sharing power with the Catholics have resulted in Protestants feeling they are suffering from inadequate identity representation.

The Good Friday Agreement provides all citizens of Northern Ireland equal rights. Catholics are gaining rights they were once restricted of and Protestants have to acknowledge Catholics as holding equal status. Protestants should not feel like a victim of the peace process, they should feel their rights are still being represented. The Good Friday Agreement also allows both Protestants and Catholics to express their identity through non-violent means. The Democratic Unionist Party and Sinn Féin should create policies that adhere to the spirit of the Good Friday Agreement by ensuring people are allowed to march and parade as long as it does not result in violence or riots. The political parties should be aware that conflict identity becomes an issue when the groups perceive the policy outcomes of the peace process as “a ‘competition’ in which a ‘gain’ for one community means a ‘loss’ for the other” (Wilson & Stapleton, 2005, p. 657).

One policy option is to allow Protestants and Catholics to march through both communities in Northern Ireland. This policy option supports the Protestants’ right to march but opposes the Catholics’ proposal to restrict Protestant marches from entering Catholic areas. The



opposite option is for both groups to celebrate in their own area. It supports the Catholics' right to not be forced to accept the Protestants' ideals, but may be perceived as a "loss" to Protestants as it does not support their tradition of marching anywhere they would like. It is clear that marching and parading remains an issue in Northern Ireland because it is difficult to implement a policy that fulfills the Good Friday Agreement without infringing on a community's right.

## **Police Service**

When Northern Ireland was self-governed during 1922 to 1972, the police force was the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). The RUC beliefs were similar to unionists (Doyle, 2010). The majority of Catholics and nationalists did not trust, support, or join the RUC (Doyle, 2010). Policing was one of the most prominent issues of the Northern Ireland conflict (Doyle, 2010). In order for the peace process to be successful, the government needed to address the issue of the police system. Ultimately, the police force in Northern Ireland changed from the RUC to the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) (Doyle, 2010). The transformation of policing has been one of the most successful features of the peace process (Doyle, 2010).

In his book, *Policing the Narrow Ground*, John Doyle (2010) outlined the nationalists' and unionists' perspectives of the RUC. Doyle (2010) explained three key points of the nationalist viewpoint of the RUC. First, the RUC's priority was counter-insurgency (Doyle, 2010). RUC was more aggressive towards nationalists' protests (Doyle, 2010). During the 1981 nationalist protests promoting the IRA hunger-strike, the RUC fired 29,657 plastic pellets and seven people died (Doyle, 2010). Also, "the aggressive response of the police to the civil rights protests from autumn 1968 onwards, radicalized and entrenched Irish nationalist hostility to the police." (Doyle, 2010, p. 168). Nationalists did not trust the RUC or feel protected by them. On

the other hand, the RUC used more relaxed mechanisms during unionist protests (Doyle, 2010; Bryan, 2000). Protestants held protests against the civil rights marches and “the RUC – a proportion of whom were Orangemen – then blocked the civil rights marches” (Bryan, 2000, p.11).

Nationalist’s second criticism of the RUC was its human-rights record (Doyle, 2010). Nationalists believed the RUC used an excessive number of plastic bullets toward their activities. Nationalists were able to acquire international support to investigate RUC’s human rights violations (Doyle, 2010). However, the investigations produced minimal information and little prosecutions of RUC officers, leaving nationalists further dissatisfied with the results of the investigations and still not supportive of the RUC (Doyle, 2010).

The third argument by the nationalists was that the RUC was not representative of the community (Doyle, 2010). The majority of the officers in RUC were unionists and Protestants with only a few officers with a Catholic and nationalist background (Doyle, 2010). “In 1998, when the Good Friday Agreement was signed, nationalists made up between 44% and 48% of the working-age population in Northern Ireland, but only 7.5% of RUC officers were ‘Catholic’” and even fewer were nationalists. (Doyle, 2010, p.174-175). With the RUC made up of mostly unionists, nationalists were perceived as the “other” community (Doyle, 2010). The RUC also represented a unionist identity (Doyle, 2010). The RUC demonstrated their loyalty to the British government by having police stations fly the Union Jack, the national flag of the United Kingdom (Doyle, 2010). The title of the RUC also favored unionists (Doyle, 2010). “Royal” refers to the British crown and “Ulster” is what mostly unionists call Northern Ireland and is not a commonly used term by nationalists (Doyle, 2010). Nationalists argued that the Northern Ireland police should recognize a nationalist identity.

Doyle (2010) discussed the unionists' perspective of the RUC and their counter-arguments to nationalists' criticism. First, unionists unanimously supported the RUC (Doyle, 2010). It argued that the RUC was not reflecting simply a unionists' perspective, but the constitutional perspective that the United Kingdom sovereigns Northern Ireland (Doyle, 2010). Unionists rejected the human rights violations and perceived the investigations as attacking the RUC and the state (Doyle, 2010). Unionists agreed they were in favor of "capital punishment and the use of ambush tactics against the IRA" because they were threatening the constitutional status of Northern Ireland (Doyle, 2010, p.179).

Unionists also rejected the nationalists' perspective of how the RUC is unrepresentative. They claimed that nationalists did not join the RUC because of their "subversive nature" (Doyle, 2010, p.181). Unionists argued that it was a citizen's duty to support the RUC and therefore, it was the nationalists' political parties' duty to encourage the nationalist community to support and join the RUC (Doyle, 2010). However, unionists did not trust the few Catholics that were officers in the RUC claiming they were saying "nationalist" remarks in the media or advocating against the Orange Order parades (Doyle, 2010). This highlights how the RUC upheld a unionists' identity and were opposed to the nationalists' community.

Overall, nationalists called for a disbanding of the RUC and the creation of a new police service in Northern Ireland (Doyle, 2010). Unionists sought devolved power of the police force from UK authority, but also wanted to exclude nationalists and keep policing the same as it was for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Doyle, 2010). However, the peace process calls for devolved government and sharing power between nationalists and unionists, therefore the unionists had to accept the sharing policing power between both communities.

The 1998 Good Friday Agreement established the Independent Commission on Policing (Doyle, 2010). The purpose of the Independent Commission on Policing was to propose how a Northern Ireland police service can best reflect the goals of the Good Friday Agreement. The Commission was led by Chris Patten and the 175 recommendations the Commission produced for the Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) came to be known as the *Patten Report* (Doyle, 2010).

The recommendations included changing the name from RUC to PSNI, having neutral symbols, proposing 50:50 recruitment of Catholics and others to achieve 30% Catholic PSNI officers by the end of 10 years, and to have leaders from the majority unionist and nationalist political parties on the Policing Board (Doyle, 2010). After the *Patten Report* was published, unionists were thoroughly opposed to the changes (Doyle, 2010). Nationalists were more supportive of the recommendations, but weary of how the United Kingdom was going to implement them.

The British government initiated a Police Bill to reflect the *Patten Report's* recommendations (Doyle, 2010). However, the Police Bill disregarded key provisions of the *Patten Report* leaving all of the nationalist's arguments against the RUC unfulfilled (Doyle, 2010). The United Kingdom's Police Bill was highly criticized by the nationalist community, the Irish government, and many human rights groups (Doyle, 2010). The British government amended the Police Bill in 2001 to more adequately represent the proposals of the *Patten Report* (Doyle, 2010).

After the Northern Ireland Assembly and Executive were suspended in the early 2000's and an international commission observed the IRA destroying their weapons, the St. Andrews Agreement in 2006 was formed (Doyle, 2010). The St. Andrews Agreement was an agreement

between the Irish and British governments and accepted by the nationalists' and unionists' political parties in Northern Ireland (Doyle, 2010). It established new provisions to support the power-sharing government (Doyle, 2010). It led to the end of the Northern Ireland suspensions and officially devolved authority and policing from the United Kingdom to Northern Ireland in 2010 (Doyle, 2010)

The principles of the Good Friday Agreement were reflected in the transformation of the RUC to the PSNI. Today, PSNI is representative of the entire community by having officers from both unionists' and nationalists' backgrounds (Doyle, 2010). The new symbol for PSNI contains elements of beliefs from both groups (Doyle, 2010). While the RUC had hardly any support from the nationalist community, the PSNI is endorsed by the nationalist political parties who embody nearly all of the nationalist constituencies (Doyle, 2010). Nationalist have faith in the police service because the PSNI incorporates the nationalists' identity and is upheld and overseen by the Policing Board consisting of a nationalist political party leader. The agreement between unionists and nationalists to share the powers of policing illustrate the values of the Good Friday Agreement.

## **Conclusion**

The Good Friday Agreement is a major policy of the Northern Ireland peace process ending paramilitary violence and providing for power sharing between unionists and nationalists. The reformation of the police service has successfully implemented the goals of the Good Friday Agreement. However, it is has been difficult to create policies addressing peace walls, education, and marches and parades that fulfill the vision of the Good Friday Agreement. First, peace walls provide safety for the resident living near them. Second, most Protestant and Catholics prefer the

high-achieving segregated grammar schools compared to the poor performing integrated schools. Finally, marches and parades highlight the value of tradition and equal rights.

These remaining issues reveal that the heart of the Northern Ireland conflict is the polarization in religious, national, and political identity. Most Protestants wish to remain a part of the United Kingdom and most Catholics hope for a united Ireland. How can the Northern Ireland government construct policies when the two identities do not agree on their preferred boundaries of the state? The Good Friday Agreement strives to provide stability to Northern Ireland taking into account both identities. It envisions Northern Ireland as place where unionists and nationalists' identity are equally represented while maintaining peace and promoting cooperation between the two communities.

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