A Social Identity Analysis of Dissident Irish Republicanism in Northern Ireland

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Abstract

Although Northern Ireland has become a more peaceful place since the Good Friday Agreement, spoiler groups in the form of dissident republicans remain persistent in their opposition. This thesis analyses the role of social identity as a vehicle for understanding dissident Irish republicanism in Northern Ireland. Social Identity is a theory for understanding social psychological phenomena relating to group structures and intergroup relations. By focussing on dissident republicanism, and its relation to the Republican mainstream as characterised by Sinn Féin, this thesis finds that the political and personal identity of dissident groups and their members is best understood as a reaction to the out-group. This study argues that the relative strength of the mainstream out-group in the wider republican communities has a positive impact in terms of supressing dissident republican violence, but arguably also a negative impact in terms of countering legitimate political opposition.

This thesis proposes that the role of group structures and in/out-group divides are a prominent feature in understanding the occurrence and persistence of dissident republicanism. In doing so, it contributes to the existing literature, which tends to treat dissident and mainstream republicanism in an isolated manner,

by unpacking the intertwined relationship between them. Through data gathered from an extensive period of fieldwork, that resulted in 29 interviews with different actors, this thesis provides a new and holistic understanding of dissident republicanism, not as a separate entity but as an inherently intertwined phenomenon in direct relation to the republican mainstream. Appreciating the origins and function of dissident groups is important in understanding their strategies and activities, and ultimately in determining possible solutions. It enhances understanding of some of the underlying difficulties in the Northern Irish peace process.

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Abbreviations

32CSM – 32 County Sovereignty Movement
AP – An Phoblacht
CIRA – Continuity Irish Republican Army
CRN – Catholic/Republican/Nationalist
DUP – Democratic Unionist Party
EO – Executive Office
GAA – Gaelic Athletic Association
GFA – Good Friday Agreement
IMC – Independent Monitoring Commission
INLA – Irish National Liberation Army
IRA – Irish Republican Army
IRPWA – Irish Republican Prisoner Welfare Association
IRSP – Irish Republican Socialist Party
MLA – Member of the Legislative Assembly
NICRA – Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association
NIO – Northern Ireland Office
NIRA – New Irish Republican Army
OFMDFM – Office of First Minister and Deputy First Minister
ONH - Óglaigh na hÉireann
PBP – People Before Profit
PIRA –Provisional Irish Republican Army
PSNI – Police Service Northern Ireland
PUL – Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist
RIRA – Real Irish Republican Army

ROI – Republic of Ireland

RSF – Republican Sinn Féin

RUC – Royal Ulster Constabulary

SDLP – Social Democratic Labour Party

SF – Sinn Féin

UDA – Ulster Defence Association

UUP – Ulster Unionist Party

UVF – Ulster Volunteer Force

VDR – Violent Dissident republican

WP – Workers Party

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1) Introduction

But that citizen's perception was also at one with the truth in recognizing that the very brutality of the means by which the IRA were pursuing change was destructive of the trust upon which new possibilities would have to be based

Seamus Heaney[1]

This thesis explores the social identity of dissident Irish Republicanism in Northern Ireland. Paramilitary organisations in Northern Ireland, alongside the different violent dissident groups that operate in the province, continue to highlight the challenges of the peace process. Although violence is at much lower and less widespread levels than it was during the conflict, it remains a presence in everyday life in communities across the country. Despite the decreased level of violence, the threat should not be ignored. There have been more than 150 deaths and over 2000 bombing and shooting incidents related to the security situation in the twenty years since the Good Friday Agreement.[2] Paramilitary punishment is consistent, and paramilitary

[1] Seamus Heaney (1995) 'Nobel Lecture – Crediting Poetry', 7 December 1995 http://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/literature/laureates/1995/heaney-lecture.html (Accessed 30/06/2017)

[2] BBC News (2018) *158 security –related deaths since the Good Friday Agreement;,* 23 April 2018, via https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-43862294 (Accessed 28/07/2018); Nolan, P. (2018) *Post-conflict Northern Ireland is still plagued by political violence,* The Irish Times, 23 April 2018, via https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/post-conflict-northern-ireland-is-still-plagued-by-political-violence-1.3470229 (Accessed 28/07/2018); Tonge, J. (2014) A campaign without end?:'Dissident' republican violence in Northern Ireland. *Political Insight*, 5:1, 14-17

organisations remain active in both communities.[3] Meanwhile, the political process in the devolved institutions at Stormont continues to be stifled by a series of political crises, and the on-going Brexit negotiations has put the survivability of the peace process into question.

It is in this political and social reality that this thesis sits, when it assesses the social identity of dissident Irish Republicanism and its relation to the now Irish Republican mainstream of Sinn Féin. The central line of argument focuses on the need to understand Republican dissent or republican ultras in how they relate to, and identify themselves against, the republican mainstream. This is necessary to holistically understand their existence and persistence but also to understand some of the wider issues facing republican communities in Northern Ireland. By using a social identity approach, this thesis tests and builds on the theoretical implications of in-group/out-group structures and intergroup competition within the Irish Republican movement. It dissects dissidents beyond their umbrella perception and looks at what unites and divides them; doing so will provide a far more holistic and nuanced appreciation of dissident republicanism than is portrayed in existing discourse.

This thesis also assesses the wider consequences of continued dissent in Irish Republicanism. It argues that a core consequence of the orthodox perception of spoiler groups in Northern Ireland is that the close association to violence, although correct, seemingly stifles

[3] Archick, K (2018) *Northern Ireland: Current Issues and Ongoing Challenges in the Peace Process*, Congressional Research Service

prospects for non-violent dissent and political opposition to mainstream political actors. Recent political challenges, particularly Brexit, make renewed attention to a key part of the fragility of an unfinished and contested peace process, and a community divided on so many levels, all the more important.

This introduction provides an overview of the research aims, arguments, contributions and relevance of this thesis. It also provides the structure of this research project as a whole. In addition, in order to position the research in modern day Northern Ireland, this introductory chapter provides some concise historical context regarding perceptions of identity in the Provisional Irish Republican movement. This is not intended to chronologically summarise the history of the island of Ireland or the Troubles, but rather to reflect on the creation of modern Northern Irish Republicanism and the roots of its conflicted identity, as this forms the basis of what follows.

Despite the absence of major dissident attacks on the UK mainland, there has been a continuing presence of IRA violence in Northern Ireland. In a speech in 2010, the then head of MI5 Jonathan Evans admitted that the expectations of an ever-decreasing level of terrorism in Northern Ireland were proving wrong, and activity and ambition to commit acts of terrorism, particularly concerning Irish Republican groups, was in fact on the increase.[4] On 11 May 2016, for the first time since its publication, the official threat level of Northern Ireland related

[4] Evans, J. (2010) 'Speech to the Worshipful Company of Security Professionals', 17 September 2010 (Full text available via: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/terrorism-in-the-uk/8008252/Jonathan-Evans-terrorism-speech.html, (Accessed 12/01/2016)

terrorism to the UK mainland was raised, from moderate to substantial, posing renewed questions about the security situation in Northern Ireland and the success of the peace process.[5] This was particularly in light of the centenary of the 1916 Rising, a pivotal moment in Irish Republican history, and security services braced themselves for an increase in violent activity. For example, on 4 March 2016 a bomb exploded under the vehicle of a prison officer, Adrian Ismay, who died twelve days later.[6] The New IRA claimed responsibility for the attack. He was the second prison officer to be killed after the murder of David Black in 2012. Other victims of dissident republican violence included police officers, members of the armed forces, and predominantly civilians, who suffer the consistent impact of continued paramilitary violence in their community.

To most minds, Northern Ireland has been largely at peace for nearly two decades, and the power-sharing government, despite multiple suspensions, has been functioning since the restoration of power-sharing in 2007. However, this perception that all is well in Northern Ireland hides an underlying reality of communal and internal division, and myriad political problems stemming from the power-sharing arrangements that form the basis of this research. The difficulty of implementing and protecting the 1998 Good Friday Agreement or the Belfast Agreement can be found in the words of Seamus Heaney, opening this chapter, when he spoke them as early as 1995.

[5] MI5 (ND) 'Threat Levels' https://www.mi5.gov.uk/threat-levels (Accessed 01/09/2017)
[6] BBC (2016) 'Prison officer Adrian Ismay injured in Belfast bomb attack dies', 15 March 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35813224 (Accessed 22/06/2018)

Northern Irish peace was inevitably built on decades of distrust, dislike and violence. Its survival perhaps was also clad in the 'constructive ambiguity' that the Good Friday Agreement provided. How that necessary trust and healing needs to be restored and maintained, and how former and existing violence needs to be dealt with, are questions still at the heart of Northern Ireland's politics and society; the issue of dealing with the past comes up time and again. As research for this thesis progressed, Northern Ireland continually faced new and old internal and external pressures that significantly impacted on its political stability and its communities.

Most significantly, the Brexit referendum in June 2016 raised growing questions over Northern Ireland's status, the border, and the prospect for renewed upheaval and a return to the dark days of the past. The perilous position that Northern Ireland faces has become one of the key pillars of Brexit negotiations.[7] It arguably comes to the heart of the difference between the main political parties' perception of the position of Northern Ireland in the UK and the island of Ireland. The June 2017 Westminster elections, and the subsequent coalition arrangements between the Conservative Party and the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP), shone an external spotlight on Northern Ireland and its unusual place in the UK once more. Inevitably, this thesis,

[7] European Parliament (2017) 'Joint Motion for a Resolution on negotiations with the United Kingdom following its notification that it intends to withdraw from the European Union' (2017/2593(RSP)) via http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//NONSGML+MOTION+P8-RC-2017-0237+0+DOC+PDF+V0//EN (Accessed 02/07/2017)

through focusing on social identity, reflects on some of these external pressures and their consequences throughout.

Internal political stability has also been uprooted, and the question of power-sharing and the peace process are raised again. The power-sharing institutions have suffered long periods of ineffectiveness and are crippled by this destruction of trust as Seamus Heaney characterises it. Former first minister Peter Robinson resigned in 2015 after months of negotiating the 'Fresh Start Agreement' following reports that an intact leadership structure of the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) was still present.[8] Although the relationship in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister (OFMDFM) had not been as good as between Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness, the relationship between Robinson and McGuinness was still significantly better than the one between McGuinness and Robinson's successor Arlene Foster.

After several crises and new agreements, Stormont finally collapsed in January 2017 when Martin McGuinness ultimately resigned from his role as deputy first-minister over the DUP's handling of a botched green energy scheme. This was also a culmination of other issues, including the Irish language act, legacy cases and poor personal relations between the First and Deputy First Ministers. McGuinness, the long-term face of Sinn Féin in politics, died in March 2017 leaving Sinn Féin in search for a new leader in the North. The March 2017 assembly elections and the subsequent negotiations were deeply troubled and

[8] Northern Ireland Office (2015) *Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland,* 20 October 2015

complicated by both the Brexit referendum and 2017 general election as well as the new leadership in Sinn Féin. Although these latter external and internal developments are not directly included in the thesis, they clearly demonstrate the fragility of the Northern Ireland security landscape and the importance of examining issues surrounding identity and dissident republicanism. Moreover, the analysis provided in this thesis speaks to such broader – and significant – debates. The seismic changes in Northern Ireland in the last few years do not negate the findings of this research, but rather stress its importance. Therefore, this is also briefly reflected on in this introduction, and further in the conclusion.

1.1) Contributions, aims and objectives, and relevance of this study

The research aims of this thesis set out to achieve two core things. They are best summarised as follows:

- To provide a more holistic and nuanced understanding of residual paramilitary Republican violence and the nature of political and physical dissent.
- To provide a framework to conceptualise and operationalise social identity as a means to help explain the interplay between identity and dissenting or radical groups.

Assessing the role of social identity in modern Irish Republicanism serves two key purposes that form the basis of the theoretical contributions of this study. Through its conceptual and theoretical

framework, this thesis contributes to the growing body of research that seeks to assess political violence, dissent, extremism and terrorism through the lens of identity. There is a growth in policy relevant work on the construction of identity, particularly in the case of foreign fighters, terrorism and Islamic State. These works oftentimes borrow from Social Identity theory or at least understand the importance of identity in conceptualising the problem and its possible solutions.[9] Most western countries' counter-terrorism framework or briefings also include notions of identity.[10]

Through its theoretical approach, this thesis provides an analysis that is able to exceed the relative stasis of many existing approaches in political theory and their interpretation of identity. This research uses and expands on the original framework of Tajfel and Turner, pioneers of Social Identity theory, by operationalising it in three different areas: logistical, social and ideological.[11] This allows for different areas of influence on intergroup conflict to be integrated and given its due weight, whilst acknowledging the complex and shifting nature of identity in groups. It does not only look at political elements, or social elements, but rather at both, and at the relation between them. The case

[9] See for example: Berger, J.M. (2017) 'Extremist Construction of Identity' ICCT Policy Brief, April 2017, https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ICCT-Berger-Extremist-Construction-of-Identity-April-2017.pdf (Accessed 11-02-2018)
[10] See for example: Home Office (2011) 'Prevent Strategy' https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/97976/prevent-strategy-review.pdf (accessed 04/10/2017), US Homeland Security Commission (2016) 'a national strategy to win the war against Islamist terror' https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/A-National-Strategy-to-Win-the-War.pdf (accessed 08/11/2017)
[11] Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979) An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *The social psychology of intergroup relations*, *33*(47), 74. Tajfel, H. (1982) Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual review of psychology*, *33*(1), 1-39. Tajfel, H. (1974) Social identity and intergroup behavior. *Social Sciences Information,* 13*,* 65-93

of Irish Republicanism serves as a vehicle to explore these issues as they are already rooted deeply in academic discourse on terrorism, political violence and in the broader Northern Irish peace process.

This theoretical approach can also contribute to other cases. Most relevantly now, for example is the case of Colombia and FARC, with the surrounding issues of dissent within that organisation.[12] More broadly, it can be applied to political radicalism with both violent and non-violent facets, including the far-right, far-left or single-issue based groups such as animal rights or environmental activism. Indeed, the relationship between identity, resistance and violence are dominating security and political discourse across the world, from divisions in the United States to alleged Russian attempts to undermine the European Union.

This thesis offers empirical depth through its use of semi-structured interviews and the rich data it has gathered. The empirical findings shine new light on the importance of relationships, be they negative or positive, in understanding modern Irish Republicanism. This thesis dissects the Republican community beyond the usual juxtaposition of peaceful and violent Republicans, or along the traditional Republican/loyalist divide. It looks beyond those that adhere to the peace process and those that do not and rather seeks to provide an analysis of how they all relate to one another. Significantly, this thesis highlights how the interaction between the mainstream Republican

[12] Reuters (2017) 'FARC dissidents take UN official hostage', 4 May 2017, http://www.reuters.com/article/us-colombia-kidnapping-idUSKBN1801LF (Accessed 7 May 2017)

movement and the different dissident groups also stifles room for non-violent opposition to Sinn Féin. The rich data generated by interviews provides an in-depth view of modern Irish Republicanism and the way in which an outwardly seemingly unified community still contains deep levels of split and disagreement in part as a result of the prior conflict. One of the core findings presented in this research is the extensive power that the larger mainstream can have over the smaller dissenting fractions. Nevertheless, dissidents cannot be fully discounted.

There are limitations to this study, partially caused by restricting the beginning and end dates of data collection. This, as stated above, excludes an analysis of some of the recent events including the 2017 Stormont election and the Brexit referendum. Nonetheless, because of the immediate scope of this research, focussing in-depth on Republican communities, these wider events are not detrimental to the analysis provided in this thesis. On the contrary, a deeper understanding of Irish Republicanism in Northern Ireland may prove useful in tackling some of the challenges that Northern Ireland is set to face. On a theoretical and conceptual level, it needs to be acknowledged that the case study of this research is specific, as most case studies are. However, and as explained in the methods section, the conclusions remain both robust and significant.

This necessitates at least a reflection on why it is still relevant and important. Whilst this thesis does not include a direct analysis of some of the crucial shifts outlined above, it provides an understanding of the context in which they have evolved, and focuses on a matter that is consistently present in Northern Ireland throughout. Dissident

republicanism, although small and relatively unsupported, presents a continuous spoiler to the peace process. Although it is unlikely that armed struggle in its current form will directly achieve its aims of the united socialist Irish Republic, it is still important to consider the role of such spoilers, and how they can be understood. This is imminently more important as the exogenous and endogenous pressures of the collapse of Stormont and the Brexit challenge have changed how dissident republican groups can operate. As these groups themselves have ascertained, they are willing to extort the Brexit and border issues for their own benefit.[13] Therefore, this thesis takes an in-depth look at the dissident groups in relation to the mainstream Republican movement over the last decade in order to provide a nuanced understanding of the nature and role of violence, as well as the impact on peace. In short, a detailed and rigorous examination of Northern Ireland is certainly warranted.

That said, and although focussing particularly on Irish Republicanism may not automatically translate to other cases, the thesis does have broader implications beyond the case study. The theoretical framework can be lifted and applied elsewhere: identity and group relations are universal concepts. A deeper and more nuanced understanding of identity and the role of group relations as discussed in chapter three is a useful tool in expanding the toolkit of researching terrorism, political violence and dissent beyond the scope of Northern Ireland and Irish Republicans.

[13] Taylor, P (2018) 'New Dissidents hoping to exploit Brexit', *BBC,* 15 May 2018, https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-44082633 (Accessed 22/06/2018)

1.2) Research questions and thesis structure

This thesis seeks to answer one core research question: what insight can social identity provide in understanding post-conflict Irish Republicanism in Northern Ireland? In order to do so, this research answers a set of sub-questions:

1) What is the role of interpersonal and intergroup relations in constructing the social identity of dissident republican groups since the peace process?
2) To what extent is there popular support in the wider republican arena for the ideological and political principles of dissident republicanism?
3) Why, and to what degree of success, do dissident republicans continue a level of armed struggle?

These questions although standing on their own, are closely correlated to the methodological and theoretical positions taken in this research. They are particularly representative of the key thematic approach that this research takes. They reflect the interdisciplinary nature of this research and the importance of group identity and in-group/out-group characteristics. Indeed, identity politics runs through all three. As such, they reflect a central line of argument that dissident republicanism needs to be understood specifically in how it relates to Sinn Féin and the Republican mainstream.

Building on these ideas, this thesis presents two core arguments. First, the manner in which the mainstream/dissident republican dichotomy operates has both negative and positive impact. Positive impact centres on how the relative strength of the mainstream Irish republican movement prevents the effective growth of violent spoiler groups. Negative impact centres on the mainstream ability to not only stifle the growth of violent spoilers but also impact the growth of legitimate political opposition. Second, the in-group/out-group division, although effective, overlooks people who identify with parts of Irish Republican identity on both sides of the spectrum. A less simplistic approach recognises that such individuals can contribute to a less competitive narrative of Irish Republicanism.

This thesis consists of eight chapters in order to answer the research questions. After this introduction, this thesis starts with an examination of the literature in chapter two. Here particular attention is paid to the literature on terrorism and political violence, as well as the literature directly related to the Irish Republican movement, dissident republicanism, and the Northern Irish peace process and political literature. This is done to bring together a situational awareness of the subject, to explore the literature on which this thesis builds, and determine the debates to which this thesis contributes. Although the field directly related to dissident Irish republicanism is relatively small, there is a broader importance in understanding what happens to a former paramilitary organisation and its political wing, as spoiler groups are a considerable challenge to peace. This thesis contributes to this body of literature via its in-depth understanding of

the phenomenon of dissident republicanism through its relationship with the former mainstream.

In chapter 3, this is followed by an extensive conceptualisation and operationalisation of the theoretical framework. This chapter provides the framework on which the research questions are based. It begins with an exploration of the literature and foundations of social identity theory. Despite the theory finding its roots in social psychology, this thesis explores how its core principles can be applied to other fields. The important concepts of identity and intergroup conflict and competition are considered in this chapter. It also explores how identity needs to be interpreted in Northern Ireland specifically and how this relates to post-conflict Irish Republicanism. This chapter provides three core factors of social identity: social, ideological and logistical proximity and explores how these factors work together.

Chapter 4 provides the methodology, and broader research design, of this thesis. This chapter first explores the use of a single case study, followed by an in-depth exploration of the data collection. This chapter pays particular attention to the fieldwork and interview process, critically reflecting on the strengths and challenges of both. This chapter concludes with the data analysis methods and a discussion on thematic analysis and theme choices.

This thesis has three main themes derived from the theoretical framework and the existing literature that are reflected in the empirical chapters of this thesis:

1) (inter)personal relations
2) Political and ideological identity
3) Violence and crime

These three themes are reflective of the social and ideological factors of the social identity framework, as well as of the role of violence in intergroup conflict. They are also representative of some of the bigger issues that are raised in the literature on dissident Irish Republicanism as discussed in chapter two.

Chapters 5, 6 and 7 focus on the empirical contribution of this thesis. These chapters each tackle one of the main themes that are reflected in the secondary research questions and the theoretical framework. Although one core theme is most prominent in each of the empirical chapters, they do overlap and correlate. This is particularly because of how they relate to the theoretical framework.

Chapter 5 tackles theme one, interpersonal relations. It examines the importance of social groups and networks in understanding the existence of dissident groups, their membership and the intergroup construction of the mainstream vs. dissident interpretations of Irish Republicanism. This thesis particularly seeks to contribute to the existing literature on dissident republicans by exploring the consequences of presenting dissidents and the mainstream republican

movement as dichotomous. The core consequence of this simplistically binary approach is that those Irish republicans that may not feel positively attracted to Sinn Féin's political strategy or to dissident republican groups remain largely unheard. This is despite the fact that these Irish republicans may be in a good position to bridge some of the conflict between the in-group and the out-group. Instead, it places them in direct relation to one another and builds strongly on the links that exist between the mainstream and non-mainstream of Irish Republicanism. This thesis critically explores the consequences of that existing relationship and argues that in order to fully understand the continuance of Republican dissent, it is important to look beyond the partially isolated perception of republican dissidents. Practically, this thesis takes a closer look at how these dynamics are portrayed in the case of prisoners, ex-prisoners and prisoner support groups.

Chapter 6 looks closely at the modern Irish republican arena in line with the second key theme. This chapter focuses on modern participation and competition in the political arena, the political tradition of Irish republicanism, and many of the historical connotations of dissident groupings. Its core argument signifies that there is in fact a modicum of support for the basic, socialist principles underlying the interpretation of Irish Republicanism, as the moderate success of socialist candidates indicates. Why this does not translate to success for dissident republican groups is also explored here. Political support for dissident candidates is low in part because of the lack of pragmatism in recognising the immense unpopularity of violence.

Second, the highly divided nature and the lack of successful leadership in political dissident groups makes it difficult for them to be elected or to form any type of political alternative. Third, the significant position of primacy of Sinn Féin and their ability to further disassociate dissident groups on the first two causes hinders grounds for non-violent dissent. This chapter also considers the role of the out-group, mainstream Irish Republicans in the form of Sinn Féin, in understanding the importance of power imbalance between in- and out-groups. Although current support for dissident republican politics is negligible, and support for Sinn Féin is unlikely to decrease, it is still important to consider how the existing relations between mainstream and dissenting voices undermines political debate.

Chapter 7 expands on this further by focusing on the continuation of dissident republican violence and crime. This chapter finds that continued paramilitary violence is a troubling challenge to the ability of 'positive' or political dissent to arise, as the powerful mainstream has been increasingly able to contribute negative perceptions of the wider population towards dissident republicanism. The positive side of this is that is has a positive impact on limiting violence and the risk of successful spoiler groups. A continuation of the Armed Struggle is largely ideologically supported by dissident groups, or at least not actively condemned. It is however condemned by the mainstream out-group as unpopular and against the wish of republican communities.

This is largely due to the criminalisation of dissident republicanism. Although there is a clear criminal element in dissident republican violent activity, something that is unlawful to begin with, it also raises

a particular issue between the mainstream and non-mainstream on what is considered 'legitimate' violence, what is considered legitimate consent, and what extenuates the coercive qualities of the out-group over the in-group. The ability to suppress violence comes at a potential cost of suppressing non-violent disagreement too. It is particularly in this area that dissident republicans are unable to create a positive social identity beyond a small inner circle. This chapter furthermore addresses the 'criminalisation' of Republican violence as a means of discrediting dissent as a whole.

Chapter 8 revisits the theoretical framework outlined in chapter three and seeks to bring the theoretical findings in each of the three presiding chapters together in an orderly fashion. As this thesis takes a theory-testing approach, it is important not only to provide its results, but consider grounds for theory building too. This chapter also offers some overall conclusions related to the case of Irish republicanism and Northern Ireland and offers suggestions for the potential for further comparative research both on the theoretical and empirical elements of this thesis and a future research agenda.

1.3) Historical and organisational context of the Northern Ireland Conflict and dissident Irish republicanism

In order to understand the context of the place and people of this study, it is important to consider parts of its history. However, for the purposes of this study supplying an exhaustive history of Anglo-Irish and Northern Irish history would be extraneous, regardless of the long memories of Irish Republicans. This section therefore focuses on areas

of Irish Republican history that impacted on the way in which identity became a factor in the Provisional Republican movement and the subsequent post-conflict era of Northern Ireland discussed in this thesis. This section seeks to trace the organisational roots of dissent and the mainstream Irish Republican movement in modern Northern Ireland from the Troubles, through to the inception of the modern form of dissident Irish Republicanism.

Accordingly, it takes an episodic look at this history by focussing on the last century of Irish Republicanism, and those events most directly linked to the creation of combative communities of Unionism and Republicanism in Northern Ireland and particularly the context in which the Provisional Irish Republican Movement in Northern Ireland operated. This also provides some background to the reasons behind the different splits of the Provisional IRA. To all scholars of political violence, terrorism and insurgencies, the IRA is a key example and Northern Ireland is sometimes conveniently, and undeservedly, referred to as the most over-researched place in the world.[14] Nonetheless, the questions of Northern Ireland and Irish Republicanism did not end with the Good Friday Agreement as the Omagh bombing in August 1998 portrayed so brutally.

1.3.1) Creating the Troubles: from partition to civil rights

As McKittrick and McVea assess, Northern Ireland was born in violence. The 1916 Rising failed to establish the desired socialist republic and led

[14] Whyte, J (1991) *Interpreting Northern Ireland*. Clarendon Press, New York, p. viii

to the partition of Ireland after a bloody war of independence from 1919 to 1921, followed by the Irish Civil war from 1922-1923.[15] Against this backdrop, Northern Ireland was never free from sectarian tension and troubled political and social relations.[16] As such, IRA violence and the difficulty of Northern Ireland's place can be traced back as far as the Irish volunteers and Wolfe Tone in the 18th century or in its myriad modern forms since the Fenians, the Irish brotherhood and the IRA in the early 20th century. IRA presence has fluctuated, but is mostly remembered for its widespread and brutal campaign during the Northern Irish 'Troubles'.

In the early days of the North, Republican politics was consistently looking to the newly established government in the South for guidance. Many nationalist politicians were unsure about whether to take their seats in the different parliaments, giving significance to the rise of abstentionism as a Republican strategy. Reliance on the South however, to provide strategy and guidance, was often not profitable as it had its own considerations first. This started slowly but steadily created a rift between the North and the South, creating an increasingly fractured relationship. Although some IRA activity remained, it had very limited support and thus very little backing in the light of increasingly harsh measures in the North to contain its armed struggle.[17]

[15] O Dochartaigh, N. (1997) *From Civil Rights to Armalites; Derry and the birth of the Irish Troubles,* Cork University Press, Cork, p.xiv
[16] McKittrick, D., & McVea, D. (2002) *Making sense of the troubles: The story of the conflict in Northern Ireland*, Penguin, New York, p.4
[17] Ibid.

Unionist dominance in the North meanwhile took on a 'triumphalist' form toward the Irish Catholic minority, leaving it mostly unprotected from the discriminatory practices of the Orange state.[18] These practices went beyond those concerning electoral politics, housing and employment and included bans on identity driven elements such as the commemoration of the 1916 Rising and the display of the Irish flag.[19] Through its policies, the Northern Irish state actively supressed notions of Irish and Irish Republican identity. Despite the political exclusion from power, and the on-going activity of the IRA in, for example, the border campaign in the late 1950s, many of the more prosperous parts of the Catholic communities were relatively passive. Although there was opposition to partition, this did not manifest itself in widespread support for armed struggle or revolutionary practices. In fact, after the failed border campaign, the IRA had more or less disbanded by 1962.

Despite the continued existence of sectarian divides, the uneasy Northern state saw little in terms of mass mobilisation of the Catholic community until the start of the Civil Rights movement and the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA). This started in Derry/Londonderry in October and November of 1968. Although NICRA was little more than an uneasy umbrella for Socialists, Nationalists and Republicans, it shared the common goal of challenging the discriminatory unionist state. As such, it did not present a clear identity of what Irish Republicanism entailed. The prior apathy of the Catholic communities was abandoned in favour of mass demonstration towards the state. The clash that occurred between marchers and the

[18] Tonge, J. (2002) *Northern Ireland; conflict and change, 2nd edition,* Pearson Education, p.19
[19] Ibid.

Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) on the 5th of October 1968 and the three days of rioting after that significantly increased the salience and effectively operationalised the previously more dormant Catholic Irish Republican identity in both radical and moderate groups.[20]

Although the aims of the Civil Rights movement focused exceedingly on a changing nature of the state in terms of Catholic economic and political prospects, the existence and dominance of sectarianism highlighted the cultural and identity aspect of the conflict as well.[21] The British state recognised the need to implement measures to appease and emancipate the Catholic community, but the mobilisation and escalation of conflict made any political resolution led by the insecure and unstable Northern Irish state impossible and requiring of increased British attention.[22]

The August 1969 Battle of the Bogside, where riots ended in a clash between Catholic protestors and the RUC, led to retaliatory attacks on RUC stations across Northern Ireland. Any attempt by the RUC to enter Derry's Bogside failed as they had become outnumbered. This signified a tipping point with the escalating tensions and the added British dimension with the start of Operation Banner in 1969, when British troops were deployed to relieve the RUC and B-Specials.[23] These events and escalations, although briefly represented here in a very simplified manner, led to the salience of Protestant vs. Catholic communities: it

[20] O Dochartaigh (1997) *Op. Cit.* p.xv
[21] Ruane, J. & Todd, J. (1996) *The dynamics of conflict in Northern Ireland; power, conflict and emancipation,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 179-191
[22] O Dochartaigh (1997) *Op. Cit.* p.16
[23] White, R. (2017) *Out of the Ashes, an oral history of the Provisional Irish Republican Movement,* Merrion Press, Kildare, pp.56-57

directly placed Irishness and Britishness in opposition to one another, and escalated dormant identities to become actively violently competing ones.

1.3.2) The birth of modern dissident Irish Republicanism

It is within the realm of mobilised and weaponised identities of the Northern Irish conflict, that the Provisional Irish Republican movement seized its ground. This does not mean that Irish Republicanism and the IRA did not exist before. However, their support was limited in the lead up to the escalation of tension in Northern Ireland. As this thesis focuses on more modern developments in dissident Irish Republicanism, and particularly on the post-2007 era, this section provides historical context to the birth of modern dissident Irish Republicanism, by reflecting on the reasons behind the major splits of the Provisional IRA.

This thesis predominantly considers groups that trace back to the ranks of the Provisional IRA. This organisation however, was itself a split in the Irish Republican movement. The Provisional IRA split from the Official IRA in 1969/1970 particularly over the use of violence, as sectarian tensions were rising in Northern Ireland. The historical trajectory characterises the IRA as a spent force after its 1956-1962 border campaign.[24] It is in reaction to the security measures, and increased sectarianism, that were not equally met with political strategy that the Provisional IRA formed and took root in 1969. This is

[24] English (2012) *Armed Struggle: the history of the IRA*, Pan, London, p.81

in part explained too by the Official IRA's reluctance to adopt a militarised strategy.[25]

The civil rights movement and the subsequent escalation of tension in Northern Ireland breathed new life into the organisation, although perhaps not in the manner that Republican leaders, like Seán Mac Stíofáin and Cathal Goulding, had necessarily envisaged. PIRA linked its ideology to the ideals of the 32 County Irish Republic as envisaged by the leaders of the 1916 rising but more importantly sought to protect the Nationalist community from harm.[26] With the escalating security situation, the PIRA managed to attract new members without significantly addressing precisely what its identity was. The salience of conflict and the desire to protect the Catholic communities in Northern Ireland took precedence over its ideology.

The Provisional IRA and Sinn Féin had two significant and importantly clearly traceable splits during the Troubles. The first major split in the Provisional movement was in 1986 when Sinn Féin abandoned abstentionism to the Dáil Éireann. This move led to the creation of Republican Sinn Féin and the Continuity IRA. Although the official split occurred during the 1986 Ard Fheis, the run-up to this event can be found in the years prior. This split arguably occurred not only because of the political decision made in the mid-1980s, but also over personality and leadership issues within the Provisional movement.[27]

[25] Smith, M. L. R. (2002) *Fighting for Ireland?: the military strategy of the Irish Republican movement*. Routledge, London, p.88
[26] Tonge, J. (2005) *The new Northern Irish Politics?*, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, pp.14-15
[27] Morrison, J.F. (2013) *The origins and rise of dissident Irish Republicanism: The role and impact of organizational splits*. Bloomsbury Publishing New York

The split was ultimately also the result of a conflict between the Northern Irish and Southern Irish IRA/Sinn Féin leaders, and the division between old traditionalism and new innovation. The leadership of the PIRA southern command under Ruari O'Bradaigh and Daithi O'Connail was losing popularity in the movement over its alleged mishandling of the 1975 ceasefires. Simultaneously, young leaders in the North, including the likes of Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness and Danny Morrison, were becoming increasingly popular in the North, in part through their calling for a restructuring of the organisation, both politically and militarily.[28] O'Bradaigh, up until his death remained a prominent leader of RSF. Republican Sinn Féin is the most traditionalist of the dissident groups that exist today, retaining their abstentionist platform. This first split therefore can be considered both ideological and personality driven. RSF and the Continuity IRA suffered further fragmentation that is discussed in this thesis.

The second major split occurred in 1997 over the acceptance of the Mitchell Principles that were set as a precondition to entering peace talks. The result of this would be the creation of the, to date, deadliest of paramilitary dissident groups, the Real IRA. The Real IRA was responsible for the 1998 Omagh bombing and the murder of two British soldiers in 2009. Its political wing, the 32 County Sovereignty Committee started as a pressure group within Sinn Féin and split away, renaming itself as the 32 County Sovereignty Movement, when the

[28] Horgan, J. (2012) *Divided we stand: The strategy and psychology of Ireland's dissident terrorists*. Oxford University Press, pp.20-23

official split occurred. This split occurred again for reasons both ideological and personality driven.

Ideologically, the creation of the Real IRA was over the utility of the armed struggle. Personality-wise, it was also the result of discontent under relevant PIRA and SF figures over the ceasefires.[29] Despite the fact that one of the core reasons for the RIRA to come into existence was over the ideological stance on the armed struggle, the fall-out over the 1998 Omagh led to a split within RIRA between those seeking to move away from violence and those wishing to continue it. This group, Óglaigh na hÉireann, also operates under the RIRA banner.[30]

It is important to acknowledge that within the Irish Republican tradition a mosaic of different political, paramilitary, and prison groups have existed simultaneously. The divided landscape is not something that finds its roots in the Northern Ireland Troubles and peace process, yet it has become exacerbated during that time. The movement has been susceptible to splits from very early on and even the organisations described in this section have split and split again. Splitting in dissident Irish republicanism since the peace process has made the landscape almost unrecognisable, and often times it is difficult to trace the exact origins of dissident groups and organisations. Nevertheless, most, in some form or other, have occurred after the two major splits in 1986 and 1997.

[29] Ibid. Pp.28-31
[30] Ibid. Pp.35

The weight of tradition in the Irish Republican movement often clashes with new, pragmatic innovation from other factions in the organisation. Both the 1986 and 1997 split are reflective of that in such a way that those splitting away felt that the movement progressed too far from Irish Republican ideals, be that recognising the Irish/Northern Irish government, or engaging in negotiations. This too is the case with violence. As Bowyer Bell puts it: 'without the IRA the Movement would be a fraternal society, a clan of the alienated, not a force for change. Without the IRA the Movement would wither and die.'[31] The dissident movement displays that not only in relation to Sinn Féin, but also internally, as the armed struggle is a constant topic of discussion as the creation of Óglaigh na hÉireann attests to.

The rigid determination and romantic historicism in the quest for Irish unity is a stark element in the 20th and 21st century. However, it begs the question of whether Bowyer Bell's assessment is incapable of accepting change in Irish Republicanism as it is in Sinn Féin today. Or, if the abolition of such armed strategies means that Sinn Féin is no longer truly Republican. Such questions over what it truly means to be Irish Republican underpin many dissident groups.

Finally, violence hardly ever exists in a vacuum. This is particularly poignant in Northern Ireland throughout its history. However, this thesis does not simply accept history as a logical determination for modern Irish Republican dissent. The explanation that the armed struggle today is being true to its roots that 'Ireland unfree shall never

[31] Bowyer Bell (1997) *The Secret Army: the IRA, Revised third edition*, Transaction Publishers, New Jersey, p.341

be at peace' is ultimately counterproductive to the political progress towards equal treatment that has been made by Sinn Féin since it entered the power-sharing institutions. However, had it not been for its decades long reign of violence, the Provisional movement may not have ended up there in the first place. Northern Ireland and the Irish Republican Movement have a complicated relationship with its shared history, and ultimately this too is contested as the centenary commemorations of the 1916 rising so forcefully pointed out.[32] Nonetheless, awareness of its foundational history is crucially important to understand and trace the roots of dissent in post-GFA Northern Ireland, and the underpinning role of identity.

[32] Gill, P. & Morrison, J.F. (2016) '100 years of Irish Republican Violence' *Terrorism and Political Violence,* 28:3

2) Literature review

It is quite possible that, in proportion to size, Northern Ireland is the most heavily researched area on earth

John Whyte[33]

2.1) Introduction

This chapter reviews the relevant literature in the field of terrorism and political violence, the dissident Irish Republican movement, and peacebuilding and politics in Northern Ireland. It demonstrates where this thesis sits within the broader historiographical landscape and the debates to which it contributes. Given the interdisciplinary nature of research on terrorism and political violence in particular, these sections include literature from the wider field of the social sciences. The depth and breadth of research that is available on Northern Ireland also means that much of the research in the subsections of this chapter directly relates to the case study. The theoretical chapter provides an in-depth exploration of the literature relating to social identity theory and identity in more general terms.

This chapter is structured to start with broader issues in research on terrorism and political violence. The core focus here is to recognise how identity is growing in importance in new research, but the literature is often limited to Islamist terrorism in the post-9/11 period. Most attention is paid to novel threats, including violent extremism and homegrown terrorism. This thesis seeks to add to this growing

[33] Whyte, J. (1991) *Interpreting Northern Ireland*. Clarendon Press, New York, p. viii

literature by taking an alternative case study that allows for a systemic theorisation and conceptualisation of identity, shedding new light in the process. The field has grown and expanded significantly since 9/11, and it is important to reflect on this. Where the early criticism noted a field overly reliant on secondary literature, there is now a growing focus on fieldwork and primary data.[34] Yet, the majority of research in terrorism studies does not engage with primary data.[35]

This section aims to position this thesis in the wider debate on terrorism and political violence and makes reference to newer subjects of interest such as radicalisation, violent extremism and homegrown terrorism. The core purpose of this section is to place the thesis in direct dialogue with this growing field of literature. This thesis challenges the undertheorising and under conceptualisation of the use of identity and the reactionary nature of its case selection in its attempt to overcome this.

Then, this chapter moves on to the literature on the Irish republican movement and the Northern Irish conflict. This section addresses in detail the debates in literature on dissident Irish republicanism. Although the field of research on dissident republicanism is relatively small, it is important to consider what the existing literature dictates about the subject specifically. This section particularly looks at the

[34] Silke, A. (2008) 'Research on Terrorism: A Review of the Impact of 9/11 and the Global War on Terrorism', in H. Chen, E. Reid, J. Sinai, A. Silke and B. Ganor (Eds.) *Terrorism Informatics: Knowledge Management and Data Mining for Homeland Security*, Springer, New York, pp. 27-50

[35] Schuurman, B. (2018) Research on Terrorism, 2007–2016: A Review of Data, Methods, and Authorship, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 1-16.

debate in the literature on whether dissident republicanism should be explored as a modern phenomenon or as a historical remnant. This has implications for how one is to consider the actual threat these groups pose, and on their potential survival. It partially necessitates finding a difficult balance between underestimating and overestimating the violent capabilities and the political prospects of dissidents or republican ultras. Most of the literature on dissident Irish republicanism focuses on the dissident groups as separate entities and their use of violence. This thesis contributes to the literature by extending this into understanding the politics of dissident republicanism in more depth and by putting it in direct opposition to the Irish republican mainstream.

Finally, this thesis discusses the Northern Irish peace process and the current state of political affairs in Northern Ireland. This section, albeit abstract, seeks to place the narrow focus of this thesis into the realm of power-sharing and political competition in Northern Ireland more widely. It addresses the questions of political processes and social progress that has been made since the peace process started. Furthermore, it is important to consider the debates on the Northern Irish political landscape since the inception of the Stormont power-sharing executive. Peace processes and conflict negotiations are a separate field of literature, which draw on multiple case studies; due to the focus of this thesis on the post Good Friday Agreement (GFA) Northern Irish case, this literature review concentrates on the more directly related works. This is done primarily to explore the debates surrounding the implementation phases of the peace agreement and to explore the current political and social setting of Northern Ireland in

order to position the role of residual violence in later chapters of this thesis. The focus of this section is primarily on contextualisation.

The generalisability of this study lies in its theoretical development and the use of dissident republicanism as a case study for wider research in social identity and political violence. However, due to the specific circumstances of Northern Ireland, it is imperative to discuss how this thesis reflects on the wider debates related to the specific case circumstances. This thesis seeks to contribute by adding another dimension of community relations to that field.

2.2) Terrorism and Political Violence

The study of terrorism and political violence is multi-disciplinary. Therefore, this literature review necessitates consideration of sociology, political science, history and psychology. The post 9-11 landscape has dramatically increased research on terrorism and political violence, leading to a substantially increased output. This section focuses on the development of the traditional terrorism literature, the increased role of social and psychological dynamics, and more recent developments in terms of radicalisation, (homegrown) extremism and issues of identity in understanding terrorism and political violence.

This thesis contributes in several core dimensions to the field of terrorism and political violence. First, it contributes to the field in terms of its empirical richness through its use of fieldwork and interview data as a primary source. Second, it revisits a case that is often used as an

historical example of terrorism, and places it in direct dialogue with post 9/11 developments in terrorism research that are often only associated with a particular type (Islamist) of terrorist actors. Third, this thesis furthers the conceptual and theoretical knowledge on issues related to identity that are prominent throughout the field in a more explicit rather than implicit manner. Identity is included in many new studies but is often undertheorised and used implicitly. Although there may be disagreement over the manner in which this thesis conceptualises and theorises identity, and although there are some case-specific conditions, this alternative focus contributes to the wider understanding of identity in terrorism and extremism.

In order to do this, this section engages primarily with two debates in the terrorism literature: first, that of old vs. new terrorism. This thesis contributes to this debate particularly by revisiting a case study that is considered old, and placing that within the developments in terrorism studies that have taken place over the last two decades. It is reflective of new developments such as homegrown terrorism and the input of identity in terrorism studies. This thesis contributes to this debate by exploring ways to theorise and conceptualise identity in a more holistic manner. This thesis does not seek to contribute in any significant depth to the continuing debate of defining and conceptualising terrorism and political violence, as this is beyond the aims of this thesis and therefore this section includes only a short reflection on defining terrorism, as it relates to the thesis.

There are significant issues with defining terrorism and there is debate whether such a definition is even possible.[36] Agreeing upon a useable definition allows for a more subjective identification of whether or not a certain act or perpetrator is in fact terrorism or a terrorist. From the critical terrorism studies side most researchers believe that an objective and internationally accepted definition of terrorism can never be agreed upon.[37] In as such, they express their decision not to adhere to a solid definition, as it is a subjective term. Traditionalist terrorism scholars tend to stress that there is purpose for a definition of terrorism. Such a definition must be achieved in order to solidify possible legal and social consequences without prejudice.[38] Although limited definitions have the possibility to be restrictive in our interpretation and contain possible bias, as the critical argument explores, this thesis argues that in order to support empirical and theoretical findings a definition needs to be conceptualised.

Crenshaw argued that it was both desirable and possible to develop a definition of terrorism sufficiently devoid of normative or value-based judgement.[39] This is in order to be useful in analysing the phenomenon of terrorism as distinct from its context, and be assessable based on its own characteristics. In this way questions of legitimacy vis-a`-vis the cause or motives involved could be considered separately from a judgement as to whether terrorism was occurring. Although the

[36] See for example: Combs, C. C. (2017) *Terrorism in the twenty-first century*. Routledge, Ch. 1
[37] Laqueur, W. (1987) *The age of terrorism*, Little Brown and Company, New York, p.7, p.302
[38] Crenshaw, M. (1994) *Terrorism in context,* Penn State University Press, Pennsylvania
[39] Ibid.

number of definitions of terrorism is large, for the sake of understanding, this thesis adheres to Hoffman's definition as follows:

> ineluctably political in aims and motives; violent – or threatens violence; designed to have far-reaching psychological repercussions beyond the immediate victim or target; conducted either by an organisation with an identifiable chain of command or conspiratorial cell structure or by individuals or a small collection of individuals directly influenced, motivated, or inspired by the ideological aims or example of some existent terrorist movement and/or its leaders; and, perpetrated by a subnational group or non-state entity.[40]

This definition is chosen because it includes both violence and the threat of violence. Its breadth allows for interpretation of both ideological and social factors, as well as incorporating groups with a variety of backgrounds and structures. Given the current focus of terrorism studies on Islamic related terrorism, this definition allows for wider and different cases to be assessed under the same definition for the purposes of this thesis.

2.2.1) Terrorism and Political Violence, Old. Vs New terrorism and Critical Terrorism Studies

[40] Hoffman, B. (2006) *Inside Terrorism,* Columbia University Press, New York

Terrorism and political violence has been studied for decades but saw a major expansion of public interest after the 9/11 attacks. This thesis argues that some of the crucial earlier observations on terrorism are not as different from modern interpretations as some popular discourse leads to believe.[41] Laquer assessed already in the 1970s that even then, terrorism was misconstrued as a new phenomenon, and wrongly identified as the most important threat to the world today driven by terrorists who are fanatical believers that respond to injustice.[42] Some of these suppositions remain visible in the perceptions of terrorism. This is very similar to modern interpretations of terrorism.

Terrorism in recent years has become intrinsically linked with what Horgan considers 'socialisation towards violence',[43] or, as Neumann describes it, 'what goes on before the bomb goes off'.[44] Recent works seek to identify the process of what leads people to become engaged in terrorism. Despite the common agreement among most terrorism researchers that there is no such thing as a psychological footprint for terrorists from which to identify them, the importance of individual and group development is of key importance.[45]

[41] See for example; Schmid, A. P., & Jongman, A. J. (1988) *Political Terrorism*, New Brunswick, or Silke, A. (2001). The devil you know: Continuing problems with research on terrorism. *Terrorism and political violence*, 13:4, 1-14, for a discussion of the early problems with terrorism research.
[42] Laqueur, W. (1977) *Terrorism,* Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, p.5
[43] Horgan, J. (2005) *The Psychology of Terrorism*, Frank Cass Publishers, London, pp. 102-105
[44] Neumann, P. R. (2008) "Introduction." In *Perspectives on Radicalisation and Political Violence – Papers from the First International Conference on Radicalisation and Political Violence*, edited by P. R. Neumann, 3–7. London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation and Political Violence.
[45] Taylor, M. (2010) 'Is terrorism a group phenomenon?'. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*,15:2, 121-129; Taylor, M. and Horgan, J. (2006) 'A Conceptual Framework for

There are broadly three competing explanations put forward to explain engagement in terrorism: structural level explanations; group-level explanations and individual-level explanations.[46] Structural-level explanations focus on the environmental sector as an explanatory factor. The social, cultural, political, economic and geographical environment drives involvement in terrorism.[47] Group-level explanations focus on the role of group dynamics in facilitating involvement in terrorism.[48] Individual-level explanations focus predominantly on the psychological characteristics of the individual actor. These three traditions of understanding involvement in terrorism are usually reflective of the discipline in which they are studied. This thesis focuses predominantly on the group-level but contributes to that by incorporating in its multidisciplinary approach elements of both individual-level explanations as well as structural-level explanations.

One particularly important area of this debate in terrorism research that is relevant for this thesis is that of 'old' vs 'new' terrorism. This is primarily because 9/11 has led to a drastic switch in the focus of terrorism research towards religious (particularly Islamist) terrorism and away from the more traditional understanding of terrorism with

Addressing Psychological Process in the Development of the Terrorist'. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 18:4, 585-601

[46] Schuurman, B. (2017) 'Becoming a European Homegrown Jihadist; a multilevel analysis of involvement in the Dutch Hofstadgroup, 2002-2005, PhD thesis

[47] Ross, J. I. (1993) Structural causes of oppositional political terrorism: Towards a causal model. *Journal of Peace Research*, 30:3, 317-329.

[48] Crenshaw, M. (1981) The causes of terrorism. *Comparative politics*, 13:4, 379-399.

clear political and national aims.[49] The IRA in its myriad inceptions, but particularly the Provisional IRA, are an often-used case study for understanding 'old' terrorism. This thesis argues that the novelty of 'new' terrorism does little to aid understanding of terrorism apart from moving on to different cases. Rather than seeking to assess and analyse similarities that can contribute to effective counter-terrorism, it focuses too much on the differences and the inability for comparison and lesson learning.[50]

Four key areas that Duyvesteyn puts forward as being 'new' in the new terrorism can be briefly summarised as 'the transnational nature of the perpetrators and their organizations, their religious inspiration and fanaticism, their use of weapons of mass destruction, and their indiscriminate targeting'.[51] Old terrorism then stands to be non-transnational, devoid of religious inspiration, not in possession of weapons of mass destruction and discriminative in their targeting. However, under those characteristics its novelty must be criticised on at least two grounds. First, nationalist 'old' terrorism like that of the different reincarnations of Republican paramilitaries was not restrained to the borders of the UK and Ireland either, but also took place on continental Europe and received support, active and passive, from all over the world, although mostly limited to Western

[49] Soeters, J.L. (2005) *Ethnic conflict and terrorism*, Routledge, New York,; Hoffman, B. (2006) *Op. Cit.*; Sageman, M. (2008) *Leaderless Jihad*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia

[50] For more on terrorist learning see: Mumford, A. & Kettle, L. (eds.) (2017) 'How terrorists learn: adaption and innovation in political violence', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* Special Issue, 40:7, 523-664

[51] Duyvesteyn, I. (2004) How New Is the New Terrorism?, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 27:5, 439-454

countries.[52] Second, so-called 'new' terrorists are still impacted by national or territorial desires; many do indeed pursue clear territorial aims. Furthermore, it is arguable that targeting is never fully indiscriminate. [53]

In other words, 'new' terrorists are not always ideological in nature but often had direct practical aims, visible for example in parts of the cases of Hamas and Hezbollah.[54] Second, debate surrounds the role of religion in organisations such as Al-Qaida and Islamic State; many scholars now believe religion is not its identifying characteristic.[55] Furthermore, the IRA is not entirely devoid of the influence of religion with the vast majority of its membership and support coming from the Catholic community.[56]

Thus, such religious support may be implicit and less important than explicit ideology, but not necessarily negligible. Therefore, the idea that there is a clear divide between new and old terrorism overlooks the clear similarities between both. The essential characteristics of nationalist terrorism, and the lessons that have been learned from such organisations, should therefore not be simply become devoid of meaning. 'Old' terrorist organisations like the IRA have proven to reshape and survive over time and therefore can provide crucial

[52] English, R. (2012) *Armed struggle, the history of the IRA*, Macmillan, London
[53] Duyvesteyn, I. (2004) *Op. Cit.* pp. 442-445
[54] Hoffman, B. (2002) Rethinking Terrorism and Counterterrorism Since 9/11, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 25:5, 303-316
[55] Kurtulus, E.N. (2011) The "New Terrorism" and its Critics, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 34:6, 476-500
[56] Duyvesteyn (2004) *Op. Cit.* pp.441-444

lessons in assessing the longevity and development of such organisations in a contemporary setting.

According to a RAND study by Connable and Libicki, most insurgencies and terrorist organisations tend to last up to a maximum of ten years, with notable exceptions including FARC and the IRA. Most organisations however are defeated within two years. As stated in chapter one, dissidentism is a relevant consideration in both these groups, with both the IRA and FARC being susceptible to splintering. Connable and Libicki argue that after the two-year stage the chance of victory by the state increases.[57] Sageman raises that such long-lasting terrorist organisations, like the different IRA streams but also ETA, possess a certain type of kinship, an organisation based on primarily members of certain extended families, like mafia style organisations.[58]

This is opposed to organisations where the majority of members are not necessarily related or share similar life experiences that drive them to become active in terrorist organisations.[59] Although his claim has certain gaps and exceptions, at its core premise might hold a certain sense of truth for current IRA groups, where key members are often from 'high-profile' Republican backgrounds and are radicalised 'within their own backyard'.[60] Thus, this thesis speaks to this debate on 'old' vs. 'new' particularly by assessing how a traditional 'old' case of terrorism

[57] Connable, B. & Libicki, M.C. (2010) 'How Insurgencies End', *prepared for the Marine Corps Intelligence Activity*, RAND cooperation, pp.26-29
[58] Sageman (2008*) Leaderless Jihad*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, p.15-22
[59] Rosenfeld, J.E. (Ed.) (2011) *Terrorism, identity and legitimacy, the four waves theory and political violence,* Routledge, New York
[60] Ibid.

can be used in modern day to contribute to our ability to learn and develop conceptual issues, in this thesis identity, in an alternative case.

A second core debate in recent years revolves around the role, necessity, and input of Critical Terrorism Studies. This is important because it concerns itself with understanding the field of *terrorism studies,* and not literature limited to engagement in terrorism or terrorist organisations. Critical terrorism scholars argue that terrorism studies lacks methodological rigour, and substantive engagement with primary data; that it is little more than 'a glorified literature review'.[61] Although the case is true that much research related to terrorism does not engage with primary data, this criticism is widely acknowledged amongst terrorism scholars themselves.[62]

Critical scholars further argue that terrorism research is inherently problem solving and that orthodox or traditional terrorism scholars are too biased towards the status-quo and are therefore unable to remove their research from state-centred outcomes or to present more normative findings that may be uncomfortable.[63] In line with Horgan and Boyle, this thesis argues that such arguments are overstated.[64] This thesis contributes to some of the concerns raised by critical terrorism studies, namely an overreliance on secondary data and a status-quo

[61] Silke, A. (2006) Conference paper presented at '*Is it Time for a Critical Terrorism Studies*?' University of Manchester/University of Aberystwyth, October 2006
[62] Horgan, J., & Boyle, M. J. (2008) A case against 'critical terrorism studies'. *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 1:1, 51-64.
[63] Gunning, J. (2007) A case for critical terrorism studies? *Government and opposition*, 42:3, 363–393
[64] Horgan and Boyle (2008) *Op. Cit.* pp.53-54

bias, but builds this outside of the normative tradition that critical terrorism scholars argue for.

2.2.2) Developments in terrorism studies: radicalisation, extremism and issues of identity

This section briefly examines three concepts in modern terrorism literature: radicalisation, homegrown extremism and identity as it relates to terrorism studies. The close association between violence, terrorism and radicalisation is frequently stressed in academic literature and broader policy. Governments generally describe radicalisation as 'a move from a peaceful perspective to one, which encourages and thrives on the use of violence'.[65] Silber and Bhatt assert 'terrorism' to be the 'ultimate consequence of the radicalization process'.[66]

However, they also importantly argue an individual who has been radicalised does not necessarily have to become involved in an act of terrorism. In fact, Githens-Mazer and Lambert argue that 'radicalisation' has no inherent relationship to terrorism.[67] It is here that this thesis contributes to the idea of non-violent and violent expressions of 'extreme' identity as a means to explore the links between groups that are directly involved in violence and other types of fringe political groups with the larger, moderate, out-group.

[65] Bhatt, A., & Silber, M. (2007) *Radicalization in the West: The homegrown threat*. The New York Police Department
[66] Ibid.
[67] Githens-Mazer, J., & Lambert, R. (2010) Why conventional wisdom on radicalization fails: the persistence of a failed discourse. *International Affairs*, 86:4, 889-901.

The reasons identified for radicalisation are mainly threefold: economic disadvantages, social inequality and expression of (religious) identity.[68] There is disagreement in the literature about what is the best explanatory factor. Lynch argues primarily for the inherent importance of identity, and group processes within Muslim communities.[69] Hornqvist and Flyghed argue that social exclusion and inequality are the main contributing factors of (violent) radicalisation.[70] Vidino and Brandon argue that although all three factors are important, the easiest path towards a solution lays in contributing towards economic prosperity and employment opportunities to counter radicalisation.[71] Although economic prosperity has the ability to relieve problems in the short term, it does not account for either of Lynch's or Hornqvist's and Flyghed's assumptions and, although they are more difficult issues, they may have more enduring effects in the long term.

Even before the rise of the Muslim radicalisation debate after 9/11, criminology scholars identified violence as at least indirectly part of a group dynamic. Depravation, unemployment, political disillusionment, boredom and romanticism towards violence need to be addressed at the local level in order to prevent radicalisation and moves towards

[68] Lynch, O. (2013) British Muslim Youth: radicalisation, terrorism and the construction of the 'other', *Critical studies on terrorism*, 6:2, 241-261; Bonino, S. (2013) Preventing Muslimness in Britain: The Normalisation of Exceptional Measures to Combat Terrorism, *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 33:3, 385-400
[69] Lynch, O. (2013) *Op.Cit.* pp.241-243
[70] Hornqvist, M. & Flyghed, J. (2012) Exclusion or culture? The rise and the ambiguity of the radicalisation debate, *Critical studies on terrorism*, 5:3, 319-334, pp.320-322
[71] Vidino, L. & Brandon, J. (2012) Europe's experience in countering radicalisation: approaches and challenges, Journal of policing, *Intelligence and Counter terrorism,* 7:2, 163-179, pp.165-166

engaging in violence.[72] In this area one's identity becomes important, as Abbas and Siddique establish in their research on radicalisation and de-radicalisation among British South Asian Muslims in Birmingham.[73] However, they establish that radicalisation functions as a trigger towards violence primarily if other factors mentioned above are also present.[74]

The radicalisation literature is prone to present the 'Muslim' problem as unique and novel and unlike anything ever seen before. This implies the inability or inapplicability to apply lessons from the past to the new context as was discussed in the previous section on 'new' vs. 'old' terrorism. Although it portrays novel and unique characteristics, it does not exclude itself from the possibility to assess a different form of violent radicalisation. Dalgaard-Nielsen even argues that perhaps the lessons of other previous conflict groups might be lost by politicians' insistence on the novelty of the situation.[75]

This research seeks to contribute to this literature by focussing on the issue of social identity and group alignment, and view it in light of an alternative case study: Irish Republicans and the expression of identity in the dissident republican movement in Northern Ireland. In doing so, it provides an addition to studies of radicalisation and identity in

[72] Pettersson, T. (2003) Ethnicity and violent crime: the ethnic structure of networks of youths suspected of violent offences in Stockholm, *Journal of Scandinavian studies in criminology and crime prevention*, 4:2, 143-161
[73] Abbas, T. & Siddique, A. (2012) 'Perceptions of the processes of radicalisation and de-radicalisation among British South Asian Muslims in a post-industrial city', *Social Identities: Journal for the Study of Race, Nation and Culture*, 18:1, 119-134
[74] Ibid. p.120
[75] Dalgaard-Nielsen, A. (2010) Violent radicalization in Europe: What we know and what we do not know. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *33*(9), 797-814, p.799

Muslim and British Asian communities, thereby adding nuance and emphasising the importance of identity as an issue transcending so-called waves of terrorism or the new/old divide.

However, and importantly, although this thesis uses some of the underpinnings of radicalisation literature, predominantly group dynamics and issues of identity, it does not closely adhere to the radicalisation framework. This is primarily for a key reason: there is a propensity in the literature to see terrorism as the only possible outcome of radicalisation. By contrast, this thesis argues that it is important to distinguish between radicalism and extremism along the lines of Bartlett and Miller. Radicalism may hold views that are considered unacceptable or extreme but do not necessarily legitimise or engage in the use of violence. For extremists on the other hand, violence is the preferred method.[76] Neumann distinguishes this as being a violent or non-violent extremist.[77] This thesis, as argued in chapter three, claims that identity conflict can also be violent or non-violent.

A final trend in the literature relevant to this thesis involves identity in terrorism. Recent studies have started to integrate identity perspectives to understand terrorism.[78] Scholars now make a

[76] Bartlett, J., & Miller, C. (2012) The edge of violence: Towards telling the difference between violent and non-violent radicalization, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24:1, 1-21.
[77] Neumann, P. R. (2013) The trouble with radicalization, *International Affairs*, 89:4, 873-893.
[78] See for example: Berger, J.M. (2017) 'Extremist Construction of Identity' ICCT Policy Brief, April 2017, https://icct.nl/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/ICCT-Berger-Extremist-Construction-of-Identity-April-2017.pdf and Schwartz, S. J., Dunkel, C. S., & Waterman, A. S. (2009) Terrorism: An identity theory perspective, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32:6, 537-559.

distinction between cultural identity, social identity and personal identity; however, they tend to address these elements in isolation, as opposed to inherently connected. Schwartz et al. for example disassociate between cultural identity, group dynamics and personal identity. Yet, in doing so they overlook how these factors are all part of the same process. Furthermore, studies on identity in terrorism again predominantly deal with Arab or Muslim identity.[79] As Borum shows, most pathways or conceptualisations of understanding terrorism, extremism and radicalisation are implicitly built on, or explicitly related to, Islamic terrorism in the west.[80] It is important for the methodological, conceptual and theoretical rigour to apply issues of identity and group dynamics in alternate terrorist organisations.

To summarise, the contribution this thesis seeks to make to the existing literature on terrorism and political violence is predominantly three-fold. First, this thesis contributes by adding primary empirical data to a field that remains, despite recent improvement, predominantly based on secondary material. Second, this thesis revisits an 'old' case when the majority of the field has moved towards studying issues related to Islamic terrorism. Doing this contributes to the literature by putting dissident republicanism in dialogue with the modern developments in terrorism studies. Third and finally, this thesis expands on the

[79] See for example: Levin, S., Henry, P. J., Pratto, F., & Sidanius, J. (2003) Social dominance and social identity in Lebanon: Implications for support of violence against the West. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 6:4, 353-368 and Sidanius, J., Kteily, N., Levin, S., Pratto, F., & Obaidi, M. (2016) Support for asymmetric violence among Arab populations: The clash of cultures, social identity, or counterdominance?. *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations*, 19:3, 343-359.

[80] Borum, R. (2011) Radicalization into violent extremism II: A review of conceptual models and empirical research. *Journal of Strategic Security*, 4:4, 37-62.

conceptualisation and theorisation of identity as an important element of understanding terrorism and extremism.

2.3) Dissident Irish Republicanism

Scholarly interest in the Northern Ireland conflict has diminished in recent years. One of the reasons for this is the post-9/11 landscape that saw many scholars shift focus to Islamist terrorism. Another reason for this shift in scholarly attention is that Northern Ireland is widely regarded as a solved conflict as a result of the 1998 Belfast Agreement. Nonetheless, the threat of spoiler groups like the Real IRA, the Continuity IRA and other violent dissident groups have sparked a renewed concern about the continuation of identity based violence in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland offered a rich basis to study civil conflict, terrorist groups and peace processes and it still is a relevant case study to continue to study their effects. Creating an in-depth understanding of spoilers like paramilitary dissident groups, whilst linking that to the trajectory of the parties that entered into peace, can provide interesting new insights into the effect of spoiler groups.

Given the small field of scholars working on the subject of dissident republicanism, there is little sense of competing schools or streams of thought. dissident republicanism is furthermore often discussed only peripherally in work done on the Provisional IRA or Northern Ireland more broadly.[81] This thesis argues that there are two core issues in the literature that need to be addressed. First, although some literature

[81] See for example English (2012) *Op. Cit.* pp385-403 & White, R.W. (2017) *Op. Cit.* pp373-385

displays elements of both, the majority of the existing literature is focused on the paramilitary wings of dissident republicanism, with far less emphasis on the political dissidents within Irish republicanism, with the notable exception of Whiting's excellent account of the political groups.[82] The little literature that does explore the ideology and identity of dissident Irish republicanism largely does so from a historical perspective and does not rigorously engage with the contemporary focus that is part of the literature on violent dissident republican activity.[83]

Second, the literature on dissident republicanism does not sufficiently address the relationship between the mainstream and dissident republican movement and particularly the consequences of this relationship. Dissident republicanism is too heavily explored as an isolated phenomenon. Therefore, this thesis argues that the literature does not so much suffer from significant gaps or irreconcilable debates, but rather from an inherent disconnect between its different elements.

This thesis seeks to make a core contribution to the existing literature on dissident Irish republicanism by taking a more holistic approach of dissident Irish republicanism by more strongly combining analysis of its violent and political elements. Furthermore, this thesis creates a more complete picture of modern Irish Republicanism by focusing on the consequences of the relationship between dissident and mainstream republicanism. This contribution is to assess and analyse

[82] Whiting, S. A. (2015) *Spoiling the peace?: The threat of dissident republicans to peace in Northern Ireland*, Oxford University Press, Oxford
[83] See for example: Sanders, A. (2011). *Inside the IRA: Dissident republicans and the War for Legitimacy: Dissident republicans and the War for Legitimacy*. Edinburgh University Press.

how both violent and non-violent dissent relate to the mainstream Republican movement and other dissident groups. This thesis expands on the existing literature by adding an in-depth understanding of the consequences of organisational splits and historical accounts. This is crucially important to understand how dissidents legitimise themselves and attack the larger mainstream movement, but also in order to understand how the mainstream restrains the dissidents from gaining power and influence.

First of all, there is disagreement in the literature on the use of the term dissident republicanism. The term 'dissident republicans' is used by political and security institutions to identify both political and violent groups that reject the Belfast Agreement and perceive the need to continue actively in the fight for Irish reunification. They are deemed dissidents because they did not follow the path of the republican mainstream of Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA under the Adams/McGuinness leadership.[84] Those that are however considered the dissidents by the vast majority of people argue that they have not strayed from the path of true republicanism, and that those that have sold out to the occupying British forces (Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA) are the true dissidents.[85] Some scholars refer to these groups as Republican 'Ultras' because of their propensity to ignore the will of the majority in moving away from violence.[86]

[84] Currie, P.M. & Taylor, M. (eds.) (2011) *Dissident Irish Republicanism*, Continuum Press, London

[85] Patterson, H. (2011) *Beyond the Micro group': the dissident republican challenge,* In Currie, P.M. & Taylor, M. (Eds.) *Dissident Irish Republicanism,* Continuum Press, London, pp.65-97

[86] Tonge, J. (2012) 'No-one likes us; we don't care; dissident Irish Republicans and mandates', *The Political Quarterly*, 83:2, 219-226

Others who focus on discussing the paramilitary wings of dissident groups refer to them as violent dissident republicans.[87] This concurs with the wider discussion on violent and non-violent extremism as discussed in the previous section. This thesis uses the dissident terminology for both violent and non-violent groups because of their small size relative to the mainstream.

The literature focusing on the dissident republicans directly is far smaller than that on the Provisional movement and the Troubles itself, which is understandable given that the issue is relatively recent, its number of casualties much lower, and it is often researched peripheral to broader political research. The consequence of this is a lack of analytical depth. Existing literature on the post-Belfast agreement years often focuses on the general political state of Northern Ireland and the peace process or on the on-going violent activities of the dissident republican actors. The work of Aughey, for example, offers an extensive overview of Northern Irish politics since 1998, but less extensively identifies the position of dissident republican actors within this due to their lack of electoral success.[88]

Similar research is conducted by Agnes Maillot focusing on the new position of Sinn Féin within the new political process but excludes the impact of dissident republicanism.[89] The implications of modern

[87] Horgan, J., & Morrison, J. F. (2011) Here to stay? The rising threat of violent dissident republicanism in Northern Ireland, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 23:4, 642-669.
[88] Aughey, A. (2005) *The politics of Northern Ireland: beyond the Belfast Agreement*, Routledge, London
[89] Maillot, A. (2005) *New Sinn Féin: Irish Republicanism in the twenty-first century,* Routledge, New York

research on Northern Ireland are that there is either research on the mainstream, and the development of Sinn Féin, or on the dissident republicans. The link between the two and the consequences of this relationship is underexplored.

Recent research focuses mainly on the actions and organisation of current violent actors such as the Continuity IRA and the Real IRA. It does not analyse the political and societal impact of these findings to a significant extent.[90] Scholars focus predominantly on the direct power capabilities remaining with the republican dissidents rather than assessing their further-going capacity to affect society. In this school of thought on dissident Irish republicanism, ideology is relevant as an explanatory factor, but the politics of dissent are not necessarily relevant to that discussion. Morrison for example states that

> There is clearly nothing wrong with disagreeing with the direction taken, and decision made, by the Sinn Féin leadership. It actually promotes democratic voice within republican and nationalist communities. It allows for these communities to question this direction.[91]

[90] Frenett & Smith (2012) IRA 2.0: Continuing the Long War—Analyzing the Factors Behind Anti-GFA Violence, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 24:375–395; Horgan, J. (2012) *Divided we stand: The strategy and psychology of Ireland's dissident terrorists*. Oxford University Press, Oxford; Horgan & Morrison (2011) Here to Stay? The Rising Threat of Violent Dissident republicanism in Northern Ireland*, Terrorism and Political Violence,* 23:4, 642-669; Neumann, P. (2005) From Revolution to Devolution: Is the IRA Still a Threat to Peace in Northern Ireland? *Journal of Contemporary European Studies,* 13:1, 79–92

[91] Morrison, J.F. (2013) *The origins and rise of dissident Irish Republicanism: The role and impact of organizational splits*. Bloomsbury Publishing New York, p.2

This is indicative of the state of the literature on dissident Irish republicanism. There is a disconnect between political activism and support for dissident political ideology and the need to understand dissident ideology as a legitimisation of violence. Furthermore, a lack of electoral success does not negate possible consequences and societal pressures that can accompany a violent phenomenon like dissident republicanism. Furthermore, the literature does not adequately explore the consequences of the continuation of the armed struggle on the possibility of the promotion of this democratic voice that Morrison refers to.

The work of Tonge and Evans does address these societal aspects more specifically. Their analysis of the Northern Irish General Election survey sheds light on the amount of support for Republican ideology in Northern Ireland however; this is primarily based on voting behaviour. Although this provides a solid base for further research, it cannot take into account the support for groups such as the Real IRA and the Continuity IRA since these are organisations outside the political spectrum.[92] According to Tonge, Republican dissidence only seemed to revive after 2007 when Sinn Féin took the seismic decision to back the new police services after signing the St Andrews Agreement 'ending any final ambiguities over its support for purely constitutional methodologies'.[93]

[92] Tonge, J. & Evans, J (2012), Menace without mandate? Is there any sympathy for 'dissident' Irish Republicanism in Northern Ireland*? Terrorism and political violence* 24:1, 61-78
[93] Tonge, J. (2012) *Op.Cit.* p.223

Furthermore he assesses the level of dissident support is at a 'very modest, but not entirely negligible, level of sympathy'.[94] Frampton provides similar key reasons why the dissident republican groups were able to gain a level of momentum after 2007.[95] He identifies the official exit from the stage of the Provisional IRA as a key decisive factor combined with Sinn Féin's endorsement of the PSNI and Sinn Féin's entry into government with the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the subsequent failure of the party in the 2007 Irish general election.

Research related to the ideology of dissident republicanism is largely historical. Scholars such as Sanders set out the narrative of victimisation and legitimisation of Republican groups in order to justify their actions.[96] Frampton offers a similar approach in his in-depth account of the historical roots of Republicanism and how modern day dissidents adhere to this history and symbolism as an explanatory construction for their actions.[97] Yet, despite the contribution of this particular approach to the ideological underpinnings that shape dissident thinking and ideological identity, this literature is less reflective of contemporary political development. There are those that argue that dissident republicans are solely cloaking themselves in history and pursuing a sense of martyrdom akin to that of their heroes. Frampton in particular emphasises the role of historic determinism, although he does emphasise the existence of dissent as a reaction to the

[94] Ibid. p.224
[95] Frampton, M. (2010). The return of the militants: Violent dissident republicanism. *London: International Centre for the Study of Radicalisation, King's College London*, *68*, 3-14.
[96] Sanders, A. (2011) *Op. Cit.* pp. 1-15
[97] Frampton, M. (2011). *Legion of the rearguard: dissident Irish Republicanism*. Irish Academic Press, Kildare

Irish republican mainstream.[98] On the other hand, there are those within this historiographical tradition that argue dissident republicanism is much more 'the product of the contemporary Northern Ireland than it is of the enchanting power of any atavistic tradition'.[99]

Dissident republicanism might provide the rhetoric and the repertoire of contention. Arguably, however, its martyrdom and historic narrative is propaganda for romanticists, something that might give the organisations their cloak of legacy and legitimacy and a shared history, whereas declining economic prospects and growing social tensions are the real recruitment tool. This is similar to some of the issues in the literature on radicalisation: the combination of social, economic and identity factors is what drives republican dissidents to violence. Bean described the general consensus on dissident republicans as both a 'historically determined residue and an inevitable by-product of the de-escalation of contemporary conflict'.[100]

This thesis, like Bean's observations, argues that historic identification has become an inherent part of contemporary identity, and as such historical narratives are used to express and strengthen a kinship and belonging to members of Dissident organisations. Therefore, dissident republicans are not necessarily stuck in the past, and thus merely

[98] Frampton M. (2011) *Op. Cit.* p.8
[99] Bean, K. (2012) New dissidents are but old Provisionals writ large'? The dynamics of Dissident republicanism in the New Northern Ireland, *Political Quarterly* 83:2, 210-218, p.211
[100] Bean (2012) *Op. Cit.* pp.210-211

representing a historic representation of violence, but that they perceive the past to be a strong characteristic of their social identity.

This thesis builds particularly on the work of Sophie Whiting, although there are important distinctions. She provides a detailed account of the political and ideological nature of dissident republicanism beyond the immediate scope of their violent activity. By doing this, she provides a nuanced understanding of the political aim of these groups. She states that 'due to the frequent portrayal of Sinn Féin as the archetypal form of republicanism, other groups' fidelity to the ideology is often considered in relation to what Sinn Féin represent'.[101] Whiting 's aim is to 'analyse whether contemporary dissidence forms an inevitable cycle of resistance to compromise by republican leadership'[102] and in doing so answers questions about the current nature of Irish republicanism.[103] She traces both the ideological nature of dissident groups, as well as the difference between dissidents and Sinn Féin.

This thesis expands on, and develops, Whiting's assessment in two important ways. First, this thesis presents an important addition to Whiting's work by going beyond the analysis of ideology. This thesis considers in depth how personal and social factors are important in understanding the relationship between different groups in Irish republicanism. Thereby this thesis also seeks to understand how interpersonal relationships such as friendship, or the lack thereof, shapes political agenda's. This thesis thus assesses in particular how

[101] Whiting, S.A. (2015) *Op. Cit.* p.111.
[102] Whiting, S.A. (2015) Op. Cit. p.5
[103] Ibid.

the mainstream and dissident groups interact and how groups and identity is shaped by this relationship. Second, this thesis thereby seeks to analyse more holistically how dissident ideology is shaped by its relationship to Sinn Féin on both the ideological as well as a personal level. By adding this personal level to assessing dissident republicanism, a new analysis is warranted of their ideological aims as well, in order to evaluate how the ideological and personal interconnect. This personal level is not prominent in Whiting's valuable assessment of dissident republicanism. This thesis therefore moves beyond the valid reasons given by Whiting for what she calls is 'the dissident critique of Provisional Sinn Fein', namely 'their acceptance of partitionist institutions the GFA and PIRA's decommissioning, and endorsement of policing'.[104] It seeks to expand on Whiting's work by adding the personal element to the analysis and consequently re-assessing how that addition shapes dissident ideology and its relationship to Sinn Fein.

The question then arises of whether or not dissident republican capabilities and support are strong enough to revoke the peace process and if their armed struggle is futile. The existing literature discusses whether dissident republican violence is underestimated or overestimated. Most concurs that dissidents lack support and organisational strength to be a threat to the peace process. The general consensus is that they have little to no popular support and thus are unable to achieve their goals.[105] However, the PIRA never represented

[104] Ibid. pp.110-111 & pp.184-190
[105] Frampton, M. (2010) Dissident Irish Republican Violence: A resurgent threat? *Political Quarterly*, 83:2; 227-237; Tonge, J. (2012) No-one likes us; we don't care; dissident Irish republicans and mandates, *The Political Quarterly*, 83:2, 219-226

a majority's will of an armed campaign either and despite not achieving their ultimate goal, they were not defeated without any gains. In contrast, a vast majority of people protested against the PIRA actions. Nonetheless, the PIRA represented a larger minority's will than the dissidents do.[106]

However, although this thesis agrees that dissidents lack support and strength, this thesis argues that dissident republicanism can be a potential threat. Smyth contributes further to the idea that dissident republicans have had a twofold effect on how the peace process has unfolded in the early stages. She argues that dissident republicans added to the Unionist mistrust of Sinn Féin's position.[107] Martin McGuinness' open condemnation of republican dissident action after the murder of Constable Stephen Carroll and the Massareene attack may not have been so much a condemnation for the actual meaning of it, but more aimed as a gesture towards unionist government partners of Sinn Féin's unbreakable support for the ballot over the bullet.[108]

The new republican groups may not be strong enough to mount as serious and prolonged a challenge as the Provisionals did. However, in an inherently unstable polity built on communal polarisation they will possibly continue to exert a potentially destabilising influence out of proportion to their firepower and numbers. Up until 2005, the PIRA

[106] Taylor, M. (2010) 'Is terrorism a group phenomenon?'. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, 15:2, 121-129
[107] Smyth, M. (2004) The process of demilitarization and the reversibility of the peace process in Northern Ireland, *Terrorism and political violence*, 16:3 544-566
[108] Moran, J. (2008) *Policing the peace in Northern Ireland, Politics, crime and security after the Belfast Agreement*, Manchester University Press, Manchester; Mulcahy, A. (2006) *Policing Northern Ireland, Legitimacy, Reform and Social Conflict,* Willan Publishing, London

maintained control of Republican areas and minimised the possibilities for dissident republicans. Rather, both were in a feud; the PIRA killed a RIRA leader in Belfast in 2000. Martyn Frampton however argues that the opportunity for dissidents to grow to any significant strength is highly unlikely.[109] How many of the former Provisionals actually did go on to become supporters or members of dissident republican groups is unknown, as is what brought about their decision but this thesis argues that it is most likely a combination of fear, a vacuum of purpose and actual ideological commitment to the cause of the dissident republicans.

Thus, this thesis contributes to the literature on dissident republicanism by placing dissident groups in direct relation to the mainstream out-group. The consequences of doing this have not been significantly explored in the literature. Furthermore, challenging much of the literature on the armed struggle and violent dissident republicanism, this thesis is neither as historical as much of the ideological literature on dissident republicanism nor as singular in its focus as much of the terrorism literature on dissident republicans.

2.4) The Northern Ireland peace process and the politics of consociationalism

This section examines the literature on spoilers, the Northern Ireland peace process and the politics of consociationalism. This addresses several issues. First, since dissidents are considered a spoiler group, it

[109] Frampton, M. (2011) *Op.Cit.* p.228

is important to contextualise the potential risks of spoilers in peace processes and reflect on the idea of winning and losing an insurgency. Second, because the Northern Irish peace process is contested within Irish republicanism itself, as will become clear in the empirical chapters of this thesis, this section reflects on the academic stalemate vs. interplay debate. Third, because this thesis explores both dissidents and Sinn Féin, it is important to have a wider understanding of the Northern Irish peace process and the current power-sharing institutions, and particularly the theoretical perspective behind the Northern Irish peace process.

This is particularly relevant because the mainstream out-group, Sinn Féin, heavily relies on its place in both the peace process and the consociational Stormont institutions in its approach towards dissident republicanism. As is explored in depth in the empirical chapters of this thesis, Sinn Féin attempts to delegitimise dissent on the basis of both the peace process and its electoral success. Therefore, it is important to reflect on the academic discourse on these issues. This section, consequently, seeks predominantly to provide academic context to some of the issues that are addressed through the theoretical framework and the empirical findings of this thesis.

Arson defines peace processes as 'processes of dialogue over time between representatives of contesting forces, with or without an intermediary, aimed at securing an end to hostilities in the context of agreements over issues that transcend a strictly military nature'.[110]

[110] Ibid.

This definition seems to make more note of the importance of taking peace negotiations beyond the realm of ceasing military operations into discussions on longer-term strategies to construct and maintain a peace process. Accordingly she states that 'peace processes involve an effort to end armed confrontation by reaching agreement that touch on at least some of the principal political, economic, social and ethnic imbalances that led to the conflict in the first place'.[111]

Thus, the general debate in the literature is between whether a peace process should be considered solely along the lines of an end to violence or whether it should be examined beyond the military realm by considering its influences on the subsequent social and political structures. This thesis adheres to the latter perception because it link political issues and violent issues more cohesively.

In most peace processes and conflict situations, debates arise about the role of a specific party or what negotiations take part behind closed doors. In the case of Northern Ireland, the debates surrounding the peace process, what it entails, how it came about and what it means for the future of the province, are highly contentious issues. Unlike most other conflict situations however, the outcome in Northern Ireland leads to debates that stretch to covering who is even the real victor of the conflict.[112] There are broadly two theoretical arguments regarding winning and losing in asymmetric conflict. On one side, most significantly Andrew Mack argues that it is essentially a battle that is to

[111] Arnson, C. (Ed.). (1999). *Comparative peace processes in Latin America*. Stanford University Press, Redwood City, CA p.1
[112] Miller, D. (2014) *Rethinking Northern Ireland: culture, ideology and colonialism*, Routledge, London

be won by the insurgents due to their superior political will.[113] On the other side Ivan Arreguin-Toft reasons that it is not the insurgents' to win, but the states' battle to lose by choosing the wrong strategic objective vis-à-vis the insurgency.[114]

Our understanding of who 'won' and who 'lost' the Troubles influences how we interpret the course of events and the negotiations of the early and mid-1990s and the outcome of the peace process. It is beneficial to include broader literature on peacebuilding processes first, especially in the context of the Northern Ireland conflict. As Stedman argues, peace-making is a 'risky business'; so-called spoilers, groups intent on breaking negotiations, are broadly agreed to be the most dangerous source of risk to ruining on-going negotiations and should be dealt with separately and not be granted immediate access to the peace process.[115]

By contrast, other scholars including Irwin and Milton-Edwards argue that spoilers, or extreme factors, should be involved in negotiating an end to hostilities from the outset of negotiations in order to prevent immediate or delayed breakdown of peace. For example in the case of Angola, renewed civil war broke out after 1975, following the rejection of the peace process by one of the parties involved, that was arguably

[113] Mack, L (1975) 'Why Big Nations Lose Small Wars: The Politics of Asymmetric Conflict', *World Politics*, 27:2, 175-200
[114] Arreguin-Toft (2001) 'How the weak win wars: A theory of Asymmetric Conflict' *International Security* 26:1, 93 – 128
[115] Stedman, S.J. (1997) 'Spoiler problems in peace processes' *International Security,* 22, 5-53, p.6

more extreme in its demands,.[116] A similar occurrence can be seen after extremist Hutus rejected the 1994 peace accords in Rwanda and the genocide that followed.[117] Therefore in order to have the likeliest chance of success should be as inclusive as possible.[118]

Yet, the consequence of a peace process itself can paradoxically create splintering of the parties involved.[119] This thesis aligns with White's argument that the peace process in Northern Ireland would not have been able to succeed if Sinn Féin and the Provisional IRA had not been involved in the negotiations in the first place, but acknowledges that the dissident republican movement at the time of negotiations could not be considered an important enough issue and thus understandably was not included and Sinn Féin's decision to enter into negotiations was cause for splintering in the movement.[120]

There are at least two relevant schools of thought behind understanding why the Northern Irish peace process happened and several debates about how the peace processes played out. In terms of understanding why the peace process started, it is important to consider the stalemate and interplay debate. The idea of stalemate refers to combatants coming to the realisation that they are unable to

[116] Hoddie, M., & Hartzell, C. (2003) Civil war settlements and the implementation of military power-sharing arrangements. *Journal of Peace Research*, 40:3, 303-320.
[117] Stedman (1997) *Op. Cit.* pp.5-15
[118] Irwin,C. (2001) 'How Public Opinion Polls Were Used in the Northern Ireland Peace Process', *Global Review of Ethnopolitics*, 1:1, 62-73; Milton-Edwards, B. (2004) 'Elusive ingredient: Hamas and the peace process, *Journal of Palestine Studies,* 33:4, 39-63
[119] Duyvesteyn, I., & Schuurman, B. (2011) The paradoxes of negotiating with terrorist and insurgent organisations. *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 39:4, 677-692.
[120] White, T.J. (2013) *Introduction,* in White, T.J (Ed.) *Lessons from the Northern Ireland Peace Process,* Wisconsin University Press, pp.3-34

militarily or politically defeat their opponent.[121] This indicates that fighting parties took their places at the table in the understanding that neither a military nor a political solution could ultimately be achieved, and that a stalemate left no other way out than negotiation. However, although stalemate may have played a role, this thesis does not accept stalemate as the only possible explanation.

The interplay argument on the other hand concurs that a stalemate explanation is not a sufficient explanation in the case of Northern Ireland. The IRA was not militarily defeated, and Sinn Féin made several political leaps. Rather, in order to understand why the Northern Irish peace process occurred, at least from a republican perspective, we 'need to adopt ideological, political, structural and experiential dimensions, in addition to military considerations.'[122] Understanding this perception over stalemate and ripeness in engaging with the peace process is important to understand the conflict that exists within republican communities over the utility of armed struggle, and the perception of the Northern Irish peace process as a defeat of the IRA. This is more specifically addressed in the empirical chapters of this thesis.

As to how the peace process occurred, O'Kane argues that one of the crucial elements that permeated during and after the Northern Irish

[121] Zartman, I. W. (2000) Ripeness: The hurting stalemate and beyond. *International conflict resolution after the Cold War*, *2*, 225-250, Brams, S. J., (1990), *Negotiation Games*, Routledge, New York

[122] Tonge, J., Shirlow, P., & McAuley, J. (2011) so why did the guns fall silent? How interplay, not stalemate, explains the Northern Ireland peace process. *Irish Political Studies*, 26:1, 1-18, p.14; Mac Ginty, R. (2010). Hybrid peace: The interaction between top-down and bottom-up peace. *Security dialogue*, 41:4, 391-412.

peace process is the fundamentally different perspective the parties involved had about the root causes of the conflict. Playing the 'blame game' led to a fluctuation in attitudes towards the prospects of peace and these were subsequently heavily influenced by the situation 'on the ground.' Accordingly, the peace process remained fragile and at risk of failure throughout.[123] Sinn Féin remained especially demanding using the threat of IRA violence. As Tony Blair said of those less extreme negotiating partners like the SDLP and the PUP, 'you guys, your problem is you don't have any guns'.[124] Hauswedell and Brown argue that 'the issue of paramilitary arms [carries] a symbolic value and weight that [goes] far beyond its military potential, serving as the political foundation upon which both conflict parties [anchor] their positions'.[125]

This is more or less denied on the other hand by those that argue all parties involved seemed to have a certain level of understanding of the balance that was needed; exerting pressure to perceive one's own objective, whilst not tipping the balance too far that your collaboration partner becomes so disenchanted and distrusting it leaves the negotiating table. Dixon argues that both the British government and the Republican and Loyalist parties on the ground, albeit for their own

[123] O'Kane, E. (2013) The Perpetual Peace Process? Examining Northern Ireland's Never-ending, but Fundamentally Altering Peace Process, *Irish Political Studies*, 28:4, 515-535, p.516
[124] Londonderry Sentinel (2014) 'Yeah, you guys, your problem is you've no guns: Blair told SDLP', https://www.londonderrysentinel.co.uk/news/yeah-you-guys-your-problem-is-you-ve-no-guns-blair-told-sdlp-1-6121384 (Accessed 26/07/2018)
[125] Hausweddel & Brown (2005) Burying the hatchet: the decommissioning of paramilitary arms in Northern Ireland, *Bonn International Centre for Conversion, Brief 22*

reasons, were rooting for a solution.[126] This, in the case of Sinn Féin and the IRA, leads back to the possibility for dissident republicanism. It was important to make enough concessions to continue negotiations, but not so many that the movement would breach.

In general, scholars identify different stages of peace processes and argue that each stage comes with its own risks and potential for success and failure. O'Kane identifies five stages in the Northern Irish case: 1990-1994, embarking; 1994-1998, negotiating; 1998-2003, attempting to embed the agreement; 2003-2007 reconfiguring the agreement; 2007 onwards, achievement.[127] Bew, Frampton and Gurruchaga identify three, broadly along the following timeline and associated issues; 1998-2005; No guns, no government; IRA decommissioning, 2005-2007; Patten is not enough; reassessing security sector reform, 2007-present; Two steps forward, one step back.[128]

Despite a relevant identification of these, arguably marking 2007 onwards as achievement aligns with the general belief that Northern Ireland is a solved case. This however, is overly optimistic and a renewed appreciation for on-going hurdles in the peace process would have contributed to both approaches. This is because highly contentious issues do not disappear or become easier to solve in the current political institutions in Northern Ireland due to its legal obligation to seek compromise from both sides of the divide.

[126] See Dixon, P. (2012) 'In defence of politics: interpreting the peace process and the future of Northern Ireland, *Political Quarterly,* 83:2, 265-276
[127] O'Kane (2013) *Op. Cit.* pp.518-530
[128] Bew et al. (2011) *Op.Cit.*

However, the more that politicians from leading parties predicate their participation in government on contentious political issues to the detriment of bread and butter ones, the more they will tend to alienate themselves from the general population.[129] As soon as the general population becomes unengaged in the peace process or the political status quo, it will either actively or passively allow change, which offers an opportunity for dissident actors to seize their opportunity, which could severely harm the current political processes in Northern Ireland.[130] This thesis argues that it is beneficial for the political progress of Northern Ireland to consider issues of political competition. The current power-sharing institutions, although crucial in obtaining peace, have the possibility to create problems in the future. This thesis presents one such possible problem: Sinn Féin's ability to stifle political competition by contributing to the criminalisation and negative social identity of many forms of dissent.

Another debate is between those scholars that argue the Northern Irish peace agreement is consociational,[131] and those that argue, although for differing reasons, it is an integrated process.[132] Consociationalism

[129] Skarlato, O., Fissuh, E., Byrne, S., Karari, P. & Ahmed, K. (2013) *Peacebuilding, community development and reconciliation in Northern Ireland,* in White, T.J. (Ed.) *Lessons from the Northern Ireland Peace Process,* Wisconsin University Press, pp.198-226
[130] Ibid.
[131] Lijphart, A. (1981) Consociational Theory: prospects and problem. A reply. *Comparative Politics,* 13:3, 355-360; McGarry, J. & O'Leary, B. (2006) 'Consociational Theory, Northern Ireland's Conflict, and its Agreement 2. What Critics of Consociation Can Learn from Northern Ireland' *Government & Opposition,* 41:2, 249-277; O'Leary, B., & McGarry, J. (2016). *The politics of antagonism: understanding Northern Ireland.* Bloomsbury Publishing, London
[132] Bew, J. & Frampton, M. (2012) 'Debating the stalemate: a response to Dr Dixon', *Political Quarterly,* 83:2, 277-282; Dixon (2012) *Op.Cit*

dictates that in highly divided societies the only possibility to halt and prevent violence is by essentially separating the conflicting communities entirely. This means separated education, health care, community centres and a government that is set-up entirely based on power-sharing. Those arguing against consociationalism argue that the opposite is necessary to prevent conflict in the future; actors should integrate education, society and every-day life to the extent that the conflicting identities or ethnicities opt for a shared future.[133]

Northern Ireland since the peace process displays signs of both. On the national level, education and political power are segregated, and power-sharing measures are in place. On the local level however, community projects are encouraged to integrate the communities. Although consociationalism is in the short to medium term a lot more stable and unlikely to allow violence, it may in the long term alienate societies. Integration on the other hand is difficult to enforce in the short and medium term, as it can led to friction, but if done successfully can provide a resolution to the disputing ethnic group and lead to long-lasting peace.

The Belfast Agreement or Good Friday Agreement as such evolved to be highly ambiguous, yet subtle, something that became most clear during implementation. Although the content of the Agreement was widely available, the interpretation differed between the different actors involved and actors interpreted the outcome according to what was beneficial for their grassroots. This was a necessary precursor to

[133] Ibid.

reach an agreement in the first place, but within the current political climate in Northern Ireland, the issues raised in this section create highly problematic circumstances. The literature although agreeing on the presence of ambiguity, differs between whether this was a deliberate move or an unwarranted side effect. Nonetheless, O'Kane argues that ambiguity was a necessary precondition to get the agreement accepted in the first place. In the period after the signing of the agreement, both sides claimed victory.[134]

Despite the debates discussed above, interpreting and accepting the 'stalemate' position, rather than assuming there was a clear win-loss situation, might be the most profitable and beneficial stance on the subject. As Frampton acknowledges, it is this ambiguity that allows for much of the controllable level of violence, as it does to the continuation of it.[135] Peace processes are about selling it to the grassroots, and making it possible to all parties to sell it to their communities. It is thus those who feel like they were not addressed fully by the positive influence of the peace process that will continue to attack it.

The literature also sought to make sense of the transitional process and the capacity of the IRA and Sinn Féin. Richards argued that the decision to move towards disarmament and decommissioning was much more the result of the changed international strategic context after 9/11 than it was an internal strategic dedication to peaceful aims.[136] Yet, there is an intrinsic need to disarm in order to achieve and maintain peace and

[134] O'Kane (2013) *Op. Cit.* p.525
[135] Frampton (2010) *Op. Cit.*
[136] Richards, A. (2001) Terrorist groups and political fronts: the IRA, sinn Féin, the peace process and democracy. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 13:4, 72-89.

commit actors to political means only. An agreed stake in the political process is a means to do this. However, this is not without caveats as the political stalemate and the entrenchment of Northern Ireland as a result of consociationalism suggests.

2.5) Conclusion

To conclude, this thesis speaks directly to the field of terrorism and political violence, as well as dissident republicanism in several ways. It also contributes to wider debate on peace and politics in Northern Ireland. Although there have been some indications towards this thesis' emphasis on identity, this is discussed in more depth in the next chapter.

The contribution this thesis seeks to make to the existing literature on terrorism and political violence is predominantly three-fold. First, this thesis contributes by adding primary empirical data to a field that remains, despite recent improvement, predominantly based on secondary material. Second, this thesis revisits an 'old' case when the majority of the field has moved towards studying issues related to Islamic terrorism. Doing this contributes to the literature by putting dissident republicanism in dialogue with the modern developments in terrorism studies. Third, and finally, this thesis expands on the conceptualisation and theorisation of identity as an important element of understanding terrorism and extremism.

Related to the dissident republican literature, this thesis contributes to the literature on dissident republicanism by placing dissident groups

in direct relation to the mainstream out-group. The consequences of doing this have not been significantly explored in the literature. Furthermore, and unlike, too much of the literature on the armed struggle and violent dissident republicanism, this thesis is neither as historical nor as narrow or hermetic in its focus. This thesis argues that there are two core issues in the literature that need to be addressed. First, as stated previously, although some literature displays elements of both, the majority of the existing literature focuses on violent dissident republicanism, with far less emphasis on the political aspects of dissident Irish republicanism.[137]

The little literature that does explore the ideology and identity of dissident Irish republicanism largely does so from a historiographical perspective and does not engage with the contemporary focus that is part of the literature on violent dissident republican activity. Second, the literature on dissident republicanism does not properly address the relationship between the mainstream and dissident republican movement and the consequences of this relationship. Dissident republicanism is too heavily explored as an isolated phenomenon. Therefore, this thesis argues that the literature does not so much suffer from significant gaps or irreconcilable debates, but rather from an inherent disconnect between its different elements.

Finally, and more contextually, this thesis contributes to the wider literature on Northern Irish peace, the issue of spoiler groups and the current consociational agreement in Northern Ireland. The

[137] Whiting, S. A. (2015) *Spoiling the peace?: The threat of dissident republicans to peace in Northern Ireland*, Oxford University Press, Oxford

relationship between the in-group and out-group, on which this thesis focuses, raises important issues regarding the peace process and current political landscape in Northern Ireland. Although the current situation in Northern Ireland has improved significantly compared to the pre-GFA timeframe, there is still a continuous and constantly changing threat to political stability as a result of the peace process and the consociational arrangements.

The Northern Irish peace process has created a devolved political system but has not solved the issue of a divided society and internal conflict is still present. Within this system dissident republicans have both become a spoiler intent on forcing a return to violence by continuing to pursue violence or the threat thereof, as well as a representation of Republican dissatisfaction. Although dissident republicans may not so far have been able to seriously threaten the durability of the peace process, their constant threat of violence has prevented normalisation of social and political life in Northern Ireland. The notion of dissident aims is divided in the literature between those that argue it is merely historic determinism and romanticism towards violence and the idea that it is a product of contemporary developments.

3) Social Identity and Intergroup Competition: a Theoretical framework

One could find dozens of [...] examples to show how complex is the mechanism of identity: a complexity sometimes benign, but sometimes tragic

Amin Maalouf[138]

3.1) Introduction

This chapter sets out the theoretical approach taken in this research. It discusses the core principles of the theory, as well as the more recent ways in which it has been applied to academic discourse. Specifically, it explores the way in which the social identity approach can be used to provide insight into the existence of continued dissident republican conflict in Northern Ireland. Although a variety of explanations can aid understanding of post-conflict violence, this research adopts a framework that focuses on interpreting the role of identity. It does so because it allows for a layered and in-depth understanding of different groups identifying under a similar banner, in this thesis Irish republicanism, despite maintaining different connotations as to what that means. This is clearly the case in the varieties of modern Irish Republicanism. It also seeks to address, and complement some of the shortcomings of the theory. In sum, this chapter provides a framework through which to understand and interpret the empirical chapters.

[138] Maalouf, A. (2000) *In the name of Identity: Violence and the need to belong,* Penguin Books, New York (Orig. *Identités meurtrières,*1996) p.14

The first section of this chapter sets out the principles of the social identity approach. Although it is a well-established theoretical approach in social psychology, it can be adjusted to contribute to other fields of study, including politics and conflict. Because of its ability to explore group processes in a variety of ways, it is particularly useful in understanding the dynamics of in-group and out-group relations across different disciplines. It focuses on the three core theoretical assumptions: (i) individuals strive to achieve or maintain positive social identity; (ii) a positive social identity is based to a large extent on favourable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant out-groups; and, (iii), when social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive either to leave their existing group and join some more positively distinct group and/or to make their existing group more positively distinct.[139] This section is divided to cover both parts of the theoretical approach: social identity theory in itself, and its supplementary self-categorisation theory. These are commonly used in unison and together form the social identity approach adopted in this thesis.

Second, this chapter explores the role of identity as a driver for conflict. It focuses primarily on intergroup competition and identity salience, and the way in which both are linked to non-violent and violent conflict. In other words, it seeks to provide a theoretical basis in which different forms of threat, in both physical and non-physical forms, can cause

[139] Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979) An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *The social psychology of intergroup relations*, 33:47, 74; Tajfel, H. (1982) Social psychology of intergroup relations. *Annual review of psychology*, 33:1, 1-39; Tajfel, H. (1974) Social identity and intergroup behavior. *Social Sciences Information,* 13*,* 65-93

conflict situations. Some level of non-violent intergroup conflict is customary in most social situations, and it is difficult to establish the point at which conflicting identities become so salient that they are manifested through physical violence. Nevertheless, social identity is a useful tool to understand perpetuation of violence. This thesis argues that understanding the role of intergroup competition can serve as a tool to distinguish and recognise the way in which identity can serve as a justification mechanism on which groups seek to legitimize their actions.

Third, this chapter examines the role of identity in Northern Ireland and Irish Republicanism. This section is divided in two, the first looking at the role of identity in post Good Friday Agreement (GFA) Northern Ireland in general, and the second specifically at the fragmentation of Republican identity as the basis of the different groups that this research focuses on. It argues that identity competition is partially entrenched in Northern Ireland in part as a result of the consociational nature of the power-sharing institutions as discussed in chapter two.

This section serves primarily to explore some of the roots of modern Republican identity beyond the historical observations made in the introduction of this thesis. It conceptually unpacks perceptions of Irish Republican identity (and, to a lesser extent of identity in Northern Ireland as a whole), in order to establish the way in which different groups perceive their own identity. This section also highlights why Northern Ireland and dissident republicanism is a suitable case to test the theory in more depth in the empirical chapters. It provides the theoretical and conceptual basis upon which the subsequent empirical

chapters are built. The key notions of Republican identity that are established here serve as a guide for understanding dissident identity in the subsequent chapters of this research.

Finally, this chapter provides the framework for the application of the theory throughout the thesis. This framework is closely aligned with the methodological choices and thematic approach laid out in chapter four. This framework is derived from the theoretical principles and constructed in such a way that it can be applied to this case study. It discusses the approach deducted and conceptualised from the theoretical principles. This focuses primarily on the type and direction of relationships that exist between the individual, the in-group and the out-group. Next, it addresses the process behind group relations. It establishes three broad factors of identity proximity, in other words the closeness and function of relationships that construct in-group/out-group relations. These three factors are logistical, social and ideological proximity. This approach is then applied and tested throughout the empirical chapters.

3.2) the Social Identity Approach

Social identity, or the social identity approach, shares similarities with other theories such as identity theory but, as is discussed later, provides a clearer analysis of group structures as opposed to individualistic interpretations of self and identity. It focuses in more depth on the role of groups and social relations. The approach can offer important insights for political scientists as it interprets the role of shared identity and social constructions in understanding political

behaviour. According to Huddy, social identity is suitable to political research since its level of analysis is primarily based on groups and group structures.[140]

This thesis uses the approach to explain the context of different groups' identification and how the process of striving for a positive social identity in the context of a transitional/post-conflict society can lead to sustained and further intergroup conflict. It is taken into the realm of political studies and political psychology, as Beaudette and Kirkpatrick assess, in considering political behaviour, radical political candidates and political competition.[141] Accordingly, it allows for the interpretation of how groups operate, and how social identity can be a source of conflict across communities and generates insights into the causes and perpetuation of political violence and intergroup conflict. It is a promising framework to analyse issues of radical or dissenting politics with coinciding violent and non-violent conflict. This section of the chapter establishes the core theoretical premises on which the research is constructed and how it is applied to the specific case study.

The approach comprises of two sub-theories that complement one another: social identity theory and self-categorisation theory. The latter is predominantly developed in light of criticism that social identity theory by itself is unable to explain the process of self-categorisation. Self-categorisation refers to the process behind an

[140] Huddy, L (2001) 'From social to political identity: a critical examination of social identity theory', *Political Psychology,* 22:1, 127-156
[141] Beaudette, D. M., & Kirkpatrick, A. B. (2017) Zero-sum of all fears: intergroup threat, contact, and voting behavior in Northern Ireland, *European Political Science Review*, 9:1, 51-71.

individual's decision to identify as a member of a particular in-group.[142] Therefore, both sub-theories are discussed in the next sections. Together, these two theories make up what is often referred to as the social identity approach. Social identity theory in this thesis however, refers to both parts of the approach combined.

Social identity theory is a socio-psychological theory seeking to establish an integrative theory of intergroup conflict by understanding the construction of in- and out-groups in the social world. Social identity, first of all, refers, according to Hogg et al., to the idea of a 'social category', be it nationality, political affiliation, ethnicity or religion for example, to which one considers oneself a member.[143] They state further that 'people have a repertoire of such discrete category memberships that vary in relative overall importance in the self-concept'.[144] This means that people will identify with particular groups in differing levels of importance. The self-concept is the way in which each person seeks 'to achieve self-definition and self-interpretation (i.e., identity) in three fundamental ways: (a) in terms of their unique traits, (b) in terms of dyadic relationships, and (c) in terms of group membership'.[145] The importance of a particular category can vary in its salience.

[142]Hornsey, M. J. (2008) 'Social identity theory and self- categorization theory: A historical review', *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 2:1, 204-222, p.204
[143] Hogg, M.A., Terry, D.J. & White, K.M. (1995) 'A tale of two theories: a critical comparison of identity theory with social identity theory', *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 58:4, 255-269, p.259
[144] Ibid. P.259
[145] Sedikides, C., & Brewer, M. B. (Eds.) (2015) *Individual self, relational self, collective self.* Psychology Press, New York, p.1

Identity salience refers to the moment where a particular part of individual social identity becomes increasingly noticeable. According to Terry et al, this is to be understood in a way that the social identity of a person differs and its core constructs vary in relative importance in response to 'immediate situational cues'.[146] In other words, part of one's identity can become more important if the situation evokes it. Identity is a continuously changing process and consists of many different aspects, with each taking precedence according to the context and situation. According to Northrup, loss, or the threat of loss, of the perceived or actual status of one's identity, is the primary factor that will bring out and strengthen the belonging part of one's social identity.[147] When threats or insults to a particular in-group become sufficiently significant, they have the potential to cause non-violent or violent conflict and intergroup competition.

Tajfel and Turner established the core principles of social identity theory with a set of three core assumptions. First, individuals strive to maintain or enhance their self-esteem, and accordingly they strive for a positive self- concept. They seek to identify themselves and those with whom they associate in a positive perspective. Second, social groups or categories, and subsequent membership of them, are associated with positive or negative power value connotations.[148]

[146] Terry, D.J., Hogg, M.A. & White, K.M. (1999) 'The theory of planned behavior: self-identity, social identity and group norms', *British Journal of Social Psychology,* 38, 225-244, p.229

[147] Northrup, T.A. (1989) 'The dynamic of identity in personal and social conflict' in Kriesberg, L., Northrup, T.A. & Thorson, S.J. (Eds.) *Intractable conflicts and their transformation,* Syracuse University Press, Syracuse (NY), pp. 55-82, p.66

[148] See: Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. C. (1979) An integrative theory of intergroup conflict. *The social psychology of intergroup relations*, *33*(47), 74. Tajfel, H. (1982) Social psychology of

Hence, social identity may be positive or negative according to the evaluation of those groups that contribute to an individual's social identity. This evaluation tends to be based upon social consensus, either within or across groups. Therefore, and thirdly, the evaluation of one's own group is determined with reference to specific other groups through social comparisons in terms of value-laden attributes and characteristics. This evaluation of both the own, and the other groups, creates a distinctive situation of in-group and out-group differentiation.[149]

This differentiation can take either positive or negative forms by which the in-group is regarded. Positively perceived comparisons between in-group and out-group produce high prestige; negatively perceived comparisons between in-group and out-group result in low prestige. Given the aim to establish a positive social identity, in-groups, and their individual members, seek to maintain or create a positive comparison towards relevant out-groups. Those out-groups however are seeking to establish the reverse. This creates a mechanism whereby groups will seek to make themselves look better, the other look worse, or both simultaneously. It is through this mechanism that intergroup competition is created and maintained.[150]

From these assumptions, Tajfel and Turner derived the following related theoretical principles: First, individuals strive to achieve or maintain positive social identity. They seek a positive self-concept

intergroup relations. *Annual review of psychology*, *33*(1), 1-39. Tajfel, H. (1974) *Social identity and intergroup behavior. Social Sciences Information,* 13, 65-93

[149] Tajfel and Turner (1982) *Op. Cit.* pp.5-9

[150] Ibid.

through which they choose to associate and identify, but importantly also by disassociating from those they perceive to have a negative identity. Second, a positive social identity is based largely on favourable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant out-groups: the in-group must be perceived as positively differentiated or distinct from the relevant out-groups. Third, when social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive to leave their existing group and join some more positively distinct group and/or to make their existing group more positively distinct. In other words, they seek to alter the negative perception of the group towards a more positive one. The basic hypothesis, then, is that pressures to evaluate one's own group positively through in-group/out-group comparisons lead social groups to attempt to differentiate themselves from each other.[151] This internal and external pressure to a positive social identity concept can lead to intergroup competition and in ultimate cases be a cause of conflict.

Social identity theory, therefore, analyses behaviour from the group level, and is not constrained by the size of the group or its dispersion.[152] Tajfel and Turner tested this primarily in the so-called minimal group paradigm, or minimal group testing. This referred to the socio-psychological principles being tested on groups that did not have socio-historical context but were created for the purpose of experimenting. This ruled out any existing prejudices or context that could determine intergroup prejudice. The classification of in-group and out-group were made on general, non-meaningful boundaries, leading to a clear show of in-group/out-group preference being induced in subsequent

[151] Ibid.
[152] Hogg et al. (1995) *Op. Cit* p.262

behaviour in the experimental setting.[153] This provides evidence for the theoretical principles in a controlled setting, but it also raises the question of whether, and if so how, it translates to different cases where prior engagement and socio-historical context is present.

In the Republican movement, even small groups will actively seek to portray themselves in a positive light through a variety of pre-existing values and prejudices, just as much as larger groups would. Another crucial element is the ability for identity construction to be a continuous process of defining and re-defining, which 'in turn has the potential to create identity conflicts, especially in conditions of social transformation'.[154] This is particularly relevant then in a context of social transformation like a society in the midst of a peace process such as Northern Ireland.

Furthermore, in terms of social transformation, members of a particular in-group may lose their positive connotations towards their own group and thus will either seek to change it, or individuals will leave the group to join one that is more in line with the self-concept. This process is especially visible in the breach in Republican identity that is prominent in the early years of the peace process, with high profile members of certain Republican groups switching allegiances, or simply leaving the group altogether. Decisions with far-reaching consequences as to the perception of a group's identity can serve as the colloquial 'step too far' leading to people no longer being satisfied with

[153] Diehl, M. (1990) 'The minimal group paradigm: Theoretical explanations and empirical findings', *European review of social psychology*, 1:1, 263-292.
[154] Jayasuriya, L. (2008) 'Constructions of culture and identity in contemporary social theorising', *International Journal of Culture and Mental Health*, 1:1, 30-43.

their group identity and thus seeking elsewhere for a positive social identity.

There are at least three classes of variables that should influence intergroup differentiation in concrete social situations, This refers primarily to day-to-day social interaction and interpersonal communication as well as political allegiances.[155] First, individuals should have internalised their group membership as an aspect of their self-concept; they must feel inherently part of the relevant in-group and perceive it as an important enough aspect of their identity. For example, in the case of Republican communities this means a distinctive expression of their nationalism/Republicanism as part of their personal identities. It does not always suffice that others define them as a group, although consensual definitions by others can become, in the long run, one of the powerful causal factors for a group's self-definition.[156] In other words, even though a group of individuals may not perceive themselves to be a collective, consistent referral by the out-group to their collective traits, may lead to them becoming increasingly unified or at least be perceived as such.

In the case of dissident republican groups for example, this can be found around the interpretation of the 'Dissident' label. Most groups, which have been attributed the dissident label, would argue they are actually not dissenting at all, and the label has been imposed on them from the mainstream Republican out-group or from the media; nor

[155] Stryker, S. & Burke, P.J. (2000) 'The past, present, and future of an identity theory, *Social Psychology Quarterly- Special Millennium Issue on the State of Sociological Social Psychology* 63:4, 284-297
[156] Tajfel & Turner (1979) *op. cit.* pp. 36-40

would they necessarily agree on being similar to others given the same banner. Nonetheless, and as we shall see, whereas some groups have sought to disassociate themselves completely from the term dissident, others have intended to provide a more positive association to the term itself. In other words, they have begrudgingly accepted the imposed identification and have sought to provide it with a positive connotation in order to re-assert the positive group identification.[157]

This links to the theoretical assumption that groups will seek to identify themselves positively even if an attribute is imposed from the outside. This is discussed in more depth in chapters five and six of this thesis. In politically divided societies, like Northern Ireland past and present, and in situations where the idea might exist that identities are threatened by the existence of the 'other', expression of identity is expected to be stronger. In the case of dissident republican groups, a strong sense of identity is intrinsically connected to a belief that it is essential and legitimate to continue the armed struggle against the occupation forces. It is within this context that radicalisation, as an extreme strengthening of one's views towards their expression of identity to justify and legitimise the use of violence, is likely to occur.

The second variable of intergroup competition is that the social situation must allow for the comparison between groups. There must be a valid basis for competition or at least the perception that such a basis exists. This means that not all groups will feel the need to compare

[157] See for example: The Irish Times (2016) 'The 'true' Republicans: 'Nothing since 1919 is legitimate" by Peter Murtagh, 26 March 2016, via http://www.Irishtimes.com/news/ireland/Irish-news/the-true-Republicans-nothing-since-1919-is-legitimate-1.2587308 (retrieved 21-04-2016)

with one another. The nature for that basis of comparison and competition varies from group to group. Skin colour, for instance, is a more salient attribute in a diverse country like the United States than in a more physically homogenous place like Hong Kong.[158] Language seems to be an especially salient dimension of social identity in bilingual places such as French Canada and Belgium compared to a more linguistically uniform country like Denmark or Norway.[159]

Apart from the (rarely spoken) Irish and Ulster-Scot language divide, language and especially skin colour are not especially significant in day-to-day identity distinctions in Northern Ireland. However, language, especially Irish, has recently become a politicised and thus more expressed issue. This reflects the changing nature of identity and social identity drivers, and how certain issues may increase or decrease in salience depending on time and place. The attributes that are salient in the wider in- and out- group divide of Northern Ireland as a whole are largely summarised under the banners of religion (Catholic/Protestant) and politics (Republican-Nationalist/Loyalist-Unionist). Yet, in the in/out-group division within Irish Republicanism, salience cannot only be found among those lines, as both dissident and mainstream republicans consider themselves inherently part of the same umbrella of Republicanism. The perceived grounds for intergroup conflict thus need to be found in other factors.

[158] Morland, J. K. (1969) 'Race awareness among American and Hong Kong chinese children' *American Journal of Sociology*, 75:3, 360-374.
[159] See Giles, H., & Powesland, P. (1997) 'Accommodation theory', In Coupland, N. & Jaworski, A. (Eds.) *Sociolinguistics: a reader and coursebook*, Palgrave Macmillan, London, pp. 232-239

As Connolly establishes:

> An identity is established in relation to a series of differences that have become socially recognised. These differences are essential to its being. Identity requires difference in order to be, and converts differences into otherness in order to secure its own self-certainty.[160]

Accordingly, the salience of contentious issues of group identity may differ from one case to the next. There also might be dissimilarity as to what issues or parts of identity groups find important. The remits of building a positive or negative group identity stretches beyond solely the direct interaction or the political scene. Research has shown that individuals also 'maintain and strengthen their social identities through what they see, read, and hear in the media'.[161] This is a relevant issue as it alludes to the way in which outside actors can shape in-group identity from a non-competitive viewpoint. In other words, and referring back to perceived or actual threats, identity may be shaped by outside actors without inherently negative intentions, whilst the in-group may perceive it as such.

[160] Connolly, W. E. (2002) *Identity, difference: democratic negotiations of political paradox*. U of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, p.64

[161] Blumler, J. G. (1985) 'The social character of media gratifications,' In K. E. Rosengren, L. A. Wenner, & P. Palmgreen (Eds.), *Media gratifications research,* Sage, Beverly Hills, (CA), pp. 41-60, p.50; Valkenburg, P. M., Peter, J., & Walther, J. B. (2016) Media effects: Theory and research. *Annual review of psychology*, *67*, 315-338, p.332 & Lin, M. C., Haridakis, P. M., & Hanson, G. (2016) The Role of Political Identity and Media Selection on Perceptions of Hostile Media Bias During the 2012 Presidential Campaign. *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 60:3, 425-447, pp.426-429

Third, in-groups do not compare themselves with every available out-group: the out-group must be perceived as relevant. Similarly, proximity and situational salience are among the variables that determine out-group incompatibility, and pressures toward in-group distinctiveness should increase as a function of this comparability. It is important to state at this point that in many social situations, comparability reaches a much wider range than a simply conceived 'similarity' between the groups. By establishing clear boundaries of one's own identity 'in-group', it becomes differentiated from the selected out-groups. This research takes the starting point of dissident republicans as the in-group. It is important to evaluate their relationship to a significant out-group. Because of the issue of relevance and salience in the selection of out-groups, not all actors in Northern Ireland are relevant. Dissident republican groups therefore need to be assessed in relation to mainstream Irish Republicanism, as characterised by Sinn Féin.

The aim of differentiation is to maintain or achieve superiority over an out-group. 'Thus the real conflicts of group interests not only create antagonistic intergroup relations but also heighten identification with, and positive attachment to, the in-group'.[162] Tajfel's and Turner's theory suggests that there is a tendency to structure social environments in terms of groupings of persons, or social categories, thus simplifying the world. These categories are to some extent based

[162] Tajfel & Turner (1979) *op. cit.* Pp. 36-40 & Turner, J. C., Brown, R. J., & Tajfel, H. (1979). Social comparison and group interest in ingroup favouritism. *European journal of social psychology*, 9:2, 187-204.

on personal experiences but are also largely determined by our society.[163]

However, in this regard it is important to consider that collective and social identities are neither natural nor static. As was mentioned previously, identity is fluid and liable to change. Within certain constraints, they are socially constructed, politically negotiated, and dynamic. Groups share a

> collective name, tend to stress common descent, and rely frequently on myths of common origin. They share collective historical memories, elements of common culture, association with a homeland, and a sense of solidarity.[164]

As such, the formation of social identity is a dynamic and fluid 'cultural product of political processes'.[165] Whereas anthropologists tend to focus on the cultural dimension and political scientists on the political, a combined focus on the interactions between the two dimensions is essential to achieve a more comprehensive and nuanced analysis of the phenomenon of collective and social identity. When cultural difference is assigned social relevance, the relationship distinction is politicised.[166] Thus, identities are neither ascribed nor achieved: they

[163] Hogg, M. A., & Turner, J. C. (1987). Intergroup behaviour, self- stereotyping and the salience of social categories. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 26:4, 325-340.
[164] Aronoff, M. J. (2011) 'The politics of collective identity: contested Israeli nationalisms', in Rosenfeld, J. (ed.) *Terrorism, identity and legitimacy: the four waves theory and political violence,* Routledge, Abingdon, pp.168-189, p.169
[165] Ibid. p.169
[166] Ibid. p.169

are both. They are wedged between 'situational selection and imperatives imposed from without'.[167] Social identity becomes most important – and therefore salient - when forces of domination and/or assimilation threaten it. Consequently, when social identity and group identification become increasingly salient, behaviour in support of the group may also become more extreme.[168]

A final element of social identity that needs to be discussed briefly is the idea of self-categorisation: how and why individuals identify with a certain group and thus internalise it as part of their social identity. Although this thesis seeks to apply the core principles in a broader political field rather than offer individual psychological findings, it remains important to at least briefly highlight this issue. Its development as part of the social identity approach, complementing social identity theory as outlined above, was in reaction particularly to the criticism that social identity theory was unable to explain why people wanted to belong to a certain group.[169]

As outlined above, the minimal group paradigm and the classifying of individuals into groups on randomly designed factors, does not explain enough about the practical self-categorisation process. It displays what happens when people are randomly divided into groups, and made to portray some element of competition, but this limits the understanding

[167] Eriksen, T. H. (2002) *Ethnicity and nationalism: Anthropological perspectives*. Pluto Press, London, p.57
[168] Swann, W.B., Gomez, A, Dovidio, J.F., Hart, S & Jetten, J. (2010) 'Dying and Killing for One's Group: Identity Fusion Moderates Responses to Intergroup Versions of the Trolley Problem', *Psychological Science,* 21:8, 1176-1183, pp.1176-1177
[169] Turner, J. C., Hogg, M. A., Oakes, P. J., Reicher, S. D., & Wetherell, M. S. (1987) *rediscovering the social group: A self-categorization theory*. Basil Blackwell, Oxford

of why individuals feel attracted, or resentful, towards groups. Although it mentions the possible importance of socio-historical considerations, and the motivation behind intergroup competition, it does not reveal much about the cognitive process behind intergroup conflict.

Social categorisation, or self-categorisation, refers to categorising oneself into the preferred chosen in-group, whilst categorising others, particularly those not favourable, into unfavourable or undesirable competitive out-groups.[170] This is usually done on the basis of positive or negative stereotyping. In particular, it refers to the stages before the social identity, or the referral of oneself in a group context, has been established. In this light, it contributes to the theory of social identity by adding the individual element to group level analysis.[171]

Self-categorisation is done on the basis of depersonalisation, or stereotyping. It is when the individual starts to incorporate the beliefs, values and norms of the prototypical member of the favourable in-group, or at least aims to do so. When this is combined with an issue of salience, it morphs the identity of the individual, into the social identity of the group.[172] For example, when individuals were sought to identify socially in mixed-sex groups versus same-sex groups, the commonality of gender as a shared factor was more prominent in the mixed group, as the issue of gender was not salient when the other gender was not

[170] Hogg, M. A., & Terry, D. I. (2000) Social identity and self-categorization processes in organizational contexts. *Academy of management review*, 25:1, 121-140.
[171] Turner, J. C., & Reynolds, K. J. (2011) Self-categorization theory. *Handbook of theories in social psychology*, *2*, 399-417.
[172] Ibid.

present.[173] This indicates that self-categorisation is done on the basis of feeling associated to the stereotype and the actual presence of the issue consciously or subconsciously spurring the salience of an issue.

This requires, according to Hornsey and Hogg, two elements: fit and accessibility. Accessibility refers to the general presence of a social group in a particular moment. This explains the difference to an extent between random, in the moment categorisation, for example as mentioned in the gender context above. It may also be accessible because people are motivated to portray that categorisation and internalise it as part of their social identity.[174] Fit refers to 'the extent to which social categories are perceived to reflect social reality; that is, the extent to which they are seen to be diagnostic of real-world differences'.[175] In other words, the extent to which one's personal identity is comparatively and normatively fits the in-group stereotype, and the norms, values and beliefs that they hold.

Thus, the theoretical approach of this thesis examines both the occurrence of intergroup conflict and the construction of in-groups and out-groups. In doing so it analyses different dissident republican groups and how they relate to one another and the mainstream republican out-group. It also looks at the way in which individuals associate to different social groups on issues of identity salience. This

[173] Ibid. pp. 400-405
[174] Hornsey, M. J., & Hogg, M. A. (2000) Assimilation and diversity: An integrative model of subgroup relations. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 4:2, 143-156, pp.151-153
[175] Hornsey (2008) *op. cit.* p.208

is done through the combined social identity approach of social identity theory and the process of self-categorisation

3.3) The Role of Identity in Conflict

According to Kriesberg, any identity-related conflict has four components that may generate social conflict: 'strong group identities, grievances, goals to reduce those grievances by changing other parties, and belief in the possibility of such change'. [176] Although identity is not always the distinct feature of why conflicts might occur, it can often provide a contributory factor, at the very least, to explain both causes and persistence.[177] According to Allport's early findings, developments of positive in-group attachment occur prior to developing certain attitudes towards out-groups.[178] He furthermore suggests that positive in-group preferentiality does not equate without exception to a negative feeling towards out-groups.[179] As Brewer depicts this dynamic, 'In-group love can be compatible with a range of attitudes toward corresponding out-groups, including mild positivity, indifference, disdain, or hatred'.[180]

This section focuses on the role of identity as a factor driving conflict. It first explores how identity can lead to heightened non-violent tension,

[176]Kriesberg, L. (2007). *Constructive conflicts: From escalation to resolution*. Rowman & Littlefield, Lanham, MD; as referenced in Korostelina, K. (2007). *Social identity and conflict: Structures, dynamics, and implications*. Springer, New York, p.146
[177] Brewer, M.B. (1999) The psychology of prejudice: ingroup love or out-group hate? *Journal of Social Issues,* 55:3, 429-444, p.429
[178] Allport, G. (1954) *The nature of prejudice*. New York: Addison–Wesley
[179] Ibid.
[180] Brewer, M.B. (1999) *op. cit.* p.430

focussing in part on identity salience (where positive or negative pressure heightens personal identification with a particular identity). Second, it uses social identity and intergroup competition to establish how identity is a driver of violent conflict.

This theoretical framework helps understand why groups maintain violence and how they use their identification as a means of providing internal legitimacy for the conduct and targeting of violent actions. This section seeks to put the literature on identity and conflict in the political tradition in direct conversation with the social psychology literature on social identity. Identity is a key element of, for example, Wendt's theory of constructivism.[181] Yet, this interpretation of identity in political studies is rather static. Social identity is a more responsive perception of identity that allows for the interpretation of rapid change and apparent inconsistencies. Thus, this section particularly seeks to bring the theory further into the political realm.

3.3.1) Identity and non-violent conflict

Social identity can become conflicted through both positive and negative identity drivers and intergroup power connotations. Positive perceptions of the in-group and negative perceptions of the out-group are not necessarily reciprocally related.[182] Brewer argues that in reality

[181] Wendt, A. (1999) *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge University Press. Wendt, A. (1992) Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics. *International organization*, 46:2, 391-425.
[182] Brewer, M.B. (1999) *Op. Cit.* p.430

> In-group identification is independent of negative attitudes toward out-groups and that much in-group bias and intergroup discrimination is motivated by preferential treatment of in-group members rather than direct hostility toward out-group members.[183]

This poses the idea that positive feelings towards the in-group are not always synonymous with negative feelings towards the related out-group. Self-categorisation can exist solely on the basis of in-group love, with no directly related out-group hate to go with it.

Although the principles of social identity apply to most situations in terms of in- and out- group behaviour in its various forms, in situations where identities are conflicted, a positive identity becomes to some extent a zero-sum game. One identity must always establish itself over the other, creating a competitive base. Korostelina therefore reiterates the idea of intergroup identity insults: 'low-intensity aggressive actions that are perceived by the insulted side as intentional and illegitimate'.[184] An identification or self-categorisation in relation to the in-group can be achieved both through the before-mentioned in-group love *or* out-group hate.

Expression of identity with the intention to display power towards the out-group is a fact long established in Northern Ireland. In the 1960s, for example, as Barritt and Carter note, 'much of the emotion centred

[183] Ibid. P.429
[184] Korostelina, K. (2014) Intergroup identity insult: A social identity theory perspective, '*Identity, an international journal of theory and research'*, 14:3, 214, 229

on matters such as the holding of parades and the display of flags, which a less introspective community would long have recognized to be unimportant and even comic'.[185] Such 'comic' identity issues are rife both in society and politics in Northern Ireland and both communities seem implicitly or explicitly capable of consistently either provoking or insulting the other into a reaction. This establishes a level of 'bullying behaviour', where, because identities are heightened, many expressions of identity will be perceived as hostile to the out-group. This is present across the Protestant-Unionist-Loyalist/Catholic-Republican-Nationalist divide, but, importantly, also within the Republican community itself.

Korostelina establishes that such 'bullying behaviour' has the potential to lead to 'stronger insult-related anger in the context of intergroup relations'.[186] In other words, heightened identity insults have the potential for escalation. Furthermore, she notes that the intergroup conflict can either deteriorate from non-violent insult to violent behaviour or begin with violent actions and become accompanied by non-violent forms of threat.[187] Accordingly, non-violent and violent expressions of identity often occur in parallel. She establishes six forms of insult: identity, projection, divergence, relative, power and legitimacy insults. Although all six variations have different connotations about their form and function, they share the notion of seeking to diminish the legitimacy and self-esteem of the out-group, or,

[185] Barritt, D. P., & Carter, C. F. (1972). *The Northern Ireland problem: a study in group relations* (2nd ed.) Oxford University Press, London as quoted in Cairns, E. (2010) *Intergroup Conflict in Northern Ireland,* in Tajfel, H. (ed.) *Social Identity and Intergroup Conflict,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 277-299, p.277
[186] Korostelina, K. (2014) *Op. Cit.* p.214
[187] Ibid. p.214

by ways of comparison, insult the out-group in an attempt to increase in-group values.[188]

Such provocations are threats to the self and group concepts, regardless of whether the insult is factual or simply perceived to have occurred by its targets. Through misperception, in other words, an insult may be taken as such even when it is not intended to be so by the group delivering it. Accordingly, actions by groups perceived as an out-group are more likely to entice a retaliatory action from the in-group due to its inherent need to oppose and differentiate from those out-groups it perceives relevant. It is in this form of non-violent assaults on one's identity, morals and values that intergroup relations are likely to change. This is due to a perceived threat, in terms of both existential threats, and challenges to identity, between different groups. Accordingly, such non-violent conduct is likely to 'invoke power relations and historical relations between groups'.[189]

Non-violent threats to out-group identity are primarily used as a method of provocation, but can also occur 'accidentally' or at least without the established premeditation or intent to insult the other. According to Doosje and Branscombe, this is most likely to occur when the prior relationship between particular groups may have already been characterised by contention or conflict.[190] It relates back to the idea that insults can be perceived on the receiving end in a way that

[188] Ibid. p.214
[189] Ibid. p.227
[190] Doosje,B., & Branscombe, A.S.R. (1998) 'Guilty by association: when one's group has a negative history' *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology,* 75:4, 872-886

was not intended. Historical notions of identity become inherently related to providing the conflict dimension to identity salience.[191]

3.3.2) Identity and violent conflict

Intergroup conflict is especially likely to occur in a situation where identity competition is a more pronounced aspect of social life, for example where there is social exclusion or discrimination due to one's religious or political convictions, class or ethnicity.[192] Often, and especially in intractable or deep-rooted conflict, identity becomes or has become in the past, an inherent part of the social, political and economic fabric of a divided society. When this type of institutionalisation occurs, pre-existing violence is likely to continue at some level. Korostelina argues therefore that social identity is unlikely to be the direct source of violence, nor a necessary consequence. Rather, social identity helps understand the dynamics and structure of perpetuating conflict.[193]

Accordingly, violence is most likely to occur where there is a widespread and high in-group bias, and a well-established dislike

[191] See; Hogg et al. (1995); Stets, J.E. & Burke, P.J. (2000) 'Identity theory and social identity theory' *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 63:3, 224-237; Insko, C.A., Schopler, J., Kennedy, J.F., Dahl, K.R., Graetz, K.A. & Drigotas, S.M. (1992) 'Individual-group discontinuity from the differing perspectives of Campbell's realistic group conflict theory and Tajfel and Turner's social identity theory' *Social Psychology Quarterly,* 55:3, 272-291

[192] Crocker, C. A., Hampson, F. O., & Aall, P. R. (2005) *Grasping the nettle: Analyzing cases of intractable conflict*. US Institute of Peace Press.

[193] Korostelina, K. (2007) *Op. Cit*. p.147

towards the out-group.[194] It is important to consider this in terms of a continuation of violence and not necessarily as a direct cause. Given the state of Northern Ireland today, and in light of this research, it is important to consider reasons behind continuing violence. Conflict did not end with the GFA, although the level was decreased significantly. Therefore, it can be stated that there is a continuation of violence in Northern Ireland.

According to Northrup, the operationalisation of identity into an escalation of an existing threat of violence can be explained in four related stages: threat, distortion, rigidification and collusion. Stage one, threat, is mostly related to what is discussed in the previous section as expressions of non-violent conflict. It is likely to be continuous in a situation where two (or more) social identities are inherently opposed to each other in terms of historical traditions or territorial aspirations. Thus, the threat can be existential, identity related, or both. This threat is most likely to lead on to escalation if the core constructs of the competing identities are perceived as mutually exclusive and invalidate each other. In other words, violence is more likely to be caused if the identities are part of a zero-sum game scenario, or where one's victory is perceived as an automatic loss for the other.

Stage two, distortion, or aggression, is the response given towards the incoming threat. Often this also takes place both violently and non-violently. Responses to threats can differ. As established in social

[194] Tzeng, O.C.S. & Jackson, J.W. (1994) 'Effects of contact, conflict and social identity on interethnic group hostilities, *International Journal of Intercultural Relations,* 18:2, 259-276, p.271

identity theory, a group may either choose to strengthen the positive self, or seek to decrease the position of the out-group. It occurs when a group reacts to, or counteracts, the real or perceived threat from the other group. Stage three, rigidification, is where interpretations of the world and the differing groups within it becomes more rigid or extreme. Accordingly, it 'is a process of crystallizing and hardening what is construed as self and not-self'.[195] It is in this stage that a strong form of 'othering' will take place. This seeks to increase the distance between the in- and the out-group in order to differentiate between them. Such a process is only deemed to be more rigid in a social reality that allows for such separation, and is less likely to occur where there is a clear focus on integration and cooperation.[196]

The fourth and final stage, collusion, is where the conflict itself takes on such relevance that it leads groups to behave in a more consistent and openly hostile manner. As such, these four stages exist on an interrelated escalating or sliding scale, with collusion the point where violence becomes widespread and has such salience that it becomes inherently part of the self-concept. Thus, whereas in the previous three stages, the salience may be perceived as temporary, or incidental, in the collusion stage it is integrated in to the social make-up of a society. As such, it is at this stage that in- and out-group structures become most solidified, and in some cases, including in Northern Ireland through power-sharing, become institutionalised in order to seek a prevention of violence. Violence is increasingly likely to escalate due to persistent

[195] Northrup, J. (1989) *op. cit.* p.70
[196] Ibid. p.70

threats between groups that become more widespread and take precedence over other aspects of one's social identity.

In the case of Northern Ireland, the two distinct communal traditions may not be openly in conflict at the same level as that of the 1970s and 1980s, but the identity differentiation is upheld politically, educationally, religiously and societally. This makes in-group/out-group differentiation on different levels deep and constant when it concerns the interpretation of social and ideological drivers. This is particularly the case between Catholic and Protestant communities, but some of the elements of that divide are also found between dissident and mainstream republicans. This is particularly the case for political and social elements. The politics of consociationalism exacerbates the unionist/nationalist political divide, and communities continue to be largely identifiable by their religious majority. It has essentially entrenched cross-community identity.

Thus, both non-violent and violent conflict between groups finds its roots in perceived or actual threats to one's identity. Accordingly, as Wright argues, this also suggests that 'social identity salience and social power may be harnessed to reduce terrorist activity by reducing perceptions of threat from the view of terrorist organizations'.[197] The institutionalisation of identity has shifted from a violent to a non-violent political alternative. As Akcinaroglu and Tokdemir assess, the continuing use of violence can now be perceived as a way of installing

[197] Wright, J.D., (2015)'A Social Identity and Social Power Perspective on Terrorism', *Journal of Terrorism Research*. 6:3, 76–83, p.76

either love or fear within and across communities as a means of building reputation.[198]

3.4) Identity in Northern Ireland and Irish Republicanism

Most studies on identity conflict in Northern Ireland take a cross-community approach. Although national and communal identity is present in most societies today, its role in Northern Ireland has heightened salience. Although for most citizens, this salience is not of day-to-day importance; society in Northern Ireland remains highly segregated, as visibly demonstrated in, for example, its education system. According to Goeke-Morey et al., social identity remains at the heart of division over voting, religion, and group status.[199] There remains a clear pattern of othering, of 'us' and 'them', when considering the two communities.

To some extent, the perception of this divide remains based on a zero sum game: if 'they' win something, this is an automatic loss for 'us'. Yet, as this thesis shows, this othering, and the creation of in-groups and out-groups goes considerably deeper into the heart of communities in Northern Ireland and does not only exist cross-community, but also intra-community. Therefore, this section explores why Northern Ireland is a particularly relevant case study.

[198] Akcinaroglu, S. & Tokdemir, E. (2016) 'To instill fear or love: Terrorist groups and the strategy of building reputation', *Conflict Management and Peace Science,* 1-23
[199] Goeke- Morey, M. C., Cairns, E., Taylor, L. K., Merrilees, C. E., Shirlow, P., & Cummings, E. M. (2015) Predictors of strength of in- group identity in Northern Ireland: Impact of past sectarian conflict, relative deprivation, and church attendance. *Journal of community & applied social psychology*, 25:4, 283-295, p.284

The aforementioned issue of education is a particularly important example; its proximity to everyday life is much closer than is, for example, interaction with the political institutions in Stormont. According to the Northern Irish Department of Education, only seven per cent of pupils in 2014/2015 attended an integrated school, with the other 93 per cent attending almost exclusively Protestant or Catholic schools.[200]

This is, according to McGlynn et al., a worrisome tradition, as integrated schools contribute to positive attitudes towards a joint society and stimulate issues of forgiveness and reconciliation.[201] Both traditions however have been generally reluctant regarding integrated education, despite this being one of the core drivers of identity formation and socialisation.[202] This, according to Gallagher and Cairns, contributes to the establishment of differentiation and identification with in- and out-groups from childhood onwards. Such embedded identification contributes to the upholding of a perceived identity competition.[203]

[200] See the Northern Ireland Department of Education (2015) via http://www.deni.gov.uk/index/schools-and-infrastructure-2/schools-management/10-types_of_school-nischools_pg/16-schools-integratedschools_pg.htm (Accessed 06-05-2017)
[201]McGlynn, C., Niens, U., Cairns, E. & Hewstone, M. (2004) Moving out of conflict: the contribution of integrated school in Northern Ireland to identity, attitudes, forgiveness and reconciliation, *Journal of Peace Education,* 1:2, 147-163
[202]Harris, M. (1993) *The Catholic Church and the foundation of the Northern Irish State,* Cork University Press, Cork, Ireland
[203] Gallagher, E. & Cairns, E. (2011) 'National identity and in-group/out-group attitudes: Catholic and protestant children in Northern Ireland', *European Journal of Developmental Psychology,* 8:1, 58-73

Examination of the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey offers further insight into different identity constructs. This survey has been undertaken since 1998 to reflect a range of social and political issues, and includes several items on self-identification. Although in most areas of community relations, vast improvement has been made between 1998 and 2014, it must be noted that in terms of education, overall support for integrated schools has not increased. Catholic support for segregated education has in fact increased from 38% to 42 %.[204]

The nomenclature of identity in Northern Ireland, noticeably Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist and Catholic/Republican/Nationalist, should not be seen as separate entities but rather as inherently coinciding traditions. In other words, although not all Catholics are necessarily Republican or Nationalist and vice versa, the division of communities on religious lines is inherently related to the political and ideological identifiers associated with it. It is unlikely for a Protestant to also identify as an Irish Republican, just as it is also unlikely for a Catholic to strongly identity as a Loyalist. As Dingley puts it, 'however one tries to dress it up, a rising Catholic population [...] prompts expectations of fundamental national and political change, which inherently associates religion with nation'.[205]

[204] Available via ARK Northern Ireland, Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey, See: http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/1998/Community_Relations/OWNMXSCH.html (1999) and http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2014/Community_Relations/OWNMXSCH.html (2014)

[205] Dingley, J. (2009) Religion, truth, national identity and social meaning: the example of Northern Ireland, *National Identities,* 11:4, 367-383, p.369

Ample other examples can be found of the notion that these traditions are inherently linked. These extend beyond the field of politics and religion and go as far as, for example, sporting traditions, where particular sports and teams (for example the GAA, Celtic/Rangers, and rugby) are inherently associated with one tradition or the other.[206] The strength of a divided identity salience is also perpetuated due to the way in which the political and social landscape since 1998 has been shaped. As discussed in the literature review, the consociational layout of the institutions of the devolved government upholds the single identity politics of Republicanism and Unionism as mutually exclusive.[207] This inherently leads to polarisation and the continuance of the 'orange and green' tradition shaping politics and voting behaviour.[208]

A substantial part of the intergroup differentiation now takes place on the ground and has extensively led to a political zero-sum game that transcends beyond the political into the social arena. According to Brown and MacGinty, this presents a partial explanation as to why parades, commemoration and partisan symbols, including flags and murals, carry such great importance, and equally are so contentious, to both communities.[209] The annual parades season, the Orange Order and Republican marches through each other's 'territory', the conflicts

[206] Hassan, D. (2002) A people apart: Soccer, identity and Irish nationalists in Northern Ireland, *Soccer & Society,* 3:3, 65-83
[207] Brown, K., & MacGinty, R. (2003) Public attitudes toward partisan and neutral symbols in post-agreement Northern Ireland. *Identities: Global studies in culture and power*, 10:1, 83-108, p.83
[208] Van Boven, L., Judd, C. M., & Sherman, D. K. (2012) Political polarization projection: social projection of partisan attitude extremity and attitudinal processes. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 103:1, 84-100, p.98
[209] Brown & MacGinty (2003) *op. cit.* p.102

over flags and national symbols are still occurring. Despite being in and by itself non-violent acts, such issues have led to violent outbursts in recent decades, including the Drumcree stand-off and the dispute in North Belfast.[210] Saguy and Halperin recognise a problem that 'a major barrier to conflict resolution is group members' tendency to hold on to the in-group's narrative of the conflict and reject the out-group's perspective'.[211] By upholding such open manifestation of in-group identity on various aspects of social and political arenas, it is exceedingly difficult to move beyond identity politics and reduce the salience of identity.

Importantly, in- and out-group politics not only applies to the broader divide between nationalists and loyalists, but also extends to the intra-community level. Traditionally, the Republican movement has been susceptible to splits, most noticeably with the creation of the official and provisional IRA.[212] In post-2007 Northern Ireland, fragmentation has led to a strong mainstream political Sinn Féin and a diverse non-conformist amalgamation of violent and non-violent Republican groups. This thesis argues that group structures and dynamics as outlined in the previous sections of this chapter can aid understanding of how this impacts the rhetoric and action within and between different groups. All these groups seek to identify themselves positively

[210] See for example: Dingley, J. (2002). Marching Down the Garvaghy Road: Republican Tactics and State Response to the Orangemen's Claim to March their Traditional Route Home after the Drumcree Church Service. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 14:3, 42-79.
[211] Saguy, T., & Halperin, E. (2014) Exposure to out-group members criticizing their own group facilitates intergroup openness. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*,40:6, 791-802, p.791
[212] For detailed information on splits in the Republican movement, see Morrison, J. F. (2013). *The origins and rise of dissident Irish Republicanism: The role and impact of organizational splits*. Bloomsbury Publishing USA.

and in contradiction to Sinn Féin, which represents the mainstream. Although the existence of dissident republicanism is particularly relevant in relation to mainstream Sinn Féin, as is the focus of this research, it is important to also consider it in a wider perspective. Loyalist communities inherently perceive continuing Republican violence specifically, but also the Republican political and physical threat to the union more widely, as a problem. Therefore, it is important to consider this intra-community perspective.

Understanding social identity within Northern Irish groups, and the way in which they characterise identity, history and the use of violence, offers valuable insight into their current political position in Northern Ireland. Nonetheless, and perhaps not as much integrated in Tajfel's and Turner's social identity approach as they might be, personal relationships, kinship and even consanguinity in establishing the self-concept are particularly significant.[213] In the case of Northern Ireland, where there is a generational element to involvement in Republicanism, these consanguine elements are also incorporated in understanding dissident republicanism. This means in practicality that family lineage is particularly prominent in, first, passing on Irish Republicanism from one generation to the next, but, second, also in passing on the interpretation of Irish Republicanism. Identity can be a strategic tool in the Republican movement in post-GFA Northern Ireland. Historical, political and cultural heritage are valuable and applied retroactively; rather than solely being an inherent part of the

[213] Ryang, S. (2004) 'Social Thought and Commentary: A Note on Transnational Consanguinity, or, Kinship in the Age of Terrorism, *Anthropological Quarterly,* 77:2, 747-770

self-concept, this research argues that heritage and history is also utilised as a tool for recruitment, justification and legitimisation within the different fractions of the Republican movement. The post-conflict development of political and societal normalisation in Northern Ireland, and to a lesser extent in the Irish republic, has increasingly fractured and fragmented the Republican movement beyond the Sinn Féin mainstream.

Dissident republican violent and non-violent provocation is used to exert a level of threat towards the relevant out-groups. Although their violent actions have not seen the successes they desire, that of a united Ireland, this thesis argues that their continuation can be perceived as an attempt to re-establish Northrup's four stage approach of threat, aggression, rigidification and collusion, and, as Frampton puts it, the intent to keep the flame of physical force Republicanism alive.[214] Dissident republicans claim to be the inheritors of the real Republican tradition and, accordingly, they perceive any political interference or political participation in the Northern state illegitimate.

In order to better understand the field of dissident republicanism it is essential to lay out the groups that are active within this area and to conceptualise their group identity. Annex 1 provides a synopsis of the dissident groups taken into consideration in this research. They are those groups that split from, or can be traced back to, the Provisional Irish Republican movement. As Whiting states, 'the label of dissident has become a construction to collectivise those who oppose the current

[214] Frampton, M. (2011) *Op. Cit.* pp.77-91

status quo, and is largely bereft of serious analytical purpose'.[215] Thus, those groups that do not adhere to Sinn Féin's Republicanism have almost automatically been given the classification of dissident republicans. This dynamic is further explored in the empirical part of this thesis.

3.5) Framework for applying the theory

One of the core challenges of using an approach such as social identity, with its broad spectrum and overarching principles, is that, unless conceptualised and specifically applied, it can be too broad or generalised.[216] Therefore, it is important to create an overarching framework of the theoretical principles to be applied throughout the thesis. This thesis operationalises the theory across three factors: logistical, social and ideological. The first factor seeks to establish salience; the latter two are broad explanatory categories for both intergroup relations and self-categorisation. Therefore, derived from the theoretical literature, this thesis applies a three-factor framework to its empirical data. These concern logistical factors, not explicitly tested, but necessary to establish salience; social factors; and ideological factors.

There is a link between salience and logistical factors. As we established, not all in-groups and out-groups relate to one another. Furthermore, salience establishes the existence of a relationship

[215] Whiting, S. A. (2015) *Op.Cit.* p.188
[216] Hogg, M. A., & Williams, K. D. (2000) From I to we: Social identity and the collective self. *Group Dynamics: Theory, Research, and Practice*, 4, 81–97.

between indivuals and groups and amongst different groups. If there is no existing contact, be that physical or virtual, and thus no logistic proximity, salience does not exist.

Before examining these factors in more depth, this section establishes the direction and typology of relationships this thesis examines. As discussed previously, two core levels of relationships exist within social identity theory. First, there is that from the individual to the group. This focuses on why and how people become involved with a particular group, self-categorisation, and predominantly on the personal push and pull factors, as Dalgaard-Nielsen establishes, that play a role in radicalisation processes and involvement in extreme groups.[217] The dimensions, discussed below in more detail, may be negative, positive or neutral in nature. In other words, the individual to group level takes into account the complex interrelationship between factors that attract people to a certain group, and/or repels them from that group's perceived out-group. It reflects on the push and pull factors that may influence the process of self-categorisation.

The second type focuses on the relationship between the in-group and subsequent out-groups. This can, in fact, be multiple groups, depending on the case at hand. Thus, group structures can in and by themselves pertain a level of fluency. Dissident republican groups persistently identify themselves against mainstream Republicanism, but far less against Unionism, because it is too removed as a comparison. Sinn Féin

[217] Dalgaard-Nielsen, A. (2010) Violent radicalization in Europe: What we know and what we do not know. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 33:9, 797-814.

on the other hand, will seek to positively differentiate themselves from Unionism for a variety of reasons, including its close political and social relations in Stormont. This in-group/out-group fluency is evident furthermore in the recent merger of different violent dissident groups into a new larger group, but also in cooperation between dissident groups on community issues such as homelessness and water charges, or historical issues such as internment and the hunger strikes.

Individuals can shape the social identity of a group, through opening it up to other characteristics and ideas, especially when this is a shared positive aspect. Therefore, as Tajfel and Turner establish, individuals can seek to change the social identity of a group to make it more positively distinct.[218] However, through its initial characteristics, groups will attract a certain individual that largely aligns with its social identity to begin with, as he or she seeks to join those groups deemed positive to the self-concept. This creates a complicated mechanism of the stasis of the group as a whole, in order to attract like-minded individuals, in combination with changes to social identity that may occur as a result of individual traits brought in by members of a social group. Thus, in order to apply a social identity framework to a case, both levels of analysis need to be taken into account.

[218]Tajfel, H., & Turner, J.C. (1979) *Op. Cit.* pp.35-39

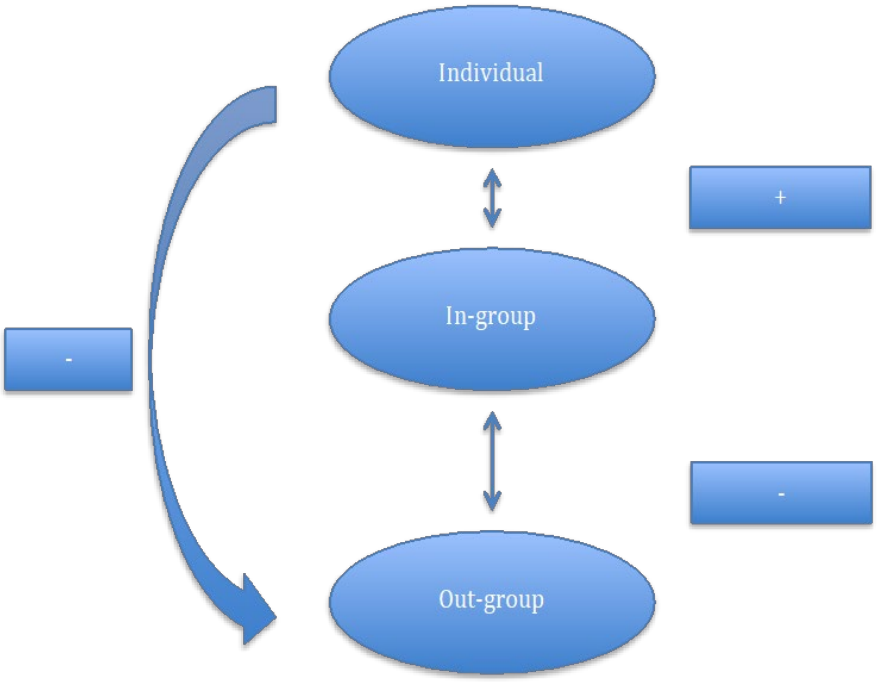


Figure 3.1: Multilevel relationships and identifiers of the type of relationship

Figure 3.1 presents the relationships and the usual type of relationship this entails, building on the principles of social identity. This combines both the elements of social identity theory, and self-categorisation theory from the perspective of individual, in-group and out-groups. First, the individual, as social identity theory dictates, seeks to associate with a group to enhance self-esteem and build a positive social concept through a process of self-categorisation. Therefore, it follows that the relationship between the individual and the in-group will be, or aims to be, a positive one. This relationship, as indicated, is reciprocal. Alternatively, the key relationship of an individual towards the in- and out-group can also be dictated by a negative relationship. In other words, the perception of the out-group may be negative enough that one categorises oneself in necessary opposition to this out-group.

Finally, there is the level of relationship between the in-group and the relevant out-groups. Although, as established previously, the relationship between these two may be one of indifference, this research project looks at intergroup conflict and thus is interested in the effects of a salient relationship between the two. This indicates that these two groups are negatively related; in other words, there is grounds for competition and conflict between the groups. Apart from these levels, it is also important to assess when and how these relationships are affected and a salient in-group structure is present.

The key aim of social identity is to understand why relationships between individuals and groups exist the way they do. Thus, it is important to understand for what reason people engage with groups, and groups engage amongst themselves. Building on the key principles of social identification, this thesis argues for the importance of three separate but interlinked factors: logistic proximity, social proximity and ideological proximity. The term proximity here is used to indicate that the closeness and relevance of each dimension are on a continuum as opposed to a dichotomy. These are chosen as broad categories reflecting the assessments made on the role of identity in violent and non-violent conflict.

Logistic proximity is a necessary but insufficient driver of group membership and in/out-group relations. To an extent it refers to access, however, as Brooks assesses, the term actually caries a much more politically laden weight then accessibility, as established in self-

categorisation theory.[219] Logistic proximity in this thesis refers to the existence of salience. Simply put, it means a relationship exists in some form or another, and is relevant to the actors involved. In the case of a social identity approach, this thesis argues that it is a practical necessity: do the individuals and groups have access to one another? This can be due to either geographical proximity, being in close distance physically, or virtual proximity (given the recent rise of internet communication).[220] Nonetheless, in the case of Northern Ireland there is still a largely geographical element. This helps to clarify the localised nature of dissident republicans and the existence of hotbeds of activity.

Online communication and social networking play an increasingly important role of access to groups via the Internet. Although this is a logical, and perhaps obvious, element as to how and why people become part of a group and how these groups characterise themselves, it is however a precondition of membership and the existence of group structures. If access to a group is impossible, it can effectively be isolated. Therefore, this theme is not explicitly explored in the thesis, but helps lay the foundations to interrogate intergroup conflict in Irish Republicanism. Although this access is necessary to create the possible relations, they do not indicate direct salience, or relevancy, to create

[219] Brooks, R. (2009) Researching democracy and terrorism: how political access affects militant activity. *Security Studies*, 18:4, 756-788.
[220] According to the Internet Telecommunication Union 48% of the worlds population used the Internet in 2017. This is significantly higher under young people 15-24 where this is 71%. Although Internet use is growing rapidly, it does mean that virtual proximity is not universal. See: Internet Telecommunication Union (2017) *ICT Facts and figures 2017,* https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/ICTFactsFigures2017.pdf (Accessed 10-07-2018)

intergroup competition or conflict. As Jackson and Smith assess, there is a need to assess whether the in-group actually assesses a certain out-group as holding competitive relations to the in-group.[221]

This thesis establishes two broad categories for identifying competitive functions of the group: social, and ideological. Logistic proximity is intertwined with the idea of social proximity but is not a precondition for existence of intergroup relations to an explanatory cause. It addresses varied elements of social interaction. Social proximity explores the existence and form of friendship, familial relations or social interaction between and across groups. In Northern Ireland, this has the added element of community groups, and community structures as is analysed in chapter five. Social proximity focuses on the human element of social identity or the idea of the comparative fit. In other words, it focuses on (inter)personal relations. Again, it focuses on both levels of social identity relations. It refers both to elements of why people may become a member of a group, but also on how those groups interact within themselves and towards others.

This social proximity includes two of the elements of Jackson and Smith's and Hogg's frameworks for applying social identity: leadership and prototypicality or stereotyping.[222] Leadership is important because it represents the group to the outside arena. Popular leaders can attract members or do the exact opposite. This is often personality

[221] Jackson, J. W., & Smith, E. R. (1999) Conceptualizing social identity: A new framework and evidence for the impact of different dimensions. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 25:1, 120-135.
[222] Jackson & Smith (1999) *op. cit.*; Hogg, M. A. (2001) A social identity theory of leadership. *Personality and social psychology review*, 5:3, 184-200.

driven and leaders can be more or less representative of the wider group. De Moura et al. refer to prototypicality as the idea that those people who are the prototype of the group as a whole may become the recognisable figures and develop leadership positions. In turn, this prototype can shape group behaviour. This can lead to a group's increased or decreased social attractiveness.[223] This social proximity refers in particular to the personal and interpersonal elements to group structures.

This element of the framework looks at individuals' recognition of favourable stereotypes. It argues that people may become part of a certain social group because its prototypical members display characteristics favoured by the individual. This contributes to the idea of social cohesion and being surrounded by a group of people with a certain kinship. This can be through friendship, family bonds and other close relationships. It moves beyond the idea of a social group having a common purpose. Conversely, it may also incorporate an element of dislike – towards individuals or other groups, which could contribute to ones' association or categorisation in another group. This category is not exclusive, as, for example, inter-republican family divisions exist as well.

The third factor for applying social identity theory in this thesis is ideological proximity. It is an important concept to consider when studying extreme groups through the lens of social identity. It refers to

[223] De Moura et al. (p.241) '*Innovation credit: when and why do group members give their leaders license to deviate from group norms?'* in Jetten, J, & Hornsey, M.J. (Eds.) (2011) *'Rebels in Groups: Dissent, Defiance, Difference and Deviance',* Wiley-Blackwell, UK.

closeness, or opposition, in ideological principles in a broader sense, including for example religious or political proximity. In this way, it assesses the broader issue of normative fit and the stereotype members of a social group displaying stereotypical behaviour. As was discussed in the literature review, politics and ideology play a contested role in terror groups and political violence. This would imply that even if geographical and social proximity are not there, one may join a group because they agree with/ adhere to the ideology, principles and politics of certain groups. It represents an element of why self-categorisation may take place, but also to which out-groups an in-group take a salient position.

This ideological element, largely political in this research, indicates a more principled and less socially driven process of self-categorisation and group behaviour as it focuses more on a set of principles or commonly held values as it does on likeability and interpersonal closeness.[224] Whereas social proximity focuses much more on the interpersonal relations in its myriad forms, ideological proximity focuses more on beliefs and values. It is possible to perceive ideological proximity as more objective; it does not focus as much on who people like, know or associate with, but rather what they value and believe. However, people do not exist in an ideological vacuum, and in many cases social and ideological proximity play an interconnected role in intergroup conflict and competition. Who you know may influence what you believe and vice versa.

[224] Jenkins, R. (2014) *Social identity*. Routledge, London, pp. 9-11

Therefore, it is important to also consider this interplay in more depth. Going forward, these ideological and personal elements are used to distinguish between decisions made on the basis of social preferences or ideological convictions. It is important to consider whether the extreme interpretation of dissident republicanism is built on personal or ideological motivation in order to fully understand and consequently tackle the issue.

Although social and ideological proximity can be seen as separate elements, it is in fact the complex interrelationship between the two that this thesis argues has the greatest impact on social identity and in/out group conflict. For example, as chapter five explores, since the peace process Irish Republicans have developed an extensive network of social organisations. A key example would be ex-prisoner groups. These have been built mostly on an element of social cohesion, but with the growing divide in Republicanism, they have become both a social and a political marker. In other words, social groups that are not necessarily related, have become part of the political group conflict between dissidents and mainstream Irish republicans.

An individual's decision to join a particular group is most commonly based on a positive ideological and social proximity to that group. However, there can also be an element of 'my enemy's enemy is my friend'; joining a group in such a case is based on the negative proximity towards a given out-group.

One of the crucial contributions to understanding social identity and intergroup conflict is this complex relationship between social

structures and political motivation. Although both need to be, and, as stated above, are, taken into consideration for individual motivations to join a group and subsequent group identity, it is necessary to analyse both in parallel. In fact, although the political and social areas have distinct features, they overlap and result in a complex system where the different combinations of the different relationships, dependant in part on the salience of an issue, shape understanding of social identity.

This system contributes to the core structures of social identity theory and intergroup relations in such a manner that it systemises and illustrates the fluctuating nature of identity. Closely related groups will often display intergroup fault lines, either social or political. In the case of dissident republicanism, this will largely be violence. Therefore, this thesis argues that dissident republican groups remain small and achieve relatively little because there is an adherent lack of ideological proximity from the wider community towards them. People simply do not seek to join these groups because they disagree with the strategies and tactics used, predominantly abstentionism and violence. The election of two People before Profit (PBP) Members of Legislative Assembly (MLA) however displays that there is more support for the socialist ideology of these groups.

Levels of proximity are classified in this thesis as negative or positive. Negative proximity is creating conflict, violent or non-violent, whereas positive proximity has the opportunity to create cohesion and cooperation. In other words, whether the relationship is built on positive perceptions and identifiers or negative ones. This thesis hypothesises that dissident republican groups amongst themselves

have a generally positive level of political proximity, although negative on certain key areas including the use of violence due to the widespread disagreement on the futility of armed struggle, and a fluctuating level of social proximity. As for the relationship between the dissidents and Sinn Féin, the relationship at the group level is a negative political and social proximity. In other words, there is a generally high level of disagreement both politically and socially between the dissident and mainstream Irish republican movement.

What is important to consider is that these interpretations fluctuate on a personal level and need to be regarded as the default position from the group level. It is for this reason, for example, that there is little prominent interaction between dissident republicans and loyalist communities, based on the lower intensity of social and political proximity, despite the geographical high level. Therefore the loyalist out-group is relevant for Sinn Féin through social and political interaction on the national level. Therefore, the theory of social identity is a relevant tool for understanding group structures. Finally, the themes and methodology that are discussed in the next chapter are closely related to the theoretical framework that is set up in this theoretical chapter.

4) Methodology and Data

4.1) Introduction

This chapter sets out the design and methodology used in this study. It consists of three main sections. Section 4.2 explains the research design. It also offers a brief discussion of the generalisability/transferability of this research, explaining how this is a predominantly theory-testing thesis with some theory-building elements that could be applied to other cases. It is a distinctively qualitative case study allowing for an in-depth explanation of group behaviour in a particular geographical location and set timeframe. Although qualitative research raises questions surrounding generalisability and duplication, this approach allows the research to explore the complexities of this particular case study in an in-depth fashion than more quantitative studies would allow.[225]

Section 4.3 discusses data collection, focussing first on existing primary and secondary sources used in this thesis, before an in-depth exploration of fieldwork and interviews. The latter examines and critically reflects upon the process of participant selection, the aims and manner in which the interviews were conducted, issues surrounding access, and the challenges and successes of the fieldwork process. Finally, given the politically sensitive nature of research into political violence, this chapter also explores issues of ethics and reflexivity.

[225] Gillham, B. (2000) *Case Study Research Methods,* Continuum, London, p.11

Section 4.4 focuses on the data analysis methodology. This thesis uses a thematic analysis, consisting of three main themes derived from the literature and theoretical framework. These are: (inter)personal relations; political and social identity; and violence and crime. Each of these main themes is represented in the three empirical chapters. This section discusses both the pros and cons of the data analysis method and outlines the way in which it is applied throughout the thesis.

4.2) Research design

This thesis is an explanatory case study, focussing on post-conflict Irish Republicanism in Northern Ireland through the lens of social identity theory. According to Flyvbjerg, a case study is 'an intensive analysis of an individual unit (as a person or community) stressing developmental factors in relation to environment'.[226] The main unit of analysis in this research are Irish Republicans, and although broader aspects of Northern Irish society are taken into consideration where necessary, due to its theoretical model, this research focuses specifically on dissident and mainstream Irish republicans. The in-group focus is on dissident republicans, with mainstream Republicanism as the selected out-group. This research uses a case study design because of the specificity of the groups on which it focuses.

Case studies have benefits and pitfalls. Generally speaking, they are the most suitable tools to explore a research topic in depth. The low level of abstraction and the high level of detail of case studies was the main

[226] Flyvberg, B. (2011) *Case Study,* in Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, Y.S. (Eds.) *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research,* SAGE publishers, London, p.301

consideration behind this thesis' research design. Focussing on one case allows depth and detail to be included in the research. Case studies allow for in-depth examination of a certain phenomenon. As the focus of this thesis is on smaller groups within a particular community and given its relatively bottom-up approach, a case study is the most suitable research design. Furthermore, case studies allow for both theory testing and theory building approaches.[227] A second benefit of a case study design is, as Yin assesses, its suitability to explore contemporary events.[228]

In other words, case studies allow taking into account on-going events and analysing phenomena that are not yet concluded. Explanatory case studies are able to incorporate a wide variety of sources and 'benefit from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis'.[229] A case study design is the most suitable for this study as it allows for a detailed exploration of the subject of dissident republicanism, and contributes most significantly to its aim of theoretical development.

A criticism of qualitative case studies is that they run the risk of being too subjective and reliant on 'the researcher's unsystematic views about what is significant and important and […] the close relationships that the researcher frequently strikes up with the people studied'.[230] Another often-cited flaw is that case studies limit generalisability. First,

[227] Ibid. p.302
[228] Yin, R. K. (2009) *Case study research: Design and methods (applied social research methods*) SAGE, London, p.5
[229] Ibid. p.13
[230] Bryman, A. (2012) *Social Research Methods,* 4th Ed. Oxford University Press, Oxford, p.405

in terms of replicability, Bryman argues that due to the highly subjective nature of data collection and analysis, as well as researcher bias, a repeat of the same study is very unlikely to lead to the same outcome and therefore this threatens the validity of the research.[231] Although this is a valid point, acknowledging the issue of researcher bias and practicing a level of reflexivity throughout can offset such issues and strengthen reliability.[232] Second, a thorough explanation of the methods of data collection and data analysis can help recreate the process of the researcher and strengthening the research outcomes.[233] This thesis acknowledges these methodological frailties and as a result seeks to offset them by providing an exploration of the interpretive methods in the following sections of this chapter, as well as maintaining reflexivity throughout.

These potential weaknesses are offset by two factors. First, this study develops theory-testing elements beyond the Northern Ireland case study. In other words, it seeks to test the theory and build on it through the case study in such a manner that it is also applicable to other cases. Second, it addresses phenomena including dissent, political violence and terrorism, which are not unique to this case study but are global issues. By allowing for an in-depth analysis of dissident republicanism and anti-peace agreement politics in relation to identity and group structures in this particular, well-researched case, the outcomes enable theoretical and conceptual application of the findings. They also allow the specific case study to generate broader policy implications.

[231] Ibid. p.70
[232] Van Evera, S. (1997) *Guide to methods for students of political science*. Cornell University Press, Ithaca (NY), pp.53-57
[233] Ibid. pp.53-57

This thesis stresses the importance of identity as relevant to political radicalism and intergroup conflict beyond the direct Northern Irish case. A better understanding of social identity can generate important insight into why people engage in dissenting or radical politics and/or ultimately violent behaviour. This is an important topic spanning far beyond Northern Ireland. The case study approach enables a detailed analysis and interpretation of this particular context, but it also generates broader ideas applicable to other conflicts.

The research questions outlined in the introduction assess both the social identity of dissident republicanism, and the role it plays in non-violent and violent conflict. This case study focuses on the years 2007-2016 in order to consider the development of both violent and non-violent dissident republicanism in a 'politically stable' society. Stability in this context must be perceived as relative. Despite the existence of violent dissident republican groups such as the Real IRA and the Continuity Army Council before the peace agreement, 2007 is selected in order to assess residual violence in this modern context with the power-sharing institutions in place. This date also coincides with the end of the military operation in Northern Ireland, Operation Banner, and the two-year process of normalisation and de-militarisation.

The outer limit of 2016 is selected because it was the centenary year of the Easter Rising, which, as a pivotal moment in Republican history, has had great impact upon the expression of identity within the Republican movement. The signal events of the 2016 commemoration serve as an

exploration of the distinctive role of a shared identity history in a modern context.

4.3) Data collection

This section provides an in-depth exploration of the data collection. It first discusses existing primary and secondary source material, particularly online data, used in this thesis, before offering an extensive exploration of the fieldwork and interview process. Finally, it discusses ethics and reflexivity. This is particularly related to the challenges of fieldwork, but also assesses issues surrounding dealing with potentially sensitive sources, particularly when researching violent dissident republican material.

Qualitative research identifies four key methods of data collection: individual interviews; focus groups; observational/participant observation research; and participatory/action research.[234] The first refers to a one-to-one conversation with a selected participant. Focus groups are multiple people discussing an issue, either with the researcher solely observing or with more closely guiding the discussion. The latter two methods, of observational and participatory research are mainly utilised in ethnographic studies, in which the researcher gathers data from observing certain groups (fieldwork) or actively engaging with their unit of analysis.[235] Given the sensitivity of the political setting, and the constraints of involvement with the unit of

[234] Berg, B. L., Lune, H., & Lune, H. (2004) *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences* (Vol. 5) Pearson, Boston (MA), p.52
[235] Ibid. p.52

analysis in this research, the two latter methods are more restrictive. Ethnographic observations from fieldwork are only sparsely employed in favour of data gathered from interviews. This is also in order to limit the issue of researcher bias and replicability as discussed above.

Accordingly, this thesis draws on qualitative individual interviewing. This method allows for the gathering of in-depth knowledge of personal experiences and individual narratives as significant of a broader communal phenomenon. This is particularly relevant because this thesis focuses on identity. This is, as a concept, mostly established on an individual and group level through one's own interpretation and is relatively subjective. Therefore, it is important to gather valuable insights into the construction of identity from the people involved in the groups that this thesis focuses on. The empirical contribution of this thesis is partially dependent on gathered data from conducting a set of semi-structured interviews with different people, which is triangulated with analysis of a broad range of other primary and secondary source material.

4.3.1) Primary and secondary data sources

This thesis begins by using secondary literature to construct the broader framework and position itself within existing debates. It takes an inclusive approach and draws on a range of topics including (counter) terrorism, Northern Ireland, and post-conflict reconciliation from a range of disciplinary perspectives including political science, history, security studies and political sociology (see chapters two and

three). Secondary literature was also used to corroborate and triangulate primary source data.

The research draws heavily on primary source material, including but not limited to newspapers, policy documents, government papers, and online material including newsletters, opinion pieces and blogs. Some primary quantitative material measuring satisfaction with security services and political institutions are analysed to support the qualitative data. Such data includes surveys and opinion polls (such as the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey and the Omnibus Survey) revealing attitudes towards sectarianism, political opinions and a united Ireland. Although the direct linkage between politics and paramilitaries has become less tangible, analysing election outcomes (see chapter six), can provide insights into Republican attitudes, not least when dissident groups have offered candidates in local elections. Therefore, although the analysis of this material is not quantitative, some descriptive statistics are used in order to corroborate, challenge or triangulate findings from qualitative primary data, including the gathered interview material discussed in the next section.

Republican newspapers such as An Phoblacht (AP), the Sovereign Nation and Saoirse, alongside websites of dissident republican political parties form a useful data source. It is important to recognise that this material, identifiable as either mainstream or dissident republican, is inherently political. This, however, is its strength and utility as a source. This thesis does not use such material to ascertain objective accounts of history, but to interrogate constructions of identity. Analysis helps establish the nature of Republican identity, determine how it positions

itself towards both mainstream Republicans and other groups, and understand how the political and historical mandate used to develop in-group identity is constructed. This material provides a lot of in-depth information on the different themes and narratives discussed throughout the thesis.

Further content comes from the major news sources on Northern Ireland, including the BBC, the *Belfast Telegraph*, the *Guardian*, the *News Letter*, the *Irish Times*, the *Irish News* and the *Independent*, but also from smaller local newspapers such as the *Lurgan Mail* and the *Derry Journal*. The latter provide more information on local events than the larger outlets and can therefore be an interesting source of information reporting from the areas where dissident activity is highest. Because of the timeframe set out in the research design, most content has been collected online. It is predominantly through the larger national news sources that this research collects its more descriptive material on dissident activity, political news and other such material.

This is thus in opposition to the aforementioned republican news sources being analysed on its thematic content. This does not imply that such larger news sources are impartial or unbiased. A significant body of research reports newspaper biases on a variety of issues ranging from health to climate change and newspaper endorsements on politics.[236] However, the content that this thesis takes from these

[236] For more on this, see: Chiang, C. F., & Knight, B. (2011) Media bias and influence: Evidence from newspaper endorsements. *The Review of Economic Studies*, 78:3, 795-820; Boykoff, M. T. (2007) Flogging a dead norm? Newspaper coverage of anthropogenic climate change in the United States and United Kingdom from 2003 to 2006. *Area*, 39:4, 470-481; Nye, J. S. (1990) *What liberal media?: The truth about bias and the news*. Basic Books (AZ)

news outlets focuses on the events it portrays, rather than the analysis it provides, and much is corroborated in secondary literature where possible.

Further Internet sources such as the official websites of political parties, whether mainstream republican, dissident republican, or unionist, are also a useful source. They offer information relating to the parties' official and unfolding policy lines, press releases, historical narrative and identity, and reactions to broader events. These websites can help to uncover the development of the relationships between different actors in the Northern Ireland peace process, and their opinions towards a broad set of events from the perspective of the actor itself. Internet-based academic projects such as ARK Northern Ireland, providing social and political information on Northern Ireland, and the Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN) furthermore provide access to a broad range of historical data, information and material relating to conflict and politics in Northern Ireland.[237] This includes online resources, surveys such as the Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey and academic data.

Although access to existing academic books and journal articles is consistent and relatively reliable, access to the secondary material available on the web is less straightforward. Dissident republican websites publish material, which may later be removed. Therefore,

[237] ARK (ark.ac.uk) stands for Access Research Knowledge and is an academic database from academics at Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster. This resource includes the Conflict Archive on the Internet, as well as several public opinion surveys and policy groups focused on Northern Ireland. CAIN (cain.ulst.ac.uk) is a substitute database at the University of Ulster that collects data on the Northern Irish Troubles.

some content is instantly printed, saved or screenshotted to preserve it, in case it later becomes unavailable online. Dissident groups have also increasingly published statements on their social media accounts such as Facebook and Twitter. This thesis draws on posts from dissidents' official channels. This also includes material hosted on YouTube, where Éirígí and 32CSM have their own channels, whilst other channels such as PoblachtachAontacht and Óglaigh Na hÉireann have a collection of videos, including televised interviews with both political and violent dissidents.

This material is transcribed verbatim and analysed as other written documentation in order to ensure overall consistency of analysis. The thesis targets its collection around official statements made by dissident republican groups in the run up to, or in the aftermath of, violent attacks or historically significant dates. This helps narrow down the search, grasps content when expressions of identity are at a heightened state, and provides key insights into episodes of dissident activity and its reactions.

Thus, this research draws on a wealth of primary and secondary sources. It is, however, limited to textual material, and does not seek to rigorously analyse images. Graffiti, murals and posters are a commonly used tool to promote dissident groups, or even provide threats to local communities. Yet it requires different methods of interpretation. The choice to keep the methods used in this thesis confined to more traditional political methodology is done to provide consistency to the manner in which themes and subthemes are constructed and analysed, as is discussed in section 4.4 on data analysis.

4.3.2) Fieldwork and Interviews

Interviews are a valuable means of original data collection. They allow for the acquisition of nuanced and complex empirical material, rich in new insights. However, it needs to be remembered that individual recollections are not objective; they are subject to personal interpretation and memory as well as bias and deliberate obfuscation on the part of the interviewee. Once again, this is a strength within the context of this particular research. The thesis does not use interviews to construct an objective account of history. Instead, interviews present an in-depth and personal conceptualisation of issues relating to identity construction and perceived group competition. Therefore, individual recollections can help establish trends or differing narratives, which can then be tested against other data. Identity, and one's perceptions and portrayal thereof, are highly individual, but patterns and commonalities between participants' perceptions provide much-needed deeper insight into the motives and characteristics of the unit being studied.

This method has drawbacks, including time and resources, the need for careful participant selection, and the likeliness that members of political parties will adhere to the official policy of the organisation. Nonetheless, this method provides the opportunity to gather first-hand information that when carefully triangulated with other material can offer valuable insights into the intergroup relationship between Republican communities and the different aspects of Republican

identity.[238] This section discusses the way in which qualitative interviewing serves as a method of data collection, the types of interviews conducted, and some of the issues that need to be accounted for in order to successfully plan and conduct interviews.

4.3.2.1) Interview format and Transcription

There are three main types of interviewing: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. This thesis uses the semi-structured option to allow a more flexible approach, where appropriate. It enables follow-up questions that derive from what the interviewee's initial answers. It is also a more suitable method to adapt to interviewees where the set questions may not be relevant or suitable. Regardless of the type of interview, conducting them can provide the researcher with a broad empirical base. There are however very careful considerations that are made in conducting interviews.[239]

One particular issue is sampling, and the researcher needs to justify how participants have been selected. Participants are often selected for semi-structured interviews on the grounds that they have pre-established expert knowledge or experience. In the case of this research project, participants were selected mostly because of their membership of either the in-group or the out-group of this thesis, or a substantive relationship with the Republican movement. This meant that the core targets were dissident or mainstream republicans.

[238] Seidman, I. (2013) *Interviewing as qualitative research*, 4th Edition, Teachers College Press, New York, pp.7-10
[239] Ibid.

However, because of the nature of dissident republicanism, it was sometimes difficult to get a representative of each of the core groups to give an interview. Although the sample divided over the in and out-group is not very large, there is a good balance between in- and out-group members, and all major dissident organisations are represented.

Interviews were conducted using a pre-written list of questions organised by theme, not submitted in advance. This developed as the number of interviews progressed, allowing the researcher to reflect upon and adapt the structure to better interrogate emerging themes and ideas. Because of the conflicting nature of dissident and mainstream republicanism as an intergroup dynamic, there were two sets of questions (although overlap existed with some questions – especially those providing a base level of information on individual perspectives – featuring in both).

This was particularly the case with the first questions of the interview, where participants were asked to display how they had become involved in the Republican movement. The other questions contributed to each of the three main themes: interpersonal relations, ideological and political identity, and violence and crime, but were adapted slightly depending on participant. These three themes were derived from the existing literature and the theoretical framework, as discussed in more depth in the next section. Questions were asked on the political and social perception of one's own group and the opposite group.

In total, this thesis uses 29 interviews conducted over a period of approximately four months between February and September of 2016.

Out of 29 interviews, one participant refused to be recorded and identified. This participation is thus anonymised and the transcript was taken through detailed notes during the interview, which were written up immediately after the interview and sent to the participant for approval. In this case, and the case of a serving police officer, the researcher made the decision to withhold the location and date of the interviews. Although anonymity was not specifically requested, the threat against serving officers of the PSNI is relevant and this measure was taken to subvert any potential risk to the participant beyond their direct employment.

All other participants agreed to being recorded and attributed (see Annex 2). If participants are not, or were not aligned with any particular organisation, this is also included. This sample size serves as a relatively representative data source, particularly as many interviews were with leadership figures from the different organisations. However, in order to provide data that is as representative as possible, interview material has been triangulated with other sources as outlined above. Most of the interviewees fall either in the category of dissident republican or mainstream republican, with some being derived from security services or wider social groups. Annex 2 provides the basic information on the interviews conducted. Where participants stated something off the record, or requested not to have their name put to a particular statement, this has been integrated in the chapters. In cases where statements were directly related or attributable to another individual, the author has taken the decision in certain cases to anonymise the statement.

Finally, some reflection on the transcription of interview material is necessary. Given that transcription is a highly time consuming process, the first choice that needs to be made is whether to transcribe the interview in full. The largest risk of not doing so in order to save time is that 'preselecting parts of the recordings to transcribe and omitting others tend to lead to premature judgements about what is important and what is not'.[240] Conversely, given the length of some of the interviews, not all information discussed is directly relevant to the thesis, and in certain situations, part of the recording is conversation on unrelated matters.

There are several different ways of transcribing data, but in general there are three levels of specificity in which this can be done, one of the most common being verbatim transcription, without accounting for subjective non-verbal cues.[241] Others, specifically in psychology and health sciences, include either transcribing whilst integrating pauses, sighs and other verbal cues, or choosing to also integrate non-verbal cues into their transcription.[242] Given the methods used to analyse all empirical data, verbatim transcription is the preferred method, as interpretation of, for example, body language is highly subjective, can be easily misinterpreted, and is non-replicable.

Given the high volume of material gathered, the interviews are not transcribed in full, but rather use a transcription scheme based on the

[240] Seidman (2013) *Op. Cit.* p.118
[241] McCormack, C. (2000) From interview transcript to interpretative story: Part 1. Viewing the transcript through multiple lenses, *Field Methods,* 12:4, 282 – 297
[242] Ibid. p.287

themes that are addressed throughout the thesis. Section 4.4 addresses the thematic methodology of this research in more depth.

4.3.2.2) Participants and Access

One of the core issues of conducting interview research is the issue of sampling and access. This is particularly true when considering sensitive material and seeking access to relatively private figures. This research adopts a snowball sampling strategy in seeking to counter these issues. Snowball sampling, or chain referral sampling, refers to a method were contact is initiated through existing contact. Practically, it means that you ask current participants in a sample to garner access to other participants.[243] This is a common way of getting access to further participants and was moderately successful in the context of this research. Chain referral or snowball sampling has two characteristics that need to be addressed.

First, it requires initiating this chain; one needs to find a first point of contact. This can be difficult with hostile or closed groups. Second, it affects the sample as a whole. Because people exist within their own social network, snowball sampling can lead to participants who all share similar beliefs and values as they are part of the previous participant's network. As sampling and referral involves an element of trust, participants are likely to chain to someone within that trust

[243] Biernacki, P., & Waldorf, D. (1981) Snowball sampling: Problems and techniques of chain referral sampling. *Sociological methods & research*, *10*(2), 141-163; Noy, C. (2008) Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of social research methodology*, 11:4, 327-344.

network.[244] As this thesis seeks to posit the identity of an in- and out-group in relation to each other, it thus established two chains of referral: one within the mainstream Republican tradition, and one within the dissident republican arena. These chains were run parallel over the course of the fieldwork process.

Initial access was gained through external gatekeepers, including journalists and academics. Through their willingness to set up or initiate meetings with Irish republicans, both dissident and mainstream, it was possible to start the snowball process. In most cases, interviewees were willing to relay contact details for other possible participants, but this was not always the case. In reality, many people, particularly high-profile dissident republicans, or people out on bail restrictions, were exceedingly hesitant to contribute to this research project, and voiced their direct concerns to both the researcher and gatekeeper that it was too politically sensitive, or, given historical experiences with such academic research, that they feared retribution.

There are previous research projects that restricted willingness to participate; this is particularly the case for the Boston tapes project,[245] which ended up posing certain risks for the participants, including the possibility of prosecution based on the recorded material. The lack of trust towards the researcher was simply not always overcome, but harvested two different results. First, in some cases it meant that the

[244] Noy, C. (2008) Sampling knowledge: The hermeneutics of snowball sampling in qualitative research. *International Journal of social research methodology*, 11:4, 327-344.
[245] For more information on this research project, see; https://bostoncollegesubpoena.wordpress.com/

participant was willing to participate after initial contact, but ended the chain of referral. In other cases, potential participants indicated a willingness to participate but withdrew this offer in the run up to the scheduled meeting. In two cases, possible participants did not turn up to scheduled interviews and barred all further communication. Although this was unfortunate, it was also indicative of the challenges posed by fieldwork on sensitive issues. Given the relative balance of the sample, between dissident/mainstream republicanism, this refusal did not negatively affect the conclusions of this research.

To avoid any issues arising from the conduct of interviews for this research project, foreseen issues were relayed to and consequently approved by, the school of Politics and International Relation's Ethics committee. Furthermore, before interviews, the participants were instructed to not relay any evidence which may be relevant to legal investigations, and to not provide any statements relating to current illegal activity. This was a precautionary measure and proved largely unnecessary. In most cases, the participants were extensively acquainted with the process of interviewing, and were thus well aware of how to deal with this, and in most cases follow up questions by the researcher were actively diverted if the interviewee did not wish to answer.

Interviews lasted between 20 minutes to 2.5 hours, with the general length being approximately one hour. One subject was interviewed on two occasions. There was a general problem with the gender balance, with women being far less willing to speak. Out of 29 interviewees 28 were male and one is female. With this thesis focusing on social identity

and interpersonal relations, it would have been interesting to see if there were noticeable differences on gender lines. However, as this is not a thesis that builds on a gendered framework, it does not have a direct effect on the findings of this research, and perhaps this forms an avenue of potential future research. Women were usually reluctant to speak as most women encountered during the fieldwork process were under bail conditions, or unfamiliar with the process of interviewing and therefore hesitant in light of the consequences of, for example, the Boston tapes.

Eight interviews can be categorised as dissidents: Irish republicans that are members of, or otherwise closely involved in, dissident republicanism. Although this sample is not very large, it is balanced and includes mostly leadership figures, representing most of the large dissident organisations. Six are former PIRA/SF who are now independent in myriad forms. Nine participants are drawn from the ranks of Sinn Féin. Five interviews are with other stakeholders, including clergy, security services and other political parties.

4.3.3) Ethics and Reflexivity

Research on sensitive areas such as terrorism, political violence and political extremism in most cases suffers methodological frailties, not least the difficulties in gaining access to primary data. It is therefore necessary to reflect briefly on such frailties and how they apply to this research project. One of the core problems of terrorism or political violence research deals with the clandestine nature of the unit of study. The unit of study, by its nature, engages in unlawful activity. This raises

questions of legality. According to Taylor and Quayle, researchers have a moral obligation to assist security services when so requested, for example by consigning interview data.[246] This places the researcher in an extremely difficult position, as they may seek to protect their sources, which they may have promised anonymous participation. However, in the case of legal investigations, especially under the UK Terrorism Act (2006), not collaborating with security services is a legal offence. Many of the paramilitary wings of dissident organisations are in fact legally defined as terrorist organisations.

To overcome this in practical terms, the decision was taken to focus on political leadership, activism and general perceptions of the use of violence. None of the interview participants was, to the author's knowledge, currently involved in violent activities. Moreover, all interviews focussed on modern perceptions, and approaches as well as general attitudes, as opposed to accounts of past wrongdoings, which lie outside of the research scope. This consequently also raises the difficult debate that scholars on terrorism are not, or ought not to be, counter-terrorism mechanisms.[247] Terrorism scholars are, according to Horgan, in a position in which they need to be able to contribute to government policy without neglecting their professional ethical position as independent researchers.[248]

[246] Taylor, M. & Quayle, E. (1994) *Terrorist lives*, Brassey Publishing, London, p.24
[247] Toros, H. (2008) Terrorists, scholars and ordinary people: confronting terrorism studies with field experiences*, Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 1:2, 279-292, p.280
[248] Horgan, J. (2012) interviewing the terrorists: Reflections on fieldwork and implications for psychological research. *Behavioral Sciences of Terrorism and Political Aggression*, 4;3, 195-211, p.201

4.4) Data analysis

Where the previous section focussed on data collection, and the type of sources used in this thesis, this section outlines the manner in which these sources are subsequently analysed. Gomm suggests three different ways of analysing the results of qualitative data: as reports on states of affairs, focusing solely on the information provided; thematic analysis as a way of describing what things may mean to people; and narrative analysis, which treats the interview as a display of the contextualisation of narrative as part of a wider issue.[249]

The overarching methodology of this thesis is a thematic analysis or thematic content analysis. Analysis focuses on a number of themes and sub-themes that derived deductively from the existing literature, the theoretical framework and the interview process. The semi-structured nature of the interviews also allowed for the construction of more inductive themes through primary data gathered over a prolonged period of fieldwork. Thematic content analysis is used to construct a 'bigger picture' of the existing problems underlying intergroup conflict and social identity competition in modern Irish Republicanism. This thesis adopts this approach to incorporate the complex and competing terminology that is used by the in-group and out-group. Similar terms may hold different meaning to the groups in this thesis and play a crucial part in constructing their social identity.

[249] Gomm, R. (2008) *Social Research Methodology, a Critical Introduction*, 2nd ed. Palgrave Macmillan, New York, pp.240-245

4.4.1) Thematic analysis and theme development

Thematic analysis is often also referred to as thematic content analysis. In fact, the two are similar and often used interchangeably depending on a researcher's interpretation.[250] Within thematic content analysis a theme is articulated through an individual code, for example a word or phrase; researchers count its occurrence. Within a thematic analysis, core themes are built up out of multiple different words or phrases relating to that subject.[251] Inherently, thematic content analysis and thematic analysis share the same core principles. However, it is in the processes of constructing and presenting the themes that thematic content analysis and thematic analysis run the risk of being applied without due structure.[252]

Content analysis, according to Wilson, allows researchers to analyse large numbers of texts via, for example, semi-automated software assisted programmes or other structured ways of counting to discover trends and patterns in the data.[253] However, this method lacks contextualisation and, whilst helpful in counting or systematically organising certain words, it fails to interpret them in any broader perspective.[254] Content analysis may not focus on the social construction of language, but it does allow researchers to aggregate

[250] Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013) Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & health sciences*, 15:3, 398-405
[251] Bryman, D. (2012) *Op. Cit.* p.400
[252] Vaismoradi et al (2013) *Op. Cit.* p.402
[253] Wilson, A. (1993) Towards an integration of content analysis and discourse analysis: the automatic linkage of key relations in text, p.1
[254] Billig, M. (1988) *Methodology and Scholarship in Understanding Ideological Explanation*. In: C. Antaki (ed.), *Analysing Everyday Explanation: A Casebook of Methods*. London: Sage. p.206

results, trends or patterns in a large volume of data that may not be initially perceived.[255]

The tradition of content analysis is sometimes focused on quantitative applications, but this is not a necessity and the method can be used in a qualitative study by systematically categorising the representation of particular themes. Because of the necessity of context and the importance of underlying methods, this thesis does not use this type of content analysis. The meaning and interpretation of terms within Irish Republicanism are highly dependent on the person using them. Thematic content analysis is therefore able to help discover patterns, such as the use of terminology over time by different actors. Its application, as explained by Mayring, consists of the following:

> '[…] an internal structure can be filtered out; material can be extracted and condensed to certain domains of content. One can look for single salient features and describe them more exactly; finally, the material may be rated according to dimensions in the form of scales'.[256]

Accordingly, the material is analysed in order to highlight particular key themes and terminology and to distil a large volume of data into fewer thematic categories.[257] The choice to focus on this type of analysis as opposed to a more structured content analysis is

[255] Krippendorff, K. (2012) *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*, Sage, London
[256] Mayring (1983) pp.54-55 quoted in Flick, U. (2014) *An introduction to qualitative research*. Sage, London p.327
[257] Elo, S., & Kyngäs, H. (2008) The qualitative content analysis process, *Journal of advanced nursing*, 62:1, 107-115, p.108

predominantly because the same phrases, terms and words have different meaning to the dissident and mainstream groups under investigation. Therefore, any methodology that only looks at the text or counts the occurrence of a key word underestimates the underlying mechanisms and overlooks nuances.

Three main themes exist: (inter)personal relations; Political and social identity; Violence and crime. These three themes are derived from the theory of social identity, the interpretation of dissident republican politics, and the issue of violent conflict. The first and second theme are a reflection of the theoretical framework lied out in chapter three. The third derives from the wider literature on dissident Irish republicanism and political violence. As established in chapter three, this conflict can be both violent and non-violent, but as one of the research questions focuses on the role of social identity in the assimilation of post-conflict dissident republican violence, it is important to focus on the violent aspect of intergroup conflict.

In the construction of themes, this thesis largely follows Braun and Clarke's six phases of thematic analysis: familiarising with the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes and producing the report.[258] As table 4.1 shows, Braun and Clarke's framework is more detailed than the traditional content analysis framework as developed by Flo and Kyngas. The reason to opt for this six-step framework discussed below

[258] Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative research in psychology*, 3:2, 77-101.

in more depth is that it provides a more detailed approach to organising the data.

Table 4.1: comparing Thematic and Content Analysis Stages.[259]

Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 87)	Content analysis (Elo & Kyngäs, 2008: 110)
Familiarising with data Transcribing data, reading and rereading the data, noting down initial ideas	*Preparation* Being immersed in the data and obtaining the sense of whole, selecting the unit of analysis, deciding on the analysis of manifest content or latent content.
Generating initial codes Coding interesting features of the data systematically across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code.	*Organising* Open coding and creating categories, grouping codes under higher order headings, formulating a general description of the research topic through generating categories and subcategories as abstracting.
Searching for themes Collating codes into potential themes, gathering all data relevant to each potential theme.	

[259] Adapted from Vaismarodi et al (2013) *Op. Cit.* p.402

Reviewing themes Checking if the themes work in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set, generating a thematic map.	
Defining and naming themes Ongoing analysis for refining the specifics of each theme and the overall story that the analysis tells, generating clear definitions and names for each theme.	
Producing the report The final opportunity for analysis. Selection of vivid, compelling extract examples, final analysis of selected extracts, relating back of the analysis to the research question and literature, producing a report of the analysis.	*Reporting* Reporting the analysing process and the results through models, conceptual systems, conceptual map or categories, and a story line.

Phase one, familiarisation, consists of reading and grouping data into thematic ideas. This is conducted mainly on the basis of the theoretical literature and the available primary data on the case study. The data gathered through the interview process is complementary, meaning that the processes of phase two, three and four, are interactive. Indeed, as noted above, the previously collected data and the theoretical principles helped create the themes underpinning the interview

questions. Therefore, the main themes were constructed whilst the process of data collection was on-going.

Phase two, generating initial codes, and phase three, searching for themes, have therefore been integrated. Phase two involves coding interesting features of the entire data set. Phase three then collates the codes and ideas into initial themes and gathers the data relevant to that theme. Because of its theory testing elements, this thesis has derived the three main themes – interpersonal relations, social and political identity, and violence and conflict - from the theoretical principles in correlation with the available secondary and primary sources on dissident republicanism. Therefore, the initial codes and themes are constructed more rigidly to reflect the research design and research questions. However, sub-themes have been more loosely constructed through this six-phase process. All subthemes fall under the umbrella of one or more of the main themes.

Phase four, reviewing the themes, entails testing whether the themes are actually reflected in the data.[260] It therefore builds reflexivity into the analysis process. Unlike Elo and Kygas' framework, it allows for the researcher to return to original ideas and revisit their validity. This thesis has adopted this phase after the initial three phases have been conducted on both parts of the data collection processes. Therefore, the themes that were derived from the secondary data, informed the semi-structured questions used in the interviews. However, the data from

[260] Braun & Clarke (2006) *op. cit.* p.94

the interviews expanded on these themes or brought up themes that were not yet generated from the existing data.

In this fourth stage, inductive sub-themes were added that reflected the interview data. Therefore, during the theme review stage of the process, some initial themes turned out to be less relevant as expected before the interviews, whereas others arose from the interview data. Thematic analysis process therefore provided the possibility to garner themes both through deductive and inductive use of data. This also influenced phase five, defining and naming the themes. Throughout this process, themes were constructed and refined and the overall narrative or 'story' of the analysis was laid out. Each main theme is represented in an empirical chapter. Finally, step six is the final written report.[261]

The six phases provide a highly linear process. In practice however, and as noted above, most research processes conduct data collection and analysis in parallel to some extent. This matters because it particularly shapes how the data is included in the thesis and what has been purposefully omitted as well as what direction the final analysis takes. Nonetheless, it provides a structure as to how the data has been analysed. The interplay between the existing data and the empirical data collected through the interview process mean that the initial phases of the thematic analysis process have been repeated, or have not taken place in the exact linear order. This has been overcome by grounding the main themes in the theoretical literature whilst allowing

[261] Fereday, J., & Muir-Cochrane, E. (2006) Demonstrating rigor using thematic analysis: A hybrid approach of inductive and deductive coding and theme development. *International journal of qualitative methods*, 5:1, 80-92.

the qualitative details of the case study to provide a deeper analysis on the sub-thematic level.

These six steps have been applied to this thesis. Step 1-3 led to the creation of the main themes. The main themes are a result of wider reading of the secondary literature, the theoretical literature and engagement with primary material on dissident Irish republicanism. These main themes were accordingly used to establish the interview questions. These interview questions were used to gather data during the fieldwork. That data was analysed to inductively create smaller sub-themes that arose from, and deepened, the main themes and provided more detail during steps four and five.

The core sub-themes in this thesis are: the role of history; friendships, social relations and personal conflict; dealing with the past; socialism; electoral politics, criminal activity and drugs; Irish unity; and grassroots activism. These sub-themes are often relevant for more than one of the main themes. For example, an important sub-theme is the role of history in Irish Republicanism. This is relevant for understanding both political and social identity as well as violence and crime and accordingly is reflected throughout all three empirical chapters. The same goes for Irish unity, which is a sub-theme represented both in the political identity of dissident groups, as well as in the justification of the armed struggle. Dealing with the past is a relevant sub-theme for both Interpersonal relations and ideological and social identity.

4.5) Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the methodological choices made in this thesis. First, the choice of design is a longitudinal case study, focussing on one particular case over a number of years. This is done to aid the theory testing and theory building elements of this research. Because the theoretical approach is relatively wide, the choice of a narrow case study seeks to challenge the theoretical premises. Furthermore, and despite issues surrounding generalisability, this thesis aims also to contribute to the existing literature on post-conflict Northern Ireland, in particular on the issue of dissident republicanism. Doing a case study of this kind allows for in-depth analysis of the issue more than other choices of research design.

Second, this chapter has outlined and assessed data collection, particularly semi-structured interviews. Furthermore, it has also reflected on this process and on the subject of the research as a whole. This is important since choices of design, questions and even the snowballing process affects the data that has been collected. Nonetheless, by interviewing participants from both the in- and the out-group on the main themes of this thesis from competing angles, this thesis has sought to provide complete and reliable data.

Finally, this thesis uses a thematic analysis. This is a method that categorises data into different themes and sub-themes. Although the idea of content analysis is to create a mechanism of counting or recognising trends or patterns, it is also important to consider the way in which these have been constructed. Through a six-phase process,

this thesis has constructed a set of main themes derived from the theory and existing literature. These main themes are represented in the empirical chapters and made up of several inducted and deducted sub-themes. Doing so allows for clearer reflection throughout the process, and the ability to re-assess the validity of themes. The aim of the methodological choices has been to aid the theory-testing and theory-building elements of this thesis through answering the main and sub research questions in a rigorous and robust manner.

5) From Provos to Dissidents: exploring the mainstream/dissident dichotomy.

These victory parades were rolled out, and let's face it, everyone knew there was no victory. No one knew what there actually was, nobody could point at something and say, well, maybe we got that. All this nonsense was getting brought out [...] this back and forth to Downing Street and someone coming out on the steps saying [...] 'Bobby Sands is on my shoulder and Mairead Farrell is on the other shoulder.'[262] *And you're going, this all sounds very whitewashy.*

Fionnuala Perry[263]

5.1) Introduction

This chapter focuses on the theme of interpersonal relations. As such, it looks in more depth particularly at the self-categorisation process and individual perceptions of Irish republicanism. Throughout this chapter, multiple elements of social identity are tackled. First, this chapter explores some reasons behind joining the Provisional IRA. This is predominantly done to assess why those members consequently left the movement and establish the way in which social identity and status associated with membership of the Provisional IRA lost its positive

[262] Mairead Farrell was a member of the Provisional IRA and the first woman to go on the blanket protest after arriving in Armagh Gaol. She was shot dead by the British army in Gibraltar in 1988

[263] Perry, F. (2016) Interview with the author.
NB: at the time of the interview, Fionnuala Perry was not an official member of any dissident republican group and expressed reasons why, discussed further in this chapter. Nonetheless she was an active activist in West Belfast and has since this interview was conducted, joined new dissident political party 'Saoradh' as its national vice chairperson.

connotations and became negative. Second, this chapter explores why those members did or did not join a dissident group. In doing so, it analyses the negative social identity of dissident republican groups from the perspective of others also not belonging to the mainstream movement. Thus, it critically assesses the theoretical assumption that those who leave a certain group seek to improve their social identity by joining another group. This chapter argues that this is not necessarily the case if both the in-group and out-group options are deemed insufficient.

This chapter furthermore challenges the way in which dissident republicans and the former Provisional IRA/Sinn Féin are presented as distinctively different groups. It argues that the two need to be seen as intrinsically linked when thinking about Irish Republican identity. They are best perceived as a relatively fluid continuum despite the existence of distinct groups on either end of the spectrum. In doing so, this chapter examines the limits of the theoretical framework and challenges the binary nature of social identity. This chapter argues consequently that those republicans falling outside of the binary can serve a useful purpose in creating positive dialogue. Thus, although it challenges a core premise of the theoretical framework, it does so in order to explain why this may have positive unintended consequences.

This chapter empirically assesses why a deeper understanding of the relationship between the mainstream and the dissident republican groups, and those belonging to neither, can be vitally important for republican communities and more widely for Northern Ireland as a whole. The partisan perception of social structures such as grassroots

initiatives and ex-prisoner groups is divisive in republican communities, where arguably inclusion and integration is vital for Northern Irish peace. Thus, this chapter challenges some of the binary elements of the theory, but claims that doing this can in fact be beneficial in tackling or lowering existing intergroup conflict.

This chapter consists of three sections. Section 5.2 discusses the motivations and narratives of individual Republicans for joining and leaving the Provisional IRA and Sinn Féin. It focuses on wider social and ideological narratives, providing an empirical examination of the self-categorisation process. Section 5.3 analyses some of the main criticisms of dissident republican groups, unpacking accusations of organisational disunity, a paucity of leadership and the futility of the armed struggle. Together, sections 5.2 and 5.3 analyse the ideological and social motivations behind the self-categorisation process from the perspective of both members and non-aligned Irish republicans. It also establishes that although members may deem the social identity of their in-group as sufficiently negative, they do not always join the relevant out-group.

Furthermore, drawing on interview data with high profile Irish republicans outside of group structures, this thesis argues that those republicans have the possibility to provide a narrative on Irish republicanism outside of the conflicting groups. This can be beneficial for mediating intergroup conflict between the in-group and the out-group. Section 5.4 provides an empirical example arguing why it is important to analyse the dichotomy between dissident and mainstream republicans and the consequences of this. This is done by

looking at the role of former combatants and prison groups in post-conflict Northern Ireland. This chapter argues that the intergroup conflict between mainstream and dissident groups has extended beyond politics and is also inherently present in more grassroots or community-building initiatives like prisoner groups. This creates a partisanship to social support, which can arguably exacerbate intergroup conflict.

5.2) Going at it alone: Republicans outside organisational structures and pathways through the Provisional IRA

This section tackles two core theoretical issues. First, it explores some of the reasons behind self-categorising as an Irish Republican in general, and the Provisional movement in particular. Second, this section tackles why the social identity of the mainstream movement became insufficiently positive for some members. Both the initial route into the Provisional IRA, as well as the routes out of the Provisional IRA reveal ideological as well as social reasons as established in the theoretical framework.

A number of former Provisionals are currently not officially linked to any of the dissident groups but are fairly sympathetic to them or at least opposed to Sinn Féin. This group makes up roughly a third of the interviewees for this thesis. Thus, this chapter seeks to provide a perspective on Irish Republicanism held by those who are not formally aligned to any of the dissident republican in-groups or the mainstream/Sinn Féin out-group. Such Republicans are mostly disaffected and disenchanted by what the peace process brought about

and are, in many cases, Republicans who have been involved in the movement since the early 1970s and have spent many years in prison, in some cases on the blanket protests and/or hunger strikes, but feel like they have been sold out in return. The key focus here is on the personal perceptions and reasons for leaving as a key part of identity construction.

The narratives of shared history and experience are crucial in establishing a social identity and how this perpetuates 'the essence of a group's identity, how it relates to other groups, and ascertains what its options are for facing present challenges'.[264] The lack of a consistent – agreed upon – historical narrative in the Northern Irish context, as well as the difficulty of dealing with the past, allows Republican groups to adjust history to fit their chosen narrative whilst delegitimising the out-groups, or at least being accused of doing so.[265] The commemoration of the Hunger Strikers or the 2016 centenary celebration of the Easter Rising in which both the mainstream and dissident groups held their own individual commemorations, serves as a practical example of such division in historical narrative. Therefore, it is important to consider these personal and shared histories as a matter of identity construction as opposed to a mere remembrance of social commemoration.[266]

[264] Liu, J.H. & Hilton, D.J. (2005) How the past weighs on the present: Social representations and their role in identity politics, *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 44, 537-556

[265] Brewer, J. & Hayes, B. (2014) *Victimhood and Attitudes towards Dealing with the Legacy of a Violent Past: Northern Ireland as a Case Study,* British Journal of Politics and International Relations, 17:3, 512-530

[266] Liu, J.H. & Hilton, D.J. (2005) *Op. Cit.* p.550-551

5.2.1) Reasons for joining and leaving the Provisional IRA

This section discusses the reasons for joining the IRA in order to illustrate the similarities between those involved in the Republican movement. It recognises two main patterns: first, those who come from a long line of Republican families are likely to join the movement regardless of the violence that occurred from the late 1960s. Their reasoning as such comes from a highly ideological and familial background. As Fionnuala Perry expressed 'I come from a staunchly Republican family and joined Na Fianna as a young girl' and 'even without the violence I probably would have gone on to join the IRA anyway'.[267] Others who come from a long line of Republican families share this, expressing that 'I suppose it is in the blood, it is passed down from generations, all of my family would have been involved in Republicanism, in the struggle for Irish freedom as far back as my great grandfather who was one of the Invincibles[268], he was a Fenian and he was jailed for sixteen years I think'.[269]

Second, there are those who join precisely because of the violence, especially in the early 1970s, either to protect the community from harm or to go on the offensive against the opposing community and the 'Brits' as a perceived enemy. Thus, motivations caused by the conflict can be either defensive or offensive, bordering on sectarian, in nature.[270] It furthermore highlights how intrinsically connected

[267] Perry, F. (2016) Interview with the author
[268] The Invincibles were a radical splinter group of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, most active in the late 19th century and known for the Phoenix Park murders in Dublin
[269] Scannell, P. (2016) Interview with the Author
[270] Silke, A. (2003). Becoming a terrorist. In A. Silke (ed.) *Terrorists, victims and society:Psychological perspectives on terrorism and its consequences*, 29-53. Wiley, Chicester

perceptions of social and ideological proximity are. In the set of interviews undertaken for this research, most of those not formerly aligned with strong Republican family ties, revealed that their decision to join the Republican movement was a gradual path of experiences, with some of the first memories of resentment towards 'loyalist mobs' or the British army coming from a young age. As former IRA hunger striker Gerard Hodgins recalls:

> In my younger years up until I was about eleven or twelve years old, the only ambition I had in life was to grow up and join the British army as I thought they were an honourable bunch of guys. […] I remember vividly watching a young woman, she'd long hair that was blowing as she ran, and one Brit grabbed her by the hair and yanked her down. Within seconds she was surrounded by Brits, beating her with batons and boots. I was taught to never curse in front of a woman, to respect them and offer them your seat on the bus, and here were these British soldiers I looked up to, beating a young woman like you wouldn't beat an animal.[271]

This quote illustrates elements of both ideological as well as social reasoning behind his decision to join the IRA. It reveals social facets of identity through his perception of the treatment of kin, in this case a young woman within his own community. It further points to a shift in

For more on the terrorist research see chapter three.
[271] Hodgins, G. (2016) Interview with the Author

attitude towards the British and the British army in particular from wanting to join them, to wanting to actively oppose and fight them. This indicates, at least in this case, that the decision to join the IRA was predominately based on out-group hate, as opposed to active in-group love.

This is not uncommon in the history of the Provisional IRA. A key point in the early days of the conflict, that led many to actively seek to join the ranks of the IRA were most prominently the Falls Curfew (1970), the introduction of Internment (1971) and Bloody Sunday (1972), which Martin McGuinness referred to as the biggest recruitment tool the IRA in Derry ever had.[272] This, as Rogelio Alonso also assessed, meant that a lot of the younger men coming into the movement at the time when the conflict started, most were driven by context and circumstances as opposed to an older generation traditionally running the organisation through a time where it had little to no support.[273]

The patterns of why people joined the Provisional IRA thus rank from the family lineage and the importance of parochialism and sanguinity to this desire to protect the community and fight the perceived enemy. This fits the overall pattern established in the literature on IRA membership and showed little variation in the narrative offered by

[272] Al Jazeera (2014) *Head to head, interview with Martin McGuinness*, transcript, via: http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/headtohead/2014/03/transcript-martin-mcguinness-201432611584520903.html (Accessed 12-12-2016)
[273] Alonso, R. (2006) *Individual motivations for joining terrorist organisations: a comparative qualitative study on members of ETA and IRA*, In Victoroff, J. (ed.)(2006) *Tangled Roots: social and psychological factors in the genesis of terrorism,* IOS Press, Amsterdam; Gill, P., & Horgan, J. (2013) Who were the volunteers? 1 The shifting sociological and operational profile of 1240 provisional Irish Republican army members. *Terrorism and political Violence*, 25:3, 435-456.

individual, mainstream or dissident republicans.[274] Where it is still relevant today is in the continuing desire to perpetuate these principles. However, due to the continuous splits and divisions within Republicanism, the way to do this has become intertwined with the peace process and again presents an essential part of the social structures of dissident republicans and mainstream republicans. The former perpetuate the narrative that Republican communities are still under threat from oppressing forces of which Sinn Féin has now become nothing but an agent.

The signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998 and the subsequent St Andrews Agreement in 2006 present two key turning points in Irish Republican history. One marked the end of decades of violent conflict and the entry into Stormont by Sinn Féin; the second was Sinn Féin's acceptance of the PSNI. Both these matters have been crucial in terms of dissident republicanism as such major agreements inevitably led to a level of splintering and disagreement within the party.[275] Nonetheless, the moment when people left the movement and for what reasons, varies, as does the speed with which their decision took place. In the run-up to the referendum, many town hall meetings were held to answer the questions of Republican communities throughout Northern Ireland. Although for most people the idea of peace and the cessation of violence was enough to make them vote favourably, some

[274] See for example: English, R. (2012) *Armed Struggle: A history of the IRA*, Oxford University Press
[275] de Breadun, D (2015) *Power Play: the rise of modern Sinn Féin*, Merrion Press, Kildare

Republicans began to express caution with the way the provisional movement was heading.[276]

There are two core reasons for individual Republican disaffection leading to members leaving the movement. First, some members of the Provisional IRA and Sinn Féin left because they felt that Sinn Féin simply had strayed politically and ideologically from the path of Irish Republicanism.[277]

Second, and perhaps more complex, there is a shared feeling amongst those that speak out, that they have been sold out: their friends and brothers in arms died in vain and they have spent a large part of their life in prison or under stringent circumstances for what they now perceive as a surrendered battle. They are disgruntled with their former comrades who have taken up positions in Stormont and elsewhere. In other words, they feel the success of their former comrades is a betrayal of former principles.[278] This is particularly related to the social element of the framework established in section 3.5. Yet, this is not completely unrelated from ideological reasons either, as the entire act of engaging in the peace process and the subsequent political process can be interpreted as an ideological choice.

[276] White, T.J., Owsiak, A.P. & Clarke, M.E. (2013) *Extending peace to the grassroots, the need for reconciliation in Northern Ireland after the Agreement,* in White, T.J. (Ed.) (2013) *Lessons from the Northern Ireland Peace Process*, University of Wisconsin Press, Wisconsin, pp. 227-267, pp.230-241
[277] White, R. W. (2017) *Out of the Ashes: An Oral History of the Provisional Irish Republican Movement*, Merrion Press, Kildare
[278] Frampton, M. (2011) *Op. Cit.* pp.201-211

For many, the ideological and social reasons that caused them to negatively associate towards the mainstream Irish republican movement coincided with the peace process. As Anthony McIntyre expressed, 'Sinn Féin basically sold us a signed partition in which the British state is staying in exactly the same way as before'.[279] Others expressed their surprise with the striking overlap between the GFA and the 1973 Sunningdale Agreement, asking 'If it was good enough in 1998, why wasn't it good enough in 1973'.[280] Others however argued that agreeing to the principles set out in the agreement was not as voluntary as it was made out to be: 'It was more like a veiled threat you know, you come along with us and you'll be okay […] if you're silly enough to stay outside this, there's something very different out there for you'.[281]

Although the threat was not explicit, it alludes to an element of coercion or perceived intimidation. This perception may have helped hold together a large part of the movement, or at least create the circumstances in which the alienation and opposition remained passive rather than active. In other words, although people may leave a certain group because it no longer constitutes a positive social identity, they may not necessarily join another because of possible increased conflict. Another former Provisional recalled similar experiences:

> We had this meeting here in west Belfast and they sent Denis (Donaldson) to tell us it was all good, but one

[279] McIntyre, A. (2016) Interview with the author
[280] O'Rawe, R. (2016) Interview with the Author
[281] Perry, F. (2016) Interview with the Author

> fella, still someone I'd speak to and respect today, he was starting to ask critical questions, and they just kicked him out the meeting. That really made me start thinking, but I just didn't see what was happening soon enough. Now, I feel more threatened and scared of being a real Republican as I did before the conflict started in the late 60s.[282]

This quote highlights two important things. First, it foregrounds the notion of 'being a real Republican' which is consistently used in the wider intergroup conflict between dissident and mainstream republicanism. Groups on both sides claim to hold true to the values and principles of Irish republicanism. This is a claim to a positive social identity on the basis of ideological factors. This idea that there is a right way to be an Irish republican is shared by members of groups on both sides of the spectrum, as well as by non-aligned Irish republicans. Second, this quote indicates that becoming disassociated from a group, and creating a negative esteem with regards to the self, is not a sudden rupture, but rather an on-going process that takes time and happens gradually.

Others left the movement at earlier stages, usually when this coincided with an ideological split on socialist grounds, rather than necessarily over the usefulness of armed struggle over a peaceful strategy. For example, Richard O'Rawe states that 'the IRA had lost all moral ways of going, the politics was bankrupt'.[283] Some held a belief that the strategy

[282] Ibid.
[283] O'Rawe, R. (2016) Interview with the author

of armed struggle was prolonged intentionally. Others also reflected on this as a conscious decision by the Northern leadership, predominantly Gerry Adams, in order to take over from the existing southern leadership of Ó Brádaigh and Ó Conaill[284]

As Tommy McKearney recalls:

> My doubts started earlier you know. After the hunger strike, I wasn't in the best condition, physically, mentally. And it was for nothing. These guys (Adams and McGuinness) weren't in it for the same reason I was. I was always a socialist, always a Republican. I lost a brother, and a sister that were in the movement, and my little brother, they shot him dead even though he had nothing to do with anything. But it wasn't going anywhere you know, these were nationalists, and I couldn't associate with that.[285]

This quote focuses particularly on the perception that McKearney had of Adams and McGuiness being nationalists, not socialists like himself. The prototypicality of the leadership of the Provisional movement was thus no longer something with which McKearney could positively identify. As suggested by social identity theory, this left him to either seek to positively alter the social identity of the in-group, or leave. Despite the personal circumstances and sacrifices, he broke with the

[284] McQuillan, J. (2016) Interview with the author
Scannell, P. (2016 Interview with the author
[285] McKearney, T (2016) Interview with the author

IRA and Sinn Féin at an early stage over ideological and political disagreements rather than social ones. Yet, as was the case with Fionnuala Perry, the rejection of the mainstream movement, and thereby the in-group social identity, was a gradual process. This indicates that over time groups can change and thereby attract new members and lose existing ones.[286]

In terms of more social explanations, there was some perception that leaving the movement was ultimately an opportunity cost. As one Republican described it: 'if I apply for the Northern Ireland Office or some civil servant's job, they take one look at my criminal record and I'm out. If I was a Shinner though, that rep sheet, it wouldn't be such an issue'.[287] Even though this particular Republican held no personal grudges towards the individuals involved, describing Gerry Adams as 'still one of my friends', he was conscious of his decision to disengage. Yet he was also still weary of the consequences that he felt it held and critical of the aforementioned issue that the 'rep sheet is wiped clean' for those that perpetuate the accepted narrative, which, in their critical view, is synonymous with Sinn Féin.

Gerard Hodgins shared similar perspectives:

> 'I'd probably been better off if I stayed with them. You know that Sun article you know, them ones trying to blacken my reputation. Just look around you, if I'd really been this drug lord they're saying I am, this

[286] Maillot, A. (2005) *Op. Cit.* p.10-15
[287] Anonymous (2016) Interview with the author

> crime boss, I wouldn't live like I do. I'd be driving around in expensive cars and that. If I had stayed a Shinner though you know, I'd probably live up in a nice cul-de-sac up with Gerry (Adams) and Danny (Morrison) and them ones and I'd still be working for the press office or something'.[288]

Thus, there is a perception that leaving the mainstream movement creates circumstances that are less ideal than if they had stayed. There are personal costs associated with group membership, particularly, as demonstrated above, employment and social status. This indicates that the need to positively self-categorise as Irish republican with ideological purity supersedes in some case the need for social betterment. Overall, this indicates that in leaving the movement ideological reasoning takes precedence over social proximity, but that this decision has social consequences which are actively identified by those republicans who have left the movement. As this thesis established in the theoretical framework, the relationship between social and ideological proximity is complex and interrelated; this is illustrated through the reasons behind leaving the Provisional IRA. Ideological decisions can have social consequences.

To summarise, broadly speaking there are two pathways for joining the Provisional IRA that are established here: one, those who are from a long line of Republican traditions and are by blood linked to the Republican movement; two, the conflict and treatment of one's

[288] Hodgins, G. (2016) Interview with the author

perceived community becomes threatening enough or is deemed to join the IRA. The differences here are whether it is by default a decision to join to protect your community, or a way to fit in with an appealing group and identity. However, the importance becomes most prominent when this is contrasted to the variety of reasons for why people leave the movement. As stated, this can be early on, due to political and ideological reasons, or later on as a more direct result to the peace process. However, what it shows is that the moment when an in-group identity becomes negatively connoted in one's own perception, ideological decisions may have perceived social consequences.

These narratives of a shared history and a deep-rooted involvement in the conflict present a critique of Sinn Féin and mainstream Republicanism that is based on both social and ideological experiences. The importance lies partially in why these people decided to uphold this critical stance without subsequently joining a dissident or IRA splinter group, which is discussed in the next section. They, by their past, present, and future, present an alternative narrative to the commonly held dichotomy, which as Liu and Hilton argue, can aid in externally influencing key in- and out-group differences and relationships and thereby possibly providing non-aligned, agreeable identity characteristics which may be accepted by both the in- and the out-group.[289]

[289] Liu, J.H. & Hilton, D.J. (2005) *Op. Cit.* pp.546-548

5.3) Explaining lack of self-categorising into dissident groups

The logic behind social identity theory dictates that once a social identity has become significantly negative, members will seek to either improve the in-group status, or leave the group for one that is more positively distinct. On the basis of the reasons discussed in the previous section, it is therefore important to ask why some Irish Republicans did not self-categorise into any of the dissident groups. Understanding this, leads to two things, first it explores how dissident republicans are perceived, and looks at the prototypicality of dissident members. Second, it also leads to possible benefits for reducing inter-group conflict between the mainstream and the dissident republican movement. This is explored in this section and further empirically elucidated in section 5.4.

There are three main reasons why many of the independent Republicans are not joining dissident groups despite being sympathetic towards their case. First, there are personal reasons. Some Republicans have exited the public sphere and withdrawn from the Republican arena, making it very difficult to specify their reasons for doing so as they do not often make public statements. This signifies an overall departure from a social group and a decreased salience of identity connotations. Second, some, although involved in politics, do not wish to enter into party structures again or argue that there is no stable enough dissident group to join. Thus, although they may still publicly express their views and opinions, in many cases in opposition to Sinn Féin, they may not consider any of the dissident groups to hold enough added value to wish to become part of it or are opposed to some of its

characteristics, as discussed in more depth in chapters six and seven. Third, some Republicans express that they simply see no possible success that can be garnered by dissident groups' continuation of the armed struggle and argue that if the Provisional movement could not achieve its aims, the dissidents most certainly cannot, thus there is no value in becoming involved.

These critical reflections on dissident republicanism, particularly its use of violence, by Republicans who enjoy a level of respect due to their prior engagement in the Irish struggle for independence, are significant. They provide a largely unexplored avenue to present effective counter-narratives to the use of violence or the extreme nature of dissident republicanism whilst not being perceived as being favourable to, or part of, the mainstream Sinn Féin machine. They may, in effect, be able to positively shape the narrative of dissent or the desire for a viable alternative to Sinn Féin.

Republicans, for example, Anthony McIntyre, are highly critical of the dissident republicans, refuting the armed struggle and its utility. Nevertheless, he still speaks at 'Dissident' events. At a Republican commemoration in 2016 for a former PIRA member and founder of Republican Network for Unity (RNU), with high profile dissidents in attendance, he spoke of the sell-out of Sinn Féin and the need to continue supporting 'true Republicanism' as Tony Catney had done before.[290] Others, like Thomas 'Dixie' Elliot referred to 'the desperate

[290] A tribute event to Tony 'TC' Catney was held in Belfast on 5 August 2016. Although the publicity for it was done mostly through the IRPWA's social media outlets, it was attended by a variety of dissident members as well as individual Republicans. This

deluded SFers' over Martin McGuinness' decision to pose next to a painting of the Queen, proclaiming that by doing so, McGuinness is 'insulting the dead'.[291] This is despite the fact that neither are active per se in any dissident organisation. Thus, although they vocally oppose Sinn Féin, they do not positively self-categorise in any of the dissident groups either. Yet, they are Irish republicans and they do associate with the in-group. This paradox indicates two consequences for the theoretical framework; first, that the common dichotomy between in-group and out-group is incomplete. People may identify a certain way, without being a member of an associated group and in doing so challenges the rather hermetic or binary notion of "membership". Second, it raises the possibility that such people can provide a mediating position between two conflicting sides as they associate with elements of both.

It is important to reflect on their narrative and opinions as they provide at least a level of intellectual stimulus to the existence of dissident republicans without being part of Sinn Féin, and, at best, they can provide a narrative that challenges the positively held perceptions towards armed struggle. Due to their prior engagement in for example the blanket protest and hunger strikes, they hold a particular position within the Irish Republican tradition as it traditionally reveres its prisoners. However, due to their disapproval of Sinn Féin's strategy they do not enjoy the celebratory status of some of their peers but still are part of a shared history. They may not necessarily carry guns, but

anecdote is based on the author's personal fieldwork notes and attendance of the commemoration.

[291] Elliot, D. (2016) *An Insult to the dead,* The Pensive Quill, 16 November 2016, http://thepensivequill.am/2016/11/an-insult-to-dead.html (Accessed 09/10/2017)

this does not mean they lack power to influence and shape the identity and direction of dissident republicans. Therefore, they may not offer a threat per se, and, when integrated properly into their communities, they could offer a more respected voice towards disengagement with violent dissident republicanism without the inherent perception of being 'a Shinner'.

When confronted with the question why the interviewees did not join a dissident group, a common perception was that there was nothing to join in the first place. As Tommy McKearney explained, there is no viable political alternative to be offered up against Sinn Féin as long as 'they do not have their house in order'.[292] There are 'too many parties around, with not enough members to fill them up. I may agree with some of the points they make, cause we are no closer to a united Ireland than before, but they need to sort the mess out amongst themselves first'.[293] As Tommy Gorman said: 'We would prefer they [the dissidents] used any energies they have towards demolishing Sinn Féin's argument'.[294] Thus, many former PIRA members refrain from joining dissident political groups not because they no longer agree with the ideology, but because they perceive the lack of cohesion as a stumbling block. In other words, they have more negative proximity in terms of social factors, than they do in terms of ideological factors. This indicates in terms of understanding the social identity of dissident

[292] McKearney, T. (2016 Interview with the author
[293] McQuillan, J. (2016) Interview with the author
[294] Hall, M. (2014) *Finger pointing is not the way for Irish Republicanism to advance,* the Pensive Quill, 4 February 2014, http://thepensivequill.am/2014/02/finger-pointing-is-not-way-for-Irish.html (Accessed 09/10/2017)

republicans that the key explanatory factor to understand the lack of dissident support is along social lines, not necessarily ideological ones.

When asked if they would join a dissident group if there were a viable alternative or a strong political core, most actually implied that they would not be opposed to the idea. As Fionnuala Perry put it, 'this hopefully won't be far in the future'.[295] it is too early to comment conclusively on the impact that the newly established Saoradh will have on this, or whether or not such a venture is feasible, considering all the problems in the dissident movement as discussed throughout this thesis. However, it is important to note that this party is, as is usual in Irish Republicanism, the third – political – part of the triangle, with the Irish Republican Prisoner Welfare Association (IRPWA) as its prisoner wing, and the 'new' IRA as its paramilitary wing. This party also seemingly unites some loose fractions of dissidents and non-mainstream republicans.

The opposition to the utility of the 'armed struggle' is mostly strategic and not necessarily ideological. As Anthony McIntyre expresses, there is 'an irony in condemning the armed struggle like the Shinners do, because we did it ourselves, so why would it have been morally justified 25 years ago, but not now? However, it is simply pointless as they do not have the support or means to reach their goals through violence'.[296] Others share this perception: 'it's not that it's always wrong, it's just that, right now, it just won't work so it doesn't make sense to do it in

[295] This interview was conducted in August 2016, shortly before the public formation of Saoradh, of which she has become a leadership figure. It is unclear at this point whether she was already involved in the process of forming the party
[296] McIntyre, A. (2016) Interview with the author

the first place, they'd be better off building their politics'.[297] Thus, although the use of violence is not condemned necessarily from an ideological standpoint, it is simply deemed impractical, untimely and ineffective. [298] As McIntyre states: 'they haven't got the support, they haven't got the weapons and they haven't got the brains. There is no way that if the Provos at the top of their power didn't defeat the Brits that they will today'.[299] As off the record remarks suggested, the dissidents themselves are to some extent aware of the futility of their actions. Although dissident groups publicly support the armed struggle on ideological grounds, it is important to consider the impact of social identity in this matter.

Dissident reluctance to give up the armed struggle comes from more than just the belief in the utility of fighting the oppressors. It also emanates from an unwillingness to allow normalisation and admit defeat, as 'putting down the weapons would mean that the Shinners have won'.[300] This may also explain, as chapter seven explores in more depth, why so much dissident republican violent activity on a day-to-day basis is so inward looking. The majority of activity involves paramilitary punishment shootings, drugs related issues and threats to local people and community workers. Rather than being perceivable as an attempt to challenge the status quo of British presence in Ireland, it is more based on challenging the status quo of Sinn Féin and the negative connotations dissidents hold towards the out-group.

[297] McQuillan, J. (2016) Interview with the author
[298] Whiting, S (2015) *Op. Cit.* pp. 143-154
[299] McIntyre, A. (2016) interview with the author
[300] Anonymous (2016) Interview with the author

The reason why it is so important to consider these critiques of dissident republican groups is because the unaligned former PIRA members have direct, and in some cases, positive contact with such groups, despite not being officially members of them. This lack of membership, as outlined above, is more down to practical considerations that dissident republican groups simply lack cohesion or as a rejection of the utility of armed struggle, than down to an ideological opposition towards their political narratives. It can therefore actually be perceived as a shared characteristic or shared social position. Finding any type of solution or improvement of the situation by directly placing Sinn Féin and the dissidents around the table is very unlikely to be successful precisely because of a strong politically motivated conflict.

Nonetheless, independent Republican positions on the use of armed struggle are much more positive towards a non-violent approach along the lines of that propagated by Sinn Féin. In this aspect, they fall in the middle of the two social categories. As the next chapters will show, dissidents' actions are built on anti-Sinn Féin rhetoric. Dissidents and non-mainstream republicans are in much larger part anti-Shinners then necessarily opposed to a peaceful solution to a united Ireland. Therefore, independent Republicans have the opportunity to serve as interlocutors or may at least be in a position to perpetuate the idea that armed struggle is not a viable option. This would however, be preconditioned on the inclusivity and acceptance of these Republicans as acceptable narrators. Thus although they may hold a level of respect from dissident groups, it would also require their inclusion within the

wider societies and the mainstream Republican debate, which presents further challenges, one of which is discussed below.

5.4) Former combatants and prisoners in Northern Ireland after the conflict: the problem of politicisation of social support

The final section of this chapter analyses the role and position of former Irish Republican prisoners in post-conflict Northern Ireland as an illustration of how deeply rooted the distinction between mainstream and dissident republicanism has become in the post-conflict peacebuilding initiatives in Republican communities. The case provides a practical example of how and why the dichotomous nature that dictates thinking on modern Irish Republicanism has the potential to perpetuate and deepen societal division. It seeks to understand how political prisoners after 1998 are part of a similar divide between those supporting Sinn Féin and those who do not. This serves as a vehicle to illustrate the practical consequences of this imposed division.

The role of former combatants is a common issue in most post-conflict societies and is usually explored as a matter of Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR). However, such an approach to the continuation of paramilitary violence and the role of former combatants may not fully encompass some of the more social and personal developments as most DDR processes focus on the more militarised strategies associated with it.[301] On a more societal level,

[301] Knight, M. & Ozerdem, A. (2004) 'Guns, Camps and Cash: Disarmament, Demobilization and Reinsertion of Former Combatants in Transitions from War to Peace', *Journal of Peace Research,* 41:2, pp. 499-516

successes of the reintegration of former combatants comes down to two factors: a generally held political will amongst all parties involved to make the programmes of reintegration work, plus the 'active participation of ex-combatants in their own programmes of reintegration'.[302]

In post-conflict communities, there is a significant focus on intra- and cross-community peacebuilding and societal restructuring. In these processes, former combatants play a particularly important role. Reintegration into their respective societies and the wider community helps diminish violence. Nonetheless, there are important challenges associated with peace projects in contested spaces. As McDowell, Braniff and Murphy assess, peacebuilding can in 'particular points and in particular places, reactivate and maintain conflict between and across warring parties or actors'.[303] One of these particular points is the perception of paramilitary prisoners. Given the importance of the prisoner experience of Irish Republicanism in both the in- and the out-group, this is taken as a wider example to explore how such social structures are contested as a result of intergroup conflict.

Although assessments of the broad political will to make reintegration work is beyond the scope of this research, the second point is particularly important in this chapter. Some of the former Republican combatants discussed here feel that their opposition towards Sinn Féin

[302] Rolston, B. (2007) 'Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-combatants: the Irish Case in International Perspective, *Social and Legal Studies,* 16:2, pp. 259-280
[303] McDowell, S., Braniff, M., & Murphy, J. (2017) 'Zero-sum politics in contested spaces: The unintended consequences of legislative peacebuilding in Northern Ireland.' *Political Geography*, 61, 193-202, p.194

affects their possibility of full integration back into society and negatively affects their social status and livelihood. The success of any peace process is in part decided by its peace dividend. It is a necessity that enough people have benefitted from it, as growing dissatisfaction can increase the likeliness of successful spoilers. Therefore, it is important to acknowledge throughout how the relationship with Sinn Féin is a key element in the views of individual or independent Republicans. It forms part of their view as to why they have not benefited from the peace process.

No singular historic narrative finds cross-community or intra-community support. The legacy of the past offers a significant challenge to the progress of the Northern Irish peace process. This leaves room for a necessary but troublesome debate on the way victims and perpetrators have reintegrated into society. For Northern Ireland, to more constructively address its former combatants, there is a need to reassess, for example, how peacebuilding funds are distributed. Although high levels of collaboration between Sinn Féin and social organisations, such as community restorative justice or prisoner support groups, may not exist in reality, it is important to note that the perception of such collaboration does exist, and presents similar consequences. Those Republicans who are not necessarily active or violent dissidents may feel excluded from this type of assistance and thus struggle to fully re-integrate.

This idea that such social support only exists for those belonging to an active group perpetuates the narrative of there being a singular in-group, dissident republicanism, (singular despite its internal division),

and a singular out-group, Sinn Féin/mainstream Republicanism. Modern Irish Republicanism would be best presented as a continuum rather than a dichotomy. This poses a particular challenge for the theoretical framework in terms of creating forced binaries. Nevertheless, even when those binaries are an oversimplification, the in-group/out-group divide can still function as a useful tool to understand why people associate/disassociate with a particular social identity. Thus, theoretically speaking, the shared experience of prison or conflict is superseded by the imposed division between dissident and mainstream. This creates social conflict amongst those who otherwise need not engage in this. Given the role of prisoners as peacemakers, and the highly important association between former combatants and peacebuilding initiatives, the divide between dissidents and mainstream fails to be inclusive.

5.4.1) Former prisoners as peacemakers

As the Good Friday Agreement stated both the Irish and British governments carry responsibility to:

> Continue to recognise the importance of measures to facilitate the reintegration of prisoners into the community by providing support both prior to and after release, including assistance directed towards

availing of employment opportunities, re-training and/or re-skilling, and further education.[304]

Although many different projects have taken place within and across communities, including reintegration, reskilling and rehabilitation schemes for former combatants, former Republican prisoners interviewed for this thesis believe that they were not included in, or open to receive, these benefits in part due to their discontinued support for Sinn Féin's peace strategy. Even when considering social cohesion and support projects in Republican communities, there is a divide between those being 'under Sinn Féin' and those being a cover for dissident republicans.

As the literature on the nature of dissident republicanism has eluded, there is a clear link between the provisional movement/Sinn Féin and the dissident movement in terms of organisational heritage.[305] Many leaders and rank-and-file members of dissident republican groups have a background in Sinn Féin and/or the Provisional IRA. A core demand in the negotiations of the early 1990s was the early release of prisoners of the conflict, both Republican and Loyalist. Furthermore, there were requests for guarantees that former combatants would not be convicted or prosecuted. One of the differences in Northern Ireland however, in contrast to, for example, South Africa post-Apartheid, is that no real Truth and Reconciliation process has thus far taken place.

[304] The Good Friday Agreement (1998) Annex B, Prisoners, point 5. Via https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/136652/agreement.pdf (Accessed 02-11-2016)
[305] The idea of a unified dissident movement is debated; this is further addressed in Chapter 6.

The issue of dealing with the legacy of the past remains one of the most contentious political and social issues, which on multiple occasions has nearly brought down the power-sharing government.[306] The most prominent of these issues dealt with the 'On-the-Runs', where suspects had been provided a letter telling them they were not wanted for prosecution. Nonetheless, many former combatants, up to 500 in total, had their sentences revoked and were released from prison in the late 1990s until the early 2000s.

Research into former prisoners across Northern Ireland, both Republican and Loyalist, explored a shared but distinctive experience of returning into society.[307] As a former Loyalist prisoner expressed, there was a belief that Republican prisoners were perceived by their own communities with connotations that are more positive. IRA prisoners, hunger strikers and prison protesters are a part of Irish Republican history dating back the best part of a century.[308] Nonetheless, this perception of the other community by former UDA and UVF combatants also gives rise to sentiments that are largely shared by the dissident community. One former UVF combatant expressed his perception of Sinn Féin and its 'machine' as follows:

> They're all control freaks, you know what I mean, if you look at some of Sinn Féin's policy, anyone who disagrees, they're shunned, even ex-Republican

[306] The 2014 Stormont House Agreement and the 2015 Fresh Start Agreement were implemented in order to overcome the deadlock over dealing with the past
[307] J.W. McAuley, Tonge, J. & Shirlow, P. (2009) 'Conflict, Transformation, and Former Loyalist Paramilitary Prisoners in Northern Ireland, *Terrorism and Political Violence,* 22:1, 22-40
[308] Ibid. pp. 30-33

> prisoners are shunned and put to one side if they disagree with them. I wouldn't want it like that within the Protestant community. They don't want people to have individual thought.[309]

Although based on the statement of a loyalist ex-prisoner, this displays a remarkable similarity with dissident thinking, again highlighting the salience of Sinn Féin as an out-group. It demonstrates a crucial issue regarding prisoners' issues in Republican, as well as Loyalist, communities: the support and social cohesion of prisoner support groups and other such projects are divided over similar lines of the mainstream/dissident divide, and even welfare projects have become part of the internal strife. The biggest issue this brings forth is that it leaves elements of social wellbeing at the risk of becoming politicised.

This is a crucial consideration given how much of a social function ex-prisoners play in the peace process. As Joyce and Lynch argue, the transition from 'paramilitary' to 'peacemaker' can be seen as an attempt to redefine and integrate this social category.[310] A number of studies have been conducted into the role of ex-prisoners in peacebuilding, community relations, and restorative justice. They stress their importance for social reintegration and the role these former combatants can play in community cohesion and peacebuilding.[311] Former prisoners perform work as a violence

[309] Ibid p.34
[310] Joyce, C. & Lynch, O. (2016) Doing Peace: the role of ex-political prisoners in violence prevention initiatives in Northern Ireland, *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism*, 40:12, 1072-1090
[311] See for example: McEvoy, K., Shirlow, P & McElrath, K. (2004) Resistance, transition and exclusion: Politically motivated ex-prisoners and conflict transformation

prevention mechanism in, for example, areas of community justice or at the interfaces throughout Northern Ireland and are an integral part of the success of the peace process.[312] They mostly do so through the use of their shared history and personal identities.[313]

This shows potential for the use of similar processes in addressing the in- and out-group distinction within Republican communities in regards to dissident republicanism. Prioritising the shared experience of being an ex-prisoner can supersede the ideological disagreement over republican politics. Focussing on commonalities as opposed to differences can lower the salience of intergroup conflict, or at least create a more positive social proximity across the spectrum of Irish republicanism.

However, this is challenged by the perception held by a section of former prisoners that social justice and peacebuilding processes are inherently driven by the Sinn Féin agenda. Thus, although there are people, as outlined previously, who hold a critical stance on both the in-group and the out-group, and are thus in a position to be of particular use in presenting an additional narrative, they are paradoxically very unlikely to be able to do so in any systematic and effective way, as they have a negative perception of parts of the social support system.

in Northern Ireland, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16:3, 646-670; McEvoy & Shirlow (2009) Re-imagining DDR: Ex-combatants, leadership and moral agency in conflict transformation. *Theological Criminology*, 13:1, 31-59; Mitchell, C. (2008) The limits of legitimacy: Former Loyalist combatants and peace-building in Northern Ireland, *Irish Political Studies*, 23:1, 1-19 & Ferguson, N., Burgess, M., & Hollywood, I. (2015) Leaving violence behind: Disengaging from politically motivated violence in Northern Ireland. *Political Psychology*, 36:2, 199-214.

[312] Joyce & Lynch (2016) *Op. Cit.* pp.1072-1074

[313] Ibid p.1086-1087

The largest prison support group, Coiste na n-Iarchimí (Ex-prisoners committee) (hereafter Coiste) seeks to support former IRA prisoners. However, several interviewees who are no longer aligned with Sinn Féin did not feel this organisation supports them. Several former prisoners reflected on the notion that it is only for those that accepted the peace process,[314] with another former prisoner adding that 'I'd probably not be welcome there. I would have been if I had just stayed in line', 'I'd probably had been better off than I am now you know, I'd still have a nice job for An Phoblacht or something like that'.[315] This may factually be untrue, but perceptions matter: perceptions drive decisions of whether or not to engage with this type of support system.

Conversely, the message of a Belfast Sinn Féin councillor, Seanna Walsh, aligned with Coiste portrays those still engaged in violence or in opposition to the peace process as such:

> There are some people that aren't comfortable with that for different reasons. Some of the guys had been active within their own areas and they felt like they had a reason for getting out of bed in the morning because they were involved in the struggle. That gave them meaning to their lives. When the struggle was ended, what do they do? Some of them hadn't any education; they didn't have any particular job or didn't have a meaning to their lives so. And I'm being kind to them

[314] O'Rawe, R. (2016) Interview with the author
[315] Hodgins, G. (2016) Interview with the author

> to be honest with you, so for some it was ego, for some it was a sense that the armed struggle still had some sort of attraction, for some it was a way of making money to continue. There are all sorts of strange things happening in our communities. […] It is not an armed struggle to end British occupation, it's about gangsterism, it is about criminals and extortion and they use names of convenience. They use Republicanism as a fig leaf to cover the other stuff they're involved in. I don't think I have to say any more than that.[316]

This thinking, worth quoting in full, indicates that those not aligning with the mainstream movement did so for social reasons, like ego or a 'reason for getting out of bed' as well as for ideological reasons, such as continuing the armed struggle. Most prominent in his assessment however is that those not following the mainstream movement in the peace process do so for reasons of criminality or gangsterism. This particular theme is explored in depth in chapter seven. What is telling here though is what is not said in this quote, but what was expressed as a reason to leave the movement. Ideological opposition towards the political direction of the movement was a core reason to oppose the peace process and leave the provisional movement. This quote indicates elements of intergroup conflict focussed on creating a negative self-concept or social identity of the opposition.

[316] Walsh, S. (2016) Interview with the author

Walsh's statement is thus arguably problematic. Although he stated that 'Coiste is open for Republican ex-prisoners that are supportive of peace',[317] the way in which that peace was consequently defined held a notion of acceptance, not just acceptance of the non-use of violence, but also the idea that those not fully in line with the peace process *and* the political strategy were 'thus' partially dissidents involved in gangster activities or simply were not able to get their life back in order without the armed struggle.

The Irish Republican Prisoner Welfare Association (IRPWA) on the other hand identifies itself as representing those prisoners incarcerated as Prisoners of War for their continued engagement in Republican action. Its high profile leafleting action particularly in West Belfast, warning people not to speak to or inform police, provides an opposing narrative to the way in which Sinn Féin, and by extension Coiste, addresses issues. Rather than focusing on ex-prisoner support whilst providing employment through offering guided tours around West Belfast, the IRPWA perpetuates the continuity of conflict. The 'People Should Not Inform'[318] campaign profiles it more clearly as supporting dissident activity and is considered by high profile Sinn Féin members as 'not much more than a failed attempt at legitimacy' and 'the prison wing of the New IRA, who are more criminal than Republican'.[319]

[317] Ibid.
[318] A play on words on the PSNI (Police Service of Northern Ireland)
[319] Kearney, D. (2016) Interview with the author

Republican prisoners and those that have engaged in prison protests such as the Blanket protests, dirty protests or the Hunger Strikes, are held in high esteem and in some cases commemorated annually. However, even here a clear division exists between dissident and mainstream commemoration despite the shared historical background. As was shown in the previous sections, historical and personal experiences are reflected in people's alignment or de-alignment with either mainstream or dissenting groups.

It is thus important to consider the reasoning of these 'individual' Republicans in particular. There is a generally held perception by some former Republican prisoners that they would have been held in much higher esteem had they stayed in line with party politics.[320] Furthermore, as Richard O'Rawe indicated whilst discussing his decision to publish his version of the internal prison conversations over the hunger strikes between the prisoners in the H-block, the moment he went against the official narrative that was put forward, he put 'myself and my family in danger. All of a sudden, I couldn't go to the same bars I used to go 'cause they would put me up against the wall for a beating. It affected my kids going to school, and most of my friends wanted nothing to do with me anymore'.[321] Thus, despite the shared experience of being a prisoner, his decision to oppose in ideological terms had social ramifications.

[320] Interviews with Richard O'Rawe, Anthony McIntyre, Gerard Hodgins and John McQuillan illustrated this.
[321] O'Rawe, R. (2016) Interview with the author & O'Rawe, R. (2005) *Blanketmen: An untold story of the H-block hunger strike*. Virago Press, London.

Although the experiences of prisoners are personal, the implications for the debate that is being held over the past, is divided partially between those who stay in line with the political party message and those who do not. Personal perception of these issues shapes greatly how people construct their personal identities and in- and out-group perspectives. Thus, understanding why the narratives are constructed the way they are, especially by those that do not officially align with either the Sinn Féin/Mainstream or dissident groups, can help provide an alternative perspective on inter-Republican conflict along the lines of previously mentioned work in interface areas and restorative justice. However, by the way in which social support such as prisoner groups are divided along similar dichotomous lines, it is intrinsically difficult to provide inclusion. This is problematic because it may be those Republicans that are critical of both Sinn Féin and the dissidents that are able to present a more neutral narrative.

5.5) Conclusion

A scrupulous distinction between being either a "Shinner" or a dissident is insufficient in creating a full picture of Republicanism since the peace process. It suppresses open opposition on the basis of the negative connotations related to the idea of dissent. A substantive group of Republicans, many of whom carry the legacy of the Irish Republican prisoner identity, falls into neither one nor the other characterisation. Nonetheless, this group provides an interesting perspective on the current conflict going on within Republicanism, and offers insight into both the strengths and weaknesses of the Provisional movement and the dissident republicans.

Former members of the Provisional movement express both social and ideological reasons for their opposition to Sinn Féin, but equally provide a strategic and in most cases personal perspective behind their hesitance towards fully embracing the dissident movement. Their lack of involvement in organisational structures, however, does not mean that they are themselves apolitical and yet the particular Sinn Féin/dissident dichotomy is perpetuated. This is because it is difficult for an individual voice to carry significant weight, without the support of a group structure. This is at the heart of why people seek to identify themselves with a social group. This binary thinking overlooks the position of Republicans that were involved in PIRA but left the movement and became critical of Sinn Féin at their personal expense.

Understanding the perceptions of 'non-aligned' Republicans, those who hold positive and negative connotations towards both the in- and the out-group, adds an extra – albeit not objective – dimension to the perception of narratives and identity within Republicanism. Thus, even those people who are not necessarily willing to be involved in the dissident-mainstream conflict, they are, especially those living in particular geographical areas, almost inevitably going to be confronted by it. This chapter takes a case where this societal dichotomy is put into practice. It looks at prisoner support groups, particularly Coiste and the IRPWA. This chapter argues that it is possible to interpret these contradicting perceptions in a constructive manner and understand that the contention goes beyond the direct political and paramilitary nature of Republicanism and has become engrained in local communities. In order to incorporate and negate these personal

perceptions, there needs to be more focus on the identity construction of non-aligned Republicans through inclusive but non-partisan means. It is important finally, to consider the implications of these processes. It is highly unlikely that these Irish Republicans will be back in arms anytime soon, with age starting to play a considerable factor. However, they do perpetuate a narrative of dissent. In constructing a narrative, and the positive and negative connotations associated with social identity structures, there is a deep-rooted respect for former prisoners within Irish Republican traditions. What is said is as important in constructing social identities and group cohesion, as who says it.

This prototypicality of high-profile Irish republican commentators can help in tackling some element of intergroup republican conflict by stressing both negative and positive perceptions of both the in-group and the out-group. Challenging the political process of Sinn Féin, as well as the utility of the armed struggle perpetuated by some of the more extremist dissident groups, can help create a middle ground where less extreme social identities can be propagated. However, this is increasingly difficult within Irish republican communities in Northern Ireland because the intergroup conflict has shaped the social identity of other groups such as grassroots activist groups and community groups along similar lines.

It is in the best interest for the overall peace process in Northern Ireland in general, and the specific problems of dissident republicanism in particular, to attempt to shift the focus on building a peaceful political dissent platform as a legitimate option and not its violent paramilitary wing. This may not entirely root out the problem, as there

will be a current generation that will be unwilling to put arms away, but it does shape an open space for criticism that may steer a further generation of Republicans away from perceiving dissidents or non-alignment as the only alternative to having their political and personal issues addressed. As this chapter has explored, a useful tool to do so could be by incorporating Irish Republicans who currently feel like they fall outside the spectrum, as the ones described above back into the narrative of a shared past.

As the case study on prisoner issues shows, the start is by presenting an alternative to their reintegration and socialisation into their communities that is not inherently divided between either a Sinn Féin option or a dissident option. As the people interviewed in this thesis show, their ideological stance is strong and they are unlikely to bow to the choice of identifying with Sinn Féin in order to pursue personal benefit, thus they are unlikely to agree to associate with any social organisation that they perceive to be a partisan one, whether factual or not. A manner to incorporate them into the debate in a positively distinct way would be by presenting them with avenues within their own communities that are not built on a partisan distinction.

The shared experience of being prisoners, a particularly salient part of Irish Republican identity, becomes conflicted and difficult in those who stayed in line with the mainstream and those who did not, even if the latter did not formally associate with a dissident group. This alludes to a particular strength of allegiance towards being part of a movement and a level of shunning when stepping out of that line. The consequence

of this can be that rejection of the mainstream becomes stronger and more outspoken as an act of rebellion.

It is important to open the debate on Republicanism because increased avoidance between the two, an increased segregation of the in-group and the out-group, heightens the risk of increasing conflict. Increased salience heightens group identification. As established previously, a shared history between social groups increases the potential for conflict and the example of different prisoner groups, although on a small scale, shows the practical consequences of the dissident/mainstream divide.[322] It increases intracommunity segregation at the same time as cross community segregation is still actively sought to be built and improved. However, as the deeper exploration of Republican politics and violent dissident republicanism in chapter 6 and 7 show, there are serious obstacles in pursuing avenues of constructive identity building

[322] Korostelina, K. (2014) *Political insults: how offenses escalate conflict,* Oxford University Press, New York, pp.136-143

6) Understanding the ideology of dissent: modern Irish Republican politics in Northern Ireland

If you remove the English army tomorrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organization of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in this country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs.

James Connolly[323]

6.1) Introduction

This chapter tackles the main theme of ideological identity. As such, it examines several elements of modern Irish republican politics and analyses the political identity of dissident republican groups. The political identity of almost all dissident groups that this thesis assesses is deeply rooted in socialism and the legitimacy of Irish unification through violent means. Their political agenda is strongly built on a purist interpretation of Irish Republicanism, yet there is variation amongst dissident groups. Sinn Féin on the other hand has moderated over the course of the last decades and focused on a more pragmatic interpretation of its political ideology for the benefit of electoral success.

[323] Connolly, J. (1897) *Socialism and Nationalism,* In Beresford Ellis, P (ed.) (1997) *James Connolly: Selected Writings,* Pluto Press, Chicago, p.124

This chapter highlights the negative impact arising from the in-group/out-group divide between dissident and mainstream republicanism. Through an assessment of republican politics, it argues that the relative strength of Sinn Féin impacts the possibility of political opposition. This effect is particularly exacerbated when combined with the criminalisation of dissident republicanism as is discussed in chapter seven. This chapter argues that, rather than solely promoting their own positive cause, the platform on which dissidents seek to build support is in many facets predominantly negative: anti-Sinn Féin. This builds on the theoretical perception that a positive social identity is, or at least can be, constructed through both in-group love and the promotion of one's own positive characteristics, and through out-group hate whereby the negative aspects of the out-group are challenged.

Furthermore, this chapter analyses the effects of power imbalance between the in-group and out-group. It argues that in the case of such a power imbalance, it may be more difficult for the relatively weaker group to establish a positive social identity. As was established in chapter three, social identity may be characterised not only through how a group perceives itself, but also through how it is characterised by the out-group. Thereby, it theoretically matters which component is stronger; in-group positive identity construction or out-group negative identity construction. Sinn Féin's strong political control over Republican communities gives little potential for an alternative to take hold. This is also caused by Sinn Féin's ability to coercively control the narrative through deliberate use of the dissident label, and the perception of Sinn Féin candidates that leave the party. Nevertheless,

there is little to no support electorally for dissident groups, and only little support for individual non-mainstream republicans.

Some support exists within the Republican vote for an alternative to Sinn Féin, but dissident republican politics are unable to gain traction in the current political climate due to their interpretation of Irish Republican principles. This is particularly true in regards to the utility of armed struggle. Thus, although social identity theory may overlook the impact of the power imbalance between the in-group and the out-group over the possibility of creating a positive social identity, it is not enough to consider Sinn Féin as the only explanation of dissident failure. The findings in this chapter are particularly connected to the second sub-question: to what extent is there popular support in the wider Republican community for the political principles of dissident republicanism?

This chapter is divided into two sections, first discussing electoral politics, and second discussing dissident republican political objectives and the relationship between dissident republican politics and mainstream Sinn Féin. Section 6.2 of this chapter summarises and assesses the current republican political landscape of Northern Ireland. This particularly assesses the need for the electoral success of Sinn Féin as a precondition for the success of the peace process. Failure at the ballot box would entail a failure of the promised political gains on which Sinn Féin sought to sell the peace process to its grassroots. As such, electoral failure carried with it the possibility of increased success for spoiler groups.

This section then seeks to place dissident republican groups within the political layout of Northern Ireland, focusing most significantly on the formal and informal electoral positions. Although most groups adhere to the historical position of non-participation in electoral politics, since they do not recognise Westminster, the Dáil Éireann or Stormont House, some do in fact stand candidates in local elections, or support independent candidates. In order to understand the general support for political positions and more specifically for dissident political groups, this section draws on electoral figures between 2007 and the 2016 Assembly Elections. It argues that a lack of unity has impeded their ability to make political gains. In line with social identity theory, this lack of unity can be explained by social and family differences outweighing ideological compatibility, debates about historical legitimacy and identity, and attitudes towards violence.

Section 6.3 of this chapter analyses the political identity of dissident republican political wings across a number of areas. These include positions on electoral politics and legislatures; visions of a united Ireland; its Socialist/Marxist political roots; the prominence of the role of history; and the dissident position on issues of security, policing and POWs. It assesses both individual groups and dissident republicanism more generally. Furthermore, the term 'dissident' is discussed in depth, and this chapter argues that many groups labelled as such by the out-group do not perceive themselves to be dissidents. More recently, however, dissident republican groups have sought to create a positive connotation to the label imposed on them from outside. In other words, as social identity theory would suggest, dissident republicans seek to pursue a positive connotation to this label. Furthermore, this section

addresses the issue of unity/disunity in the dissident movement and argues that they are becoming an increasingly occasion-based movement. This term is introduced in this chapter as a term to explain occasional cooperation of dissident groups on issue-specific events, such as the anti-PSNI campaign in west Belfast.

Finally, this section explores the political dynamics between mainstream republicanism and dissident political groups. The intra-Republican divide is significantly built on pragmatism vs idealism/purism. In effect, dissident republicans use the narrative of the past and historical interpretations of Republicanism in order to undermine Sinn Féin and legitimise their own position, by claiming that Sinn Féin has strayed from its principles. Reversely, Sinn Féin leans heavily on its electoral success in order to justify its position. Although Sinn Féin operates in a multitude of political arenas, in Belfast, Dublin and London, and dissident republican groups would maintain themselves as being all-Ireland, the main focus here is on the way they deal with issues arising in Northern Ireland.

6.2) Republican Electoral Politics in Northern Ireland, 2007-2016

There is a distinctive local agenda to the places where dissident republican candidates stand, being particularly constrained to strong Republican areas. Chapter three established that in order for social identity conflict to be salient, there needs to be recognition of logistical, social and ideological factors. The localised nature of dissident republican electoral participation relates to the logistical proximity. Furthermore, this chapter stresses that there have practically been no

real independent Republicans contesting Assembly elections since 2007 as all those, bar one, have stood after leaving or being expelled/deselected from either the SDLP or Sinn Féin. Dissident republican groups have only had minor success in local elections and have thus far been unable to gain any MLA seats on a party or independent platform. This is in part due to the divisionary character of dissident republican groups, and in part due to the general lack of support for dissident republican groups. The other part of that explanation comes down to Sinn Féin's strong electoral performance and its successful political guidance of Republican communities away from support for dissident groups.

The 2016 Assembly elections show that support exists for an alternative to the current Republican representation. For example, two People before Profit MLAs being elected in the staunchly Republican areas of Foyle and West Belfast points to support for socialist politics in the historically deprived and most Republican areas of Northern Ireland. A minority of people in Republican communities fall into a political gap and do not feel represented by Sinn Féin or the SDLP, with both losing seats and vote share in the last Assembly elections.

Dissidents are unable to fill this electoral gap. Their seeming inability to gather electoral support is due to a variety of reasons including the lack of unity, and the inherent associations with violence. Wider dissenting politics is largely built on a platform that is anti-Sinn Féin in nature. Furthermore, the identity of the candidates that do stand on an independent platform, in both local and assembly elections, suggests that there is a large anti-Sinn Féin element in their candidacy too, which

is explored in more depth in section 6.4 of this chapter, as well as the personal connection to Irish Republicanism as has been assessed in chapter five.

6.2.1) The Republican vote in post-2007 elections: Sinn Féin's success at the ballot box

Northern Ireland elected 108 members to its Assembly in an election every five years between 2007 and 2016. Each of the 18 constituencies elected six MLAs.[324] Although the major parties governed in a power-sharing executive, the outcome of the 2016 elections brought about certain changes to the landscape. For the first time since the creation of power-sharing in Stormont, the two second largest parties on either side of the communal divide, the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) and the Social Democratic Labour Party (SDLP), decided to form an official opposition. In response, Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness stated: 'we now wait to see if SDLP will stand by the principles of the Good Friday Agreement or follow the UUP into opposition'.[325]

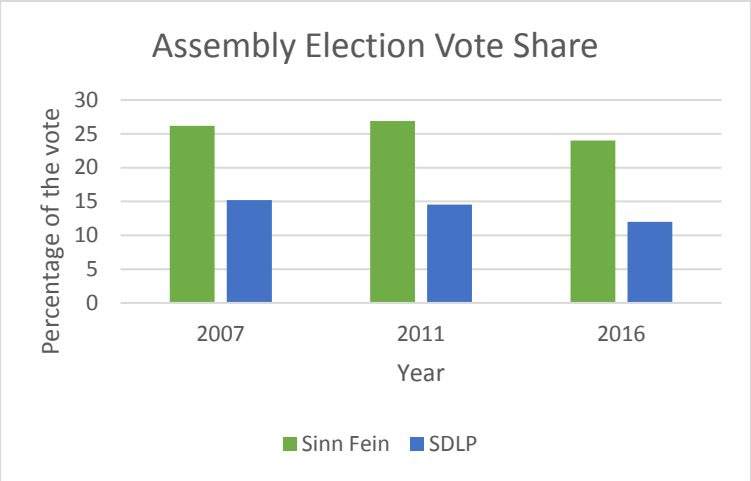
Since the signing of the Good Friday Agreement, Sinn Féin has grown to be the major Republican Party in Northern Ireland, gaining 28 or 29 seats out of 108 in the Assembly since 2007.[326] This 'victory' was

[324] After the 2016 election, this number was reduced to 90 MLAs over 18 constituencies.
[325] Sinn Féin (2016) 'Sinn Féin will continue to move society forward – McGuinness', 12 May 2016, http://www.sinnFéin.ie/contents/39861 (Accessed 10/10/2017)
[326] For more detail on the rise and reform of Sinn Féin, see: Evans, J., & Tonge, J. (2013) 'From abstentionism to enthusiasm: Sinn Féin, nationalist electors and support for devolved power-sharing in Northern Ireland' *Irish Political Studies*, 28:1, 39-57; Whiting, M. (2016) 'Moderation without Change: The Strategic Transformation of Sinn Féin and the IRA in Northern Ireland', *Government and Opposition*, 53:2, 288-311

arguably a necessity for Sinn Féin in order to pursue the peace process and keep the movement largely intact, preventing major disgruntlement of its grassroots. Part of bringing the provisional movement away from violence and towards a peaceful pursuit of its goals, rested on the idea of ripeness of pursuing politics. A poor performance at the polls would have made it difficult for the Sinn Féin leadership to sell that readiness to its support base. In other words, electoral performance was crucial in holding the movement together. Nonetheless, as table 6.1 shows, their vote count has decreased between 2011 and 2016. The 2016 electoral results were a blow to Sinn Féin, especially because of losses in its Republican heartland. The SDLP has fared significantly worse, losing two seats in consecutive elections. This, according to Tonge and Evans, may be in part due to its leadership crises.[327]

[327] Tonge, J., & Evans, J. (2015) another Communal Headcount: The Election in Northern Ireland. *Parliamentary Affairs*, 68(suppl 1), 117-132, p.132

Table 6.1: Assembly election vote share[328]



It is important to recognise smaller changes in the political landscape, especially considering the 2016 Assembly elections. The reason why small changes may still be relevant indicators for intra-Republican attitudes is because a growing resentment or indifference towards Sinn Féin may indicate the possibility for growing support for alternatives. Furthermore, they indicate changes in group structures and social identity. Although electoral loss of Republican seats has historically been at the expense of the SDLP, the 2016 election of two People before Profit MLAs in staunch Republican areas, Gerry Carroll at the expense of Sinn Féin in West Belfast and Eamon McCann in the Foyle constituency, shows a move towards the left in these areas.[329]

[328] Source: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/election/elect.htm (2007 & 2011), http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2016/northern_ireland/results (2016)
http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/election/elect.htm (2007 & 2011), http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2016/northern_ireland/results (2016)
[329] McCann lost the Foyle seat in the 2017 Assembly Elections, something that can be attributed in part to a decrease in the number of seats between the 2016 and the 2017 elections.

It also shows a clear sign of disgruntlement in grassroots support. West Belfast and Foyle are traditionally strong Republican areas, and therefore they provide an insight into underlying tensions in the Republican movement in a smaller scale scenario. Changes in voting in Republican areas may indicate a decrease in the positive perceptions held towards the Republican mainstream. Yet this does not necessarily translate into an increase in the dissident vote. It highlights theoretically that, in addition to in-group love not equating to out-group hate that the reverse can also be true: growing dissatisfaction with the mainstream Republican movement does not lead to a growing positive association with the social identity of dissident republican groups.

Dissident republicans have had no success competing in Stormont elections. Although a wide variety of candidates stand on an independent platform, most do so on a cross community platform, or on a single-issue ticket, such as Dr Kieran Deeny, one of the few independent candidates to get elected in the 2007 assembly elections on a health platform.[330] Out of all the independent republican candidates to contest assembly elections since 2007 none have been successful.[331] Candidates are, for the purpose of this thesis, included as independent if they are not standing on a party platform, but have identifiable ideological proximity to Irish Republicanism. In most cases this is based on former membership of either the SDLP but mostly Sinn Féin. This relationship draws back on the argument made in chapter

[330] Northern Ireland Assembly (ND) 'Northern Ireland Assembly Archive Site', http://archive.niassembly.gov.uk/members/biogs_07/deeny_k.html (Accessed 11/10/2017)
[331] See Annex 3

five that there is a number of Irish republicans that are neither dissident nor mainstream republican.

One of the more interesting findings is that out of all the independent Republicans to stand in elections, only one was not formerly associated with either Sinn Féin or the SDLP. That candidate, Peggy O'Hara, mother of INLA hunger striker Patsy O'Hara, stood in the Foyle constituency on a clear platform of anti-policing in reaction to Sinn Féin's decision to support the PSNI.[332] This example stresses once more the interrelated nature of ideological and social aspects of social identity as her popularity is in part due to the prototypicality of her son as an Irish republican hunger striker.

As stated in chapter five, dissident Irish republicanism is carried through a long family line as well as on grounds of ideological opposition to the mainstream. This indicates that in the case of independent candidates, the social proximity of candidates is still important alongside its political standpoint. In other words, it indicates that people vote for someone they know and respect as well as someone they politically agree with. Regardless that O'Hara was not successful in being elected, she received the second highest number of votes of the dissident candidates in the 2007 Assembly elections, and received more than double the number of votes compared to the dissident candidate with the third highest number.[333]

[332] Perry, R. (2011) the devolution of policing in Northern Ireland: politics and reform. *Politics*, 31:3, 167-178, p.173
[333] See Annex 3, Table 1

Long term IRA member Paul McGlinchey stood on a similar anti-policing platform in 2007, arguing in his election statement that

> Next year that could be your friend's or neighbour's son behind that RUC/PSNI balaclava enforcing British policing on Nationalists. Is that the type of police force you want to vote for?[334]

According to Davy Hyland, former Sinn Féin MLA, his decision to stand in the 2007 assembly elections was partly in reaction to what he argued was a conscious attempt to undermine his Sinn Féin candidacy in the run up to elections. He would not identify as a dissident, but he argued for being 'a dissenter from the prevailing orthodoxy of Sinn Féin'.[335] This reiterates the issue of labelling and the use of the term dissident as something negative and perverse. It also strongly links to the ideological and social factors of dissident social identity as being shaped by out-group hate. Opposition towards the republican mainstream is probably the strongest commonality of those identifying as Irish republican without being connected to Sinn Féin. He furthermore expressed that in his campaign, he did receive indirect and direct support from dissidents in the Newry area, for both his national and local election candidacies.[336] Although he was the most successful independent Republican to contest Stormont elections, he was

[334] Ballymena and Antrim Times (2007) 'Former 'blanket man' stands as independent Republican' 22 February 2007, http://www.ballymenatimes.com/news/ballymena-news/former-blanket-man-stands-as-independent-Republican-1-1902785 (Accessed 02-09-2016)
[335] Hyland, D. (2016) Interview with the author
[336]Hyland, D. (2016) Interview with the author

unsuccessful, but has as will be shown in the next section, successfully contested the local elections in 2011 and 2014.

Sinn Féin has comfortably increased its performance in electoral politics on a principally revisionist agenda. The emphasis of the 1970s and 1980s on a united Ireland and 'Brits out' platform shifted to one focussing on equal rights and parity of esteem, achieving equality first in the Northern State as a prelude to a united Ireland. Irish unity was perhaps seen as too radical to put at the forefront of political campaigning. Dissidents argue that this is an inherent surrender of Republican goals of territorial integrity, and such an equality-based agenda is a compromise, rather than a prelude. Recognition of the Stormont power-sharing institutions is an inherent recognition of the legitimacy of the Northern Irish state. However, as Tonge et al. assess, this agenda shift was 'enough to retain the support of a majority of earlier supporters of armed struggle, whilst the frontloading of rights within the state was popular amongst the nationalist electorate for whom unity had never been an imperative'.[337] Thus, by departing from the armed struggle, Sinn Féin expanded its electorate to those for whom violence was a deal breaker. This, in combination with the leadership issues within the SDLP helps explain its growth in places where the SDLP would have found its support base.

It is highly unlikely, based on Sinn Féin's electoral performance and its comfortable majority in Northern Ireland, that its political position is perilous. This perhaps, as was explored in chapter two, is largely

[337] Tonge, J., Shirlow, P., & McAuley, J. (2011) *Op. Cit.* p.9

attributable to the entrenchment of identity blocks as a result of consociationalism. As such, the new politics of Sinn Féin is unlikely to significantly lose its strength as the representatives for the Republican communities any time soon.

Nonetheless, Sinn Féin does not exist in a vacuum and its position is partially determined by the willingness of its unionist counterpart to govern. Therefore, any significant changes in its approach particularly concerning a united Ireland on the one hand, or growing dissent, particularly of a paramilitary nature, within the Republican communities on the other hand, can create political tension that needs to be observed to maintain power-sharing and thus Sinn Féin's political strength. However, the improbability of Sinn Féin losing its stable, if not unbeatable, lead among nationalists as a result of competition is also caused in some part due to the lack of alternative. Where the electorate perceive such an alternative to be present, and where grassroots dissatisfaction is high, it has in fact led to the election of other parties such People before Profit on the Assembly level, and other local councillors as assessed later.[338]

Sinn Féin's politics particularly in early years after the peace process and when the Provisional IRA had not yet disarmed, also carried with it an element of coercive control or 'coercive spoiler management'. Through positioning itself strongly as the only alternative to a reversal of the peace process, the provisional movement kept control of its

[338] See BBC (2016) *Northern Ireland Election Results,* Via: https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2016/northern_ireland/results (Accessed 22-07-2018)

grassroots and kept a majority of the movement and communities in line with their objectives.[339] This strategy not only applied to militant elements, discussed in more depth in chapter seven, but also to a degree in its political wing.

This strategy, as reflected in the words from McGuinness on the possibility of an opposition in Stormont, had a distinctively two-sided character. It sought both to improve its own social identity by placing themselves as the political guardians of peace and the institutions, and to negatively impose on the social identity of the relevant out-group by portraying it as opposed to peace. This element has been present in the relationship towards, for example, the SDLP and PBP, but also towards dissident groups particularly through the criminalisation thereof discussed in chapter seven. Conversely, there is a perception that Sinn Féin sought to stifle any internal contention on issues of the peace process, leading to numerous members leaving the organisation and pursuing elections independently or in some cases as part of a dissident group. This further exemplifies the interrelated nature of competition between Sinn Féin and the wider dissident movement.

6.2.2) Dissident and Independent Republicans in local elections: continued dissident failure

Dissident republican groups have only contested Assembly elections on one occasion: in 2007 when Republican Sinn Féin stood six candidates

[339] Trumbore, P. F. (2018) "The movement moves against you": Coercive spoiler management in the Northern Ireland peace process, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 30:3, 524-543.

across the North. The most successful candidate, Geraldine Taylor, gained 427 votes in West Belfast (See annex 3, table 1). After this disappointing attempt at gaining an electoral platform, no dissident republican groups have put forward candidates for Stormont, based on the argument of abstentionism. The failure to perform effectively in Stormont elections arguably served as a retreat from any political aspirations back into dogmatism. Under the banner of abstentionism, legitimacy can be claimed outside of electoral success. In other words, it allows dissident republicans to create a positive social identity on ideological grounds that legitimise not competing in electoral politics. As Whiting establishes, this debate between pragmatism and idealistic dogmatism is prominent in Irish republicanism and creates the most prominent ideological factor that divides the dissident republican in-group from the mainstream republican out-group.[340] This is illustrated further in the next section.

Based on electoral results, Sinn Féin has a highly positive ideological proximity to the wider republican electorate. The wider republican electorate supports Sinn Féin despite minor changes in the political landscape in heartland republican communities like Foyle and West-Belfast. This indicates that at least on the national level, there is little to no demonstrable support for dissident republican politics and high support for mainstream republican politics. However, as stated, this lack of success on the national level needs to also be considered in light of dissident republican ideological identity. Therefore, it is important to understand support for dissident republican politics from a local

[340] Whiting, S. (2015) *Op. Cit.* pp.68-71

level by looking at electoral performance in local elections. This thesis considers two local elections, in 2011 and 2014. In 2011, members were elected to 26 local councils. The number of councils was reduced to 11 from 1 April 2015 so that number was already introduced for the 2014 local elections.[341]

Tables 4 and 5 (annex 3) show where dissidents and independent candidates contested elections and their performance. As with the Assembly elections, the electoral data points to two assessments. First, even in the case of local elections, independent Republicans that contest local council elections without belonging to a dissident republican group, usually do so after leaving Sinn Féin or the SDLP, being critical of the way in which Sinn Féin represents its grassroots and making note of a toxic internal party structure. For example, former Sinn Féin councillor Dessie Ward described the experience of leaving the party 'like leaving the mafia'.[342] Likewise, former Fermanagh/South Tyrone MLA Gerry McHugh left after becoming disillusioned with 'the undemocratic nature of the party'.[343] Thus, this indicates again that leaving the mainstream out-group does not automatically mean joining the dissident in-group. This reiterates the findings from chapter five on the basis of ideological rather than merely social factors.

[341] Northern Ireland Direct (ND) 'Local Councils', https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/local-councils (Accessed 25/02/2017)
[342] Baker, P. (2010) 'Leaving Sinn Fein is like leaving the mafia, 5 June 2010, Slugger O'Toole, https://sluggerotoole.com/2010/06/05/leaving-sinn-Féin-is-like-leaving-the-mafia/ (Accessed 11/10/2017)
[343] BBC News (2007) "disillusioned' SF man resigns', 3 December 2007, (http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/7125105.stm, (Accessed 11/10/2017)

Second, dissidents lack electoral support. Although there have been a number of successful local candidates elected on an independent platform, none of the dissident groups that stood candidates in the 2011 local elections, most notably Éirígí, managed to get their candidates elected. The two Éirígí candidates standing in Belfast got 2062 first preference votes in the 2011 local elections, and 1756 first preference votes in the 2014 local elections. This was in both cases only 0.3% vote share on the national level.[344] However, this was centred on Belfast, and points to the regionalist nature of Republican politics. Dissident candidates will contest elections in their strongholds, most noticeably in the urban areas of Belfast and Derry. However, this is also where the competition from within the non-mainstream arena is high, and the Sinn Féin vote is also very strong. As a political commentator asked Éirígí's John McCusker: have the socialist parties in West-Belfast not divided 'the niche into sub-niches so small that nobody wins?'[345] McCusker responded:

> First of all, there are a number of people in the contest for these elections who would describe themselves as being on the left. Obviously they come with their different histories, different takes on what's required, and where we need to go. I think there is room out there for somebody like éirígí because we're republican socialist organisation. Some of the other – indeed most of the other – groups that would describe themselves as

[344] Vote share in the wards themselves was higher. See Annex 3.
[345] Slugger O'Toole (2011) 'Catching up with Eirigi's John McCusker', 16 April, via https://sluggerotoole.com/2011/04/16/catching-up-with-eirigi-john-mccusker/ (Accessed 23-07-2017)

> leftist aren't republican and won't really be addressing in any way British occupation, the realities we face in these communities.[346]

McCusker's statement indicates several relevant ideological factors that help to understand both the dissident republican ideology and the divided nature of the non-mainstream political arena. There is cohesion on the leftist ideology of non-mainstream groups; all share an ideological proximity based on socialism. However, not all share that same ideological proximity on republicanism and perceptions of the 'British occupation', and particularly what means are necessary and appropriate to address these issues.

The electoral results in 2014 saw one candidate elected to a city council; Gary Donnelly was elected with 1154 votes in Derry and Strabane. He argues that his success is because people in his constituency feel that Sinn Féin does not provide for the local community, and has turned its back on republicanism and the working class.[347] This links closely to the electoral success of Eamonn McCann in 2016 where he was elected in the same constituency on a socialist platform. Republican Network for Unity received 502 votes in the Belfast area. This indicates that non-mainstream republicanism has only managed some minor successes in the urban areas of Derry and Belfast, in staunch republican areas.

[346] Ibid.
[347] Donnelly, G (2016) Interview with the Author

Staunch dissident republicans, standing on the platform of one of the dissident republican parties, have achieved very limited success in gaining seats in local councils. However, if the results of those candidates are combined, it shows that a candidate could have been elected if they had rallied behind a joint candidate on a shared platform, as opposed to each standing individual candidates and splitting the vote. This is especially in the case of Éirígí candidates standing in West Belfast wards. Although many independents stand on an anti-Sinn Féin platform, their internal disunity prevents any of them from being elected. Many of the issues that are raised in this section, especially the notion of socialist politics in Irish Republicanism and the increasing sense of anti-Sinn Féin politics, as well as some of the reasons for dissident disunity is explored in more depth in the next sections of this chapter.

6.3) the politics of dissent: exploring the political identity of dissident republicans

As the last section has shown, there is a clear lack of success in the electoral performance of dissident republican groups. Conversely, there is also a small but noticeable dissatisfaction with mainstream Republican politics, and the vote share for the SDLP and Sinn Féin has decreased recently. The election of two PBP MLAs and a number of councillors from the Trotskyist party raises important questions about the status of dissident politics particularly as dissident republican groups share an overwhelmingly socialist political platform, but fail to gain any significant benefit in its heartland Republican arenas. The negative proximity of ideological factors underpinning dissident

republican politics and mainstream republican politics need to be explained by purism vs. pragmatism. Therefore, this section explores the ideological identity of dissident Irish republicanism and positions this in relation to the mainstream republican outgroup.

Furthermore, an analysis is provided of the use of the label 'Dissident' to describe anti-agreement political groups. One of the core observations made here is that the term itself is not necessarily negative. Instead, it is most commonly used to describe opposition to regimes that are perceived as oppressing or authoritative regimes opposed to the ideas of Western liberal values. The failure of anti-agreement Republicans to positively associate the term to those values, which dissent, enjoyed in the Cold War era, gave it an alternative, anti-peace meaning in post conflict Northern Ireland.

Irish Republicanism is historically grounded in socialist and Marxist traditions as advocated by, for example, James Connolly, one of the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising. Although each dissident republican group draws on its own interpretations, they all share a leftist political tradition. This is more obvious in groups like the Irish Republican Socialist Party and Éirígí, but is equally prominent in the political mandates of other dissident groups. As established previously with the election of two PBP MLAs in 2016, strong socialist politics finds a level of support in Republican communities. Nonetheless, this manifesto has provided limited success for dissident republicans.

In the case of dissident republicans, socialist ideals and nationalist aspirations are often interlinked and inseparable. This is historically

rooted in the words that open this chapter and the idea that without the socialist part to Republican aspirations, the Irish Republic would be ruled by the capitalist class. This may be part of the explanation for lack of success, as the interlinking of these principles also more closely links it to the armed struggle. In the case of PBP, Gerry Carroll in fact supported the idea of a united Ireland when asked, but considered the bread-and-butter issues to take precedent for his West Belfast constituents. He argued that Sinn Féin was no longer providing these socialist principles for its grassroots.[348] Either the parties themselves, their member base, or the wider electorate thus not commonly makes the distinction between whether someone is a socialist first and Irish Republican second, or vice versa, as was indicated by McCusker's assessment in the previous section.

Nevertheless, in the case of Éirígí and particularly RSF, socialism is at the start of their political manifesto through Éire Nua, one of the core manifestos of Irish Republicanism, a document most commonly associated with RSF, but until the 1980s also part of Sinn Féin's official strategy. It is a reflection of Republican thinking as it seeks to integrate the unionist minority within it and it lays out the plan for a socialist system with federal elements. This can also be found in the Protestant tradition of early Irish Republicanism of the 18th and 19th century as highlighted in the introduction. Even Republicans outside the direct remits of RSF would value the principles of Éire Nua.[349] Although Éire Nua was official Sinn Féin policy, it was abandoned in the 1982 Ard

[348] Carroll, G (2016) Interview with the Author
[349] 32CSM (2013) 'Chairmains Address at Ard Fheis', via http://www.32csm.net/2013/11/chairmans-address-at-ard-fheis-2013.html (Accessed 12-02-2017)

Fheis as internal contention for the leadership had arisen and Adams and McGuinness were preparing their leadership takeover at the expense of O'Bradaigh and O'Conaill.[350] The document and its historic roots, show the deep historical contention of RSF's political manifesto. In all its characterisation, it is the most 'purist' of all the dissident groups.

32CSM, although sympathetic towards Éire Nua, harbours a slightly more modern but also militaristic interpretation of Irish Republican politics, but like RSF is a direct descendant of Provisional Sinn Féin, starting out as the 32 County Sovereignty Committee within the structures of Sinn Féin itself. Nonetheless, as long-term member and 32CSM president Francie Mackey explained, there was little room for the traditionalist way of thinking within the organisation, leading to its ultimate departure from the Sinn Féin ranks.[351] For 32CSM it was not necessarily Éire Nua or socialism at the basis of their ideological identity, but rather the right to the self-determination of Ireland. This is why their ideological constitution does not directly include any reference to the socialist nature of the Unified Irish republic.[352]

The Republican Network for Unity seeks to stand outside the peace process and oppose the PSNI.[353] Their ideology, they claim, is based on the traditions of the French and American Revolution, as well as the

[350] English, R. (2012) *Op. Cit.* pp.252-254
[351] Mackey, F. (2016) interview with the Author
[352] 32CSM (N.D.) Policy Documents, via https://32csm.blogspot.com/p/32csm-policy-documents.html (Accessed 22-07-2018)
[353] Republican Network for Unity (ND) *Standing outside the peace process,* via http://republicannetwork.org/position-papers/standing-outside-peace-process/ (Accessed 26/07/2018)

international struggle of the working classes: 'Our socialism derives from our anti-imperialism and the long struggle of republicanism to liberate Ireland from British rule. We cannot envisage a free Ireland without socialism'.[354] Therefore, they see no possible disassociation between the different ideological factors that make up the social identity of Irish republicanism.

The close ideological proximity between dissident groups on the principles of Socialism and republicanism therefore indicates that other elements are more important at least to explain why the dissident movement is so internally divided. The wider support for socialism from the republican electorate again indicates that other factors must explain the intergroup conflict within Irish republicanism and the negative social identity of dissident republicanism. Therefore, other ideological or social factors may be more important in order to understand the lack of support for dissident Irish republicanism and the lack of unity in the dissident republican in-group.

Decisions made by Sinn Féin and the notion of the Republican split lie at the root of most of the dissident republican organisations. Although most find their origins before the Good Friday Agreement and lean heavily on their historic traditions, others, such as the Republican Network for Unity and Éirígí, came into being after the GFA and St Andrews Agreement. For some contemporary dissident groups it was the apparent departure from socialism, abstentionism or the armed

[354] Republican Network for Unity (ND) *Ideology*, via http://republicannetwork.org/ideology/ (Accessed 16-07-2018)

struggle. For others, it was the support for the PSNI and the Stormont Assembly.

The perceived lack of socialist ideals in favour of nationalist aspirations within Sinn Féin during the 1980s has led some high profile Republicans to break away from the Republican movement on the grounds that it was nationalist and separatist rather than a socialist movement striving towards a working class ideal. Former IRA hunger striker Tommy McKearney, who was interviewed for this thesis, for example, remarked that his socialism took precedence over his sense of Republicanism by the 1980s, leading him to leave the Republican movement at that point.[355] Richard O'Rawe expressed similar interpretations, and it is further reflected partially in the creation of the Irish Republican Socialist Party as well.[356]

The two main newer groups, Éirígí and RNU, started as campaign groups, the first primarily to promote the socialist tradition in Sinn Féin, the second as an attempt to create a unifying force to bind together the different anti-Agreement factions within Republicanism and as a reaction to Sinn Féin's decision to support policing.[357] Both had former Sinn Féin and Provisional IRA members at its core.[358] One of the core pillars of dissident republican political thinking in contemporary Northern Ireland is a strong resistance to the police and police harassment. Although the violence associated with that position is discussed in more depth in chapter seven, it is also very much part and

[355] McKearney, T. (2016) Interview with the author
[356] O'Rawe, R. (2016) Interview with the author.
[357] Whiting, S.(2015) *Op .Cit.* p.132
[358] Ibid. pp.116-120

parcel of its ideological identity.[359] Dissident republicans are inherently opposed to the PSNI, considering it a British Imperialist force, with the sole intention of oppressing Irish freedom and self-determination.[360] Again, this ideological factor has a close positive proximity across the spectrum of republican dissidents.

The crucial remaining divisionary ideological element of the social identity of dissident republican groups is the perception of the armed struggle. This is discussed in more depth in chapter seven, but also forms an important part of the ideological proximity between dissident groups and the mainstream. Although most dissident groups do not condemn the armed struggle, their perception of militarism differs. Éirígí most notably argues that the timing is not right for military strategies.[361] Even though neither RNU nor Éirígí share the militaristic background of 32CSM and RSF, neither individual members nor organisational structures outright condemn the use of violence.[362] Despite the lack of an armed wing, a reason carried for the lack of support for dissident republicanism, Éirígí have yet to see a successful election.

In the case of RNU, some reasons may be found in its internal strife and the loss of its major figureheads, with the death of Tony Catney, a widely respected Republican and one of the last people to receive a full paramilitary funeral, the arrest of Tony Taylor and the controversy

[359] See for example: Republican Sinn Fein (2016) *Towards a Peaceful Ireland,* (https://rsfnational.files.wordpress.com/2016/02/towards-a-peaceful-ireland_pdf.pdf); but opposition to the PSNI is shared across all dissident groups.
[360] Mackey, F., Stuart, N., Donnelly, G. (2016) Interview with the author
[361] See Horgan, J. (2013) *Op. Cit.* pp.41-42
[362] Stuart, N., Donnelly, G. (2016) Interview with the author

over Martin Og Meehan's alleged collusion and the subsequent departure from the movement.[363]

Dissidents are unable to maintain a unified front. As section 6.2 has shown, this has affected their electoral performance as they have split one another out of vote share. However, it also further impacts on people's ability to recognise and identify with an organisation. The loss of important leaders, such as is the case for RNU with the death of Tony Catney and the imprisonment of Tony Taylor, affects the prototypicality of their social identity. As the theoretical framework indicates, creating social and ideological proximity is important, but having figureheads with which individuals can associate is equally important in creating the initial access to, or association with, a group. Dissident republican groups are split to some degree on parochialism, making its membership more to do with ties and roots than with political affiliation. Social identity plays a large part in this, to the detriment of its political and social effectiveness.

Finally, Sinn Féin argue that dissident republicans lack legitimacy. Much of the dissidents' political manifesto is built on the principles of the Declaration of Independence and the vote for the first Dáil Éireann in 1919. Seemingly, less emphasis has been placed into its current

[363] See: BBC News (2014) 'Tony Catney Funeral: DUP calls for prosecutions' 14 August 2014, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-28794728 (Accessed 11/10/2017); McKinney, S. (2016) 'Leading Republican Tony Taylor returned to prison after license revoked, The Irish News, 12 March 2016 http://www.Irishnews.com/news/2016/03/12/news/leading-Republican-tony-taylor-returned-to-prison-after-licence-revoked-447862/ (Accessed 11/10/2017); Murray, G (2015) 'Martin Og Meehan: I was set up on Loyalist collusion claims', News Letter, 1 February 2015, http://www.newsletter.co.uk/news/crime/martin-og-meehan-i-was-set-up-on-loyalist-collusion-claims-1-6555178 (Accessed 11/10/2017)

policies apart from opposing Sinn Féin. Furthermore, Sinn Féin capitalises on the negative ideological proximity of violence. However, the biggest opportunity for growth of Republican dissent does come from a growing dissatisfaction with Sinn Féin.

6.3.1) The 'real' dissenters: the use of the 'Dissident' label

Many dissident republicans do not perceive themselves as dissidents. Rather, they believe that it is Sinn Féin, which has dissented from the path of true republicanism. Therefore, the use of the term is inherently related to the ideological factors that drive the conflict between the in-group and the out-group. The term 'dissident' has become associated in the Northern Irish context as anti-peace or pro-armed struggle. All those under this banner have either sought to discredit the term in order to re-establish a positive social identity, or sought to change its connotations. Therefore, the terminological and ideological conflict that exists over the term 'dissident' is reflective of the conflict that exists between mainstream and dissident groups and their attempts to establish a positive social identity. As Anthony McIntyre outlines, the term itself is usually perceived with positive connotations, but has acquired an alternative, negatively associated meaning in the case of Irish Republicanism. He states that:

> They should have battled to save the term, because for years in international politics, international discourse, human rights discourse, liberation discourse, Dissident was always a revered term. Sakharov and all those people, people who dissented from the Chilean

> Junta, the Argentinian regime, all these people were Dissidents. Now all of a sudden it has become a bad word. After the Omagh bomb, Sinn Féin, the media and the state, between them managed to give a particular inflection to the term Dissident and make it appear as pervert, or deviant.[364]

Being a Dissident in the case of Irish republicanism seems to have acquired the meaning of being opposed to peace, and in favour of violence. Arguably, however, a considerable section of Republicanism is simply dissenting from Sinn Féin's strategy and not from the idea of peace.[365] As Bolton analyses in his work on dissent in Soviet Eastern Europe even Vaclav Havel, one of the leaders of Chapter 77, the Czech dissident elite, recognised the double-edged nature of the dissident label.[366] Havel states that reclaiming positivity is necessary in the dissident terminology. He argues that the idea that dissidents and renegades are the same thing poses the idea that they seek to reject the state against which they dissent.

However, in his perspective they are simply seeking to 'affirm their human identity, and if they reject anything at all, then it is merely what was false and alienating in their lives'. [367] This is echoed in the

[364] McIntyre, A. (2016) Interview with the author
[365] See for example: Doherty, K (2016) 'a despairing Derryman' *the Pensive Quill*, 8 September 2016, http://thepensivequill.am/2016/09/a-despairing-derryman.html (Accessed: 09-09-2016)
[366] Bolton, J. (2012) *Worlds of dissent: Charter 77, the Plastic People of the Universe, and Czech culture under communism*. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA. p.2
[367], Havel, V., & Wilson, P. (1985) The power of the powerless, *International Journal of Politics*, 15:3/4, 23-96.p.39

Republican rejection of the Northern state and subsequently Sinn Féin's participation in this state. Yet conversely, he argues that:

> You do not become a "Dissident" just because you decide one day to take up this most unusual career. You are thrown into it by your personal sense of responsibility, combined with a complex set of external circumstances. You are cast out of the existing structures and placed in a position of conflict with them. It begins as an attempt to do your work well, and ends with being branded an enemy of society.[368]

It is in this two-sided interpretation of the terminology that dissident Irish republicanism needs to be perceived as well. What being a Dissident means, goes largely undefined and only receives its positive or negative meaning from the outside recognition.[369] Arguably, the term 'Dissident' itself, is a remnant of Cold War Capitalism vs Communism rhetoric.[370] Since the Cold War, the use of the term has gathered its positive connotations largely by being applied to groups and individuals retrospectively who stood up against regimes that were or are deemed oppressive, for example in the case of Chinese dissidents[371] or in the case of Azerbaijan in its opposition to the authoritarian regime.[372]

[368] Ibid. p.45
[369] Crowley, T. (2011) 'Dissident': a brief note', *Critical Quarterly*, 53:2, 1-11, P.9
[370] Ibid,
[371] Andelman, D. A. (2012) The Art of Dissent: A Chat with Ai Weiwei. *World Policy Journal*, 29:3, 15-21.
[372] Pearce, K., & Hajizada, A. (2014) No laughing matter: Humor as a means of dissent in the digital era: The case of authoritarian Azerbaijan', *Demokratizatsiya*, 22:1, 67.

In the Irish case, there is a slow and gradual internal acceptance and re-interpretation of the term, with high profile dissidents becoming more accepting of it. They seek to apply it now as a token of resistance to the mainstream, and brandishing their opposition to Sinn Féin even further, likening themselves to Irish Republican heroes such as Wolfe Tone and Donovan Rossa. As Francie Mackey stated, 'if being opposed to Sinn Féin makes me a Dissident, I will happily be called that'.[373] Interviewees stressed that they in fact were not the ones dissenting from the path of true Republicanism, and that they were staying true to the ideals of a united Socialist Irish Republic.

Yet, although the reclaiming of the term Dissident as meaning anti Sinn Féin and anti-elite can be theoretically considered as seeking to re-establish a social identity by changing the perception of a certain part of the self-concept, it has been largely unsuccessful. Dissident republicans are inherently intertwined with the violence they pursue. This is partially by their own making, and partially imposed by the mainstream out-group. The latter issue is discussed in more depth in chapter seven. The former relates to the inherently historical interpretation of Irish Republican principles. The reunification of Ireland is a non-negotiable aim that, so long as it has not been achieved, legitimises and necessitates the armed struggle. This places purism over pragmatism.

[373] Mackey, F (2016) Interview with the author

For now, as Whiting argues, the 'term "Dissident" represents Sinn Féin's ability to take ownership of the Republican franchise'.[374] As social identity theory implies, if an externally imposed label is negatively applied, groups may seek to leave it and establish a more positively distinct group, or seek to positively alter the existing social identity. Dissident republicans, or non-mainstream Irish Republicans seem to have done the latter, by making the externally imposed label part of their resistance identity towards Sinn Féin. Yet, its wider acceptance is still negatively perceived due to its inherent connection to violence and the ability by Sinn Féin to control the wider political landscape. This comes back to the theoretically overlooked issue of the effect of an imbalance of power between the in-group and the out-group discussed below. If one group is significantly stronger than the other in taking ownership of a certain identity, in this case that of Irish Republican, it has a stronger ability to negatively associate the smaller out-group.

6.3.2) United in Diversity, divided in unity: is there such a thing as a dissident republican 'movement'?

Given the desire to create a more positive social identity, dissident republicans have sought to reclaim the dissident label, beyond the association with of violence. However, this does little to actively address the lack of unity in the dissident arena. This is something that dissidents internally consider as 'a self-inflicted wound, readily

[374] Whiting, S. (2015) *Op. Cit.* p.120

exploited by those that oppose us'.[375] Therefore it is important to look at what the cohesive qualities are given that, throughout history, Irish Republicanism has been characterised by splits in the movement.[376] As Brendan Behan famously quipped, the first item on any new Republican agenda is the split. This is no different, perhaps even more pronounced, with Republican groups after the GFA and St Andrews Agreement.

Recent developments suggest a growing desire for unification of dissident groups. Despite the high level of intergroup differentiation between dissident republican groups, there is in fact a growing sense of a 'movement' amongst them, because of their shared dislike towards the Republican mainstream. Rather than being united in diversity, it would be apt to say that dissident republicans are becoming 'united in adversity'. Equally, a growing recognition of the need to unite in order to attract new members is also acknowledged by a growing number of dissident organisations.[377] Steps taken in that direction indicate that dissident groups have started to work together on what can be most accurately described as an occasion-based movement. Single issue campaigns, such as the One Ireland One Vote campaign of the 1916 Societies, in itself an amalgamation of different clubs and societies across Ireland, and the West Belfast Opposes Political Policing 'People Should Not Inform' (PSNI) leafleting campaign in West Belfast have found support and assistance from others, including a number of independent Republicans across Ireland.[378]

[375] Mackey, F. (2016) '32CSM Bodenstown Address', https://32csm.blogspot.co.uk/2016/06/bodenstown-2016.html (Accessed 12-11-2017)
[376] Morrison, J.F. (2014) *Op. Cit.* pp.13.15
[377] Mackey, F; MacCoitir, P.; Stuart, N. (2016) Interview with the author
[378] See for example: 1916 Societies (2015) 'Barry Monteith addresses 'one Ireland, one vote' launch in the Pearse Centre, Dublin', 16 June 2015,

The Republican Network for Unity when it came into being, made several attempts to bring together the dissident groups via a number of Republican Forums on Unity.[379] However, despite its intent and its consistent call for unity, the group did not manage to incorporate even a majority of dissident groups as RSF and Éirígí maintained their politically purist and isolationist stance.[380] Nonetheless, unifying moves are seen in the militaristic wing of Irish republicanism, with the creation of the IRA, commonly referred to as the new IRA, of which more is discussed in chapter seven.

Dissidents exist on a spectrum, fluctuating between unifying and separating senses of social identity, depending on the salience of a particular social interaction and the importance of a shared goal. As such, dissident republicans are an 'occasion-based movement': unifying when it suits a wider purpose, united in their opposition to an external threat or enemy, mostly Sinn Féin, but inherently internally divided otherwise. On the issue of dissident fracturing and disunity, the views of interviewed dissident and independent republicans were

http://1916societies.com/2015/06/16/barry-monteith-addresses-one-ireland-one-vote-launch-in-the-pearse-centre-dublin/ (Accessed: 09-09-2016) and Fitzmaurice, M (2016) 'Group behind West Belfast 'People Should Not Inform' posters defends the move', Belfast Live, 24 May 2016, http://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/belfast-news/group-behind-west-belfast-people-11381274 (Accessed 10-09-2016)

[379] The former website of RNU is no longer online. Off the record remarks have estimated that the membership numbers of RNU are diminishing with estimated figures currently below 100 active members. It could be argued that the organisation has effectively seized to exist, although representatives of the organisation deny this. The loss of two of their main leadership figures in recent years, with the estrangement and death of Tony Catney in 2012 and the imprisonment of Tony Taylor in 2015, have been detrimental to the organisation.

[380] Derry Journal (2010) 'Groups must unite to form Republican Congress – RNU', 6 April 2010, http://www.derryjournal.com/news/politics/groups-must-unite-to-form-Republican-congress-rnu-1-2144948 (Accessed 12-06-2016)

highly similar. When answering the question why the dissident movement was so fractured and seemed unable to work together, all raised similar themes. Internal fracturing was in many cases deeply rooted in parochialism, and a deep desire to fulfil a leadership position after leaving what they described the undemocratic and cult-like leadership of Sinn Féin and the provisional movement as well as in the role of feuding between former comrades.[381]

Despite the calls for unity, there is no real dissident republican movement to speak of. This is in part of their own making, but it is also partially caused by the circumstances of the conflict and also considerably so by the overpowering position of the out-group to influence the perception of the in-group. Sinn Féin has managed to capitalise on the internal rivalry and the unpopularity of the use of armed struggle to present its own agenda as the only possible alternative to chaos and violence. Dissident republicans as a result of internal parochial conflicts have been unable to turn this perception around. Yet, the willingness to pursue such ventures is widespread across the different dissident organisations.

6.3.3) The rise of the anti-Shinners: the relationship between Sinn Féin and the non-mainstream Republican arena.

The final section of this chapter highlights the reactionary anti-Sinn Féin nature of dissident republicanism that is prominent throughout this and other chapters. A distinct feature of dissident and anti-

[381] Mackey, F., Scannell, P., Hyland, D. (2016) Interview with the author

Agreement Republicanism is highly coloured by anti-Sinn Féin sentiments. Despite the heavy reliance on history, and a distinct lack of practical effective policies, dissident republicans in their outward comments rely heavily on criticising Sinn Féin's position and decision-making processes, something MLA Barry McElduff referred to as 'shouting outside the tent'.[382] Sinn Féin sees itself very much as an anti-establishment party, despite the criticism of those perceived by them as the political elite.[383] Internally, they continue to uphold that they are a grassroots social movement.[384]

As Beaudette and Kirkpatrick assess, the combination of the threat-induced increase of DUP votes in Loyalist communities, and Sinn Féin's ability to balance the fine line between radical and peaceful politics has seen a widespread increase of its performance.[385] It has managed to draw from the SDLP vote as it progressed in the peace process whilst maintaining a radical enough profile to satisfy its urban heartland. Yet, this process is not irreversible. Particularly in the early years of the Stormont executive, electoral performance was important to avoid the rise of the anti-Shinners. Events like the Omagh bombing also contributed to deter the rise of spoilers. Performing in the polls was necessary to show the Republican supporters that it could yield power within the institutions to replace its armed struggle. Therefore, it was important to avoid any splits from taking place, arguably, as it had been able to do in the 1980s when it took its seats in Leinster House.

[382] McElduff, B. (2016) Interview with the author
[383] Ó Broin, E., McCann, F. (2016) interview with the author
[384] Ó Broin, E (2016) Interview with the author
[385] Beaudette, D. M., & Kirkpatrick, A. B. (2017) Zero-sum of all fears: intergroup threat, contact, and voting behavior in Northern Ireland, *European Political Science Review*, 9:1, 51-71

However, it is those who now perceive Sinn Féin as part of the elite they claim to oppose that are presenting a continuous rhetoric seeking to challenge the narrative put forward by Sinn Féin. Simply put, Sinn Féin projects a sense of victimhood and narration of the past that sparks anger in its opponents. As Hopkins puts it, 'SF has promoted a version of the past which attempts to recognise the changed circumstances of the post-conflict era and, in particular the redundancy of the Provisional IRA's campaign of violence'.[386] For example, former IRA prisoner Richard O'Rawe claims that the Republican leadership outside of the prison rejected a deal by the British government, resulting in the death of six more hunger strikers.[387] This was fiercely denied by Sinn Féin and fellow prisoners of whom many support the current Sinn Féin strategy, whereas others who themselves were increasingly critical of Sinn Féin's direction would support the claims made by O'Rawe.[388] This exemplifies how Sinn Féin is actively seeking to adapt and legitimise a social identity of Irish Republicanism away from the use of violence, whilst dissidents are seeking to build their positive social identity in opposition to those moves. This establishes that there is closeness in how the two relate to one another.

[386] Hopkins, S. (2015) 'Sinn Féin, the Past and Political Strategy: the Provisional Irish Republican Movement and the Politics of Reconciliation, *Irish Political Studies*, 30:1, 79-97, p.80

[387] O'Rawe, R. (2005) *Blanketmen: An untold story of the H-block hunger strike*. Dublin: New Island.

[388] For more background and statements see: Anonymous (2009) ' Let's have the whole truth', Slugger O'Toole, 9 April 2009, http://sluggerotoole.com/2009/04/09/lets-have-the-whole-truth/ (Accessed 23/09/2016)

Without giving judgement on the validity of O'Rawe's claim itself, it demonstrates some of the issues being fought out between former comrades and goes beyond the scope of the dichotomy of mainstream vs. dissidents. Especially in terms of outspoken former members of the Provisional movement who are now independent republicans, a shared sense is felt that Sinn Féin feels perhaps threatened by the statements and revelations of its former combatants.[389] In terms of the dissident vs mainstream dichotomy, on August 2016, long time Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams said 'these (Dissident) groups are entitled to oppose Sinn Féin, however their campaign against the community must end'.[390] He referred to a West Belfast anti-policing group and the wider dissident groups being 'at war' with the nationalist communities and said he would want to enter in to dialogue to resolve these issues. One of the core pillars of both individual republicans and dissidents and wider politicised groupings is built on a strong resistance to Sinn Féin in general, and its party leadership specifically.

As discussed previously, it is undeniable that Sinn Féin is the largest and strongest Republican Party across Northern Ireland, and growing in the ROI on an anti-austerity platform. Nonetheless, support is divided in some of its Republican heartland and criticism is projected on the party for ineffective power-sharing and the implementation of Tory austerity measures. Despite their vehement opposition to Sinn Féin, dissident republican groups are simply unable to develop effective policy to challenge its politics. However, they are perhaps

[389] McIntyre, A., Hodgins, G. Scannell, P. (2016) Interview with the author
[390] For full statement, see Adams, G. (2016) 'Adams challenges dissidents on threats against the community', 16 August 2016, http://www.sinnFéin.ie/contents/41206 (Accessed 11/10/2017)

increasingly effective in pointing out internal issues within Sinn Féin, particularly its party structure and the lack of space for political opposition within the party and the wider Republican communities in Northern Ireland.[391] One of the more prominent critiques made independently by a number of interviewees was the lack of democracy within Sinn Féin as a reason to leave the party. Fallings out over re-election platforms, Ard Fheis disagreements and more generally a lack of democracy within the party, underpin individual decisions to leave the party.

There is an overlap between social and ideological factors of social identity when considering individual decisions to leave the mainstream movement. Statements that Sinn Féin was akin to leaving a cult indicate that ideological opposition was not welcome and that subsequent departure from the party also meant social ostracising from the wider movement. Many of those who left the party commented on the inability to divert from the leadership and the practices used by the party to seek to discredit anyone that attacks, opposes or may otherwise harm the party's political standing. Local councillors have recently addressed this yet again in their decision to leave the party because of the firing of Daithi McKay over the NAMA scandal.[392] This is in part due to the strength of leadership; as former Provisional John

[391] Harrison, S. (2017) 'Bullying claim haunts Sinn Fein' *BBC News,* 9 November 2017 http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-41851459 (Accessed 9/11/2017)
[392] Williamson, C. (2016) ' Sinn Fein members quit part over Daithi McKay regisnation', Belfast Telegraph, 30 August 2016, http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/sinn-Féin-members-quit-party-over-daithi-mckay-resignation-35006548.html, (Accessed 10/10/2016)

McQuillan states, Gerry Adams was considered a highly suspicious, controlling leader with a distinct desire for power.[393]

Thus, both in social as well as ideological terms, a large political proximity in dissident and independent Republicanism is based on the toxic relationship towards Sinn Féin. Although it is difficult to make a judgment on personal motivations and perceptions of a political party, it is important to note that, as Gerry Adams says, it is fine to be opposed to Sinn Féin. However, and most importantly, even though dissidents voice their opposition to Sinn Féin, they are themselves unable to formulate a political alternative, a comment all Sinn Féin members interviewed for this thesis have made themselves.[394] As long as dissident republicans do not formulate a political agenda beyond the scope of its broad ideological positions, and moves in to direct policy debate, it cannot provide a feasible opposition to Sinn Féin's strategy. In other words, there is some possibility for success for dissident Irish republican politics, but it is in need of a fairly substantive overhaul of its ideology if any group wishes to achieve some electoral success. However, because of the ideological and historical interpretation of Irish republican principles, such a lack of popular support can be 'justified away' through ideological purity over popular support.

Arguably, Sinn Féin has become increasingly 'less republican' as its focus shifted throughout the latter half of the twentieth century and the years since the peace process. Yet there is little indication that their

[393] McQuillan, J. (2016) Interview with the author
[394] Loughran, J., Kearney, D., McCann, F., Ó Broin, E., Walsh, S. (2016) Interview with the author

ultimate aim of a United Ireland has become any less avowed. Nonetheless, the strategic shift, particularly by taking its seats in Stormont, defended, as a means to an end, are indefensible in the eyes of dissident republicans. The only reasonably achievable political aim that dissidents can manage to pursue is that of reminding the Republican communities of the flaws in Sinn Féin's politics. This however, does not equate to any realistic viable alternative in terms of politics if the electoral trends continue.

The dissident movement is clearly divided. Chapter 5 demonstrated that there are many individual former high profile republicans that are neither dissident nor supportive of the mainstream. The anti-Sinn Féin rhetoric is shared amongst these groups, but has, as shown previously, not achieved anything consequential in terms of organised political opposition. This, as chapter six argues, is because of an important flaw in understanding social identity: power imbalance between in-group and out-group. Trumbore refers to this in terms of understanding dissident violence as coercive spoiler management.[395]

The early pressure that Sinn Féin successfully applied to stifle major spoilers has paved the way to coercively undermine political dissent more widely. The in-group lacks cohesion and positive social proximity and displays negative social proximity on the issue of the armed struggle. This is readily exploited by the out-group through the claims that dissidents are all thugs, and lack legitimacy and popular support as illustrated through a lack of electoral success. As the example of the

[395] Trumbore, P. (2018) *Op Cit.*pp.527-528

Hunger Strikes illustrated however, many of the shortcomings of the dissidents are also part of the historical position of Sinn Féin itself. Thus, it is because of this accusation of historical revisionism that dissident republicans and individual republicans alike share one factor in common in their social identity: opposition to Sinn Féin.

6.4) Conclusion

The ideological identity of dissident republican groups is a complicated mixture of historical lineage and contemporary resistance. dissident republicans see themselves as the last remaining force in the ruins of revolution. As Frampton aptly describes it, dissident republicans see themselves as keeping the flame of Irish republicanism alive, now that their former comrades have sold them out.[396] Although there is ideological disagreement within the republican movement, there is a deep-rooted ideological and social foundation to the existence and persistence of some elements of dissident republicanism that is grounded in opposition to Sinn Féin. Ideologically, the main element that the entire non-mainstream republican arena shares in common is anti-SF sentiments and actions.

As section 6.2 has shown, dissident republicans have had very limited electoral success, and similar conclusions can be drawn for republicans standing on an independent republican platform. However, this does not equate to political satisfaction within republican communities, as the vote share for the major republican and nationalist parties, Sinn

[396] Frampton, M. (2011) *Op. Cit.* pp.252-257

Féin and the SDLP, has dropped. The 2016 Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey shows that currently 22 percent of Catholics do not feel represented by any of the existing political parties.[397] These results are higher for young people, where one in three does not feel represented by any of the political parties. Although dissatisfaction with political choice is not exceptional to Northern Ireland, it does indicate a rising dissatisfaction as it grew at least five percent since 2010.[398] This is linked to the lack of support for dissidents through their use of violence, as, according to Tonge and Evans, more than 75% of Northern Irish people is opposed to the use of violence, which is indistinguishably linked to the politics of dissident republican groups.[399]

Nonetheless, it is highly unlikely that the cemented position of Sinn Féin will become perilous. It may be nearing its limits of growth in Northern Ireland, but it is unlikely to lose much of its existing support. Dissident groups have been unable to fill any void in the republican vote, despite there being some inclinations that it is possible in staunch republican areas, based on the recent support for the leftist/Trotskyist policies of People Before Profit. People are opposed to the militaristic and violent side of a part of the dissident republican movement. The internal disunity, and the connotation of the dissident label, further decrease the electability of any dissident groups in local elections.

[397] *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey*,(2016) via http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2016/Political_Attitudes/POLPART2.html (Accessed 26/07/2018)
[398] *Northern Ireland Life and Times Survey*,(2010) via http://www.ark.ac.uk/nilt/2010/Political_Attitudes/POLPART2.html (Accessed 26/07/2018)
[399] Tonge, J. & Evans, J. (2012) *Op. Cit.* Pp 69-70

Those standing on an independent platform in many cases did so after leaving either one of the main parties. There is an element of coercion that is experienced by people expressing criticism on the political and organisational nature of Sinn Féin. This has led former councillors and MLAs to leave and stand independently. However, this has largely been unsuccessful and entirely unsucessful at the Assembly level. Although a majority of members of dissident organisations are former members of Sinn Féin, this is not always the case.[400] As chapter five explored many independent Republicans see no prospect in the current dissident movement, especially in terms of its armed campaign. This chapter has now demonstrated that lack of unity makes it increasingly hard to pose any type of threat to the ascendency of modern Sinn Féin. Nonetheless, dissident groups have in recent campaigns shown a willingness to work together. Nonetheless, for the reasons mentioned above they also will not likely pose any electoral challenge.

Sinn Féin is unlikely to lose ground electorally, and may continue to make some electoral gains in the ROI. Dissidents are too scattered and divided to present a pragmatic alternative. Their interpretation of Irish Republicanism, particularly on the issue of violence discussed in the next chapter, is too historically rooted and insular. Although there is room for political opposition to Sinn Féin on modern grounds, as highlighted by People before Profit, the political identity of dissident groups lacks that necessary pragmatism.

[400] See Annex 3

Furthermore, section 6.3.3 has demonstrated the large role for anti-Sinn Féin sentiment seeping through their political decision-making. The narrative of dislike is visible in the way in which they accuse one another over, for example, events of the past. Although all dissident republicans have a distinct political identity, most prominently on the left of the political spectrum, its anti-Sinn Féin and anti-establishment nature is practically one of the most prominent features in their politicisation. This, building on the previous chapter, is an element prominent not only in the group structures of dissident republicanism but also in the personal identity of high-profile and rank and file members of the Provisional IRA. Republicanism has become increasingly 'emotional' in as much that personal and parochial predispositions have become increasingly prominent in Republican dialogue. As former comrades have become bitter enemies, each are contesting a different version of the 'truth' and are offering a different way of interpreting 'true' Republicanism.

7) Dissident republican violence: the physical force tradition in post-conflict Northern Ireland

They think that they have foreseen everything, think that they have provided against everything; but the fools, the fools, the fools! — they have left us our Fenian dead, and while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.

Patrick Pearse[401]

7.1) Introduction

The persistence of Armed Struggle remains a highly problematic element within dissident republicanism for two key reasons. First, it perpetuates a level of paramilitary violence to the detriment of local communities in terms of societal progress, reconciliation and integration. Second, it also, through the convolution of dissent more widely, exacerbates the problems with legitimate political dissent, as discussed in chapter six. Violence has historically been unpopular amongst the vast majority of the population of Northern Ireland.[402] However, as Hayes and McAllister assess, support for violence is ambiguous and it is extremely difficult to gauge exactly how high support truly is, as people are not likely to admit this publicly.[403] This

[401] Pearse, P (1915) Graveside Oration at the Funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, August 1915, via http://www.rte.ie/centuryireland//images/uploads/further-reading/Ed59-GravesideOrationFinal.pdf (Accessed 25/01/2016)
[402] Hayes, B. C., & McAllister, I. (2001) Sowing dragon's teeth: Public support for political violence and paramilitarism in Northern Ireland. *Political Studies*, 49:5, 901-922
[403] Hayes, B. C., & McAllister, I. (2005) Public support for political violence and paramilitarism in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 17:4, 599-617

was the case during the conflict and remains so today. Nonetheless, support for dissident violence appears low, whilst support for the police and security services seems high.[404] A lot or some support/sympathy for dissident violence, as Tonge and Evans investigated is at approximately 14% under nationalist communities. Although this is not very high, it is also, as they observe, not negligible.[405] Opposition to violence on the other hand, is as a percentage of the full sample very high at 75.3%.[406]

Most dissident groups deal with, and acknowledge, a high level of police scrutiny and possible infiltration.[407] Although it is difficult to establish, due to issues of secrecy, exactly how successful these efforts are, recent police statements imply that for any attack that succeeds, three to four are thwarted.[408] Furthermore, violent dissidents enjoy little to no support from local populations. Therefore, it is important to ask why, in light of circumstances that would benefit the cessation of armed conflict in favour of organised political dissent, some dissidents continue to pursue military strategies. This chapter argues that violence is continued for a variety of reasons: historical roots and subsequent justification; rejection of the peace process and anti-normalisation; and criminal activities.

[404] Tonge, J. (2012) 'No- one likes us; we don't care': 'Dissident' Irish Republicans and Mandates. *The Political Quarterly*, 83:2, 219-226.
[405] Tonge, J. & Evans, J. (2012) *Op. Cit.* pp. 69-70
[406] Ibid.
[407] McKevitt, M. (2016) 'Interview with Michael McKevitt upon his release from Portlaoise prison, march 28th, 2016', 19 April 2016, via http://www.michaelmckevitt.com/ (Accessed 11/10/2017)
[408] Irish News (2016) "Vast majority of attacks' stopped in campaign against dissident republicans', 11 March 2016, http://www.independent.ie/breaking-news/Irish-news/vast-majority-of-attacks-stopped-in-campaign-against-dissident-Republicans-34532598.html (Accessed 13/10/2017)

This chapter also asserts that social identity actually struggles to fully account for the continuation of paramilitary violence. Logic dictates that dissidents would cease violent activity to create a more positive social identity. Furthermore, the continuation of armed conflict has created an opportunity for Sinn Féin to associate all dissent with crime and has essentially introduced a policy of criminalisation of dissident activity within local communities. This chapter argues that understanding in-group/out-group relations in light of paramilitary violence is important in understanding why the mainstream out-group has been so successful in ascertaining a negative social identity for any and all opposition within republicanism. The coercive spoiler management, and the power imbalance that exists between the in-group and the out-group have also limited the rise of successful spoiler groups.

Violent Dissident Republicans (VDRs) have been present since before the peace process. Splits in 1986 created CIRA, whilst further splits in the mid-1990s created RIRA. Both split from the Provisional IRA, the first over the matter of abstentionism in the Irish parliament, the latter over accepting the Mitchell principles[409] and embarking on the peace

[409] Mitchell Prinicples: 'Political parties were to commit to democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving political issues; to the total disarmament of paramilitary organizations; to agree that such disarmament must be verifiable to the satisfaction of an independent commission; to renounce for themselves, and to oppose any effort by others, to use force, or threaten to use force, to influence the course or outcome of all-party negotiations; to agree to abide by the terms of any Agreement reached in all-party negotiations and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of that outcome with which they may disagree; and, to urge that 'punishment' killings and beatings stop and to take effective steps to prevent such actions' Quoted from: Monaghan, R. (2004) 'an imperfect peace': paramilitary 'punishments'in northern ireland. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16:3, 439-461, p.460

process. As with political organisations specifically and Irish Republicanism in Northern Ireland more generally, here too dissidents are fluid, divided, and inherently connected to the former Provisional movement. Violence is legitimised on the basis of historical principles, but it is also theoretically the biggest driver as to why almost all dissident republican groups are widely perceived as anti-peace and illegitimate. The convolution of both political and militant resistance to the status quo has made most forms of opposition negatively associated.

This chapter focuses on the military or paramilitary element present in dissident republicanism from 2007. It therefore does not include an analysis of the 1998 Omagh bomb since this atrocity falls outside the scope of this research, but it needs to be acknowledged from the outset that this attack influenced levels of open hostility to the use of violence and was highly damaging for any possible support base of dissident groups.[410] In contextualising dissident republican violence, this chapter seeks to provide some background to the level and characteristics of dissident republican violent acts. This provides a necessary overview to put the rest of this chapter in perspective, however the key focus, as in the previous empirical chapters, is on the role of identity regarding the use of violence.

The core focus of this chapter is on the violent wings of those organisations that are also discussed in the political chapter of this thesis and are predominantly traced back to splits in the Provisional

[410] Sanders, A. (2011) *Inside the IRA: Dissident republicans and the War for Legitimacy: Dissident republicans and the War for Legitimacy*. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh

movement. These are predominantly CIRA, RIRA, ONH, and NIRA. Therefore the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA) is not explicitly included. As the independent monitoring commission assessed, it differed from the other post conflict paramilitary groups because of its low activity, decreasing consistently, and its 'no first strike' policy, i.e. it would not engage in violence unless in response to an attack.[411] Groups established after 2016, such as Arm na Poblachta or the Irish Republican Movement are also excluded.[412] Yet, the chapter does more generally and theoretically reflect on the convoluted and split nature of VDRs more broadly. The plethora of groups that exist are symptomatic of the contentious nature of the continuation of the armed struggle. Groups split because some want to move away from violence whereas others in the group do not. Furthermore, the number of paramilitaries is not very high, and therefore there is significant overlap between groups.

People seemingly jump from one group to the next, or rebrand themselves when a group splits. Therefore, providing insight into the social and ideological, factors of social identity, as explored in this thesis, can help explain these violent groups' existence. As the work by Horgan, Gill and Morrison reiterates through the violent dissident republican project, levels of violence are relatively low, but sustained and increasing over time.[413] Nevertheless, VDRs make up the majority

[411] Independent monitoring commission (2007) *thirteenth report of the IMC*, p.7
[412] ITV (2017) *PSNI confirms new Northern Irish dissident terror group after up close investigation into Ciaran Maxwell,* via, http://www.itv.com/news/utv/2017-08-29/psni-confirms-new-ni-dissident-terror-group-after-up-close-investigation-into-ciaran-maxwell/ (Accessed 30/08/2017)
[413] Horgan, J. & Morrison, J.F. (2011) *Op. Cit.*pp.646-647, Horgan, J. & Gill, P. (2011) *Who are the dissidents? An introduction to the ICST Violent Dissident republican Project,* in,

of ethno-nationalist terrorism recorded across Europe. According to Europol, there were 76 reported dissident republican terrorist attacks in 2016 out of the 99 they classified as separatist or ethno-nationalist.[414] However, these reports do not include all acts of violence, as paramilitary punishment and other criminal activity are not classified as terrorist attacks.

The types of attacks perpetrated by Republican groups are in some cases political in nature. As Hearty assesses it, VDRs provide a performative level of activity; violence and non-violent activity is perpetrated to some degree as an act or show of force as opposed to a structural military campaign with strategic aims. It is propaganda of the deed: not about the actual goals it achieves, but violence as the act in and by itself as a way to receive attention. [415]

Such an interpretation, however, arguably over-symbolises the reality of most violence executed by dissident republicans, which is much more often directed against civilians and local populations as it is against 'political' targets. Symbolic attacks against, for example, PSNI officers and prison wardens receive the most attention, as they are a more explicit representation of spoiler violence, yet they are representative of only one type of broader dissident republican

Currie, P.M. & Taylor, M. (eds.) *Dissident Irish Republicanism*, Continuum Press, London, pp.43-64

[414] Europol (2017) 'European Union Terrorism Situation and Trend Report 2017', https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/2017-eu-terrorism-report-142-failed-foiled-and-completed-attacks-1002-arrests-and-142-victims-died (Accessed 13/10/2017)

[415] Hearty, K. (2016) 'from "former comrades" to "near enemy": the narrative template of "armed struggle" and conflicting discourses on Violent Dissident republican activity (VDR)', *Critical Studies on Terrorism*, 9:2, 269-291

violence which is far less symbolic. Attacks on civilians are more crude and less symbolic and usually involve basic devices or handguns to perpetrate the attack. Recent investigations around the arrest of marine Ciaran Maxwell in the UK, however, illustrated that dissidents do also have some limited access to much higher calibre military grade material.[416] The use of such material in an attack would receive more attention again due to the symbolism behind it.

This chapter reiterates the connection between ideological and social factors underpinning social identity and dissidents. Although some dissident republican groups highlight the armed struggle as a legitimate part of their social identity, individuals within and outside those groups may disagree. Therefore, violence creates a fault line in understanding negative and positive aspects of social identity and self-categorisation. Violence is thereby more important in understanding support for- and rejection of- dissident republican groups than any other element discussed in this thesis. The use and legitimisation of violence has ramifications beyond the direct group and is a key reason why dissident groups are inherently perceived as low prestige groups. This has the effect that the mainstream out-group has the tools through coercion to give any opposition a negative social identification. Identification with and approval of the use of violence is of crucial importance in understanding support bases in Republicanism, but the positions of groups may differ from its individual members and vice versa.

[416] Swann, S. (2017) 'Ciaran Maxwell: the marine who turned to terror', BBC News, 3 February 2017, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-38856986 (Accessed 04/02/2017)

This chapter consists of two sections. The first seeks to analyse the narrative of dissident republican violence. Irish Republicanism has a long history of what is termed 'the armed struggle', often traced back to Wolfe Tone and the Irish Brotherhood in the late 19th century. In its current form, it is arguably more akin to the low-level activity of the IRA in the 1950s and 1960s. However, this is only in terms of the level of activity, not the type. The border campaign was far more focussed on the border, whilst current activity focuses more on community control. This narrative of historical legacy and dissident 'fighting talk' is very important in tracing justification strategies but rather less in explaining the practical usefulness of it.[417] As Hearty argues, the narrative of violence is split between purism and pragmatism. Therefore, section 7.2 focuses on how dissidents cloak the use of armed resistance in a long history of predecessors as a justification and legitimisation attempt, particularly in relation to the 1916 rising and the recent centenary commemorations.

The next section focuses on the targets and tactics of dissident republican activity and on the blurred line between criminality and terrorism. Building on the discussion about the legitimatisation and narration of violence, it analyses how violence is used in practice. Data is taken from the reports of the Independent monitoring commission from 2007 until 2011 and from the PSNI Security Situation Statistics from 1 April 2007 until 31 December 2016, to illustrate the level and types of activity, although this thesis does recognise a concern with the

[417] Morrison, J. F. (2016) Fighting Talk: The Statements of "The IRA/New IRA". *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 28:3, 598-619.

availability of complete data.[418] This is perhaps rather illustrative of the convoluted nature of dissident republican violence as it is difficult to accurately attribute all activity to its direct cause and organisation.

Tactically, dissident republican violence overlaps with the methods of the Provisional IRA in terms of seeking to establish a role in community policing. It seeks to differentiate itself from the political status quo of Sinn Féin particularly on the issue of acceptance of the PSNI.[419] This is done both by paramilitary punishment and coercive practices and by seeking to discredit the PSNI and the authority of Sinn Féin in local communities. Furthermore, this section examines the narrative of thugs vs. freedom fighters, whereby mainstream Republicans disassociate from the use of violence by painting dissident republicans as thugs and criminals that have no place in the community, as opposed to their own similar actions in a different time being part of the revolutionary struggle.

Finally, this chapter assesses in more depth the relationship between mainstream and dissident groups when it concerns paramilitary violence. As previous chapters have illustrated, there is a complex multidimensional set of factors at play in modern Irish Republicanism where politics and socialisation are heavily intertwined. Furthermore, as was established in terms of political control in chapter six, the coercive capacities of the mainstream Republican movement in

[418] PSNI (nd) *Security Situation Statistics* via https://www.psni.police.uk/inside-psni/Statistics/security-situation-statistics/security-situation-statistics-archive/ (Accessed 26/01/2019)
[419]. Morrison, J. F. (2017). Copying to be Different: Violent Dissident Irish Republican Learning. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 40:7, 586-602.

suppressing dissent have arguably prevented excessive growth of spoilers. The armed struggle presents a fracture not just on the intra-group level, but also elucidates a key dynamic from the individual to the group level.

7.2) Dissident republican violence 2007-2016: levels of activity and historical legitimisation narratives

Mainstream Republicanism has dedicated itself to a non-violent, pragmatic road to achieve its aims. However, some critics have argued that the mainstream movement is actively whitewashing history.[420] This becomes visible in several of the interviews conducted about the recent debates over the centenary of the Easter Rising, the commemoration of internment in 1971 and the hunger strikes of 1981. Several interviewees opposing the Sinn Féin strategy raised concerns over recent attempts by both the Irish government and Sinn Féin in the north to tamper with the legacy of historical events.[421]

For some dissidents, the armed wing of Republicanism is part and parcel of its revolutionary existence. This becomes particularly prominent in the centenary year of the 1916 rising, with many actors claiming the rightful heir to the throne of its early revolutionary leaders. The idea of 'unfinished business' were raised in many of the Easter speeches and graveside orations in an effort to re-engage with the debate surrounding Northern Ireland, but also as a matter of

[420] Perry, F. (2016) interview with the author
[421] Scannell, P., Dalton, D., McIntyre, A., O'Rawe, R. (2016) Interview with the author

indicating that the revolution was yet to be finished.[422] As such, security forces in the run up to the centenary raised serious concern over the possibility of renewed dissident violence.[423] The murder of prison officer Adrian Ismay in March 2016, claimed by the New IRA, seems to support this evidence, but major attacks on the British mainland did not occur.[424]

The use of armed struggle against the perceived British occupation of Ireland goes back in history, but the centenary of the 1916 Easter Rising shed renewed light on the last century of Irish Republicanism.[425] In the run up to the commemoration, 32CSM stated that 'The 1916 Rising was an armed expression of Irish sovereignty so expressed because a foreign power usurped that sovereignty. That state of affairs continues to this day making further such expressions inevitable' and echoed for the importance of unifying those efforts in the years to come.[426] The leadership of RSF made similar statements:

[422] McDonald, H. (2016) 'Ireland prepares to mark Easter Rising centenary amid fears old tensions may resurface', https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/jan/03/easter-rising-1916-centernary-peace-process (Accessed 05/05/2017) Derry Journal (2017) 'Irish Revolution is Unfinished Business, 18 April 2017, http://www.derryjournal.com/news/Irish-revolution-unfinished-business-1-7919758 (Accessed 13/05/2017)
[423] McDonald, H. (2016) 'Northern Ireland police warn of dissident violence to mark Easter Rising', the Guardian, 25 January 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2016/jan/25/northern-ireland-police-warn-of-dissident-violence-to-mark-easter-rising (Accessed 02/03/2016)
[424] BBC News (2016) 'Prison officer Adrian Ismay injured in Belfast bomb attack dies', 15 March 2016, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-35813224 (Accessed 16/03/2016)
[425] See for example the special issue of Terrorism and Political Violence (2016) by Gill, P. & Morrison, J.F.
[426] 32 County Sovereignty Movement (2016) Facebook Statement, 25 March 2016

> We pledge our resolve to continue the struggle against British Rule. The Volunteers of the Continuity Irish Republican Army will continue to strike at will at the British forces of occupation. That is the most fitting tribute we can make to the men and women of 1916.[427]

Former Real IRA leader Michael McKevitt concurred that armed struggle was the only tactic ever to be noticed by the British. In his view, those continuing the fight today were no different from the men and women of 1916.[428] He further expressed criticism towards others, likening mainstream Republicanism and Sinn Féin to those looting the streets of Dublin in 1916 for their personal gain and financial benefit.[429] It is clear from the statements made by dissident groups and high-level individuals that they perceive their position equal to that of the leaders and volunteers of the 1916 rising, seeking to bring about the proclamation as it had been envisioned a hundred years ago even when they lack overall popular support.

Aside from using the centenary of the 1916 rising as a renewed call to arms, something that has been prominent throughout the years leading up to 2016 in similar fashion, graveside orations and commemorations

[427]Republican Sinn Fein (2016) '2016 Easter Statement from the Leadership of the Republican Movement', 25 March 2016, https://RepublicansinnFéin.org/2016/03/25/2016-easter-statement-from-the-leadership-of-the-Republican-movement/ (Accessed 11/10/2017)
[428] Michael McKevitt (2016) via http://www.michaelmckevitt.com/ (Accessed 12/12/2016)
[429] Ibid.

also called for a much closer cooperation between Irish Republicans.[430] Such orations, and the show of force and unity that is associated with them, is a performative act that seeks to positively represent the strength, unity and cohesion of the dissident in-group. As such, it represents a physical representation that seeks to directly challenge the out-group claim of the divided and 'un-Republican' nature of these groups. It directly challenges the authority of Sinn Féin over commemorating and legitimising their take on the path of Irish Republicanism.[431] This draws back on some of the arguments made in chapter 5 of this thesis, that dissident Irish republicanism is an occasion-based movement but lacks the structural, ideological and social unity to effectively merge or cooperate. Again, this is perhaps a good thing because it prevents significant violent spoilers, yet it also prevents organised political alternatives for republicans outside the mainstream.

The legitimisation of continuing the armed struggle is particularly done through historical justification. This is supported, for example, by the work of Frampton who argues that 'history offers the ultimate validation – and the guarantee for future success. The culture of dissidents is steeped in commemoration and reverence for republican ancestry'.[432] He furthermore argues that in the dissident justification 'at the apex of this historical edifice is 1916: the Easter Rising has

[430] See for example 32 County Sovereignty Movement (2016) 'Facebook Statement', 13 June 2016 & Republican Network for Unity (2017) 'Facebook Statement', 11 March 2017
[431] Hearty, K. (2017) 'Spoiling through performative nonviolence: ritualistic funerary practice as a Violent Dissident Irish Republican (VDR) spoiling tactic', *Studies in Conflict and Terrorism,* pp.1-19
[432] Frampton, M. (2011) *Op. Cit.* p.281

bequeathed a legacy that demands fulfilment, as well as a paradigm that inspires future conduct. At the heart of this is the perception that an armed minority *can* act in pursuit of the 'national demand' and history will, in the end, vindicate them'.[433]

Therefore, the use of violence is highly ideological. Despite the current non-violent strategy of the provisional movement, they do not disavow the legitimacy of their struggle during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Dissidents therefore draw parallels between their own struggle and the one conducted by the provisional movement. In doing so, dissidents seek to legitimise their own actions, and thus increase their ideological esteem, as well as undermine Sinn Féin's condemnation of their use of violence as hypocritical.

A closer look at the structure of dissident groups over the last few years suggests that they have actively sought to pursue a more joint strategy, most prominently in the merger of RAAD, the Real IRA and individual Republicans. This merger signified a much clearer call for unity in 2012.[434] Under a new leadership consisting of strong, well known and respected Republicans, the movement gradually moved away somewhat from the purist interpretations of long term political leadership figures such as Francis Mackey and Rory O'Bradaigh.[435] However, the pragmatism is in fact building on much more forceful and extreme anti-Sinn Féin rhetoric. Rather than seeking to remain pure to

[433] Ibid.
[434] The Guardian (2012) 'New IRA: full statement by the dissident 'Army Council', 26 July 2012, https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2012/jul/26/ira-northern-ireland-dissident-Republican-groups1 (Accessed 11/10/2017)
[435] Rory O'Bradaigh died on 5 June 2013

the Republican history, it rather actively sought to establish itself as a viable, strong and positive alternative to Sinn Féin and mainstream Republicanism through rejecting of Sinn Féin's constitutional nationalism.[436] The creation of the New IRA did at least temporarily increase the level, intensity and threat of violence as is shown further in this chapter.

From a theoretical perspective it is arguably this element of seeking a positively distinct identity, something that in the Republican movement has seen the introduction of stronger leadership figures. Thus, as chapter six stated, the commonality in ideological proximity in the in-group is based on anti-Sinn Féin sentiments. Nevertheless, this has led only to structural unification of violent wings, and not necessarily of its political wings. Resentment towards the mainstream out-group has somewhat increased in-group cohesion.

Arguably, the lack of political unity, and the more internal structural unity of some violent dissident republican groups can be explained through perceiving the armed struggle as a lowest common denominator. Those that unite to perpetrate the armed struggle find proximity over an ideological factor that is highly unpopular across the wider non-mainstream republican arena. Because they share something in common that is not a widespread area of agreement, they are more likely to create a similar prototypical member and thereby overcome the ideological disagreement over politics.

[436] Irish News (2017) *Uncompromising Easter statement from 'IRA'*, 18 April 2017 http://www.Irishnews.com/news/northernirelandnews/2017/04/18/news/uncompromising-easter-statement-from-ira--999589/ (Accessed 20/04/2017)

It is under this new banner that the New IRA seems to be pursuing the unfinished business approach. However, a strong ideological lineage remains part of the foundations of these groups, particularly in their opposition towards the route taken by mainstream Republicanism. Although the New IRA does not pose a serious threat to the peace process, it is the strongest and most active of the dissident republican groups. Recent developments surrounding the finding of high grade military material, the increased activity against the security services with the killing of a prison officer and the shooting of a police officer, and the increase of the UK terror threat of dissident republicans from moderate to substantial, indicates an acceptance by the British government and security services that these merged republicans do have better capacities and willingness to maim and kill.[437] This indicates that shifts and changes in the social identity and group structures of dissident republicanism have practical consequences that increase dissident republican violence.

Different factions may or may not have been open to a more cohesive narrative. CIRA and Republican Sinn Féin are isolated groups of dissidents, segregated by their ideological purism, as discussed in chapter six. Even though they have had internal splits as well, for example, the recent split between the central leadership and a Limerick faction, they have continued to maintain independence, or rather isolation, particularly due to their inherent purist approach. Thus,

[437] Swann, S. (2017) *Op. Cit.*

despite the relative social and ideological proximity, dissident groups themselves do not always desire unity.

The second exception is Éirígí. Although they had issues with individual members being arrested for terrorist offences, they disapprove of the utility of the armed struggle as an enshrined principle of Irish Republicanism.[438] The idea of 'Ireland unfree shall never be at peace' raises the idea that violence is un-divorceable from Irish Republicanism: part of the ideology as opposed to a strategy. For organisations such as RNU, this is the case, as was discussed in chapter 6.3.1. For others, such as Éirígí, it is neither a condemnable act nor currently a useful tool. It is this inherent disconnect and the subtle difference in disposition that is also a crucial fault line between dissident groups. As one of Éirígí's members stated:

> We do believe that the elevation of military struggle to a principle as opposed to a revolutionary tactic has retarded the development of the Republican project. The policy of militarism encourages elitism and stifles the initiative of our communities. Pursuing a military strategy at all costs also divorces the struggle from ever-changing contexts and hence, our ability to capitalize on them.[439]

[438] Foy, K. (2012) 'Eirigi woman held after garda swoop on gun raid suspects', the Herald, 29 Novermber 2012, http://www.herald.ie/news/eirigi-woman-held-after-garda-swoop-on-gun-raid-suspects-28961612.html (Accessed 11/10/2017)
[439] Fealty, M. (2008) 'éirígí: armed struggle is a tactic, not a principle', https://sluggerotoole.com/2008/03/22/eirigi-armed-struggle-is-a-tactic-not-a-principle/ (Accessed 06/06/2016)

Thus, dissident republicanism's violent narrative is heavily built on justifications on the past, particularly that of the 1916 leadership. It is seen as a justified necessity as long as the ultimate goal of a united Ireland has not been achieved. They perceive themselves as legitimate remnants of revolution, continuing the Irish struggle as their predecessors had envisioned it. The political debate between mainstream and dissident republicanism is echoed in its perceptions of the use of violence, with each opposing and countering the narrative of the other. Where Sinn Féin has taken a turn for the pragmatic, cloaking itself in the legitimacy of the ballot and the will of the people, dissident republicans find their justification in the inherit belief that their purist approach of the interpretation of Irish republican ideals does not need such a thing as popular support.

Nonetheless, some dissident groups take a pragmatic approach when it comes to violence, but a purist approach when it comes to politics. Most notably, Éirígí takes the position that violence is not warranted or useful at this point, despite openly opposing the political strategy taken by Sinn Féin, favouring a much more strict interpretation of Republican aims and rejecting the possibility of Sinn Féin's constitutional participation as a feasible path towards Irish unity. Therefore it is, as Morrison and Horgan argue, important to understand the different interpretations of the narrative of armed struggle in order to develop a counter-narrative.[440] This thesis argues that this can most effectively be done, in terms of both politics and violence, through a deeper

[440] Morrison, J. F., & Horgan, J. (2016) Reloading the Armalite? Victims and Targets of Violent Dissident Irish Republicanism, 2007–2015. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 28:3, 576-597.

understanding of the internal Republican playing field, unpacking in much more detail the political and social justifications for belonging to mainstream or dissenting groups.

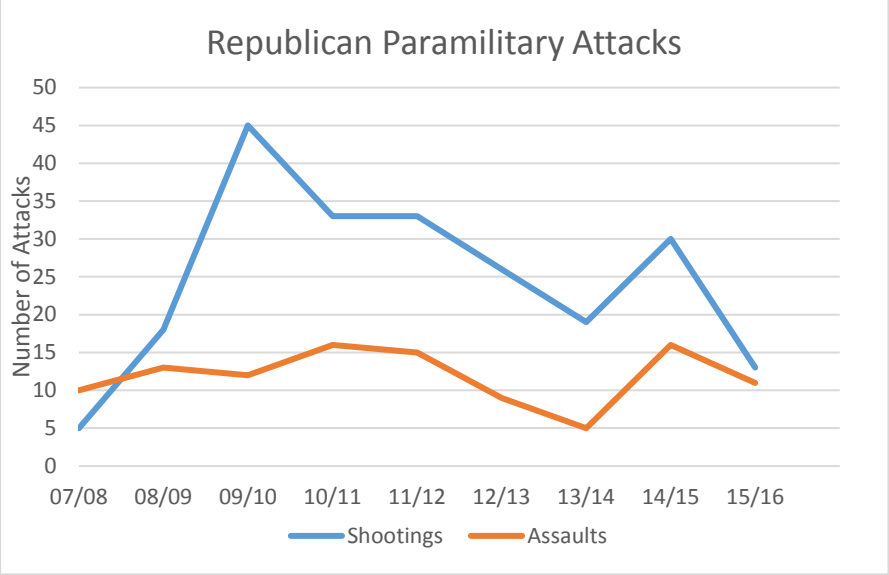
It is important to understand and untangle the narrative and legitimisation of violence. It is also important to examine dissidents' use of violence. Although violence is at a comparatively low level, compared to the zenith of the conflict, it is still prominent enough to prevent the complete normalisation of Northern Irish society. Dissident violence in its crudest form is unoriginal. Its tactics and targets can be traced back strongly to the tradition of the Provisional IRA.[441] This is largely unsurprising, as previous chapters have established that dissident groups are mostly made up of former PIRA members. Knowledge of bomb building and gun acquirement therefore are largely based on tactics of the 1970s and 1980s too. According to Oppenheimer, the latter particularly hindered the PIRA in its final years and detection of security services may have at least contributed to the end of their armed campaign.[442] This indicates that the utility of the armed struggle is low. Considering the sub question of why and to what degree of success dissidents continue to engage in a level of armed activity, the degree of success is arguably low.

According to Morrison and Horgan, the majority of VDR attacks have targeted civilians.[443] It should be noted, however, that incidents were considered civilian in many cases where the exact target may not have

[441] Morrison, J.F. (2016) *Op. Cit.* pp.589-595
[442] Oppenheimer, A. R. (2009) *IRA, the bombs and the bullets: A history of deadly ingenuity.* Irish Academic Press, Dublin
[443] Morrison, J. F., & Horgan, J. (2016) *Op. Cit.* p.584

been known. Bombs left in a residential area, for example, were coded as targeting civilians given that they would be the target group most at risk.[444] One interviewee described the reported discovery of explosive devices in the west Belfast area in February 2016as merely glorified pieces of firework.[445] This therefore also begs the question of what scholars and the police include under the banner of bomb attacks, and how lethal and serious such a threat is, or is perceived. Furthermore, numbers of attacks, suspicious devices and assaults will differ based on whether or not it is directly linked to the dissident republicans even if an occasion has not been reported, taken responsibility for, or led to an arrest or prosecution.

Figure 7.1: Republican Paramilitary Shootings and Assaults 2007-2016



Source: *2015/2016 PSNI Security Situation Statistics*

[444] Ibid. p.586
[445] Hodgins, G. (2016) Interview with the Author

Figure 7.1 demonstrates a fluctuating trend when it comes to shootings, ranging from five in 2007/2008 to 45 in 2009/2010. Other assaults remain more stable and range from five to 16 in the period under review. As Morrison assesses, some of the peaks around 2010-2013 may be down to the formation and show of strength of the New IRA.[446] However, since in many cases dissident groups do not explicitly take responsibility for violent acts, or actions are sometimes wrongly attributed, the data in the table is an indication of the levels of violence as opposed to a conclusive number. This may particularly affect the number of assaults and beatings, as victims may not report this to the police. Deaths, although relatively low, see a small peak in 2009 with the murder of two British soldiers at Massereene Barracks and the first police officer to be killed since the end of the Troubles. Nonetheless, it is difficult to assess precisely how these shootings are divided between the different dissident groups. Therefore, although acknowledging the intensity of violence, and the many caveats in measuring such activity, this thesis focuses on the strategic purpose and narrative behind dissident republican violence and the way in which it is part of the social identity of Irish republican dissidents.

In conclusion, violence is justified through historical legitimisation, particularly, in recent years, the commemoration of the 1916 Easter Rising. This historical issue is used as an attempt not only to create a more positive social identity within groups, but also to actively counter what dissidents consider as Sinn Féin's attempt at historical

[446] Morrison, J. F. (2016) Fighting Talk: The Statements of "The IRA/New IRA". *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 28:3:, 598-619.

revisionism.[447] Furthermore, although there has been little political unification amongst dissidents, paramilitary groups have managed to achieve some higher level of cohesion. Nevertheless, on the basis of the number of assaults and shootings between 2007 and 2016, the level of activity is rather low. Thus, the question why dissidents continue a level of armed struggle is found in historical narratives, and the success with which they do it is low. However, as Hearty assesses, there is more to dissident violence than its casualties. There is a role of violence that is linked to anti-normalisation. Even attacks that do not have a casualty or are merely a hoax still have an effect on the interpretation of violence and dissent.[448] Therefore, the next section looks more closely at dissident acts against normalisation, the issue of criminalisation and the intergroup competition between dissident and mainstream republicanism considering the physical force tradition.

7.3) Understanding dissident republican violence: criminalisation and anti-normalisation

There are three key issues within dissident republican violence: community policing and the targeting of security forces, violence as an act against normalisation, and the link between dissident paramilitary violence and criminal enterprise. The first, community policing, is a multi-level issue: dissident republicans target the police whilst also seeking to provide alternative or community policing themselves. The second sub-section focuses on perceiving dissident republican violence

[447] McIntyre, A. (2008) *Good Friday: the death of Irish republicanism*, Ausubo Press, New York, pp.ix-xiv & pp.121-153
[448] Hearty, K (2017) *Op. Cit.* pp.2-4

as a strategy against the normalisation of Northern Ireland; violence is perpetrated to maintain some continuation of the armed struggle of Irish republicanism. The third subsection focuses on the prominent issue of dissident republicans as ordinary criminals, and argues that although it is more convoluted compared to the relative hegemony of PIRA over criminal enterprise during the conflict, it may be over-simplistic to criminalise all dissident republicans. Although PIRA during its armed conflict used similar methods of political violence strategies, and to a much more intense degree, it is in the political interest of Sinn Féin to disassociate themselves from the violent acts of dissident republicans today, including from individuals within their own armed wing before the peace process. Martin McGuiness' speech in 2009 after the Massereene Barracks shooting branded dissident republicans 'traitors of Ireland' with nothing to offer the republican communities in Northern Ireland.

A perpetual repetition of the idea that dissident republican violence exists for the personal enrichment of its members has driven a wedge between the idea of dissidents as freedom fighters and its interpretation by the mainstream Republican movement, and the wider community, of all dissidents as thugs and ordinary criminals. Although similar observations were made of the PIRA, the fact that that same former mainstream is now actively involved in selling dissent as ordinary criminals influences their perception by the wider Republican community. This is not to dispel that paramilitary wings are in fact highly involved in criminality, but rather to address what the unintended consequences are in terms of the perception of dissent more widely.

This is again indicative of the idea of coercive spoiler management that was raised in chapter six. Furthermore, it is through the power imbalance between the in-group and the out-group that Sinn Féin actively undermined the growth of spoilers in the years after the peace agreement. Up until the public disbandment in 2005, PIRA could be more open in its armed resistance towards dissidents. Since then, the provisional movement has still had a high ideological and social influence on stifling the dissidents. Republicans in opposition were opened up to 'a level of intimidation and ostracism' from the provisional movement.[449] Whereas the pre-2007 landscape allowed the threat to be backed up with violent retaliation from the provisional movement towards the dissidents, this became more difficult after PIRA disarmament, and Sinn Féin's recognition of the PSNI and return to the power-sharing institutions. It is therefore important to consider how Sinn Féin and non-mainstream republicans interacted on the matter of physical force republicanism after 2007.

7.3.1) Community policing and police targeting, and violence as an act against normalisation

Community policing is a crucial and multifaceted part of the dissident approach to armed action. It consists of many tactics used by PIRA during the conflict. There was an overall lack of 'normal' police services being provided in Republican communities. Thus, if people had an issue with ordinary crime, burglary, theft, anti-social behaviour, they

[449] Frampton, M. (2011) *Op. Cit.* p.203

sometimes approached the PIRA for help. This was not always because people believed it to be the best option, but to avoid being perceived as an informer or because they opposed the role played by the RUC in the overall conflict.

Another reason could simply be because the Royal Ulster Constabulary at the time was unable to perform its regular duties due to perceived and actual threats of violence and the intense workload due to the ongoing conflict.[450] This was to the serious detriment of the relationship between Catholic communities and the RUC. The PIRA orchestrated a complex network of community policing and did so in a violent way, with punishment shootings, beatings and so-called arranged shootings, where victims are given a time and place for their punishment.[451] Dissident groups continue to be involved in such paramilitary punishment. In recent years, there has been a consistent level of such shootings and 2016 in particular saw a notable increase in the number of shootings.[452]

By seeking to keep, for example, drugs out of the community through threatening and extorting drug dealers, by keeping an eye out for

[450] For more on the RUC, see: Ryder, C. (1990) *The RUC: a force under fire*. Vintage, New York; Doherty, R. (2004) *The Thin Green Line: A History of the Royal Ulster Constabulary GC, 1922-2001*. Pen & Sword Military, Barnsley, UK

[451] De Heus, A. (2017) 'Meeting the needs of victims? Policing the past in Northern Ireland through the work of the Historical Enquiries Team', in Lynch, O. & Argomaniz, J. (Eds.) *Victims and Perpetrators of Terrorism; Exploring Identities, Roles and Narratives,* Routledge, London; Knox, C. (2002) 'See No Evil, Hear No Evil': Insidious Paramilitary Violence in Northern Ireland. *The British Journal of Criminology*, 42:1, 164-185.

[452] Belfast Telegraph (2016) 'dissidents blamed for rise in Northern Ireland paramilitary shootings, https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/dissidents-blamed-for-rise-in-northern-ireland-paramilitary-shootings-35727441.html (Accessed 02/02/2018)

informants, and trying to undermine the work of the PSNI, dissidents seek to provide a service they argue the PSNI is unable to supply due to its nature as an anti-Republican occupational force. This is similar to the narrative constructed regarding the RUC, however yet again with the major difference that the Republican mainstream has largely accepted Sinn Féin's justification in accepting the PSNI as opposed to the RUC. Conversely and more darkly, dissidents seek through their political opposition to the PSNI, to actively target serving police officers and prison officers as well as PSNI recruitment drives, in order to discourage young Catholics from joining the police.[453]

Dissident republican groups seek to imitate this dynamic of community policing. Its targeting of the PSNI is both strategic, albeit with caveats, and political. It is strategic in the opportunistic sense that police and security service personnel are a prominent and visible target, and they can be politically delegitimised as a clear physical representation of an oppressing state apparatus. The caveat is that targeting police officers also receives intense backlash and can heighten security forces' scrutiny. It is strategically feasible for dissident republicans to target individual police officers because of the relative ease of accessibility.

Furthermore, apart from the practical access to police officers, this action can also be legitimised to its social group as dissidents do not recognise the PSNI and argue it remains an occupational force. This strategy is best summarised under the 'Different name, same aim'

[453] The Irish News (2016) 'Men on PSNI recruitment fair bomb plot charges to stand trial later this year', 6 October 2016, http://www.Irishnews.com/news/2016/10/07/news/men-on-psni-recruitment-fair-bomb-plot-charges-to-stand-trial-later-this-year-724078/ (Accessed 11/10/2017)

banner. For dissidents, the PSNI is still a police force of an occupied territory and thus a direct enemy of the Irish Republican goals. Furthermore, they argue that the PSNI is not only an illegitimate force, it also actively seeks to supress Republicans.[454]

Most of the dissidents interviewed for this thesis hold a negative perception of the police and argue that arrests are solely for the suppression and intimidation of Republicans. One interviewee involved with a dissident group claimed, for example that, since he was known by the PSNI, they would more often stop him in the streets and that PSNI officers publicly alluded to his nature as an active dissident whilst travelling through a stronghold Loyalist area.[455] It is important to consider these negative perceptions towards the PSNI held by dissidents, as based on their violent activity it informs their perceptions of the police and their subsequent conduct towards them.

Prison officers are a representation not only of the oppressing state, and the significance of the still-imprisoned Republicans, but they are also strongly representative of the way in which prisoner issues played a significant role in the politicisation of the Republican movement after the 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes, and the prison blanket and dirty protests.[456] Thus, although they fall under the banner of security services in terms of being a target, they are also closely linked to the high profile prison life that has been so influential in Republicanism. Prisoners are part of the backbone of Irish Republicanism.

[454] Mackey, F., Stuart, N. (2016) Interview with the Author
[455] Anonymous (2016) Interview with the Author
[456] For a comprehensive history of the 1981 hunger strike, see: Beresford, D. (1997) *Ten men dead: The story of the 1981 Irish hunger strike*. Atlantic Monthly Press, Boston, MA.

This is important to understand some of the ideological conflict between the in-group and the out-group. The targeting and community-policing element of on-going dissident republican violence has many parallels to the activity of PIRA during the conflict. Therefore, dissidents claim that their activity is as justified today as it was during the height of the Troubles. The contention is on the basis that the mainstream republican movement claims it is not justified today, and that the armed struggle is against the wishes of the wider republican community. This was highly publicised in Martin McGuinness' reaction to the 2009 Massereene barracks and the subsequent death of a police officer. Thus, the current intergroup conflict over violence shows how the out-group has significantly altered its social identity to achieve, they argue, political legitimacy, whereas the dissident in-group has not. Understanding dissident targeting through the lens of social identity highlights the different ideological starting points of the group on which this thesis focuses.

Dissident violence also has a distinct feature of anti-normalisation. It prevents the complete normalisation of Northern Irish society. Although there have been relatively few major successful attacks, and there is a relative sense of peace, the consistent presence of dissident violence ensures that there are always small micro conflicts occurring. Under the banner that violence is warranted and armed resistance is needed as long as the six counties of Northern Ireland remain occupied, sustained campaigns of bombings and hoax attacks, the placing of a suspicious but non-harmful device for the aim of disruption, remains justified by VDRs. For example, between the summers of 2013 and

2014, the Army bomb squad was called out 342 times, nearly daily. As Tonge records, between 2006 and March 2012, 294 bombing incidents took place.[457] This includes only those attacks where bombs actually exploded, or were fit for purpose, thus excluding the numbers of unsuccessful devices, whether purposefully or incidentally. Violence, although at much lower levels, much less frequently and more localised, has clearly continued to persist in Northern Irish society.

Furthermore, hoax calls, usually concerning suspicious packages, are deliberately disruptive. Therefore, they are a relatively low-cost way of preventing normalisation. Although it is difficult to establish the exact number of such attacks, hoax calls are a frequent occurrence. According to the PSNI, between 2013 and 2015, there were 193 road closures due to suspect devices. Northern Irish public transport service, Translink, reported 176 security alerts on railroads between 2006 and 2015, and estimate the annual cost of dealing with repairs and inflicted costs due to riots and the wider security situation at an additional £566,000 per annum.[458] Furthermore, the explosive disposal unit was called out 347 times between August 2012 and July 2013.[459] Thus, despite the normalisation of Northern Irish society, removing military structures, closing most of the active barracks and removing security checkpoints,

[457] Tonge, J. (2014) A Campaign without End? : 'Dissident' Republican Violence in Northern Ireland. *Political Insight*, 5:1, 14-17.

[458] Alderdice, McBurney & McWilliams (2016) *The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland.* p.11

[459] Belfast Telegraph (2014) 'Call for dedicated bomb squad base', 24 October 2014, http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/call-for-dedicated-bomb-squad-base-30689879.html (Accessed 11/10/2017)

there remain continuing pressures on the system in terms of both political and financial expenses.

In recent years, this process to avoid complete normalisation has particularly focused on targeting policing, in a variety of ways. First, and as discussed elsewhere in this chapter, physical attacks on serving police officers are occurring. More illustratively of how these dissident acts influence their community, and undermine normalisation, however is through the targeting of PSNI recruitment. As part of the Patten Agreement, the new police service was required to recruit on a 50/50 basis. The desire was to create a more balanced force, thereby more representative of both the communities in which it served.[460] Nevertheless, this recruitment drive is severely hindered by the constant threat by dissidents, discouraging them from joining the new police services. As the case of Peadar Heffron further illustrates, such threats were followed through, and joining the police as a member of the CRN community was and remains a risky decision.[461] A serving PSNI confirmed that indeed there still risks for people from areas like West Belfast and Derry joining the PSNI. In cases they have to take increasing security measures, or can no longer safely enter such areas.[462]

[460] Independent commission on policing in Northern Ireland (1999) *A new beginning: Policing in Northern Ireland*, via https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/issues/police/patten/patten99.pdf (accessed 27/01/2019)
[461] Independent (2017) *Joe Brolly: Spurned, bombed and maimed by his kind*, via https://www.independent.ie/sport/columnists/joe-brolly/joe-brolly-spurned-bombed-and-maimed-by-his-own-kind-36270245.html (Accessed 27/01/2019)
[462] Anonymous (2016) Interview with the author

This is also visible in the targeting of PSNI recruitment drives. In 2015, multiple events had to be cancelled after threats from dissident republicans.[463] This constant threat, in order to drive people away from joining the PSNI, is a clear and prominent illustration of how anti-normalisation operates in Northern Ireland. Although there are fewer large-scale attacks, and thereby fewer casualties, the reality of the dissident threat shapes behaviour in some way or another. Whether that is through issues with infrastructure, increasing security expenditure, protests or marches, or in more behaviour shaping ways such as making a viable career option come with a more explicit threat to safety.

Whereas the above example illustrates the more personal level, this does thereby also affect the make-up of the PSNI as a whole. It is, according to Gustafson, and Theobal and Haider-Markel, of vital importance to have representation from previously disenfranchised communities present in police services, both at the lower and higher levels.[464] The dissident threats to local communities on their interaction with the PSNI shapes both the current and future relationship between them, and hinders the PSNI from recruiting from those local communities that are underrepresented in the force, thereby maintaining the perspective that they are not representative.

[463] The Irish Times (2015) *PSNI recruitment venues evacuated over security threats,* via https://www.irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/psni-recruitment-venues-evacuated-over-security-alerts-1.2385832 (Accessed 27/01/2019)

[464] Gustafson, J. (2013). Diversity in municipal police agencies: A national examination of minority hiring and promotion. *Policing: an international journal of police strategies & management*, *36*(4), 719-736. Theobald, N. A., & Haider-Markel, D. P. (2008). Race, bureaucracy, and symbolic representation: Interactions between citizens and police. *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, *19*(2), 409-426.

Furthermore, Dissident actions thereby affect communities as a whole as it maintains an air of violence. It has been thoroughly researched how living in communities impacted by war, communal or civil unrest and trauma, is detrimental for mental health and overall wellbeing.[465] Thus, although there has been significant improvement in normalising Northern Ireland, the continuation of dissident threat has both social, communal and psychological consequences.

Preventing normalisation is in the strategic interest of those dissident republicans that adhere to the ideological interpretation of Northern Irish police as an occupation force.[466] As several interviewees commented, given the fact that Northern Ireland is, in their view, still occupied by British forces, it is important for "true" Republicans to make sure that Republican communities are aware of this. Again, here too, reference is made to Sinn Féin's decision to enter the power-sharing government.[467] This continuation of violence, particularly targeting infrastructure and services, serves a strategic purpose: to impose the notion that Northern Ireland is not a normal society, because it is occupied.[468] These activities ensure that such issues remain dominant in social and political debates and continue to pressure the state to react and invest resources.

[465] See for example: Curran, P. S., & Miller, P. W. (2001). Psychiatric implications of chronic civilian strife or war: Northern Ireland. *Advances in psychiatric treatment*, *7*(1), 73-80.; Paolini, S., Hewstone, M., Cairns, E., & Voci, A. (2004). Effects of direct and indirect cross-group friendships on judgments of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland: The mediating role of an anxiety-reduction mechanism. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *30*(6), 770-786. & Schmid, K., & Muldoon, O. T. (2015). Perceived threat, social identification, and psychological well-being: The effects of political conflict exposure. *Political Psychology*, *36*(1), 75-92.
[466] See for example; Whiting, S (2015) *Op. Cit.*pp.146-155
[467] Duffy, M., Mackey, F., Brady, H. (2016) Interview with the Author
[468] Ibid.

The activity to prevent the normalisation of Northern Irish society is perhaps best explained first as an ideological strategy, and second also as a strategy related to the saliency of identity conflict in Northern Ireland. Continuous disruption serves as a reminder that Northern Ireland is not a 'normal' society. By doing so, such activity heightens in-group and out-group differentiation, thus maintaining saliency of social identity. It is however also explained through ideological factors, as the activity is driven by a desire to perpetuate the idea that Northern Ireland is not normal because of British presence in Ireland and because of the illegitimate state.

7.3.2) Thugs, terrorists, or true republicans? The dissident/mainstream conflict on paramilitary violence and ordinary crime

As Horgan and Taylor establish, there has always been a level of criminality associated with PIRA.[469] Since the peace process, significant moves have been made to regain criminal assets or seek compensation, and this has, for example, led to the recent incarceration of high profile former PIRA member Thomas 'Slab' Murphy on tax evasion charges.[470] Predominant sources of income were through extortion, protection money, establishing bars, hotels and taxi companies to launder money,

[469] Horgan, J., & Taylor, M. (1999) Playing the 'Green Card'- financing the provisional IRA: Part 1. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 11:2, 1-38, Horgan, J., & Taylor, M. (2003) Playing the 'green card'–financing the provisional IRA: part 2. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 15:2, 1-60.

[470] Barnes, C. (2016) 'Thomas 'Slab' Murphy takes a £10 million hit - busted Armagh plants 'linked to IRA leader's gang', Belfast Telegraph, 29 February 2016, 'http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/sunday-life/news/thomas-slab-murphy-takes-a-10-million-hit-busted-armagh-plants-linked-to-ira-leaders-gang-34497447.html (Accessed 11/10/2017)

smuggling goods, kidnap and robbery. Money was a necessary element to fund the armed struggle and it is unsurprising that this too plays a significant role in Irish dissident republicanism. The criminalisation of the armed struggle is not new. Yet some of the ways in which it is applied these days is. British counterinsurgency policy during the Troubles highlighted how, as Thatcher put it, 'crime is crime is crime. It is not political, it is crime.'[471]

The battle over political recognition of Irish Republican Prisoners subsequently formed the backbone of some of the most emotionalised parts of the conflict with the 1980 and 1981 hunger strikes. Yet, the same criminalisation of armed struggle is currently not only driven through the British state, but also carried by the mainstream Republican movement.[472] Given their prominence in Republican communities, it is exceedingly difficult for dissident groups to shake this credo. This, according to Frampton and Morrison, has been crucial in undermining the successful growth of spoilers.[473]

This link between crime and terror is nothing new in the case of Irish republicanism.[474] It is also a fairly common aspect more broadly. As Makarenko puts it:

> 'two traditionally separate phenomena have begun to reveal many operational and organisational

[471] Quoted in Shanahan, T. (2009) *the Provisional Irish Republican Army and the Morality of Terrorism,* Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, p.168
[472] Frampton, M. (2011) *Op. Cit.* pp.202-212,
[473] Frampton, M. (2011) *Op. Cit.* pp.203 & Morrison, J.F. (2013) *Op.Cit* pp.193-195
[474] See Horgan, J. & Taylor, M. (1999) *Op. Cit,* pp.1-5

> similarities. Indeed, criminal and terrorist groups appear to be learning from one another, and adapting to each other's successes and failures'.[475]

This crime-terror relationship has arguably obtained a much more complex nature with the splintering of the Irish Republican movement and with the mainstream Republican movement strongly dedicated to a peaceful political strategy. Mainstream Republicans, both for purposes of garnering support, as well as seeking to discredit dissident republicans, and as social identity theory would indicate, in order to positively disassociate themselves from dissidents, have actively sought to support the notion of dissidents as ordinary criminals as opposed to genuine republicans. According to, for example, Makarenko and Mesquite, Neumann, and O'Reilly, dissidents are now heavily involved in ordinary crime, and more ordinary criminal than terrorist.[476]

However, arguably the current crime-terror relation in Northern Ireland, is more complicated and multifaceted than the straightforward relation between dissidents and ordinary crime seems to imply. The problem is also internalised, with violent dissident organisations dispelling 'criminal elements' in their own organisations or accusing people of using an organisation's name for their own benefit. This is

[475] Makarenko, T. (2004) The crime-terror continuum: tracing the interplay between transnational organised crime and terrorism. *Global crime*, 6:1, 129-145, p.130
[476] See Makarenko, T., & Mesquita, M. (2014). Categorising the crime–terror nexus in the European Union. *Global crime*, *15*(3-4), 259-274, Neumann, P. R. (2002). The imperfect peace: explaining paramilitary violence in Northern Ireland. *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement*, *11*(1), 116-138. & O'Reilly C. (2014). "Crime and Dissent: Northern Irish Paramilitaries Rely on Criminality." *Jane's Intelligence Review* 26:3, 50–53.

usually enforced through paramilitary punishment, murder or a notification to leave the country.[477] Thus, there is a seeming contradiction between the message that dissidents are involved in ordinary crime, and that they are opposed to ordinary crime.

Complicating matters further, ordinary criminals use the banner of a paramilitary organisation to distract attention. The February 2016 Regency hotel shooting in Dublin, for example, was part of an on-going international gang feud, but gathered a paramilitary element in its execution.[478] First of all, weapons used by the perpetrators were linked back to a PIRA arms shipment.[479] Second, contradictory statements by the CIRA created confusion shortly after the shooting. The initial statement claimed responsibility and the follow-up denied any involvement, without clarity on the reliability of the statements.[480] Interviewed shortly after the Regency shooting events, RSF president Des Dalton further denied the involvement of 'true' Republicans in ordinary crime.[481] This incident further muddled an already complex

[477] Fitzmaurice, M. (2016) 'Terror group ONH claims it has shot two people and tried to kill another after "robust investigation"', Belfast Live, 20 October 2016, http://www.belfastlive.co.uk/news/belfast-news/terror-group-onh-claims-shot-12051269#comments-section (Accessed 11/10/2017)
[478] McDonald, H. (2016) 'Dublin boxing weigh-in shooting death linked to gangland feud', the Guardian, 5 February 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/feb/05/man-shot-dead-at-dublin-boxing-bout-weigh-in (Accessed 11/10/2017)
[479] Ryan, P. (2016) 'Any crime gang with Regency hotel gun attack information should come forward - Sinn Féin TD', The Independent, 8 February 2016, http://www.independent.ie/Irish-news/election-2016/news/any-crime-gang-with-regency-hotel-gun-attack-information-should-come-forward-sinn-fin-td-34433953.html (Accessed 11/10/2017)
[480] RTE (2016) 'Contradictory claims over Dublin hotel shooting', 9 February 2016, https://www.rte.ie/news/2016/0208/766228-hotel-shooting-regency/ (Accessed 11/10/2017)
[481] Dalton, D. (2016) Interview with the author

field of dissident republicanism, and further delegitimises political dissent by incentivising serious organised crime syndicates to cloak their activity under a banner of paramilitarism. The purpose of this is most likely to distract security services, but by doing so leans on the ideological social identity of dissident republicans.

This example shows a complex interrelation between criminal feuding in the ROI, and paramilitary activity across the entire island of Ireland. Therefore, some consideration needs to be made on how criminal feuding in the south impacts the reputation and ambitions of dissidents in Northern Ireland. There is clear, willing or unwilling, dissident involvement in the gangland war, as the murder of Michael Barr in 2016 illustrates.[482] In a consequent statement made about his activities as an IRPWA fundraiser and activist, it was stated that:

> Republicanism has had no part nor does it want any part of the criminal feuding that is tearing apart working class Dublin. Also to blame, are those former republicans who have besmirched the cause of Irish Freedom by siding with criminality and in doing so are blurring the lines between republicans and gangsters in the public's view; providing the state with invaluable propaganda to damage the republican struggle.[483]

[482] BBC News (2018) *Man convicted of Dublin feud murder of Michael Barr,* 30 January 2018 via https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-northern-ireland-42870079 (Accessed 29/01/2019)
[483] Saoradh (2017) *Remembering Vol. Micky Barr "Don't mourn, organise" – Saoradh Nuacht,* 30 April 2017, via http://saoradh.ie/remembering-vol-micky-barr-dont-mourn-organise-saoradh-nuacht/ (Accessed 29/01/2019)

This blurring of the lines between republicans and gangsters is indeed made obvious throughout this chapter as highly detrimental to dissident social identity from an outsider point of view. In the case of the Hutch/Kinahan feud however, it is very difficult to ascertain exactly where dissident republicans stand; whether they are on one side or the other, or perhaps a third player in this conflict, or a mere bystander group that has gotten involved. Furthermore, it's statement contradict external findings of dissident involvement in organised crime. The complexity of disentangling the role of dissidents in criminal feuding in the south or Ireland is most astutely a consequence of the fractured and split nature of dissidents. The internal justification and position of dissidents, being that they have no part in drugs and organised crime, is highly contradicted by those outside of those direct groups.[484] It impacts the reputation of dissident groups in general as they are coming to be seen in its entirety as criminal.

There is a contextual point to make here, that it is a trickledown effect of organised crime on paramilitarism, and from paramilitarism to political dissent. The effect is not perhaps direct from the criminal element to the political element. Therefore, it does not fall naturally in the literature of the crime terror nexus as was discussed above. Where political and paramilitary wings are difficult to disentangle; so too are paramilitarism, vigilantism and organised crime. Therefore, it arguably leads to the social identity of all non-mainstream republicanism to be so intertwined on both ideological and social factors, that it is difficult to untangle and change the perception of political dissent into

[484] Maguire, H. (2016) Interview with the Author

something positive. As chapter five has shown, this leads to former members of the provisional movement to leave organised republicanism altogether.

Vigilantism is particularly prominent in the conflict over drugs. Although RAAD was predominantly active in Derry, and has since been absorbed into the New IRA, its sole claim of existence was to clear Derry of drugs and drug dealers. Their strategy involved predominantly violent means, including the shooting and murder of several alleged drug dealers. RAAD furthermore issued threats for people to leave the country. Their unification with the Real IRA and several independent groupings into the New IRA is a result of the increased attempts by dissident republican groups to unify. The fact that it managed to do that on a paramilitary level also explains why the New IRA is a considerable threat.

Both members of the in-group and the out-group expressed that the extortion and involvement in drug related crime is counterproductive, as the taxing of drug dealers functions as merely a financing tool.[485] Although at a less widespread scale, dissidents too, have financed their armed struggle through criminal means.

Thus, the muddled landscape of non-mainstream republicanism and the issue of physical force republicanism has several unintended consequences that are both negative and positive. First, criminals have in fact been able to cloak under the banner of paramilitarism, including

[485] Maguire, H.; Hodgins, G., Duffy, M. (2016) Interview with the author

using former PIRA arms. Second, Sinn Féin and mainstream Republicans have effectively seized the narrative, disassociating the use of violence and crime in the conflict from that perpetrated by those today. This, particularly in the early days, stifled effective spoilers to the benefit of the peace process. Third, the internal confusion and collusion with criminal elements has significantly harmed the social identity structures of Irish dissident republicans. Several interviewees, who would identify as being pro-Sinn Féin, noted that thugs was the only thing they (dissidents) were, and that this differed from the path of PIRA during the conflict, where assets were taken in order to fund the movement, as opposed to self-enrichment. It is undeniable that dissident groups engage in violent activity, but this is internally justified by these organisations as long as it is deemed to be 'for the cause'. The recent split in the CIRA for example from the central leadership's perspective was because the Limerick fraction solely pursued criminality for personal gain, thus betraying the true Republican cause.[486]

The big difference between the perceptions of crime in these two streams of Irish republicanism is to be found in their structure, size and clarity. First, structurally and linked to size, PIRA had a finance department as part of its organisational structure, something it was able to maintain because of its size.[487] It also made certain members

[486] This sentiment was expressed off the record by interviewees, and further corroborated by several journalists and academics close to the organisation.
[487] Clarke, R., & Lee, S. (2008) The PIRA, D-Company, and the crime-terror nexus. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 20:3, 376-395, pp.382-383 & Horgan, J., & Taylor, M. (1997) The provisional Irish Republican army: Command and functional structure. *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 9:3, 1-32, p.13

solely responsible for running pubs, laundering money or executing armed robberies.

Because of the strong leadership and central command of PIRA, a much stronger grasp was held over its members to avoid the self-enrichment of which dissidents are often accused by both the in-group and the mainstream movement. The comparative lack of strength and the general confused and scattered nature of republican dissidents spill over into its moneymaking activities. Social identity theory can offer interesting insights to understanding this power imbalance. It helps explain why dissidents continue a level of armed struggle without this being a necessary positive ideological factor. Because of the power of the out-group, it becomes increasingly difficult for the in-group to positively associate themselves. Therefore, it may be more relevant to find ideological justification that finds internal approval, without seeking to expand that base.

Social Identity Theory provides a valuable prism through which to analyse the violent strategies of dissident republican groups. The Independent Monitoring Commission (IMC) assessed that PIRA has been operationally inactive since its statement in 2005.[488] The issues surrounding the murders of Gerard 'Jock' Davidson and Kevin McGuigan in 2015, however, drew light on the continued existence of PIRA leadership structures, nearly toppling the power-sharing

[488] BBC News (2005) 'Statement in full', 28 July 2005, Statement by the Provisional IRA calling an end to its military campaign, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/4724599.stm (Accessed 17/03/2017)

government in its wake.[489] These leadership structures have in this myriad form been especially prominent in containing the dissidents in the years after the peace process in order to avoid them becoming too much of a spoiler to the peace process, and according to the IMC continued to gather intelligence to do so.[490]

According to some of the interviewees for this thesis, the threat of the Provisionals has not internally ceased to exist entirely, especially against those that have dissented or have opposed mainstream republican direction. Thus, through its strong leadership, and the use of force and social ostracism, the mainstream movement has effectively undermined the growth of dissident spoilers in the years after the peace agreement. However, because of this, it has also effectively managed to conflate legitimate threats of terrorism and crime, with what is essentially political opposition. As chapter five and six illustrated, even republicans that were not favourable towards violence on a personal level, and were mostly ideologically opposed to the out-group, still felt they suffered similar social consequences.

Trumbore refers to this element as 'coercive spoiler management'; PIRA had been able to act with a relative level of impunity in the Republican communities after the peace process in order to ensure that dissident spoilers could not form too big a threat to the peace process.[491] As one expressed it, 'they certainly aren't nice to those who

[489] McDonald, H. (2015) 'Death of an assassin: how the killing of Kevin McGuigan reawakened Belfast's political strife', the Guardian, 13 September 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2015/sep/13/kevin-mcguigan-death-assassin-belfast-political-strife (Accessed 02/03/2016)
[490] Independent Monitoring Commission (2011) *25th and final report of the IMC*
[491] Trumbore, P. F. (2018) *Op. Cit.*pp.532-534

step out of line'. [492] Official evidence suggests that the PIRA has since 2007 not actively been recruiting new members or preparing any military campaign, however it has maintained some of its leadership structures at the army council level.[493]

Continuing the armed struggle has been an increasingly growing fault line in the Republican movement. It has never been widely popular, but at the height of the Troubles, particularly when 'normal' policing of Republican communities by the RUC was virtually impossible, the PIRA had a fairly strong hold over the community due to its strength. This displayed particularly in paramilitary punishment and appointment shootings. Due to both the social and political strength of the mainstream movement, in combination with a community's desire to move away from violence and a particularly popular leadership, it has always been able to take a majority with it in its given direction.

Dissidents have never had the popularity to do so. Therefore, from the community perspective, the use of violence perpetrated by dissidents since the peace process is a stumbling block and one of its most negative connotations. Apart from being a breaking point between the mainstream and the dissident movement, it has also served as a fault line between the different dissident groups, making it a micro-level issue as well. Not all dissident groups are organisationally involved in, or in favour of, the continuation of the armed struggle, but may be either affected by individual members' actions or are deemed similar

[492] Anonymous (2016) interview with the author
[493] Alderdice, McBurney & McWilliams (2016) *The Fresh Start Panel Report on the Disbandment of Paramilitary Groups in Northern Ireland*

by the wider republican communities under the banner of dissidence as a whole.

This is arguably exactly what has happened between the in-group and the out-group. The relative strength of the mainstream movement has positively halted the growth of violence, but has thereby benefited in also tackling political opposition. The in-group itself is unable to deal with the negatively imposed social identity from the out-group because the in-group lacks social proximity and is stifled by leadership issues and infighting. Furthermore, due to the intricate web of groups and personalities involved in Irish republicanism, it is difficult to disassociate the politics of dissident republicans from its social and its violent counterparts.

The violence perpetrated by dissident republicanism in post-2007 Northern Ireland, to some degree fits within the social identity framework. The choices of targets are largely political, particularly the PSNI, but there is also a large personal element involved due to the negative experiences that dissident republicans have with the police and the role they seek to play in discrediting, targeting and replacing the PSNI. Nonetheless, drawing exact conclusions on personal perceptions of violence and highly illustrated details on the use of violence are much more difficult to garner from available data, including the interviews conducted for this thesis.[494] This is in large part due to the illicit nature of the act.

[494] Hayes, B.C. & McAllister, I. (2005) *Op. Cit.* pp. 600-603

Furthermore, the area of community policing is a clear attempt at seeking to positively associate dissident republicanism with the community, although it largely only does so to its own restricted membership. The targeting of drug dealers, and people engaged in anti-social behaviour, or at least the suggestion that it is, seeks to both positively connote the actions by dissident republicanism as protectors of the community in relation to a police force that is heavily biased against them, as well as upholding a level of threat to the community to avoid complete normalisation of the security situation.[495]

However, although it legitimises its use of violence through the lens of Republican duty, and upholding the armed struggle, its intertwined nature with ordinary crime and internal feuding heavily restricts its political and social ability to be the legitimate opposition to Sinn Féin that it claims to be. Although volatile, disruptive, and at times deadly, dissident violence fails to achieve both the construction of a positive social identity and its ultimate aims of a 32 county Irish Republic. As Morrison and Horgan rightfully assess, its political justification does not align with the actual output of its actions.[496] Therefore, it is important to consider not just how violence takes place, and how it is justified, but also what alternative reasons may exist for its persistence. A crucial reason behind this is not solely to be found in its political identification and justification, but also in its social markers. Key here, as one community worker described it, is that many dissidents from the rank of the former PIRA simply will not cease their violent activities

[495] Whiting, S. (2015) *Op. Cit.* pp. 175-178
[496] Morrison & Horgan (2016) *Op. Cit* p.590

because it is the last pillar to prove that Sinn Féin has not won.[497] It is crucial to consider the perception that violence in and by itself is an act to prevent a full cessation of possible opposition towards Sinn Féin's strategy as the biggest Republican voice in Northern Ireland. Personal relations, a lack of viable political ground and internal cohesion influence this persistence to remain involved in a basic strategy of armed resistance.

7.4) Conclusion

Dissidents and their violence are, as Frampton phrases it, seeking to keep the flame of republicanism alive.[498] Understanding violent dissident republicanism however necessitates understanding the complex network of social and political relations, the internal feuds that are being fought out, as well as the political aims. With the continuous shifting of alliances and internal splits and mergers, it would be nearly impossible to conclusively state what dissident republican violence looks like exactly, who is associated with whom and where the line between terrorists and ordinary criminals can be drawn. This is made increasingly difficult, as people are not always willing to discuss the subject in much depth, either out of self-protection or out of fear and paranoia of the illicit nature of the act and its consequences.

However, arguably it is by acknowledging this complexity and opaqueness that dissident republicanism is to be identified and countered. Violence plays a particularly complicated and divisive role

[497] Anonymous (2016) Interview with the author
[498] Frampton, M. (2011) *Op. Cit.* P.286

in modern Irish Republicanism, in other words, whether violence is perceived as a necessary or warranted strategy in the first place. Something that for groups like the 32CSM and RSF is an undeniably legitimate part of the struggle, may not be so for groups like Éirígí who are dissenting from the mainstream on solely political grounds. There is a distinction between those groups that perceive the armed struggle as an ideological principle and those that see it as a possible strategy that is not currently warranted. This also explains in part why, as discussed in chapter six, dissidents are an occasion-based movement with some overlapping positions but some crucial differences.

Violence, furthermore, is used by mainstream Republicanism through the lens of criminalisation in order to not just delegitimise dissident violent actions, but to some extent also its political endeavours by linking the two inextricably. Nonetheless, it is undeniable that criminality, both actively and passively, plays a role in the dissident movement. However, this crime-terror relationship, as argued in section 7.3.3, has also played an extensive role in the funding of the armed struggle of the provisional movement and as such is neither new nor distinct. It is another element where dissident republicans lose the battle for hearts and minds to their mainstream counterparts, who very effectively manage to conflate their criminal activity with political dissent. The lack of a successful dissident violent strategy is in part to be found in their social and political disunity.

Another aim of dissident violence established in this chapter, is its desire to prevent normalisation. Here, it is possible to see some 'success'. As the IMC reported back in 2007, one of the key areas of the

security normalisation plans would be implementing significant changes in PSNI patrolling patterns, including the introduction of 'single beat officers, bicycle patrols and opening of police shops'.[499] Although this has happened to a degree, for example with some de-fortification of police stations, and the introduction of less militaristic police patrols, specifically in urban centres, the PSNI can still not be compared to a police service in the rest of the UK. Single beat officers remain a fairly unlikely sight, unless in rural areas, and in the geographical areas where dissident activity remains higher, there is maintenance of militaristic police patrol, particularly when compared to the rest of the UK. This is at least in part directly attributed to dissident republican activity.[500]

The targeting of police services and officers by dissident republicans prevents normalisation. Since 2007, dissidents have killed three police officers and two prison officers, whilst maiming several others. Although, as established in this chapter, the main victims of dissident violence are civilians, it is important to assess why certain people may be at risk. This chapter argues that people are predominantly targeted from a sense of community policing that dissidents seek to provide. People suspected of crime, particularly drug dealing, have therefore been a consistent target. However, this style of paramilitary punishment as it is performed, leans heavily on former tactics of the PIRA. This is an area where social identity theory explains a large part of the conflict between the in-group and the out-group. Dissidents claim that Sinn Féin's ideological rejection of such targeting is

[499] Independent Monitoring Commission (2007) *14th report of the IMC*, p.30 paragraph 7.1
[500] Ibid. p.30 paragraph 7.3

hypocritical as they did the same thing; the mainstream out-group however claims that such actions are against the wishes of the community.

If these arguments are displayed towards the wider republican arena, it needs to be concluded that Sinn Féin's argument outweighs dissident justification. To reiterate, through conflating dissent with violence and crime, the mainstream out-group has created a winning narrative in undermining both physical force dissent, but also to some degree, as discussed in chapter six, political dissent. Sinn Féin has mostly been able to do this because of the asymmetry between the in-group and the out-group. The in-group lacks popular support, is small and fractured whereas the out-group has grown in strength significantly. Through this, the mainstream republican out-group has also used coercive practices to drive through this advantage.

Therefore, dissident republican violence still plays a significant part in Northern Irish society, but despite serious security concerns, should not be overestimated. Its inability thus far to constitute a positive social identity amongst them towards the mainstream, is in large part the cause of its continued lack of success. It is in its strategy of legitimisation and targeting predominantly a repetition of PIRA tactics and strategies in a reduced form. This is also in part caused by resentment towards the Republican mainstream and a consequent unwillingness to surrender the final part of the armed struggle, as it indicates a complete win for Sinn Féin.[501]

[501] Anonymous (2016) Interview with the Author

There is finally, an increasingly convoluted nature to dissident violence, with individual groups and people claiming the banner of Republicanism in their criminal pursuits. The core implication of this is that any growth of non-violent political dissent can be distorted by criminal actions in the name of Republicanism, continuing the existing spectre of criminalisation. Violence and criminality is inherently at the core of the negative social identity of Dissident republicans. This is by their own making because of their involvement in crime and terrorism in Northern Ireland. The considerable longer-term consequence this can have is that Sinn Féin's continued coercive qualities, in combination with the unpopular use of violence will also stifle any opportunity for political dissent. This creates an inescapable Catch 22 for Irish Republicans like those discussed in chapter five, that may be politically opposed to Sinn Féin, but are also inherently opposed to the use of violence. Nonetheless, since the peace process, dissidents have continuously expressed capability and willingness to kill, maim and threaten its targets within and outside the community.

8) Conclusion

We have consistently called for dialogue. They have consistently refused. They are a mixum-gatherum of different groupings and individuals. But there is a responsibility to try and show leadership. And despite our abhorrence of what they are doing and despite their contempt for us we have to show leadership.

Gerry Adams [502]

It seems fitting to open the conclusion of this thesis with the words of Gerry Adams, as it is the former Sinn Féin leader who attracts a lot of personal heat from dissidents and independent Irish Republicans alike. His words echo an important argument in this thesis: in order to fully comprehend the existence and persistence of dissident republicanism, it needs to be understood in relation to the Republican mainstream of Sinn Féin. Dissident unwillingnes to engage in dialogue is not towards dialogue per se, but more so towards dialogue on the terms of the mainstream. Dissident contempt towards Sinn Féin is a consequence of the inability to put forward successful dialogue, but also one that highlights some of the complexity and coerciveness with which Sinn Féin and its leadership enforce its political prowess. Although the 'mixum-gatherum' of groups that Adams describes have some clear aims and objectives, regardless of their achievability, much dissent in the Irish Republican movement since 2007 displays only a reactionary nature to the actions of mainstream Republicanism.

[502] The Irish Times (2016) 'Gerry Adams says dissidents 'at war' with nationalist community' 16 August https://www.Irishtimes.com/news/ireland/Irish-news/gerry-adams-says-dissidents-at-war-with-nationalist-community-1.2757992 (Accessed 19-07-2017)

This thesis set out to understand the role of social identity in post-conflict dissident Irish republicanism in Northern Ireland. In doing so, it has sought to achieve two core research objectives: to provide a more holistic understanding of residual paramilitary Republican violence and the existence of political and physical dissent, and to provide a framework to conceptualise social identity as a means to help explain the interplay between identity and dissenting groups.

This thesis offers two core findings. First, the manner in which the mainstream/dissident republican dichotomy, despite the oversimplification of this banner, operates has both positive as well as negative impact on intergroup conflict in Irish republican communities. Positively, the relative strength of the mainstream movement, and the divided nature of the in-group dissident movement have prevented violent dissident groups from growing to a position where they are able to destroy the peace process and force a return to violence. Negatively, in doing so, the mainstream movement has effectively created a negative social identity for all forms of dissent, particularly through criminalising and delegitimising them. This affects the possibility for the growth of legitimate political opposition. This is mostly possible due to the relative weaknesses of the in-group as well as the strength and dominance of the out-group in controlling the narrative.

The second core finding is that the in-group/out-group divide, drawn from social identity theory, is effective in exploring intergroup conflict dimensions because it allows for a multifactorial interpretation of identity and social categorisation. However, it overlooks people who

identify with elements of both sides of the Irish republican spectrum. A less dichotomous approach could recognise that such individuals can contribute to a less competitive narrative of Irish republicanism.

Although each of the three empirical chapters had focused on one of the sub-research questions, this concluding chapter will both draw together findings from across the empirical chapters, but also explore implications for the theoretical framework. In particular, it highlights the complex interconnected nature of the ideological and social roots underpinning the theoretical. This chapter is set up to provide a summative reflection on both the empirical and theoretical findings in section 8.1 and 8.2 respectively. The final part of this chapter is dedicated to the research process and the possible future research agenda that has arisen from this project.

8.1) Core empirical findings

Dissident republicanism is relatively localised and small in scale. Yet its organisational structure is confused at best, unfathomable at worst. The plethora of groups are so divided that it becomes difficult to frame them as a dissident republican movement. They do however share similarities in some of their readings of Irish republicanism and do occasionally work together to support common aims. Therefore, they are an occasion-based movement. However the interpretation of what it means to be a 'true' Irish republican differs mostly between the strong traditional line, adhering closely to the ideological principles of Irish republicanism and abstentionism, of Republican Sinn Féin and the Continuity IRA, to the more militaristic interpretation of 32CSM and the

Real, now New, IRA. Then of course, there are groups like Éirígí, the IRSP and the 1916 societies that range from solely political groups with no paramilitary wing, like Éirígí, to more widespread action groups, like the 1916 societies.

Most of the different dissident groups try to propagate an appearance of unity. Their ultimately divided nature can be best explained by two factors. The first is the high level of interpersonal disagreement and competition between members and groups. There is a constant recognition from within the movement that the splits are driven by personalities. The social identity framework assesses these as negative social factors and negative leadership. The second main factor is the debate over the use of armed struggle as being either a republican principle or a pragmatic strategy that is currently neither warranted nor useful. Not only does this interpretation of violence divide the groups from the inside, but it also discredits the entire movement. Violence is not popular and therefore any organisation that is intrinsically linked with an armed paramilitary wing will struggle to portray a positive social identity.

Indeed, the power of the mainstream out-group in coercing the perception of any form of dissent ensures that all dissident groups are linked to violence by association. Thus, the armed struggle is largely unsuccessful, and will continue to be so, in achieving its ultimate aim of Irish unity. The negative perception of the armed struggle and the perceived connections between dissident republicanism and organised violence prevents political support for any alternative non-violent

dissent to take root and grow. This is exacerbated by Sinn Féin's ability to coerce the wider community towards its political strategy.

Given the unpopularity of the armed struggle, it is noteworthy that mergers of different paramilitary groups have taken place in the creation of the New IRA. The same has not happened for the political groups, at least during the timeframe of this study.[503] That violent groups merge more easily than political groups can perhaps be explained by size and aims. Physical force republicanism does not have widespread popularity; therefore, it arguably creates a lowest common denominator effect. Those that actively support violence have such a high negative ideological proximity, that the out-group hate creates a more powerful and intense shared in-group social identification. This is a fault line within non-mainstream Irish republicanism that Sinn Féin has managed to advantageously apply to its narrative.

Sinn Féin's coercive capacity makes it difficult for dissident groups to garner true support, as these groups are mostly all fishing in the same, small pond of people who may be open to their resistance to Sinn Féin strategy. This, ultimately, provides them with a shared platform: they have "anti-Shinner" sentiment in common. Nevertheless, this commonality is also an increasingly difficult part of their existence. Sinn Féin has a clear electoral majority in republican communities. They subsequently claim this as a full legitimisation of their endeavours and consequently reject dissident politics. The power balance is strongly tilted towards Sinn Féin, which presents clear challenges for

[503] As discussed previously, this thesis does not include a full discussion of the creation and social identity of Saoradh, as it falls outside the timeframe of the thesis.

any legitimate opposition to this party as a result. Arguably, Sinn Féin has managed to win the republican narrative through both coercion as well as legitimate political innovation and electoral success. Dissident republicanism on the other hand as failed in both its endeavours to engage in politics, as well as lost potential for support because of its close connection to paramilitarism, vigilantism and organised crime.

Despite the power imbalance between the in- and out-group, clearly in favour for Sinn Féin, there can be no full dismissal of the dissident influence on the latter. They present, as Richard English describes it, a clear and unnegotiable nuisance to Sinn Féin and the path of politics it has embarked on.[504] The clear rejection of the Peace Process and Sinn Féin strategy, as well as the consistent reminder of the hard line action it perpetrated itself for most of the latter half of the 20th century is a thorn in its side. Although the revisionist agenda of Sinn Féin builds on pragmatism and an agenda of equality, dissidents present a constant reminder of where the mainstream were themselves two or three decades ago. To answer the core research question, social identity aids our understanding of dissident republicanism because it allows for the reciprocity of the relationship between dissident and mainstream Republicans to map the fluid and complex internal nature of Irish Republicanism. That answer contains several crucial elements of this study.

[504] The Irish Times (2017) 'why Republican dissidents have not and will not go away', 19 July 2017 https://www.Irishtimes.com/news/crime-and-law/why-Republican-dissidents-have-not-and-will-not-go-away-1.3159056 (Accessed 07/08/2017)

First of all, it demonstrates that the relationship between an in-group, dissident republicanism, and an out-group, Sinn Féin, is dynamic and fluid. This fluidity is found in how the in-group and out-group are made up, how they identify themselves, how they are identified by the out-group, and in the way in which they contextually relate to one another. Second, this answer highlights the complexity of the case itself, and the high level of internal disagreement and conflict. This thesis tackles this through its conceptual framework, focussing both on personal and interpersonal matters as well as political and ideological grounding. The ideological roots of Irish Republicanism, both in terms of Sinn Féin and dissident groups, has been academically researched extensively.[505] This however does not integrate the importance of personal experience and personal networks to the extent that this thesis does.

Dissident commonality lies not in maintaining armed struggle, or the political purity of historic Irish Republicanism, but in their wholehearted rejection of Sinn Féin's strategy. This rejection, albeit reached at different times either before or after the conflict, is crucial in understanding the actions of dissident groups. This is particularly important considering that the grounds of these rejections are oftentimes personal. The willingness to instigate dialogue, as the statement of Gerry Adams alludes to, is built on a basis that for any dialogue to have far-reaching positive effects, it also needs to be built on a platform in which Sinn Féin is reasonably aware and accepting of political opposition. There needs to be a willingness to admit understanding of those not coming along with the peace process for

[505] See Whiting, S.A. (2015); *Op. Cit.* Morrison, J.F. (2013); *Op. Cit.* Horgan, J. (2012); *Op. Cit.* English, R. (2012) *Op. Cit.*

reasons other than an unwillingness towards the prospect of peace. The overwhelming power of the Republican mainstream in Northern Ireland in equating any dissent as being anti-peace fundamentally damages the prospect of any fruitful dialogue for the benefit of the wider Republican communities and subsequently progress in Northern Ireland as a whole. As much as a political stalemate is ever present on the stage of the devolved institutions, it is present within communities themselves as well.

The coercive spoiler management by the mainstream is prominent today, albeit slightly less violently, and infinitely more politically. Nonetheless, such spoiler management is closely associated with the community control of the provisional movement, making it a fine line to tread. Sinn Féin has ascribed itself the task to not only remain strong and controlling enough to curtail dissident activity and maintain and increase political control, but also to uphold an air of non-militarism in its approach in order not to provoke or instigate a strong reaction from its unionist counterparts. This two-fold strategy of being threatening to dissidents without being threatening to unionists can reasonably only go so far as to maintain an 'acceptable level of violence', to coin the phrase used in the early days of the conflict in a different light. Yet, in any 'normal' society, there is a necessary room for political and non-violent oppositions. Because of how both non-violent and violent dissent is interlinked and convoluted, Sinn Féin has the ability to some degree to classify all opposition as opposed to peace, and not solely the violent groups.

Part of the appeal of Sinn Féin in republican communities is entwined with 'keeping them safe'. Identity politics in this sense is not only directed towards protecting the republican agenda against the further unionist outgroup, but also as the only 'viable' alternative to make sure paramilitarism, as perpetrated by some republican dissident groups, cannot take hold. Sinn Féin have successfully positioned themselves as both keepers of the peace as well as custodians of the republican principles. A more cynical view on this would be that dissidents keep the perception alive that communities need to be kept at peace. Nevertheless, not all of dissident failure can be attributed to the strength of the mainstream. Dissident republicans have accrued plenty of their own failures. The first and foremost is, as mentioned, that of the perpetuation of the armed struggle.

This thesis largely takes an intra-communal approach, looking below the immediate scope of Orange versus Green approaches to Northern Ireland. This is important because it allows for a deeper understanding of some of the groups' continued use of violence and opposition towards the peace process. As chapter six established, dissident groups are much more "anti-Shinner" than anti-peace process per se. They particularly reject not the idea of peace itself, but the grounds on which Sinn Féin established that peace. Again, here too it is not the use of violence per se that drives the issue, as for many the use of violence is not the end goal in and by itself. Their belief maintains that at the stage at which Sinn Féin entered the alternative of political institutions in Stormont, the circumstances did not warrant the concessions made.

The leadership issue that Gerry Adams raises in the epigraph of this chapter is an important element to that process. The strong leadership of Adams and McGuinness enabled them to carry a large part of the Provisional movement. Through the process of coercive spoiler management thereafter they were also able to at least restrain the growth of opposition by threatening repercussions. This is reflected in the internal battle that occurred in the early 2000s when several high profile dissident leaders were threatened, incriminated or killed. Sinn Féin has been willing and able to use selective violence or the implicit threat of violence in order to suppress its critics and opponents.[506]

Although this was most prominent in the early years after the peace process, this still exists today. Maintaining peace has, of course, been positive, however, the ability of Sinn Féin to expand this coercive spoiler management towards political opponents is a negative consequence. These opponents are largely the dissidents, who are making it easy to be coerced due to their disorganised nature, and their use of violence. This is possible because the lack of organisation hinders a positive prototypicality of the membership, and the use of violence is so unpopular that any association with it creates a negative social and ideological proximity.

Nonetheless, it is also important to conclude that violence is a root problem of any potentially successful alternative to Sinn Féin to gain traction. With the notable key exception of Gary Donnelly, no dissident republican with direct links to an organisation with a paramilitary wing

[506] Trumbore (2018) *Op. Cit.* pp. 534-538

was elected in either local or assembly elections. Dissident groups claim to represent real Republicanism in their rejection of both Stormont, the Oireachtas and the Crown. Although some of their politics is very locally rooted, it also builds on century-old assumptions. As the election of People before Profit has shown, there is support for socialist and leftist political candidacy in hard-line Republican communities. This does not however translate into non-mainstream Republican electoral success, which largely comes down to a lack of pragmatism in its approach. This is something Sinn Féin has consistently driven forward in its own strategy, stressing that the time was ripe for political action to take over from violent action.

Moving into the peace process has, despite its challenges, brought about progress in the social, political and economic make-up of Northern Ireland. As Sinn Féin argue, this is not a rejection of movement towards a united Ireland, but rather amending it into a long-term strategy whilst asserting as much progress as possible in the meantime. Therefore, the mainstream has created an increasingly positive social identity on ideological factors due to its focus of the ballot over the bullet. Understanding dissident republicanism solely through an anti-peace interpretation and mainstream republicanism solely as the political holders of the peace is problematic. The combination of continued violence and a toxic adherence to political positions stifles any legitimate concerns and closes the door for political opposition that is key for functioning politics.

Finally, there is the issue of cohesion and leadership within the non-mainstream or Republican ultras. A recent example of Saroadh saw the

high profile launch of a new, ambitious Irish Republican party commonly perceived as the political wing of the New IRA and the IRPWA, completing the triad structure of the Irish Republican movement. This organisation combined high profile dissident republicans in its leadership, only to be fractured a short time later.[507] The rigid and strong approach that Sinn Féin leadership has taken, drawing back on chapter six's assessments of the cult-like perceptions of the party, have meant that a majority of people were taken along with the mainstream, with little to no effective spoilers.

This is in contrast precisely to what is hindering dissident republicanism. Combining SF dominance with the criminal activity and politically justifying paramilitary violence harms all prospect for constructive and positive dialogue for those seeking an alternative to Sinn Féin. Pragmatically, any non-violent political alternative is preferable over the violent alternative. Thus, dissident republicans lack structural integrity, both as a result of political and ideological differences, but also due to 'personnel issues'. Many groups have fallen out or lack a strong cohesive leadership structure. This, as the interviewees stated, has a lot to do with personal feelings after leaving the provisional movement and its strong leadership and regulatory power towards its members. Many who left this organisation with respect from their local community or peers wanted to pursue a leadership position in a new group. Rather than combining forces, this

[507]Belfast Telegraph (2017) 'Split rocks dissident group as 23 members walk out in protest against Belfast leadership', 27 June 2017 http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland/split-rocks-dissident-group-as-23-members-walk-out-in-protest-against-belfast-leadership-35868838.html (Accessed 08-08-2017)

led to the division of forces, with too many captains seeking to steer the ship in any given direction. Furthermore, there is the coercive power of Sinn Féin in controlling the spread of dissent, meaning that many who may be in opposition to Sinn Féin may not join any dissident grouping. In contrast, this may also be as a result of a disagreement with the political or structural identity of any non-mainstream Republican organisation.

8.2) Theoretical and conceptual implications

There is no shortage of studies on identity, across many academic fields, including political science, history, sociology and psychology. However, the way in which identity is subsequently operationalized varies.[508] It is not necessary to find a fits-all definition of identity, how it works and what it means. However, it is important to understand its importance in grasping complex cases, here particularly focused on dissent and political violence. As the case study of dissident republicanism in Northern Ireland has shown, social identity is a useful tool in exploring the shape, roots and function of dissent. However, based on its findings, it is also important to reflect on the theoretical and conceptual implications that have arisen from this research; key amongst them the need to account more strongly for the differences in power between in- and out-groups. Although some issues of stereotyping have been accounted for in the theoretical literature (see chapter three), this accounts mostly for the role of members within

[508] Asal, V., & Griffith, L. (2017). A terrible beauty is born: teaching about identity salience and conflict. *Dynamics of Asymmetric Conflict*, 10:1, 3-13

their own organisation and their subsequent portrayal to the wider arena. Yet, as established in the previous section, this thesis found that the out-group ability for coercive interference towards the in-group deserves more attention.

One of the core findings of this thesis is that a high level of personal grudges helps to explain the existence and persistence of dissident violence in Northern Ireland. These personal perceptions are closely interlinked with political and ideological aims. Paramilitary violence therefore cannot exclusively be understood by political or ideological explanations, but includes social perceptions of the out-group as a reason for continued violence. This thesis operationalises and conceptualises identity across three interrelated areas; social, ideological and logistical. In doing so, it integrates the importance of group structures as a means to understand intergroup competition in an us versus them structure that exceeds, relative to the case study, the logical loyalist vs Republican divide and focuses on the underlying relationship between a mainstream and non-mainstream part of a community.

The theoretical grounds of this research are significantly interdisciplinary and are particularly prominent in the study of terrorism and political violence, in which the social sciences and psychology has a prominently overlap. Social Psychology as a field is much more focused on human interaction and behaviour as it can be observed and questioned, as opposed to its clinical counterpart. Nonetheless, it required some translation of the core principles of the theory towards a broader socio-political use.

These three key areas of operationalising identity (ideology, social and logistical) are themselves broad and require an in-depth understanding to acquire a view of what is important. This is most effectively done through gathering and analysing in-depth qualitative data, but regardless is difficult to map. In particular, logistical proximity between a person and a social identity is increasingly difficult to assess with the growth of online networks and interconnectedness. This was relatively easy in the case of dissident Irish republicanism as the scope was smaller. Mapping such connectivity in larger cases, including for example the Islamic State is much more complex and as such subject to a growing body of research.[509] Nonetheless, even here evidence suggests that smaller scale personal contacts are also very important.[510]

The relationship between personal and ideological identities is reciprocal and interlinked. This means that in many cases one's personal networks will be stronger where ideological identities overlap and the social and personal networks in which one is involved may in turn shape ideology. These two elements are inherently interlinked, and perhaps arguably inseparable. Nonetheless, it is important to distinguish between them, because even when they have

[509] See for example: Klausen, J. (2015). Tweeting the Jihad: Social media networks of Western foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq. *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, *38*(1), 1-22. Brown, K. (2014). Atwan, A. B. (2015). *Islamic state: The digital caliphate*. Univ of California Press, Oakland, CA.

[510] See for example this recent study on mapping social contacts in Molenbeek; Coolsaet, R. (2016) 'Molenbeek and violent radicalisation: A social mapping' *European Institute for Peace,* June 2017, via: https://view.publitas.com/eip/eip-molenbeek-report-16-06/page/1 (Accessed 01-08-2017)

a noticeable influence on one another, saying they are inseparable would be akin to claiming, for example, that anyone who grows up in a conservative household will themselves inevitably hold conservative ideas. Many of the interviewees had very similar upbringings, a large amount of shared experiences, and a close-knit network of shared personal and ideological proximity, yet circumstances drove them apart to where an oppositional position is taken on both personal and ideological grounds.

The social identity framework used in this thesis lends itself to further development. This is particularly in light of power imbalances between in-groups and out-groups, an issue that has been acknowledged in the theoretical chapter of this thesis. The core principles do not sufficiently engage with the power relation that exists between groups, and may actually strongly affect a group's ability to positively self-identify in situations where the out-group holds the power balance. This arguably was the case in Northern Ireland through the strong and unilateral criminalisation of dissident republican violence. Notwithstanding that violence is criminal either way, the Republican mainstream has been able to assert its coercive power over the dissidents in the years after the peace process in order to prevent successful spoilers, and also to some extent to effectively 'other' them from their own past activity. It was something that was very present in the case study of this research, as it is unequivocal that Sinn Féin holds the power balance in comparison to the dissidents. Dissident republican identity is consistently mobilised and hence consistently salient. However, this is predominantly in response to the political strategy of Sinn Féin.

Thus, the framework has clear promise in assessing the importance of identity on a variety of issues, as well as bringing these together into the practical outcomes they have for intergroup relations. The framework is specifically suitable to allow for a complex interpretation of the interrelated nature of personal/social parts of social identity with ideological/political aspects. Nonetheless, it is important to consider the role of power disparity into how one's social identity is received beyond the group. Given that there is an 'us versus them' element to social identity through its focus on in- and out-groups, it is important to assess to what extent one is influencing the other. This thesis found that in the case of Irish republicanism, the power disparity was so significant that the mainstream movement was effectively able to stifle most dissent. In this sense, this research breaks down some of the elements of the prominent us vs. them dichotomy that is prominent in the discourse on Irish republicanism, as well as in the theoretical literature. The scrupulous distinction between in-group and out-group could benefit from a more nuanced approach that incorporates elements of fluctuation.

Theoretically, the overpowering role of the out-group on the perception of the in-group can have both positive and negative connotations. In the case of dissident republicanism, it may play an active role in supressing dissident violence. Yet, if the roles are reversed, it may undermine political engagement and alternatives to the large violent out-group which can effectively supress or coerce the smaller group. Furthermore, this element also can be detrimental in the protection of minority rights. This thesis finds that a small radical in-group is, despite its use of violence, not able to match up against a larger

moderate opposition. This process is based on active moderate resistance against the more extreme in-group.

8.3) Further Research and reflection

Finally, besides the empirical and theoretical findings, this thesis has provided an interdisciplinary framework for assessing intergroup relations between mainstream and dissenting or fringe groups. One of the crucial elements it has sought to achieve has been to create an efficient operationalisation of group identity. This provides a promising further research agenda not only in developing the framework, but also to assess different cases. As was briefly alluded to in the introduction, there is room for this study to expand into looking at not only Loyalism in direct relation to the case study, but also to wider cases of, for example, far-right terrorism, environmental or animal rights activism, but also other terrorist and insurgent groups where a majority mainstream shifts from armed struggle to a political strategy, as recently has been the case for example in the precarious peace process in Colombia.[511]

As the post 9/11 world deals with terrorism and political violence in its many forms, it is challenged by conflicting identities and groups. This thesis contributes to questions that deal with the 'why' of people's allegiances. The final decision to undertake an act of terror or violence is always in the agency of its perpetrator. How it liaises with political

[511] Colombia Reports (2017) 'these are the FARC dissident groups Colombia's authorities must confront', 14 June 2017, https://colombiareports.com/farc-dissident-groups-colombias-authorities-must-confront/ (Accessed 08-08-2017)

dissent and the understanding of one's social identity, however, is an important question. Nonetheless, some of the challenges of trying to structure a concept like identity remain. The way in which it is used and conceptualised in this thesis is but one way to tackle the subject. Although it builds strongly on existing literature and conceptualisations of identity, it is still subject to interpretation. Identity may mean many different things to many different audiences. When social groups become more extreme, and social identities become conflicted, members of those groups are more susceptible to reach for violent means. Understanding that process in more depth, and understanding how identities are linked to both violent and non-violent conduct can help to explore ways by which the non-violent narrative can effectively counter violent ones.

Over the next few years, during which the question of Northern Ireland's status will inevitably be raised time and again in the light of the current political arrangements and the Brexit negotiations, it is essential to monitor the security situation in Northern Ireland. Dissident republicans and their continued violent action are an essential element in that monitoring process. Sinn Féin's commitment to non-violent strategies is sincere but this does not negate that continuing Republican violence represents a parallel to its own history. Equally, it heightens a sense of importance for what will happen to the position of Northern Ireland and the political and social status quo. Without an external shock like Brexit to the existing internal balance, the question of Irish unity was unlikely to become so relevant; dissident Irish republicans certainly do not have the gravitas the bring about their desired changes.

The ongoing political debate on Brexit and the ensuing difficulty in the devolved institutions in the UK has perhaps raised the possibility of a United Ireland to its highest level in recent decades. The role and function of Irish Republicans may take new meaning. With that, the function of social identity and the intergroup relations that are represented within and across its communities continues to be of importance. The problem of sectarian divide in Northern Ireland has a century long tradition, and although significant progress has been made since the Good Friday Agreement in 1998, it would be unwise to consider it a closed case. Political and social progress is still of great importance in moving forward in a post-conflict society like Northern Ireland. This will take effort and insistence from both the Stormont, Irish and British government. One of the crucial battlegrounds for the Northern Irish conflict, being part of the UK or of a United Ireland, remain and thereby contain the ingredients for escalation. It is therefore of the utmost importance to understand not only cross-community, but also inter-communal relations.

Sinn Féin dominates the narrative of Irish republicanism in post-conflict Northern Ireland and prevents dissent. This partially prevents violent groups from growing and it protects the peace process. Political means should always hold preference over violent means. However, on the flipside, it has the potential to be dangerous as it delegitimises and criminalises all opposition, and those consequences of political nature should not be ignored indefinitely. Because Sinn Féin are so dominant, divided dissident groups can arguably only ever be reactionary and negative. However, it is too simple to fully lay the blame at Sinn Féin's

feet. Dissidents are themselves unable to unite and become a movement because of fluidity, personal legacies, and disagreement over violence. Furthermore, dissident involvement in violence, vigilantism and organised crime, in relation to the close connection between paramilitarism and politics, is a path they have consciously embarked on. Thus, there is also accountability to be placed on the in-group itself for the lack of support they have. The use of violence and an unwillingness to condemn the armed struggle in modern day Northern Ireland will continue to invalidate dissident republicanism as a viable alternative. As such, we can only fully understand dissident groups in relation to Sinn Féin.

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Annexes

Annex 1: Synopsis of main Dissident republican Groups

1916 Societies: the 1916 Societies are an Irish separatist movement founded in 2009. They consists of different branches divided across Ireland. They are largely a grassroots organisation that has one flagship initiative; the 'one Ireland, one vote' initiative seeks to establish an all-Island vote on the reunification of Ireland. This is their primary goal in seeking to withdraw the British veto over a border poll. Politically they believe, as many of the other political organisations do, in re-establishing an all-island parliament without any British interference.

32CSM: 32 County Sovereignty Movement, founded in 1997. Political wing of the Real IRA. 32CSM started as the 32 County Sovereignty Committee within the structures of Sinn Féin as an attempt at democratic debate within the party towards the prospect of the peace process but quickly fell out of the organisation.

CIRA: Continuity IRA. Paramilitary wing of Republican Sinn Féin. CIRA was responsible for the first peacetime killing of a police officer in 2009 when it killed Officer Stephen Carroll within 48 hours of the Massereene barracks shooting

COGUS: Prisoner wing of RNU.

ÉIRÍGÍ: Political party started in 2006 by former members of Sinn Féin. This party, although not officially condemning armed struggle, does not officially support any paramilitary organisation and as such does not have an 'armed wing'. Their politics are largely driven by Leninist/Trotskyist interpretations of socialism. Equally it accuses Sinn

Féin of being 'happy to oblige through their participation and toothless but high profile 'accountability' projects' aimed directly at Sinn Féin's decision to recognise the PSNI as a result of changes to the Policing Board.

IRPWA: Irish Republican Prisoner Welfare Association. Often perceived as representing the military wing of the former Real IRA and 32CSM. Now more or less associated with the New IRA and Saoradh. Although the Real IRA no longer exists, the 32CSM has not been entirely absorbed in Saoradh, although many personalities overlap.

NIRA: New IRA. Founded in 2012 under the banner of the 'IRA'. The 'new' addendum was added to avoid confusion. This organisation is an amalgamation of, predominantly, RIRA, RAAD and a collection of independent republican fractions.

ONH: Óglaigh na hÉireann, sometimes perceived as the military wing of RNU when it refers to the small split from the Real IRA that went under the banner of ONH. This organisation declared a ceasefire in 2017. Usually referred to as the ad hoc amalgamation of former Provo paramilitaries. Because of its general meaning of 'army of Ireland' or 'soldiers of Ireland' it is a banner used in a multifaceted context and by many groups and variations on groups.

RAAD: Republican Action Against Drugs. Although this group was officially a one-goal paramilitary organisation, focussing on drugs and drug dealers in Derry and surrounding areas, they were still perceived under the dissident umbrella later after starting attacks on security forces. RAAD was responsible for the killing of Andrew Allen in 2012, and the paramilitary punishment of several people, including a nephew of Martin McGuinness.

RIRA: Real IRA. Paramilitary wing of 32CSM. The Real IRA is often indicated as the perpetrators of the 1998 Omagh bombing and the 2009 Massereene barracks shooting, killing two British soldiers and injuring two more. This group is more militant than CIRA, which in part is down to capabilities. In July 2012 it merged with ONH and RAAD to form the new IRA.

RNU: Republican Network for Unity. The idea behind RNU was to unite the non-mainstream republican movement in order to provide a unified front against Sinn Féin. However, despite attempts this did not really work out successfully. The organisation still exists today but is very small. Politically, it too adheres to an anti-imperialist Trotskyist interpretation of Irish Republicanism. Although the RNU shares a large ideological similarity with Éirígí, the core difference is in its open resistance towards the PSNI. Whereas police resistance is a common element in the different dissident republican groups, and none perceive them to be legitimate, RNU manifests most strongly its opposition as part of its core principles. It perceives the police to enforce 'vigorous and draconian anti-Republican measures, aimed at disrupting not only legitimate political activities, but visiting daily hardship upon activists' families and children' (RNU Manifesto).

RSF: Republican Sinn Féin. One of the earliest splinters of the Provisional IRA and in existence since 1986. They were formed after a walkout in the Ard Fheis over abstentionism to the Dáil Éireann. It is the most purist in its interpretation of Irish Republican principles, which has practically meant that they are most isolated from any of the other non-mainstream republican groups. Although they unsuccessfully contested Stormont elections in 2007, they do not perceive either Stormont or Leinster house as legitimate. They hold no

elected position in Northern Ireland and one local seat in Connemara for the Galway County Council. RSF and its paramilitary wing have recently seen a split in Limerick, where one fraction was expelled and pledged loyalty to local IRA man Joe Lynch, with some remaining loyal to the Dublin leadership under president Des Dalton.

Saoradh: founded in 2016 and largely seen as the political wing of the new IRA. This party seemed to follow a trend of unification amongst dissident groups by pulling together smaller and independent fractions and present a unified front under organised leadership. However, a few months after its inception, part of its west Belfast contingent was expelled, signalling a split in its republican heartland. Although this group is not explicitly included in the analysis of this thesis because of the timeframe, it has presented itself as a significant political player in the dissident landscape.

Annex 2: Interview participants

Interview 1, Gary Donegan, 10/02/2016, Belfast
Interview 2, Des Dalton, 16/02/2016, Dublin
Interview 3, Anthony McIntyre, 17/02/2016, Dublin
Interview 4, Davy Hyland, 24/02/2016, Newry
Interview 5, John Loughran, 25/02/2016, Belfast
Interview 6, Danny Morrison, 29/02/2016, Belfast
Interview 7, Francis Mackey, 01/03/2016, Omagh
Interview 8, Brian Caskey
Interview 9, Martin Duffy, 03/03/2016, Lurgan
Interview 10, Gerard Hodgins, 07/03/2016 & 02/08/2016, Belfast
Interview 11, Padraic Mac Coitir, 09/03/2016, Belfast
Interview 12, Barry McElduff , 14/03/2016, Belfast
Interview 13, Barry McColgan, 14/03/2016, Belfast
Interview 14, Paul Scannell, 15/03/2016, Dublin
Interview 15, Eoin Ó Broin, 15/03/2016, Dublin
Interview 16, Seanna Walsh, 16/03/2016, Belfast
Interview 17, Tommy McKearney, 18/03/2016, Armagh
Interview 18, Declan Kearney, 23/03/2016, Belfast
Interview 19, Harry Maguire, 25/03/2016, Belfast
Interview 20, Nathan Stuart, 01/04/2016, Belfast
Interview 21, Sean O'Callaghan, 22/04/2016, London
Interview 22, 'John', Information anonymized
Interview 23, Hugh Brady 08/08/2016, Derry
Interview 24, Gary Donnelly, 08/08/2016, Derry
Interview 25, Fionnuala Perry, 11/08/2016, Belfast
Interview 26, John McQuillan, 13/08/2016, Belfast

Interview 27, Richard O'Rawe, 16/08/2016, Belfast

Interview 28, Gerry Carroll, 19/08/2016, Belfast

Interview 29, Fra McCan, 25/08/2016, Belfast

Annex 3: Electoral Data

Table 1: Dissident and independent republicans in 2007 Assembly Elections[512]

Name	Constituency	Denomination	Number of Votes	% of the vote	Elected
Paul McGlinchey	North Antrim	Independent Republican (Former Sinn Féin)	383	0.86	No
Geraldine Taylor	Belfast West	Republican Sinn Féin	427	1.26	No
Martin Cunningham	South Down	Independent Republican (Former Sinn Féin)	434	0.92	No
Gerry McGeough	Fermanagh & South Tyrone	Independent Republican (Former Sinn Féin)	814	1.75	No
Michael McManus	Fermanagh & South Tyrone	Republican Sinn Féin	431	0.93	No
Peggy O'Hara	Foyle	Independent Republican	1789	4.36	No

[512] Some independent candidates are not specified as either Republican or Unionist. The decision to include them as independent is made on the basis of constituency and the availability of a manifesto or clear denomination through other sources. If a constituency is predominantly unionist or no information on the political denomination of the candidate is available, they are not included. Independent candidates are only included if they are clearly identified as Republicans in order to ensure consistency in the analysis.

Michael McGonigle	East Londonderry	Republican Sinn Féin	393	1.16	No
Davy Hyland	Newry &Armagh	Independent Republican (Former Sinn Féin)	2188	4.41	No
Joseph O'Neill	West Tyrone	Republican Sinn Féin	448	1.08	No
Brendan McLaughlin	Mid Ulster	Republican Sinn Féin	437	0.99	No
Barry Toman	Upper Bann	Republican Sinn Féin	386	0.90	No

Sources:http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/election/2007nia/ra2007.htm,
http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/vote2007/nielection/html/45.stm

Table 2: Dissident and independent republicans in 2011 Assembly Elections

Name	Constituency	Denomination	Number of Votes	% of the vote	Elected
Pat Cox	Fermanagh & South Tyrone	Independent Republican (Former Sinn Féin)	997	2.08	No
Paddy McGowan	West Tyrone	Independent Republican (Former SDLP)	1145	2.91	No
Eugene McMenamin	West Tyrone	Independent Republican (Former SDLP)	1096	2.79	No

Source: http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/election/2011nia/ra2011.htm

Table 3: Dissident and independent republicans in 2016 Assembly Elections[513]

Name	Constituency	Denomination	Number of Votes	% of the Vote	Elected
Josephine Deehan	West Tyrone	Independent (Former SDLP)	1778	4.6	No
Patsy Kelly	West Tyrone	Independent (Former SDLP)	661	1.7	No
Sorcha McAnespy	West Tyrone	Independent (Former Sinn Féin)	828	2.1	No

Source: http://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/northern-ireland-assembly-election/northern-ireland-assembly-election-2016-candidates-34631983.html & http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election/2016/northern_ireland/results

[513] Results for 2016 Assembly candidates are not available from the online CAIN database used for the 2007 and 2011 elections.

Table 4: Dissident and independent republicans in 2011 Local elections [514]

Name	Council	Denomination	No. of first preference Votes [515]	Elected
Donovan McCleland	Antrim	Independent (Former SDLP)	118	No
Dessie Ward	Banbridge	Independent (Former Sinn Féin)	335	No
Padraic MacCoitir	Belfast	Éirígí	1415	No
John McCusker	Belfast	Éirígí	647	No
Paul Little	Belfast	IRSP	379	No

[514] Some independent candidates are not specified as either Republican or Unionist. The decision to include them as independent is made on the basis of constituency and the availability of a manifesto or clear denomination through other sources. If a constituency is predominantly unionist or no information on the political denomination of the candidate is available, they are not included. Independent candidates are only included if they are clearly identifying/identifiable as Republicans in order to ensure consistency. Furthermore, in the case of the 2011 council elections, designated ward data was not available. Members were directly elected to each of the 26 city councils.

[515] The number here is based on the number of first preference votes. As the vote in these elections, the number on which they have been elected or eliminated may be different based on the stage in which they were elected/eliminated.

Jim Gorman	Belfast	IRSP	209	No
Gary Donnelly	Derry	Independent (32CSM)	612	No
Martin McMonagle	Derry	IRSP	539	No
Lucy Callaghan	Derry	IRSP	340	No
Barry Monteith	Dungannon & South Tyrone	Independent (Former Sinn Féin)	1046	Yes
Bernice Swift	Fermanagh	Independent (former Sinn Féin)	1004	Yes
Pat Cox	Fermanagh	Independent (former Sinn Féin)	456	No
Gerry McHugh	Fermanagh	Independent (former Sinn Féin)	377	No
Oliver Hughes	Magherafelt	Independent Republican Party	440	No
Patsy Groogan	Magherafelt	Independent Republican Party	410	No

Padraig McShane	Moyle	Independent (former Sinn Féin)	535	Yes
Colum Thompson[516]	Moyle	Independent	466	Yes
Davy Hyland	Newry and Mourne	Independent (former Sinn Féin	1007	Yes
Paddy McGowan	Omagh	Independent (former SDLP)	536	Yes
Eugene McMenamin	Strabane	Independent (former SDLP)	565	Yes
Gerard Foley	Strabane	Independent (former Sinn Féin)	467	No

[516] Colum Thompson got elected on an independent platform, but joined Sinn Féin in April 2012. (See http://www.sinnFéin.ie/contents/23059)

Table 5: Dissident and independent republican candidates in 2014 local elections

Name	Council	Ward	Denomination	Number of first preference Votes[517]	Elected
Gary Donnelly	Derry and Strabane	The Moor	Independent (32CSM)	1154	Yes
Patrick Mellon	Derry and Strabane	The Moor	Independent	113	No
Dermot Quigley[518]	Derry and Strabane	Ballyarnett	Independent	1037	Yes
Paul Gallagher	Derry and Strabane	Sperrin	Independent (former IRSP)	978	Yes
Eugene McMenamin	Derry and Strabane	Sperrin	Independent (former SDLP)	690	No
Sammy Cusick	Belfast	Oldpark	RNU	220	No

[517] The number here is based on the number of first preference votes. As the vote in these elections, the number on which they have been elected or eliminated may be different based on the stage in which they were elected/eliminated

[518] Dermot Quigley resigned from his council seat in 2015, leaving the seat to IRSP member Warren Robinson (http://www.irishnews.com/news/2015/07/13/news/co-option-increases-irsp-voice-on-council-185518/)

Dee Fennell	Belfast	Oldpark	Independent (Currently IRPWA)	846	No
Tommy Doherty	Belfast	Court	RNU	282	No
Padraic Mac Coitir	Belfast	Black Mountain	Eirigi	1026	No
Maire Drumm	Belfast	Collin	Eirigi	730	No
Davy Hyland	Newry, Mourne and Down	Newry	Independent (former SF)	1045	Yes
Mickey Coogan	Newry, Mourne and Down	Rowallane	Independent (former SF)	149	No
Barry Monteith	Mid Ulster	Dungannon	Independent (former SF)	1458	Yes
Charley O'Kane	Causeway Coast and Glens	Ballymoney	Independent (former SDLP)	196	No
Padraig McShane	Causeway Coast and Glens	The Glens	Independent (former SF)	835	Yes

Bernice Swift	Fermanagh and Omagh	Erne West	Independent (former SF)	1195	Yes
Pat Cox	Fermanagh and Omagh	Enniskillen	Independent (former SF)	313	No
Donal O'Cofaigh	Fermanagh and Omagh	Enniskillen	Fermanagh against fracking (FAF) (former SF)	555	No